

Combatting Hate

Abstracts of Proceedings
43rd World Religions Conference

Held November 23, 2025
Lazaridis Auditorium, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Representatives of
Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism,
Indigenous Spirituality, Sikhism, Christianity and Humanism.

Organized by the
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of Canada



Acknowledgments

Our thanks is to the speakers representing various faiths and philosophical traditions, for participating and providing an abstract of their speech on the theme “Combatting Hate” for the 43rd World Religions Conference.

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Moreover, we recognize the cooperation and volunteer services of the Conference moderator - Mary Lou Roe, Councillor City of Waterloo , and the volunteer services of the entire WRC team, WRC Organizing Committee and approximately 95 other volunteers who worked hard for the organization and promotion of this conference.

Nabeel Ahmad Rana
WRC Event Coordinator
World Religions Conference

Dr. Ahmad Imran
Chair WRC Organizing Committee

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Introductory Remarks - 43rd World Religions Conference

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful

Respected Presenters, Dignitaries, Friends:

Assalamo alaikum wa Rahmatullah! May peace and God's Blessings be upon you all!

On behalf of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada and all our partner organizations, I warmly welcome you to this beautiful celebration of mutual respect and harmony.

The World Religions Conference brings together representatives of diverse faiths and philosophies to promote peace, understanding, and tolerance. It provides a unique opportunity for people of different beliefs to engage in a meaningful dialogue — sharing perspectives in a spirit of mutual respect and unity.

We gather at a time, when hate has filled many corners of our world. Hate, in its many forms — racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and more — divides communities and erodes the peace we all cherish.

Today's conference seeks to explore how the great faith traditions of the world can guide us towards compassion and understanding and combat hate.

Ignorance of others creates doubts, doubts result in fear and hatred. World Religions Conference brings us together. We discover that we have so much in common. This results in mutual understanding and compassion. And, in due course, it results in 'Love for All; Hatred for None.'

Through the spiritual insights and collective wisdom of world religions, we hope to uncover pathways that help us transform division into dialogue and fear into friendship.

But the conversation should not end here. Let today be the beginning of renewed efforts — to share, to engage, and to celebrate the differences that make our nation strong and a model of peaceful coexistence. For over 43 years, the World Religions Conference has continued to build bridges of understanding among followers of all faiths and philosophies.

The Holy Founder of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, expounded on such interfaith interaction over a century ago. Describing the basis of respect for others' faiths and respect for the Founders of all religions, he wrote:

"... This is the most attractive and peace-giving principle. It provides the basis for reconciliation among nations and promotes better moral conduct. It teaches us to believe in the truth of all the Prophets, wherever they might have appeared..."

[Tobfa Qaisariyyah (A Gift for the Queen) page 259]

The World Head and Fifth Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, while delivering a keynote address, at a similar World Religions Conference in London, UK, said:

"... all the major religions of the world taught the worship of God and love and compassion for mankind in their original form. If these original teachings were upheld today it would lead us to a harmonious society, free from conflict and war..."

[Keynote address, Conference of World Religions, London UK, February 11, 2014]

I wish you all a wonderful and a meaningful conference.

Sincerely,

Lal Khan Malik
National President
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada
November 23, 2025,
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Prime Minister's Message



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

I would like to convey my warmest greetings to everyone attending the 43rd World Religions Conference: Combatting Hate, being held in Waterloo, Ontario.

This year's conference brings together renowned scholars from different faiths and philosophical disciplines to discuss the theme of combatting hate. I am certain that the many discussions planned for this event will stimulate a great deal of meaningful exchange and that delegates will make the most of this opportunity to learn from one another.



I would like to commend the organizers of the World Religions Conference for their dedication to interfaith understanding, communication and growth.

I wish you all a productive conference.

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., O.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

Ottawa
2025

Mayor's Message



WELCOME MESSAGE FROM MAYOR MCCABE



On behalf of Council, it is an honour to welcome you today to the 43rd Religious Conference. This year's conference focus on "Combatting Hate" is a testament of the power of respectful dialogue with one only objective: Combating hate, racism and discrimination in all its forms.

