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Dear Dialogue Partners,

In this issue of the *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, we investigate the work and perspective of women, feminism, and inter-religious dialogue. Women have played pivotal roles in transforming communities and conflicts, upending theories and traditions, and building bridges of understanding where others have thought it impossible. Given the dynamic landscape of female involvement in numerous aspects of inter-religious activities and dialogue, we sought to explore inter-religious work as informed by women's perspectives and feminist theory more broadly.

In our themed section, we include four perspectives from scholars working in feminism, gender, and inter-religious dialogue. In "A Convergence of Faith: The Concept of Relation in the Work of Sara Grant, R.S.C.J.," Stephanie Petersen-Corigliano discusses Roman Catholic theological encounters with Advaita Vedanta. She analyzes the concept of non-dualism in the work of Sara Grant, a nun active in the Christian ashram movement during the second half of the twentieth century, and then connects Grant's work to that of the contemporary scholar of postcolonial and feminist theology, Mayra Rivera Rivera. Jea Sophia Oh juxtaposes a seminal Chinese divine female figure and Mary to recover compassion in religion in, "Hybridity of Kuanyin and Mary, Maternal Sacrifice and Salvation: a Comparative Theological Study." Virginia Spatz's "Toward a Gender-Aware Approach to Abrahamic Dialogue" analyzes several key components of Leonard Swidler's noted "Dialogue Decalogue" document on engaging in interfaith dialogue. She goes on to suggest four concrete innovations upon the decalogue model to incorporate the idea of gender and the recognition of gender dynamics into dialogue in the hopes of enhancing its reach and efficacy. In "The Female Divine Figure within Several World Religions," Dorothy Yoder Nyce employs a comparative approach to the question of female divinity in major "living faiths." Utilizing prominent female figures or feminine forces in Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, Yoder Nyce challenges patriarchal models of religious engagement and encourages the inclusion of all voices and gender perspectives in discussions of faith. Finally, we offer connections and new questions from Benjamin B. DeVan on potential new lessons and questions from an old and beloved story in "Royal Righteousness in the Ramayana? Faithful Leadership in India's Mythic Masterpiece."

We also share a special *State of Formation* feature. Yitz Greenberg, a leading light in the Jewish community and Modern Orthodox rabbi, describes the tense theological and historical issues that initially circumscribed his inter-religious dialogue experiences – as well as the deep connection and reflections he was ultimately able to develop. Responding to his personal narrative about the pursuit of authentic dialogue are six emerging religious and ethical leaders from State of Formation, approaching dialogue more than a generation after Rabbi Greenberg initially entered into it. Together, they bring into conversation key questions related to authentic and meaningful inter-religious interchange, as well as the frames we consciously (or unconsciously) bring to dialogue with religious "others."

Then, we introduce a new feature compiled and written by Sophia Khan in conjunction with professors, administrators, and students on campuses across the country, titled *DivInnovations*. This profile series aims to share innovative teaching and learning practices from seminaries, divinity schools, and other graduate theological settings in our communities.

We look forward to continuing to amplify the voices among us, including yours.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes and Joshua M. Z. Stanton
Founding Editors in Chief

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The Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue™

A Convergence of Faith: The Concept of Relation in the Work of Sara Grant, RSCJ, By Stephanie Petersen-Corigliano

Is the radical non-dualism of Advaita Vedanta fundamentally at odds with Christian monotheistic belief? Sara Grant, R.S.C.J., argues that it is not. However, unlike her religious and monastic contemporaries at work in India such as Henri Le Saux and Bede Griffiths, she does not rely on a mystical convergence to unsay the dichotomies between traditions. Rather, she argues that Advaita's foremost proponent, Sankaracarya, developed a philosophy that was wholly dependent on the concept of relation. Her analysis of this concept in the work of Sankara is one of Grant's unique contributions to the study of Indian philosophy. Grant further contends that an analogous concept is at work in the theology of Thomas Aquinas and that this pivotal concept has similarly received undue attention. In the work of her dissertation, Grant forges an early scholarly effort at inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology.[1]

This essay lifts up the work of Sara Grant, R.S.C.J., marking a point of convergence between the Hindu Advaita Vedanta tradition and Catholic Christianity that is distinctive from the universalizing trends that were common to the inculturation movement in India during the twentieth century. I will initially outline Grant's study and then highlight some of the potentials and problems of her work. Subsequently, I set up a second conversation between Grant's work and the more recent scholarship of Mayra Rivera Rivera, thus bridging the gap between an early proponent of relational theology and a contemporary feminist perspective on the concept of relation within Christian theology.

Ashram Context

In the second half of the 20th century, Catholic ashrams began to operate throughout India. In India, an ashram is a kind of spiritual retreat center that can be open to both ordained and lay practitioners and is typically organized around a central guru, or authoritative teacher.[2] Catholic ashrams were designed as a form of inculturation, initially intended to communicate Christian beliefs to Hindus by adapting many of Hinduism's "cultural" practices. However, the deep encounter with Hinduism actually transformed many of the Christian ashram participants, and many of these people became important figures in twentieth century inter-religious and ecumenical dialogues in India. A few leaders within this movement have received significant attention, owing largely to their written work or to scholarly studies conducted by their followers.[3] Although women both led ashrams and participated in the integral workings of ashram life, their legacy in the inculturation movement in India is mostly neglected.

Grant was an important twentieth century leader within the Christian ashram movement in India. She was born on December 19th, 1922 to a Scottish Catholic family. The eldest of five children, she joined the Society of the Sacred Heart at age 19 and studied philosophy and theology at Oxford University. In 1956 she received notification that she was to go to India to teach philosophy at Sophia College in Bombay. The diverse student body of Sophia College challenged Grant to discover the language and philosophical underpinnings of her new Indian context. Importantly, Grant approached her role as a Christian teacher of Hindu and Muslim students with sensitivity to their cultural context. She felt that for her to explicitly encourage her students to convert would be to alienate them from their families and communities, thus severely limiting their access to education, marriage, and even employment. She discerned that her role was not explicitly to evangelize, but rather, in Grant's own words, "…to seek to establish and foster that relationship between the creature and Creator which would allow the Creator to deal freely with his creatures."[4] Thus, the question of how to navigate Christian life and teaching in a pluralistic context was at the forefront of Grant's work in India from the very beginning.

Concurrent with her new teaching position, Grant studied for a doctorate in Indian philosophy. Her dissertation, *Sankaracarya's Concept of Relation*, focused on the concept of relation in the 9th century Advaita Vedanta scholar Adi Sankaracarya compared with the

Christian 12th century scholar Thomas Aquinas.[5] It is this scholarly undertaking which provides the foundation for my study of the Grant's life and work.

Grant's Theology of Relation

Grant explicitly describes the incarnation of Jesus Christ as a *means*.[6] Like Thomas Aquinas, she emphasizes the Godhead, or mystery and transcendence of God as the "proper object of devotion." During her noviceship, she became concerned that the Church was in danger from the "tendency to equate the following of Christ with a *dualistic imitation from without* rather than *an entry into his very life and consciousness of being "from" and "to" the Father."*[7] She proposes that the way to reconcile the dualism of imitation is to partake consciously in a more integrated, non-dual practice of participation in the life of Christ that focuses on the transcendence of God. While Grant notes that her personal struggle to reconcile perceived dualisms began early in her spiritual life, it was her encounter with Sankara that crystallized her understanding of non-dualism in Christianity. Grant found the cosmological theme of relation in Sankara to be compatible with Aquinas's understanding of the Creator/creation relationship as non-reciprocal.[8] Thus in Aquinas (and in Grant), creation is related to the creator as fundamentally dependent, and without this dependence, it cannot be properly understood or integrated into religious praxis.

Sankara's "*tadatmaya*" and the misappropiation of "*maya*"

Sankara's commentary on the *Mundakopanisad* states, "That very entity, the supreme Self, which this one, the man of knowledge, seeks to reach, by that fact of hankering is attainable: but not through any other spiritual effort, for it is by its very nature ever attained."[9] Sankara suggests here that knowledge of the supreme Self acknowledges unity with that supreme Self. Further, he maintains that unity is ever existent as "hankering;" a kind of inner spark of unity that persistently contrasts essence with appearance.

Grant's dissertation delves into a careful study of the common terms used to indicate relation in the work of Sankara. This work will be valued by specialists in the field of Advaita. The contribution I am highlighting in this essay centers on "*tadatmya*," or identity. This term is used in the work of Sankara to indicate the specific relationship that exists between Brahman and the phenomenal world.[10] Grant writes:

> The identity he [Sankara] predicates between *Atman-Brahman* and *sarvam idam* [every thing] does not involve the metaphysical destruction of either side of the equation. Yet neither can we interpret this 'identity' as a simple parity of equals…we are faced with the delicate necessity of simultaneously respecting both the demands of the multiplicity of ordinary *vyavaharika* [phenomenal] experience and the inviolability of the *ekam eva advitiyam* [radical nonduality].[11]

Grant suggests that, for Sankara, the relationship between Brahman and Atman, the Self and self, is basically one of cause and effect. However, in light of Advaita's theory of radical non-dualism, the cause and effect are both dependent and identical. The cause is both the creation of the effect, and it *is* the effect. How can this be? In short, Sankara argues that name and form (*namarupa*) are the limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*) of the Brahman. Thus, name and form give the appearance of objective existence within a multitude of subjects. Grant explains that names and forms "are the objective correlatives of conceptual thinking, the 'objects' of the *vyavaharika* [appearance] level of thinking."[12] Just as clay formed into a cup is named "cup," but in essence it is still clay (were it to be broken it would no longer be a cup), all things in the world receive their objective identity in relation to their function.[13]

The dissolution of the world of names and forms is, therefore, not physical destruction, but rather an ontological shift in perception. It represents the metaphysical transcendence of the

ultimate, unchanging reality in contrast with the ever-changing reality of the physical world. Thus, the relationship between the ultimate reality and the phenomenal world is a metaphysical question that contrasts appearance with essence and, as such, marks a temporal dichotomy between change and permanence, creation and creator.

A very large body of work is attributed to Sankara, much of which was not authored by Sankara himself. Collective scholarly opinion has largely agreed upon certain core texts, while a second grouping of texts remains debated. This ambiguity of authorship accounts for some common disputes and errors of interpretation, especially in the case of early western translations. One such key concept is Sankara's definition of "reality," as in our day-to-day lived existence. Much of western scholarship until the mid-1960s and still today most popular interpretations of Advaita explain Sankara's view of the world as "*maya*," or illusion. In fact, this term is rarely found in the work that is verified as Sankara's. Rather, Sankara uses the terms, "*ajnana*," or "*avidya*," which suggest a lack of knowledge, or ignorance. Thus, Sankara did not necessarily maintain that the apparent world is an illusion; instead, he suggested that it is commonly perceived through ignorance. For Sankara the fundamental theological task is to attain correct perception of the true nature of reality, that is, non-duality.[14]

Sankara suggests that there are two levels of knowledge of Brahman, that which is attained through scripture and that which is attained through experience/intuition (*anubhava*). Knowledge attained through the senses is wholly dependent on Brahman, and yet it risks being mistaken for a complete, independent source. This is the common error of *ajnana*, accepting the temporal as the eternal, or the small, separate self for the ultimate Self.[15]

It is interesting that *anubhava*, broadly translated as experience or intuition, is considered separately from sense knowledge. It points to the existence of an immanent and universal quality that can be discerned by the individual but is never conditioned (changed) by individual experience. As such, "the self immanent in creation is identical with the Supreme Self."[16] The process of knowing is subsequently compared to the discovery of a grain of rice that is extracted from beneath many husks. Sankara speaks of human sheaths, like rice husks, that must be shed. Beginning with the outermost level of experience he describes a food sheath, then the mental sheath, the intelligent sheath, and finally the bliss sheath, which resides in the heart, the closest proximity to the self. These layers of experience represent the removal of attachment and ignorance.

To summarize, Grant emphasizes two important points regarding *tadatmya*. First, as stated previously, *tadatmya* indicates a dependent identity; it is the "inner-cause," which allows any perceived effects (differences) to exist. On this point, Grant quotes Sankara:

> Although one and the same Self is hidden in all beings, movable as well as immovable, yet owing to the gradual rise of excellence of the minds which form the limiting adjuncts (of the Self) scripture declares that the Self, although eternal, unchanging and uniform, reveals itself in a graduated series of beings and so appears in forms of various dignity and power.[17]

As such, Brahman can be perceived within apparent differences through a careful discernment of *anubhava*/experience and confirmed by scripture. The second summary point is that Brahman is non-dual. This is the paradoxical status of Sankara's Advaita Vedanta: Brahman is unchanging and the cause of a mutable creation, yet Brahman and creation are essentially identical. For Grant, this is the point of comparison between Sankara and Thomas Aquinas; specifically, it is, "the concept of non-reciprocal relation."[18] This also leads to Grant's thesis, that the Self as an eternal subject (self) within creation is ultimately revealed through the action of relating.

"Non-reciprocal relation" in Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas posits relation as essentially "reference to another." Relation itself is neither a subject nor an object. Grant quotes from Aquinas: "Relation according to its essential concept is not a thing but simply refers to another, and therefore, according to its essential concept, does not posit any (reality) in its subject."[19]

Grant further details several specific aspects of Aquinas' philosophy of relation. In brief, relation requires two terms and is either *real* or *logical*, necessary or non-necessary. *Real* relation can be either subsistent or non-subsistent. The former has an identical (subsistent) foundation for both subject and term, and the only solid example of a *real*, subsistent relation is the Trinitarian mystery. Thus, according to Grant, Aquinas understood "*real*, subsistent relation" to actually describe unity, or a lack of fundamental difference that co-exists with the appearance of difference or function. Similarly, in her analysis of Sankara, Grant writes, "in *real* relations the foundation is always in the subject."[20] In Aquinas, the non-subsistent, *real* relation is considered accidental, which seems to indicate action, or is primarily descriptive of the subject but does not show a foundational unity.

For both Aquinas and Sankara, non-subsistent relations allow for difference between subject and term (although Sankara would not use this terminology, he accounts for difference in a similar way). Aquinas further qualifies some non-subsistent relations as *logical*, thus marking the distinction between two subjects with a point of conceptual difference. Lastly, for a relation to be considered necessary, according to Aquinas, one subject in the relationship must be dependent upon the relationship for its very existence. Non-necessary relations may be descriptive but do not show causational influence. The necessary relation forms the basis for Aquinas's "non-reciprocal relation," since without relation to its creator, creation would cease to exist.

"Non-reciprocal relation" denotes a particular influence resulting from the relation. In a helpful example, Grant examines the statement, "The signal was seen by the driver." Grant writes, "the relation is true [logical] but not *real* on the part of the signal, and both true [logical] and *real* on the part of the driver, since the relation is non-reciprocal."[21] In this way, Grant explains that the relation of creatures to God is not *real*, but it is true, since creation is dependent upon God's action. Further, the signal is clearly an example of a non-subsistent relation, while the Creator/creation example allows for the possibility of subsistent relation insofar as the creation has the potential to participate in the Trinitarian mystery.

In Grant's reading of Aquinas, God's causation is not immediately self-evident, but it is discoverable through reason. She reflects, "[it is discoverable] precisely because the creature is not self-explanatory but essentially relative, and this relative character stands more and more clearly revealed as intelligence penetrates more deeply into its radical inability to account for its own emergence into or continuance in being."[22]

Thus in the creature's inability to account for its existence, its relation to the Creator is revealed, to recall Sankara's earlier term, as an internal "hankering." The relation between God and creation is real, yet the subsistence of this relation is dependent upon correct perception.

The link between Sankara and Aquinas is strongest with regards to the concept of the subject's relation to the creator. However, both depict a kind of internal spark that refers to the idea that the creator is existent within the apparent individuals of creation. This idea has the potential to expand the concept of relation into interpersonal relationships. In my view, this implication of Grant's work is underdeveloped, and it is for this reason that I turn to Mayra Rivera Rivera in the final section of this essay.

Rivera's "Touch of Transcendence"

Contemporary feminist theology and proponents of postcolonial studies have made significant contributions to the discussion of how the human/divine relation impacts inter-human relationships. In her recent book, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology*

of God, Mayra Rivera Rivera examines the concept of divine transcendence and how it can work as a libratory force in contemporary contexts of Christianity. For Rivera, divine transcendence is essentially relational. It functions within the world through the dynamic, complex reality of personal engagement with all that is "other." Therefore, people experience and worship the transcendent divine through their relationships with other beings and the earth. Drawing on multiple sources including the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, radical orthodoxy, liberation theology, and postcolonial studies (Gayatri Spivak), she locates the divine in the inability to grasp, fully know, conquer, or master another being or the earth. She writes, "Our images of the divine other shape our constructions of human otherness. An apparent structural relation exists between imagining our relation to the human other and to God as wholly Other: God can be perceived as an extreme instance of interhuman difference."[23]

She goes on to argue that the similarity between God's otherness and interhuman difference is not only structural, but that human beings actually encounter the divine through the diversity of their particular relationships. Rivera essentially conflates the traditional dichotomy of immanence and transcendence. Her transcendent is immanent, working in and through persons and nature. Nonetheless, it is ultimately transcendent insofar as it requires the acceptance of the divine as mystery. This delicate balance provides a compelling model for inter-religious dialogue that accounts for difference within a relational theology.

As discussed in the first part of the essay, Grant stresses the importance of transcendence in order to avoid the temptation of idolatry, or the mere imitation of Jesus rather than an active participation in the mystery as a means of return to ultimate unity with the Godhead. She further develops a sophisticated understanding of the transcendent that is at once relational and non-dual. Rivera's contribution of imagining the divine as immanent-transcendent within interhuman relations potentially develops Grant's work in way that I find compatible with Grant's overarching theological praxis. Grant sought mutual respect with her students and with the diverse practitioners of her ashram community. She actively discouraged gossip and made a conscious choice not to encourage conversion explicitly from her students.[24] In this way, she demonstrated respect for the alterity of her context while maintaining faith in the ultimate saving power of God.

Additionally, it is Rivera's discussion of radical orthodoxy (Pickstock, Milbank) that is especially relevant for the comparison with the work of Sara Grant. According to Rivera, radical orthodoxy relies on a largely platonic understanding of cosmology. As such, the creator stands apart from its creation as eternal and unchanging. The creation exists in terms of its relation to the creator. Or, "The worldly realm derives its reality from its 'participation' (methexis) in the immutable forms."[25] This concept of participation draws, in part, upon Thomas Aquinas's understanding of human dependence on God. Rivera quotes Aquinas: "The being of every creature depends on God, so that not for a moment could it subsist, but would fall into nothingness were it not kept in being by the operation of the Divine power."[26]

As discussed above, according to Aquinas, creation is wholly dependent on God for its very existence. Rivera argues that this implies that a "creature's worth is placed in something other than the creature—in a realm external to and independent of all cosmic life."[27] Rivera draws from this a "split between the creature and its value," such that being is not inherently valuable. Rivera draws a further parallel between God as a distant ruler and colonial rule, or globalized corporate rule, and thus highlights the danger of removing transcendent power from the subjectivity of daily experience. Transcendence implies upward motion, and as Rivera points out, this has had the effect of validating sociopolitical hierarchies. Rivera writes:

> Hierarchical caricatures of transcendence depend on hypercertainties supported by claims to absolute knowledge, totalizing systems that foreclose the openness, excess, and irreducibility that transcendence implies, for appeals to a realm beyond the grasp of normative subjects, systems of thought, and social structures

> would threaten the certainties on which these hierarchies depend. Transcendence is thus relegated to an invisible realm and thus effectively prevented from touching our daily lives.[28]

Interestingly, Rivera makes several allusions to this (Thomistic) theology as setting the very reality of the world in question. Regarding the spatial and hierarchical difference between the Creator and creation, she writes, "The inherent reality of creation is thus called into question." Following the quote from Aquinas above, she comments that the ontological gap between God and creatures results in "placing creatures perilously close to nonbeing."[29] She concludes with the follow caution: "These ethical considerations should call us to assess the implication of the assumption of the inherent nothingness of things for its tendency to subordinate the value of the very existence of creatures to other 'more real' principles."[30]

Concluding Remarks

Contemporary reflections on transcendence articulate an awareness of abusive power, domination, and social inequality that was not present for the classical authors, nor was it central to Grant's writing. This is an important contribution. The tension between classical and modern interpretations of the transcendent is evident, and yet, I contend that Sara Grant's comparison of Thomas Aquinas and Sankara sheds an evocative new light on classical interpretations of the Creator/creation relationship. By positing the "non-reciprocal relation" of Thomas Aquinas as an analysis of perception, Grant distinguishes it as an invitation to a deeper level of participation. The subsistent real relation of the Trinitarian mystery is open to creation, but this requires creation to realize its fundamental relationality.

The fruit of Grant's comparative project is the articulation of her "non-dualist" Christianity, which gives a solid theological expression to the experience of non-duality within the orthodox structures of Christianity. I contend that this aspect of non-duality serves to emphasize the participatory nature of the transcendent. Grant's study of Sankara brings a new light to Aquinas. In this way, neither figure is found to be negating the value of this world as such, but rather, both are seen to be advocating a radical shift in perception as an integral aspect of religious praxis. Rivera also advances a concept of divine touch as interpersonal touch which is, in my view, both compatible with nonduality and attentive to the practical expression of divine embodiment and relation. Indeed, the divine transcendent within interhuman relations is perhaps the most concrete and faithful means of imagining a non-dual Christian praxis that honors the genuine mystery of both God and creation.

Stephanie Corigliano is a PhD candidate in Comparative Theology at Boston College with a focus on Christian and Hindu traditions. Her research interests include feminism, post-colonial theology, and transnational yoga. She is also the mother of one very active toddler and currently resides in northern California.

Notes

[1] Her dissertation was published in 1998, but was apparently written at least 20 years earlier: *Sankaracarya's Concept of Relation*, (Delhi: Motilal Canarsidass Publishers, 1998).

[2] For a detailed study of Catholic ashrams in India and the guru system see: Catherine Cornille, *The Guru In Indian Catholicism: Ambiguity or Opportunity of Inculturation?* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1991).

[3] For example: Henri Le Saux; Bede Griffiths; Thomas Matus. Another lesser celebrated, but equally important person is the Benedictine Jules Monchanin.

[4] Sara Grant, R.S.C.J., *Toward An Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian,* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 23.

[5] Ibid, biographical account based on Pt. 1.

[6] Ibid., p. 15.

[7] Ibid., p. 13. (Emphasis in the original).

[8] Grant (1998), p. 182.

[9] Ibid., p. 31.

[10] Ibid., p. 130-146.

[11] Ibid., p. 128-129.

[12] Ibid., p. 64.

[13] Ibid., p. 67.

[14] For a contemporary Hindu scholar that supports this understanding of Advaita see: Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), p.76.

[15] Grant (1998), p. 39.

[16] Ibid., p. 42.

[17] Ibid., p. 150, quoting from Sankara in *Brhamasutrabhasya* I.i.11.

[18] Ibid., p. 157.

[19] Ibid., p. 160, quoting from Thomas Aquinas, In Sent. 20, 1.1.

[20] Ibid., p. 182.

[2121] Ibid., p. 169.

[22] Ibid., p. 174.

[23] Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Lousiville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p.2.

[24]Bradley Malkovsky, in the Introduction to Sara Grant's, *Toward An Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian,* p.xiv.

[25] Rivera, p. 23.

[26] Ibid., p. 24.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 9.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Hybridity of Kuanyin and Mary, Maternal Sacrifice and Salvation: A Comparative Theological Study,

By Jea Sophia Oh

Abstract

What kind of life or living could be the key of salvation? This paper deconstructs the traditional understanding of sacrifice as the code of salvation, as many Christians have traditionally believed that Jesus's Crucifixion brought salvation "once and for all." Not only in Christianity, but also in many other religions, sacrifice has been recognized as a crucial key to bring salvation.

Kuanyin is the bodhisattva of compassion, one who chose not to be Buddha but chose to stay with us for sharing our sufferings. Similarly, Mary is a Christian counterpart and mother figure who complied with God's call to be a virgin mother of Jesus and witnessed the death of her own child with a great deal of suffering and compassion and yet was excluded from the divine trinity. Given these examples, can it be said that sacrifice is the key to salvation? I would say, "No! The cross is a result of living and not the climax of living. The key lies in compassionate living."

