

Forcing Change

Paying for Global Governance: Ideas for International Taxation

by Carl Teichrib



Issue 8, Volume 1



www.forcingchange.org



The Canadian Parliament Buildings in Ottawa

Another hand is attempting to enter your wallet. If successful, this hand will take from “world citizens” and directly transfer the gains to the international community.

No, this is not a joke. Global taxation proposals are on the table, and have been for some time. Moreover, with each proposal brought forward, a new step is taken to solidify the idea: one that is

especially intriguing to the United Nations.

Presently the United Nations is chiefly funded through the contributions of member countries, which many UN advocates view as being restrictive to the growth of the world organization. In order to be freed from this monetary limitation, imposed by sovereign nations, it is believed that an alternative source of revenue is needed. Hoping to see a form of global taxation come into being, politicians from Canada, Belgium, France, England, Brazil, Uruguay, the United States and others,¹ have been working on supranational tax schemes since Canada officially enshrined the idea back in 1999.

But seeking optional funding for the United Nations goes back much further than this. Addressing the 1963 Harvard Alumni Association, UN Secretary-General U Thant related how a future United Nations “world police force” could only become a reality when the organization’s economic hurdles had been overcome.² Similarly, Richard Falk, one of the most influential world-law attorneys recognized the importance of independent funding in his massive four volume series *The Strategy of World Order*, which was published in 1966 by the World Law Fund. In it Falk noted,

“If we conceive of life in a drastically altered international system with a large UN Police Force and a World Development Authority having a budget of up to 50 billion dollars per

year, then the need to have assured sources of revenue is indeed significant.”³

Today, the economic goals of the United Nations greatly exceed the 50 billion-dollar mark.

Creative Accounting

Looking for ways to UN financial independence, the United Nations Economic and Social Council examined a multitude of money raising ideas in the 1990's, including the creation of a world lottery,⁴ a UN credit card program,⁵ and imposing “fines” for violating international law.⁶

One unique proposal being circulated within the international community is that of a UN Security Insurance Agency. This plan, if implemented, would allow small countries that lack significant military forces to pay insurance premiums to the United Nations. In turn, the UN would guarantee the security of the insured nation by mobilizing armed units against anyone who would threaten it.⁷ With this suggestion the UN is empowered in two different ways that elevate the world body far beyond its present-day stature,

1. Revenue is generated into the world body.

Articles to Watch for in Upcoming Issues of *Forcing Change*

- ▶ Utopian Politics: International Socialism and the Rise of Global Governance
- ▶ Fundamental Fears: Biblical Christianity as a Factor in Global Instability
- ▶ Toward a Single International Currency
- ▶ Education for the Future: UNESCO and Seven Complex Lessons

2. The UN is given its own international military force to deal with potential security breaches.

Surcharges and user-fees have also been suggested as viable funding options. In *Our Global Neighborhood*, the report of the UN sponsored Commission on Global Governance, a variety of user fee arrangements were listed:

- Surcharges on airline tickets, including an extra charge for international flights.
- Charges on ocean-going maritime traffic for use of international waterways.
- Surcharges for non-coastal ocean fishing.
- User fees for activities in Antarctica.
- Parking fees for geo-stationary satellites.⁸

But of all the various proposals, world taxation schemes have received the most attention. To this end the Commission on Global Governance suggested a number of taxation models, including a “carbon tax” based on carbon emissions, and a corporate levy on multinational companies.⁹ While the Commission recognized that taxes are “never politically popular at the best of times,” it acknowledged one particular plan over all others: an arrangement now officially accepted, at least in principle, by America’s largest trading partner.

Canada Adopts Tobin Tax

In 1978, U.S. economist James Tobin published his thoughts on global monetary reform in the *Eastern Economic Journal*. His concept, now known as the “Tobin tax,” called for a universally accepted charge on foreign currency transactions. Considering the trillions of dollars traded each year (one estimate is US \$1.2 trillion/day¹⁰), the fund raising potential is staggering. And, as a

selling point to national governments, the concept is being touted as a way of clipping the wings of “rogue” currency traders.¹¹ In fact, the Tobin tax has been so well received in certain policy circles that in 1999 the Canadian federal government officially endorsed the plan, giving the tax legal legitimacy.

On October 28, 1998, Lorne Nystrom, a Member of Parliament from the province of Saskatchewan, introduced the Tobin tax to the Canadian House of Commons. Describing the levy as “a feasible part of a new world order and new world vision,”¹² Nystrom elaborated on how large the coffers would have been if the tax had been implemented based on 1995 foreign currency transactions. In his speech to the House, the intent of the hoped-to-be imposed tax was laid out in crystal clear language.

“If there were a 0.1% Tobin tax on foreign currency transactions, that would raise, in 1995 dollars, \$176 billion U.S. That is a lot of money. A Tobin tax of 0.003% would be enough money to fund the United Nations peacekeeping around the world...One of the consequences would be the establishment of a global village which would have a common good amongst all nations of the world. There would be a strengthening of international organizations. The United Nations would become a meaningful world government and would share things with national governments around the world. There could be permanent international peacekeeping forces. There are many things that could be done.”¹³

Nystrom further clarified that the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank could be reformed to implement this plan, although he preferred “a new international financial agency to administer the Tobin tax.”¹⁴ According to Mr. Nystrom, the world would be a better place if we had a global IRS.

