from

The Reason for God
Belief in an Age of Skepticism

by

Timothy Keller

**The *New York Times* bestseller that makes
"a tight, accessible case for reasoned religious belief"**

(*Washington Post*).

Timothy Keller, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, tackles the frequent doubts that skeptics and non-believers bring to religion. Using examples from literature, philosophy, anthropology, pop culture, and intellectual reasoning, Keller explains how belief in a Christian God is, in fact, a sound and rational one. To true believers he offers a solid platform on which to stand against the backlash toward religion spawned by the Age of Skepticism. And to skeptics, atheists, and agnostics he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God.

ONE

THERE CAN'T BE JUST *ONE* TRUE RELIGION

"How could there be just one true faith?" asked Blair, a twenty-four-year-old woman living in Manhattan. "It's arrogant to say your religion is superior and try to convert everyone else to it. Surely all the religions are equally good and valid for meeting the needs of their particular followers."

"Religious exclusivity is not just narrow—it's dangerous," added Geoff, a twentysomething British man also living in New York City. "Religion has led to untold strife, division, and conflict. It may be the greatest enemy of peace in the world. If Christians continue to insist that they have 'the truth'—and if other religions do this as well—the world will never know peace."[1]

DURING my nearly two decades in New York City, I've had numerous opportunities to ask people, "What is your biggest problem with Christianity? What troubles you the most about its beliefs or how it is practiced?" One of the most frequent answers I have heard over the years can be summed up in one word: *exclusivity.*

I was once invited to be the Christian representative in a panel discussion at a local college along with a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam. The panelists were asked to discuss the differences among religions. The conversation was courteous, intelligent, and respectful in tone. Each speaker affirmed that there were significant, irreconcilable differences between the major faiths. A case in point was the person of Jesus. We all agreed on the statement: "If Christians are right about Jesus being God, then Muslims and Jews fail in a serious way to love God as God really is, but if Muslims and Jews are right that Jesus is not God but rather a teacher or prophet, then Christians fail in a serious way to love God as God really is." The bottom line was—we couldn't all be equally right about the nature of God.

Several of the students were quite disturbed by this. One student insisted that what mattered was to believe in God and to be a loving person yourself. To insist that one faith has a better grasp of the truth than others was intolerant. Another student looked at us clerics and said in his frustration, "We will *never* come to know peace on earth if religious leaders keep on making such exclusive claims!"

It is widely believed that one of the main barriers to world peace is religion, and especially the major traditional religions with their exclusive claims to superiority. It may surprise you that though I am a Christian minister I agree with this. Religion, generally speaking, tends to create a slippery slope in the heart. Each religion informs its followers that they have "the truth," and this naturally leads them to feel superior to those with differing beliefs. Also, a religion tells its followers that they are saved and connected to God by devotedly performing that truth. This moves them to separate from those who are less devoted and pure in life. Therefore, it is easy for one religious group to stereo-

type and caricature other ones. Once this situation exists it can easily spiral down into the marginalization of others or even to active oppression, abuse, or violence against them.

Once we recognize how religion erodes peace on earth, what can we do about it? There are three approaches that civic and cultural leaders around the world are using to address the divisiveness of religion. There are calls to outlaw religion, condemn religion, or at least to radically privatize it.[2] Many people are investing great hope in them. Unfortunately, I don't believe any of them will be effective. Indeed, I'm afraid they will only aggravate the situation.

1. Outlaw religion

One way to deal with the divisiveness of religion has been to control or even forbid it with a heavy hand. There have been several massive efforts to do this in the twentieth century. Soviet Russia, Communist China, the Khmer Rouge, and (in a different way) Nazi Germany were all determined to tightly control religious practice in an effort to stop it from dividing society or eroding the power of the state. The result, however, was not more peace and harmony, but more oppression. The tragic irony of the situation is brought out by Alister McGrath in his history of atheism:

> *The 20th century gave rise to one of the greatest and most distressing paradoxes of human history: that the greatest intolerance and violence of that century were practiced by those who believed that religion caused intolerance and violence.*[3]

Going hand in hand with such efforts was a widespread belief in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that religion

would weaken and die out as the human race became more technologically advanced. This view saw religion as playing a role in human evolution. We once needed religion to help us cope with a very frightening, incomprehensible world. But as we become more scientifically sophisticated and more able to understand and control our own environment, our need for religion would diminish, it was thought.[4]