Maternal sacrifice is that of a self-giving life and love. Mary's life and her maternal sacrifice have been ignored by traditional soteriology, which emphasizes death and suffering. The code of salvation for these two mother figures is actually their compassion and love, therefore, "Life." Likewise, Kuanyin's sacrifice is a part of her self-giving love in the process of salvation, not the purpose or the condition of salvation.

This paper turns our soteriological focus from death to Life, the compassionate living as an alternative soteriology. With love, Kuanyin sacrificed her body. With love, she stays on earth to save all Life.

1. Absence of Mothers in Soteriology

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible: And in on Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all words, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us…

This is the first and essential part of the early Credo as the symbol of the Apostles, based on the Nicene Creed of 325. Whoever is speaking in this text recognizes the trinity, Jesus's true divinity and true humanity, his virgin conception, and his sacrifice for salvation as the doctrinal truths. The Credo has become the foundation of Christian doctrine of the trinity and Christology as well as of the atonement.

The phallocentric Christian image of God excludes women from the tri-union angle of Father-Son-Holy Sprit. The Christian religious symbolic is resultantly configured as masculine. Christianity is usually complicit with matricide and the occlusion of the feminine in as much as the Father God of monotheism and the homosexuate trinity serves to affect the exclusive emergence of the male into semiotic representation and cultural production. I would say that the traditional Christian trinity is lacking femininity, the matricidal trinity.

Law, religion, science, and civilization are structured through the masculine symbolic order, as well. The feminine is figured as an absence within the real as well as the imaginary and symbolic orders. Thus, women have been excluded from symbolic order. The female is entirely excluded from rational discourse. The interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the existence of a central other Subject. Thus, without this transcendental Subject, female subjects cannot establish their identity. Luce Irigaray argues as long as woman lacks a divine made in her

image, she cannot establish her subjectivity. It is only in relationship to female sexuate signs and representations that women can reconstruct themselves and struggle toward real subjectivity, not equal to men but different from them.[1]

What about the virgin mother, *theotokos*, the mother of God? For Mary's virgin birth of Jesus, there was no earthly male's insemination but spiritual conception. Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity* narrates that "She has not a husband but she has a Bridegroom; she weds the word of God as her eternal spouse."[2] Elsewhere, the virgin is partnered with the Father. Human and divine are wedded in Mary's virgin conception of Jesus. Is Mary God's wife or mother? Virginia Burrus interprets that Christ makes of Mary simultaneously a daughter, a mother, and a wife. Mary makes of Christ a father, a son, and a husband by coupling with the divine man, miraculously giving birth to the triune God.[3] Nonetheless, the virgin's relations with the male trinitary union of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is still unclear, and her alliance with the trinity is given little consideration. "The virgin's relations with the Father always remain in the shadow."[4] Absence of mother in the trinity was criticized by Ludwig Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity*; according to Feuerbach, the Holy Spirit is too vague and poetic a personification to serve as the third complementary being in the trinity. On the contrary, the Virgin Mary fits in perfectly with the relations of the Trinity, since she conceives without man the Son whom the Father begets without woman.[5]

"To the Son the Mother is indispensable; the heart of the Son is the heart of the Mother….Where faith in the Mother of God sinks, there also sinks faith in the Son of God, and in God as the Father."[6] Protestantism has set aside the Mother God. However, as Feuerbach points out, "The Father is a truth only where the Mother is a truth. Love is in and by itself essentially feminine in its nature. The belief in the love of God is the belief in the feminine principle of divine."[7] This principle is itself intertwined with motherhood and personal sacrifice.

Irigaray points out maternal sacrifice in terms of human conception: "the mother-mistress can and must suffer, or even die in order to honor those chromosomes of the male race, that priceless *logos spermatikos* poured into her."[8] Mothers experience psychological and emotional transformation and loss, pain, blood, and the rendering of flesh to face with the ideal of sacrifice with which the Christian tradition has predominantly viewed the sacrifice of the cross.

Julia Kristeva calls this residue of sacrifice the "abject." In patriarchal cultures, women have been reduced to the maternal function. This misplaced abjection is one way to account for women's oppression and degradation within patriarchal cultures. The abject thus both threatens and promises a collapse of those symbolic structures. In patriarchal systems, the masculine is threatened by the purportedly asymmetrical, irrational, wily, and uncountable power of the feminine. This instability and asymmetry of the masculine symbolic system can always be anticipated by the deconstruction of the system and threatened by the unpredictable becoming. In order to obtain the hegemony, the masculine suppresses and demonizes the feminine as the other, the abjection.

Women are categorized as the human representative of the abjection: the improper, transgression, unclean, sin, evil in Western Christianity. For Kristeva, Mary represents the elevation of the feminine and maternal principle. Kristeva sees this as the projection of imaginary wholeness beyond the abjection associated with childbirth.[9] In Mary's conception of Jesus, a human father was excluded. She was indeed a single teen mother of a child who had no earthly father. As an illegitimate child of Joseph, Jesus had no biological relationship to King David's genealogy. Thus, The divine agency of conception challenges the patriarchal lineage of Israel. "Only through Mary, Jesus belongs to the human race."[10] Mary's sacrifice is not "death for life" but "life for life." Mary J. Streufert writes, "Childbirth and lactation further alter a woman's body, opening, stretching, and widening her. The prematernal body does not return *in toto*. By woman's stripes is life given."[11] It is time to move our soteriological focus from death to life, from Jesus to Mary, the mother.

Kuanyin (觀音), the Buddhist Goddess of Compassion, is a similar figure to that of the Virgin Mary. Kuanyin is known as the bodhisattva of compassion and healing. A bodhisattva refuses to go to Nirvana as long as there are still other beings who have not yet attained enlightenment and who therefore still suffer. Some syncretic Buddhist and Christian observers have commented on the similarity between Kuanyin and Mary. This can be attributed to the representation of Kuanyin holding a child in Chinese art and sculpture; it is believed that Kuanyin is the patron saint of mothers and grants parents filial children. When the Tzu-Chi Foundation, a Taiwanese Buddhist organization, noticed the similarity between this form of Kuanyin and the Virgin Mary, the organization commissioned a portrait of Kuanyin and a baby that resembles the typical Roman Catholic Madonna and Child painting. Some ethnic Chinese in the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Philippines, in an act of syncretism, have identified Kuanyin with the Virgin Mary.[12]

Ancient scriptures tell the story of how Kuanyin became a bodhisattva: as she stood at the threshold to Nirvana, she heard the cries of pain and confusion emanating from the world, and she swore to remain in it until all sentient beings had been liberated from suffering. In Universal Gateway, the *Lotus Sutra*, Kuanyin can appear in as many as thirty-three different forms in order to save different types of people.[13] A key factor in the successful indigenization and feminization of this Buddhist deity in China is that, through various myths and legends, the Chinese have managed to transform Avalokitesvara, the ahistorical bodhisattva who transcended temporal and spatial limitations, as depicted in the Mahayana scripture, into Kuanyin, who, known by different Chinese names, led lives in clearly definable times and locations on the soil of China.[14]

In China, gods were depicted as real human beings. Mostly the gods were males originally. Likewise, Kuanyin was originally a male deity. Her prototype was Avalokitesvara and became transgendered and evolved as a female deity through her sacrifice and compassion as a woman. Kuanyin had to become Miao-shan, a living woman, so that she could be worshipped as a Chinese goddess. Kuanyin's salvific powers, promised by the sutras, are manifested in story of Miao-shan, which offers a biography of the thousand-handed Kuanyin. The highlight of the story is the transformation of the eyeless and handless young girl who offered hands and eyes for saving her ill father who once abandoned her as an infant into the thousand-eyed and thousand-handed Bodhisattva.[15] Her compassion was considered feminine virtue.

Unlike Kuanyin, a female deity in Asia, the God who has for centuries reigned in Western culture is often referred to as male, a God who mirrors the patriarchal culture and masculine desire. Irigaray argues that woman has no mirror in order to become woman. This is a constructive point, that spiritually oriented women felt the need to connect with a being of the same gender, one they could turn to when they needed protection from diseases and dangers. Much like the Chinese Great Mother, Kuanyin was especially worshipped by women, whose role was severely curtailed in male-dominated Confucian society.

Finally, by the ninth century C.E., practically all images of Kuanyin became female. Some transitional images even show Kuanyin in feminine robes but sporting a fine moustache as an androgynous figure. This probably indicates that the Chinese collective consciousness had strongly absorbed the bodhisattva in female form.[16] I found that Kuanyin's transgender body followed its personality, which I perceive to be more feminine than masculine. Kuanyin gradually evolved from a male to a female. Kuanyin and human mothers mirror each other in becoming divine through maternal sacrifice and compassion. She is the most beloved and revered of the Chinese deities. Kuanyin is the Divine Mother we all long for: merciful, tender, compassionate, loving, protecting, caring, healing, and wise.

2. Compassion, not Sacrifice

Among many legends of Kuanyin, Miao-shan's sacrifice of her body to save her father is similar to Jesus's salvation story. Miao-shan might have been a favorite religious name for

women long before the birth of the legend. This is similar to the popularity of the names Maria or Mary among Christian women in honor of the Virgin Mary. Miao-shan donated her arms and eyes to heal her father and had become the embodiment of the purest unconditional compassion.[17] It sounds as horrifying as Jesus's crucifixion. The body was scattered into many pieces and prepared into medicine. Both Jesus's passion and Miao-shan's sacrifice are too violent to romanticize as love. Miao-shan became Kuanyin with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes to see (hear) cries (sufferings) of the world and to embrace the world. As the co-sufferer and healer, she stays in the mundane world. She is the heart of the world who feels directly our suffering and happiness until the whole world is saved.

What does sacrifice do for salvation? Is salvation the result of sacrifice, or did sacrifice come out of the process of salvation as an act of compassion? The latter is what I believe as a feminist theologian. First of all, if we consider salvation as conditional on sacrifice, now we are saying that without sacrifice there can be no love and salvation. Secondly, in order to be saved, sacrifice can be romanticized and enforced. In the name of love for family, many women are forced to sacrifice. Thirdly, through this process of dramatization of sacrifice, violence can be justified. Finally, the horrific drama has become inevitable for fulfilling the atonement as the perfect crime with no charge.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza states, "If Jesus lived the *basileia* of God by festive table and egalitarian healing, then Jesus's sacrifice of life has more to do with the kingdom of God and less to do with the redemption of sin."[18] By the same token, Rosemary Ruether eschews the idea of redemptive suffering. Ruether argues that Jesus's death is the result of his commitment to a model of new leadership of service to others. Jesus's life redeems us, and his suffering is a by-product, not the cause, of redemption. The cross is a result of living, not the climax of living.

Being reminded that "Jesus's life is redemptive" is critical in the effort to redirect our focus from a single vision of atonement to a multifaceted view of it.[19] Jesus's compassionate living is viewed by feminists as maternal and feminine. Elizabeth Johnson argues that the crucified Jesus embodies the exact opposite of the patriarchal ideal of the powerful man. Thus, Jesus's maleness is prophecy announcing the end of patriarchy. Johnson claims that Jesus's passion and compassion resemble women's shedding blood for life in menstruation and giving birth. Jesus is the savior, not because of his physical maleness but because of his love.[20] However, Jesus is undeniably a male savior and the protagonist of the Christian atonement. Similarly, Kuanyin is the Bodhisattva of compassion, one who chose not to be Buddha but instead to stay with us to share in and heal our sufferings. Her compassionate living is the key to salvation. Kuanyin's sacrifice is likewise a by-product of her self-giving love, not the purpose or the condition of salvation. For Kuanyin, suffering invokes compassion, and compassion saves (heals) the sufferer.

3. Compassion is listening

Both Kuanyin and Mary are called "Lady of Compassion." Kuanyin in Chinese roughly translates as "the One who sees the cries of the world." Similarly, Mary listens to our prayers and prays with us to communicate with God. Here, listening is the crucial point of compassion. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, a Greek prayer that has been in use for 1,750 years begins with Mary's compassion: "Under your compassion we take refuge, *Theotokos*; do not overlook our prayers in the midst of tribulation, but deliver us from danger, O only pure, only blessed one."[21] The same verb "deliver" (*libera*, to redeem) is found in the *Lord's Prayer*: "deliver us from evil" (*libera nos a malo*). Mary is a savior figure, who delivers us from danger and protects us as the listener to our suffering.

Here is a Buddhist prayer to Kuanyin: "She *redeems* the multitude; She has great compassion; Thus she rules over the T'ai Mountain, and lives at the South Sea. She *saves* the poor, searching for their voices."[22] Kuanyin is the messianic figure who saves the world from suffering, dwells in mountains and rivers, listens the cries of suffering. The Process

Ecotheologian, Jay McDaniel calls God the Deep Listening. Deep Listening is not an act of knowing about; rather, it is an act of knowing with. In genuine listening, the dichotomy between subject and object is eliminated, because at a certain level of the listener's psyche, we become the other, the person listened to. "In the beginning is the listening, and this listening is with God and is God."[23]

If so, then I wonder why the lady of compassion, Kuanyin (觀音, seeing the cries) is not Chungyin (廳音, hearing sounds). The Chinese letter "Kuan (觀)" means not just "seeing (見)" but "seeing through," therefore, penetrating, immanence in the midst of sufferings of the world, "being with"; not just a cry for but a "cry with"; not just a prayer for but "prayer with." If the pain is so horrible, one cannot even make a sound. This was so for Jesus on the Cross, the silent cries of the oppressed, natural destruction, animals' sufferings, deforestation, and more – all of which are barely audible but visible. Yet they require our careful and responsive observation. Kuanyin refrains from entering Nirvana in order to come to the aid of others. She was so moved by the pain of the world's beings that her heart began to shake, and she knew that she could not yet leave the world behind with the vow of bodhisattva: "I will not reach final liberation until all other beings have been liberated."[24]

If compassion is defined as a virtue, it relates to the emotional capacities of empathy and sympathy for the suffering of others. The Latin word *cum* means "with" and *passion* means "suffering." Compassion means being with the suffering heart of the one who suffers. Compassion means being with the event, sharing the event, feeling the event, and actually becoming the event – as Mary, the suffering mother at the Cross, was witness to the Resurrection.

It would behoove us to shift our focus from Jesus to Mary in the Crucifixion. Traditionally, Christian theologies have focused on Jesus's suffering on the Cross. Christians traditionally believe that Jesus's Crucifixion brought salvation "once and for all." I believe we should instead refer to John 19:25-27 about the Crucifixion of Jesus and Mary's maternal sacrifice:

> 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, [a] here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Among four Gospels, John's description of the Crucifixion of Jesus reveals Mary's presence as a detailed picture even though it is still Jesus-centered. Three other Gospels do not even mention Jesus's name. I would argue that one should not read the Gospel of John under the *a priori* assumption that it is only Jesus's story, in which Mary just enhances Jesus's soteriological climax. Rather, it would benefit us to reread this story as "Mary's story." The alternative soteriology is to be saved in the presence of God by way of compassion. This is a soteriological model of restoration that is not simply maternal but transcendent. Compassion is what restores our awareness of God's presence. By transferring our soteriological focus from death to life, such as the life given and cared for by the mother, the way to life is no longer exclusively focused on an obedient death but on compassionate living, Life.

Compassion means being with the sufferer and becoming the other. The key to salvation is not sacrifice or suffering itself. Rather, suffering calls for compassion. Compassion heals and saves the sufferers. Compassion occurs when there is *passion* (suffering) and healing from it. It is as though a synergy when Mary prays with us, being with and becoming the other. The practice of synergy evokes compassion and the support of "community of communities" as "becoming together." Compassion is the Heart of God, and *God is the Heart*. The Heart of Compassion saves the world not once and for all, but continually and immanently, every day

within us. Compassion bridges *samsara* and *nirvana,* suffering and salvation. With compassion, *samsara* is transformed into *nirvana*. *Nirvana* has been postponed but can be attained now when we invite the compassionate heart in the midst of *samsara*.

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Notes

[1] Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, tr. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 63.

[2] Virginia Burrus, *Begotten, Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 145.

[3] Ibid., 144.

[4] *Sexes and Genealogies*, 62.

[5] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The essence of Christianity*, tr. George Eliot (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004), 74.

[6] Ibid., 75.

[7] Ibid., 75.

[8] Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, tr. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 170.

[9] Julia Kristeva, *Stabat Mater, The Kristeva Reader*, tr. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 49-79.

[10] Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatic I, 2*, 219.

[11] Mary J. Streufert, "Maternal Sacrifice as a Hermeneutics of the Cross," *Cross Examinations*, ed. Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 71.

[12] Daniela Schenker, *Kuan Yin: Accessing the Power of the Divine Feminine* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2007), 26.

[13] Chun-Fang Yu, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 294.

[14] Ibid., 295.

[15] Ibid., 299.

[16] *Kuan Yin: Accessing the Power of the Divine Feminine*, 16.

[17] Ibid., 21.

[18] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 95.

[19] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 27.

[20] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 161.

[21] Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Lost Gospel of Mary: The Mother of Jesus in Three Ancient Texts* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2007), 86.

[22] David R. Kinsley, *The Goddess Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 25-26.

[23] Jay McDaniel, *Gandhi's Hope: Learning from Other Religions as a Path to Peace* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 8.

[24] *Kuan Yin: Accessing the Power of the Divine Feminine*, 2.

Toward a Gender-Aware Approach to Abrahamic Dialogue, By Virginia A. Spatz

Abstract
Interfaith dialogue, in practice, frequently overlooks gender as a key element in faith experiences, despite academic recognition of gender's interaction with spirituality, religious experience, and faith community roles. Abrahamic dialogue often includes men and women with substantially gendered views and practices. Moreover, dialogue itself can raise gender issues for participants from egalitarian communities. Dialogue lacks a systematic approach to this reality. This article examines Leonard Swidler's popularly referenced "Dialogue Decalogue," along with some "new" commandments for feminist men proposed in 1973, to suggest the beginnings of a systematically gender-aware approach to Abrahamic dialogue.

Introduction

While academic circles have long recognized a variety of ways in which gender interacts with spirituality, religious experience, and roles in faith communities, the practice of interfaith dialogue generally fails to incorporate any such recognition. Guidelines for inter-religious and interfaith dialogue rarely discuss gender. Abrahamic dialogue has developed no systematic approach to gender as a key element in faith experience, although men and women – especially older participants and those from Muslim or orthodox Jewish communities – may bring substantially gendered views. Moreover, Abrahamic dialogue itself can raise gender issues for participants otherwise unaccustomed to facing these on a regular basis.

This article examines Leonard Swidler's popularly referenced "Dialogue Decalogue," along with some "new" commandments for feminist men proposed in 1973, to suggest the beginnings of a systematically gender-aware approach to Abrahamic dialogue. While text-based, this article makes no claims to "scholarship," and examples throughout are from the author's personal experience as a woman, a Jew, and a participant in interfaith worship and study.

Swidler's Decalogue and Gender Awareness

Background

One of the most commonly cited sets of guidelines for inter-religious and interfaith dialogue is "The Dialogue Decalogue."[1] The document is on reading lists for interfaith courses, including those at Auburn and Hartford Seminaries. It is used as the basis for many dialogues and has been copied and/or adapted many time since its publication.

Nowhere does Swidler's "Decalogue" mention women or gender, and most adaptations available by Internet search do not reference gender.[2] In 2004, Ian Markham, of Virginia Theological Seminary, developed "A New Decalogue," including a commandment to "recognize any political, economic, or gender issues in the dialogue." He explains:

> ...The need to confront the political, social, cultural, and gender issues in the dialogue is an imperative forced on us by our understanding of what is disclosed in a variety of faith traditions. The dialogue needs to operate in a justice framework.[3]

With rare exception (Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, 2008, e.g.),[4] this new commandment does not seem to have influenced basic guidelines for inter-religious and interfaith dialogue. Several points in Swidler's original "Decalogue" suggest avenues for exploring gender within interfaith dialogue.

Recognizing Oneself

Swidler's "Fifth Commandment" says that "each participant must define himself," adding: "Conversely—the one interpreted must be able to recognize herself in the interpretation."

Women and men in some Abrahamic faith communities live very different religious lives and must be offered opportunities to define themselves and recognize themselves in dialogue. Where gender-segregation in worship and other aspects of communal life is the norm, it is important to recognize gender-based religious sub-communities. In such cases, men and women participating in inter-religious dialogue with other faith communities may need to engage in some degree of "inter-religious" dialogue across gender divides in their own communities as well.

In some Jewish communities, for example, the ritual bath [*mikvah*] and observances at the new moon [*rosh chodesh*] play key roles in the spiritual lives of many women, individually and communally.[5] In addition, many Jewish women regularly recite psalms for a list of individuals, loved ones, and strangers, in need of healing or rescue, and connect with one another around this practice. Men might find meaning in *mikvah, rosh chodesh*, and/or reciting psalms, but these would not likely be defining elements for a male Jew. Thus, without careful attention to gender, some participants might never recognize themselves in the dialogue's portrait of "Jew." On the other hand, a woman who prepares for daily prayers with a prayer-shawl and *tefillin* (ritual items used only by men in some communities) and defines herself in terms of contributions to the local *minyan* [prayer quorum] might not recognize herself in a portrait outlined by "women's practices," such as those mentioned above.

Here are some examples of recognition questions for consideration in Abrahamic dialogue:

- Are participants selected with a view to including participants from male and female sub-communities?
- Are men and women, especially those from communities with strong gender divides, both given opportunities to define their own experiences?
- When a woman does not recognize herself in an interpretation of her faith, is her experience understood as variant or even aberrant? Or is it accepted as an equally valid experience of that faith?
- When a man does not recognize himself in an interpretation of his faith, is his experience adopted as traditional or more correct? Or is it accepted as an equally valid experience of that faith?

From Within

Swidler's "Tenth Commandment" requires participants to "attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology 'from within.'" Swidler adds, "Religion or ideology is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart, and 'whole being,' individual and communal." He cites Raimundo Panikkar (1918-2010), a prominent Roman Catholic proponent of inter-religious dialogue: "To know what a religion says, we must understand what it says, but for this we must somehow believe what it says." But the view 'from within' can be very different for women and men. And this raises a number of issues for dialogue.

An example: I helped organize an inter-denominational Jewish worship service, led by women, in solidarity with Women of the Wall,[6] an organization dedicated to the right of women to collective prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. After much discussion about inclusivity and equality, a planning group chose to adopt a version of the "women's prayer" structure used by Women of the Wall. This allowed orthodox women to participate but involved conducting the service—contrary to practice of many involved—as though there were no *minyan* present. This meant asking women who ordinarily participate in services without gender-based restrictions to

agree, for the purposes of this service, that they "do not count" toward a *minyan*.[7] It also meant asking men involved, regardless of their regular practice, to adopt the "non-counting" of women and related limitations on the worship service.

The decision and the reasons for it were included in advance publicity and in handouts and announcements on the day of the service. As the service unfolded, however, several women raised the possibility of following their own community's practice for determining a *minyan* so they could recite *kaddish* [sanctification of God's name] in honor of a deceased loved one. During the brief discussion about how to proceed, one woman angrily protested that the service was being conducted "based on a fiction anyway."

Most of the participants in this service later reported that they found the worship instructive as well as spiritually enriching. Even so, many egalitarian Jews said they experienced difficulty bringing themselves into a world where women were not counted—even temporarily and for a cause they supported. Meanwhile, some Orthodox Jews had trouble understanding why the "ordinary" practice of a women's prayer group involved so much angst.

- When approaching a gender-determined religion, how might someone committed to egalitarianism "believe what it says?" Is an egalitarian view optional for men? For women?
- When approaching an egalitarian religion, how might someone committed to gender-determining legal views "believe what it says?" Can full partnership between women and men be come and go?
- What are the implications for a person's 'whole being' in being asked to make this kind of shift?
- Can a woman kept apart from worship action—in a women's gallery or separate room—ever get 'within' the faith experience of dialogue brothers?
- Can a man—kept away women's prayer groups and worship spaces—ever get 'within' the faith experience of dialogue sisters?