While some members of parliament did voice



Lorne Nystrom

opposition to the tax proposal, it received broad political support across party lines. On March 23, 1999, the Canadian Parliament passed the Tobin tax with a vote of 164 to 83. At this time the tax is simply “on the books,” with the understanding that when the

international community fully accepts it, Canada will already be in the loop.

Considering that Canada is America’s largest trading partner, with two-way commercial trade running in excess of \$500 billion in 2005, the Tobin tax decision has potential consequences for more than just lining UN pockets. If and when the tax comes into effect, be it in a year or a decade from now, such a scheme will impact the price of trans-border goods and services. And your wallet will be just a little lighter.

The Push For US Acceptance

Within the United States, the Tobin Tax has been slow to catch on, but it has made a small introduction into the federal political system.

In the year 2000, Congressmen Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Senator Paul Wellstone (DMN) urged the US government to enact the global levy. Certain special interest groups have also joined the cause. The California-based Center for Environmental Economic Development has established the “Tobin Tax Initiative.”¹⁵ And the World Federalist Association (now known as Citizens for Global Solutions), America’s largest world government lobby group, is helping add acceptance pressure.

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs), special interest groups with world-wide influence, are also supportive. The World Federal-

ist Movement (WFM), which is the umbrella organization under which the WFA operates, has been striving to advance the principles of the Tobin tax. Its executive officer, Bill Pace, played a critical role during the UN Millennium Forum (May 22-26, 2000), where over 1,000 NGOs from around the world played a part in UN reform processes.¹⁶

During one of the Forum's sessions, delegates poured over ideas for alternative UN funding. Again, the Tobin tax took a high priority. And during the final day of the Forum, international attorney Richard Falk – through the invitation of Bill Pace – held a special meeting with world federalists and other key leaders regarding specific global governance proposals. Not surprisingly, many of the meeting participants had given vocal support to the Tobin tax earlier during the week.

As an accredited participant at the Forum, it became clear to me that world taxation is viewed as a strategic landmark in the creation of a world government. But there are problems.

Taxing Problems

While great strides have been made to advance world taxation, major implementation problems exist. The tax would have to be universally accepted; otherwise, non-participating nations would quickly become tax havens. With this in mind, what enforcement options would be used for non-compliant countries? Who would ultimately collect the tax and oversee its use? How would a global tax affect national and regional economies? And what safeguards would be employed to restrain corruption or to keep the levy from continually rising?

Initially, problems surrounding design and management of the tax may seem insoluble. However, the fact remains that we now have a harmonized global tariffs arrangement, which at one time was considered as utopian as the presently discussed international tax. Major organizations and influential individuals within the world community are

not asking “if” or “when,” but rather “what will it take?”

Beyond the predictable complications associated with implementing a UN empowering world tax, a greater danger exists in what such taxation represents. In the third volume of Richard Falk's *Strategy of World Order*, Norman J. Padelford, an early advocate of United Nations monetary reform, gave a warning regarding autonomous UN funding.

“The power of an independent purse could become the prelude to the seizing and exercising of independent power. This could be detrimental to national independence and even ultimately to personal freedom.”¹⁷

This danger struck home while I was attending a youth-oriented world government conference in Washington, DC during the spring of 1999.¹⁸ One of the panelists, a young lady from the US, rigorously pressed the need for a world management system equipped with the power to tax.

“On the international level, graduated tax must be implemented...Presently, Americans accept mandatory taxes on a state and national level. A successful world government rides on applying this system internationally. Aside from economic sacrifices, effective [world] government entails the sacrifice of certain freedoms. In cultivating security through a globally respected law enforcement system, all nations, and therefore all people must cooperate and make some sacrifices...A world government must establish an equilibrium where certain freedoms are restricted in mankind's best interest...global law transcends national law, and unity carries more weight than diversity. This requires each nation state to yield certain rights to the international government, vowing to abide by international decisions.”¹⁹

Funding Global Governance

It has often been said that the dividends derived from alternative United Nations funding programs, like the Tobin tax, would go towards making the world a more secure place. UN Secretary General U Thant inferred this during his 1963 Harvard speech, and the 1999 legislative action of the Canadian government also demonstrated this taxation/world police and security link.

The fact that numerous plans exist to develop an international police and military force, either under the direct umbrella of the United Nation or somehow else attached to the UN's decision making process (this will be reviewed in upcoming FC issues), gives us a window into the importance of alternative funding. As the UN currently stands, it doesn't have the economic means to field a fully functional battle group. Hence, if the dreams of global security under UN auspices are to be realized, funding issues will have to be addressed and implemented.

Canada has stepped to the plate, and now waits for the world to catch up before taxes can be legally levied. In fact, the year after Canada adopted the world tax initiative, the European Parliament started to seriously take interest in the plan. And in 2003, Belgium tabled a similar global tax platform. Other countries are contemplating similar steps.

