Interreligious Education & US Rabbinical Schools

By Or N. Rose

Introduction

US rabbis are today working in a highly diverse and fluid national religious culture.[1] In chat rooms, hospitals, college dorms, and family tables across the country, Jews are interacting with people from different religions with greater frequency and with fewer barriers than in past ages.[2] For rabbis to work successfully in this dynamic social milieu, they need training to deal with a complex set of interreligious matters (or issues with substantive interreligious dimensions), ranging from intermarriage, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to the decline of religious affiliation among many American millennials, to anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry.[3] As Diana Eck has written, the sheer fact of demographic diversity does not mean that people will interact with one another across religious lines in thoughtful and productive ways, particularly in times of anxiety, scarcity, or conflict. Developing and sustaining such an ethos—what Eck refers to as "religious pluralism"[4]—requires thoughtful leadership. Like other elements of leadership development, there are key skills, virtues, and knowledge[5] that rabbis must cultivate to be effective actors in the interfaith[6] sphere.

There is not only a need to train rabbis in this field because of pressing societal issues relating to religious diversity, but also because interreligious education can help students grow as Jewish seekers and leaders. As I will argue below, when engaged in thoughtful interreligious initiatives, seminarians have the opportunity to clarify and deepen their own beliefs and values, and to hone their visions and communication skills. By learning about other religious traditions and with people who practice them, rabbinical students can gain important knowledge and insight and become more reflective and articulate teachers, preachers, and pastors. They can also learn how to help educate non-Jews about Judaism and serve as representatives of, and advocates for, our community.[7]

In this brief essay, I outline several key components that I believe are essential to interreligious education for future American rabbis.[8] Before delving into this discussion, however, it is important to state that there are some significant challenges to implementing a meaningful interreligious educational agenda into the contemporary rabbinical school curriculum. In speaking with administrators and faculty from several different seminaries, they repeatedly raise the issue of *time*. The existing curricula in all of the schools I am familiar with—across the denominational and nondenominational spectrum—are already very full. Further, in many of the non-Orthodox schools, students necessarily spend a great deal of time developing basic language and classical text skills, since they often enter these programs with limited prior Jewish learning. Where can one fit in courses in interfaith dialogue or comparative theology when already there is not enough time for Tanakh, Talmud, Halakhah, and the like? In speaking with students, another dimension of the time dilemma emerges: many of them come to rabbinical school after spending long periods in non-Jewish (mostly secular) environments, and they now seek a deep immersion in Jewish religious life for personal and professional growth. As such, they do not necessarily see engagement in interfaith educational activities as being crucial at this point in their journeys.

Compounding the problem further is the fact that the interfaith engagement is still emerging as a discrete subject area in academia and in religious leadership training programs.[9] It is also an interdisciplinary field that includes several different foci: theology, history, text study, dialogue, etc. There is a limited body of scholarly literature on interreligious education in

general, and for religious leadership development specifically.[10] There are even fewer such resources designed by and for Jewish educators, including those working in rabbinical schools. The number of scholars and/or professionals working on interfaith educational initiatives in Jewish seminaries is also quite small. As a result, we do not yet have a sophisticated language of discourse—gleaning from both Jewish sources and other relevant fields—or established curricular norms and standards. While this field has grown considerably in the past decade,[11] it is still at an early stage of development. All of this makes it challenging to advocate for the implementation of an interreligious educational agenda in a context in which there are already significant curricular pressures and time constraints.

In light of these challenges, we need to think strategically about how to integrate interfaith learning in our rabbinical schools. In addition to introducing new academic and co-curricular activities, consideration should be given to drawing out salient interreligious issues within existing courses.[12] Internships in such locations as hospitals, social justice organizations, or prisons provide powerful opportunities to work with people from different religious and secular walks of life, and to reflect on these encounters as spiritual and moral leaders-in-training.[13] Using informal educational programs such as orientations, retreats, seminars, and guest lectures can also be useful opportunities for focused interreligious learning. In such cases, educators need to think carefully about how to link these special events to the day-to-day life of our schools. Finally, in articulating the need for interreligious education in Jewish seminaries, we should observe how other, relatively new fields of study and practice, like clinical pastoral care or community organizing (both of which also share various elements in common with interfaith education) have been integrated into rabbinical school curricula.

Learning *About* & Learning *With*

While in an ideal situation, it would be valuable to provide rabbinical students with introductory courses to several of the world's religions, given the curricular pressures discussed above, I think it is important to begin with Christianity and Islam. Why? We live in a country in which the majority of its citizens are Christian and whose culture has been profoundly shaped by Christianity. Judaism and Christianity also share common foundational texts and emerged out of the same cultural milieu.[14] In the case of both Christianity and Islam, our extensive interactions over the centuries require us to learn about the similarities and differences across these traditions and the influences each has had on the other. We also need to honestly examine the extensive histories of violence and oppression as well as models of interreligious cooperation among members of the Abrahamic[15] traditions. With Islam, we also have the opportunity to explore our shared situation as minority communities in the US, and the similarities and differences in this context, too. The need to learn about Islam is intensified because of the widespread fear and mistrust of Muslims in the Jewish community and in broader American life,[16] resulting from ongoing hostilities between Israel and her Arab neighbors—including, but not limited to, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—terrorist activities carried out by radical Muslim groups in the US and elsewhere, and negative depictions of Arabs and Muslims in popular Western culture.[17]

Learning *about* the religious other is necessary but insufficient. It must be complemented with, as Mary Boys and Sara Lee call it, "learning in the presence of the other." As these two pioneering interfaith educators write, "Our goal is to transcend learning… in the abstract," and to facilitate person-to-person encounters between Jews and Christians. For rabbis to be effective actors in the interreligious sphere they need to understand the ways in which actual Christians and others embody their religious traditions, gaining insight into what are the animating questions, fears, hopes, and dreams of religious people searching for meaning and

purpose in today's world. This kind of dialogical learning can only take place in the presence of the other.[18] While one time and short-term encounters can be powerful educational experiences that ignite or fortify one's commitment to this work, I advocate for the development of longer-term initiatives whenever possible, as these allow participants to cultivate deeper relationships with one another and to extend their learning.

Related to the previous point, it is important for Jewish seminarians to learn with peers from other religious traditions who are also preparing for leadership roles in their respective communities. This provides students with the opportunity to explore a range of religious and professional matters, participating in what my colleague, Dr. Jennifer Peace, describes as experiences of "co-formation."[19] These encounters can also help the aspiring Jewish leader to begin creating networks of interreligious peers whom they can call on in the future for support and advice, and with whom they can engage in cooperative ventures. Seminary faculty can serve as important role models and guides in these contexts by working with students and with non-Jewish colleagues to facilitate various courses and programs for students, faculty, and other key constituents.[20]

One valuable Jewish model of relational learning that we can draw on in the interreligious context is that of *havruta* study. This classical rabbinic mode of dialogical peer learning (and various contemporary adaptations of it) invites participants to share in study and conversation about issues of ultimate concern. Further, in presenting stories about various havruta partners—Rav and Shmuel or Hillel and Shammai—the sages express the value of relational learning and its value in building sacred community.[21] While there are obvious differences between intra-Jewish and interreligious learning situations, the following reflection from Diana Eck on interreligious dialogue serves to demonstrate the similarities between these two phenomena:

> The language of pluralism is that of *dialogue* and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the "table" will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table–with one's commitments.[22]

To anyone familiar with traditional *havruta* study, Eck's statement about the dynamics of interfaith dialogue sounds a familiar note. Some of my own richest interreligious learning has taken place in the context of havruta learning, and it has been a helpful pedagogic tool in teaching students from different traditions.[23]

Theologies of Interreligious Engagement

Abraham Joshua Heschel once said that "faith" must proceed "interfaith."[24] While the faith journey has no end, and we cannot wait to engage in interreligious activities until we resolve all of our theological quandaries, rabbis-in-training need to develop working theological narratives that help undergird their work in the interfaith sphere. How do they understand the relationship between God, the Jewish people, and peoples of other religious traditions? What are the key Jewish texts—ancient and modern—that they draw on to help articulate their beliefs? How do they understand such foundational theological categories as revelation, covenant, and chosenness in light of their experiences with non-Jewish friends, neighbors, and coworkers? How do they respond to negative portrayals of non-Jews and of non-Jewish religious traditions in various influential Jewish textual sources?[25] Eboo Patel offers a helpful definition of a theology of "interreligious cooperation": "By *theology*, I mean a coherent narrative that

references key scriptures, stories, history, poetry, and so on, from the cumulative historical tradition of the faith community." As Patel goes on to say, "Our challenge is to make those pieces salient, interpret and apply them to the contemporary dynamic of religious diversity…"[26] While there are still a relatively small number of modern Jewish theological works that deal with interreligious issues in a sustained manner, the situation is changing with several new resources emerging in just the last few years.[27] We can also make use of the extensive body of Christian theological literature on interreligious engagement written in recent decades.[28]

Teaching Judaism to Non-Jews, Engaging Non-Jewish Wisdom with Jews

If rabbis are going to serve as effective leaders in interfaith contexts, they need to be able to articulate their values, beliefs, and commitments in a language that is accessible to others unfamiliar with Judaism. Further, it is crucial that as representatives of Judaism, rabbis can contextualize their particular choices within larger historical and contemporary Jewish currents. Not only is this important in terms of providing non-Jewish dialogue partners with basic Jewish knowledge, but it also serves to demonstrate that Judaism is, as Mordecai Kaplan[29] famously described it, "an evolving civilization" with a rich multi-vocal tradition that continues to grow and change within and across the generations. While none of us can speak on behalf of Judaism as a whole, we must offer others insight into various dimensions of our sacred traditions, providing them with resources for further learning, and helping people understand why we practice as we do. In so doing, rabbis can serve as both ambassadors of Judaism and as witnesses to their individual Jewish lives. By learning how to articulate their religious values and ideals to non-Jews, seminarians can also refine their own thinking and improve their communication skills. Rabbinical students are regularly thinking about how to engage with Jewish constituents who possess limited knowledge of, or experience with, Jewish religious life and practice. While these situations are certainly not the same, some of the same pedagogic strategies can be used in Jewish and interreligious contexts.[30]

On the flipside, rabbis also need to explore how one can thoughtfully incorporate teachings and practices from other traditions into the life of a community, and what are the limits of such acts of adaptation. For example, should a synagogue incorporate a particular meditation practice from Buddhism, a liturgical selection from Catholicism, or a movement exercise from Hinduism? If so, what alterations might be necessary and why? This not only involves a conversation about theology, but also about ritual practice, aesthetics, and the appropriate mechanisms (halakhic or otherwise) for introducing change in community. This kind of interreligious "borrowing" happens regularly across traditions and has been going on in different ways for centuries; the challenge is for us to be as thoughtful about it as possible. It can be helpful to explore with students past examples of religious adaptation—philosophical, liturgical, social, etc.—by Jews and the challenges and outcomes of such attempts. For example, how did Maimonides integrate Greek and Muslim thought into his philosophical system?[31] How did the founders of Reform and Modern Orthodoxy reshape elements of synagogue culture in light of German Protestantism?[32] Closer to home, how did Second Wave Jewish feminists help transform the American rabbinate using lessons learned from secular and Christian feminists, among other sources?[33] What can we learn from the ideas and actions of various change agents and from the responses of their communities—both positive and negative?

Programming & Partnerships

Among the skills rabbis need to function as effective leaders in the interfaith realm, they must be adept at planning and facilitating meaningful programs for people from different religious traditions. What kinds of programs or projects might be most meaningful for various

groups of children, teens, or adults? Whether one is organizing a text study, volunteer program, or holiday gathering, rabbis need to think carefully about the *goals* of their interreligious engagement. Are we bringing people together for theological discussion, relationship building, or to attend to a civic or social issue of common concern? Of course, it is possible to achieve more than one of these aims through a given initiative, but one must be deliberate in setting out his or her goals and developing programs that reflect these priorities. Here Boys and Lee offer us candid insight into this issue:

> Both of us have been to sessions advertised as "dialogues" when those who attend have virtually no opportunity to interact with each other, or even to learn the names of those around them. Merely listening to the same speaker or panel of speakers and having opportunity to ask questions after the presentation might at best constitute a prelude to dialogue."[34]

This is not simply a criticism of the promotion of this event, but a reminder to educators that we must be thoughtful about the goals, design, *and* promotion of our interfaith activities.

Jewish leaders must develop networks of colleagues from other religious traditions who are similarly committed to interreligious engagement. This requires an investment in developing relationships with clergy and lay leaders and making a shared commitment to help cultivate an ethos of interfaith cooperation in their communities. This work requires time and patience, and a willingness to persevere through challenging interpersonal or group experiences. The more religious leaders can learn about the needs and wants of the other communities, the more effective their interreligious work will be. The deeper one's relationship is with leaders and key stakeholders from other communities, the less likely it is that an issue will arise without warning. It is also more likely that the leaders will be able to work together productively to solve problems when they do occur based on existing knowledge, past experience, and trust in and commitment to their partners.[35]

Curricular Suggestions

Having outlined some of the conceptual elements of interreligious education in American rabbinical schools, below I offer some concrete suggestions for academic courses and related co-curricular activities. In making these recommendations, I draw on my experience as an educator at Hebrew College (HC) and Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) over the last decade. I have developed much of this work with colleagues from both schools under the auspices of CIRCLE, our joint center for interfaith learning and leadership.[36] I also incorporate insights and recommendations from several colleagues from other seminaries and interreligious organizations with whom I have had the privilege to work. The list below is *not* intended to be comprehensive, but rather suggestive. Further, I have not created a specific sequence, but invite readers to think about how these might be used individually or in combination as the basis for an area of concentration, a certificate program, or an MA in interreligious education or the like.