Between Equals

Swidler's "Seventh Commandment" states that "dialogue can take place only between equals." It is clear that the author had in mind that no broad religious category—Jews, Christians, etc.—should view itself as superior to another. But gendered experience complicates the challenge of meeting as equals.

An example: Participants in the most recent "Building Abrahamic Partnerships" program at Hartford Seminary (June 2011) joined small group visits to mosques, synagogues, and churches. Many participants had attended *jum'ah* (Friday teaching and prayers) at the same, English-speaking mosque. Our mutual debriefing illustrated very different experiences for women and men.

Upon arrival, women gathered in an upstairs room. We were actively welcomed by the imam's wife and other regulars. We learned the mosque's history, including its history in the Nation of Islam. We were surrounded by preparations for the post-service meal, asked about our own worship communities, and encouraged to participate in future activities local and national. We watched the *khutbah* [sermon] and followed prayers via closed-circuit TV.

One Muslim woman objected to this segregation. Some Muslim and non-Muslim women reported conflicts of philosophical, psychological, and spiritual natures in regard to the forced separation, and one Muslim woman brought her objections to the male leadership. All women reported difficulty in following the prayers via TV.

Upon arrival, men gathered downstairs. They, I later learned, were greeted by regulars and listened to the *khutbah* and participated in *jum'ah* from the main prayer space. Male

visitors did not learn the mosque's history, were separated from food preparations, and did not report special encouragement to participate in future activities. While some men reacted strongly to the gender segregation, afterward in discussion, none reported these issues as their experience at the mosque.

Later, in debriefing, it was clear that the men's experience—devoid of history and some aspects of communal welcome—was quite different from the women's, for both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors. Abrahamic dialogue can acknowledge such gender-based differences within a larger faith community, treating all as equally valid. Or it can affirm, however unwittingly, experiences from only one side of a religious gender divide.

Further complicating matters, of course, are conflicts within our various religious communities regarding the extent to which current gendered practices are accepted or contested. Moreover, our current religious landscape includes denominational and post-denominational communities representing a variety of gender-based and egalitarian ideologies. When participants from communities with different views and practices meet, an Abrahamic dialogue can acknowledge the differences and treat all as equally valid—in theory, at least. In practice, however, gendered and egalitarian ideas do not easily coexist.

Here are some examples of equality questions for consideration in Abrahamic dialogue:

- Where women's and men's experiences differ by religious law as well as custom, are both sets of experiences presented and represented in dialogue?
- Are men's and women's experiences treated as "equal?" Or, is one gender's experience deemed "alternative" and another "normative?"
- Where there are intra-religious differences in approach to gender, are all accepted? Or is one declared "normative" and others "alternative?"
- Is the weight of gender-based discrimination, historical and contemporary, acknowledged?
- How can dialogue approach conflicts between egalitarian and gender-determined religious views?

Equalitarian and Gendered Tradition

"A Modest Beginning"

Nearly 40 years ago, Jewish feminist Esther Ticktin suggested "A Modest Beginning:"[8]

> The social reality I speak of is the existence of a significant number of new Jewish women: women who have not been socialized to accept the traditional exclusion of women from full and equal participation in the spiritual and intellectual life of Judaism. These new Jewish women now feel like strangers in the house of Israel and are begging, asking, demanding or screaming (depending on their temperament and tolerance for injustice) not to be shunted off behind a mehitza (partition), to be counted as equals in minyan [prayer quorum], to be called up to the Torah, to be allowed and trained to lead the congregation as slichei tzibur ["messengers of the community"]...The excluded are not, after all, the unknown and unknowing strangers; they are your mothers, sisters, wives and daughters whose eyes have been opened and who now know that they have been kept out...[9]

Ticktin argues that the injunction against oppressing a stranger prohibits excluding women from equal participation in religious life. Moreover, she explains, Jewish law forbids benefiting from another's exclusion.

Back in 1973, Ticktin asked men to consider the effect of exclusion on their sisters and

advocated for viewing egalitarian practices as more essential than custom, "based more or less on the prevailing mores of the non-Jewish world." Instead, she said, egalitarian principles must have the weight of law. The article concludes with a proposal that the Jewish community "move in the direction of making [these new laws] binding on ourselves." Nearly four decades later, the Jewish community has made substantial strides in this direction but has yet to meet this challenge entirely.

"Partnership" practices have evolved in the Jewish community in recent years to allow women more leadership opportunities; a small number of orthodox women have been ordained with titles approaching that of "rabbi." Women are still excluded from central roles in most Orthodox Jewish worship, however. Similarly, Muslim women are largely excluded from worship leadership, as are some Christian women. Consequently, Abrahamic dialogue today still faces, and sometimes precipitates, the "stranger" experience Ticktin describes in "A Modest Beginning." Therefore, Abrahamic partnerships may need to consider proposals similar to those Ticktin made in 1973.

"A Modest Continuation"

Here are some proposed guidelines based on Ticktin's decades-old commandments:

1) Faith communities with a commitment to gender equity must represent that as a religious principle of weight, rather than a custom easily altered for the sake of cooperation. In the spirit of Swidler's "Seventh Commandment" (meeting "equal with equal"), neither egalitarianism nor tradition should be understood to trump the other. Both must be presented, by their practitioners, as authentic expressions of faith.

2) Where women are excluded from aspects of a community's religious life—from physical prayer space, from worship leadership, from scholarship and teaching opportunities, from community leadership or ordination—acknowledge that. Let women and men express the effect, from within, of any exclusion they experience and define their own experiences from wherever their religious lives are centered.

3) Where inter-religious dialogue asks participants to understand and/or temporarily adopt practices and philosophies that exclude women, acknowledge that. Let women and men express the effect of any exclusion they experience.

4) Where inter-religious dialogue asks participants to understand and/or temporarily adopt practices and philosophies that give men and women unfamiliar roles, acknowledge that. Let women and men express the effect of any alteration of roles they experience.

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Notes

[1] Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20:1 (Winter 1983).

[2] Cf, e.g.: The Institute of Interfaith Dialog [http://www.interfaithdialog.org/reading-room-main2menu-27/115-interreligious-and-intercultural-dialogue-guidelines]; Jewish Community Center of Victoria (Australia) [http://www.jccv.org.au/uploads/JCCV Interfaith Guidelines.pdf]; Anglican Church of Canada [http://www.anglican.ca/faith/eir/idf-guidelines]

[3] Ian Markham, "A New Decalogue," Lecture three of the Teape Lectureship in India (December 2004).

[4] Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, "Guiding Principles for Interreligious Relations" (Adopted February, 11, 2008).

[5] Traditionally, most "time-bound" commandments – including participating in public prayers – are not incumbent on women. On the other hand, there are three commandments specifically enjoined on women: the laws of family purity (including visiting the mikvah after every menstrual period), "taking challah" (offering a small portion of the dough when baking), and the kindling of sabbath candles (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a). The monthly festival of the new moon is particularly associated with women. See, for example, this article at My Jewish Learning. http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Rosh_Chodesh/Women.shtml

[6] http://womenofthewall.org.il/

[7] In egalitarian Jewish congregations, men and women participate equally in reciting and leading prayers, in reading from and reciting blessing over the Torah. When a minyan is not present in any congregation–including in orthodox women's prayer groups–certain prayers are not recited.

[8] http://www.interfaithandgender.org/amodestbeginning.htm

[9] Ticktin, Esther, "A Modest Beginning," in *The Jewish Woman: An Anthology. Response: A Contemporary Jewish Review*, Number 18, Jewish Student Press Service (Summer 1973).

The Female Divine Figure within Several World Religions, By Dorothy Yoder Nyce

Abstract
This article, with Mary the Mother of Jesus as a starting point, examines the female divine in several notable living faiths. To be fixed on one deity or truth claim can imply that one alone is superior, and that by extension others are weak or false. Little can be known of the wisdom or strength of the plural when diversity is ignored, for pluralism responds to diversity. Pluralism prompts religiously faithful yet open-minded people to relate with those whose beliefs differ. As they increase knowledge of and sensitivity to others' god or goddess concepts, personal wellbeing or neighborly good might more easily emerge.

Introduction

Ann Lee, Anandamayi Ma, Ammachi, Mata Gujari (Gujri), and Kwan Yin are rarely named in one sentence. They exemplify what this article seeks to describe in more detail.

Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers, migrated to America from England in 1774. A few influential followers, not she herself, later credited her with being the "second appearing of Christ in the female."[1] Sri Ananda Ma,[2] (Ananda Ma, 1896-1982) saint and guru from the Bengal area of India, traveled extensively as a pilgrim and teacher. Gifted with divine power and knowledge, though never having studied, she healed others and experienced ecstatic states. Thousands gathered—to be in her presence, observe her compassion, hear her chant divine names, or teach that "everything is One" (*advaita*, nonduality). Ammachi (Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi), a currently active Hindu guru known as the "hugging saint," travels the world followed by thousands. Her remarkable memory, stamina for continuous hours of giving "audience" to the loyal, and wisdom shared in addresses are valued by disciples.

Honored among Sikhs, Mata Gujari mothered the tenth and final Guru, the noted Gobind Singh. With her husband, the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, Mata founded the city of Anandpur in India's Punjab state. Guru Tegh established for Sikhs the moral duty to protect the rights of people of all faiths. In 1705, when Sikhs fled Anandpur, Mata Gujari and two young grandsons became separated from the group. Betrayed by a Muslim officer, they were arrested and imprisoned in a cold tower in Delhi. Mata Gujari prepared the boys to appear in court, urging them to remain steadfast to the Sikh faith. Bricked up alive inside a wall, they died the same day that she was martyred. Sikhs credit Mata for causing Sikhism to continue through instilling loyalty to the Dharma in descendents.[3]

Taoism had a celestial mother figure whose womb was known as the cosmos; this Divine Feminine was thought to have resurrected in the figure of Kwan Yin. Kwan Yin, the Buddhist goddess of Compassion, chose "to stay on the wheel of life to help other people achieve spiritual enlightenment."[4] Like *Shekinah* for Judaism or the Virgin Mary among some Christians, she is presence within all. Ever engaged in the world, her energy and compassion saves and enables others in their spiritual work. Somewhat like the universal Holy Spirit, Kwan Yin guards and teaches Buddhists to listen, be open to serve, and cultivate compassion.

To what extent might these women known for sacred actions represent the Divine? At one level, for people who believe that all human beings are created in God's image, the question of symbolizing might seem moot. For loyal followers, special significance may extend to such honored ones due to distinct, beyond average human qualities. They truly inspire faith or motivate good will. For those with a firm view of one God alone, as Allah, to include other figures might risk diminishing the Supreme One.[5]

Increasingly, a pluralistic framework that includes the female divine figure can help people realize the limits of a particular religious focus and truth. To own the relative (limited) nature of a religion may help a person loyal to one faith also be open to the fact that other faith

systems also prompt members to relate to the Ultimate or God within. Mindful and knowing oneself, a person can become freer to inquire into, respect, and learn from others whose central, sacred truths and practices differ. To understand another's self-understanding or universe, while confessing distinct beliefs, enables solidarity and liberation. Such trust fortifies pluralism, part of time-honored reality. Granted, major religions today are largely seen as patriarchal in focus. But, if honoring the female through divine figures might prompt women and men to be more balanced in crediting each other's worth, why forego the wisdom of inclusion? This article pursues that task through insight into Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism.

On Crediting the Sacred

An issue hovering over content is whether and how female divine or holy figures affect human, notably woman's, sacred being. Readers are invited to ponder the impact of truly perceiving what devotion to a female figure or goddess might offer a devotee and, with the same honesty, how devotion only to a male-oriented god concept limits views of both human and divine. Not until living in India in the 1960s did this writer engage the female divine figure more seriously.

Remarkably, thirty-four direct or indirect references to Mary the mother of Jesus occur in the Qur'an. Sura XIX is titled "Marium," its content focused on her. Although Allah alone is divine for Muslims, Mary's purity and uniqueness are nonetheless distinctly valued, beginning with the miracle of her own childhood.[6] Nourished by angels, she had daily visions of God. Greatness appeared also in her response to Gabriel's announcement of her role as mother: "When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?" Despite physical facts, she wonders when the birth will occur. Convinced that Allah creates what Allah desires, Mary's Jewish piety suggests abandon to God's will.[7] With the Arabic title of *Islam* meaning "submission," Muslims resonate with her willing spirit. They see it as devotion or worship, as crediting divine authority.

The Qur'an provides further details.[8] From a place of withdrawal, Mary gives birth; tired and sad, she invokes death. The divine Spirit of truth brings comfort: Mary's thirst is quenched by a stream under her feet; she eats dates. When she faces slander on returning to her people, the infant speaks; he defends his mother from the cradle. Such a miracle persuades Muslims that the Spirit pervades the child. Mahomet recognizes Mary as chosen by God to be linked to her son.[9] The Qur'an later mentions Mary's last years and ascension to heaven. But, because she is human, "Jesus son of Mary" cannot be Son of God. While beliefs of religions, like that one, differ, to live with contradictions and ambivalence may enable openness. More female models of holiness would likely enhance theology and worship that may have in part historically relied on patriarchal dominance.

How then address human sexual dominance and its effect on understanding the sacred in any religion, for god-concept or for people? Not female or male, biblical divinity reflects activity and qualities that characterize human beings—whether making and keeping covenants or forming and building relationships. Whether making garments, giving birth, or winnowing grain; compassion, joy, or judgment. Since all people reflect God's image, all need to claim and endorse that fact with comparable strength. When primarily the Supreme One is described or experienced as masculine or men are valued more highly as humans or for leadership, patriarchy reigns. For Jews, along with Christians and Muslims who followed, the basic understanding of human creation has been flawed. However, to name the first, non-sexual being "earth creature," which is faithful to the Hebrew text, with distinct sexuality following simultaneously, could prompt human equity. Hebrew scholar Phyllis Trible taught that condition of created goodness decades ago.[10] For equity, each is dependent on the other, as light and darkness, for identity. Each is created to responsibly care for the earth and other life. Each represents the divine. The divine, being beyond human limits, is not identified with one more than the other. For true equity to emerge, all need genuinely to desire it.

Women and men address the concern for equity—Riffat Hassan, Yvonne Yazbeck, and John Esposito among Muslims, Hindu Arvind Sharma, Jewish scholar Susannah Heschel, Christian Leonard Swidler, and Buddhist Rita Gross, to name a few others. Noted writer Rosemary Radford Ruether speaks to the issue at hand: "It is idolatrous to make males more 'like God' than females. It is blasphemous to use the image and name of the holy to justify patriarchal domination."[11] Theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza explains her broader term *kyriarchy*—rule of domination or power that divides as with master, lord, head—including but beyond sex/gender.[12] Perhaps a corrective eon will yet follow patriarchy to credit the sacred more broadly. If God will bring together people of all nations before the world's end, might people of faith be gracious enough to learn from other living faiths, in part to bring more balance and wholeness to concepts of the Ultimate?

Christian Inheritance of Judaic Female Divinity

What might Christians observe from their Jewish heritage? Hebrew scripture includes about forty references to the phrase "Yahweh and his Asherah," the singular or plural forms of the word *asherah*, or its symbol—a wooden pole or cultic tree. Studies have examined a thirteenth century BCE ewer (pitcher), sacred storage jars, and inscriptions of "Yahweh and his Asherah" etched into stone. The latter appear from ninth or eighth century BCE sites southwest of the Dead Sea. Scholar Judith Hadley[13] traces the goddess Asherah from Syria (as Asratum) to Ugarit, where she was the head goddess. In Canaanite myth, Asherah or the Great Mother Goddess was known as consort of the chief god El. When Yahweh became the name of Israel's replacement God for El,[14] Asherah carried over too. So, prior to monarchy, Israel engaged Asherah's cult; by the tenth century, Israelite worship included devotion to a female figure.

The author's latest book, *Multifaith Musing: Essays and Exchanges*, includes imagined exchanges between people of different Christian groups or living faiths. Diverse themes include water, crossing cultures, scriptures, religious conflict, and goddesses. A brief excerpt from the chapter titled "Asherah from the Hebrew Bible: Story of a Divine Pair Revoked" follows. After an exchange focused on a number of Hindu goddesses, two university students—a male Hindu Indian and a female Christian visitor to India—dialogue here (learn from each other) about ancient Jewish Asherah's presence:

> **Utpal**: How about the second jar?
> **Marie**: On one side of *Pithos B* appears: "Amaryau says: Say to my Lord (X): I bless you by Yahweh [our guardian] and by his Asherah."
> **Utpal**: A clear blessing formula.
> **Marie**: The reverse side is of more interest. Five worshipers appear in procession, their hands raised. The inscription alongside suggests: "I bless you by Yahweh of Teman (a region) and by his asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with (you) my lord."
> **Utpal**: A more profound blessing.
> **Marie**: What's more, it states the blessing form that Christians now call the "Doxology." We might conclude worship services with it!
> **Utpal**: And you'd never known that the same blessing sent your religious ancestors on their way, grateful for Yahweh and his Asherah!
> **Marie**: Precisely. To learn that a remnant of loyalty to Asherah persists in my worship experience prods me to pause also, when meeting a Hindu goddess form today.
> **Utpal**: We can all recall visual and tangible symbols that connect people of faith with the One God. Most people who revere an object before them know that it's not actually divine. It reminds them that the Ultimate constantly enters human experience. . . . [15]

Power patterns exist. Hebrew prophets Amos and Hosea had not denounced the Asherah object. Hosea later advised Israel to call the entire people of God "God's wife." Since men filled primary leadership roles, women as a whole could be therein overlooked. A similar male power pattern took place after Jesus ascended; with patriarchy well established, the collective church was named the "bride of Christ." Whether Christians since then confront the direct linkage of maleness with divinity through Jesus might be discussed; such attitudes and values continue to shape believers.

We next note Jewish prophet Jeremiah's scene. Three-fifths of his chapters contain material about some form of forsaking Yahweh, of idolatry. But diverse, visible reflections of the divine mattered to Israelites. Details of burning incense to the queen of heaven, kneading and offering cakes, and pouring libations to gods concentrate in Chapter 44. Patrons served not mere prostitutes but a class of sacred or 'undefiled' woman called *zonah*. These or the cultic pole symbol—a tree trunk with its branches 'lopped off'—could appear at most sanctuaries, by the wayside, "on every high hill and under every green tree,"[16] at a threshing floor, or by the city gate. Israelite women might also have held small, clay figurines for assurance during childbirth or when desperate to survive a natural disaster. Symbols may have expressed the holy better than words for some people with whom Yahweh seemed less real.[17]

E. O. James[18] contends that "nowhere in the Ancient near East were goddesses of fertility…more dominant and persistent than among Canaanites, Phoenicians, and Hebrews." Not until exile did Judaism rid itself of the Mesopotamian mother goddess or fertility symbols. Complementing Yahweh, the entrenched symbols had met psychological need. For over three centuries—first introduced into the Jerusalem Temple by King Rehoboam until exile in 586—the divine female form enhanced cultic life. Morton Smith argues that syncretism persisted even as the Yahweh-alone covenant spread.[19] People need not doubt the 'staying power' of goddess worship within popular Judaism. Merlin Stone suggests, however, that generally "the sex of the deity [was] determined by the sex of those in power."[20]

We next briefly highlight Jewish Wisdom literature. Wisdom (*hokhmah* in Hebrew and *sophia* in Greek) takes on the role that *Shekinah* formerly filled during wilderness, Tabernacle and early Temple years. *Shekinah* was the all-pervading radiance, power, or divine presence of God in the world; she signifies God's dwelling within. The Hebrew book Proverbs reflects passion about acquiring Wisdom. In the first chapter, personified Wisdom calls aloud from the street. She laments about how the fools who hate knowledge and fail to fear Yahweh are rejecting her message. Over thirty verses of Chapter 8 find Wisdom eager to be heard from the city gate. As God did for kings, God had bestowed power and sound judgment on Wisdom. Surpassing others with words of truth, Wisdom had been fashioned by Yahweh; Proverbs 8:24-31 records her being delighted to accompany the Creator in crafting. Elizabeth Johnson's theology points to divine, holy Mystery. Aware of how oppressive and idolatrous speech about God can be when male dominant (obscuring divine height, depth, and breadth), she welcomes the biblical figure of Wisdom/Spirit.[21] But, early church writers transferred details about personified Wisdom to describe Jesus. What Judaism had said of Sophia, Christian hymn makers and epistle writers say of Jesus. How Judaism described Sophia's dealing with people, gospels describe as Jesus's acts. For example, calling the burdened to come, find rest; befriending the outcast or caring as a mother bird; nourishing through bread, wine, and water. Through such shifts, strengths of Spirit/Sophia were diminished. That type of shift occurred again during the early Reformation when qualities that described Mary for Roman Catholics, Protestants focused instead on Jesus.

Almost needless to say, the Christian heritage from Judaism has been great. Some cultures retained honor for the Virgin Mary within their belief systems, but many Christians have focused on a male Jesus. The author wishes to study how such a focus has diminished

Jesus's main focus on God's inclusive kingdom. Such a study will pursue also the wisdom if *kindom* replaced *kingdom,* with a focus on relating rather than ruling.

Examples of the Goddess or Female Divine in Hindu Experience

Within the major religion of Hinduism, goddess worship is prominent. Names of either gods or goddesses can stand for the underlying Ultimate Reality. Well over a century ago, Max Muller coined the term "henotheism" to explain how a religion explains or justifies multiple deities. Rita Gross explains how, although many deities can be real, only the one being worshiped at a given moment is psychologically 'real.' She believes that to comprehend such plurality without competition, western people need to rise above limited bias for oneness.[22] She might well have recommended the three religions with a strong view of God alone—the monotheism of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—to all re-examine their strong bias of oneness.

Yearly, Hindus who worship Lakshmi, Goddess of Abundance or Wealth, welcome her into their homes through special rituals and ceremonies. Lakshmi, linked also to fertility, is known alongside the preserver god named Vishnu. In rural settings, after thoroughly cleaning the house, old clay pots are replaced. Farm animals are washed in a nearby river. Their space in an attached barn gets cleaned and dried before women resurface all floors and walls, outside first. They swirl a mixture of clay with cow dung. After grinding rice with a granite rolling pin, they form it into a paste to use as paint. Using cotton cloths, women creatively paint on most surfaces auspicious symbols for Lakshmi: sheaves of rice, rice mounds, lotuses, elephants, and peacocks. Finally, footprints are painted to suggest the goddess's arrival. With meager furniture moved from the main room, a shrine is drawn on the floor and a wooden altar placed in it, surrounded with lotus flowers and a Lakshmi image. A small black stone from the *puja* (worship) room is added to a large pot, unhusked rice, red silk, and garlands of marigolds. The oldest woman chants a welcome to Lakshmi as other women howl in high voices. As the camphor ignites, Lakshmi 'enters' the image formed. "What only seconds before was a sacred object is now the Goddess herself." During the next two days family men join for prayer and feasting in the home-become-temple.[23]

The goddess Lakshmi is also honored during the five-day festival of Diwali. Hindu festivals combine legends, myths, and traditions. Earthen oil lamps illuminate pathways and rooflines. With homes cleaned and utensils polished, streets and public buildings lighted, and new clothes purchased, merchants and traders join to celebrate. Through songs and prayers, people express goodwill, hoping to be rid of poverty and to overcome ignorance. This splendid Indian festival commends the supreme energy, grace, and glory of the goddess Lakshmi. It validates female strength alongside male competence.

Questions surface: How do we show interest in or validate sacred meaning for others? What benefits might non-Hindus gain from learning about goddess worship practiced in living faiths? Do Christians know enough about Hindu thought and practice to judge it? Hindus often note Christian ignorance or arrogance. Hinduism, the third largest religion in the world, has 800 million loyal members in India (more than double the U.S. population).[24] Accounts of Hindu goddesses often reflect human experience common to both women and men.