If a world tax were to become a reality, for the sake of global security or for another reason, it would elevate the United Nations to the level of a sovereign regime. As A.W. Clausen, former President of the BankAmerica Corporation and the World Bank said in 1979, "The control of money and credit strikes at the very heart of national sovereignty."²⁰

Indeed it does. The control of money and credit, two aspects that dovetail a world tax scheme, empowers the end-user with sovereign economic leverage. Therefore, if the United Nations possesses taxing authority either through participating member countries or via another circuit, the world

body could conceivably be magnified to that of a semi-autonomous ruling entity. After all, the ability to create wealth out of taxation is the power and prerogative of government, and that's essentially what the United Nations would become. **FC**

Endnotes:

¹ For more information on which countries and politicians have been working on this idea, see the two links listed: <http://tobintaxcall.free.fr/list.htm>, and <http://tobintaxcall.free.fr/in%20the%20parliaments.htm>. Also see the Open Letter titled "The Tobin Tax at the ECOFIN."

² U Thant, "United Nations Peace Force," an address to the Harvard Alumni Association, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 13, 1963. As re-printed in *The Strategy of World Order, Volume III: The United Nations* (World Law Fund, 1966), pp.526-534.

³ Richard Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz, *The Strategy of World Order, Volume III: The United Nations* (World Law Fund, 1966), p.731.

⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Debate on New & Innovative Ideas for Funds*, July 23-24, 1997. UN Press Release.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ James A. Paul, Statement on Innovative Funding to the UN Economic and Social Council, July 11, 1996.

⁷ James A. Paul, *Alternative Financing for Global Peace and Development* (Global Policy Forum, September, 1997).

⁸ The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.220-221.

⁹ Ibid., pp.218-221.

¹⁰ See, *Currency Transaction Tax – Question and Answers*, www.currencytax.org/questions_and_answers.php

¹¹ See Paul Hellyer's book *Stop: Think* (Chimo Media, 1999), p.176.

¹² Hon. Lorne Nystrom, "Tax on Financial Transactions," Private Members Business, *Edited Hansard* – Number 144, Wednesday, October 28, 1998, Canadian Federal Government House of Commons, p.1735.

¹³ Ibid., p.1745.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Tobin Tax website for the Center for Environmental Economic Development is <http://ceedweb.org/iirp>.

¹⁶ The author of this article was a delegate to the UN Millennium Forum. Any reference to the activities of the Forum stem from his experiences and the internal documents distributed to attendees.

¹⁷ Norman J. Padelford, "Financial Crisis and the Future of the United Nations," *The Strategy of World Order*, p.768.

¹⁸ This conference, sponsored by the World Federalist Association and the Center for Global Peace, was titled the "National Youth Conference on the Hague Appeal for Peace." The dates were April 9-11, 1999, and took place in the Ward Building at the American University.

¹⁹ I am not going to publish the name of this youth participant

because of her age at the time of the meeting.

²⁰ From an interview between Michael Loyd Chadwick and A.W. Clausen; as published in the 1981 *Freemen Digest* issue on International Banking, p.21.

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Unveiling the Global Interfaith Agenda

By Carl Teichrib

Religious pluralism isn't a new concept, but it has made tremendous inroads during the past ten years. This development hasn't been confined to churches only, but now tracks through international politics, economics, and major social structures.

In past issues of *Forcing Change* various aspects of this movement have been expounded on, including environmental links. However, the following article, which is divided into two parts, offers a unique window into the growing clout of the interfaith agenda and its deeper meaning. Increasingly, this socio-religious pluralism will find its way into more local programs and actions,

including community functions, civic politics, and economic "justice" agendas. All of this will impact churches, from local congregations to national boards, and will become increasingly visible in secular fields such as public education and the workplace. Already this is happening.

As mentioned, this article is comprised of two parts: the front section, "An Inside Look," details my observations while attending a 2001 interfaith event in St. Petersburg, Florida. A special emphasis is placed on what to watch for regarding the impact of the inter-religious agenda at the more local and discernable level.

The second part of this article is a review of the 2004 Barcelona Parliament of the World's Religions. While I didn't attend this event, the information and intelligence that came out of this gathering gives us an interesting "big picture" sweep of the global interfaith program, including its linkages to issues of economic governance.

An Inside Look

January 11-14, 2001, St. Petersburg, Florida.

If you live anywhere in the "snow-belt," St. Petersburg Florida can be a wonderful place in the middle of January. The salty Gulf of Mexico breeze and the warm sunshine create a perfect escape environment from the clutches of winter. Everybody north of the "40th parallel" knows this. So it was no surprise to discover that one of the year's earliest interfaith events would take place in "sunny St. Pete."

Starting on January 11 and ending on the 14th, interfaith activists from as far away as Korea and the United Kingdom gathered in St. Petersburg to attend the "Religions in Dialogue: Moving from Conflict to Trust" conference. Held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in the heart of the city, the purpose of this event was to create a common vision and cooperative strategy to advance the global interfaith agenda for 2001 and beyond.



The 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions

At first it seemed that the conference was going to be a wash – less than 50 people had shown up. But while the size of the group gave the appearance of insignificance, many of those who attended were involved at the highest levels of global interfaith work. In fact, three of the five largest interfaith organizations in the world were represented at the “director’s level.”