This gathering is an opportunity to transform words into meaningful action and today, we all commit to foster a society where differences are celebrated and where every person feels safe, valued and respected.

Thank you for being part of these important conversations and for demonstrating that unity and respect is possible when we choose to stand together and support each other.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dorothy McCabe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Dorothy McCabe
City of Waterloo

100 Regina Street South, Waterloo City Centre, Waterloo, Ontario Canada N2J 4A8 519-747-8700 Fax 519-747-8500

Combating Hate Judaic Perspective

Jay Judkowitz
Temple Shalom

[President of Temple Shalom, a Reform Jewish synagogue in Waterloo. Jay has been active in antihate activities in the Waterloo Region in partnership with government, police, and members of other faith communities. Immigrated here nine years ago and feels compelled to actively promote Canada's values of peace and tolerance which were a major motivator for him and his family to choose Canada as their home.]

Jay Judkowitz recently concluded nearly three years as president of Temple Shalom, the Reform Jewish congregation in Waterloo. During that time, he led his community through a period marked by a dramatic rise in religious hatred, antisemitism in particular, globally, across Canada, and locally here in KW. Jay has worked to build bridges between Temple Shalom and other faith communities, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, while also advising civic leaders on how to address hate and promote understanding.

In this talk, Jay explores a paradox at the heart of religion, its power to both heal and harm. Religion, practiced by human beings, can be used to enlarge our moral vision, to see every person as sacred and every life as cherished. But it can also be used to justify fear, division, and violence, convincing us that G-d loves only our group, that our wounds are unique, that our own people are blameless, and that others deserve vengeful punishment.

Across traditions, including Judaism, we see both tendencies, the parochial impulse to restrict our concept of humanity to only our own people, and the universalist call to love and respect everyone. In this moment of tension and strife, Jay invites us to reclaim the spiritual resources in our faiths that teach compassion, universal dignity, and the release of resentment using Judaism and Jewish tradition as an example.

Drawing on Jewish texts and stories, from ancient scripture to mystical prayers and prophetic teachings, Jay will share lessons that command Jews to love not just our own people, but the entire human family. These are the lessons he teaches his children, that give him hope for the future, and that sustain him in community leadership. Hopefully these lessons, along with similar lessons that will be shared today by other faith leaders, can inspire us all to reject hatred and build sustainable peace, here in KW, across Canada, and globally.

Combating Hate Hindu Perspective

Dr. Shiv D. Talwar
Shen Network

[A scholar and author, Dr Talwar was profoundly shaped by the interfaith violence of India's Partition, inspiring a lifelong mission to heal humanity. Retiring early from civil engineering, he authored three books on the shared metaphysical roots of religions, blending ancient wisdom with modern science, and redefining education through personal transformation. Now teaches graduate courses in Neurobiology of Transformation, promoting inner growth and societal harmony.]

In a world increasingly polarized by ideology, ethnicity, religion, and politics, hate has become a pervasive force undermining the very fabric of our shared humanity. At its core, hate is not merely a social or moral failing—it is a symptom of a more profound disconnection from our true identity and potential as human beings. This presentation explores how we can combat hate by fostering a neurobiological and spiritual shift toward holistic human integration, transcending the boundaries that divide us.

Drawing from insights in neuroscience, psychology, and contemplative traditions, we examine how the autonomic nervous system shapes identity formation. When dominated by the sympathetic branch—associated with stress, vigilance, and survival—our sense of self becomes fragmented, reactive, and tribal. This physiological state narrows our attention, fuels fear-based thinking and reinforces rigid boundaries between “us” and “them.” In contrast, when the autonomic system is balanced—particularly through parasympathetic activation—we experience a broader, more inclusive awareness. This shift enables holistic thinking, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness that transcends superficial differences.