Not only are gods and goddesses deeply honored in India. Consider Mira Bai who lived during the 1500s.[25] A saint, mystic, and famous poet, she exhorts the way of *bhakti* or deep devotion. Fully devoted to the *avatar*[26] Krishna, she gave up her princely husband to live with kindred, devoted *bhaktas* known for equality and care for the poor. She also chose a Muslim to be her Guru (religious mentor). Traveling to many temples sacred to Krishna, she sang and danced her devotion. A "favored symbolic figure" of Gandhi's, Mira Bai's nonviolent non-cooperation prompted his being her disciple. She symbolized for him, and for many others who honor her or her poetry, the "power of love."

Clearly, people will question whether or not Hindu goddesses or female religious figures benefit women. Adherents themselves will need to respond. And responses will vary because of

diverse, ambiguous, and complex issues. Anne Elvey reviewed the book titled *Is the Goddess a Feminist?*,[27] in which writers address political, social, and religious aspects. They find contradictions in goddess power and lives lived by women. Although the Hindu religion honors more goddesses than any other religion, traditional features also characterize the faith and many devotees. How women identify with goddesses and how they use their images affect influence. So does a person's perception of *shakti* (female energy or power) or how she responds if not thought worthy of symbolizing the sacred. This writer nudges being broadly informed about living faiths.

Conclusion

Issues raised in this essay will linger. Prompted by looking to Mary the Mother of Jesus, people learn about patterns with divinity that express faith in diverse ways. Buddhist scholar and practitioner Rita Gross, with decades of interfaith experience, thinks that female names and images of deity are crucial for women's wellbeing.[28] When either women or men are thought unworthy of symbolizing divinity, wellbeing or self-image for all become factors. From ancient Judaism, we learn that those who honored the queen of heaven felt that they lacked nothing until they quit pouring out libations to her.[29] J. Severino Crtoatto suggests that female metaphors—*Shekinah* glory, Wisdom, and Sophia—express "the other side" of divinity.[30] From Hindus, we learn that both women and men honor both gods and goddesses. Female features of deities matter to those who give prime loyalty to Vishnu or Shiva, and male features matter to systems that highlight female *shakti* or *Devi* energy. Most adherents look to a particular reflection of divinity with whom they connect for a given point in time.

May we honor the divine in Mary and ever explore and engage insight from diverse, living faiths to communicate with divinity.

Dorothy Yoder Nyce is from Goshen, IN. Formerly a teacher, she continues as a researcher, author, and activist for justice. She has lived in India several times, toward a total of six years, where the interfaith reality gained close attention. Her latest book is titled *Multifaith Musing: Essays and Exchanges*. She presented much of this paper at a conference titled "My Spirit Rejoices in God, My Savior: Mary in Anabaptist Dress" held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, IN, March 2011.

Notes

[1] Jean M. Humez, "Lee, Ann," in *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, Serinity Young, ed., vol. 2 (NY: Macmillan Ref USA, 1999), 577-78.

[2] Karen Kechillis Prentiss, "Anandamayi Ma (Ananda Ma)," in *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*. Serinity Young, ed., vol. 1 (NY: Macmillan Ref USA, 1999), 29. See also "Sri Anandamayi Ma," http://www.anandamayi.org/ashram/1i.htm; retrieved 3/21/2011, 9 pp.

[3] N.A. "Mata Gujari ji (1624-1705 A.C.)," http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/martyrs/matagujari.html, retrieved 3/21/2011, 3 pp. [With thanks to Sikh friend Surinder Sahni's introduction to Mata.]

[4] Sandy Boucher, *Discovering Kwan Yin, Buddhist Goddess of Compassion* (Boston: Beacon Pr, 1999), 5, 68-9.

[5] The author wishes to use diverse names for God-ness in this essay, in part to encourage naming divine breadth rather than limit or stereotype as through male pronouns, and in part to honor the richness of divinity—of name and form—known among loyal Hindus (like Lakshmi or Krishna for the Universal Being) and Jews (El Shaddai or Yahweh/Adonai for the Ultimate).

[6] Sura 3:34-37.

[7] Sura 19:20. To compare the Luke text (1:34): "How can this be since I am a virgin?" The implied "Here I am. . . So be it" (*fiat* in Latin) of Luke 1:38 does not directly appear in the Muslim text.

[8] Sura 19:22-36.

[9] Giancarlo Finazzo, "The Virgin Mary in the Koran," http://www.ewtn.com/library/mary/marykran.htm, retrieved 10/25/2010, 4 pp.

[10] Phyllis Trible. Chapters 1 & 4 in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Pr, 1978).

[11] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Pr, 1983), 23.

[12] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Pr, 1992), 8, 117, 122-25, 201.

[13] Judith Hadley, "Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud,'" *Vetus Testamentum*, xxxvii/2, 1987, 180-213; See also Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ Pr, 2000).

[14] YHWH, Exod. 3:14.

[15] Dorothy Yoder Nyce, *Multifaith Musing Essays and Exchanges* (Nappanee, IN: self, 2010), 106-7.

[16] Dt. 12:2; I K 14:12; 2 K 16:4, 17:10; Isa 30:25; 57:5, 7; 65:7; Jer. 2:20, 3:6, 13; 17:2; Ez 6:13; 20:28; 34:6; Hos 4:13; 2 Chr 28:4.

[17] Dorothy Yoder Nyce, "Probing the Shape of Syncretism known to Jeremiah." Paper for Seminary course on Jeremiah, Prof. Millard C. Lind, Assoc Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Dec 1978, 46 pp.

[18] E. O. James, *The Tree of Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 181.

[19] Morton Smith, Chapter IV in "The Survival of the Syncretistic Cult of Yahweh," in *Palestinian Parties that Shaped the Old Testament* (NY: Columbia Univ Pr., 1971), 82-98.

[20] Merlin Stone, *When God was a Woman* (NY: Dial Pr, 1976), 53, 51.

[21] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (NY: Crossroad, 1993), Part III, 124-87.

[22] Rita M. Gross, *A Garland of Feminist Reflections Forty Years of Religious Exploration*, (Los Angeles: Univ of Calif Pr, 2009), 145, note # 4 p 328, 152. She recommends reading Laurel C. Schneider's *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (London and NY: Routledge, 2008).

[23] This entire paragraph draws from Stephen P. Huyler, "Embracing the Ephemeral: Transitory Images," in *Meeting God Elements of Hindu Devotion* (New Haven: Yale Univ Pr, 1999), 179; See also his description of the Lakshmi celebration in an urban setting 176-83 in Huyler, "Bidulata Welcoming the Goddess," in *Daughters of India Art and Identity* (NY: Abbeville, Pr Publ., 2008), 116-27.

[24] Jaclyn Youhana, "Religion is third largest in the world," from *The Journal Gazette*, titled "Ind. seeing gradual growth of Hindu impact," in *The Goshen News*, [Goshen, IN], Nov. 8, 2010, A8.

[25] Madhu Kishwar & Ruth Vanita, "Poison to Nectar: The Life and Work of Mirabai," *Manushi*, No. 50, 51-52, 1989, 74-93. [See also Yoder Nyce, *Multifaith*..., 122.]

[26] An *avatar(a)* suggests the descent (or advent) of a god to earth. Such a figure descends in order to help people or show a path to salvation. Karel Werner, *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism* (Chicago: NTC Contemporary Pub Co, 1997), 38. Originally published in Surrey, UK by Curzon Pr, 1994.

[27] Anne Elvey, review of *Is the Goddess a Feminist?,* Alf Hiltebeitel and Kathleen M. Erndl, eds. 3 pp, http://www.politicsandculture.org/2010/08/10/anne-elvey-review; retrieved 4/28/2012.

[28] Gross, 173.

[29] Jer. 44:17-18.

[30] J. Severino Crtoatto, "Recovering the Goddess Reflections on God-Talk," in *Toward a New Heaven & a New Earth, Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, Fernando F. Segovia, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 33-53.

Royal Righteousness in the Ramayana? Faithful Leadership in India's Mythic Masterpiece, By Benjamin B. DeVan

Abstract
Reading revered, sacred, classic, and popular religious texts and stories together is one significant way to enrich inter-religious relationships. This essay explores the *Ramayana* as a Hindu resource for inter-religious conversation by examining the virtues or *dharma* espoused and exemplified by its leading characters. How do the *Ramayana*'s royal exemplars personify qualities essential to faithful leadership? What among their virtues might inter-religious and other leaders apply in their own spheres of influence? Doubling as a companion or discussion guide, this article utilizes R.K. Narayan's user-friendly *Penguin Classics* edition as one succinct and accessible narrative for multi-faith settings.[1]

Introduction

How does one lead with integrity? Was there ever a perfect person, a righteous ruler?[2] Jews may point to Moses, Christians to Jesus, Muslims to Muhammad, and Buddhists to Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.[3]

In the Hindu tradition, perhaps no model is set forth so regularly as Lord Rama, the central figure in the *Ramayana*, India's mythic masterpiece. Unbeknownst to some of the *Ramayana*'s characters (and initially to Rama himself), Rama appears to the reader as the incarnation or avatar of the Hindu god, Vishnu.[4] As Vishnu's avatar, Rama for many Indians literally embodies goodness, righteousness, duty, and truth—commitment to *dharma*.[5]

One fruitful way to enrich or initiate inter-religious encounters is by reading revered, sacred, classic, or popular religious texts and stories together. In an Abrahamic context, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament professor Ellen F. Davis and Imam Abdullah Antepli (who once lead a prayer for United States Congress) co-taught a Duke University elective, "Listening Together: Christians and Muslims reading Scriptures.[6] Halfway around the world from Duke, Carl Medearis describes how Druze, Muslim, and Christian Lebanese Parliamentarians selected Jesus as a noteworthy exemplar they all admired and read the Gospel of Luke together.[7]

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a (or perhaps *the*) Hindu text frequently chosen for this purpose, popular for the past thirty years or so even in American business settings.[8] Indian intellectuals including Purushottama Bilimoria, Gurcharan Das, and B.K. Matilal have investigated *dharma* in the Indian epic *Mahabharata* within which the *Bhagavad Gita* is situated.[9] Relatedly, the *Mahabharata* Book III: Vana Parva alludes to *Ramayana* episodes and characters.

But the *Bhagavad Gita* is not the only Hindu text useful for discussions surrounding leadership, for introducing non-Hindus to Hindu sacred stories, or as a resource for interreligious conversations. The *Ramayana* with its *dharma* leitmotif is especially suited for dialogues on leadership, naturally sparking discussion about which characters are worthy of emulation, and in what capacities. In his essay, "Hindu Ethics in the Ramayana," Roderick Hindery agrees: "[i]n the original *Valmiki-Ramayana*, listeners, viewers, or readers must distinguish for themselves which deeds of Rama and others are meant to be normative and which are proposed as anti-types."[10]

Ramayana retellings abound in South Asian culture and lore, and controversy persists regarding which, if any, are authoritative.[11] The "original" Ramayana is often attributed to the poet Valmiki, who may have heard it from the sage Narada, or according to legend from a grieving bird cawing over her arrow-pierced dying mate.[12] The Tamil poet Kamban (c: 1,000 CE) assimilating and interpreting Valmiki exclaimed, "I am verily like the cat sitting on the edge of an ocean of milk, hoping to lap it all up."[13] R.K. Narayan's *Penguin Classics* edition draws heavily from Kamban, extolling love and reverence for Rama as a youth, disciple, brother, lover, ascetic, and warrior: "In every role we watch him [Rama] with awe and wonder."[14]

But Rama is not merely a youth, disciple, brother, lover, ascetic, or warrior. These identities anticipate or complement Rama's role as righteous king. And Rama is not the only auspicious royal exemplar in the *Ramayana*. Rama's father Dasaratha, stepmother Kaikeyi, half-brothers Lakshmana and Bharatha, beloved Sita; the imperial birds Jatayu and Sampathi, and the monkey majesties Hanuman, Sugreeva, Vali, Angada, and Tara; even the demon king Ravana and Ravana's siblings are relevant to consider.[15] This multiplicity of exemplars facilitates the expression and development of myriad insights evoked by vibrant inter-religious encounters.

Narayan's *Ramayana* is one accessible, affordable, and cogent English rendering for adult readers.[16] Narayan is a native Indian easily utilized for Hindu and non-Hindu interlocutors possessing a basic command of English. Diana Eck, director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard, uses Narayan to stimulate conversation among undergraduate and graduate students, some with no prior *Ramayana* exposure.[17] At 192 pages, Narayan's English retelling is more succinct than others by William Buck (461 pages), Krishna Dharma (480 pages), Ramesh Menon (720 pages), Arshia Sattar (696 pages), Kamala Subramaniam (695 pages), and the multivolume Princeton edition by Goldman, Goldman, and van Nooten where the sixth volume alone is 1632 pages.[18]

Dharma and Dasaratha

Narayan opens by introducing Rama's human father, King Dasaratha, as a compassionate and courageous ruler loved and honored by his subjects, whose one sorrow was childlessness.[19] Fearing to sire no successor, Dasaratha seeks divine assistance and marries three women. Kausalya births Rama. Kaikeyi births Bharatha. Sumithra delivers twin sons Lakshmana and Sathrugna. Dasaratha arranges the best tutoring available, and happily watches his children mature.[20] When Rama begins to win his peoples' hearts, gently inquiring after their wellbeing and showing empathy for their everyday concerns, the people respond, "With you as our Prince and your great father as our guardian, we lack nothing."[21]

Dasaratha administers justice and fulfills other duties of state without begrudging less glamorous responsibilities of public service.[22] He shelters his kingdom from evil, is hospitable to visitors and emissaries, and supports the holy sages. When the sage Viswamithra asks to take the adolescent Rama and Lakshmana demon hunting, Dasaratha lets them go, recognizing that his sons will not and must not be compelled to perpetually tarry in childhood.

Viswamithra spins a yarn for the boys as they travel, "Thataka's story," illustrating how parents can be (initially) holy, filled with valor, purity, and wild energy; but their offspring may be scoundrels or worse. To adapt the Biblical Proverbs 22:6, parents can "train a child up in the way s/he should go," but each person is finally accountable for his or her own actions. Nor does past virtue ensure sustained integrity.[23]

Unlike Dasaratha's more consistent virtue, the once pure Thataka grows bitter and cruel after her sons are punished for their devilry. She becomes more dreadful than Yama, the god of death, who is said to take life only at a ripe time.[24] Viswamithra displays Thataka and her sons as negative examples—*a-dharma*. Rama debates the wisdom and justice of lethally confronting Thataka, yet determines that allowing Thataka's rampages to continue might be a greater evil than defeating or even killing her.[25] Readers can inquire into whether Rama acts rightly and the repercussions of Viswamithra's counsel for Rama and Lakshmena's facing more formidable foes.

Karma, Kaikeyi, and Kooni

Soon after his first demon slaying, Rama meets Sita, a very different woman from the self-abased Thataka. Rama is drawn to Sita with all his heart but, "If she were married he would instinctively have recoiled from her."[26] Rama restrains himself even after betrothing Sita, awaiting their fathers' blessings and wedding ceremony.[27]

By this time, the aged Dasaratha aims to "lay aside the burdens of office."[28] Who better than Rama to succeed him? Rama by reputation embodies compassion, an impartial sense justice, and the courageous strength necessary to protect his people from hostile forces.[29] Dasaratha nevertheless reminds Rama, "You will pursue a policy of absolute justice under all circumstances. Humility and soft speech—there could be really no limit to these virtues. There can be no place in a king's heart for lust, anger, or meanness."[30]

But as the city celebrates, Kaikeyi's maiden Kooni provokes Kaikeyi to panic by deceptively maligning Rama's intentions.[31] Kooni represents the false or depraved adviser, as well as the tremendous consequences potentially set in motion by appealing to fear.[32]

Kaikeyi subsequently wrests the kingdom from Rama by calling on two favors (boons) Dasaratha owes her, effectively banishing Rama for fourteen years and crowning her son Bharatha king. Dasaratha will not withdraw his promises to Kaikeyi for "convenience."[33] Nor does Rama expect him to: "A word given is like an arrow. It goes forward. You cannot recall it midway."[34] Rama goes into exile so Dasaratha can fulfill his pledges to Kaikeyi, and Rama shows no bitterness toward Kaikeyi or Kooni. In contrast to his malefactors, Rama observes "no distinction" in *dharma* toward a mother and stepmother.[35]

Dasaratha acknowledges that *dharma* binds even the king. This brings grief to Dasaratha and his citizens through Rama's resultant exile, but Dasaratha will not forsake the integrity that enabled him to reign with courage and compassion, to love and be honored by his people.

Some readers of the *Ramayana* will disagree with Dasaratha's decision, but Dasaratha is conceivably second only to Rama representing royal righteousness in the *Ramayana* by serving ungrudgingly, vigilantly protecting those under his care, and stepping aside when ruling indefinitely might amount to "avarice."[36] Dasaratha's example supplies an opening for reflection on succession, transition, and delegation vital to any flourishing enterprise.

Rama, for his part, does not despair but resolutely embarks again with his half-brother Lakshmana on an expedition of spiritual exercises and demon slaying. Lakshmana does not go quietly but rails, "I'll be the fate to overpower fate itself…Whoever dares to oppose my aim will be destroyed. I [will] establish you [Rama] on the throne as your right, irrespective of what a female serpent has tried to do. My blood boils and will not calm down."[37]

Rama quells Lakshmana's anger, assuring him their immediate destiny is renunciation and dwelling with the enlightened forest hermits. "Do you want to let your anger rage until you have vanquished an innocent brother who has no part in this, a mother who has nursed us, and a father who was the greatest ruler on earth?"[38]

Despite Rama's rebuke, Lakshmana epitomizes the loyal first officer or second-in-command who diagnoses injustice and pre-empts any urge for Rama to state similar sentiments. Lakshmana's anger is not baseless, but born from honest zeal that simultaneously tempts Rama and helps them to deliberate their next move.[39] Rama rejects Lakshmana's proposal as hasty and misdirected, explaining to Lakshmana why they must redirect their zeal.[40]

Rama also intuits a "bigger picture" to *dharma*. Rama's descent from riches to rags may be a privilege in its own way, a joy to be embraced implicitly if not explicitly as part of a larger plan interweaving *dharma* and *karma* to achieve better benefits than might have occurred had Rama immediately ascended to the throne: Rama submitting to exile permits Dasaratha to discharge his accrued *karma* and *dharma*, Kaikeyi to receive her prize, and Rama to rid the world of Ravana.[41]

Rama even refuses to despise Kooni, but perceives *karma* is repaying him for youthful foolishness. Rama remembers with remorse at least one episode when he made fun of Kooni and threw clay clods at her. "Even when you realize that the one before you is an enemy and must be treated sternly, do not hurt with words. Even in jest…even [to] the lowliest."[42]

Rama's youthful folly affords an occasion for repentance. Every leader is subject to *karma* and *dharma* toward even the "lowliest" they influence.[43] Despite youthful indiscretions,

Rama personifies humble nobility, the king in exile who must become low before being lifted high, who by becoming poor becomes richly faithful to *dharma*, who is banished in mourning, yet returns to reign in glory. Rama's character is variedly reminiscent of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Ruth, David, and Solomon in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus in the New Testament,[44] Muhammad in Mecca, Siddhartha Gautama, Confucius and his legacy in China, and a veritable host of ancient and modern myths.[45] *Dharma* seems to call myriad mythical and historical leaders to be humble before exalted, or exalts them precisely because they are humbled, or because they humble themselves.

But Rama's humility does not save him from sadness in seeing Sita with her finery and jewels discarded when so recently she had dressed herself as befitting a queen.[46] Rama reminds Sita that Dasaratha's vows do not apply unequivocally to her, but Sita's love for Rama binds her to set aside courtly finery for a time: "Fourteen years!...(a) living death for me without you...a forest or a marble palace is all the same to me."[47] Sita sacrifices physical comfort for the loftier joy of companionship with her beloved. Where Sita's treasure is, there her heart is also.[48]

Rama realizes his *dharma* encroaches on others like Sita, Lakshmana, and the Kosala people who implore Rama to return as king even when he cannot, and Bharatha who protests to Kaikeyi, "You have had the cunning, the deviousness, to trap the King into a promise, and not cared that it meant death to him. How am I to prove to the world that I have no hand in this?"[49]

Bharatha begs Rama to stay home and be crowned, lamenting as the Biblical David does when faced with a comparable conundrum when his former adversary turned ally Abner is assassinated by David's close associate, Joab.[50] For both Bharatha and David, their intense sincerity persuades their people they had no part in either duplicitous treachery.

After five days of mourning, Kosala's ministers and royal priest ask Bharatha to rule in Rama's place since Kosala will otherwise have no legitimate king. But Bharatha instead pursues Rama. Bharatha's garb and demeanor proclaim his distress. Bharatha wears garments of tree-bark, "accomplishing the journey on foot as a penance, following Rama's own example."[51] Lakshmana doubts Bharatha at first, but when Bharatha draws near and pleads forgiveness, offering to abdicate, Lakshmana apprehends Bharatha's constancy is genuine.[52]

Rama cannot accept Bharatha's abdication. That would violate *dharma* by nullifying Dasaratha's boons to Kaikeyi. Once Bharatha freely relinquishes his kingdom, *dharma* demands Bharatha receive it back by reigning as regent in Rama's place. Bharatha places Rama's sandals on the throne to symbolize the true king in whose stead he governs, and vows self-immolation if Rama does not return promptly at the appointed time.[53] While other people might battle bitter rivalry over possessions, authority, and borders, it is astonishing to find Rama and Bharatha deferring to *dharma* and relinquishing the throne to each other by asserting: "Yours, not mine."[54]

Rama's Reign Delay

When Rama departs into exile, he is not idle nor does he meditate indefinitely with hermits. Rama envisions liberating the oppressed and establishing peace, gentleness, and justice as his critical responsibilities, never losing sight in this new location of his goal to thwart the asuras, "fiends who infested this area causing suffering and hardship to all the good souls who only wanted to be left alone to pursue their spiritual aims in peace."[55]

As with the approaching clash with Ravana, an assault on Sita draws Rama's and Lakshmana's attention to evils infesting the land, provoking Lakshmana to battle Ravana's demon sister Kamavalli who attempts to deceive Rama about her true character, projects her avarice onto Sita, and threatens Sita while Rama is away. Lakshmana reflexively protects Sita, wounding Kamavalli but letting her live, perhaps perceiving she is not as degraded or destructive as Tharaka.[56] *Dharma* and *karma* employ Kamavalli as a link to Rama's confronting Ravana who lusts for Sita and kidnaps her in retaliation for Lakshmana wounding Kamavalli.

Ravana kidnaps Sita when, like Kaikeyi before her, Sita succumbs to fear. Sita fears for Rama's life when he tarries on a hunt. She badgers Lakshmana to defy Rama's instructions to protect her and orders Lakshmana to find Rama. The great Eagle Jatayu, a divine monarch pledged to defend Dasaratha's descendents, guards Sita in Lakshmana's stead.[57]

Jatayu tries to dissuade Ravana, but Ravana prevails and mortally wounds Jatayu. With a great effort of will, Jatayu keeps himself alive until Rama and Lakshmana arrive, searching for Sita. With his dying breath, Jatayu encourages Rama and Lakshmana, "Do not despair, you will succeed in the end."[58] Hanuman reiterates Jatayu's example to the noble warrior monkey, Angada, "Do not despair or give up. There is much that we could still do…Remember Jatayu, how he died nobly fighting Ravana to the last."[59]

Before Rama and Lakshmana engage Ravana, they face a difficult dilemma with the regal monkeys Hanuman, Sugreeva, Vali, Tara, and Angada. After listening to Sugreeva's grievances against his brother Vali, Rama assists Sugreeva in combat without hearing Vali's side of the story.[60] Lakshmana cautions Rama, "I am not certain whether Sugreeva is trying to involve you in anything more than [a mere spat]…I do not know if we should participate in this struggle at all. How can you trust as an ally one who has not hesitated to intrigue fatally against a brother?"[61]

When Vali is mortally wounded, his ensuing parley with Rama further complicates the question of whether Sugreeva or Vali is more in the right. Vali claims that Rama has judged him wrongly, that acquiring his brother's wife to protect her while her husband was away was legitimate within Vali's society.[62] Vali maintains, "It is my primary duty to help the weak and destroy evil wherever I see it. Whether known or unknown, I help those that seek my help."[63]

Karma may be at work since Sugreeva was likewise "unknown" to Rama, but sought Rama's help against Vali. Vali acted based on what he "knew." So does Rama. Rama faced a thorny decision without clear access to pertinent facts. Choosing *not* to act, or to delay action could also have repercussions. Leaders may never know the full extent they align with the most virtuous parties in a conflict, and must balance urgent priorities with diligent care.

