



Your Excellencies and dear friends, I would like to begin by thanking Sir Sigmund Sternberg and his co-founders of the three faiths forum the late Sheikh Dr. Zaki Badawi, the Reverend Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, and the coordinator of this event Mr. Sidney Shipton, who invited me here to day.

I would also like to mention that Sir Sigmund Sternberg has been my mentor and a source of inspiration in the life's work that we have both chosen.

Mindful, of the successful work of the Three Faiths Forum, my wife Meredith and I founded the Pave the Way Foundation in New York.

The worldwide mission of Pave the Way Foundation is to enhance the practical relationship between the religions, by identifying and eliminating obstacles and sources of friction, and by initiating educational, cultural and technological gestures between the faiths.

Our vision is to bring the religions closer together with the common goal of removing the use of religion to be used by some as tools to achieve their personal agendas.

We wish to identify those who intentionally manipulate prophetic language and the holy text in order to justify violence and malevolent acts, which denigrate and defile every religion.

Throughout our travels, we have been struck by a surprising observation. The picture, painted by the media, is greatly distorted.

While in the Middle East, we have met many Palestinians and Israelis and the one common message is that they both are tired of the endless fighting and they simply want peace for their children.

When you walk in the Old City of Jerusalem you hear the Muslim call to prayer and see the religious of every faith going about their business with never a harsh word or act.

Many of the media reports paint an entirely different picture. These reports tend to make a bad situation worse and typically illustrate events in a way which are crafted to inflame emotions.

Too often the motivation of the media is to sensationalize the story, in order to get better television ratings or to sell more newspapers, rather than to report the real facts with historical accuracy.

Famed American writer Mark Twain had once said, “if you don’t read newspapers to are uniformed, if you do read newspapers you are misinformed.

I have come to you today not as a learned scholar or an expert in theology but as a simple observer, who has come to the conclusion that we have been allowing the extreme few to determine the fate of the many.

Religious extremism is the cause of almost every conflict on earth and while we are spending billions on homeland security and defense, we do not invest anything on universally exposing the tool used to justify it all, religious extremism.

International conflicts have been justified by the intentional distortion of the prophetic language and the religious text. When one claims that he will be blessed and will go to paradise if he kills innocents, governments cannot respond to these remarks only the religions can.

My humble suggestion here today is that the governments need to reach out to a cadre of religious leaders representing all of the faiths, who can make statements to condemn violent acts in the language of religion the very moment these events occur.

In this universal war against extremism, we must not be afraid to seek support from the very religious sector from which these zealots have sprung. Once every act of violence in the name of religion is met with universal religious condemnation, then we must work with the media to be a partner in an effort, which may save their very existence as well.

Governments must partner with the religious leaders and with the media, to spread this message worldwide.

It may only take the detonation of one weapon of mass destruction, which can start a chain reaction of events that may not be able to be stopped. All of the fruits of the acquisition of money, which dominate our daily existence like mansions, Rembrandts and Chagall's, fancy cars and the like, will all be dust.

We must collectively find the strength and determination to recognize the true enemy of peace, religious extremism in every faith, and focus all of our efforts on neutralizing it.

I would like to conclude with the remarks of a 17th century Anglican Theologian Jonathan Swift who said "the problem is that everyone has just enough religion to hate and not enough to love."

Thank you for the time you have given me to day.