The implications of this understanding are profound. Hate is not an inevitable human trait; it is a conditioned response rooted in dysregulated biology and distorted identity. By cultivating practices that restore autonomic balance—such as mindfulness, breathwork, prayer, and interfaith dialogue—we can reawaken the integrative capacities of the human mind. These capacities allow us to perceive others not as threats or competitors, but as reflections of ourselves, equally deserving of dignity and compassion.

This presentation also challenges the dominant cultural narratives that define identity in terms of external affiliations—nationality, religion, race, or ideology. While these markers have social significance, they are not the essence of who we are. True identity arises from the universal human experience: the capacity to be aware, to love, to create, and to connect. When we reclaim this deeper identity, we unlock the potential for unity across all faiths and cultures.

Faith traditions, when interpreted through this lens, become powerful allies in the fight against hate. At their mystical core, all religions point toward unity, compassion, and transcendence. The teachings of Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, and countless others emphasize love over fear, inclusion over exclusion, and the sacredness of all life. By returning to these foundational truths and integrating them with scientific insights into human biology, we can build a new paradigm of coexistence—one that honors diversity while affirming our shared essence.

The presentation will conclude with a call to action: to reimagine education, healthcare, and social policy in ways that promote neurobiological well-being and holistic identity formation. This includes advocating for the use of biomarkers like the cortisol:DHEA ratio to assess stress and resilience, integrating contemplative practices into public life, and fostering environments that support emotional regulation and inclusive thinking.

Combating hate is not merely a moral imperative—it is a biological and spiritual necessity. By understanding the roots of division and cultivating the conditions for integration, we can move from fear to love, from fragmentation to wholeness, and from conflict to peace. This is the revolution of our time: a mind-body revolution that reclaims the full spectrum of human potential and affirms the sacred unity at the heart of all existence.

Combatting Hate Islamic Perspective

Imam Farhan Iqbal
Missionary Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at Canada

[A prolific speaker, author, and research scholar. Imam Farhan is a missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community with degrees in Islamic Theology and Religious Studies. Served in Ghana, the U.S., and Canada, and is pursuing his Doctorate in Religious Studies. Routinely appears at interfaith events, media, and on his YouTube channel Understanding Islam. Authored several books and articles, including a recently published one "Rise, Transform, Succeed: Habits for Muslim Youth.".]

The religion of Islam combats hate in many different ways, but for the sake of brevity, I would like to highlight 3 main ways in which Islam achieves this noble goal:

- #1 - Promoting Tolerance
- #2 - Promoting Compassion and Sympathy
- #3 - Emphasizing Absolute Justice

Tolerance

Many Muslims in Canada, especially those from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, came here for one primary reason: Canada stands for tolerance and respect for people of all faiths and backgrounds. That is why any form of hate—whether antisemitism, Islamophobia, or any other prejudice—horrifies us. Intolerance has no place in a peaceful society.

Islam is clear on this matter. The Holy Quran teaches: **“For you your religion, and for me, my religion”** (Chapter 109; Verse 7). Once, a funeral procession passed by and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) stood up out of respect. He was told that it was the funeral of a Jewish man. He said: **“Was he not human?”** At another occasion, the Christians of Najran came to visit the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and he offered them a space inside his mosque to offer their prayers. Through such examples, Islam teaches that true faith is expressed through kindness, empathy, and honouring the humanity of others.

Compassion and Sympathy

The God of Islam is introduced in the very opening of the Holy Qur'an as **“Rabbul-'Alameen”** — the Lord of all the worlds. This means He is the Lord of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and people of every faith. Islam, therefore, is a religion that extends sympathy, love, and mercy to all of humanity.

Regarding the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Quran declares: “And We have sent thee not but as a mercy for all peoples.” (Chapter 21; Verse 108). The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) exemplified this mercy throughout his life. One deeply moving narration highlights Islam's emphasis on compassion and service to mankind. He said that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will say:

“O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not attend to Me.” Man will say, “O Lord! How could I attend to You? You are the Lord of all the worlds.” Allah the Almighty will say, “Did you not know that so and so of My servants was sick? You did not attend to him. Did you not know that if you had done so, you would have found Me near him?”