But this has not happened, and this "secularization thesis" is now largely discredited.[5] Virtually all major religions are growing in number of adherents. Christianity's growth, especially in the developing world, has been explosive. There are now six times more Anglicans in Nigeria alone than there are in all of the United States. There are more Presbyterians in Ghana than in the United States and Scotland combined. Korea has gone from 1 percent to 40 percent Christian in a hundred years, and experts believe the same thing is going to happen in China. If there are half a billion Chinese Christians fifty years from now, that will change the course of human history.[6] In most cases, the Christianity that is growing is not the more secularized, belief-thin versions predicted by the sociologists. Rather, it is a robust supernaturalist kind of faith, with belief in miracles, Scriptural authority, and personal conversion.

Because of the vitality of religious faith in the world, efforts to suppress or control it often serve only to make it stronger. When the Chinese Communists expelled Western missionaries after World War II, they thought they were killing off Christianity in China. Instead, this move only served to make the leadership of the Chinese church more indigenous and therefore to strengthen it.

Religion is not just a temporary thing that helped us adapt to our environment. Rather it is a permanent and central aspect of the human condition. This is a bitter pill for secular, nonreli-

gious people to swallow. Everyone wants to think that they are in the mainstream, that they are not extremists. But robust religious beliefs dominate the world. There is no reason to expect that to change.

2. Condemn religion

Religion is not going away and its power cannot be diminished by government control. But can't we—via education and argument—find ways to socially discourage religions that claim to have "the truth" and that try to convert others to their beliefs? Couldn't we find ways to urge all of our citizens, whatever their religious beliefs, to admit that each religion or faith is just one of many equally valid paths to God and ways to live in the world?

This approach creates an environment in which it is considered unenlightened and outrageous to make exclusive religious claims, even in personal conversations. It does so by stating and restating certain axioms that eventually achieve the status of common sense. Those who deviate from them are stigmatized as foolish or dangerous. Unlike the first strategy, this approach to the divisiveness of religion is having some effect. It cannot ultimately succeed, however, because at its heart is a fatal inconsistency, even perhaps a hypocrisy, that will eventually lead to the collapse of this way of thinking. What follows are several of these axioms and the problems with each.

"All major religions are equally valid and basically teach the same thing."

This assertion is so common that one journalist recently wrote that anyone who believed that "there are inferior religions" is a right-wing extremist.[7] Do we really want to say that the Branch

Davidians or religions requiring child sacrifice are not inferior to any other faith? The great majority of people would almost certainly agree that they are.

Most people who assert the equality of religions have in mind the major world faiths, not splinter sects. This was the form of the objection I got from the student the night I was on the panel. He contended that doctrinal differences between Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism were superficial and insignificant, that they all believed in the same God. But when I asked him who that God was, he described him as an all-loving Spirit in the universe. The problem with this position is its inconsistency. It insists that doctrine is unimportant, but at the same time assumes doctrinal beliefs about the nature of God that are at loggerheads with those of the all the major faiths. Buddhism doesn't believe in a personal God at all. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe in a God who holds people accountable for their beliefs and practices and whose attributes could not be all reduced to love. Ironically, the insistence that doctrines do not matter is really a doctrine itself. It holds a specific view of God, which is touted as superior and more enlightened than the beliefs of most major religions. So the proponents of this view do the very thing they forbid in others.

"Each religion sees part of spiritual truth, but none can see the whole truth."

Sometimes this point is illustrated with the story of the blind men and the elephant. Several blind men were walking along and came upon an elephant that allowed them to touch and feel it. "This creature is long and flexible like a snake" said the first blind man, holding the elephant's trunk. "Not at all—it is thick and round like a tree trunk," said the second blind man, feeling

the elephant's leg. "No, it is large and flat," said the third blind man, touching the elephant's side. Each blind man could feel only part of the elephant—none could envision the entire elephant. In the same way, it is argued, the religions of the world each have a grasp on part of the truth about spiritual reality, but none can see the whole elephant or claim to have a comprehensive vision of the truth.

This illustration backfires on its users. The story is told from the point of view of someone who is not blind. How could you know that each blind man only sees part of the elephant unless *you* claim to be able to see the whole elephant?