Sugreeva's true character remains in doubt. He commissions armies to reinforce Rama against Ravana, but only after sinking into alcoholic stupor and narrowly avoiding a war with his erstwhile allies for flagrantly failing to uphold his promises in a timely manner. Angada reprimands Sugreeva, "you gain your ends and then forget your responsibilities."[64]

Ravana's Folly and Restoration?

If any ruler in the *Ramayana* is utterly debauched, Ravana is the obvious candidate. Unlike Dasaratha who steps down at a fitting moment, Ravana "is led astray by greed, and then succumbs to the particular illusion of power: the dream of perpetual dominance."[65] Ravana treacherously conveys a façade of sanctity by disguising himself as a holy man to kidnap Sita. Ravana is "the grand tormenter" of his subjects and betrays his benefactors.[66] He surrounds himself not with wise counselors, but flatterers.[67]

Ravana is selfish, self-deluded, quick to anger, and fickle. He flippantly underestimates his adversaries, and like his sister Kamavalli, is blinded by sexual lust.[68] He does not accept generous terms of peace, nor appreciate Rama for at first sparing him after Rama disarms Ravana in battle. Ravana's brother Vibishana justifiably defects after failing to persuade Ravana to abandon foolishness.[69] *Dharma* and *karma* coalesce, bringing Ravana to ruin.

But is Ravana irredeemable? He shows empathy for Kamavalli and initially strives to spare Jatayu.[70] When Ravana dies:

> Rama watched him fall headlong from his chariot face down onto the earth, and that was the end of the great campaign. Now one noticed Ravana's face aglow with a new quality. Rama's arrows had burnt off the layers of dross, the anger, conceit, cruelty, lust, and egotism which had encrusted his real self, and now his

> personality came through in pristine form—of one who was devout and capable of tremendous attainments. His constant meditation on Rama, although an adversary, now seemed to bear fruit, as his face shone with serenity and peace…What might he not have achieved but for the evil stirring within him![71]

Return of the King and Queen

Just as *dharma* demands Rama first decline Kosala's kingship, fourteen years later Rama must (re)assume it. Bharatha's *dharma* as regent is complete.

But all is not yet well for Sita. The Kosalans and maybe Rama himself question Sita's faithfulness during her long and arduous captivity. Just as Vibishana is unable to tolerate Ravana's dishonorable rule, so *dharma* requires Rama and his people to evaluate Sita as a capable queen, and she is vindicated.[72] However, it is important to note that some commentators identify Sita's trial by fire as suggesting Rama plays the role of an abusive husband instead of an exemplary spouse.[73] Rama in certain instances might thus reveal *a-dharma* in his apparently less than ideal conduct exuding the impression of a vengeful, suspicious, or anxious spouse by yielding to personal insecurities and public pressure at Sita's expense.

Much may be concluded concerning faithful leadership or royal righteousness in R.K. Narayan's rendering of the *Ramayana*. Dasaratha rules with compassion and courage, steps down at a suitable time, protects his people from evil, trains capable successors, shows hospitality to dignitaries and emissaries, and supports holy sages without bitterness or surrendering to fear, lust, sloth, or avarice. Kamavalli, Kaikeyi, Kooni, Ravana, Sugreeva, and Thataka provide negative examples or *a-dharma* through their assorted vices and corruptions.

Bharatha, Lakshmana, and Sita as Rama's second, third, or fourth in authority regularly lend Rama strength rather than envying or undermining him.[74] Bharatha presides as a provisional regent and restores the administration of Kosala to Rama at the proper time. Lakshmana is a loyal counselor, warrior, and companion. Sita is Rama's devoted bride and fellow sovereign receiving abundant attention in Hindu liturgy and literature.[75]

Each character in the *Ramayana* has one or more parallels in other religious, historical, and literary contexts. Considering how these illumine and challenge each other will animate dialogue not only among Hindus, but among all who enjoy inter-religious encounter. Examining whether, how, or in what way *dharma* echoes or deviates from "submission" to the Ultimate (the very definition of Islam), the Word or Logos in Christianity and Greek philosophy, and "the Tao" of Chinese mysticism is preeminently apropos. Additional counterparts to the qualities and actions of the *Ramayana*'s royal exemplars await discovery and extrapolation in print and conversation. Even Rama himself provocatively participates in intra- or interfaith relations by establishing a Shiva linga memorializing an imaginably rival deity after Hanuman helps Rama rescue Sita.[76] Hanuman in turn exudes "devotional service to his master."[77]

Rama's interactions with Vali and Sita are rife with moral ambiguities, but Rama's humility, chastity, courage, compassion, determination, restraint, timely rebuke, perseverance in confronting evil, magnanimity toward enemies, careful deliberation, readiness to learn from his mistakes and to teach others accordingly, and kindness toward "even the lowliest" are arguably worthy of emulation.[78] Meeting Rama and other exemplars through interpreters such as R.K. Narayan holds significant promise for energetic dialogue now and in the future.

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Culture, Christian Apologetics Journal, Huffington Post, Journal of Religion and Europe, Africanus Journal, Wesleyan Theological Journal, Patheos, and more. He also recently published a book chapter in *The Legend of Zelda and Theology* (Gray Matter, 2011, edited by Jonny Walls) and earlier on Martin Luther King, Jr. in *How to Get a Life: Empowering Wisdom for the Heart and Soul* (Humanics, 2003, edited by Daniel McBrayer and Lawrence Baines).

Notes

[1] I am grateful to Karen DeVan and Finnian Moore Gerety for feedback on an early draft of this essay.

[2] Cf. R.K. Narayan, *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic (Penguin Classics)* (New York: Penguin, 1972, 2006), xxi.

[3] Cf. e.g. Lin-Chi Lu, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi* (trans. Burton Watson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 52.

[4] E.g. Narayan, xi, 13, 65, 91, 94, 127-128, 145, 155. Cf. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Harper & Row, 1946), 27; Cornelia Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen (eds.), *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1978), 64, 70.

[5] C.f. e.g. Linda Hess, "Rejecting Sita: Indian Responses to the Ideal Man's Cruel Treatment of His Ideal Wife," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67:1 (1999), 1-32; Roderick Hindery, "Hindu Ethics in the Ramayana," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 4:2 (Fall, 1976), pp. 287-382.

[6] Ben DeVan, "Evangelicals and Muslims Loving God, Each Other, and the World Together?" *Huffington Post*, February 21, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ben-devan/evangelicals-and-muslims-_b_825242.html.

[7] Carl Medearis, *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus: Gaining Understanding and Building Relationships* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2008), 141-142.

[8] E.g. Pete Engardio with Jena McGregor, "Karma Capitalism: Times Have Changed since Gordon Gekko quoted Sun Tsu in the 1987 Movie *Wall Street*. Has the *Bhagavad Gita* replaced *The Art of War* as the Hip New Ancient Eastern Management Text?," *Bloomberg Businessweek* (October 30, 2006), online: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_44/b4007091.htm; John H. Barnett, "A Business Model of Enlightenment," *Journal of Business Ethics* 4 (1985), especially 61.

[9] Purushottama Bilimoria, Joseph Prabhu, and Renuka Sharma (eds.), *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges Volume I* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), especially 16, 22, 44, 86, 97, 103, 114, 313; Gurcharan Das, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Moral Dilemmas in the Mahabharata* (Delhi, India: Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Association with Motilala Banarsidass, 1989).

[10] Hindery, 290.

[11] Cf. Paula Richman (ed.), *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991). Philip Lutgendorf, "All in the (Raghu) Family: A Video Epic in Cultural Context," *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia* (ed. Lawrence A. Babb and Susan Wadley, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 217-253 analyzes a popular television *Ramayana* serial. Cf. two accessible resources for general audiences: Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106-107; Kim Knott, *A Very Short Introduction to Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2000), 40-42.

[12] Cf. Diana L. Eck, "Following Rama, Worshipping Siva," *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India* (ed. Diana L. Eck and Francoise Mallison, Groningen, Netherlands: Egbert Forsten and Paris, France: Ecole Française d'Extreme-Orient, 1991), 50; Flood, 107, 288; Knott, 41; Narayan, xxi, xxiv, xxiii, 33, 148, 149.

[13] Kamban in Narayan, xxiv.

[14] Narayan, xxv, brackets added.

[15] Rama's mother Kausalya in Narayan's narrative principally serves to comfort Dasaratha and be perceived by Kaikeyi as an antagonist (cf. 38, 38, 42, 42, 46, 47, 49, 55, 58).

[16] Children's and youth versions of the *Ramayana* proliferate. Two published in the twenty-first century are: Bhakti Mathur and Maulshree Somani (Illustrator), *Amma, Tell Me about Ramayana!* (Bangalore, India: Anjana Publishing, 2007); Bulbul Sharma and K.P. Sudesh (Illustrator), *The Ramayana for Children* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

[17] Eck used Narayan's translation, for example, in her spring 2010 "Hindu Worlds of Art and Culture" course.

[18] William Buck, *Ramayana* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1976); Krishna Dharma, *Ramayana: India's Immortal Tale of Adventure, Love, and Wisdom* (Varanasi and Kathmandu: Pilgrim's Publishing, 2004); Ramesh Menon, *The Ramayana: A Modern Retelling of the Great Indian Epic* (New York: North Point Press, 2001, 2003, 2004); Arshia Sattar (trans.), *Ramayana* (New York: Penguin Global, 2000); Kamala Subramaniam, *Ramayana: Tenth Edition* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2009); Robert P. Goldman, Sally Southerland Goldman, Barend A.E. van Nooten, *Ramayana Of Valmiki: An Epic Of Ancient India (Princeton Library of Asian Translations), Vol. VI, Yuddhakanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[19] Narayan, 4. Dasaratha's archetypal childless sorrow is paralleled by many Biblical characters and other figures who supply multiple opportunities for inter-religious and comparative engagement surrounding (in)fertility.

[20] Narayan, 6.

[21] Narayan, 6. Cf. Absalom in 2 Samuel 15 who similarly curries his peoples' favor, but for insurrection reasons.

[22] Narayan, 7.

[23] Cf. Ezekiel 33:12-16, Matthew 21:28-32.

[24] Cf. Narayan, 12-13; Zimmer, 171.

[25] Cf. the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna constituting the greater part of *The Bhagavad Gita*.

[26] Narayan, 25 presents Rama intuiting Sita's availability as a wife.

[27] Narayan, 31-32.

[28] Narayan, 33.

[29] Narayan, 34.

[30] Narayan, 35.

[31] Kooni is also called "Mandara" in another useful introduction to Hinduism for general readers, Ed. Viswanathan, *Am I a Hindu? The Hinduism Primer* (San Francisco, CA: Halo Books, 1992), 79. Cf. Knott, 42; Lutgendorf, 232.

[32] Narayan, xxvii, 37-39, cf. 106; 1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 10; Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 24:6.

[33] Narayan, 43. Before he dies, Dasaratha confesses that once on a forest hunt, he accidentally shot and killed a young boy, the caregiver of two blind parents. Upon hearing of their son's death, the parents were overcome with grief and cursed Dasaratha to suffer a similar anguish (Narayan, 50; cf. Dimmitt and Buitenen, 247). This does not stop Dasaratha from trying to resist or reverse *karma* (the cosmic force ensuring fitting results for one's actions) but *karma* relentlessly incorporates Dasaratha's plans to thwart it. Dasaratha parallels the exploits of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* – another king who sought and failed to resist fate.

[34] Narayan, 54.

[35] As with Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar; as with Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and their maidservants in Genesis; and as in the life of Muhammad where Aisha is the favored wife, polygamy often facilitates strife. Cf. e.g. Lelia Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), especially 51, 60, 105; Christiana de Groot, "Genesis," in Cathererine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (eds.), *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 1-27.

[36] Narayan, 34. Dasaratha stands in contrast to the demon king Ravana whose more honorable brother Vibishana warns, "A man loses his honor and name only through lust and avarice" (Narayan, 58).

[37] Narayan, 52, brackets added; cf. Kinsley, 70.

[38] Narayan, 52.

[39] Not unlike Jesus's temptation by Peter to avoid suffering in Matthew 16 and Mark 8.

[40] Comparable again to Jesus's rebukes to Peter, James, and John in Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 9 and 22; and John 18. E.g. "Put your sword back into its place" (Matthew 26:52, Revised Standard Version).

[41] Cf. Romans 8:28 and Joseph to his duplicitous brothers in Genesis 50:19-20, "'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today" (NRSV).

[42] Narayan, 106, brackets added.

[43] But cf. Narayan, 57, who idealizes Rama, "If Rama committed a seemingly wrong act, it would still be something to benefit humanity, like a mother forcibly administering a medicine to her child."

[44] Cf. Philippians 2.

[45] To name just a few familiar examples in pop culture: King Arthur, *Beauty and the Beast*, Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*, Aslan and Prince Cor in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion King*, and *Mulan*.

[46] Narayan, 53. Though Sita later dons Anusuya's gifts of jewels and fine clothing (Narayan, 62).

[47] Narayan, 53; cf. Flood, 66, 109; Kinsley, 4; Knott, 42, 44; Viswanathan, 79.

[48] Matthew 6:1 and Luke 12:34. J.K. Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York: Arthur A. Levine, 2007), 325, alludes to this quotation also in the context of relationships.

[49] Narayan, 58.

[50] 2 Samuel 3.

[51] Narayan, 59; cf. Dimmitt and Buitenen, 86; Knott, 42.

[52] Narayan, 60.

[53] Narayan, 61, 151, 152. The sandals imagery resembles Jesus and John the Baptist in Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27; and Acts 13:25. Bharatha's actions preempt additional delay. I (the author of this paper) have participated in several informal Hindu-Christian conversations comparing Hindu scriptures to *Lord of the Rings* and *Aesop's Fables*. Unlike Denethor, the Steward of Gondor in Peter Jackson's adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Bharatha does not imagine or style himself as a suitable heir to Dasaratha's throne. Nor does Bharatha resist Rama's eventual return as Denethor does with Aragorn.

[54] Narayan, 60, italics in original.

[55] Narayan, 63; Zimmer, 171.

[56] Cf. Smeagol/Gollum's crucial but possibly unexpected role in *Lord of the Rings*.

[57] Rama healed Jatayu's elder brother Sampathi after Sampathi nearly sacrificed himself to save Jatayu from sunstroke. Sampathi subsequently rules the Eagles after Ravana kills Jatayu (cf. Narayan, xviii, 119, 120).

[58] Narayan, 89; cf. Eck, *Banaras*, 89; Eck, "Following Rama, Worshipping Siva," 59-60.

[59] Narayan, 118.

[60] Also spelled, "Sugriva," cf. Eck, "Following Rama, Worshipping Siva," 60, 62; Knott, 43.

[61] Narayan, 99, brackets added.

[62] Contrast Lakshmena and Jatayu's ostensibly chaste protection of Sita.

[63] Narayan, 103.

[64] Narayan, 111.

[65] Narayan, xv.

[66] Narayan, xv, 4, 74, 85-87. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14; Dimmitt and Buitenen, 86; Knott, 43. Ravana betrays divine facilitators of his power. Dante's *Inferno* correspondingly places traitors to benefactors in the deepest circle of hell.

[67] E.g. Narayan, 76, 125; cf. 1 Kings 12, 22; 2 Chronicles 10, 18.

[68] E.g. Narayan, 80, 87, 121; cf. Dimmitt and Buitenen, 213.

[69] Narayan, 132. As in the Biblical Proverbs, "foolishness" involves both wickedness and recklessness.

[70] Narayan, 89. Eck, *Banaras*, 289, remarks that Ravana, "is a brahmin as well as a demon whose death incurred for Rama…terrible sin…The *linga* (a nondescript sculpture in honor of the god Shiva) that Rama established came to be considered one of the great *lingas* of light, so holy that it destroys the worst sins by merely beholding it." Cf. Lutgendorf, 32-37 for a discussion also of Kaikeyi's potential redemption.

[71] Narayan, 146-147. Cf. the dragon in the 2007 Warner Brothers film adaptation of *Beowulf*. Will *dharma* pursue Ravana in a future life? Two bestselling series of novels integrating similar themes are Robert Jordan (with Brandon Sanderson), *The Wheel of Time* (New York: Tor/Tom Doherty Associates, 1990-) which includes a powerful and evil sorcerer (of sorts) named "Rahvin," and Stephen King, *The Dark Tower* (Various, 1982-2004).

[72] Narayan, xi, xiv, 147-150; but cf. Flood, 108; Kinsley, 74, 76. Knott, 43, 45 extrapolates, "To modern Western readers…this might seem heartless…but Rama must think and act according to his *dharma* as king. He must give this role priority over and above his personal inclination or belief in Sita's chastity."

[73] Cf. e.g. Sally J. Sutherland, "Sita and Draupadi: Aggressive Behavior and Female Role-Models in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109:1 (January-March, 1989), 63-79, especially 77-78; Hess, especially 2-19; Hindery, especially 301-303, 312-313.

[74] Narayan is silent on any such ambitions, assuming Bharatha, Lakshmana and Sita's absolute loyalty. For a contemporary variation on this theme involving more explicit emotional struggle, see Ron Weasley's character in Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, especially 375-381.

[75] Cf. Dimmitt and Buitenen, 70-71, 88, 223; Eck, *Banaras*, 263, 377; Flood 66, 78, 108-109; Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 64; Kinsley, 70-71, 73, 78, 81; Narayan, 134-137, 148-153.

[76] Cf. Eck, *Banaras*, 263; Eck, *Darsan*, 43, 68; Kinsley, 72-73; Narayan, 96, 104, 107, 112-124, 130-132, 140, 147, 148, 153, 155-157. But Flood (108, cf. Narayan, xxviii, 91) calls Hanuman "the son of the wind-god, Vayu." Narayan references Brahma and Shiva aiding Rama's combat with Ravana (cf. xxviii, 4, 9, 10, 18-21, 25, 26, 64, 67, 80, 86, 89, 95, 95, 100, 103, 107, 128, 140, 143, 144, 146, 150, 151). Moreover, establishing a Shiva linga signifies Rama's humility as an incarnation of Vishnu, since the linga partly symbolizes Vishnu and Brahma's inability to fathom the depth and height of Shiva, cf. Eck, *Banaras*, 289; Eck, *Darsan*, 68; Eck, "Following Rama, Worshipping Siva." Kinsley presents Rama as also helped by Kali before and after defeating Ravana (119, 139).

[77] Flood, 146; cf. Narayan x, xxviii.

[78] Narayan, 106.

What Would Roy and Alice Do? A Reflection on How I Came to Be a Failure through Dialogue, Thank God,
By Irving (Yitz) Greenberg

I first learned about dialogue from reading Martin Buber. From him, I understood that religious dialogue was all about meeting the other in an I-Thou encounter. Certainly, there should be no intention to change the other or make him/her over in my image. But I confess that I did not enter the Jewish-Christian conversation in a very dialogic frame of mind. I was driven by a shocking, life-changing encounter with the Holocaust in 1961 that tore apart my devout, believing relationship with the God of Israel and shattered my religious equilibrium as a fulfilled modern Orthodox Jew. I could not understand how the Nazis could single out the Jews for total extermination, preceded by emotional torture and endless suffering, yet the neighboring peoples—nay, the whole modern civilized world—stood by. Nor could I accept that God had not intervened to save God's people from this fate.

As I read and studied, I came to believe that the Jews were set up to be victims of genocide by almost two thousand years of Christian theology that had penetrated deep into Western civilization. As "the new Israel," Christians had to defend Christianity's validity as the upgraded, ongoing covenant of Abraham/Sinai, even as the original Israel lived on and rejected Christianity's claims. The answer was the teaching of contempt—a horrifying typology of Jews and their religion: having been besotted by pride in being chosen, the Jews grew self-satisfied and spiritually blind. Their faith turned into a religion with no soul or compassion. They arrogantly rejected God who in the person of Jesus Christ walked among them, and they became cruel murderers who mocked and, bringing the mild, loving Lamb of God forward, condemned him to death, forfeiting their election, and brought down an eternal curse from God on themselves.

These teachings darkened over the centuries into images of Jews selling their soul to the Devil, afflicted with pestilent diseases—not to mention horns—that betrayed their pact with the Arch Fiend. They poisoned wells and spread plagues to decimate their neighbors. They kidnapped innocent children, cut their throats, drew their blood, and baked it into the *matzah*, their ritual bread. Thus, Christianity injected deep into Western culture the image of Jews as uncanny and demonic, beyond the pale of humanity. By the 19th century, this profile had mutated into racial anti-Semitism. One consequence was that in religious anti-Semitism, the evil characteristics could be shucked off by becoming Christian; now Jews were incorrigibly sub-human. Hitler and many Nazi leaders were not faithful Christians—indeed they were enemies of Christianity—but they seized upon the group already designated by Christianity as unworthy life to be their scapegoat; by the elimination and death of the Jews, the world would be made whole.

I saw that to rid Christianity of supersessionist demonization and "justified" hatred would require an active program of positive affirmation of Judaism by Christianity's practitioners. It would take a head-on acknowledgement of past guilt and a determined repentance, including confronting the New Testament itself when it portrayed Jews as cursed. It would take unblinking self-criticism and heroic efforts to neutralize the Church Fathers' and various saints' teachings about "the Jews." Protestants would have to repudiate the violent, eliminationist anti-Semitism of Martin Luther—the very man who gave them so much spiritual nurture and understanding of faith. Could a religion with such a bad record generate such a noble and selfless reformation in order to stop inflicting pain on others? It did not look very promising.

Desperate and looking for allies, my wife and I entered Jewish-Christian dialogue in order to persuade Christians to cut off this tradition of anti-Semitism so its terrible impact would never be felt again. I also felt that Christians would need to recognize the good truth about Jews and Judaism in order to reject the vicious stereotyping embedded in their tradition, so I tried to show a Judaism worthy of respect: *Halachah* as more than a legal system (=Law) as

opposed to living Christian faith and encounter with God (=Gospel), the Torah as a redemptive vision of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and a way to walk with God through every moment of life; Judaism as a covenant to work for the spiritual and political liberation of humanity, and not about the Jewish people alone; the core proclamation of Judaism as this: that every human being was created in the image of God, endowed with the dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness; and flowing from these principles, all the commandments between one person and another – from "love your neighbor as yourself" to *tzedakah,* the obligation to help the poor; from feeding the hungry to treating others with justice.

Did I think about Christianity itself as a religion? Not much. Although I was Orthodox, my view of the founding of Christianity was close to the standard liberal religious American Jewish view: it was the religion started in the name of Jesus, a "liberal" Jew who brought many good Jewish values to the new faith, even though Paul, the conduit of much Hellenistic influence, had turned this new faith toward (excessive) spiritualization of the Messiah and away from Jewish religious practice. I had no clue about Christians' extraordinary closeness to Christ or their experience of the presence of God in him, or the ethical resources and the extraordinary self-sacrifices that Jesus and the Crucifixion evoked in the faithful. My goal in "dialogue" was not to learn about Christianity, but to teach Christians about its deeply embedded anti-Semitism.

I remember some classic responses:

- Christianity might be anti-Judaism–critical of the religion–but not anti-Semitic; anti-Semitism is hate, and Christianity is a religion of love.
- Later Christians injected anti-Semitism into Christianity, but the New Testament is sacred, and a divine text by definition cannot be besmirched with hatred.[1]
- Hitler was a pagan who hated Christianity; "we were persecuted also so the Holocaust cannot be connected to Christianity". Pius XII ordered the monasteries to hide the Jews of Rome.

Such encounters did not increase my appreciation for Christianity. Had all the Christians I met been conventional and defensive, this dialogue would have been futile, if not disastrous.