O son of Adam, I asked you for food but you did not give Me any food.” Upon this the son of Adam will say, “O my Lord. How could I feed You whereas You are the Lord of all the worlds?” Allah the Almighty will say, “Do you not remember when a servant of Mine asked you for food? You did not feed him. Did you not know that if you had fed him, you would have had a reward with Me?” (Sahih Muslim)

The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him), founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community states:

“I proclaim to all Muslims, Christians, and Hindus and Aryas, that I have no enemy in the world. I love mankind with the love that a compassionate mother has for her children, even more so.”
(Arbaeen, pt. 1, p. 344)

Exercising Justice

The Holy Qur'an commands:

“O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.” (Chapter 5; Verse 9)

Islam teaches that justice and peace are inseparable. True peace cannot exist where justice is absent, whether within nations or between them. Equality is central: the Quran states that the most honourable among people is the one most righteous, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or social status.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), in his Farewell Sermon, emphasized this universal principle: Arabs are not superior to non-Arabs, whites are not superior to blacks, nor vice versa. Islam thus upholds justice, equality, and human dignity as the foundation for harmony and peace in society.

Combatting Hate Buddhist Perspective

Dr. Mitra Barua
Martin Luther University College

[Research scholar and educator, Mitra is the Assistant Professor in Asian Studies and Buddhist Scholar in Residence at Martin Luther University College, (Wilfrid). He teaches Buddhism and Asian Wisdom Traditions contributing to Luther's MA program in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy. Previously, taught and conducted research at Cornell University, Rice University and the University of Saskatchewan. Author of Seeding Buddhism with Multiculturalism (2019).]

Metta (Befriending): Buddhism and the Buddhist tradition is diverse. The following perspective on hatred and the means to overcome it derives from existing early Buddhist teachings found in the Pali canon. The verse number 5 in the *Dhammapada* (Verses of the Wisdom) reads:

*Nahi Verena Verani
Sammantidha Kudacanam
Averena ca Sammanti
Esa Dhammo Sanantano*

The verse says, “Hatred is never overcome by hatred in this world. Loving-kindness alone can overcome hatred. This indeed is an eternal truth.” This enduring teaching was true at the time of the Buddha, 2500 years ago in North India. That is also true now in this world. That will also be the case in the future anywhere and everywhere.

This eternal truth revealed itself to the Buddha as he examined his heart/mind. With that personal experience and conviction, the Buddha invites each of us to examine our own heart/mind. He promises when we observe our own heart/mind, the truth will reveal to us. More importantly, that revelation will liberate us as well as all sentient beings around us.

The Buddha suggests that our internal investigation will convince us that hatred is not an inherent property of our

beautiful heart/mind. That means that hatred is external, foreign or alien to our heart/mind. In other words, our mind is like pure water. As water gets dirty and polluted with impure substances, our mind also gets polluted with mental impurities like hatred. The opposite is also true: as polluted water could be purified with a water-purification system, our temporally contaminated heart/mind could also be purified or made free from external hatred with a self-examination system.

What is that self-examination system that Buddha recommends us to experiment to overcome hatred? Buddha calls it the *Metta Bhavana* or the cultivation of loving-kindness or friendliness. I also call it the practice of befriending with our heart/mind. Here are a few essential steps of the heart/mind purifying system that transforms our destructive energy into a constructive/beneficial energy.

First, the Buddha invites us to observe our strong destructive energy called anger, the active expression of hatred. Like every form of energy, this mental energy is fluid and flows constantly. Rather than act on that negative energy, the Buddha says observe it to understand it and examine it as an energy scientist would do to understand energy. With that close observation, we will realize that with supportive conditions hatred rises, stays for a while and finally fades away when its supporting condition disappears. This close observation of anger enables us to manage it. This skill is called emotional regulation and anger management.