There is an appearance of humility in the protestation that the truth is much greater than any one of us can grasp, but if this is used to invalidate all claims to discern the truth it is in fact an arrogant claim to a kind of knowledge which is superior to [all others] . . . We have to ask: "What is the [absolute] vantage ground from which you *claim to be able to relativize all the absolute claims these different scriptures make?"*[8]

How could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you yourself have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality you just claimed that none of the religions have?

"Religious belief is too culturally and historically conditioned to be 'truth.'"

When I first came to New York City nearly twenty years ago, I more often heard the objection that all religions are equally true. Now, however, I'm more likely to be told that all religions are equally false. The objection goes like this: "All moral and

spiritual claims are the product of our particular historical and cultural moment, and therefore no one should claim they can know the Truth, since no one can judge whether one assertion about spiritual and moral reality is truer than another." The sociologist Peter L. Berger reveals the serious inconsistency in this common assumption.

In his book *A Rumor of Angels* Berger recounts how the twentieth century had uncovered "the sociology of knowledge," namely that people believe what they do largely because they are socially conditioned to do so. We like to think that we think for ourselves, but it is not that simple. We think like the people we most admire and need. Everyone belongs to a community that reinforces the plausibility of some beliefs and discourages others. Berger notes that many have concluded from this fact that, because we are all locked into our historical and cultural locations, it is impossible to judge the rightness or wrongness of competing beliefs.

Berger goes on, however, to point out that absolute relativism can only exist if the relativists exempt themselves from their own razor.[9] If you infer from the social conditionedness of all belief that "no belief can be held as universally true for everyone," that itself is a comprehensive claim about everyone that is the product of social conditions—so it cannot be true, on its own terms. "Relativity relativizes itself," says Berger, so we can't have relativism "all the way down."[10] Our cultural biases make weighing competing truth-claims harder, yes. The social conditionedness of belief is a fact, but it cannot be used to argue that all truth is completely relative or else the very argument refutes itself. Berger concludes that we cannot avoid weighing spiritual and religious claims by hiding behind the cliché that "there's no way to know

the Truth." We must still do the hard work of asking: which affirmations about God, human nature, and spiritual reality are true and which are false? We will have to base our life on *some* answer to that question.

The philosopher Alvin Plantinga has his own version of Berger's argument. People often say to him, "If you were born in Morocco, you wouldn't even be a Christian, but rather a Muslim." He responds:

> *Suppose we concede that if I had been born of Muslim parents in Morocco rather than Christian parents in Michigan, my beliefs would have been quite different. [But] the same goes for the pluralist. . . . If the pluralist had been born in [Morocco] he probably wouldn't be a pluralist. Does it follow that . . . his pluralist beliefs are produced in him by an unreliable belief-producing process?[11]*

Plantinga and Berger make the same point. You can't say, "All claims about religions are historically conditioned except the one I am making right now." If you insist that no one can determine which beliefs are right and wrong, why should we believe what you are saying? The reality is that we all make truth-claims of some sort and it is very hard to weigh them responsibly, but we have no alternative but to try to do so.

"It is arrogant to insist your religion is right and to convert others to it."

The noted religion scholar John Hick has written that once you become aware that there are many other equally intelligent and good people in the world who hold different beliefs from

you and that you will not be able to convince them otherwise, then it is arrogant for you to continue to try to convert them or to hold your view to be the superior truth.[12]

Once again there is an inherent contradiction. Most people in the world don't hold to John Hick's view that all religions are equally valid, and many of them are equally as good and intelligent as he is, and unlikely to change their views. That would make the statement "all religious claims to have a better view of things are arrogant and wrong" to be, on its own terms, arrogant and wrong.