Here is the breakdown of the key interfaith leaders in attendance and the organizations they represented,

- **Marcus Braybrooke**, Director of the **World Congress of Faiths** (WCF) and arguably one of the most prolific writers on interfaithism. He is considered by many to be the most knowledgeable and influential man in the interfaith movement. The WCF is located in the United Kingdom. Mr. Braybrooke is also



Marcus Braybrooke

a Patron of the International Interfaith Centre at Oxford. The WCF was one of two co-sponsors of the St. Petersburg event.

- **Richard Boeke**, Chairman of the WCF. He too lives in the UK.
- **Allan Race**, Editor of WCF’s publication *World Faiths Encounter*. Mr. Race is also a Trustee of the International Interfaith Centre.
- **Andrew Clark**, Secretary-General of the **International Association of Religious Freedom** (IARF), also located in the UK. The IARF was the second co-sponsor of this event.
- **Doris Hunter**, IARF Director for the United States.
- **Jim Kenney**, International Director for the **Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions** (CPWR) – the group that organized the 1993 and 1999 World Parliament of Religions. Mr. Kenney is also a Trustee of the International Interfaith Centre. The CPWR is headquartered in Chicago.



Shabbat Serice During the Interfaith Meeting

Of the five major global interfaith organizations, only the World Conference on Religion and Peace (located in New York city) and the United Religions Initiative (located in San Francisco) were not officially represented, although some of the conference participants and attendees had played roles in both of these absent groups.

Other participants included,

- **Dr. Hal French**, Professor at the Dept. of Religious Studies, University of South Carolina, and author of *Zen and the Art of Anything*.
- **Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao**, Chief Editor for the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, and Professor at the University of South Carolina.
- **Dr. Spencer Lavan**, a long-time interfaith activist. He has been involved in inter-religious work around the world for decades.

Because the event was held in the Unitarian

church, Unitarians were in the majority. Other faith communities present were,

- **Christianity**. In all cases those representing “Christianity” held to a very liberal view of the faith. Marcus Braybrooke and his wife were among the Christians present. Some attendees claimed a form of “grafted” Christianity, such as Christian-Buddhist or Christian-Unitarian. Many admitted being brought up as a child in the Christian faith. Richard Boeke, who played a fundamental part throughout the four days, had at one time been the pastor of a Southern Baptist church. He’s now a Unitarian minister. On a couple of occasions I heard attendees confess that they had been “saved” at a Billy Graham crusade but had “come to their senses” soon thereafter.
- **Hindu**. Representation included one lady who “converted” to Christianity while in India to escape her overbearing family’s legalistic brand of Hinduism. Once she moved to the US and was freed from her “fundamentalist” Hindu family,

she converted back to Hinduism. She told me that if she ever moved back to India, she would once again become a “Christian.”

- **Buddhism.** Frank Tedesco, a Buddhist scholar and interfaith activist, was part of the Saturday afternoon panel session. Mr. Tedesco had flown in from Korea specifically to participate in this conference.

- **New Age/Wiccan.** They were represented in the Thursday evening interfaith worship service (remember, this is a religious meeting, and “worship” is planned into the program agenda). During this time, a ceremony was conducted in which a Wiccan invoked a “blessing,”

“I am the four corners of the earth, north, south, east, and west, which bound the sacred circle where we stand, ready to receive our gods. Beloved Mother, by many names and faces are you known. As you are the name ‘ever young,’ let us stay young forever and ever grow within our faith. As you are the fertile mother, ever giving. Help us to harvest the sweet fruit of this gathering – tolerance, understanding, and love.”

Other “faith communities” included,

- **Judaism.** On Friday evening we were led in an interfaith Judaic Shabbat service, conducted by the Beth Rachamim Synagogue – which is one of a handful of overtly gay and lesbian synagogues in the country. Throughout the service, prayers and reaffirmations were made to endorse their homosexuality.

- **Theosophy.** The Theosophical Society set up a display table and gave a workshop presentation. The founder of the Theosophical Society was Helena Blavatsky. Alice A. Bailey was another prominent theosophist. Both of these ladies have been referred to as the “Mother of the New Age

Movement.” Theosophy is an occult philosophy elevating Lucifer to the position of liberator of humanity.

- **Native American.** Saturday afternoon a sweat lodge was set up for those who wanted to partake in a Native American spiritual experience.

- **Humanism.** Humanism was presented as one of the “religions” (or should that be “anti-religions”?) and was given a time slot for a Saturday afternoon workshop. Strange as it may be, the St. Pete Unitarian church had numerous brochures and informational sheets promoting humanism.

- **Kashi Ashram interfaithism.** Located near the east coast of Florida is Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati’s interfaith ashram. “Ma,” the guru of the Kashi Ashram, has blended a variety of western and eastern spiritual traditions. Ma’s interfaith teachings have been an example to the interreligious community, and she has been involved in a variety of world interfaith events and organizational activities. At least two of her followers were present at the St. Pete meeting.

- **Scientology.** Besides giving a workshop on Scientology, a Scientology drama and musical team gave a performance during Saturday evening’s cultural program.