However, by the grace of God, I met a most remarkable group of Christians including Franklin Littell, Gerald Sloyan, Paul Van Buren, John Palikowski, J. Coert Rylersdaam, Clark Williamson – and especially Sister Rose Thering and Roy and Alice Eckardt, who became soul mates. There were many others, too numerous to name. These people got it. They understood the Christian problem, because they had studied it themselves. They did not need me to teach them; they were ahead of me, which is why they joined the dialogue. They were able to offer a critique from within that was not fudged or airbrushed in any way. As faithful Christians, they were determined to erase the blot of anti-Semitism from the religion they loved. And most had started to study Judaism already so they could do justice to it as an independent faith with dignity and depth of its own.

During the weeks before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, when it appeared to every caring Jew that the Holocaust was about to be repeated in the destruction of Israel, there was a deafening silence from the churches. But the above colleagues did speak out, and they condemned the Church's bystanding. Roy (and Alice) Eckardt wrote a searing article, "Again, Silence in the Churches."[2] Sister Rose had already begun working on an analysis of Catholic textbooks' treatment of Jews and Judaism. She went on to campaign with astonishing force for liberating Soviet Jewry and for Israel's right to exist in peace in the Middle East. One would have to have a heart of stone not to be moved by the integrity and passion of these good Christians. I began to reflect on the apparent paradox that these were people shaped by and suffused with Christian faith, which surely deserved some credit for raising such people. Clearly, I had not paid sufficient attention to the total substance of the religion and its effects on its adherents.

I was further shaken out of my complacency by the depth of criticism and the unyielding search for purification and moral rebirth that my dialogue partners exhibited over time. I remember how the Eckardts grasped that certain classic Christian beliefs were deeply implicated in the worst Christian behaviors. They made the point that the basic conviction that Christianity was the sole religion in which God had joined in person misshaped Christian theology into putting down all other religions (in addition to the way it distorted Judaism to show the specific inferiority of Jewish faith). They witheringly portrayed Wolfgang Pannenberg, then considered one of the leading contemporary *avant garde* Christian theologians, who claimed that, "Through the cross of Jesus, the Jewish legal tradition as a whole has been set aside in its claim to contain the eternal will of God in its final formulation—as false witness about Judaism's claims and unselfconscious, self-flattering triumphalism." They realized that the Church's claims had to be reshaped and reduced, in order to stop the falsification and mistreatment of others.

They also perceived how the Christian good faith focus on Jesus's infinite suffering in the Crucifixion had led to dismissal of the suffering of others and even of the enormity of the Holocaust itself. This led them to the theological reduction of the Crucifixion and the "relativizing" of the Resurrection in their later classic, *A Long Night's Journey into Day*.[3] In it, they quoted the account of the Nazis in Auschwitz burning Jewish children and described it "as an evil that is more terrible than other evils [including the crucifixion of Jesus who was a mature person on a mission who knew for what he was dying]. This is the evil of little children witnessing the murder of other little children…being aware absolutely that they face the identical fate." By this standard, "[t]he God forsakenness of Jesus has proved to be non-absolute – for there is now a God forsakenness that is worse by an infinity of infinity that God forsakenness of Jewish children which is a final horror."[4]

In 1975, I broke my boycott of Germany to participate in a conference on the Holocaust in Hamburg. The German participants were noble Christians, headed by Gertrud Luckner who had been sent to the concentration camps for her resistance to the Nazis. At one session, Roy Eckardt presented. As he went on, the murmurings grew. The listeners were embarrassed by the uncensored dissection of Christianity's sins against the Jews (a feeling no doubt intensified by the presence of Jews). They were offended by the reduction of Christian claims – even though Eckardt explained that this was the only way to break the vicious cycle of Christian triumphalism. The group literally silenced him. I felt that we were inches away from some kind of excommunication.

I could not help speaking up. I had not heard such penetrating words of unsparing self-criticism since the prophets of Israel had chastised the people. Although the prophetic words had been misused by Christians to degrade the Jews, in actual fact the prophets' critique was testimony to the ethical stature of Jewry and the high standards by which Judaism was being judged. I testified that as I heard Roy, I experienced Christianity's moral grandeur in that it could raise up such prophetic voices in this time. Now I understood that Jews would have to make a herculean effort to try to match such a standard of self-purification from sins against others.

Other experiences continued to shape my evolving stance towards Christianity and Christians. Sister Rose (who loved Shabbat and often came to spend the day with our family) invited us to visit Catholic worship. We came to see the living liturgy and the spiritual force of sacraments and community. I also met Christians who had taken up the cross and devoted their lives to serve the needy and helpless.[5] Through dialogue and experience, I discovered the moral force of Christianity, the spiritual power of its worship, as well as the will to serve God, the devotion unto death of true Christians, sending me on an extended journey to reconceive the Jewish relationship to Christianity. I tried to understand what vision for the world and message to the Jews God had wanted to convey in extending the covenant to a vast segment of humanity through Jesus and Christianity.

The impact of these experiences, as I have noted, went beyond rethinking Christianity from a Jewish perspective. The Eckardts and Sister Rose had no axe to grind against Christianity. They were seeking truth unto its innermost parts and they would speak it even to God. They would show no favoritism to man or God; they refused to soften the failures, responsibilities, and obligations that they uncovered. Therefore, their critique implicitly challenged all religious people—inevitably, for me, extending to Judaism as well.

In a conference in 1976, Roy presented a paper, "The Recantation of the Covenant,"[6] which argued that God must repent for giving the covenant to the people Israel—the Divine was guilty of exposing Jewry to murderous fury without giving the people protection against the ultimate genocidal cruelty. I have written elsewhere of the theological crisis that this paper set off in me.[7] The initial terms of the covenant were (to quote Elie Wiesel) that the Jews "are to protect His Torah and He in turn, assumes responsibility for Israel's presence in the world."[8] This was not just a theoretical point. If Roy was right, then traditionalists could no longer claim that unless modern Israelis observe the Torah, that God would exile them again, or that if Jews obey the Torah—or study it—they need no army, for God will protect them. Nor could moralists —or Christians—argue that unless Israelis live by the highest standard, then Israel has no right to exist, and the land will spit them out. This insistence is a powerful, if tacit, undercurrent in the critique of Israel on the Christian left and among liberation theologians. Roy made me see that it was immoral for God to demand that Israel meet higher standards or else – since God was not, as initially promised, going to save them when in danger. There was a need to rethink Judaism in light of the Eckardts' spiritual witness.

I struggled to rearticulate Jewish theology: The covenant was broken in the Holocaust; God could no longer make demands. But the covenant was *voluntarily* taken on again by Jewry out of love (of God, people, and the redemptive vision). Later, I came to believe that from the beginning, the covenant had been designed by a loving God as a pedagogical process: as human capacity grew, God self-limited more. Finally, the Divine renewed the covenant on the basis of full human commitment – but humanity had not acted responsibly in Europe in the 1930s and 40s. That breakdown made the Holocaust possible, after which the Jewish people stepped up and took responsibility for their own destiny by assuming sovereign power creating the State of Israel. Its task was to exercise that power with justice and liberty for all. Naturally, many in the Jewish community were offended by these thoughts.

The Eckardts' impact on me was not finished. I had noticed all along that they paid a steep price for their religious courage and avant-garde explorations. Roy had been a distinguished student of Reinhold Niebuhr and published important books. He had served as President of the American Academy of Religion as well as editor of its journal. He should have been at Harvard or Yale. The reason he wasn't seemed obvious to me: he and Alice were too devoted to Judaism and Jewry, too involved with the Holocaust, and too outspoken in their critique of Christianity. In effect, they were asking the Church to have the faith and courage to "die"—to crucify its own worst tendencies even at the risk that classic concepts might also expire. This prospect frightened and angered many Christians, even some repentant ones.

The Eckardts even challenged no less than the Resurrection itself, writing: "It is the teaching of the consummated Resurrection which lies at the foundation of Christian hostility to Jews and Judaism," and in this "Christian triumphant ideology reaches ultimate fulfillment."[9] They argued that most affirmations of Resurrection failed the test of historicity (fundamentalists were, of course prepared to fail this test, but most Christians were not fundamentalists), and highlighted how many modern theologians had already spoken of Resurrection as "symbol," "myth," "experience," or as "extra-bodily" and thus not necessarily literal. Roy and Alice knew they would be spiritually crucified by Christians outraged at their further relativizing of the core doctrines of Christianity. Out of Jewish self-interest and loving concern for them, I privately pleaded with them not to push their community beyond its limits. But in order to stop the mass

murder of Jewish children from recurring, they were willing to follow Jesus, to take up the cross and be destroyed themselves in order to save the innocent.

Here was their final impact on my life: I had been increasingly in tension with my own Orthodox Jewish community due to my theological journey under the impact of the Holocaust. Now I asked myself: in light of the Eckardts' approach, what in my tradition taught contempt for other traditions? Which traditions in Judaism denigrated the image of God in various people or groups? Prodded by their model, I spoke out. In the eyes of my community's leadership, my offenses were many: urging the centrality of restoring the image of God to its fullest as a response to the systematic degradation of the image in the camps meant affirming black liberation, women's liberation, gay liberation; recognition of the unity of fate and the revealed inadequacy of all positions in the light of the Shoah meant affirming internal Jewish pluralism; reconceptualizing the relationship with Christianity to recognize it as a covenantal partner in *tikkun olam* meant a grave departure from past consensus. I felt that all these teachings were desperately needed in a post-Holocaust world, but I was straining my own ties to their breaking point.

Indeed, I tried to soften or downplay some positions in order to narrow the distance between me and my community. But just when I was ready to sell out, the image of Roy (and Alice, and Sister Rose and others) would rise up before me. They were being crucified for their fidelity to justice for Judaism/Jewry, whatever that took. How could I betray their model by backing down?[10] Time and again when I hesitated, I asked myself: what would Roy (and Alice) do? I could do no other. I got into trouble; many relationships were ruptured. But I learned the final lesson of dialogue: it made me into a better—certainly a changed—member of my own faith.

After great catastrophe, one must respond with great redemptive acts—morally, theologically, politically—in our faiths and between our faiths. From the Eckardts' example, I learned that it is worth being a "failure" in order to make such redemption possible. I believe that this rapprochement and new partnership between Judaism and Christianity (which only people like them could have made possible) will be seen in history as one of the great religious revolutions of all time, a repentance/turning almost without parallel.

As I, too, brooded on the fate of the burning Jewish children at Auschwitz, I came to believe that there could be only one reparation for this infinite evil—and that was not immortality (i.e., consolation in a post-mortal existence) but resurrection (ironically, given the Eckardts' own relativizing/reducing of Christian understandings of resurrection). I came to feel its overwhelming moral necessity. Both God and humans would have to accept the responsibility to make it happen. I came to believe that in both our faiths, resurrection is the central life affirming, mortal body-upholding, humanity-liberating promise and consolation. Like the Eckardts, I affirm the future Resurrection. In their words: "The young Jewish prophet from the Galilee sleeps now. He sleeps with the other Jewish dead, with all the disconsolate and scattered ones of the murder camps, and with the unnumbered dead of the human and non-human family. But Jesus of Nazareth shall be raised. So too shall the small Hungarian children of Auschwitz." They helped me to see that once we have reckoned with full mind and responded with full heart to the triumph of evil and the rule of despair in our time, we can with honor, dignity, and hope embrace the promise of the prophet. "They shall not do evil nor destroy in all My holy mountain [that is, the whole planet]; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

An ordained Orthodox rabbi, a Harvard Ph.D. and scholar, **Irving (Yitz) Greenberg** has been a seminal thinker in confronting the Holocaust as an historical transforming event and Israel as the Jewish assumption of power and the beginning of a third era in Jewish history.

Notes

[1] I remember, thirty years later, having such an exchange with the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Since our paths had crossed at a conference in a hotel, I pulled out a Bible and asked him to read Matthew 27:25 ("The people cried: 'His blood be on us, and on our children") and some of the classic passages in John. He was obviously shaken up, fell silent for a moment, and then said: you know my mother read me these passages starting from my childhood. My mother loved the Jews and there was not a drop of hatred in these verses as she read them (I am not recalling his exact words, but the gist of them). In a way, I believed him, but in the early days, such responses evoked righteous indignation in me, if not scorn.

[2] *The Christian Century*, Vol. LXXIV, Nos. 30 and 31, July 26, 1967, pp. 970-980, and August 2, 1967, pp. 992-995.

[3] Eckhardt, Alice L. and A. Roy. *Long Night's Journey into Day*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982.

[4] Ibid, p. 104.

[5] One most vivid memory: a Norwegian television news anchor who had given up a life of celebrity and fortune to build and run a village for abandoned, brain-damaged children in the backwoods of Sri Lanka.

[6] In Alvin Rosenfeld and Irving Greenberg, *Confronting the Holocaust: The Work of Elie Wiesel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

[7] see Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*, p. 26ff

[8] Elie Wiesel, "Jewish Values in the Post Holocaust Future" in *Judaism*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1996, p. 281.

9 Eckhardt, Alice L. and A. Roy. *Long Night's Journey into Day*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982. p. 130.

[10] One of the beauties of dialogue is that it spreads religious paradigms that formerly operated only inside the context of the faith that spawned them--through exposure and intimacy, leaping across faith barriers and shaping people nurtured in a totally different religion.

Speak the Truth in Love: Bringing Inter-religious Dialogue Home, By Jason A. Kerr

Rabbi Greenberg's essay charts two parallel religious journeys. The first is his own, in which he shifts from viewing Christianity as a vehicle for anti-Semitism to recognizing its potential as a source of moral power. The second is that of Roy and Alice Eckhardt, whose quest to liberate Christianity from its anti-Semitism ultimately leads them to challenge the doctrine of the Resurrection. These poignant stories demonstrate the capacity of inter-religious dialogue to change people and institutions. Even so, Rabbi Greenberg also frankly acknowledges the costs that these inter-religious encounters can impose on intra-religious relationships: the Eckhardts' forceful speaking "frightened and angered many Christians, even repentant ones," while Greenberg says that he "was straining [his] own ties to their breaking point."

If the *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue's* founding premise is that inter-religious dialogue is a Good Thing, then questions inevitably remain about how to bring the fruits of these external encounters safely back home, where we can share them with our own religious families. Citing the Eckhardts' example, Rabbi Greenberg concludes that blunt witness-bearing is the best way: he equates efforts "to soften or downplay some positions in order to narrow the distance between me and my community" with selling out. Certainly, there is biblical precedent for this approach, as in the case of Jeremiah, who, feeling burdened by the social costs of his prophecy, wished to become silent, "But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*."[1]

I love—deeply love—that passage from Jeremiah, but I do not think it offers a very good model for successful engagement with one's community, unless one feels strongly that one's proper place in that community is either the stocks or a miry dungeon. Taking up Jeremiah's mantle involves believing that one's faith community has decayed so far that redemption and repentance may well be impossible. Only a divinely kindled fire in the bones can sustain hope in the face of such bleakness. Only such a flame can temper prophetic speech against repeated kicks to the teeth. Only this conflagration can weld a person to such a community. Better simply to leave, right? But Jeremiah couldn't.

My purpose here is not to assess to what extent either Rabbi Greenberg or the Eckhardts feel this fire in their bones, nor to comment on the relative reprobation of their respective communities. God forbid. Rather, I wish to reflect on alternative possibilities for engagement with one's community. These reflections will necessarily be particular and somewhat resistant to universalization, perhaps even by other members of my own faith community, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the Mormons). If—to twist a familiar metaphor—not God per se, but the dialogue table is the Mountain, there are many paths leading up its slopes, so there must be just as many paths, if not more, coming back down.

My starting point for these reflections is the assumption that we find much good in our communities, whatever their blemishes. Certainly, that is the case for me. There is, after all, something of home in them, no? In other words, I'm assuming that a parallel with Judah in the time of Jeremiah is, shall we say, less than exact. Rabbi Greenberg writes that times of great catastrophe require great redemptive acts; how, then, can we participate in redeeming the faults and shortcomings of our communities, especially when many of our coreligionists do not perceive them as such, resorting instead to sophistries along the lines of distinguishing between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism?

The vital, life-giving principle here is charity. The Christian *locus classicus* is 1 Corinthians 13, but attention to the broader context pays dividends by making charity firmly about life in a diverse community.[2] Paul's epistle addresses the problem of schism—"I beseech you…that *there* be no divisions among you"—and chapters 12-14 are the heart of his solution.[3] In chapter 12, Paul compares the church to a body, with the diverse spiritual gifts operating in the

church serving as the body's diverse "members." Each member serves its function and contributes uniquely and indispensably to the working of the body as a whole.

Thus, when Paul writes, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal,"[4] he is identifying charity as that without which the diversity of gifts becomes cacophony rather than symphony. Charity, this chapter teaches, requires a paradoxical selfless engagement: charity "vaunteth not itself" and "seeketh not her own,"[5] but on the other hand, unexercised gifts produce silence, not symphony, so some self-assertion is in fact required. Chapter 14 then offers some practical advice about achieving this balance. People should absolutely speak in tongues, Paul says, but they should only do it publicly if someone present can interpret, so that the community as a whole can benefit.[6] Prophesy, by all means, but "let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."[7]

From these teachings of Paul, I learn that charity requires using one's gifts openly, but always remembering and respecting the enabling environment of the community. In other words—and I'll acknowledge that this next phrase is a fraught one—charity requires knowing one's place. This phrase evokes nothing so powerfully as oppression and slavery, so why am I using it in a discussion of charity? Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Zvi Brettler offer some useful guidance when they write that Paul's use of the body metaphor inverts the usual Roman one, which served to justify its class system, as in Menenius Agrippa's fable of the belly.[8] In Paul's charismatic ecclesiology, God functions primarily as the principle of order in what is otherwise supposed to be a self-regulating system driven by individuals' conscientious engagements with the spirit of their own gifts and with each other.

The secret to knowing one's place can be found in the second part of Jesus's great summation of Torah: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[9] Interpretation of this precept turns, as C. S. Lewis observed, on what it means to love oneself.[10] For present purposes, it suffices to say that loving oneself demands honesty to one's gifts. In Rabbi Greenberg's case, it would seem that watering down his views felt dishonest to him. Among many other things, self-love entails exercising one's gifts fully. The presence of neighbors, though, puts boundaries on this exercise, and we accept these boundaries by participating in our communities rather than speaking as voices in the wilderness. "The spirits of the prophets," writes Paul, "are subject to the prophets," with "prophets" in the plural, not the singular. We speak and let others judge, and we judge when others speak. Charity demands that we act in ways that do not hinder the other members of our community from exercising their own gifts to the fullest. Love thy neighbor as thyself: only in this way can we purchase the liberty of speech and action consonant with our gifts.

This principle, incidentally, applies to dialogue among religions as well as within them, as Rabbi Greenberg's essay beautifully illustrates. In this broader context, community replaces self; the commandment becomes "love your neighbor religion as you love your own." For me the most powerful part of Rabbi Greenberg's essay is the ending, in which he gives the principle of resurrection back to his friends. They, recall, had been willing to sacrifice it out of love for Judaism. Rabbi Greenberg senses this love deeply, and yet out of his own love he urges them not to pursue the idea. He tries, as it were, to point toward a ram in the thicket. It seems like he is saying that the Eckhardts need not let their love of Judaism trump their love of Christianity; he did not require so great a sacrifice to persuade him of their love. And so, at the end of the essay, he looks to resurrection as a principle that might heal the horrors of what had been for him the original breach: the Holocaust.

Let me, like Paul, conclude with practicalities, focusing on my own community by way of example. The "Mormon Moment" attending Mitt Romney's rise to the Republican nomination has entailed many vibrant, public conversations both about and within Mormonism. Among other things, these conversations have involved airing out old controversies about such things as polygamy and the Church's policy, ended in 1978, of withholding the priesthood from men of

African descent. Sometimes, the controversies turned out to be less old than many in the Church could have wished, as when an article in *The Washington Post* quoted BYU religion professor Larry Bott offering a controversial—and racist—explanation for the priesthood ban, prompting a strong repudiation from the LDS Newsroom the next day. Incidents like "Bott-gate," as it quickly became known in the Mormon blogosphere, raise questions not only about who can speak authoritatively on matters of Church doctrine, but also about what role individual members of the Church might play in validating or rejecting doctrines upon which the institutional Church has no official position.[11]

In a subsequent address on 1 April 2012 at the Church's annual General Conference, Apostle D. Todd Christofferson affirmed that members do have a role to play. Elder Christofferson quotes an earlier LDS leader, J. Reuben Clark, using language strongly reminiscent of the passages from Paul I've been discussing: "[t]he Church will know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the body of the members, whether the brethren [i.e., the leaders of the church] in voicing their views are 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost'; and in due time that knowledge will be made manifest." Clark made this statement in the context of a story about LDS prophet Brigham Young giving an afternoon sermon whose tenor seemed directly contrary to that of his morning sermon. Thus, even while Elder Christofferson strongly asserts that only the Apostolic calling carries the authority to pronounce definitively on doctrine, he nevertheless grants the Church, represented by the body of members, an important part in determining when a particular pronouncement should be received as authoritative.[12] There may only be one Prophet (or fifteen, counting the counselors in the First Presidency along with the twelve Apostles), but in a real sense, we are all prophets, or at least we ought to be. The spirits of the prophets are subject unto the prophets.

Thus, members of the Church have an obligation to speak as the Holy Ghost moves them, all the while submitting to the communal framework that makes prophecy both possible and meaningful. For those who feel called to be "alternate voices," Armand Mauss offers some helpful guidelines, summed up in a "Decalogue for Dissenters."[13] These precepts can provide critics with a path for peaceful and fruitful communal participation that should pre-empt most detours into Jeremiah's dungeon. I'll reprise a few of them here, quoting Mauss in italics and then offering my own commentary.

- *1. Seek constantly to build a strong personal relationship with the Lord as the main source and basis for your own confidence in the alternate voice you are offering*. Paul writes in Romans 12:6 that people with the gift of prophecy ought to exercise it "according to the proportion of faith"; thus, putting our gifts to use in the Church demands that we put the first great commandment first and drive our roots deep in the love of God.
- *4. Endure graciously the overt disapproval of 'significant others,' including family members, but never respond in kind*. As a corollary to Paul's metaphor, it seems reasonable to assume that a basic level of mutual misunderstanding will derive from the members' different roles. The foot will, I suspect, have an altogether different perspective on the piece of glass in the road just ahead than the eye that delights in how wonderfully it refracts the light. These differences are natural and should be allowed to continue.
- *6. Be humble, generous, and good natured in tolerating ideas that you find aversive in other Church members, no matter how "reactionary."* As in the previous example, charity requires allowing the free play of ideas to go on, trusting that the truth, or something like it, will prevail in the end. We have to keep our own sense of righteousness subordinate to this process. Others' lack of charity does not justify our giving up on it.
- *10. Endure to the end*. Taking opinions and ideas that feel certain to us and then turning them loose into the uncertain seas of dialogue can be overwhelming. It can feel a bit like giving up on the foundations that have rooted us in our communities' time out of mind. This requires faith: as Kierkegaard wrote, "The faithful person lies constantly on the

> deep, 70,000 fathoms beneath him. No matter how long he may lie out there, it doesn't therefore mean that he is coming, little by little, to lie and stretch himself on the beach. He can become calm, more capable, find some security that loves games and happiness of mind—but until the last moment he rests on 70,000 fathoms' depth."[14] Danger is a fact: bear it out, and hope to find your sea legs soon.

These principles offer a good framework for balancing the need to exercise one's own gifts fully with the recognition of their contingency upon the larger community, which needs the gifts of *all* its members.