Many say that it is ethnocentric to claim that our religion is superior to others. Yet isn't that very statement ethnocentric? Most non-Western cultures have no problem saying that their culture and religion is best. The idea that it is wrong to do so is deeply rooted in Western traditions of self-criticism and individualism. To charge others with the "sin" of ethnocentrism is really a way of saying, "Our culture's approach to other cultures is superior to yours." We are then doing the very thing we forbid others to do.[13] The historian C. John Sommerville has pointed out that "a religion can be judged only on the basis of another religion." You can't evaluate a religion except on the basis of some ethical criteria that in the end amounts to your own religious stance.[14]

By now the fatal flaw in this approach to religion in general and to Christianity in particular should be obvious. Skeptics believe that *any* exclusive claims to a superior knowledge of spiritual reality cannot be true. But this objection is itself a religious belief. It assumes God is unknowable, or that God is loving but not wrathful, or that God is an impersonal force rather than a person who speaks in Scripture. All of these are unprovable faith assumptions. In addition, their proponents believe they have a superior way to view things. They believe the world would be a

better place if everyone dropped the traditional religions' views of God and truth and adopted theirs. Therefore, their view is also an "exclusive" claim about the nature of spiritual reality. If all such views are to be discouraged, this one should be as well. If it is not narrow to hold this view, then there is nothing inherently narrow about holding to traditional religious beliefs.

Mark Lilla, a professor at the University of Chicago, spoke to a bright young student at Wharton Business School who, to Lilla's bafflement, had gone forward at a Billy Graham crusade to give his life to Christ. Lilla writes:

I wanted to cast doubt on the step he was about to take, to help him see there are other ways to live, other ways to seek knowledge, love . . . even self-transformation. I wanted to convince him his dignity depended on maintaining a free, skeptical attitude towards doctrine. I wanted . . . to save him . . .

Doubt, like faith, has to be learned. It is a skill. But the curious thing about skepticism is that its adherents, ancient and modern, have so often been proselytizers. In reading them, I've often wanted to ask: "Why do you care?" Their skepticism offers no good answer to that question. And I don't have one for myself.[15]

Lilla's wise self-knowledge reveals his doubts about Christianity to be a learned, alternate faith. He believes that the individual's dignity as a human being rests on doctrinal skepticism—which is, of course, an article of faith. As he admits, he can't avoid believing that it would be better for people if they adopted his beliefs about reality and human dignity rather than Billy Graham's.

It is no more narrow to claim that one religion is right than to

claim that one way to think about all religions (namely that all are equal) is right. We are all exclusive in our beliefs about religion, but in different ways.

3. Keep religion completely private

Another approach to the divisiveness of religion is to allow that people may privately believe their faith is the truth and may "evangelize" for their faith, but that religious beliefs should be kept out of the public sphere. Influential thinkers such as John Rawls and Robert Audi have argued that, in public political discussions, we may not argue for a moral position unless it has a secular, nonreligious grounding. Rawls is well known for insisting that what he calls "comprehensive" religious views be excluded from public discourse.[16] Recently a large array of scientists and philosophers signed "A Declaration in Defense of Science and Secularism," which called on the leaders of our government "not to permit legislation or executive action to be influenced by religious beliefs."[17] The signers included Peter Singer, E. O. Wilson, and Daniel C. Dennett. The philosopher Richard Rorty, for example, has argued that religious faith must remain a strictly private affair and must never be brought into discussions of public policy. To ever use an argument grounded in a religious belief is simply a "conversation stopper," which the nonbeliever cannot engage.[18]

To those who complain that this approach discriminates against religion, Rorty and others retort that this policy is simply pragmatic.[19] They are not ideologically opposed to religion per se, nor are they seeking to control religious beliefs, so long as they are kept in the private sphere. However, in the public square it is divisive and time-consuming to argue constantly over reli-

gion. Religion-based positions are seen as sectarian and controversial, while secular reasoning for moral positions are seen as universal and available to all. Therefore, public discourse should be secular, never religious. Without reference to any divine revelation or confessional tradition, we should work together on the great problems of our time—such as AIDS, poverty, education, and so on. We should keep our religious views to ourselves and unite around policies that "work" best for the most people.

However, Stephen L. Carter of Yale responds that it is impossible to leave religious views behind when we do any kind of moral reasoning at all.