- **Introductions to Christianity and Islam** – As stated above, I believe that we need to offer our students introductions to the other Abrahamic traditions. In designing such courses, it would be helpful to include periodic engagement with leaders, professional and volunteer—of their communities to allow students to encounter a range of voices from within a given tradition. If these interactions were to include Christians and Muslims who are also preparing for religious leadership roles this would enrich the conversation significantly, as students could discuss a variety of religious and vocational

matters with their peers. Even better would be a situation in which there was a Christian or Muslim cohort of leaders-in-training studying about Judaism at the same time as the rabbinical students were learning about Christianity or Islam, and the groups came together at various points over the semester (in person or through video conference) to explore key issues.

- **Joint Courses** – Team-taught courses for students from different religious communities (roughly equal numbers, if possible) can provide the opportunity to focus on a specific topic of relevance to all of the participants. One course I have co-taught several times with my colleague at ANTS, Gregory Mobley, is "The Book of Job & the Problem of Evil in Jewish & Christian Thought." This class allowed us to delve into a classical text shared by our communities that was not otherwise covered in our respective curricula and to explore (in chronological fashion from the Bible through contemporary times) a variety of approaches to the issue of theodicy—a key theme in both traditions and a significant issue for religious leaders—including poetry, music, painting, and film.[37] One key element to this course was the requirement that students participate in interreligious *havruta* partnerships between sessions.

- **Religious Leadership Seminar** – In this hybrid course, students have the opportunity to explore the contemporary American religious landscape, meet religious leaders working in different interreligious contexts—college campuses, hospitals, prisons, environmental and social justice organizations—and examine a variety of real-world case studies. This is a context in which students can begin to envision working in the field, facing various interreligious challenges, and participating in the growth and development of the interreligious movement. Including an internship component in this course can help bring several of the theoretical issues to life and allow students to exercise their leadership skills.

- **Clinical Pastoral Care** – These training programs often include internship experiences in which students interact with patients from different backgrounds (religious and secular) and learn with and from non-Jewish peers in leadership formation. Every year, my students report that these programs are among the most powerful interreligious learning experiences because of the combination of student-patient engagement, and the opportunity for extensive religious and vocational reflection with a small interreligious cohort of fellow students and a supervisor with extensive field and teaching experience. One pragmatic advantage of the CPE units is that they can be taken during the summer when regular classes are not in session and there is an opportunity for an immersive experience. Connecting these intensive courses to the broader curriculum is an important pedagogic challenge.

- **Israel Program** – Many Jewish seminaries require students to spend a semester or full academic year in Israel. If planned thoughtfully, this time abroad can serve as a powerful opportunity for students to experience life as a religious *majority*, to meet Muslims and Christians living in Israel, and to learn about the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and about the religious dimensions of this and other regional struggles. Unfortunately, the Israel year experience is often treated in isolation from the rest of the seminary curriculum. As with the CPE experience, we need to think carefully about issues of integration: how best to prepare students for this journey, how to engage with them while away, and how to help them reenter school life and American (and American Jewish) culture.

- **Peer Groups** – Providing students with their own spaces to explore issues of common concern or interest, including text study, spiritual practice, vocational concerns, and social and environmental responsibility. At HC and ANTS, we have created an interfaith fellowship program for students through CIRCLE. Two students (in *havruta*) from each school pair to create a research project or to lead a peer group and invite others (usually 8-10 total) to join them for study, discussion, or volunteer service once monthly. CIRCLE provides student fellows with stipends and each group with a modest budget for food and supplies. The fellows also facilitate sessions for the broader student bodies during a daylong program called "Community Day," in which the faculty and students from ANTS and HC engage in a variety of activities together. Recently, we invited emerging Muslim leaders from the Greater Boston community to serve with ANTS and HC students as interfaith fellows.[38] CIRCLE staff people meet with the fellows throughout the year to advise the student leaders and to gain insight from them about their peer group experiences and its implications for our broader educational agenda.

Conclusion

Given the fact that American rabbis are working within a societal context of great religious diversity and fluidity, seminary educators need to provide students with meaningful opportunities for growth as interreligious leaders. Such learning can also help future rabbis clarify and deepen their convictions and questions, provide them with experience sharing Jewish wisdom and life experience with non-Jews, and allow them to create a network of professional colleagues with whom to engage in the future. Through such training, our students can emerge as more capable and articulate representatives of and advocates for the Jewish community. Because the contemporary rabbinical school curriculum is already so full and the field of interfaith education is relatively new, we need to be skillful in implementing new courses and related activities and lifting up important interfaith issues in existing academic frameworks. Additionally, teachers and administrators in Jewish seminaries need to make creative use of co-curricular opportunities for such learning. The goal is to help cultivate a new generation of moral and spiritual leaders who are at once deeply committed to and immersed in Jewish life and thought, and who also have the skills, virtues, and knowledge to serve effectively in interreligious settings.

---

[1] See Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001); and Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

[2] See, Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2005). See, also, the 2013 Pew study, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*, http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey.

[3] See, Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*.

[4] Eck provides a fuller interpretation of this term on the Pluralism Project website, www.pluralism.org. Various thinkers reflecting on religious diversity use the term "pluralism" differently. For example, compare Eck's description with that of Paul Knitter's in his *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

[5] The formulation of these categories is influenced by the work of my colleagues Eboo Patel and Catherine Cornille. See Patel's *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Cambridge, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), and Cornille's *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008).
[6] Throughout this essay I use the terms "interreligious" and "interfaith" interchangeably. Others I cite prefer the term "multifaith" as it accentuates the need for the involvement of many communities in this effort.
[7] Justus Baird explores some of the same issues in his reflection on the need for interreligious education for American religious leaders more broadly. See his essay, "*Multifaith Continuing Education: Leading Faithfully in a Religiously Diverse World," in A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders, edited by* Robert E. *Reber and D. Bruce Roberts (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010), pp. 245-260.*
[8] I wish to thank my Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) colleagues, Jennifer Howe Peace (co-director of CIRCLE) and Gregory Mobley (co-founder of CIRCLE), for developing many of these ideas with me. I also wish to thank several Jewish colleagues working on interfaith educational initiatives in seminaries for their insights, guidance, and collegiality. These include: Justus Baird, Reuven Firestone, Alon Goshen Gottstein, Mel Gottlieb, Melissa Heller, Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, Yehezkel Landau, Rachel Mikva, Joshua Stanton, and Burton Visotzky.
[9] The Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices undertaken by the Association of Theological Schools (the accrediting body of over 270 Christian seminaries in North America) marked an important step in the growth of this field. See, Stephen Graham's synopsis of the initiative, "Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society: An ATS Project, 2010–2012," in *Theological Education* 47:1 (2012): 1-10. The 2009 study by Justus Baird and Lucinda Mosher of Auburn Theological Seminary's Center for Multifaith Education, *Beyond World Religions: The State of Multifaith Education in American Theological Schools*, provided important data on this work from educational institutions across the US. See a summary of their findings at http://www.auburnseminary.org/seminarystudy.
[10] In addition to several of the resources listed in these notes, other relevant educational materials include: Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014)*; Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, edited by Rebecca Kratz Mayes (Philadelphia, PA: Ecumenical Press; Temple University, 2009); *Interactive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook*, edited by Bud Heckman (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2008); *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action*, edited by Eboo Patel and Patrice Brodeur (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006); Judith Bering, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Orbis Books, 2004). Recent publications focused specifically on theological education include: *Teaching Theology & Religion* 16.4, edited by Lucinda Mosher (Crawfordsville IN: Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, 2013); *Theological Education* 47.1 (2012) and 47.2 (2013); and David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, editors. *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach II: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue* (Hartford, CN: Hartford Seminary, 2009). For additional resources, visit http://www.auburnseminary.org/mfbibliography.
[11] See, Justus Baird, "Multifaith Education in American Theological Schools: Looking Back, Looking Ahead," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 16.4, pp. 309-321.
[12] It is not a simple matter to ask faculty members, with varying levels of investment and expertise in this area, to alter their teaching. Support from administrative and academic leaders is crucial to the long-term success of this work. In this context, I wish to thank the presidents, deans, and faculty of our two schools for their ongoing engagement in shaping our interreligious

educational agenda(s). I also wish to thank the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion for providing HC and ANTS with a generous grant in 2012 that was dedicated, in large part, to exploring with both faculties our interreligious educational priorities. For more information on this initiative, please visit http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/grants/article.aspx?id=25323.

[13] See, for example, the reflection by Daniel A. Berman on his experience as a rabbinical student in a clinical pastoral care program at a major Boston hospital: "How We Pray," *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*, edited by Jennifer Peace, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), pp. 185-187.

[14] See Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[15] On the complicated nature of this term, see Jon Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012). Resources on the Jewish experience in Christian and Muslim societies include: Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), and Robert Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[16] Ibid., *American Grace*.

[17] Another significant criterion for course selection and related programming might be the religious makeup of the city or township in which a school is located. Engaging local religious groups not only provides students with rich learning opportunities, but also gives the school the opportunity to play a constructive role in fostering a positive interreligious ethos in its community.

[19] Jennifer Peace, "The Role of Theological Seminaries in Increasing Interfaith Cooperation in the United States: The CIRCLE Program of Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College," *Journal of College & Character* 12.1. Please see Dr. Peace's response to me essay in this issue of *JIRS*.

[20] See, for example, the reflection by Robert Pazmino and Michael Shire about their experience co-teaching graduate students from ANTS and HC (January 2014) in this issue of *JIRS*.

[21] Classical reflections on the nature of havruta study include: Babylonian Talmud (BT) Ta'anit 7a, BT Shabbat 3a, and BT Kiddushin 30a-b. Among the most dramatic and heartrending tale about an ancient rabbinic havruta pair is that of Rabbi Yohanan and Reish Lakish in BT Bava Metziah 84a.

[22] See, www.pluralism.org.

[23] See Melissa Heller's reflection on the use of havruta study in the context of co-teaching an interreligious course: "Jewish-Christian Encounter through Text: An Interfaith Course for Seminarians," *The Journal of Interreligious Dialogue*, www.irdialogue.org, Issue 8, February 2012, pp. 29-42.

[24] See Heschel's essay, "No Religion is an Island," in *No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel on Interreligious Dialogue*, edited by Harold Kasimow and Byron Sherwin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 10. This article was originally Heschel's inaugural lecture as the Henry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary in 1965. See, also, *Abraham Joshua Heschel Philosophy, Theology and Interreligious Dialogue*, edited by Stanislaw Krajewski and Adam Lipszyc (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009).

[25] On this issue, see Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not: Ancient Jewish Attitudes Towards Other Religions* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998); Elliot Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford University Press, 2006); and Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (Oxford University Press, 2009). See, also the Jewish theological works listed below.

[26] Ibid., p. 142.
[27] The following is a list (in alphabetical order of author or editor) of recent works—academic and popular—I have used in my teaching and writing: Alan Brill, *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); Alon Goshen-Gottstein and Eugene Korn, editors, *Jewish Theology and World Religions* (Oxford, UK: Littman Library Of Jewish Civilization, 2012); Reuven Firestone, *Who Are the Real Chosen People?: The Meaning of Chosenness in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2010); Michael Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002). I have also made extensive use of earlier 20th century Jewish theological writings relating to interfaith engagement by Martin Buber; Arthur Cohen; Elliot Dorff; Arthur Green; Irving Greenberg; David Hartman; Abraham Joshua Heschel; Mordecai Kaplan; David Novak; Judith Plaskow; Zalman Schachter-Shalomi; Joseph B. Soloveitchik; and Michael Wyschogrod.
[28] See, for example, the work of Michael Barnes; Francis X. Clooney; John Cobb; Catherine Cornille; Gavin D'Costa; Jacques Dupuis; Jeannine Hill Fletcher; Paul Griffiths; Stanley Hauerwas; John Hick; Mark Heim; Paul Knitter; George Lindbeck; Hans Kung; Brian McLaren; Raimon Pannikar; Peter C. Phan; Karl Rahner; Leonard Swidler; John Thatamanil; David Tracy; Miroslav Volf; and Amos Yong.
[29] On Kaplan's life and work, see Mel Scult, *The Radical American Judaism of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013)
[30] Of course, with high levels of intermarriage in the American Jewish community, many rabbis regularly address non-Jews alongside Jews in their synagogues and in other Jewish communal contexts.
[31] See Moshe Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
[32] See the relevant selections in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010 edition), chapters IV-VI.
[33] See, Pamela Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination 1889-1985* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), chapters 4-5.
[34]M. Boys and S. Lee, *Christians & Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other*, p. 96.
[35] See *American Grace*. See, also, Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2003).
[36] One issue we regularly discuss in this educational partnership is which pedagogic practices (form and content) we share in common and which differ based on the history and dynamics of our respective communities, the missions of our schools, and the needs of our students.
[37] See my brief reflection on this teaching experience: "Descending from Mount Moriah: A Reflection on Interfaith Study," in *Tikkun Magazine*, Winter 2011, http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/descending-from-mount-moriah-a-reflection-on-interfaith-study.
[38] Through a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, the two schools were able to jointly hire Celene Ibrahim-Lizzio as the first visiting scholar in Islamic Studies and co-director of CIRCLE. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Ms. Lizzio is helping CIRCLE develop new educational programs for Muslim students and professionals, create strategic partnerships with Muslim organizations, and expand our interfaith offerings. Please see Ms. Lizzio's response to my essay in this issue of *JIRS*.