Second, the Buddha encourages us to go one step further in self-examination or the heart/mind purification system. When we calm down or our anger subsides, Buddha suggests us to investigate where that anger or hatred comes from. Are there particular external and/or internal conditions that make us angry? As we dig deeper, we may find the external and internal conditions. External conditions may be there, but we hardly have any control over them. Therefore, the Buddha would say focus on our internal conditions such as the way we experience and interpret the world and how we relate to the world.

Finally, the Buddha gives a spiritual practice to be friendly to ourselves and the world around us. At the core of this practice is the acknowledgement that we do not want to suffer but we suffer from many things. More importantly, we rely on each other to eliminate our sufferings and for our own wellbeing. Therefore, the Buddha encourages us to recognize our own wish not to suffer and wish for happiness. Similarly, every sentient being does not want to suffer and wishes for happiness and joy. The Buddha also advises to hold ourselves and others lightly and gently so that we forgive us and others for the past mistakes, failings, shortcomings and even wrong doings. With the cultivation of friendliness, there is no door for the external mental impurities like hatred to enter into our inherently pure heart/mind. That is the Buddhist way of combatting the hatred within us and in the world.

Combatting Hate Indigenous Spiritual Perspective

Clarence Cachagee
Crow Shield Lodge

[Charming speaker, Clarence is a Sixties Scoop survivor from Chapleau Cree First Nation, A community leader and founder of Crow Shield Lodge, a non-profit offering land-based healing for all nations in Waterloo Region. His biography, North Wind Man, shares his story of experiencing homelessness and addiction rooted in generational trauma, and his journey supporting others on their paths to healing.]

As I stand before you today, I am reminded of the stories of my ancestors, who survived the darkness of residential schools and the 60s Scoop. Their experiences, though painful, have taught me the importance of resilience, forgiveness, and healing. Today, I want to share with you the impact of these historical traumas on our communities and the ways in which we can work together to combat hate and promote

healing.

The residential school system and the 60s Scoop were designed to erase our identities, cultures, and languages. The trauma inflicted upon our ancestors continues to affect our families and communities today, manifesting in complex ways. However, despite the pain and suffering, our communities have shown remarkable resilience and strength. We have held on to our cultures, languages, and traditions, and we continue to thrive.

As an intergenerational survivor, I have seen firsthand the impact of historical trauma on our communities. I have witnessed the pain and suffering that still lingers, but I have also seen the strength and resilience that defines us. Our traditional teachings and stories emphasize the importance of forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. We believe in the power of ceremony, language, and culture to heal and bring people together.

So, how can we combat hate and promote healing? First and foremost, we must acknowledge the historical traumas that have been inflicted upon our communities. We must recognize the ongoing impact of these traumas and work towards creating a more just and equitable society. This requires a commitment to understanding and learning about our shared history and the experiences of Indigenous peoples.

One way to combat hate is through education and awareness. By learning about Indigenous cultures, histories, and experiences, we can break down stereotypes and misconceptions that fuel hate and intolerance. We can also work towards creating inclusive and welcoming spaces that celebrate diversity and promote understanding.

Another way to promote healing is through community-based initiatives. Healing circles, cultural camps, and language programs provide a safe space for individuals to reconnect with their cultures and find support. These initiatives also offer a way for communities to come together and support one another in the healing process.

As we work towards healing and reconciliation, it's essential to prioritize Indigenous voices and perspectives. We must listen to and amplify the voices of Indigenous peoples, rather than speaking over or for them. This requires humility, empathy, and a willingness to learn and grow.

Ultimately, combating hate and promoting healing requires a collective effort. We all have a role to play in creating a more just and equitable society. Whether it's through education, advocacy, or community-based initiatives, every action counts. Let's work together to build bridges of understanding and respect, and to create a world that honors our cultures, languages, and identities.

I am reminded of the power of collective action. Together, we can create a brighter future for our children and future generations. Let's rise above the hate and build a world that celebrates diversity, promotes understanding, and honors the dignity and worth of all individuals.