> *Efforts to craft a public square from which religious conversation is absent, no matter how thoughtfully worked out, will always in the end say to those of organized religion that they alone, unlike everybody else, must enter public dialogue only after leaving behind that part of themselves that they may consider the most vital.*[20]

How can Carter make such a claim? Let's begin by asking what religion is. Some say it is a form of belief in God. But that would not fit Zen Buddhism, which does not really believe in God at all. Some say it is belief in the supernatural. But that does not fit Hinduism, which does not believe in a supernatural realm beyond the material world, but only a spiritual reality within the empirical. What is religion then? It is a set of beliefs that explain what life is all about, who we are, and the most important things that human beings should spend their time doing. For example, some think that this material world is all there is, that we are here by accident and when we die we just rot, and therefore the important thing is to choose to do what makes you happy and not

let others impose their beliefs on you. Notice that though this is not an explicit, "organized" religion, it contains a master narrative, an account about the meaning of life along with a recommendation for how to live based on that account of things.

Some call this a "worldview" while others call it a "narrative identity." In either case it is a set of faith-assumptions about the nature of things. It is an implicit religion. Broadly understood, faith in some view of the world and human nature informs everyone's life. Everyone lives and operates out of some narrative identity, whether it is thought out and reflected upon or not. All who say "You ought to do this" or "You shouldn't do that" reason out of such an implicit moral and religious position. Pragmatists say that we should leave our deeper worldviews behind and find consensus about "what works"—but our view of what works is determined by (to use a Wendell Berry title) what we think people are for. Any picture of happy human life that "works" is necessarily informed by deep-seated beliefs about the purpose of human life.[21] Even the most secular pragmatists come to the table with deep commitments and narrative accounts of what it means to be human.

Rorty insists that religion-based beliefs are conversation stoppers. But all of our most fundamental convictions about things are beliefs that are nearly impossible to justify to those who don't share them. Secular concepts such as "self-realization" and "autonomy" are impossible to prove and are "conversation stoppers" just as much as appeals to the Bible.[22]

Statements that seem to be common sense to the speakers are nonetheless often profoundly religious in nature. Imagine that Ms. A argues that all the safety nets for the poor should be removed, in the name of "survival of the fittest." Ms. B might respond, "The poor have the right to a decent standard of living—they

are human beings like the rest of us!" Ms. A could then come back with the fact that many bioethicists today think the concept of "human" is artificial and impossible to define. She might continue that there is no possibility of treating all living organisms as ends rather than means and that some always have to die that others may live. That is simply the way nature works. If Ms. B counters with a pragmatic argument, that we should help the poor simply because it makes society work better, Ms. A could come up with many similar pragmatic arguments about why letting some of the poor just die would be even more efficient. Now Ms. B would be getting angry. She would respond heatedly that starving the poor is simply unethical, but Ms. A could retort, "Who says ethics must be the same for everyone?" Ms. B would finally exclaim: "I wouldn't want to live in a society like the one you are describing!"

In this interchange Ms. B has tried to follow John Rawls and find universally accessible, "neutral and objective" arguments that would convince everyone that we must not starve the poor. She has failed because there are none. In the end Ms. B affirms the equality and dignity of human individuals simply because she believes it is true and right. She takes as an article of faith that people are more valuable than rocks or trees—though she can't prove such a belief scientifically. Her public policy proposals are ultimately based on a religious stance.[23]

This leads a legal theorist, Michael J. Perry, to conclude that it is "quixotic, in any event, to attempt to construct an airtight barrier between religiously grounded moral discourse . . . and [secular] discourse in public political argument."[24] Rorty and others argue that religious argument is too controversial, but Perry retorts in *Under God? Religious Faith and Liberal Democracy* that secular grounds for moral positions are no less controversial

than religious grounds, and a very strong case can be made that all moral positions are at least implicitly religious. Ironically, insisting that religious reasoning be excluded from the public square is itself a controversial "sectarian" point of view.[25]

When you come out into the public square it is impossible to leave your convictions about ultimate values behind. Let's take marriage and divorce laws as a case study. Is it possible to craft laws that we all agree "work" apart from particular worldview commitments? I don't believe so. Your views of what is right will be based on what you think the purpose of marriage is. If you think marriage is mainly for the rearing of children to benefit the whole society, then you will make divorce very difficult. If you think the purpose of marriage is more primarily for the happiness and emotional fulfillment of the adults who enter it, you will make divorce much easier. The former view is grounded in a view of human flourishing and well-being in which the family is more important than the individual, as is seen in the moral traditions of Confucianism, Judaism, and Christianity. The latter approach is a more individualistic view of human nature based on the Enlightenment's understanding of things. The divorce laws you think "work" will depend on prior beliefs about what it means to be happy and fully human.[26] There is no objective, universal consensus about what that is. Although many continue to call for the exclusion of religious views from the public square, increasing numbers of thinkers, both religious and secular, are admitting that such a call is itself religious.[27]