Interreligious Education and US Rabbinical Schools Response to Or N. Rose

By Nancy Fuchs Kreimer

Or Rose has done a wonderful job of laying out both the challenges and the benefits of serious attention to multifaith learning in the training of rabbis. I concur with his analysis, and admire the pathbreaking work he and his colleagues have done in the last decade through CIRCLE. I continue to learn from Or and Jennie, and I am grateful for the wisdom, energy and imagination they have brought to this emerging field of interreligious seminary education. In this brief response, I will add some of the experiences my colleagues and I have had through the Multifaith Studies and Initiatives Program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. I agree with Or that "There is a limited body of scholarly literature on interreligious education in general, and for religious leadership development specifically." I believe all of us will grow through further experiments, longitudinal studies and attention to the creation of a language of discourse for this work.

As Or points out, the issue of time in the curriculum is a serious one for rabbinical training. As in the other non-Orthodox schools, students at RRC often need to spend time developing basic language and classical text skills. Fortunately, we have not had to fit our Multifaith courses into an already full curriculum. Since the late 1980's, candidates for the rabbinate have been required to take two full semester courses in our department, one of them in the area of Christianty. This past academic year, the faculty completed a major revision of RRC's curriculum. Not only did the faculty confirm the Christianity requirement—in a slightly revised form—it has added a requirement that students demonstrate basic knowledge of Islam and Muslim Americans. This was a big decision. The faculty clearly agreed with Or that, as he put it so well, "the need to learn about Islam is intensified" in the situation we find ourselves in today as Jews, both in Israel and in diaspora. We believe we are the first rabbinical school to have such a hefty requirement. Clearly, our faculty affirms Or's argument that Jewish seminary interreligious education should begin with grounding in knowledge about Christianity and Islam. I also share Or's sense that "learning with" rather than just "learning about" is of great value to our students' formation as religious leaders. Finally, I want our courses to include practicing the very competencies we hope to see them put into use as rabbis in the field. A hefty order, indeed!

At the core of our current program are two courses: "Jewish-Christian Encounter through Text" (a hevrutah course offered alternate years with a Main Line Protestant and Evangelic seminary) and "Muslims in America"(a course that includes pairing with a Muslim graduate student from Penn with whom our students create and execute a session about Islam in a Jewish venue.) We have offered both these courses multiple times, learning and improving with each iteration. Melissa Heller has written about the Christian Encounter course, and I have written about the course on Muslims

In RRC's new curriculum(phased in over several years) these courses will continue to be offered, but they will now have a prerequisite. In order to benefit from the skills and relationship building offered by these experiences, students need a foundation of basic information about Christianity or Islam. We are working on developing on line methods to prepare and test students for this kind of knowledge so that the courses themselves can focus on deeper immersion in the work itself.

Even with the requirements in place, we are well aware of the competing challenges facing our students and are constantly developing, exploring and testing new ways to provide them with opportunities for multifaith learning. While we offer courses that just seem exciting, such as "Arabic for Interfaith Engagment" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttGTsSbZT38), we realize that our most successful courses are ones that bring together other parts of our curriculum. When possible, we try to teach our skills in conjunction with the other aspects of our students' formation as rabbis.

For example, this January, we are offering an intensive course entitled Rabbis as Peace Builders, co-taught by Rabbi Daniel Roth of the Pardes Institute Center for Conflict Resolution and Rabbi Amy Eilberg, author of From Enemy to Friend: Jewish Wisdom and the Pursuit of Peace. The course will provide important training for interfaith work and, at the same time, include Talmudic text study and more general pastoral skills. While these teachers are in Philadelphia, we will also offer a multifaith workshop that will bring religious leaders of other faiths to RRC to learn along with our students in a day long version of "Rabbi as Peace Builder."

Similarly, because our students come to us with a healthy interest in issues of social justice, we have included in our Multifaith offerings a variety of courses with a focus on contemporary issues such as "Multifaith Food Justice" and "Incarceration: Pastoral and Political Issues."

We also seek ways to expand the students' interfaith experiences while working within existing requirements. For example, we require our students to spend forty hours "shadowing" a rabbi or several rabbis, to gain an appreciation of the challenges of practice in the field. This year, we developed an option for students to spend three of those hours in the company of one of three carefully selected Christian clergy in the area.

What is the value of immersive experiences such as retreats over against less intense, more long-term opportunities for connection? I am not sure, but we continue to try both. In close collaboration with Or, RRC created its own signature immersive program, a four day residential retreat for Muslim and Jewish Emerging Religious Leaders. This past June, we completed our fourth retreat and have just finished working with an organizational consultant to evaluate the program through interviews and surveys of our first 50 alumni. Our most recent retreat was an experiment—a program for women leaders only. I have served on the faculty of the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore week long intensive program for Jewish and Christian seminarians; RRC students can fulfill a portion of their Multifaith requirement by participating.

A question that remains salient for me: What is gained by programs that focus on just one relationship(e.g. Jewish-Muslim, Jewish-Christian) as opposed to gatherings with multiple traditions represented? We have been blessed by two years of energetic student leadership, spearheaded at RRC, in creating PERL, Philadelphia Emerging Religious Leaders.(http://www.stateofformation.org/2014/08/growing-a-string-of-perls-a-report-from-the-first-year-of-philadelphia-emerging-religious-leaders-part-i/) PERL has emerged as a model for other cities, with three program areas, partnerships with several seminaries and interfaith organizations, and a successful training for over thirty emerging religious leaders in the skills of interfaith dialogue. Unlike other RRC programs that have aimed for depth rather than breadth(our course offerings, our Muslim-Jewish retreats), the PERL program is fully multifaith, casting a broad net across the religious landscape of Philadelphia. . The group chose to work with Philadelphians Organizing to Witness Empower and Renew(POWER) a Faith-

Based Community Organizing group. As organizer Josh Weisman wrote, " We visited the Gurdwara of one of our members, the Shabbat table of another, had one-to-one conversations, talked theology and social justice, and planned and ran many meetings together."

In closing, let me add several more questions to the excellent ones Or has posed. Is there a need for interfaith opportunities for women or for men only? What special training can we offer our future campus religious professionals? How can we prepare our American religious leaders-- Jews, Christians and Muslims –to become courageous peace builders, moving beyond the polarization (especially with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) that threatens to divide our own communities and our interfaith efforts? In short, I find myself in accord with what Or has written and look forward to the opportunity to continue exploring these questions and more together.

Essential Ingredients for Multifaith Education in a University Setting: Response to *Interreligious Education & the American Jewish Seminary*

Yael Shy and Yehuda Sarna

Gone are the days when effective interfaith engagement came from two theologians sharing a stage, agreeing to agree on how religions must become more pluralistic. The needs and methodologies have shifted, and new approaches must be outlined. Rabbi Or N. Rose makes a powerful case for Interreligious Education as a critical component of Jewish seminary education and suggests a framework for its implementation. Rabbi Rose's proposal is at once creative in its expression and consistent with the most successful interfaith initiatives emerging globally.

Our experience at New York University, the largest and one of the most diverse private universities in the United States, echoes with that of Rabbi Rose's approach. The purpose of this essay is to argue that one ought not diverge far from Rabbi Rose's model when applying interfaith training to a diverse undergraduate population such as the one at NYU.

Over the past decade, NYU has committed significant attention to building a robust model. Its strides included the induction of chaplains and their inclusion in commencement ceremonies, the dedication of a state-of-the-art and centrally located facility as a "Center for Spiritual Life", and perhaps, most boldly, the establishment of an academic minor in Multifaith and Spiritual Leadership. Recognizing the potential this complex of resources could play within the public life of New York City and the U.S. more broadly, NYU established the Of Many Institute for Multifaith Leadership to achieve its goals in engaging the public. Its founding advisory board chairs, Chelsea Clinton and Dr. Linda Mills, respectively produced and directed a documentary which shares the name of the Institute, 'Of Many', enabling its narrative and principles to spread to even broader audiences.

The Institute directors and founders - in consultation with experts in the field and cohorts of student leaders - developed six key principles of multifaith engagement that underlie its mission and vision. Many of these principles align with Rabbi Rose's suggestions for building effective interreligious education in the seminary setting, indicating a growing consensus around a vision for the field of multifaith education in the 21st century. As we elaborate on these principles, the overlap with Rabbi Rose's framework is evident.

Background

The September 11th attacks, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the ensuing ten years of rising religious hostilities on a global level[1] highlighted the desperate need in this country for nuanced public discussions guided by well-informed multifaith leaders dedicated to building bridges and promoting peace and coexistence. Far too few of these leaders emerged and even fewer institutions of higher education were equipped to truly support such conversations. The result was widespread misunderstanding, divisiveness, and, at times, outright hostility between faith groups on college campuses nationwide.

This disruptive tension hinders feelings of safety for students and undermines the opportunity for the benefits that come with having diverse relationships, including enhanced academic achievement (Higher Education Research Institute, 2004), greater maturity (Parks, 2005), and the development of an ecumenical worldview (Mayhew, 2011). Additionally,

responses to religious conflict on the university level frequently focus on crisis-response rather than on campus-wide relationship building and institutional transformation. As a result, institutions miss the opportunity to develop new peacemakers from among a group of young people who are at a critical stage in their moral development.

The Of Many Institute for Multifaith Leadership at NYU's was created to address this need. Its mission is to inspire, educate and train the next generation of spiritual, religious and secular leaders to meet the growing complexities of their communities and the world in the 21st Century.

Six Principles for Multifaith Engagement on College Campuses

The 'Of Many' Institute's six principles for multifaith engagement drive the Institute's work and reflect its values. As Rabbi Rose writes, it is crucial to "think carefully about the *goals* of interreligious engagement"[2] before embarking upon programming or curriculum development. Each of the following principles reflect that careful thought and have contributed greatly to the Institute's success.

1. Multifaith Leaderhsip should reflect diversity, accounting for the complex and intersectional identities of our constituents.

All of us live at the intersection of multiple identities that affect our power and privilege in society, our practice of religion, and how we see the other. The Institute's classes and programs try to illuminate these intersections and complexities using critical race theory and techniques borrowed from the successful Intergroup Dialogue pedagogy.[3]

2. *Multifaith Leadership should be* rooted in face-to-face encounters and deep relationship-building within and between communities and/or individuals.

As Rabbi Rose notes, "The deeper one's relationship is with leaders and key stakeholders from other communities…it is also more likely that the leaders will be able to work together productively to solve problems.[4] The Institute incorporates relationship building – grounded in mutual vulnerability and shared values – into every aspect of its work. Bridges, the award-winning Muslim-Jewish dialogue group at NYU housed under the Institute sponsors a yearly event in which both faith groups attend the other's Friday worship service and then eat dinner together. The event sells out each year, with over 280 students in attendance. Inspired by Bridges' success, last year a group of Muslim and Christian students created MuCh: Muslim-Christian Dialogue at NYU – a sustained group of Muslim and Christian students who get together monthly to study each other's sacred text and discuss similarities and differences. Bridges and MuCh are just two examples of initiatives that allow students time to build real friendships across lines of difference, echoing Rabbi Rose's recommendation for longer term initiatives over one-time or short term encounters.[5]

3. *Multifaith engagement should be committed to social transformation and civic engagement.*

When working together on social transformation efforts such as rebuilding a disaster area or organizing a multifaith campaign against sex trafficking, students have the ability to connect with people of other faiths through a lens of shared values and a common sense of purpose. Additionally, as Rabbi Rose suggests with relationship to seminary students in their clinical pastoral care training, socially-engaged multifaith work is an effective way for students to build and flex their leadership muscles out of the classroom and in the field. In addition to its

regular calendar of multifaith service efforts, Of Many is launching a fellowship program in 2015 specifically designed to foster a cohort of young people to learn critical multifaith leadership competencies in an educational and professional settings. Fellows will gather for bi-weekly discussion-based learning sessions coordinated by the Institute as well as work at paid part-time internships at multifaith social justice institutions in New York City.