Practitioners of other religions were also in attendance, but those listed above (including Unitarian) were the most active. Interestingly, while a fair number of participants claimed to be “Christian,” the reaction to “fundamental Christianity” was anything but friendly. As with every other interfaith meeting I’ve been to, fundamental Christianity was unashamedly bashed. Claiming to be a way of “tolerance,” the interfaith movement is, in reality, extremely intolerant when religions such as Christianity proclaim “exclusive truth.”

So what “inside information” was given at this meeting? Here it is,

- **The next Parliament of the World’s Religions.** After the 1999 Cape Town Parliament of the World’s Religions, it was determined that a parliament should be convened every five years. Due to circumstances, the next parliament will not be held until 2005, one year later than expected. [Note: the Parliament was able to convene in 2004 after all]. According to Jim Kenney, the CPWR wants to bill its next event as a type of “Olympics” of world religions. To this end, the CPWR wants cities to compete in hosting the event, much like the Olympic system currently does.

Here’s the inside scoop; Mr. Kenney made it very clear that at least 10 world cities have started bidding to host the next parliament – but, as Kenney pointed out, the CPWR hasn’t even made the “call to host” public yet! Watch as the momentum for the next parliament builds as cities compete to host what is fast being viewed as the premier inter-religious event. It is also expected that other players, possibly corporate, financial, and institutional, will come alongside with support packages and endorsements. If all this takes place, and it looks like it will, the interfaith agenda for the next five to ten years will catapult forward in an unprecedented way.

- **United Religions Initiative.** The URI and its global charter was developed by Bishop William Swing at the behest of the United Nations and Robert Muller, a top UN official and visionary. At the St. Pete meeting, it came out that the more historically established interfaith players considered the URI to be a type of black sheep within the interfaith family. During the URI’s early years, statements made by Bishop Swing had caused a rift between the URI and the other interfaith groups. Now that Swing has stepped down from his position as director of the URI (Charles Gibbs has taken over), the global interfaith community is ready to embrace the URI as a respectable player within the global inter-religious agenda. Watch

as the URI gains prominence via the fact that the world interfaith leadership is now recognizing its place as a global partner.

- **Earth Charter.** Jim Kenney explained during a private conversation that the interfaith movement is in agreement with, and working towards, the acceptance of Mikhail Gorbachev’s *Earth Charter* program. More often than not, the *Earth Charter* has been viewed as a political entity. While this is the predominant view, Mr. Kenney made it clear that the *Earth Charter* platform transcends the political and connects with the interfaith agenda. Watch as the interfaith movement and the *Earth Charter* program link more tightly in promoting religious pluralism, earth servitude, and “world management.”

** The *Earth Charter* is a platform document intended to shape civilization around Earth-first principles and strengthen global governance.

- **International Association of Religious Freedom in America.** The IARF is the oldest interfaith group in the world (it was founded in 1900), but it doesn’t have a strong presence in the US. One of the anticipated results of having this conference in St. Pete was that the IARF would cement ties with US interfaith activists. IARF has been a substantial player in Japan, India, and the UK, and now it plans to sink deeper roots in America.

- **World Alliance of Interfaith Organizations.** The most important development that came out of the St. Petersburg meeting was that the three global bodies proposed an informal world alliance strategy. During the meeting they refrained from calling this alliance an interfaith “world federation,” but in many ways this is what was being discussed. All of this came about through “coffee table talk” – informal discussions in the lunch-room and lounge. Often times, these informal settings are the places where the real agendas are developed.

Knowing this alliance is taking shape, the essential questions are; what will be the nature of this alliance, and where will it take us? At this point, it's hard to know. At the very least, the CPWR, the World Congress of Faiths, and the IARF will work together in a much tighter fashion. One of the "alliance" suggestions was to develop a common internet data base for inter-religious networking; a small first step, but a step nonetheless.

As the leadership from the three major bodies that met at St. Petersburg continue to flesh out this new cooperative, the other two groups (URI and the World Conference on Religion and Peace) will, in all probability, join in some degree. Watch as the interfaith movement becomes a more cohesive and potent force at both the national and international level. Only time will tell how the global interfaith agenda will ultimately impact our lives.

Where does this leave Biblical Christianity?

- **In the Church:** Stay alert to how the interfaith movement is shaping the Christian church, both locally and broadly speaking. Expect ecumenical pressures and mandates from national offices to participate in pluralistic settings. Furthermore, expect fundamentalist positions to be questioned and challenged; especially regarding the exclusive message of Jesus Christ (John 14:6 comes to mind), sin and the issue of judgement, and the role of evangelism.

- **Politics:** Keep an eye on "hate-crimes" legislation, which is a key venue in degenerating religious exclusiveness. Watch as civic leaders in various parts of the country attempt to zone downtown blocks as "interfaith" areas. Moreover, expect influential Christian leaders to partake in inter-religious political and civic functions, lending more credibility to the pluralistic position.

- **Education:** Keep a special watch within our educational institutions, both Christian and secular. The New Age/interfaith movement recognizes that influencing education at all levels, which in turn shapes young minds, is a strategic component in advancing the global agenda. Already many churches and Christian schools have succumbed to the philosophy of religious pluralism, and our secular schools have been advocating this for years.