Eugene England's classic essay, "Why the Church is as True as the Gospel," shows some good examples of such principles working toward the general good. Telling of his five years as the leader of a small congregation in Northfield, Minnesota—where he had come after graduate work at Stanford that had had the effect of honing his "alternate voice"—he relates his immersion in the simple, even lowly acts of service the calling required: blessing babies, counseling married couples, helping an addict through withdrawal. This immersion made it possible for him to exercise his gifts in ways that the congregation could accept:

> ...[a]nd after six months, I found that my branch members, initially properly suspicious of an intellectual from California, had come to feel in their bones, from their direct experience, that indeed my faith and devotion to them was "stronger than the cords of death." And the result promised in Doctrine and Covenants 121:44-46 followed: There flowed to me "without compulsory means" the power to talk about *any* of my concerns and passions and to be understood and trusted, even if not agreed with.[15]

For all my highfalutin' talk of charity, there really is no substitute for love, expressed in the most basic way: service for a fellow human being in need. Do you think somebody doesn't understand you? Stop worrying about that, and serve him or her in love. Does your opinion arouse consternation? Stop talking for a moment, and serve the people you've bothered. The community consists of you and them together, and from that blending arises the good that makes the community feel like home in the first place. There is no community worth saving without these fellow-citizens. Love them. Maybe they'll listen, and maybe they won't, but love them. No, it won't be easy: just love them.

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Notes

[1] Jeremiah 20:9, KJV, italics in original. Italics in the King James Version signify words without a precise precedent in the original but that seem necessary to conveying the sense in English.

[2] Paul's letter to the Corinthians was probably written in the mid-50s CE, addressed to the congregations he had gathered on a missionary journey to Corinth a few years earlier. Unlike other letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament, this one is generally held to be authentic. In it Paul offers guidance on many of the divisive issues facing these early groups of Jesus-followers. For a concise introduction to the epistle, see Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 287-88. Among Christians, chapter 13 of this letter is a famous passage about love; it is often read at weddings. The King James translation (along with some others) can be found here:
http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=1Cr&c=13&v=1&t=KJV

[3] 1 Cor. 1:10.

[4] 1 Cor. 13:1.

[5] 1 Cor. 13:4-5.
[6] 1 Cor. 14:26-28.

[7] 1 Cor. 14:29.

[8] See Levine and Brettler, 307n. Menenius Agrippa's fable appears in Livy, and also in Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*, from which it made its way into the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. The gist is this: the various members complain about the stomach's idleness, but the stomach reproves them with a reminder that it receives nourishment and redistributes it for the general good.

[9] Matt. 22:39.
[10] See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996 [1952]), 105.

[11] Jason Horowitz, "The Genesis of a Church's Stand on Race" in *The Washington Post*, 28 February 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-genesis-of-a-churchs-stand-on-race/2012/02/22/gIQAQZXyfR_story.html. "Church Statement Regarding 'Washington Post' Article on Race and the Church," 29 February 2012, http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article. Both accessed 18 April 2012. The Church's position on the reason for the ban has been—and remains—"nobody knows." While this position tacitly discredits ideas like those promulgated by Bott, it also underplays the thorough historical research into this question, exemplified by Lester Bush's seminal article "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue* 8 (1973): 11-68, available at https://www.dialoguejournal.com/2012/mormonisms-negro-doctrine-an-historical-overview.

[12] D. Todd Christofferson, "The Doctrine of Christ," April 2012 General Conference. Text available at http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/the-doctrine-of-christ. Accessed 18 April 2012.

[13] Armand Mauss, "Alternate Voices: The Calling and Its Implications" in *Sunstone* 76 (April 1990): 7-10, available at https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/076-07-10.pdf

[14] Søren Kierkegaard, *Stadier paa Livets Vei [Stages on Life's Way]* (Copenhagen, 1845), 414. My translation. Accessed on *Google Books*, 18 April 2012. Full text (in Danish) also available at sks.dk/SLV.

[15] England's essay was initially published in *Sunstone* 54 (March 1986): 30-36, available at https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/054-30-36.pdf. England later published an updated version of the essay reflecting on its impact in *Sunstone* 115 (December 1999): 61-69, available at https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/115-6-61-69.pdf. The quotes are from the scripture England cites, available at http://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/121.44-46?lang=eng#43.

Tikkun Olam *and Radical* Kenosis*: Fruit Borne in a Dialogue of Spiritual Encounter*, By Tasi Perkins

Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg's "What Would Roy and Alice Do? A Reflection on How I Came to Be a Failure through Dialogue, Thank God," is an insightful and provocative reflection on the constructive potential of inter-religious dialogue. Greenberg identifies Christianity's history of contempt for Jewish people—manifest in the unspeakable atrocities of the Shoah—as the initial catalyst for his engagement in dialogue with Christians. Personal encounters with particularly honest and self-critical Christians led to a methodological shift in his approach to dialogue, and through this new approach, he has highlighted an important missiological parallel between the two traditions.

Substance: Addressing the Wounds of History

Greenberg is not wrong when he notes that "certain classic Christian beliefs were deeply implicated in the worst Christian behaviors"[1] and that these beliefs have been manifest repeatedly in the "teaching of contempt – a horrifying typology of Jews and their religion."[2] Well before this prejudice was horrifically displayed in "the enormity of the Holocaust,"[3] Christians had falsely accused Jews of poisoning wells and spreading plagues and had used such scapegoating as a pretext for brutality and repression.[4] Augustine of Hippo taught that Christianity needed to preserve the Jewish communities in its midst as a constant reminder of the mark of Cain: "The nation of impious, carnal Jews will not die a bodily death. For whoever so destroys them…will assume from them the sevenfold punishment with which they have been burdened for their guilt in the murder of Christ."[5] Punctuated instances of inquisition and expulsion were hardly anomalies. An Asturian Holy Thursday chant, representative of long Christian tradition of symbolically (and sometimes physically) attacking Jews during the Paschal Triduum proclaimed, "Marrano Jews: you killed God, now we kill you."[6] Until 1959, the Roman Rite liturgy included a Good Friday prayer for "*perfidis Judæis*" (the perfidious Jews). Rabbi Greenberg does not exaggerate the history of Christian contempt for and violence against both Jews and Judaism, and his suspicion that this pattern is deeply embedded in Christianity calls on Christians to revisit their foundational beliefs and basic theological presuppositions.

Greenberg describes his early attitude toward the Church: "To rid Christianity of supersessionist demonization and 'justified' hatred would require an active program of positive affirmation of Judaism by Christianity's practitioners."[7] A focus on the Gentile dimension of Christianity can recover the affirmation for which Greenberg calls. Echoing Saint Paul, Karl Barth notes, "the Gentiles who have come into the community have no glory of their own."[8] In overcoming her supersessionist tendencies, the Church must rethink the nineteenth century *Religionswissenschaft* typologies of religion that characterized Judaism as an "ethnic" or "nomothetic" religion inferior to "universalistic" or "world" religions.[9] Greenberg is insistent that Judaism has a universal mission—he reads "the Torah as a redemptive vision of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and…Judaism as a covenant to work for the spiritual and political liberation of humanity, and not about the Jewish people alone."[10] Christians, therefore, must rethink their assumptions about Judaism as well as their own theological identities, and this is best done when both traditions begin to revisit their relationship to each other.

This relationship is clearly unique. Greenberg predicts that, "this rapprochement and new partnership between Judaism and Christianity…will be seen in history as one of the great religious revolutions of all time."[11] Yet does either tradition have unique relationships with other religions? It is impossible to deny that Christianity emerged within a Jewish milieu and initially conceived of itself as a Jewish movement. But if Greenberg is correct that, "the Church's claims had to be reshaped and reduced, in order to stop the falsification and mistreatment of others,"[12] then Christians must ask the question of who these "others" are. He notes the need for Jews and (presumably) Christians to participate in movements aimed at "black liberation, women's

liberation, [and] gay liberation."[13] But what of the relationship with other religions, particularly Islam? Gabriel Said Reynolds has demonstrated convincingly in *The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext* that Islam emerged within a Jewish-Christian milieu and that the Qur'an presupposes familiarity with the scriptures and traditions of Judaism and Christianity.[14] The logic of Greenberg's theological and ethical thrust necessitates that Jews, Christians, and Muslims engage in "trialogue"[15] to address theological disputes, historical conflicts, and contemporary injustices.

Methodology: From Theological Exchange to Religious Experience

"What Would Roy and Alice Do?" describes Rabbi Greenberg's developing understanding of dialogue and the potential for transformation through spiritual humility and stark honesty. He admits that, in his early period, his, "goal in 'dialogue' was not to learn about Christianity, but to teach Christians about its deeply embedded anti-Semitism."[16] This almost inevitably triggered a defensive response, and neither party made much progress. His encounters with Roy and Alice Eckardt, Sister Rose Thering, and others changed his perspective. He discovered a mutuality of restorative hope between these two traditions in which "resurrection is the central life affirming, mortal body-upholding, humanity-liberating promise and consolation."[17] The vulnerability of his interlocutors taught him the, "final lesson of dialogue: it made me into a better—certainly changed—member of my own faith."[18] This methodological shift might be described in terms of the fourfold typology of inter-religious dialogue articulated in 1991 by the Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples. Their document describes "dialogue of life…dialogue of action…dialogue of theological exchange [and] dialogue of religious experience."[19] Greenberg's early approach might be described as a "dialogue of theological exchange," which largely resulted in the entrenchment of positions and stalled communication. After meeting Roy, Alice, and others, he discovered the "dialogue of religious experience" in which "persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches."[20]

This approach to dialogue has led Greenberg from a position that is primarily critical of the Other to one that fully integrates self-criticism as well. His Christian dialogue partners were open about the Church's historical shortcomings; "their critique implicitly challenged all religious people – inevitably, for me, extending to Judaism as well."[21] Because Roy and Alice "refused to soften the failures, responsibilities, and obligations that they uncovered,"[22] Greenberg began to wonder: "Which traditions in Judaism denigrated the image of God in various people or groups?"[23] This metamorphosis of focus has borne the fruit of deepening the Christian idea of self-emptying, or *kenosis*.

Insight: *Tikkun Olam* as Inspiration for Radical *Kenosis*

Jürgen Moltmann's famous development of a kenotic approach to Christianity begins with reflection on the atrocities of the Shoah. He cites Elie Wiesel's reaction to seeing a hanged youth suffering in agony at Auschwitz: "Where is [God]? He is here. He is hanging there on the gallows."[24] Moltmann and Greenberg differ about where to locate God in the history of suffering in Judaism. Both offer critiques of Vatican II's *Nostra Ætate*, which states that "God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues."[25] Moltmann challenges what he considers to be a lingering supersessionism: "I regard the declarations of the second Vatican Council on the attitude of the church to the Jews to be weak, since here Judaism is still included amongst the 'non-Christian religions', while the church is described as a successor organization in the history of salvation to Israel, which she cannot be."[26] Greenberg's challenge to the notion of an immutable covenant between God and Israel – Vatican II is not unique in recalling God's promise to Abraham – is that the covenant itself has to be reconsidered in light of the Shoah. The Jewish community has no choice after Auschwitz but to guard itself; a breakdown of the covenant "made the Holocaust possible, after

which the Jewish people stepped up and took responsibility for their own destiny by assuming sovereign power creating the State of Israel."[27] Yet as politically complicated and emotionally charged as the question of Israel and Palestine is, it is important to keep in mind that the territory which encompasses the modern state of Israel was never (as Christian Restorationists first quipped in the nineteenth century) "a land without a people for a people without a land." Greenberg affirms the need for justice for all people and the special role that the Jewish community is to play in *tikkun olam*. The modern state of Israel has a responsibility "to exercise [its sovereign] power with justice and liberty for all."[28] Here his approach to dialogue is invaluable. If – as hinted above – there is a unique relationship between the "children of Isaac" and the "children of Ishmael," then Rabbi Greenberg serves as a reminder that political challenges have theological dimensions. Christian-Muslim and Jewish-Muslim histories need to be revisited through religious self-criticism.

Liberation theologian James Cone notes that, "the risk of faith means that the oppressed are not infallible.[29] At the same time, the imperfections of the oppressed have too often been used as pretexts for further oppression. Concerned lest the devastation of Shoah repeat itself, Greenberg asserts that it is "immoral for God to demand that Israel meet higher standards or else"[30] and that it is wrong to threaten "that unless modern Israelis observe the Torah, that God would exile them again – or that if Jews obey the Torah [then] they need no army, for God will protect them. Nor could moralists – or Christians – argue that, unless Israelis live by the highest standard, then Israel has no right to exist."[31] *Tikkun olam* involves regard for the marginalized and sensitivity to the ways in which they can be exploited.

An important contribution of this understanding of *tikkun olam* to Christian theology is the way that it expands the Christian concept of self-giving love. Greenberg invites *kenosis* (the biblical term for self-emptying, a word which admittedly does not appear in his article) to penetrate even ecclesiology and anthropology. He applauds "uncensored dissection of Christianity's sins against the Jews"[32] and those who ask "the Church to have the faith and courage to 'die' – to crucify its own worst tendencies even at the risk that classic concepts might also expire."[33] Cone's focus on marginalized people resonates with this sort of *kenosis*: "any view of the gospel that fails to understand the Church as that community whose work and consciousness are defined by the community of the oppressed is not Christian and is thus heretical."[34] While still largely unrealized, the impulse toward self-emptying into the life of the Other is alive in various pockets of Christianity. Greenberg's example of self-criticism and honest historical assessment can inspire these pockets to multiply and expand. A fuller doctrine of *kenosis* would consist of "reconceptualizing the relationship with Christianity to recognize it as a covenantal partner in *tikkun olam*."[35] Both concepts, thereafter, could further the inter-religious dialogue with traditions outside Judaism and Christianity.

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Notes

[1] Greenberg 5.

[2] *Ibid.* 1.

[3] *Ibid.* 6.

[4] *Ibid.* 2.

[5] Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 12.12, cited in Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law* (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1999) 28.

[6] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) 203.

[7] Greenberg 2.

[8] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol. III.3*, trans. G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010, originally published in German, 1960) §49, p.184.

[9] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 109ff.

[10] Greenberg 3.

[11] *Ibid.* 11.

[12] *Ibid.* 6.

[13] *Ibid.* 10.

[14] Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

[15] Leonard Swidler, Khalid Duran, and Reuven Firestone, *Trialogue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007) 38ff.

[16] Greenberg 3.

[17] *Ibid.* 12.

[18] *Ibid.* 11.

[19] Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, Rome, 19 May 1991) ¶42.

[20] *Ibid.* ¶42d.

[21] Greenberg 8.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.* 10.

[24] Elie Wiesel, *Night* cited in Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993, originally published in German, 1972) 274.

[25] Paul VI . *Nostra Ætate* (Second Vatican Council, Rome, 28 October 1965) ¶4.

[26] Moltmann 135.

[27] Greenberg 9.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] James H Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, revised edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, originally published 1975) 190.

[30] Greenberg 8.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.* 6.

[33] *Ibid.* 9.

[34] Cone 35.

[35] Greenberg 10.

A Response to Rabbi Greenberg, By Lauren Tuchman

Rabbi Greenberg's personal journey and initial struggles with dialogue resonate very deeply with me. I was moved and inspired not only by his evolving stance towards Christians, but also by the extraordinary examples of Roy and Alice Eckhardt and Sister Rose. Though their work and writings were deeply discomforting and not infrequently offensive to their coreligionists, I feel that their stories are extraordinary examples of the tremendous individual, communal, and societal transformation that can take place if we submit to the often-difficult work that dialogue requires of us.

Rabbi Greenberg's evolving relationship to Christians—from wishing to enter into dialogue so that he might teach them about the lethal anti-Semitism imbedded into their texts and teachings, to an abiding appreciation for the complexity and richness of Christians' encounter with the Divine and a profound appreciation for Christian spirituality—is one with which I strongly connect. Even now, after having had very meaningful dialogues with Christians and others, it is far too frequently the case that when I enter into dialogue I do so with numerous worries and concerns at the forefront. Instead of allowing for emotional and spiritual growth to take place, and rather than allowing myself to be open to the idea that my own theology might change as a result of my encounters with the other, I concern myself with presenting a good picture of Judaism. Just as with Rabbi Greenberg's initial motivations for entering into dialogue, I find myself feeling the need to make sure that my partners in dialogue are conversant with the facts of this often ugly history.

This inner emotional landscape has played itself out in my most recent dialogic encounters with theologically conservative Christians who, out of what I truly believe to be a genuine if perhaps misguided desire to get to know Jesus more deeply, have begun to explore the Jewish roots of their faith. How, they argue, can they truly know Jesus without a deep-seated appreciation for the way he lived, practiced and died? This desire has manifested itself not only in the adoption of uniquely Jewish religious ritual but also in the study of Jewish texts. Although I most certainly appreciate their desire to gain a fuller understanding of themselves through this exploration, I have often wondered where the line between genuine exploration and cultural appropriation exists, and what actions result in one crossing such a line. When I hear of a Torah scroll being used in non-Jewish religious ceremony, or when I hear of a Christian who has chosen to wear a tallit when praying in a non-Jewish context, I am quite frankly very unsettled. Do I have a responsibility to jump in and reclaim what is sacred to me? Or do I swallow my profound discomfort and move forward, hoping that, through such exploration, a deeper appreciation will emerge? Conversely, as deeply unsettled as I become in such scenarios, how is the other person feeling? Am I, as a Jew, too quick to make disparaging statements about others with whom Jews have not always had the most pleasant of interactions, feeling that history, as it were, has let us off the hook from doing the same kind of work in understanding others that they may be doing to better understand us?

On one of the final days of my undergraduate career, one of my professors said something to his students that will always stick with me: that when we study religion, we know we have done so satisfactorily when we appreciate the beauty in those religions that are not our own and when we come to understand the flaws in that which we hold sacred. Dialogue is meant to make the comfortable afflicted. The most transformative and meaningful dialogue emerges when we do not shy away from the contentious conversations and when we feel that we are in a safe enough space to allow those feelings and emotions that might be raw to show themselves. Dialogue occurs when we bring the totality of ourselves and our life experiences to the table, in the hopes that, just as we show our utter human vulnerability, we will be able to move forward into a much more meaningful relationship with the other. Rabbi Greenberg's journey is a testament to what can happen if we but allow ourselves to do the inner work we need to move

from a place of uncertainty to a full-fledged willingness to engage. I hope to have the strength to follow his wise example.

Lauren Tuchman graduated in May 2011 from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America with a Master of Arts in Judaic Studies and holds a BA in religion and Judaic Studies from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. Her interests include the intersections between religion and gender studies as well as religion and disability. She is deeply committed to interreligious dialogue and was active in numerous interreligious organizations during her undergraduate and graduate careers.

"Dancing with the Divine," a Rabbinical Student's Response to Rabbi Greenberg, By Adina Allen

Reflecting on his experience of interfaith dialogue, Yitz describes his process of moving from a place of resistance to a place of openness and learning. The turning point was meeting a group of particularly visionary Christians who were able to offer powerful and nuanced critique of Christianity from within and to speak out against those parts of their tradition that they saw as destructive.

This group of colleagues exhibited deep and honest introspection and self-critique and exemplified the model of challenging even the most entrenched norms of their own religions in pursuit of a resonant theology. Yitz writes that these thinkers were asking the Church "to have the faith and courage to 'die'—to crucify its own worst tendencies even at the risk that classic concepts might also expire." Inspired by his colleagues, Yitz has been and continues to be a voice that calls upon Judaism to allow those aspects of our tradition that don't serve us—homophobia, sexism, racism—to die away in order for our religion to blossom and thrive and for, as he says, Gd's image to be restored to its fullest expression.

I admire the many ways Yitz has challenged Orthodoxy to grow and change, even at the risk of his own reputation. And there is so much work yet to be done. On too many issues, walls of defensiveness, resistance, self-protection, and fear surround us and stifle the life force of our tradition. True and lasting Jewish continuity will come from nurturing the creative impulse within each human being and allowing this creativity to speak to, and perhaps radically change, our tradition.

To me, true faith is allowing oneself to be constantly changed by dancing with the Divine. Movement is life. Just as our bodies begin to atrophy and decay from stagnation, so too our personal spiritual lives and the collective life of a religious tradition will die from lack of movement. The essence of Gd is transformation. In Exodus (3:14) Moses asks Gd's name, and Gd replies, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh," "I will be that which I will be." Gd is not a static figure with a knowable name but rather is constantly in the process of becoming. Gd is infinite possibility. One of the most powerful ways we can live *b'tzelem Elokhim*, in Gd's image, is to embody this quality of dynamism.

Adina Allen is a third year rabbinical student in Hebrew College's transdenominational program in Boston. Her passion lies at the intersection between Judaism, ecology, and creativity. At Hebrew College, Adina envisioned and curated *Emunah v'Omanut*—an art exhibit that gave voice to the diverse ways we balance being inheritors and innovators of Judaism. Adina is also the co-founder of the Movement Minyan, in which participants explore elements of traditional Jewish prayer through the body. Prior to rabbinical school Adina was the Assistant Editor of *Tikkun* magazine. Adina has been a contributing scholar to *State of Formation* for the past two years.

Sparking a Spiritual Revolution: A Unitarian Universalist Reflection on Rabbi Greenberg's Theology of Engagement, By Nicolas Cable

The modern Orthodox Rabbi Irving Greenberg embodies vulnerability at a level not often seen in public discourse. His article, "What Would Roy and Alice Do?: A Reflection on How I came to Be a Failure through Dialogue, Thank God," is a powerful yet humble statement on the importance of self-reflection, critical engagement with others and with God, and the willingness to be vulnerable as we travel along our spiritual journeys in life.

Rabbi Greenberg has spent much of his time as an advocate for building constructive relationships across lines of religious difference, including within his own tradition of Judaism. However, this is not the stereotypical interfaith dialogue that has often been reduced to a joke of inter-religious engagement. No, the type of engagement that he seeks to nurture is that which demands that the participants truly consider how they are living out the foundational beliefs of their respective traditions (e.g., "Love your neighbor as yourself," *tikkun olam*, etc.). In addition, this engagement calls for its participants to be willing to admit the missteps they have made in their efforts to live by these teachings.

I have been involved in interfaith organizing for the past three years. It has been extremely gratifying at times, as well as occasionally frustrating beyond measure. I have spoken with friends on countless occasions about the lack of enthusiasm on our college campuses and in our other communities regarding interfaith engagement. Rabbi Greenberg's reflection on the need to be willing to repent and be transformed within these engagements is what I believe is a missing link to this recurrent theme of dialogue with my colleagues.

I resonate with Rabbi Greenberg's courage and willingness to reach out to Christians who may implicitly or explicitly advocate theologies that dehumanize Jewish people, and other religious people, for that matter. However, what is more admirable in his article is how he discussed the necessity of not merely looking outward at where others are not living humbly and truthfully in one's religious tradition, but also looking inward at one's own community and the places where they may not be living in right relationship with one another and with God. Rabbi Greenberg took the same questions he had about other traditions and applied them to his own tradition, asking "Which traditions in Judaism denigrated the image of God in various people or groups?" By doing this, he showed that all traditions are inherently prone to corruption and distortion, even his own.

As a Unitarian Universalist seminarian and leader within that tradition, I am moved by the spiritual maturity that Rabbi Greenberg shows in suggesting that we all have work to do to rehumanize the "other" (and ourselves) into I-Thou relationships. The Fourth Principle of my faith tradition is that we affirm "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" for our congregants. Theologically, Unitarian Universalists are as diverse as fingerprints and as proud of this diversity as one could imagine. The element of responsibility in spiritual development and moral day-to-day living is something I have preached on more than once. Learning to be spiritually responsible leads one not merely to look forward, but backward, as well, at the places where spiritual freedom of interpretation and expression has led to the detriment and suffering of others.

At the end of his article, Rabbi Greenberg shares a phrase that is similar to one I have been using for some time now. He writes, "I believe this rapprochement and new partnership between Judaism and Christianity…will be seen in history as one of the great religious revolutions of all time, a repentance/turning almost without parallel." I charge congregations that I guest preach at to consider starting a spiritual revolution. This revolution is not a violent or political one of which we are more accustomed to; rather, it is a revolution of the heart to be ever more open to the divine spark within every person, guiding them to truth and meaning, and bringing justice into the world.

There are innumerable unaddressed and unresolved atrocities in the world, including the implications of the Holocaust and Christian anti-Semitism. I am inspired by Rabbi Greenberg's spiritual introspection and outreach to people within his tradition and across religious boundaries. I pray that my humble work can be of the same vein for the same goal: a spiritual revolution of cosmic proportions. This journey begins (or for some, continues) where Rabbi Greenberg began, in building humanizing relationships between people, where God can be seen reflected brightly in every face.