4. Multifaith work should be focused on introspection and meaning-making as a way of understanding spirituality.

Several national research studies over the past decade have shown a marked increase in the number of students seeking spiritual reflection as a part of their university experience. A national study of over 100,000 college students in 2007 conducted by UCLA researchers found that a rise among students who said "attaining inner harmony" and "integrating spirituality in my life" were "very important" or "essential" life goals. Over 80% of respondents articulated an interest in spirituality, with 76% interested in a "search for meaning" or "purpose in life."[6]

The Institute tried to provide safe spaces for students to grapple with these questions of personal faith and spirituality that tend to arise as they deepen their relationships with friends of other religious backgrounds. Personal reflections are built into the Institute's coursework (see below, #6), trainings, and many of its events and programming.

5. Multifaith work should be inclusive of and attentive to personal narratives through intentional storytelling pedagogy.

Throughout the various platforms created for interfaith engagement, students learn both how to tell their own story so that others can listen, as well as listen so that others will tell their story. They become cognizant of how making themselves vulnerable to others by sharing their own experiences can induce empathy and understanding. In an era where American college students decreasingly define their religious identities doctrinally (note the surge in "spiritual but not religious"), it makes sense not to limit the discourse to theological reflection, but to open it primarily to narratives on lived experience. Surprisingly, a true story will carry more authenticity – even authority – than doctrinal speculation.

6. Multifaith work should be supportive of the integration of the whole student experience throughout their academic and co-curricular development.

Although housed in NYU Student Affairs and primarily working at the co-curricular level, the Institute also supports the first academic minor in the country at any major secular research university in Multifaith and Spiritual Leadership. The minor, jointly housed in the Silver School of Social Work and the Wagner School of Public Service, provides students of all faith backgrounds (including those who are unaffiliated with a particular faith tradition) the opportunity to learn the theory and practice behind effective multifaith leadership. Coursework and co-curricular activities allow students weave multifaith engagement and leadership into all aspects of their lives, deepening their learning and strengthening their skill set to emerge in the world as effective multifaith leaders.

Conclusion

Rabbi Rose's thoughtful framework for the strategy and direction of the burgeoning multifaith leadership movement deftly addresses many of the same concerns and possibilities we examined in developing the Of Many Institute for Multifaith Leadership at NYU and the six

principles that underlie our work. As the field grows and deepens, we look forward to continuing to assess and study these different approaches and to share our findings with others.

---

[1] See Pew Research: Religion and Public Life Project: *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High* (January 14, 2014) http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/#interactive

[2] Id., p. 8

[3] See Islam, Steinwert and Swords, *3Dialogue in Action: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Interfaith Education*, Journal of Interreligious Studies, Issue 13, Winter 2014.

[4] Id, p. 9

[5] Id, p. 4

[6] See The Higher Education Research Council's *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose*, UCLA, 2007.

Interreligious Leadership Education for Muslims in the United States

By Celene Ibrahim-Lizzio

An Argument for Inter-religious Leadership Education

The United States has become home to the most diverse Muslim population in the world; simultaneously, Muslim religious groups and Muslim civil society organizations have become more prominent in this country's cultural and religious life.[1] And even though Muslims in the United States continue to shoulder burdens caused by stereotyping,[2] bigotry, negative media attention, legal scrutiny, and surveillance,[3] on the positive side, these dynamics have spurred on a plethora of institutions and programs that aim to strengthen Muslim representation in American government and civil society, including within the robust sphere of American inter-religious life.[4]

In order to navigate this complicated public sphere, Muslims institutions in the United States—religious or cultural centers, schools, advocacy groups, service organizations, foundations, etc.—need effective leadership and engaged constituents with institutional management skills and grounded religious insights. Both religious insight and management skills are needed to provide effective oversight, implement strategic growth and sustainability plans, develop compelling civic programs, and conduct successful community outreach. Muslim institutions in the United States require staff on hand that are competent in educational programming coordination, culturally relevant counselling, social service referrals, fundraising campaigns, media relations, and several other spheres of activity. Such organizations need the input and direction of learned religious leaders with competency not only in the vast realm of traditional religious learning but also with the ability to *apply* that knowledge *appropriately* within the communities in which they serve.[5] These different needs demand a Muslim professional who is grounded in religious learning, competent in non-profit leadership, who can navigate the many traditional media and new media outlets, and who is effective on the growing circuit of inter-religious dialogue and engagement forums.[6]

Interreligious relations: Both Will and Skill

The will and skill to form inter-religious partnerships is key in many of the above-mentioned domains of religious and civic community building. In fact, the degree to which constituents and leaders of Muslim organizations are versed and vested in inter-religious relations directly impacts the degree of integrated within, rather than isolated from, wider American civic networks at the local, regional, and national level.[7] Muslim individuals and families have formed affinity groups according to ethnicity, countries of origin, civic commitments, and political affiliations. At the same time, many grassroots initiatives are striving to build fluid and inclusive spaces wherein a full range of Muslim identities and affinity groups can interface and where frank yet civil conversation can occur on different aspects of diversity within and across Muslim communities.[8] Many of the skills necessary to navigate the inter-religious scene also give Muslims practical strategies for engaging with pressing issues related to intra-Muslim diversity. Domestic inter-religious alliances may even contribute positively to dispelling inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts abroad.

Inter-religious Competencies for Muslim Community Leaders

For the reasons above, inter-religious education is a fundamental component of Islamic higher education broadly, and religious leadership training specifically. At present, leadership training for American Muslims encompass several distinct domains, and programs in Islamic higher education vary greatly depending on a student's specific field of interest and career path. Although programs in can take many different forms, the vast majority of programs would be enhanced with deliberate attention given to inter-religious learning.

Core competencies for Muslim leadership depend on the particular context but include: fluency in advanced religious scholarship, skills in congregational leadership including managing staff, organizational leadership, conflict resolution, interpersonal counseling, the ability to give referrals for further social support services, fundraising, media and public speaking skills, and inter-religious coalition building abilities. There is also need for imam training for preaching, and chaplaincy training that includes both religious knowledge and pastoral skills specifically tailored to hospitals, universities, prisons, in the military, and other civic institutions. Third, there is the need for experienced religious educators with competence in teaching general religious literacy, including providing instruction in reading and reciting the Qur'an in Arabic, clarifying fundamentals of faith and religious law, and giving guidance on how to imbibe Islamic morality and values in everyday decision-making. In this sphere, it is important for instructors to have inter-religious awareness, as they are on the front lines, so to speak, of teaching and modeling compassionate understandings of the religious other. In a related area, there is the need for community members to organize programs such as youth outreach, matrimonial services, dispute resolutions services, funeral services, and other family-geared events. Given the increasing intra-religious makeup of many American families, even these arenas of communal life can entail inter-religious dimensions. Skilled non-profit professionals are needed to represent the needs and interests of American Muslims within their professional organizations and on the national scene; this task explicitly requires inter-religious engagement.

The Future of Muslims Interreligious Leadership Education

Muslim communities face some similar challenges as Jewish communities in particular with respect to higher religious education. Namely, as Or Rose points out in his reflection above, it is an intimidating proposition for leadership training programs to incorporate inter-religious dimensions into their existing curricular requirements, given the many other prerequisite skills that students must acquire in a relatively condensed period of time. This is also true for programs for Islamic learning; the requisite skills, particularly language competency and internalization of sacred texts,[9] require a significant time investment that might otherwise preclude spending time on deepening inter-religious competencies.[10] Another significant hurdle to both inter-religious education and inter-religious engagement is the salient fear Muslims could be led astray or otherwise confused by engagement with the religious other.[11] This is a legitimate apprehension if the inter-religious forum or curriculum is not carefully engineered and skillfully facilitated. As Or Rose points out, the field is in many ways at its infancy, but consensus around best practices are emerging, and long-time inter-religious facilitators, conveners, instructors, and funders are busy translating their experiences into standards and curriculum guides, as this forum attests.

In the various domains mentioned above, inter-religious and inter-cultural relations are pertinent and valuable skills. What would curriculum for nurturing these skills look like? There is a rich historical record of inter-religious relations to explore. The Islamic intellectual tradition also includes plentiful scholarly engagements with religious diversity, particularly in the areas of

law and exegesis. Some of this material is bleak when set against contemporary notions of pluralism, but working through the legal precedents, ethical imperatives, and historical accounts are both challenging and necessary. Inter-religious curriculum for Muslims can include works of comparative theology or give attention to the ways in which other communities have understood and reckoned with Islamic notions of prophesy, revelation, or sacred history. There is an increasingly robust literature on inter-religious relations written by Muslim academics, including Jerusha Tanner Lampety, Hussein Rashid, Homayra Ziad, Jospeh Lumbard, Asma Afsaruddin, Tariq Ramadan, and other contemporary contributors to the field of inter-religious and comparative religious studies. There are also a host of compelling organizations with field placements for experiential learning, for instance the *Islamic Society of North America's Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances,* or the *Interfaith Youth Core,* among many others. A much fuller rendition of curriculum for Muslim inter-religious leadership training is possible, but here it suffices to observe that the field is in its infancy and has tremendous potential.

---

[1] For a recent anthropological and sociological account see Mucahit Bilici, *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam Is Becoming an American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[2] For a potent account see Jasmine Zine, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women's Feminist Engagement," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1 (2006): 1-24.

[3] For an excellent analysis of the legality and ethics of surveillance and its impact on Muslim communities in the United States, see Linda E. Fisher, "Guilt by Expressive Association: Political Profiling, Surveillance, and the Privacy of Groups," *Arizona Law Review 46* (2004): 621-675.

[4] For an account of this development in the initial years of this century, See Liyakatali Takim, "From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America," *The Muslim World* 94 (July 2004): 343-355.

[5] For further insights, see Quaiser Abdullah, "Formation and Education of Muslim Leaders," in *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook,* vol. I, *ed.* Sharon H. Callahan (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 693-701.

[6] For an overview of such dialogue forums and their etiquette, see Takim, 348-54.

[7] For a detailed analysis see Anna Halafoff, "Countering Islamophobia: Muslim Participation in Multifaith Networks," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 4 (2011): 451-467.

[8] To give several such grassroots examples, The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard University, in cooperation with the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, hosed a forum in spring of 2014 for North American Muslim scholars, activists, artists, performers, community-builders, social entrepreneurs, and thought-leaders to brainstorm best practices and new avenues and for creating inclusive spaces, telling authentic stories, leading Muslim institutions, and meeting the needs of North American Muslims. The organization *Critical Connections* in Springfield, Massachusetts is another such initiative that sponsors regular educational programming related to Muslim diversity. Similar programming is also increasingly frequent at large Islamic cultural centers and regional Muslim umbrella organizations, including at events of the Islamic Society of North America.

[9] This "internalization" process not only entails memorization and linguistic understanding, but more importantly entails the cultivation of the moral self in accordance with the wisdom gleamed from the interpretive tradition.

[10] For an explicit comparison of transformations in rabbinical training to the contemporary Muslim experience see John H. Morgan, "Islam and Assimilation in the West: Religious and Cultural Ingredients in American Muslim Experience," *Journal of Religion and Society*, 16 (2014), 1-11. See particularly the sub-section "Muslim Clergy and Professionalization: Educational Leadership in Transformation," 3-4. Morgan rightfully points out the impact of

Christian forms of worship and leadership on transformations within American Judaism. I disagree, however, with several of the specific recommendations the author makes for further Americanizing the mosque environment.

[11] See Takim, 349.

Why Christian Seminaries Need Interreligious Education

By Jennifer Peace

Interreligious education in US Christian Seminaries: Context and Content

Christian seminary education has many mandates – ministers are worship leaders, preachers, exegetes, historians, ethicists, evangelists, theologians, comforters, councilors and prophets. It is one of the last great generalist professions when you consider the range of competencies required. Beyond the content of seminary education, there is also the ever-changing context of seminary education. My colleagues outlined some contours of the multi-religious landscape in which rabbis and imams in the US are working today. This is the same religiously diverse context that our Christian seminary graduates are entering.

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the body charged with mapping out a detailed blueprint of the essential content for Christian seminary students is also concerned with context. As recently as June 2012 a new standard was introduced to encourage seminaries to consider (in their curricular decisions) the "multifaith and multicultural contexts" in which seminarians will live out their ministries.[1] While the standard leaves a wide margin for interpretation, by including an explicit reference to "multifaith" contexts this opens the door to an emerging mandate for interreligious education in Christian seminaries.

As a co-director and co-founder of CIRCLE and the first person to hold the title "assistant professor of interfaith studies" at Andover Newton Theological School, the question of why we need interfaith education and what should be included in this emerging field are ones I have both a professional and personal stake in taking up. The first acknowledgement is that these are questions none of us can answer alone. Not only do they require fellow educators from multiple religious contexts but they benefits from the growing and thoughtful cadre of academics, activists, and religious professionals taking up these questions in their own, churches, synagogues, mosques, monasteries, temples, and educational institutions. It is crucial that any agenda for interreligious education be developed in conversation with diverse religious constituencies so that we are not promoting a Christian-centric (or mono-religious) version of "what we need to know about religious others." Interreligious education requires us to build jointly; shared goals, curricula, programs and courses. By jointly imagining a scope and sequence that serves the needs of multiple religious communities we can model in process and outcomes, a commitment to learning *with* (rather than about) each other.[2] This commitment to parity has been a cornerstone of CIRCLE's model from our co-designed, jointly taught courses to our interfaith fellowship program which requires students to submit proposals in pairs, working across religious lines on projects that honor the needs of both.