Re-Creating Eden

From July 7th to the 13th, 2004, Barcelona Spain was the focal point for a momentous interfaith event, the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions. And while this conference received practically no media coverage in North America, it was a major milestone in a lineage of interfaith events.

The history of the Parliament of the World's Religions goes back over 100 years to 1893. That year, the first World's Parliament of Religions took place as part of the World Columbia Exposition in Chicago. Thousands attended, and the gathering became a seminal event in American religious life, "marking the change from the dominance of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism to the start of a multi-religious society"¹

Richard Seager, in his Harvard University Doctrinal Thesis on the 1893 Parliament, further elaborated on this national religious turnaround,

"As far as religious pluralism in America is concerned a strict construction of the issue would seem to suggest that after the Parliament, there were many ways to be religious. One could be saved or self-realized or grow in God consciousness or be self-emptied. And as America itself continued to pursue its messianic mission, it was a nation under a changed God. Krishna, Vishnu, the Buddha (technically a not-God), the Divine Mother,

and other deities had been tucked up in the nation's sacred canopy, where they joined the Christian Father and Son, Jehovah, Nature's God, and Apollo and his Muses..."²

One hundred years later, in 1993, the second Parliament of the World's Religions took place, once again in Chicago. Like the first Parliament, this event drew thousands of participants from practically every major and minor stream of thought, philosophy, and spiritual persuasion.

Erwin Lutzer, author and well-known Christian apologist, attended this event with a critical eye. Writing on what he witnessed, Lutzer commented,

"The gods are on a roll, and woe to those who stand in the way of their agenda! With lofty ideals and utopian plans to unify the religions of the world for the common good, this parliament met to break down the barriers that exist in the accelerated march toward unity"³

Setting the stage for deeper interfaith collaboration, the 1993 Parliament spurned a landmark directive: the creation of a Global Ethic.

Blending various aspects of many religious traditions, the basic idea behind the Global Ethic was and is to unite all religions around a common core set of moral and ethical values. To this end, the 1993 Parliament was especially significant, as the drive towards a Global Ethic elevated inter-religious cooperation to new heights.⁴

In 1999, on the eve of the new millennium, the third Parliament of the World's Religions took place in Cape Town, South Africa. Again, thousands attended. However, when the Parliament concluded it was evident that a new direction for interfaith cooperation had been formulated. Unlike the past two events, which had a heavy emphasis on religious unity, the South African conference produced a remarkably political agenda.

Titled, *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, the final report from Cape Town stressed that Earth-centric changes needed to take place within gov-

ernments, religious institutions, labor and industry, education, science, the international political community, and in other areas such as commerce and media. It was a call for "global interdependence" and "robust cooperation within the human family." All of this was to take place within a framework of interfaith understanding where Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the other spiritual paths could unite around a "better world" concept.⁵

And then came the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions.

Peak attendance at Barcelona topped 8,600, with participants coming from all corners of the world and representing an enormous range of religious beliefs and practices. Prominent interfaith organizations were also present, including the United Religious Initiative, which had approximately 150 of its global leaders partaking in the event (URI also had two information booths set up).⁶

Arguably one of the most important aspects of this parliament was the vast amount of networking which took place. Throughout the week, interfaith advocates and organizations built bridges and came together in striking formal and informal partnerships with other likeminded groups and individuals. More importantly, Barcelona afforded an opportunity to build upon the aspirations of each of the prior parliaments.

From its start until its close, participants worked to put in place a number of political commitments, including the role of religious communities in addressing international debt and financial governance, and to support water management programs that ultimately work hand-in-glove with the World Water Vision [an international water management action plan].⁷ Religious violence and tolerance were also viewed as a major area of political action, recognizing that the world's religions play a part in shaping social policies and directives.

Dirk Ficca, the Executive Director of the Parliament of the World's Religions, explained what political interconnections would be pursued in

order to implement the commitments made during the week.

“The Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions has also developed a process to monitor and support the implementation of the Barcelona Parliament commitments, including best-practice manuals and a web-based communications network in order to support and assess the impact on the world’s pressing problems. We are also exploring partnerships with other sectors of society such as organizations within the UN system, the World Bank and organizations that promote corporate social responsibility.”⁸

Here’s where the rubber meets the road: a commitment to impacting global political decision making via the unified lobbying influence of the international religious community. Ultimately, it’s man’s plan to remake the world in man’s image. Consider three historic statements from the first World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893,

— “This day the sun of a new era of religious peace and progress rises over the world, dispelling the dark clouds of sectarian strife. This day a new flower blooms in the garden of religious thought, filling the air with its exquisite perfume.

This is the day a new fraternity is born into the world of human progress, to aid in the up-building of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men.

Era and flower and fraternity bear one name. It is a name which will gladden the hearts of those who worship God and love man in every clime. Those who hear its music joyfully echo it back to sun and flower.

IT IS THE BROTHERHOOD OF RELIGIONS.

