

## Afterword



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One room of my house is dominated by a 48-inch floor loom. Its four harnesses, each featuring dozens of heddles through which individual strands of yarn will pass, are controlled by treadles (foot-pedals). The yarn with which the loom is loaded is called the warp. The yarn that is made to pass over and under the warp's strands is called the weft. The color and weight of the weft plays a role in determining the pattern and texture of the resulting cloth. But so does the order of the treadling—and that is influenced by choices made before warping commenced. The warp's chief characteristics are consistency and strength. The weaver will want to keep its tension steady; but if a thread breaks, there is a way to repair the situation. I like to wind warps that are randomly multicolored; in choosing weft yarn, I like to take a nontraditional approach to executing a traditional weaving pattern. For more than forty years, I have claimed handweaving as a hobby. More recently, handweaving—its equipment and process—has made itself useful in attempts to explain my vocation(s).

A vocation is a path one cannot help but follow. It is a calling. A vocation is jealous, demanding. Once answered, it is a call that grips. And I have answered two. Even in my early teens I found both music and religion compelling—and not simply the religion I was practicing. Vocationally, was music the warp and religious studies the weft? Certainly, that once was the case. I had a long career as a musician before earning my doctorate in theology. Did religion take over the warp's role? Perhaps, for a while. In recent years, it has seemed more appropriate to declare unabashed *bivocationality*.

The professional life to which I am called consists of a multi-hued mixture of music and religion threads. By training, I am a Christian moral theologian for whom ethics and aesthetics are two sides of the same coin; but as an academic, I have taught in Religious Studies departments as often as not. As a scholar, I engage the breadth of America's religious manyness generally and Hinduism particularly—all the while continuing the deep exploration of Islam and Christian-Muslim concerns I commenced in the early 1990s. I perform as a multi-instrumentalist (bassoon, organ, harpsichord, recorder, and a few others) and liturgical musician who also has had a long career as a choral conductor and ensemble singer. I am a regular member of a

Renaissance ensemble, an occasional participant in a symphony orchestra, and a lover of opportunities to play chamber music of any era. I am a church-musician; but otherwise, the threads of my music and religion vocations do not interweave: it has been rare for me to function as both a musician and a religion-scholar in the same venue. However, it has indeed been possible to work other artforms into the weft of my career. I make extensive use of the visual arts when teaching theological concepts. I bring the lens of comparative theology to the study of calligraphy, scribing, and chant. I study ballroom dancing to maintain the stamina to do everything else. The texture of my professional life is, as a result, nothing if not interesting.

Multidisciplinarity is a hallmark of Interreligious Studies, the arena in which most of my religion-work now takes place. Yet, “the arts” as a collective and in their individual forms have not been prominent in its literature. So, in the first stages of developing *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies* (2022), I proposed devotion of an entire section to them. Peer reviewers thought otherwise. In the end, robust essays on the arts were included, but were scattered throughout the volume. It was a happy outcome. Yet, I remained convinced that the field could and should do more with the arts. Apparently, my *Journal of Interreligious Studies* colleagues were like-minded. This thematic issue was their idea—not mine. That they have released it in my honor is such a wonderful gift. Dear Axel, Or, Tom, Soren, and Peng, please know that I am immensely grateful! Dear guest editor Hussein, thank you for your graciousness. Dear authors: thank you for contributing so insightfully to JIRS’s showcase of intersections between arts and religions. Dear Joel, please allow me to say once more that your decision that I should represent Hartford on the JIRS staff has been a continuous source of blessings. For that, gratitude is ongoing.

Some thirty years ago, I struggled to make sense of a major vocational disappointment; the yarn in my “religion” basket was full of the knots and tangles rendering it unsuitable for warp and barely usable as weft. Yet a mentor insisted: “I cannot say how, but I am convinced that, eventually, this call will be redeemed.” It has been.



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