I am keenly interested not only in how Andover Newton and Hebrew College understand interfaith education but also how this conversation is playing out on the national level in other seminaries (and colleges). Can we be part of a movement to shift the ethos and understanding of what constitutes well-prepared religious leaders for the multi-religious context of the US today? Making space for this conversation within academia is the primary motivator behind developing a new area at the American Academy of Religions in "Interreligious and Interfaith Studies."[3] Our collective understanding of the imperative for and meaning of interfaith education will no doubt be informed by the unfolding conversations at this annual gathering over the next five years.[4]

Dispositions that promote Interreligious learning

Beyond convening conversations, adding courses and changing curriculum, CIRCLE's work is about promoting an ethos of interreligious understanding on our campuses here in Newton, MA. This is work that includes, but necessarily goes beyond simply adding skills and knowledge measured by ATS standards. Increasingly, my colleagues and I have been talking about the qualities of character or virtues that we want to cultivate through our work.[5] My job as a Christian interreligious educator is to do what I can to encourage dispositions, consistent with the values of my tradition, that contribute to greater understanding across religious lines. My work also entails identifying and critique dispositions that create barriers to this work.

So let me suggest, as a work in progress, five dispositions that foster interreligious understanding. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a suggestive list to spark further conversation. These have emerged over time and they continue to be refined through the interplay of my interactions with students, conversations with colleagues, and my own convictions as a Christian.

1. **A willingness to live with paradox.** I would also describe this as having a high tolerance for ambiguity. It reflects a willingness to accept both/and without insisting on pushing out one reality for the sake of the other. This disposition is essential for being able to remain deeply rooted in one's own religious identity while being radically open to the religious identity and beliefs of another.[6] Paradox is at the heart of the Christian path and an important guard against absolutism - one of the primary barriers to interfaith work in my experience.[7]

2. **A willingness to challenge dualistic thinking**. This capacity is at the heart of dismantling harmful stereotypes that are at the root of prejudice. I owe my own awareness of the dangers of (hierarchical) dualistic thinking to the work of feminist theologians such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Reuther. The need to transcend dualistic thinking is a refrain in many religious traditions. As with work to dismantle sexism or racism, dismantling religious bigotry is fundamentally a form of consciousness-raising work. It requires us to think beyond the individual and to consider the whole system.[8]

3. **A willingness to be transformed.** There is a quality of curiosity and playfulness that animates the best interfaith work. It requires a flexibility and suppleness that allows for new insights and new understanding. In a Christian context I am reminded of the Benedictine vow to "conversion of life," a willingness to be remade, reborn, transformed daily as God continues to work in us. Max Stackhouse, an ethicist who taught at Andover Newton for many years, once remarked that to truly be a Christian means to be constantly open to conversion. This capacity to be changed is an important guard against a kind of unyielding resistance to transformation that is a barrier to interreligious learning.

4. **A willingness to grant the other the benefit of the doubt**. Granting others the benefit of the doubt when it comes to assessing motives and interests is an important building block for the kind of interreligious relationship building that the best interreligious learning is predicated on. It is also an important safeguard against the tendency to create fixed categories of "us" and "them," painting others with a broad brush based on one aspect of their identity.[9]

5. **A willingness to be humble**. In many ways, humility is the first virtue in this work. It is also essential to the Christian life. The longest chapter in *The Rule of St. Benedict*, written in the 6th century as a handbook for monks who wanted to live out the teachings of the Gospel, is on humility. I think of this as the "take the log out of your own eye first" principle.[10] It is an essential guard against pride, ego and arrogance. This is particularly important for Christians in the US engaged in interfaith work given our majority status.

Finally, Christian seminaries need interreligious education not only to be prepared to work in multi-religious contexts, but to live out their call as Christians. Without cultivating dispositions that inspire and enable us to get to know our neighbors across religious lines, we will inevitably fall short of a fundamental Christian obligation to: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10: 25-28).

---

[1] Seminaries accredited by the ATS are now required to "engage students with the global character of the church as well as ministry in multi-faith and multicultural contexts." The standard is intentionally written to leave room for interpretations consistent with the wide theological spectrum reflected among ATS member schools. As such it stops short of advocating the kind of explicit interreligious engagement that is at the heart of our work at the Center for Interreligious and Communal Leadership Education (CIRCLE) at Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College.

[2] For an excellent example of what it means to learn with rather than about the other, see Mary Boys and Sara Lee, *Christians & Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2006).

[3] Approved as a new group by the AAR in 2012, we had our first set of panels in 2013 at the AAR meeting in Baltimore. One of the four panels hosted under the auspices of the new group focused on Interreligious Education. I co-chair the group with Dr. Homayra Ziad. Steering Committee members include: Diana Eck, Paul Knitter, Or Rose, John Makransky and Ravi Gupta.

[4] Each fall issue of JIRS will be built around articles based on the presentations made at annual AAR meetings under the auspices of the interreligious and interfaith studies group.

[5] These conversations have been inspired in part by Catherine Cornille's book, *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, (New York: Herder & Herder, 2008) which includes five "essential conditions" for interreligious dialogue: humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy and hospitality. Here I use the term *disposition*, because I see it as suggesting attitudes that sit at the intersection of temperament (inherent, neurologically-based personality traits) and character (traits rooted in our upbringing and values that are learned and cultivated over time). If we think of one's disposition as "the tendency to act or think in a particular way" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disposition) crucial formation periods such as early childhood, college, transitions like parenthood – and I would argue, seminary - are powerful times when one's default dispositions may be challenged or changed.

[6] My wording here intentionally echoes Andover Newton's newly adopted mission statement: "Deeply rooted in Christian faith and radically open to what God is doing now, Andover Newton Theological School educates inspiring leaders for the 21st century."

[7] Two excellent articles for understanding the dangers of absolutism are Mary Gordon's essay, "Appetite for the Absolute," in *The Best American Spiritual Writing, 2005 edition,* Philip Zaleski ed. (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005) and an essay by Gustav Niebuhr, "Choosing Words over Bullets," where he picks up on his great-uncle Reinhold Niebuhr's definition of absolutism as "the self justifying quest for the impossible ideal." *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Summer/Autumn 2012 (Vol. 40, Nos. 3 & 4).

[8] For an enlightening exploration of the dynamics and dangers of religious stereotyping see Jesper Svartvik & Jakob Wiren, eds., *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[9] For a detailed and fascinating exploration of the dynamics of "otherizing," see Lawrence Wills', *Not God's People: Insiders and Outsides in the Biblical World*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).
[10] Matthew 7:3-5 "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."

Rabbi Or N. Rose is an associate dean at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, and Co-Director of CIRCLE: the Center for Inter-Religious & Communal Leadership Education, a joint venture of Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College. He is the co-editor of Jewish Mysticism and the Spiritual Life: Classical Texts, Contemporary Reflections (Jewish Lights, 2011)

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, Ph.D., has been involved with interfaith dialogue for nearly four decades. She attended some of the earliest initiatives to include Muslims. She launched RRC's department dedicated to multifaith studies in the late 1980s and has pioneered innovative service-learning courses, internships and unique opportunities for RRC students to study sacred texts with their Christian and Muslim counterparts. Her efforts led to a groundbreaking 2009 summer retreat for Jewish and Muslim scholars and to an ongoing salon series for students and faculty called "Praying With Your Feet: Conversations With Social Activists About Faith."

Rabbi Yehuda Sarna has been the Skirball Executive Director of NYU's Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life since 2012. He has been deeply involved in multifaith work for his entire tenure at NYU. Inspired by the thousands of Jewish students at NYU, Rabbi Sarna helped create a pathway for multifaith activities through Of Many, as one of its co-founders.

Yael Shy directs all operations for the Global Spiritual Life Office and the Of Many Institute. Together with Dr. Marcella Runell Hall, she was the Co-Founding Director of OM. She is also the Founder and Director of the Mindfulness Project at NYU, the University's home for contemplative mindfulness, yoga, and meditation programming. Yael is a graduate of Northeastern University School of Law. She was formerly the Director of Development and Education at the NYU Center on Violence and Recovery, and an NYU College of Arts and Sciences alumna.

Celene Ibrahim-Lizzio, MDiv. is the Islamic Studies Scholar-in-Residence jointly appointed to the faculties of Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College and co-director of the Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education. She lectures and publishes widely on topics including the histories and theologies of interreligious relations, Islamic religious leadership and higher education, Islam and Muslims in North America, Islamic family law, Muslim feminist theology, and Qur'anic studies. Ibrahim-Lizzio earned a Masters of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandies University, a Masters of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, and a bachelor's degree in Near Eastern Studies with highest honors from Princeton University. She is completing a doctorate at Brandeis University in Arabic and Islamic civilizations and also serves as the Muslim Chaplain for Tufts University.

Jennifer Howe Peace is Assistant Professor of Interfaith Studies and co-director of CIRCLE at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, MA. Author of numerous articles and essays on interfaith cooperation, Dr. Peace co-edited, My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Inter-Religious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation (Orbis 2012). She has been an interfaith organizer and educator since the 1990's. She serves as one of the publishers of the Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue and served as a founding board member of the United Religions Initiative, a founding leader of the Interfaith Youth Core, and a founding member of the Daughters of Abraham book groups.

Christianity's Complicity in the Shoah: Continuities and Discontinuities

By Mary C. Boys

To what extent is Christianity complicit in the genocide perpetrated by the Third Reich? What continuity exists between Christian teaching about alleged Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion and Nazi ideology? To what extent is such teaching discontinuous with it?

These questions cannot be adequately addressed without reference to the generally "tormented" history between Jews and Christians.[1] The charge that the Jews were (and in the thinking of many Christians, remain) "Christ killers" stands at the center of this history, yet this accusation functioned differently in various historical periods and thus had different effects. In the rhetoric of the early church, particularly in the literature categorized as *Adversus Judaeos*, the charge served primarily to form a distinct identity separating "us" from "them." It was the North Star in a constellation of accusations that Jews were faithless, blind, carnal, and legalistic, tropes that resonated throughout theological commentary and pastoral exhortation. Yet, for the most part the accusation remained in the realm of rhetoric.

In the medieval period, however, many Christians thought of Jews as less than human. The malevolent figure of Judas symbolized the quintessential Jew. Christians denounced Jews as usurers, bribers, and secret killers who needed the blood of Christian children for their Passover rituals. Although the Enlightenment resulted in Jewish emancipation, it also led to preoccupation with the "Jewish Question" (*Judenfrage*) regarding whether Jews should or even could be integrated into "Christian" nations. Further, in much of the twentieth century, Protestants and Catholics associated Jews with Bolshevism. In Catholicism, the traditional disparagement of Judaism developed new layers as Jews were conflated with communists, liberals, Freemasons, and the secular state. Lutherans, who constituted about 60 percent of German Christians, carried the legacy of Martin Luther's "On the Jews and Their Lies."[2]

How, precisely, to assess the degree of Christian complicity is fraught with difficulty. Not surprisingly, Holocaust historians differ in their judgment about the extent of Christian responsibility. Quantification, however, is not the issue, as if continuity and discontinuity could be apportioned in a mathematical formula. The preponderance of evidence, however, reveals that Christian teaching—both in what was explicitly said and in what was left unsaid—bears considerable culpability for the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the larger context in which the Third Reich carried out genocide reveals other significant causes of the Shoah.