In this name I welcome the first Parliament of the Religions of the World.”⁹
[capitals in original]

— “The religion of the future will be universal in every sense. It will embody all the thought and aspiration and virtue and emotion of all humanity; it will draw together all lands and peoples and kindreds and tongues into a universal brotherhood of love and service; it will establish upon earth a heavenly order.”¹⁰

— “Religion will then, as now, lift man above his weakness by reminding him of his responsibilities. The goal before is Paradise. Eden is to rise.”¹¹

And, from 2004 Barcelona Parliament of the World’s Religions:

“The relentless effort of the Council for the Parliament of World Religions brings religious leaders within one platform and calls upon us to fulfill the highest purposes of religion. We come from the four directions, like streams merging into a great river. We are all on our way home to the Ocean of the One Divine Spirit...Let each of us come, willing to be immeasurably enriched by the beauty, depth and validity of one another’s traditions. With each encounter, let us meet the Divinity in one another.”¹²

None of this should come as a surprise to the discerning Christian and observer of religious world affairs. Rather, expect more of this type of activity as man seeks to re-create Eden into a New Age paradise where humanity sits enthroned – alongside the gods of nature.

As noted in the introduction to this article, the global interfaith agenda has a broad range of influencing factors, including economic governance issues (see the above reference to the World Bank).

More importantly, while the scope of the inter-religious movement is obviously planetary in nature, it’s at the local level where the impact will

be most readily visible. How it plays out in the educational setting, business world, civic playing field, and the church community will vary from region to region, city to city. But the social/religious change factor is the same; regardless of which vehicle is used to carry forward the agenda.

For Christians, the most important battleground for religious pluralism is in the church. It's here where the most influence for subtle, negative change can be expected. As churches across North America embrace this interfaith trend, be on guard as false doctrines and dangerous philosophies shift the attention away from the exclusive, saving message of Jesus Christ, the fallen nature of man, and the holiness of God's justice to one of religious diversity, openness, and experiential spiritual designs that bridge the gap between "Christianity" and other religious beliefs and practices.

Sadly, this is happening now, and the pressure is mounting to heedlessly follow this path. In the future, *Forcing Change* will highlight some of these troublesome areas. **FC**

Endnotes:

¹ Marcus Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope: One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue* (SCM Press, 1992), p.41.

² As quoted by Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope*, p.41.

³ Erwin Lutzer, *Christ Among Other gods: A Defense of Christ in an Age of Tolerance* (Moody Press, 1994), p.11.

⁴ See, Joel Beversluis (ed.), *A SourceBook for Earth's Community of Religions* (CoNexus Press/Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993); Marcus Braybrooke, *Faith and Interfaith in a Global Age* (CoNexus Press/Braybrooke Press, 1998); Peggy Moran and Marcus Braybrooke (ed.), *Testing the Global Ethic: Voices from the Religions on Moral Values* (CoNexus Press/World Congress of Faiths, 1998).

⁵ Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, (1999).

⁶ United Religions Initiative, *URI eUpdate* (August 2004).

⁷ For more information on international water management programs, see *World Water Vision: Making Water Everybody's Business* (Earthscan Publications/World Water Council, 2000).

⁸ Dirk Ficca, "The Parliament Of The World's Religions Results In Thousands Of Commitments To Address Religious Violence And Other Urgent Issues Facing The World," www.cpwr.org/2004Parliament [accessed August 25, 2004].

⁹ Charles Carroll Bonney, "Words of Welcom," *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (Open Court Publishing/Council for a Parliament of

the World's Religions, 1993, edited by Richard Hughes Seager), pp.21-22.

¹⁰ Merwin-Marie Snell, "Future of Religion," *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (Open Court Publishing/Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993, edited by Richard Hughes Seager), p.174.

¹¹ Emil Gustav Hirsch, "Elements of Universal Religion," *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (Open Court Publishing/Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993, edited by Richard Hughes Seager), p.224.

¹² His Holiness Swami Shuddhanandaa Brahmachari, 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions, opinion piece, "The Needle and Thread" [accessed August 25, 2004, www.cpwr.org/2004Parliament/news/opiniobrahma.htm]

Sharpening Claws: Russian Bomber Flights and American Interests in Central Asia

By Carl Teichrib

For the first time since the 1992 collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia resumed long-range strategic bomber flights into NATO and US controlled airspace. According to President Vladimir Putin, this new development reflects a permanent position,

"I made a decision to restore flights of Russian strategic bombers on a permanent basis, and at 00:00 today, August 17, 14 strategic bombers, support aircraft and aerial tankers were deployed. Combat duty has begun, involving 20 aircraft..."

...Air patrol areas will include zones of commercial shipping and economic activity. As of today, combat patrolling will be on a permanent basis. It has a strategic character."¹

In another RIA Novosti news filing, Sergei Ivanov, the deputy prime minister overseeing the defense industry said, "This has nothing to do



A TU 95 Bear on Patrol

with ‘bloc mentality’ or confrontation, let alone a return to the Cold War.”² This statement, while reassuring to the Western public, doesn’t fit with the ongoing tensions that have developed in the Central Asian region.

Further reporting on this renewed Russian flight program, Reuters news services claimed that Russian bombers flew “near the Pacific island of Guam, where the U.S. military has a base, and ‘exchanged smiles’ with U.S. pilots scrambled to track them.”³ An over-flight also occurred in the North Atlantic, causing the British to launch Typhoon interceptors in a shadowing action alongside a Russian Tupolev-95 “Bear” aircraft.