Combatting Hate Sikh Perspective

Upkar Singh
Community Leader

[Community worker and leader. Upkar studied traditional Sikh philosophy in India and is engaged with contemporary Sikh scholarship. B.Sc. in Psychology with a major in History and a minor in the History of Religions from the University of Toronto, he brings an interdisciplinary approach to his work. His focus on dialogue, reflection, and interfaith understanding emphasizes community building and the cultivation of mutual respect across cultural and religious boundaries.]

“Why waste away your life in hatred and conflict?”- Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 1178

With the world becoming ever more polarized and filled with open hate, Sikhi's message of Oneness becomes even more crucial. The One is described to be Nirbhau (without fear) and Nirvair (without hatred). Why? Because the One is all, there is no other. Existence is whole and unified, and love unites. Love is the human embodiment of the universe's reality. Love comes from the realization of One. Hate is the opposite of Oneness. It is division derived from fear, and fear emerges from ignorance. When Guru Nanak assured us we can reach that level of reality – of Oneness, imbued in fearlessness and embodied through love – there was no room for hate.

This vision of Sikhi was not only preached, but embodied and practiced. From Guru Nanak's travels around the world, interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, to the court of Guru Gobind Singh, which brought together poets, thinkers, and seekers from across traditions. From the building of the Golden Temple containing four doors welcoming all of humanity, to including the writings of those from various creeds into one scripture. From the institution of never-emptying community kitchens (langar) where emperors and beggars dined together, to offering one's life for the freedom of religion – Sikh history demonstrates that unity among diversity doesn't just have to be an idea.

Sikhs have long faced the hate and intolerance that pervades the world. To be a Sikh was punishable by death at one point in history. Countless innocent Sikh men, women, and children were tortured and killed for their beliefs and loyalty to the teachings of Sikhi in the eighteenth century. In November 1984, Sikhs were lynched in the streets of Delhi wherever they were seen. After 9/11, hundreds of hate crimes targeted Sikhs in North America simply for how they looked. The Oak Creek Gurdwara tragedy of 2012, where Sikh worshippers were murdered in prayer, shook the community to its core. Yet, as with other tragedies, Sikhs responded with strength, courage, and zeal. Guided by the teachings of Guru Nanak, Sikhs find that the answer to hate is compassion, understanding, and fearlessness in standing up against it.

Hate becomes part of our everyday lives through biases, norms, and language. And now with the advent of social media, hate has been amplified in unprecedented ways, further distancing communities and reinforcing echo chambers. We must be careful, as hate can seep into our lives and set us against our neighbours and community members without us even realizing we are walking a dark path.

Hate is not only intentional at the personal level – it can embed itself within the systems and structures around us. The Nazi regime, Jim Crow, and the cultural genocide of the Indigenous peoples in Canada are all examples of how hate can take terrible systemic forms. We must be careful, as we can become

complicit in hateful structures and institutions that have the “right to violence” and operate as if they were “normal.”

Hate, personal and institutional, may appear to stem from a desire to dominate, but its roots lie elsewhere. Hate is a burden growing from fear. At heart, everyone hopes to be free of this burden. Guru Nanak dismantles this fear of the “other”. The “otherness” dissolves, and strangers become familiar because all eyes are filled with the light of the Divine One we all search for. And this familiarity takes us beyond the differing identities and categories that societies have layered onto us all.

To combat hate, we must not only be loving and compassionate but also fearless in this pursuit. Only then can we stand up against hate, united and strong, across our differing beliefs, perspectives, geographies, histories, and struggles. Guru Nanak's concepts of Nirbhau (without fear) and Nirvair (without hate) are not just passive ideals. Rather, they are a call to loving action and courage to help rebuild our societies based on unity rather than division.