Nicolas Cable has just finished his first year as a Master of Divinity student at Chicago Theological Seminary, where he is studying to be a Unitarian Universalist congregational minister. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from DePaul University with a B.A. in Religious Studies (Ethics and Social Justice concentration) and Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies (Gender and Sexuality concentration). Nic has been working in the interfaith movement for several years and has recently been involved with the Interfaith Youth Core located in Chicago. He has one numerous awards, including some related to preaching, leadership, and academic achievement.

I, Thou, The Holocaust, By Ela Merom

Asking:

How can I respond in a way that takes into account the Holocaust in all of its horror, both the horror of the atrocious event itself and the horror of knowing that humanity could allow something like it to take place?

How do I approach the subject, as a modern day Israeli who feels immense sadness and helplessness in the face of the racism in my society, of the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian people, and of the perpetual fear that many in this country live with and suffer from on a daily basis? The *Shoa is* very much alive here. A large percentage of the Jewish population in Israel consists of second or third generation holocaust survivors, and the psychological impact of the *Shoa* therefore affects Israeli society both on a personal and on a national level.

It is with these questions in mind that I write my response to Rabbi Greenberg's article, only a few days before Holocaust Memorial day here in Israel. This topic is overwhelming to the regular psyche and world of emotions. What can be done with such a trauma, a trauma so massive, ongoing, blind, and of such unimaginable aggression? It is impossible to hold it all in its entirety; nor do we want to because it is so terrible, so scary.

I am inspired by Rabbi Greenberg's efforts to address the Holocaust head-on, for his attempt to make sense of it for himself, for his generation, and for future generations, and his efforts—initially as a survival measure—to prevent another disaster from happening to the Jewish People, growing into a phase of a will to redeem humanity at large and religion at large after this terrible, terrible chapter.

What I wish to understand is how it is that humans can inflict pain on other humans. What part of ourselves must we shut down in order to do that, and why have we humans over and over again shut ourselves to terrible crimes committed against fellow humans? It is not a contest; suffering is suffering. Humans in Africa, torn away from their land and families and sold like farm animals; myriad indigenous people massacred, their sacred culture disrespected, degraded, and destroyed; one million Armenians massacred by the Turks in the Armenian genocide; recently, protestors killed by the thousands in Syria for simply wanting freedom; and, you know, the usual acts of killing and rape that are commonplace in "regular" wars.

A snapshot from my life:

In 1996 I, like most Israeli youth, participated in a delegation to Poland to learn about, witness, and mourn the massacre of my people and the massive loss of Eastern European Jewish culture. Traditionally in most Israeli schools, upon return from Poland, the delegation is responsible for leading the Holocaust memorial ceremony that the rest of the school attends. Leading the ceremony was something I had very much looked forward to for years.

Upon returning from the trip, I began thinking about how we would lead the ceremony. The more I thought about it, the more I felt I wanted it to be different somehow. There was something missing for me in the usual format of the ceremony. At first I did not know what it was, but then I came to the clear conclusion that we cannot fully commemorate the Holocaust, or do its memory justice, if we do not mention the human suffering in the hands of other humans that is happening presently.

I was especially distraught about the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Yugoslav Wars that had recently ended and were being judged by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. How can we disregard these horrors that are happening presently, I thought, when talking about our own tragedy that happened decades ago? I was unprepared for the kind of resistance I was met with, mostly by the staff, but also by some of the students.

Special student meetings were held to discuss this topic, and I, very fiery, fought this campaign hard...and lost. In spite of the good number of students that joined me, my efforts

were vetoed by the staff in a large meeting with the entire delegation, on which I dramatically walked out. In protest, I did not lead or participate in any part of the ceremony, which at the time was heartbreaking for me, since the Holocaust was so central to my growth as a human and as a Jew. I was sad and angry, but soon after, these feelings turned into understanding; not justification; but compassionate understanding. What I realized is that there is so much "realtime" active mourning that is still going on for most Israelis at that point that it is just too hard to embrace the suffering of other nations.

Mourning:

For most Jews in Israel and around the world, mourning the inconceivable loss of the Holocaust did not begin in 1945 when Nazi Germany was brought down, but during the Eichmann trial. Until the trial, Jews were still trying desperately to pick up the broken pieces, to find their scattered remaining family members, and to start new families. There was also an incredible amount of shame, as victims often have, and in response, the subject was silenced. Instead of mourning, all that energy was put into renewal.

During the Eichmann trial, that silence was finally broken. The entire country sat glued to their radios, listening to 90 holocaust survivors come to the witness stand one after the other to testify about their horror stories of radical loss, degradation, and abuse. Many were breaking down and weeping, and the entire country was along with them. Finally, mourning was allowed and was happening in the public sphere. Today, the mourning continues, but it seems like there are more and more voices in Israeli society, mostly of second and third generation Holocaust survivors who are ready to move on to the next phase, to ask new questions, bring up previously tabooed topics, and to hold the memory of the Holocaust in a new way.[1]

A true and real mourning process calls for a period of time in which we are completely consumed by our own suffering. This kind of process, done right, is one that allows us to open ourselves to the suffering of others. We certainly need to affirm our suffering, but let us not hug it like a teddy bear!

Believing that identifying ourselves as victims gives us real power, or that acknowledging the suffering of others somehow denies us the affirmation of our own, is false. Yes, it is true that acknowledging and truly connecting to another's suffering may decrease the weight of our own; however, this is not because doing so denies our own, but rather, because when we meet in our fragility, when we are all witnesses who feel responsible for each others' suffering, we find new strength and consolation.

Perfect Happiness:

There can be no real happiness in the face of another's suffering. The more we pursue real happiness, the less we inflict suffering upon others. And this pursuit of happiness requires creativity. What is the essence of creativity? Creativity is grace manifested; it is going deeper, finding an expression coming from The Beyond that cannot be conceived by the regular, binary paradigm to which our minds are habituated. Because in that over-used paradigm: yes, it is either us or them.

As victims, we also live in that binary reality. I believe that it is with this kind of creativity that we can really engage with the Holocaust and find consolation.

The different uprisings, in flesh and spirit, during the Holocaust and in the establishment of the Jewish State was, I believe, largely about Jews saying loud and clear, "Aggression towards Jews is wrong, we should not be inflicted suffering upon,[2] we will not allow it again, we have a right to be safe, to be free, to be happy." Victims sometimes need to say the refrain, "We will not allow it again, we have a right to be safe, to be free, to be happy," for a long time in order to be convinced of this very simple fact, true and absolute: yes, not because I am Jewish, Christian, talented, pretty, do I have a right to live, free and happy, but just because I am! Truly realizing this leads to one conclusion, and one conclusion only: everybody deserves to

be free and happy. *Everybody*. Not coming to that realization means we have not completely realized our own perfect right to perfect happiness, which is beyond what we can imagine.

That is the fulfillment of "Love thy fellow human as you love yourself." There is no "because" justifying this commandment, which has been taught to be the most central part of Torah, yet it is followed by "Ani YHVH," I am God. This is because it is actually more of a truism than a commandment; if we truly love ourselves, we love our neighbor; if we truly love our neighbor, we love ourselves.

We are all on the path and have not realized that completely, still we are living in the "world of separation," yet this Perfection should be our guiding light. Our endeavor as humans is to realize truths from that perfect world into this broken world. That is the only way I know how to live here on earth, to be able to hold all the pain, and to be truly happy.

And it takes conviction and persistence. It requires asking ourselves, "What stands between me and my complete and perfect happiness?" And affirming, "I will overcome it!"

I wish for the Holocaust to empower us in a real way. In honoring the massive suffering of our people, we need to be committed to freedom and justice for all, particularly regarding the Jewish people's primary nation of entanglement these days: the Palestinians. Not because what we are doing is a Holocaust, an apartheid, or any other name, but because it is simply wrong. Put quite simply, we should be committed to their safety and happiness as much as we are to our own. No, allow me to make it even clearer: their safety, freedom, and happiness *is* our own.

Chaplains unto the nations:

We can take the authenticity and bravery of Rabbi Greenberg as an inspiration for a journey of discovery, for *Tikkun Ha'nefesh,* and for *Tikkun Olam* – healing of the self and healing of the world, propelled by hard, even earth-shaking questions created by the encounter with the reality of the Holocaust.

Some of the best chaplains I know have experienced terrible loss and trauma. It is my deepest prayer to The Source of Life, to The Source of Comfort that my people can transform our terrible trauma into the grace of healing power for ourselves and for other nations.

Ela Merom is a seeker of truth, fascinated with the paths to the divine in the everyday and the extraordinary. She is a spiritual director and leads Jewish Mindfulness workshops. Ela is now in the midst of birthing a new progressive prayer group in Tel Aviv, where she lives, works, and raises her two precious daughters Shahar and Adi-Liah.

Notes

[1] This is the 13th year that in Tel Aviv a "Alternative Holocaust Memorial Ceremony" was held in Tmuna Theater. This ceremony, mostly created by 3rd generation survivors, allows for a new, creative, and groundbreaking commemoration of the Holocaust, and is representative of the part of Israeli society that is ready for a change in the conversation about the Holocaust.

[2] While the Holocaust was obviously the mountain top peak of aggression towards Jews (and other minorities, lest we forget) Jews were suffering from discriminating laws and aggression in Europe for many years prior.

Issue 9 of the Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue *welcomes a special new addition to our regular content: DivInnovations profiles.*

The DivInnovations series represents an exciting new collaboration that State of Formation and the Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue *are embarking upon in an effort to capture dynamic research, initiatives, partnerships, and projects (particularly interfaith in nature) at seminaries, divinity schools, and graduate theological settings in general across the nation. We will be posting profiles of institutions both on the State of Formation blog of emerging scholars through this account and in each issue of the* Journal. *Look for your school in coming posts! We invite you to be in touch about nominating your institution for a profile by emailing our liaison and profile developer, Sophia Khan.*

DivInnovations Profile 1: *Claremont Lincoln University and Claremont School of Theology*

In conversation with Jon Hooten, Special Assistant to the President for the University Project and Ph.D. candidate:

Claremont Lincoln University and Claremont School of Theology may be tucked away in an idyllic setting in sunny California, but they are in no way removed from issues of social justice. Claremont Lincoln University and Claremont School of Theology offer a vast array of degree tracks in, among other subject areas, Interreligious Studies, Muslim Leadership, Practical Theology, and Ministry. Among a host of pioneering initiatives, such as the recently launched Initiative for Engaged Ethics, the Center for Engaged Compassion, and the Center for Global Peacebuilding, Claremont Lincoln has recently partnered with Rockhill Farm, which was

established in 2009 in Bakersfield, Central Valley, CA . This groundbreaking collaboration embodies the spirit of engaged social justice that is a hallmark of the Claremont name.

As an outgrowth of their relationship with Rockhill Farm, Claremont Lincoln established the Rockhill Institute, which offers community-based theological education through rigorous intellectual training, spiritual awareness, and political organizing to service underprivileged communities. Fernando Jara, one of Claremont's M.Div. students, founded Rockhill Farm to rehabilitate male drug and alcohol users (primarily ex-criminals) through a 'boot camp' model. Their motto speaks volumes about their dynamic mission, which seeks to work alongside its participants as they journey toward recovery and self-discovery: "Courage. Self-mastery. Empowerment." The program encourages reentry and residency through fitness training programs, theological study (now with Claremont faculty members!), developing analytical reasoning skills, and assisting with the maintenance of a farm--including the business side of the industry. This project exemplifies the valuable cooperation between dedicated faculty and inspired students that can build bridges toward achieving social justice that reach beyond the classroom, into communities in need.

Fernando Jara speaks:

- Interview with Forward Thinkers: California's Everyday Leaders
- Seeds of Change Interview

Claremont and Rockhill, as narrated by Claremont M.Div. candidate and President of Rockhill Inc., Nora Jacob:

"The men of Rockhill Farm have already been receiving a superb biblical education five days a week from my fellow M.Div. student and Rockhill Farm founder, Fernando Jara. What's most exciting to me about the Rockhill Institute is that its students -- who include all the men of the Farm -- are now being challenged to apply their learning not only to their own lives (transformation from the inside out, personally) but also to the possibilities of making positive changes in their community (transformation from the inside out, societally). On February 12, 2012, Fernando and I co-founded a new congregation, RockHill Disciples of Christ, in Bakersfield as another, complementary way to focus social justice work in the Central Valley. Bakersfield is California's 9th largest city and has had major problems with drugs and gang violence. Fernando and the men have connections throughout all levels of the community there, and the church outreach is beginning to take shape, again, to make a positive difference from the inside out. The single most touching moment I've experienced -- as co-pastor of the new church, pastoral care provider to the men of Rockhill Farm, and President of Rockhill Inc. -- was rehearsing the men of Rockhill Farm to serve as Deacons for the new church. Each had to confront the question of 'worthiness' for service, and each had to answer it for himself. Imagine someone who's working in various ways to heal his own life, then standing up and saying, 'YES, I am worthy in God's eyes!'"

DivInnovations Profile 2:
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

In conversation with Sr. Marianne Farina, CSC, PhD, Department Chair of Theology:

At the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (DSPT), the dialogical reigns supreme. The DSPT is an institution whose commitment to dialogue permeates numerous layers of campus life. From the constant stream of engaged classroom discussion across the disciplines of philosophy and theology, wherein ultimate questions of meaning are always entertained, to the annual Aquinas Lecture, which connects with members from the outside community and thereby provides service to society, the DSPT fulfills the mission of its earliest scholastic ancestors who rigorously sought to engage all forms of knowledge available to them in order to interpret central theological, philosophical, and social questions. At the Owl of Minerva and Dumb Ox monthly meetings, students take up the banner of approaching difficult issues through presentations of their own research to their academic community, opening themselves and their ideas up to critical discourse.

The DSPT stays connected to social justice issues through, among other things, its recent launch of the Faith in Human Rights project. Since 2009, this exciting initiative has partnered with numerous institutions and organizations to host lectures on the role of religion in human rights advocacy and implementation. The program explores issues such as human trafficking, racial and religious discrimination, i.e., Islamophobia, along with a number of other critical topics. On April 22nd, 2012, the Faith in Human Rights project will host a program, "Requiem for the Death Penalty," which seeks to rally support for ending the death penalty in California. With opportunities to focus on Interreligious Studies, Religion and the Arts, including opportunities for international exchange, and its more traditional coursework in theology and philosophy, the DSPT offers a wealth of diverse avenues for scholarly development.

In 2013, the DSPT in conjunction with Professor Marianne Farina will grapple with approaches to the Qur'an in a six-month program that will feature artists who produce Islamic art based on verses in the Qur'an. The program will investigate the teachings, recitations, and other concomitant philosophical questions that emerge from engagement with this sacred text. These efforts hope to transform stigma against and eradicate ignorance about Islam.

DSPT, as narrated by students:

"In line with the Thomistic tradition, respectful scholarly dialogue is of the utmost importance at the DSPT, whether it be in the classroom, independent faculty engagements, or student forums. I recently gave a presentation at our student philosophy forum on my thesis, 'Human Flourishing at the Root of the Common Good.' I found the feedback from my peers to be both supportive and helpful as I was working to refine my ideas. This support and intelligent feedback is also enabled in large part by the intimate setting of a small and specialized faculty and student body. I am privileged to able to study philosophy at this very unique institution."
—Richard Joseph Mayer, OP (Ordo Praedicatorum)

"Dr. Marianne Farina's work at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology ranges from Christian and Islamic Philosophy to Ethics and Interfaith Dialogue, and encourages students and faculty to engage in the GTU's wide diversity of topics in interreligious discourse. In my own work on Muslims, Islam, and Media in the United States, I continuously find my discussions with Dr. Farina on subjects within Islamic Studies to be elucidative and steeped in a tradition of

knowledge that is reflexive and reflective of contemporary issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims. Dr. Farina's work at DSPT highlights the ways in which larger conversations between faith communities and individuals can be engaged to promote human rights issues and interfaith dialogue on local, national, and global levels."
—Som Pourfarzaneh, PhD Student, Graduate Theological Union

"I was especially impressed by the rigor of the Dominican School's academic standards that have come about because of - not despite its - faith-based mission. For Muslim students navigating their own place in Western academic institutions, the Dominican School can be a model for modern religious scholarship that does not compromise on the foundations of its rich tradition nor its authenticity."
—Farah El-Sarif

"My experience at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology has been intellectually stimulating, enriching, and extremely beneficial for my academic pursuits and line of work. I have found that other traditions and religions are skillfully navigated with a nuance that even co-religionists often fall short of. I was impressed by the comfort level of students when they engaged in class despite their diverse backgrounds and I can honestly say that I have not experienced such a warm environment of religious sensitivity throughout my academic studies. I truly hope that the cross-religious study program at the Dominican school continues to expand its noble initiative."
—John F. Rhodus Jr.

DivInnovations Profile 3: *Reconstructionist Rabbinical College*

In conversation with Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, Ph.D., Director of the Department of Multifaith Studies and Initiatives, Associate Professor of Religious Studies:

For more than twenty years, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) has recognized the need for Jewish leaders to understand other religious traditions and has required its students to engage in multifaith work, through a minimum of two semester-long courses. RRC's unique stance among rabbinical seminaries garnered an award from the Interfaith Youth Core and successive, multi-year grants from the Henry Luce Foundation. These grants fueled the department into high gear, giving RRC the opportunity to expand and experiment in a number of dynamic directions.

An annual four-day retreat for 16 emerging Muslim and Jewish religious leaders from a range of religious training programs became a central component of the college's multifaith work. This pioneering project aims to provide an incubator for far-reaching Jewish-Muslim partnerships and to develop cohorts of influential young leaders who take skills, relationships and understanding back to their respective communities. Before the Luce grants, RRC had taught a course on Islam for Rabbis. Afterwards, the college was able to tailor that course into a service learning experience that explored new ways to teach students about Islam beyond the classroom. RRC partnered with Muslim graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center to brainstorm innovative ways of teaching Islam in a Jewish venue. Rabbinical students have gained valuable leadership skills by developing one-on-one relationships with Muslim counterparts, studying religious texts, and visiting mosques. An intimate multifaith salon brought students into dialogue with leaders of other faiths; a

continuing education program for RRC graduates this spring will help practicing rabbis understand Islam in America via video conferences with four renowned Muslim scholars.

The College has pursued yet another innovative interfaith partnership in its regular activities with Lutheran Theological Seminary and with Palmer Theological Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist). Students from RRC are paired with Lutheran Theological Seminary students for an entire semester to undertake deep textual analysis. This Jewish-Christian encounter through text brings together ten students from each campus, and each week features a new text from the respective faith traditions. This year, RRC partnered again with LTSP for an innovative course based on the Harvard Pluralism Project case study initiative and hopes to continue work with Palmer as well.

New multifaith courses continue to emerge. At the suggestion of State of Formation Contributing Scholar Michael Ramberg,, RRC class of 2012, RRC students recently worked with Shane Claiborne, founder and leader of The Simple Way movement on several service projects in Philadelphia's inner-city Kensington neighborhood that demonstrate Christian intentional living. Claiborne took the volunteers on a "reality tour," pointing out problems and the religious groups working to address them.

In addition to their intensive interfaith study, RRC students participate in social justice initiatives. Shepherded through the Social Justice Organizing Program by Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, students combine rigorous coursework with supervised internships in which they cultivate relationships with a number of pioneering, dedicated organizations in Philadelphia. For example, an RRC student is currently interning with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). HIAS was founded originally by Jews to help Jewish immigrants but has since expanded to assist all immigrants with legal aid work and refugee resettlement. Student interest in environmentalism and interfaith work has led to a partnership with New Jersey-based environmental justice group Green Faith, which educates worshippers at churches, synagogues, and mosques. Courses at RRC such as "Food Justice," and "Money in Our Lives and Society" enlarge the students' visions. Rabbi Liebling and Rabbi Kreimer join forces to supervise interns working in social justice and interfaith contexts.

By searching for meaning outside of its own walls, RRC has enriched the lives of its own students and others for decades. Its trailblazing efforts make it an especially rewarding setting for future scholars and activists who are dedicated to forging new partnerships and finding new paths for constructive collaboration.

Further Links:

- Leadership profile of Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer on Harvard's Pluralism Project
- Multifaith Studies and Initiatives at RRC
- Rabbi Dr. Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer's RRC blog, Multifaith World
- RRC employs the Harvard Case Study Method: Case Study
- Videos from the 2009 Garrison Retreat for Emerging Muslim and Jewish Leaders
- Videos from talk at RRC by Rabbi Daniel Brenner on multifaith education for middle schoolers

RRC, as narrated by Michael Ramberg, Class of 2012:

"In the extraordinarily rich learning environment of RRC, my interfaith opportunities have been among the most rewarding. My interfaith classes and internships have exposed me to academic

perspectives on Islam, in-depth text study with a diverse group of Christians, interfaith organizing for immigrants' rights and case studies on challenges around religious pluralism. The result of this training is that as I prepare to graduate in June I am open to the tremendous beauty in other religions and I am committed to being a leader in creating genuine pluralism.

Call for Submissions for *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue*™ Issue 11: Religion & Politics

Given the undeniable impact of political affairs upon religious matters and of religion upon such political matters as elections, marriage equality, reproductive rights, war, healthcare determinations, ethnic violence, economic rights—to name but a few of many—we at the JIRD believe it is time to dedicate a special issue to the topic of Religion and Politics. We ask that you share with us your critical reflections for our eleventh issue, due to be released in the late fall of 2012. Among the countless possible avenues for exploration, we have provided a few to prompt your thinking:

- Although politicians are expected to make official decisions without appealing to religious grounds for justification, they are allowed and even at times expected to utilize their religiosity during campaigning. How does this duality affect their constituents? Does it, for example, establish a false hope that a candidate who has been voted into office based on being a 'better Christian' than another will advocate for laws that adhere strictly to faith doctrines?
- Why are politicians, especially presidential nominees, asked to assure voters that they will not simply be puppets to their religions while in office?
- To what extent, if any, should the religious views of some dictate policies that affect many?
- Is it possible for political officials to separate religious views from decision-making?
- Can an oppressive regime fueled by religious rhetoric be justified or sanctioned based on theological principles or assertions made in sacred texts?
- Is a separation between the realm of the political and that of the religious necessary for a democracy to flourish?
- What role does inter-religious dialogue have to play in mediating political issues?

The Journal is a peer-reviewed publication dedicated to innovative research on and study of the interactions that take place within and between religious communities. Published online, it is designed to increase both the quality and frequency of interchanges between religious groups

and their leaders and scholars. By fostering communication and study, the Journal hopes to contribute to a more tolerant, pluralistic society. Recent issues have centered on critical themes in inter-religious studies, including "Religion and Revolution" and "Women, Feminism, and Inter-Religious Dialogue."

Submission Guidelines

All submissions must be the original, previously unpublished work of the author(s). Authors are also advised to read about the Journal and the previous issue prior to submitting an article. Submissions should be around 3,500 words, including references and a 100-word abstract. They should strictly adhere to the *Fifteenth Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style*, utilizing endnotes for citations and footnotes for discursive elaboration (please do not use in-text citation for anything, including references to sacred texts). Submissions should be in a .doc or .docx format, both of which are available in open-source format as well as in most word processing software. Please be sure to separate sentences by a single space rather than two, and please make use of serial commas (e.g. "yes, no, and maybe" rather than "yes, no and maybe"). Any failure to comply with stylistic standards will be pointed out by staff editors, and authors will be expected to correct the discrepancies themselves during the editing process.

Co-authored articles are welcomed and encouraged. Articles may be submitted online at www.irdialogue.org/submissions or via e-mail to submissions@irdialogue.org.

Deadlines

The deadline for submissions for the eleventh issue of the Journal is July 15, 2012. Articles submitted after this date will not be considered for publication in the eleventh issue. You will hear back about the status of your submission by August 15, 2012.

Peer-Review Process

After an initial vetting process by the editorial board, each submission will undergo a rigorous peer-review by members of the Board of Scholars and Practitioners. If accepted for publication, the Journal's staff may edit the submission for mechanics and adherence to writing standards.