All of this appeared to be part-and-parcel of a

larger joint Russian/Chinese military exercise, one that included political elements from neighbouring nations. Writing for the Christian Science Monitor and re-published on CBS News, Fred Weir’s article on the subject gives some extra details on this joint operation. Consider the following excerpt from his August 18th text, published just two days after the renewal of Russia’s strategic bomber flights.

“On Friday, Mr. Putin joined **leaders of China** and other members of the six-nation **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** in **Russia’s Chelyabinsk region** to view the **final stage** of the group’s most **ambitious joint military**

maneuvers yet, including 6,500 troops and over 100 aircraft. Also on hand were scheduled to be leaders of SCO observer states and prospective members, among them India, Pakistan, Iran and Mongolia.

At an SCO summit in Kyrgyzstan Thursday, Putin stressed that while Russia is not seeking to build a Cold War-style 'military bloc,' he does see the SCO expanding from its original purpose as an economic association to take on a greater military role.

'Year by year, the SCO is becoming a more substantial factor in ensuring security in the region,' he said. 'Russia, like other SCO states, favors strengthening the multipolar international system providing equal security and development potential for all countries. Any attempts to solve global and regional problems unilaterally have no future,' he added.

The SCO, founded in 2001, is often referred to as a 'club of dictators' due to less-than-democratic ex-Soviet members such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The group has been holding joint war games since 2005, when it also demanded that the U.S. vacate military bases it had acquired after 9/11 in former Soviet Central Asia, whose oil and gas reserves are garnering increased attention from the West."

As stated above Russia has a special interest in the Central Asian zone. As a recent US Army War College documents related, "Russia and China have launched a coordinated campaign to oust the U.S. strategic presence from Central Asia."⁴

Without question this region is a hotbed area where energy security interests and instability collide. America's involvement in the Caspian Sea and Caucasus zone rests on these two contentious realities.

1) The energy side: regional oil and gas exploration projects, trans-regional and intra-regional

petroleum pipeline construction, and greater petroleum market access.

2) The stability side: civil unrest in the former Soviet satellite countries, counter terrorism activities, and stability problems associated with Afghanistan, Pakistan/India, Iraq and Iran, and further out to Israeli and the larger Middle East.

Stephen J. Blank, a Soviet expert attached to the US Army War College, adds another dimension: a military placement reason.

"...we must understand that the importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus to the United States lies not only in the presence of abundant energy resources, but also in these zones' geographic proximity to key theaters in Europe, the Middle East, and across Asia. Military power can be projected back and forth from any one of these theaters; the Transcaspian area that embraces the Caucasus and Central Asia is pivotal to any such success. Access to these zones have become an issue of great strategic and policy importance, in view of America's global responsibilities and vital interests."⁵

Russia, and China too, have strategic reasons for their involvement in the Eurasian block; Reasons that include and go beyond the fact that Central Asia is a direct gateway, especially for Russia. Petroleum and national/regional loyalties also play a key role. Therefore, US involvement in this area is deemed a strategic threat.

Watch as tensions in the area – which have been simmering for years – increase in pace and intensity as Russia, China, and the US vie for prominence as the region's protectorate. Watch also as China and Russia step up activities in relationship to the US dollar devaluation now taking place; the repercussions of this dollar development, either experienced gradually or with flash-intensity, will be a significant global-in-scale problem. For



America this is a vital concern as China holds massive amounts of US debt securities, and as Russia plays its cards as a major European petroleum supplier and global arms producer.⁶ **FC**

See the following resources for more on this subject:

Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Basic Books, 1997). Note: This is one of the most important volumes on the strategic value of the Eurasian/Central Asian region, the roles of America, Russia, and China. **Get it and read it.**

Note: The recommended US Army War College material can be downloaded or hard-copy ordered through the website of the Strategic Studies Institute [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil]

Stephen J. Blank, *After Two Wars: Reflections on the American Strategic Revolution in Central Asia* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, July 2005).

Stephen J. Blank, *US Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to Them* (US Army War College

Strategic Studies Institute, March 2007).

Stephen J. Blank, Rosoboroneksport: *Arms Sales and the Structure of the Russian Defense Industry* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (January 2007). Note: this is an important and timely work on Russian military/industrial restructuring. While not fitting exactly with the Central Asian theme, it does provide good background on the changes taking place in Russia.

R. Craig Nation, *Russia, the United States, and the Caucasus* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, February 2007).

Elizabeth Wishnick, *Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: US Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, May 2004).

Endnotes:

¹ As quoted by the Russian News and Information Agency (RIA Novosti), on 17/08/2005, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070817/72189719.html>.

² RIA Novosti, "Ivanov says strategic bomber patrols no return to Cold War," <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070823/73769928.html>.

³ "Putin revives Russia's long-haul bomber flights," Reuters, Friday, August 17, 2007.

⁴ Stephen J. Blank, *US Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to Them* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute March 2007), p.v. (Summary section).

⁵ Stephen J. Blank, *After Two Wars: Reflections on the American Strategic Revolution in Central Asia* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, July 2005), p.v. (Summary section).

⁶ For more on the Russian military production side, see Stephen J. Blank, *Rosoboroneksport: Arms Sales and the Structure of the Russian Defense Industry* (US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (January 2007).

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