“Hatred is gone, there are no enemies; the One is seen in all” - Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 1077

Combatting Hate Christian Perspective

Father Toby Collins
St. Mary's Church

[Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Kitchener, Fr Toby was inspired by the Resurrectionist community to dedicate his life to service and hope. For over 20 years, he has been transformed by the message of Jesus' resurrection and the support of his community. Passionate about social justice, he leads initiatives such as building Tiny Homes for the homeless and fostering friendships with society's most vulnerable.]

From a Christian perspective when dealing with hate we look to Jesus as our mentor. The ways that he taught and demonstrated his response to hate are many. I will focus on these core responses that Christians seek to emulate in their own lives.

1. Identifying the origins of evil/hatred coming from the human heart.

In Mark 7:21 he points out that it is within the human heart that evil intentions arise. Signaling that we are all capable of hating and hurting others. He challenged his followers to identify what is going on in the depths of their own hearts and allow the hatred they might find there to be transformed by God's love. For Christians the belief is that through prayer we discover how to ask God to transform and heal any hatred we may find in our hearts so that we are not projecting it onto others.

2. Turning the other cheek.

When Jesus was asking about returning an insult with insults and retaliation his response was to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39) and to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). He reveals that we have the power to choose not to retaliate and to love those who persecute us so that violence doesn't perpetuate more of the same and that others can see there are better ways of dealing with hatred that can lead to reconciliation and peace.

3. Jesus calls his followers to forgive.

Two examples:

a) In John 8:1-11 when an account is given about Jesus encountering men attempting to stone a woman to

death because she was caught in the act of adultery. Jesus' response to the men was that "he who is without sin should cast the first stone" at the woman. After every man that was present dropped their stones and walked away, Jesus said to the woman, "neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

b) In Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus tells his friends about a servant of a landowner who overextended himself in debt. His debt was forgiven by the landowner, but the servant did not do the same for those who owed him money. When the landowner found out he sentenced the unforgiving servant to prison until he paid the debt he was originally forgiven.

In both instances Jesus teaches his followers that being forgiven demands that one become a more forgiving person. Therefore a Christian who is facing unfair treatment, whether unpaid debts or acts of hatred, is called to be forgiving.

4. Avoidance is an option.

For Christians, another way of dealing with hatred is avoidance. In Luke 4:28-30 Jesus walked through crowds that surrounded and tried to throw him off a cliff because they saw him as a threat to their own beliefs. He and his followers make a quick exit and in so doing avoid becoming the victims of violent acts rooted in hatred. In this instance Jesus demonstrates another response to facing hatred. Some situations may call for a quick escape to avoid the evils of hatred.

5. Triumphant submission to reveal new life.

The final example of combating hatred that I would like to comment on from a Christian perspective can be found in Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21. Most scholars agree that this is a triumphant act of submission by Jesus because he knows he cannot withstand their power to condemn him but believes something will be revealed if he faces the hatred many of the people have for him. The people's judgment is to put him to death and so begins a long and painful crucifixion. It is interesting that as Jesus is crucified, he prays that those crucifying him will be forgiven (Luke 23:34).

For Christians, what happens only days later is the resurrection of Jesus' body and accounts of Jesus appearing to the men and women who followed him. He encourages them to proclaim that the hatred in the hearts of those who crucified him was not strong enough to overturn God's plan to triumph over death and offer eternal life to all of humanity. Hatred still exists in the world but for Christians it never has the final say. Since the resurrection of Jesus, Christians throughout the world have demonstrated a triumphant submission to hatred in many different ways because they feel called to witness to their faith in Jesus and his power of his resurrection to overcome any form of hatred, death, and/or despair.

Combating Hate Humanist Perspective

Sassan Sanei
Society of Ontario Freethinkers

[Respected philosopher and electrical engineer, earning both degrees at the University of Waterloo. Sassan's academic path reflects his passion for bridging the humanities with science. His technology career deepened his understanding of how innovation, ethics, and responsibility shape society. As a Humanist Officiant, he performs ceremonies for people of all cultures. Sassan serves on the Board of Humanist Canada to advance reason, compassion, and fair public policies.]

