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***Conflict & Reconciliation: The Contribution of Religions***

edited by John W. Bowker

**Religion Doesn't Only Cause War ...**

**NEW BOOK EXAMINES ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN ACHIEVING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION AFTER CONFLICT AND WAR**

There is no question that religions are involved in many of the world's conflicts and wars. From Asia to the Middle East and Darfur, and in many previous conflicts and wars, the footprint of religion is easy to see.

But a new book, ***Conflict & Reconciliation: The Contribution of Religions***, (Key Publishing, 2008) examines how religions can promote and lay the groundwork for peace after conflict. Moreover, the book explains how some religions command followers to seek reconciliation.

Edited by renowned religious scholar John W. Bowker, ***Conflict & Reconciliation: The Contribution of Religions***, includes chapters written by experts in different religions, who met together to write and discuss the chapters of this book, in order to share with others how different religions understand and practice reconciliation.

"It is not accurate to say that religion alone causes conflicts, since the causes of long-running conflicts can never be reduced to a single, simple issue," says Bowker. "It is, strictly speaking, not religion as such that causes anything, but people who hold religious beliefs or who belong to particular religions."

Adds Bowker, "Religion has been responsible for stunning human accomplishments and is typically a driving force for goodwill. But this doesn't diminish the harm and damage religions have brought about."

**Chapters by various experts cover topics including:**

- a. The current state of conflict resolution and religion
- b. Reconciliation, peace and justice in Hinduism
- c. Resources for dissolving conflict in Theravada Buddhism
- d. Mahayana Buddhism's central ethical concern
- e. Resources for reconciliation in the Confucian tradition
- f. Judaism - Reconciled to difference
- g. The roots of reconciliation in Christianity
- h. Christianity's peace-making tradition
- i. Peace and reconciliation in Islam

*Conflict & Reconciliation* is the result of a project developed and financed by Gresham College, London. For more than 400 years Gresham College has existed to share with a wider public the findings of current research in many subjects.

"This book is a resource drawn from the long experience in different religions of seeking reconciliation after conflict," notes Bowker. "But it is only a preparation for reconciliation that can be attempted in an academic way. It can only be achieved by people, by individuals who get involved, by people who stand in the market-places of the world and find unbearable the suffering that violence always creates."

### **Contributors to *Conflict & Reconciliation: The Contribution of Religions*:**

Andrew Acland -- an author, trainer, consultant and practitioner in mediation, conflict resolution, consensus-building and stakeholder dialogue since 1985; one of the pioneers of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the United Kingdom. His political intervention experience includes South Africa and the Middle East.

Jeremy Brooks -- a parish priest in Hertfordshire, UK, and author of *A World of Prayers*, a collection of children's prayers from across the world and a number of forthcoming collections of children's prayers, drawn from different faith traditions.

Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok - religious scholar and author of numerous books including *Who's Who in Christianity* (Routledge) and *A History of Jewish Civilization* (Bison Books).

Gavin Flood -- academic Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Previously he was head of department and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Stirling.

Mary Grey -- an ecofeminist liberation theologian, and until recently D.J. James Professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Wales, Lampeter and formerly Professor of Contemporary Theology at the University of Southampton, based at La Sainte Union (1993-7).

Peter Harvey -- author of *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism* (Curzon, 1995).

Christopher Lamb - well known lecturer on Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. He has focused within each domain on conflict issues, including: sati, female and male circumcision, religiously-inspired homophobia, abortion, gender inequality, persecution of non-believers, religious privilege and the religious indoctrination of children.

David Thomas - Author of numerous books and professor of Christianity and Islam, with MA degrees from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Lancaster.

Xinzhong Yao -- Professor of Religion and Ethics, and Director of the Centre for Chinese Studies at University of Wales, Lampeter, UK. His publications include *Wisdom in Early Confucian and Israelite Traditions* (Ashgate, 2006) and *Encyclopedia of Confucianism* (ed., Routledge, 2003).

**About the editor:**

John W. Bowker was formerly Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster and was Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1984 to 1991. He has been Adjunct Professor at the University of Pennsylvania and at North Carolina State University. He is the editor of *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, and author of *What Muslims Believe*, *God - A Brief History*, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Religions*, *Beliefs that Changed the World*, *The Sacred Neuron* and *The Meanings of Death*, which won the HarperCollins Religious Book Prize.



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