Continuities

A dominant legacy of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition is that of "marking out 'the Jews'—flesh and blood Jews—for ostracization, alienation, marginalization, torment, and on many occasions, death."[3] In this respect, then, Christian teaching formed the *precondition* of Nazi ideology. Had "Christianity not irrevocably transformed 'the Jews' into mythical beings, Nazism would not have chosen to do the same."[4] But the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition served not only as a precondition but also as an *enabler* insofar as its depiction of Judaism as degenerate fused with racial antisemitism in sectors of Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a consequence, many Christians would have found it difficult to distinguish between the antisemitism of the Third Reich and that of the churches. Further, a number of its members promulgated views that were deeply imbued with Nazi ideology. Even though a minority of Christians attempted to distance themselves from antisemitism and expressed moral sympathy

for Jews, the longstanding negative portrayal of Judaism complicated developing any theological sympathy.[5]

Recent research also reveals that the Nazis were neither so "pagan" nor so anti-Christian as many had assumed. Christian teaching shaped a number of their leading figures. Moreover, "For every Protestant who expressed misgivings privately, there was another who believed Nazism meant a return to Christianity."[6] Postwar interviews with Nazi perpetrators, and in many cases, their wives as well, reveal that they believed themselves forgiven by the merciful God of Jesus Christ—in contrast to the vindictive God of Judaism.[7]

The extent to which references and allusions to the Christ-killer charge became part of German culture may be seen in issues of the weekly tabloid *Der Stürmer*, published from 1923 to 1945. "The Jews are our misfortune" (*Die Juden sind unsere Unglück*) ran along the bottom of each front page. During Holy Week in April 1927, an article, "Golgotha," appeared:

> The Galilean Jesus Christ was an avowed mortal enemy of the Jews, before the entire world. He told them flat out what he thought of them: "You are children of the devil! Your father is a murderer from the very beginning. And you seek to act according to your father's desires." His [Jesus'] struggle was for liberation. The liberation of a native agricultural people out of indentured servitude under the bloody dominion of the racially foreign Jews. This is why Christ had to die. Death on the cross. Because he was not a trader and Pharisee and perverter of the Scripture. Because he had the courage to confess himself to his people and against the Jews. The Promised Land was going to ruin. What was left remained a gravestone.
>
> But the murderers of Christ live. They live in the midst of the German people. And strive for its collapse. The hand of Judah lies heavily upon it [the German people]. It [the German people] has been driven into debt. Eroded and maltreated in body and spirit. The German people is on the path to Golgotha. All Judah wants its death. Because his [Judah's] father is a murderer from the very beginning. And because the Jew wants to act according to its father's desires. Germany is to go down in a racial chaos of humanity. Is to be wiped out, out of the heroism of its history.
>
> Germany awake! It is almost midnight! …[8]

Similarly, on Easter 1933, the paper has a sketch of a Nazi soldier and a German woman standing together, gazing at the crucified Jesus; a church steeple is visible in the background. The caption reads: "The Jews nailed Christ onto the cross and thought he was dead. He is risen. They nailed Germany to the cross and thought it was dead, and it is risen, more gloriously than ever before."[9]

Theological claims did not exist in a vacuum, as is shown in the fusion between Christian teaching over the ages about Jews and Judaism with the growing antisemitic ideology in early twentieth-century Germany (with parallels in Austria). Particularly after the devastating defeat in World War I, many Germans sought redemption in a regeneration of its people through a resurgent nationalism in which radical antisemitism became identical with the campaign against the Weimar Republic (1919–1933).[10] Various "patriotic" groups coalesced around the need to "purify" the German people—a tragic echo of the preoccupation of sixteenth century Christians of the Iberian Peninsula with "purity of blood" (*limpieza de sangre*). Thus, by the end of the 1920s, many were demanding that Jews be excluded from citizenship, and the boycott against Jewish businesses widened. In the final years of the Weimar Republic, no significant social or political groups existed to counter radical antisemitism. By the 1930s, the liberals, who had championed Jewish emancipation in the nineteenth century, were no longer a potent political force. The workers' movement, less influenced by antisemitism, was preoccupied by class issues and gave short shrift to the ideology of the National Socialists.

Although we lack detailed knowledge of how the faith formation of European Christians in the 1930s and 1940s affected their view of Nazi propaganda, we have ample documentation of the lack of forthright criticism of Nazi ideology with regard to the "Jewish Question" by ecclesiastical authorities. Both Catholics and Protestants protested about issues of concern, particularly about the so-called "Euthanasia" program in which mentally and/or physically handicapped persons were gassed in various clinics and installations throughout Germany. They were far more vociferous in denouncing the killing of the handicapped than in opposing brutal policies against the Jews.[11] The authorities challenged Nazi strictures on the churches, but they were largely silent in the face of the Nuremberg Racial Laws, *Kristallnacht*, and the concentration/death camps.[12]

In fact, the churches played a key role in the management of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" and the "Reich Citizenship Law." The latter law denied Jews citizenship, and the former mandated that anyone who had three or four Jewish grandparents be considered a Jew, regardless of religious affiliation. Ironically, the system the Nazis designed to assess whether a person was a "true" German (i.e., Aryan) or a Jew required a signed and stamped document proving (or not) that a person's grandparents had been baptized. Thus, the Christian churches became the "single most important site for the implementation of Nazi racial segregation."[13] With millions of Germans seeking four baptismal records, the staff of the churches carried an extra workload, "but there is no record of complaint about being made complicit in the racist process."[14]

A 1938 religious education booklet for Catholic adults, *Nathanaelfrage* ("Nathanael's Question"), took issue with the notion of an Aryan Christ, but "warned that [although] Christ might have been part of the Jewish people and a Jew through his birth and adherence to Jewish customs, … this would not mean he was racially a Jew…. Christ became less and less 'Jewish.' His manner (*Wesen)*, his word and work, were not Jewish but divine. All his life he had stood against the Pharisees and the 'voice of [Israel's] blood and the longings of its national ambitions.'"[15] This booklet reveals the increasingly racialized discourse, in which the Catholic hierarchy also engaged. For example, in a Lenten address of 1939, Archbishop Konrad Gröber of Freiburg objected to portraying Jesus as an Aryan, but insisted that Jesus was Jewish "only on His Mother's side, since He was conceived of the Holy Ghost."[16] As Ulrike Ehret concludes, "National Socialist race theory was no longer rejected out of hand (criticism was reserved for 'race religion'), as the Church had done since the late 1920s; this was now taken as a given category including the racial image of the Jews. This essentially abandoned the Jews to anti-Semitic vilification and persecution."[17]

Although Christian teaching had resulted in the dehumanization of Jews over the centuries, the prevalent, non-genocidal antisemitism in the general population "prevented any serious opposition to the Nazis once they had decided to embark on the murder of the Jews."[18] It was not so much that antisemitism in the churches inevitably led to the Final Solutions, but rather that it "predisposed" many not to act.[19] As Robert Ericksen provocatively asks: "Is it possible, however, that ordinary Germans who became killers for the Nazi state felt they had received permission from their churches or from their universities?"[20]

While Christian complicity cannot be quantified, ample evidence exists of the churches' feeble response to Nazi ideology and even enthusiastic support, such as among "Hitler's priests." Their sense of the compatibility of Catholic Christianity with Nazi racial theory is chilling. So, too, is the [Protestant] German Christian Movement's (*Deutsche Christen*) Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life (*Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben*) that presented Jesus as an Aryan, de-judaized the New Testament, and blamed the degenerate Jews for Jesus' death. Despite their confessional differences, Protestants and Catholics were united in their

opposition to Jews. As Doris Bergen concludes: "Two traditions had shaped the life of the churches in Germany since the time of Luther and even before. One was hostility toward Jews and Judaism, the other confessional strife. Both of them thrived in the Third Reich."[21]

Even in the immediate postwar period, the churches showed little empathy to what Jews had experienced. Particularly problematic is the way in which high Catholic officials, clerics, agencies, and monasteries, along with the collusion of various governments, facilitated the escape of Nazi war criminals. This is a complicated story, part of the church's extensive efforts to ameliorate the situation of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons amidst the chaos of postwar Europe. The efforts of agencies such as the Vatican's Relief Commission for Refugees were marred by the assistance also extended to Nazis, apparently justified by a twofold rationale: Aiding the anti-communist Nazis would prevent the spread of communism, and offering forgiveness and assistance to Nazis and their collaborators provided the possibility of conversion or return to the practice of Catholicism.

It would take a considerable period of time before the churches began to confront what Christian teaching over the ages had contributed to the reception of Nazi ideology.

Discontinuities

However extensive, shameful, and sinful Christian complicity in the Shoah, it alone does not bear the blame. Christianity's legacy of denigrating Judaism (and too often vilifying Jews) never, even its most extreme voices, sanctioned state-sponsored genocide, the "Final Solution." The teaching of Christianity may have been a "necessary cause leading to the Holocaust, [but] it was surely not a sufficient one."[22] Thus, it is important to sketch out the larger context in which interrelated developments in science, nationalism, colonialism, fascism, and World Wars I and II were causal factors. Racism and antisemitism were integral to all.

In the realm of science and medicine, eugenics and racial hygiene held many in thrall in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, not only in Germany but also in Great Britain and the United States. Since heredity was considered to be determinative and immutable, the only recourse was to prevent the decay by such methods as compulsory sterilization, the killing of persons disabled by mental or physical deficiencies, and the destruction of foreigners (especially Jews, but also the Roma). By the end of World War II, some 200,000 "deficient" children and adults had been put to death in killing centers overseen by medical personnel. The importance of cleanliness and purity of blood was most effectively conveyed by designating others—especially Jews—as the foil. The Jew as a racial pariah became a fundamental theme of the curriculum in German schools. Moreover, in the various concentration camps, medical professionals oversaw the selection process and the gassing of victims, and engaged in unethical (and often gruesome) medical experiments."[23]

The "Jewish question" was central to nationalist movements as nations-in-formation worked out the constituency of their citizenry. When Germany became a unified nation-state in 1871, Jews held full legal equality, but tensions raised by rapid urbanization and antisemitic societies gave rise to more exclusionary perspectives. Germany's expansionist policies under Wilhelm II, Kaiser from 1888-1918, led to Germany's colonization of Southwest Africa (now Namibia) and East African (now Tanzania), as well as Cameroon, Togo, and Samoa. Germans pursued a campaign of "deliberate annihilation" against Southwest Africa's Herero and Nama peoples: "Germany's first racial state and society took shape, not under the Third Reich, but under Imperial Germany in its prime African colony. The German army, colonial administrators, and settlers learned that against Africans they could practice the most brutal measures possible, and could do so with active support of the very center of German state power, the Kaiser, the military staff, and the civilian government."[24] Organizations such as the

Pan German League, formed at the end of the nineteenth century, exacerbated the racialization of national identity.

World War I accentuated the desire to dominate others, but after defeat and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which stripped Germany of its colonies, many in Germany gave way to the "pathos of victimization"—and the Nazis cleverly exploited both the aspiration of domination and the misery of loss.[25] The Nazis regarded the loss of World War I as a "call to world domination, a threat, and a rationalization for murder of the Jews and anyone else cast in the role of shirker, traitor, or defeatist."[26] Fascist leaders made use of race science to justify authoritarian means of binding a nation into a single people by means of an aggressive foreign policy, militarism, and exaltation of the nation-state. Jews in particular were pariahs because as foreigners they detracted from the purity of a nation's people. Other peoples as well were regarded as threats: some Slavic peoples, most notably Russians; ethnic Poles, the Roma and Sinti peoples ("Gypsies"), and homosexuals. The Jews alone, however, "were thought to pose an evil going beyond the evidence of the senses." [27]

This broad and brief outline of contributing causes does not exculpate Christianity. It does, however, suggest the multifaceted character of the Shoah. Moreover, the heuristic of "continuities" and "discontinuities" is itself inadequate to account for the complex ways in which Christian teaching and the churches functioned vis-à-vis the Third Reich. For example, some Christians who held highly problematic theological views of Judaism nevertheless showed outstanding moral courage—most notably, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The timidity Pope Pius XII manifested in the face of Nazism is in part explained by his obsession with communism as the greater threat to Western civilization.[28] Nevertheless, the complexity of the situation should not overshadow the manifold ways in which Christians enabled the genocidal actions of the Nazi regime.

Conclusion

I write as a Catholic Christian for whom staring into the tarnished mirror of history is deeply disturbing. Although the Shoah defies comprehension, what we do understand imposes a moral obligation on all of us who are Christian—and offers an unsettling case to all religious people of the consequences of denigration of the religious other. If, however, we Christians are to do more than lament—a necessary response—then it is incumbent upon us to take a long, hard look at what the anti-Jewish teachings of the churches inspired or justified during the Holocaust. The question of Johannes Baptist Metz—"Ask yourselves if the theology you are learning is such that it could remain unchanged before and after Auschwitz. If this be the case, be on your guard."[29]—cries out for a response.

---

[1] See the 1998 statement from the Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," says: "The history of relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one." See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_16031998_shoah_en.html (accessed July 9, 2014).

[2] See Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjena, *Martin Luther, the Jews, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

[3] Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context, vol. 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 399.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Kevin Spicer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 229-230.