Hate is not a problem of belief or of divine will. It is a human problem that is created, perpetuated, and ultimately solvable by human action.

In today's world, political extremism divides communities. Xenophobia poisons dialogue. Social media amplifies anger and contempt that once would have been confined to isolated voices. Differences in religion, gender, and culture are exploited to justify exclusion.

Humanity thus faces a moral challenge. Is combatting hate a human responsibility, founded on empathy and civic action? Or do we pray for divine intervention?

Humanism offers a non-religious way of life that values reason and compassion. It is guided by rational thought, informed by scientific inquiry, and inspired by the creativity and achievements of human culture.

Humanist groups like the Society of Freethinkers (SOFREE) and Humanist Canada recognize that morality does not require a deity. It arises from our capacity for empathy and our understanding of the consequences of our actions.

Bertrand Russell, the renowned philosopher, observed that human progress depends on cultivating intelligence, compassion, and responsibility for the welfare of others.

Carl Sagan, the celebrated astronomer, reminded us that our universe unfolds on a scale far beyond human experience, yet our actions create meaning, beauty, and justice within it.

In Canada, thinkers and educators have long emphasized that social cohesion relies on cultivating civic virtue, ethical reasoning, and mutual respect. These are principles that resonate with Humanist values.

Hate often thrives where ignorance, fear, and tribalism take hold. When people are taught to see “others” as threats, rather than neighbours or friends, they respond with blame and prejudice instead of intelligent reflection.

Humanists therefore see education as essential to recognizing patterns of oppression, challenging false narratives, and resisting manipulation.

Humanists are inspired by the achievements of science and art. We see the enduring potential of human reason. And we are awed by the beauty of our natural world. This fosters appreciation for diversity, rather than suspicion of it. By cultivating awareness of our common humanity, we broaden our connection with lives different from our own.

In Canada, recent debates around immigration, multiculturalism, and Indigenous reconciliation reveal tensions that, if ignored, can deepen into resentment and escalate into hostility.

All around the world, ideological wars fuelled by fervent nationalism and religious extremism displace millions of innocent people.

Humanist principles provide practical guidance to overcome these challenges. Community initiatives promote dialogue across differences, educational programs emphasize critical thinking, and civic engagement safeguards human rights. These are real-world demonstrations of countering hate through conscious, collective effort.

We are filled with hope, not for divine intervention, but as a call to action. Hope is the courage to build understanding. It is fostering cooperation, repairing trust, and shaping a society that values the dignity of every individual.

Humanists emphasize personal accountability. To combat hate, we cannot rely on governments or social leaders. Nor can we pray for a cure that scripture seems to promise, but never brings.

Combatting hate is in fact the responsibility of every person in daily life. All of us, whether religious or atheist, possess the agency to stand against discrimination, correct falsehoods, support inclusive practices, and model ethical behaviour.

Logic and empathy allow responses to provocation without perpetuating cycles of retaliation. When

communities are guided by ethical principles, rather than fear or religious dogma, we transform intolerance into peaceful understanding.

Science, logic, and evidence-based thinking support this approach. Social psychology demonstrates that hate is mitigated through exposure to diverse perspectives and cooperative problem-solving. Studies of reconciliation and restorative justice show that societies heal fractured relationships when grounded in mutual recognition and empathy.

Humanism embraces these findings not as abstract theory, but as practical tools for action. In a world increasingly interconnected yet vulnerable to fragmentation, we offer hope and direction in meaningful and actionable ways.

Combatting hate is an ethical, civic, and human responsibility. It is not a task delegated to an invisible higher power. It is a challenge that requires human intelligence, human creativity, and human courage.

Humanism invites us to cultivate understanding and uphold fairness while acting with compassion. Because hate is neither inevitable nor insurmountable. By acknowledging that the solutions lie in our hands, we can transform fear into knowledge, division into dialogue, prejudice into empathy.

The work is ours. The tools are human. We can shape a world where hate is challenged at every turn by the boundless potential for human decency. Not because we are commanded to, but because we choose to.

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