Christianity Can Save the World

I've argued against the effectiveness of all the main efforts to address the divisiveness of religion in our world today. Yet I strongly

sympathize with their purpose. Religion can certainly be one of the major threats to world peace. At the beginning of the chapter I outlined the "slippery slope" that every religion tends to set up in the human heart. This slippery slope leads all too easily to oppression. However, within Christianity—robust, orthodox Christianity—there are rich resources that can make its followers agents for peace on earth. Christianity has within itself remarkable power to explain and expunge the divisive tendencies within the human heart.

Christianity provides a firm basis for respecting people of other faiths. Jesus assumes that nonbelievers in the culture around them will gladly recognize much Christian behavior as "good" (Matthew 5:16; cf. 1 Peter 2:12). That assumes some overlap between the Christian constellation of values and those of any particular culture[28] and of any other religion.[29] Why would this overlap exist? Christians believe that all human beings are made in the image of God, capable of goodness and wisdom. The Biblical doctrine of the universal image of God, therefore, leads Christians to expect nonbelievers will be better than any of their mistaken beliefs could make them. The Biblical doctrine of universal sinfulness also leads Christians to expect believers will be worse in practice than their orthodox beliefs should make them. So there will be plenty of ground for respectful cooperation.

Christianity not only leads its members to believe people of other faiths have goodness and wisdom to offer, it also leads them to expect that many will live lives morally superior to their own. Most people in our culture believe that, if there is a God, we can relate to him and go to heaven through leading a good life. Let's call this the "moral improvement" view. Christianity teaches the very opposite. In the Christian understanding, Jesus does not tell us how to live so we can merit salvation. Rather, he comes to

forgive and save us through his life and death in our place. God's grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and who acknowledge their need for a Savior.

Christians, then, should expect to find nonbelievers who are much nicer, kinder, wiser, and better than they are. Why? Christian believers are not accepted by God because of their moral performance, wisdom, or virtue, but because of Christ's work on their behalf. Most religions and philosophies of life assume that one's spiritual status depends on your religious attainments. This naturally leads adherents to feel superior to those who don't believe and behave as they do. The Christian gospel, in any case, should not have that effect.

It is common to say that "fundamentalism" leads to violence, yet as we have seen, all of us have fundamental, unprovable faith-commitments that we think are superior to those of others. The real question, then, is *which fundamentals will lead their believers to be the most loving and receptive to those with whom they differ*? Which set of unavoidably exclusive beliefs will lead us to humble, peace-loving behavior?

One of the paradoxes of history is the relationship between the beliefs and the practices of the early Christians as compared to those of the culture around them.

The Greco-Roman world's religious views were open and seemingly tolerant—everyone had his or her own God. The practices of the culture were quite brutal, however. The Greco-Roman world was highly stratified economically, with a huge distance between the rich and poor. By contrast, Christians insisted that there was only one true God, the dying Savior Jesus Christ. Their lives and practices were, however, remarkably welcoming to those that the culture marginalized. The early Christians mixed people

from different races and classes in ways that seemed scandalous to those around them. The Greco-Roman world tended to despise the poor, but Christians gave generously not only to their own poor but to those of other faiths. In broader society, women had very low status, being subjected to high levels of female infanticide, forced marriages, and lack of economic equality. Christianity afforded women much greater security and equality than had previously existed in the ancient classical world.[30] During the terrible urban plagues of the first two centuries, Christians cared for all the sick and dying in the city, often at the cost of their lives.[31]

Why would such an exclusive belief system lead to behavior that was so open to others? It was because Christians had within their belief system the strongest possible resource for practicing sacrificial service, generosity, and peace-making. At the very heart of their view of reality was a man who died for his enemies, praying for their forgiveness. Reflection on this could only lead to a radically different way of dealing with those who were different from them. It meant they could not act in violence and oppression toward their opponents.

We cannot skip lightly over the fact that there have been injustices done by the church in the name of Christ, yet who can deny that the force of Christians' most fundamental beliefs can be a powerful impetus for peace-making in our troubled world?