[6] Richard Steigmann-Gall, "Christianity and the Nazi Movement: A Response," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42 (2007): 185-211; citation, 205.
[7] See Katharina von Kellenbach, *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[8] See http://churchesandtheholocaust.ushmm.org/page/der-sturmer-images. I thank Victoria Barnett, Staff Director for Church Relations at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and her summer assistant, Andrew Kloes, for these excerpts from *Der Stürmer*.
[9] Ibid.
[10] See Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14.
[11] See Doris L. Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," *Central European History* 27/3 (1994): 329-48.
[12] Response to *Kristallnacht* by church authorities was minimal. The only public response among Catholic clergy was from Bernhard Lichtenberg, Provost of Berlin's St. Hedwig Cathedral, who, among other defiant acts, prayed for the Jews from the pulpit each evening for three years. Arrested in October 1941, Lichtenberg responded to his prosecutors: "I think I am not only authorized but obliged, to preach to the Catholic believers, that they may not let themselves be confused by unchristian dispositions but live by Jesus Christ's commandment: 'Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.' That includes Jews." Lichtenberg also organized the office of the Special Relief of the Diocese of Berlin (*Hilfswerk beim Ordinariat Berlin*), and drew Dr. Margarete Sommer, a member of the Berlin Catholic resistance circle, into the organization; after Lichtenberg's death, she became the organization's director. Lichtenberg also worked with resister Dr. Gertrud Luckner, who led actions on behalf of Jews in Berlin and Munich through the German Catholic charity Caritas. Yet such figures were few in number. See Brenda Gaydosh, "Seliger Bernhard Lichtenberg: Steadfast in Spirit, He Directed his Own Course" (Ph.D. dissertation, The American University, Washington D.C., 2010, 311-312.
[13] Robert Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust*: *Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 118.
[14] Cited in Ulrike Ehret, "Catholicism and Judaism in the Catholic Defence against Alfred Rosenberg, 1934-1938: Anti-Jewish Images in an Age of Race Science," *European History Quarterly* 4/1 (2010): 35-56; citation, 44.
[15] Ehret, "Catholicism and Judaism," 46.
[16] Cited in Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 335.
[17] Ehret, "Catholicism and Judaism," 48.
[18] Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 105.
[19] So Donald J. Dietrich, *Catholic Citizens in the Third Reich: Psycho-Social Principles and Moral Reasoning* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 305.
[20] Ericksen, *Conscience and Complicity*, 22-23.
[21] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 348.
[22] Yosef H. Yerushalmi, in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: Ktav, 1977), 103.
[23] See Patricia Herberer, "Science," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies,* eds., Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39-53; citation, 52.
[24] Eric D. Weitz, "Nationalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, 54-67; citation, 62-63.
[25] Ibid, 65.
[26] Doris L. Bergen, "World Wars," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies,* 95-110; citations, 97.
[27] See John Connelly, "Gypsies, Homosexuals, and Slavs," in *The Oxford Handbook of*

Holocaust Studies, 274-289; citation, 288.

[28] See Michael Phayer, *Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

[29] Johannes Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church,* trans. Peter Mann (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 29.

Professor Mary C. Boys has been the Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology and Dean of Academic Affairs at Union Theological Seminary, New York City since 1994. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Prior to her present appointment, she served for seventeen years on the faculty of Boston College.

Processing Experiences Within an Academic Framework: A Challenge for Interfaith Education

By Elena Dini

There are clearly many ways to address the issue of interfaith dialogue in an academic context. A first distinction may easily come when tackling the question: Why do we care about interfaith dialogue? The answers scholars, instructors, and students come up with may be very different. Among the most common is the consideration that our world is getting more and more diverse, and people are living in multireligious environments. We should therefore learn how to live together at our best and invest in social cohesion. Dialogue, then, has a very practical and communitarian aim. However, this is not the only answer one can give.

Dialogue is often praised for its individual transformative power. Archbishop Rowan Williams, commenting on the Building Bridges Seminars, a well known experience of dialogue in the academic world, said:

> For many a real dialogue about what we specifically believe and the thoughts we have about our faith ought to take second place to discussions concerning the practical tasks we can share [...] But this dialogue has been conceived rather differently. Christians are Christians and Muslims are Muslims because they care about truth, and because they believe that truth alone gives life.[1]

So sometimes, dialogue can be sought just for the sake of dialogue itself.

We are thus faced with a field approached with different aims, at different stages of personal growth, and in different ways. Whether we agree with the first reasoning or with the second or with both, it is clear that this "interfaith dialogue" people are interested in learning or that they feel may be relevant for their future activities is primarily concerned with concrete and necessary encounters with an "other" from a different faith community. It is therefore imperative to discuss **what can be taught to these people and how**.

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the presence of explicit occasions that seminaries, universities, or educative institutions actively offer for interfaith education within and outside the curriculum. Three main pedagogic choices will be introduced: visits to houses of worship, dialogue exchanges in the classroom, and multifaith housing. In this context, two specific case studies will be examined: Hartford Seminary (USA), a seminary which has a clear focus in interfaith dialogue and Islamic studies, and the Summer School of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme (UK), which annually selects an international group of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim emerging religious leaders to be engaged for three weeks in various activities of interfaith dialogue, with a specific focus on Scriptural Reasoning training. These case studies will lastly open the way to reflection on how to help students process their interfaith experiences within an academic framework. How will these encounters, skills and tools coherently become part of a knowledge that is to be assessed and implemented? Is it possible to do so?

In many different academic fields, a common experience has been that of moving from a frontal lecture-style teaching to a more participative learning model. If this is true for scientific topics, it is even more so for a discipline based on human interactions—like interfaith dialogue. The Scarboro mission's website proposes an interesting model of five approaches to interfaith dialogue:

Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak as a believer for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice.[2]

In these five different approaches (which may be integrated in a holistic education), probably only the first one could be addressed without direct contact with the religious other; even then, receiving informational content from a person of the specific faith tradition under observation is definitely a more captivating experience than receiving it from an "outsider" of that religious community.[3] This is because there is clearly a difference between learning about the other and being in the presence of the other,[4] in the same way as there is a difference between learning about interfaith dialogue and practicing it. Interfaith education is not only about learning contents, but also about learning skills and virtues. In order to do so, practical experience is needed. Among the different activities or experiences that may be proposed in an academic or more broadly learning setting, three have been chosen here for a deeper discussion.

The first one is the **visit to houses of worship of other faith traditions**. In many interfaith dialogue courses, this is an option, sometimes a requirement. Students are expected to visit the house of worship of another tradition, and that may happen in two ways: either they are invited to do it on their own, or they are called to do it with their class. There are clearly pros and cons to each of the two alternatives. For example, James Redington, describing the course on Interreligious Dialogue at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, tells us that he prefers that these visits "be a 'real-life' experience, and thus involve spontaneity both on the student's part and the religious center's, rather than being too pre-arranged or ordered to formal dialogue."[5] Wesley Ariarajah, teaching at Drew University School of Theology, has a different approach. Part of his course on "The Challenges of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice" are two Friday evening visits. The group attends a program in two selected houses of worship, which consists generally in a short introduction by some leaders of the community, attendance at the worship, and finally convivial time with the community. It seems clear that the class benefits from the organization of the event and also from the chance to discuss and unpack this experience together during the following class meeting.[6] However, it is interesting to note that the instructor of this particular course also requires an individual semester-long project based on observation, interviews, and analysis of a specific religious community to be selected by the student. This way, the student may have both the chance of interacting personally with another faith community and benefiting from the class discussion about their common experience.

In the two cases I have studied more closely, visits to houses of worship are part of the experiences students are exposed to. At Hartford Seminary, there were at least four courses in 2013-14 that offered this opportunity: "Dialogue in a World of Difference," "Building Abrahamic Partnerships," "Christian-Muslim Relations in Arabia: Ibadi Islam and Interfaith Theology in the Sultanate of Oman" (which takes place in Oman), and "Faith in the Neighborhood: An Introduction to America's Religious Diversity." For the sake of space we will just highlight some points related to the first two courses. For the "Dialogue in a World of Difference" course, which is required for all Master's degree candidates, students must

submit a comparative writing assignment. They have to attend a service in their own faith community and in at least another one, observe from a sociological point of view the way it is run, and then write down their reflections according to a set of guidelines provided during the course. Even if this kind of engagement does not require a personal connection with the community, there are two extremely interesting outcomes: first of all, a better familiarization with that faith tradition, and second, the development of a critical eye which should be applied not only to the hosting community, but also to one's own community for the sake of this writing assignment.[7] Sometimes it is difficult to realize how double standards are used in one's own assessments, and this exercise will likely highlight some of these unconscious prejudices.

In the Building Abrahamic Partnerships, an intensive 8-day course designed as a Jewish-Christian-Muslim training program, visits to the houses of worship take place during the program so that the whole group is attending together. Students usually go to a mosque on Friday, a synagogue on Saturday, and a church on Sunday. During the lunch break, after having attended the worship, the group shares reactions to the experience. Yehezkel Landau, the instructor of the course, underlines the importance of taking into consideration negative feelings, fears, and suspicions students may encounter during this activity. He states: "These are the moments, holistically engaging head and heart and gut, where I believe BAP [Building Abrahamic Partnerships] is most interpersonally genuine, spiritually and ethically concrete, and ultimately transformative in positive ways."[8] The moment of direct contact not only with a person from another faith community, but with the more institutional setting of that faith tradition, may provoke feelings that must be taken into consideration and processed in order to be transformed from potential obstacles into elements of strength.

The Summer School of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme (CIP) also proposes visits to houses of worship. The Assistant Director and the Recruitment Officer of the Summer School describe the goal of that activity as the chance for the international student body to familiarize with the UK religious panorama and to have an experience that for many students is completely new. Furthermore, they add: "Using the Scriptural Reasoning language, the Summer School is a 'tent' and the tent is fantastic but you cannot live in a tent forever. And sometimes you need brick houses so going to the places of worship is visiting those brick houses."[9] An alum comments on his visit to a place of worship of another faith tradition:

> I felt it allowed me an intimate insight into their 'sacred spaces' and it was here that I felt my historical and theological kinship most strongly [...] It also allowed me to view those rituals, traditions, liturgical practices, and doctrines I found 'strange' and 'silly' from a different angle where they were intricately tied to a community bound in sacred relationship with God.[10]

From these comments, it may be argued that taking time to enter someone else's world is a valuable experience. Students of different faith traditions may come together in the same classroom and have valuable exchanges, which may turn into friendship. However, there is always the need in an academic learning process to connect that single person to his/her larger community.

Another important factor in interfaith education is the way **dialogue exchanges happen in the classroom or in activities in which the group is invited to share time with members of another religious community**. The quality of interaction seems to be an extremely relevant issue, able to make the whole relational experience a success or a failure (though not the informational one, as the case described by Robert Hunt from Perkins School of Theology shows[11]). Considering the option of a multireligious student body (which is not always the case), the class interactions become a priority to be facilitated and monitored by the instructor/s. Diane Swords is a long-term facilitator of Intergroup

Dialogue courses (a tool designed in the 1980s to "engage students in critical conversations about race and equality")[12], and in her remarks about the interfaith course she co-facilitated at Syracuse University on "Dialogue in Action: Faith, Conflict and Community," three main points may be identified: a) the importance of communication skills, b) the need to create a safe space where all participants may feel comfortable to talk and share, and c) the active choice to support students in creating personal relationships. [13] These three points may be easily seen in connection: good communication skills pave the way to the creation of a safe environment where people may feel open to develop relationships based on the acquired bonds of trust.

Eboo Patel, April Kunze, and Noah Silverman from the Interfaith Youth Core also insist on the importance of using communication skills to learn about the other in dialogue. The authors discuss the Interfaith Youth Core's choice of using storytelling as a key methodology for interfaith youth work. Their argument is that:

> [S]torytelling provides a bridge for overcoming some of the major obstacles frequently encountered in interfaith dialogue by opening the possibility for a different kind of conversation. [...] Personal storytelling moves the encounter from competing notions of 'Truth' to varied human experiences of life.[14]

However, we should not imagine that every dialogue session is easy: some difficult moments or conflicts may clearly arise. What do we do then? How do we consider these moments, and how do we react? Jeffrey Kurtz and Mark Orten have come to an interesting theory about what they call "rhetorical rupture": "a rhetorical rupture may be understood as a pivotal moment when the conventions of rhetoric [...] inject conflict into a discourse community."[15] These occasions of conflict are described by the authors as "teachable moments,"[16] and, I would add, probably among the best teachable moments if the instructor is able to incline the group toward a positive resolution. If a conflict in what should be a safe space arises and is managed, this experience will likely be treasured in the minds and hearts of the participants, who will know that it is possible to come to a common ground even in the face of conflict.

Professor Hadsell, President of Hartford Seminary, is one of the three instructors of the Dialogue in a World of Difference course. Together with two professors who used to teach this course with her, she stresses the importance of four points that I find particularly relevant: a) the choice of organizing small group discussions during the sessions that allows students "to practice theories they learned in class and gain experience in dialogically interacting with people from different traditions and cultures,"[17] b) a set of general guidelines which are the ground on which to build positive class interactions like respect, appreciative listening of the other, and active sharing of one's own beliefs and ideas[18], c) the possibility of debriefing in plenary what happens in the small group discussions, and finally d) the added value of having an interfaith team of instructors which may model a positive interfaith interaction.

In the CIP Summer School, the situation may be somewhat different. Students are usually exposed to a wide range of diverse interfaith activities. The key commitment is to the Scriptural Reasoning session, which takes place every morning (Saturdays and Sundays excluded). During the rest of the day, however, many other activities take place: group discussions revolving around a specific topic, master classes or interactive practical workshops with an expert in interfaith dialogue, and "buddy groups," which are very small informal groups with at least a Jewish, a Christian, and a Muslim student which are assigned for the whole time of the Summer School (this is the space where students can choose every day what topics to discuss with no fixed agenda). Talking about the kind of interactions experienced during the SR sessions, the Recruitment Officer underlines a main difference

from the usual kind of interfaith exchanges: “In SR there is no immediate pressure to apply the dialogue to real life. Most times it comes as part of the conversation but the conversation can focus on only scriptures.”[19] When asked to describe the quality of interactions and “class” discussions during the Summer School, the alumni/ae interviewed for this paper seem to identify the opportunity to cohabitate as the main factor which made the difference in their interactions. An alumna from the United States comments that: “I think the CIP interactions were much more transformative, intense than previous experiences because of our living arrangements.”[20]

These reflections pave the way to the last element in interfaith education that this paper is going to tackle: **multifaith housing, i.e.** the chance for members of different faith groups to live together, which can involve anything from spending time outside the classroom, to sharing free time, to sitting together for meals, to engaging in totally informal discussion, to establishing common ground for everyday house management issues. Not many examples have been studied regarding the impact multifaith housing has on interfaith learning. However, if we rely on students’ reflections and comments, it seems clear that this experience is probably one of the most formative and transformative ones while probably having, at the same time, the lowest degree of traditional academic value or of conscious reflection.

Hartford Seminary has made the explicit choice of proposing to students residing on campus to experience multifaith housing. President Hadsell comments:

> One of the concrete outcomes is that people in the housing learn to deal with conflicts and that conflict can be about food, hours, etc. Some of these issues may have to do with religion and some others don’t. My guess is that for many people the first thing they experience is the difference with religion, particularly in terms of time for prayer and kind of food, and then, as time goes on, religion just becomes part of who that person is.[21]

Another interesting element she highlights is the transformative power of these everyday experiences; people may be worried at the very beginning about lacking respect for each other or crossing boundaries they shouldn’t cross. But, as Hadsell states, taking the example of Nigerian students:

> Our Nigerian students might go back to extremely conflictual situations between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria but, for the rest of their lives, they’re going to carry within themselves the knowledge of the friendship they have made with Muslims or Christians. They can never demonize the other in the same way again.[22]

This same thought is echoed by a Nigerian alum of the CIP Summer School: “Living together during those weeks has broken all stereotypes; I now have more Muslim friends. I have even co-founded an organisation with Muslims back home.”[23] As already observed, the quality of dialogue exchanges for some of the CIP Summer School alumni/ae is considered to be the result of living together, since it gives the chance to build deeper relationships and bonds of trust. Another student shares:

> Because we had been spending a lot of time together, sharing meals, etc, we had a level of trust which allowed us to begin to share ideas and feelings about contentious and painful issues (most noticeably Israel/ Palestine) in an honest and fairly open way… For example, I ended up discussing attitudes to contraception with a participant of another religion, which came out of me telling her about my forthcoming wedding.[24]

The CIP Summer School takes place in an incredibly beautiful setting: Madingley Hall. When I asked the organizers why they chose that location, one of their first answers, though not the only one, was that it was "at some distance from Cambridge so the students can engage with each other without the distraction of being in an urban city center." Madingley Hall is indeed far enough from the city center to make going out on one's own every night difficult for an international student. The result is that students come up with activities for their free time together, having thus a chance more to get to know each other better.

The relational and experiential side of interfaith education seems to play a major role in academic settings. The main question one should then ask is: **how do we frame in academic terms what happens in those situations?** In her article on "Engaging Interfaith Studies across the Curriculum: from Niche to Norm," Cassie Meyer is concerned with how to assess the level of interfaith learning of students. She proposes "relationship-building skills and knowledge that fosters interfaith literacy"[25] as the outcomes an instructor should seek. Along the same lines, Rabbi Or Rose from Hebrew College states: "I do think that there are important elements of interreligious education that can and should take place through traditional book learning [...] However, as I said above, these forms of learning are necessary, but insufficient."[26]

It may happen that, when interpersonal relationships are at the basis of one's own learning, the academic content is left behind. It is this author's belief that this should not be the direction interfaith education should move to. Relational and experiential education need both a basis on which to be built and a framework in which to be analyzed within the academic setting. From a discussion with Professor Hadsell on the issue of when and how to teach contents (theological, scriptural, social, and cultural) in interfaith education, it became clear that, even if one starts with teaching content, there is no clear delimitation between academic knowledge and experience—especially when that happens in a multifaith context where "just being in the same class together is experience and having breaks during which the Muslims go to pray is experience or Ramadan when Muslims are fasting is experience."[27] A parallel may be useful to explain the importance of a basic knowledge of the other's faith and of interfaith literacy. In a friendship, the people involved usually try to learn more about one another: what kind of food the other one likes, how many brothers and sisters does he/she have, what is the other person's most joyful or painful memory, and so on. This is because one cares for the other person. The same happens within the context of interfaith relationships. One is not usually called to be an expert in the other's faith, but a general and basic knowledge is definitely something to be sought. This knowledge, then, is clearly going to be imbued with personal experiences of direct relationships with people from that faith tradition and to become not only something to be found in books, but also through an enriched living knowledge.

Usually when someone is called to serve in a multifaith setting or is engaging in interfaith dialogue, there are three main actions he/she may find useful to perform after an interfaith training: a) talking about the experience: what one lives may be extremely powerful and transformative and one should be trained to convey this experience to other people in order to make it accessible, b) making that experience useful: that means to draw from it clear teachings and not only emotions or feelings, and c) being able to "replicate" the experience. By "replicating" I mean being able to apply skills, practices, and knowledge acquired during the training to new contexts. That requires a deep interiorization of both the material taught during the course and the experience itself.

How is it then possible for the instructor to facilitate this process? A viable option is that of finding times and moments for the class and the single individual to debrief what has been read, listened to, and experienced. This can be done either during the class time or as part of the assignments of the course. The deepness of the interfaith experience

lived (and this includes the multifaith housing) is not going to be forgotten, and it will clearly remain part of the students' baggage. However, it seems more difficult to systematically reflect on such experiences when one is no more living it and is already engaged in another phase of his/her own life. This is why, in order to help students process the interpersonal and interfaith experiences they have had during the course or during the time spent in the training, instructors may consider the options of: a) inviting the students to keep a diary where they can register after every session something that they learned and that can either shed light on a past situation or be useful for a future one, b) elaborating a project with some of their colleagues so that they may have the chance to get to know each other better and to reflect on the practical side of dialogue, and c) inviting the students to submit a reflection not on what they learned from the course but on a specific situation that they will have to face in their communities after the end of the course and how they can apply the wisdom received during the training.

To conclude, the field of interfaith dialogue is still a very young one. But it is also a field which feels the pressure of developing in a short time. How, then, may academia support the endeavors of those who are training and those who want to be trained? This paper has tried to demonstrate the importance of relational and experiential education in this field through the observation of three activities or situations that may foster the development of interfaith knowledge and skills: visits to houses of worship, dialogue exchanges in the classroom, and multifaith housing. Nonetheless, the importance of providing students with relevant content and basic knowledge of other faiths, of history of relations between communities, and of analysis of practices and tools to use in dialogue should not be underestimated. The role of academia seems to be that of providing spaces for the students to experience interfaith dialogue but, even more importantly, of supporting them in processing their experiences and making them able to actively access and replicate them.

Works Cited

Ariarajah, Wesley. "The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology." In *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell. Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009.

Birinci, Suendam, Heidi Hadsell and David Roozen. "Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program." In *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell. Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009.

Hadsell, Heidi. "Interfaith Dialogue in Christian Theological Education in North America: Opportunities and Challenges." In *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, edited by Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja. Oxford, Regnum Books International, 2010.

Hunt, Robert. "World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology." In *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell. Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009.

Islam, Nazia, Tiffany Steinwert, and Diane Swords. "3Dialogue in Action: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Interfaith Education." *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 13 (Winter 2014).

Kurtz, Jeffrey, and Mark Orten. "Interfaith Dialogue and Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities." In *Interfaith Dialogue in Practice: Christian, Muslim, Jew*, edited by Daniel S. Brown Jr. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.

Landau, Yehezkel. "Building Abrahamic Partnership: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary." In *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell. Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009.

Meyer, Cassie. "Engaging Interfaith Studies across the Curriculum: from Niche to Norm." *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 13 (Winter 2014).

Patel, Eboo, April Kunze and Noah Silverman. "Storytelling as a Key Methodology for Interfaith Youth Work." in *Interfaith Dialogue at the GrassRoots*, edited by Rebecca Kratz Mays. Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008.

Redington, James D. "'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, in the Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley." In *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell. Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009.

Rose, Or. "Continuing the Conversation: Pedagogic Principles for Multifaith Education." *Theological Education*, Vol. 47, N°2 (2013).

Scarboro Missions. https://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php accessed March 10, 2014.

Williams, Rowan. "Introducing the Seminar." In *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims studying the Bible and the Qur'an together*, edited by Michael Ipgrave. London: Church House Publishing, 2004.

---

[1] Rowan Williams, "Introducing the Seminar," in *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims studying the Bible and the Qur'an together*, ed. Michael Ipgrave (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), xi.

[2] Scarboro Missions. https://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php accessed March 10, 2014.

[3] As Prof. Robert Hunt from Perkins School of Theology argues when he describes the choice he made in his course on "World Religions and Christianity" to allow space for lectures by non-Christian religious practitioners. Robert Hunt, "World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology," in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, eds. David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009), 73.

[4] Or Rose, "Continuing the Conversation: Pedagogic Principles for Multifaith Education," *Theological Education*, Vol. 47, N°2 (2013): 62. Rabbi Rose is Co-Director of CIRCLE, a center for interreligious learning and leadership co-sponsored by Hebrew College and Andover Newton Theological School.

[5] James D. Redington, "'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, in the Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley," in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, eds. David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009), 49.
[6] Wesley Ariarajah, "The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology," in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, eds. David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009), 134.
[7] Heidi Hadsell, "Interfaith Dialogue in Christian Theological Education in North America: Opportunities and Challenges," in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, eds. Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 218.
[8] Yehezkel Landau, "Building Abrahamic Partnership: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary," in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, eds. David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009), 100.
[9] Skype interview done by the author with the Assistant Director and Recruitment Officer of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme Summer School on February 20, 2014.
[10] E-mail interview with a CIP Summer School alum done by the author on March 10, 2014.
[11] Students were required to take part in a series of dialogue meetings with non-Christians from local communities, but a group reported to have met with a Muslim community which did not organize for any real meeting with a group of members. They just arranged for a meeting with an imam that the students described as "closed-minded, largely ignorant of American culture and mysoginist." Notwithstanding, the students "agreed that they learned a great deal." Both quotations are from Hunt, "World Religions and Christianity," 71.
[12] Nazia Islam, Tiffany Steinwert, and Diane Swords, "3 Dialogue in Action: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Interfaith Education," *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 13 (Winter 2014): 4.
[13] Ibid., 6.
[14] Eboo Patel, April Kunze and Noah Silverman, "Storytelling as a Key Methodology for Interfaith Youth Work," in *Interfaith Dialogue at the GrassRoots*, ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2008), 41.
[15] Jeffrey Kurtz and Mark Orten, "Interfaith Dialogue and Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities," in *Interfaith Dialogue in Practice: Christian, Muslim, Jew*, ed. Daniel S. Brown Jr. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 86.
[16] Ibid., 86.
[17] Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell and David Roozen, "Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program," in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, eds. David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2009), 200.
[18] Ibid, 193.
[19] Skype interview done by the author with the Assistant Director and Recruitment Officer of the Cambridge Interfaith Program Summer School on February 20, 2014.
[20] E-mail interview with a CIP Summer School alumna done by the author on March 5, 2014.
[21] Personal interview with President Heidi Hadsell on March 7, 2014.
[22] Personal interview with President Heidi Hadsell on March 7, 2014.
[23] Email interview with a CIP Summer School alum done by the author on March 7, 2014.
[24] Email interview with a CIP Summer School alumna done by the author on March 10, 2014.
[25] Cassie Meyer, "Engaging Interfaith Studies across the Curriculum: from Niche to Norm," *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 13 (Winter 2014): 73.
[26] Rose, "Continuing the Conversation," 62-63.
[27] Personal interview with President Heidi Hadsell on March 7, 2014.

Elena Dini is a Russell Berrie Fellow at the Angelicum University in Rome for the academic year 2014-15. She completed a Graduate Certificate in Interfaith Dialogue at Hartford Seminary in 2014. She learned about and practiced interfaith dialogue in different settings and countries in the past: Italy, United Kingdom, Israel and United States. She has also worked in the field of communications linked to religious communities or organizations for the past 6 years.

Constructing Religious Identity in a Cosmopolitan World: The Theo-Politics of Interfaith Work[1]

By Jeannine Hill Fletcher

The practice of interreligious dialogue has long concentrated on the challenges that competing religious beliefs hold for the creation of an interfaith community. Differing religious beliefs about the nature of human existence and the role of humanity in the world construct distinctive religious identities grounded in particular thought systems. These religious identities bind some members of the interfaith community together but simultaneously distinguish them from 'others'. While attention to competing beliefs invites us to consider the role of religion in identity-formation, this focus tends to recognize 'difference' along only one axis with the distinction being among discrete faith communities. So the understanding goes: Christian identity is different from Muslim identity because Christians believe differently than Muslims. This approach, however, when it is abstracted from material, social and embodied realities leaves little room to consider difference emerging from other areas and intersecting with religious belief to inform religious identities. The lens of gender, for example, invites us to ask: *What difference does it make when we consider women's experiences in the light of claims to religious truth and the formation of religious identity?* Informed by feminist methodologies, I have argued that attention to gender makes a difference in the production of religious beliefs, in the experience of religious identities and in our theological conclusions about the multiplicity of religions. Analyzing the absence of women's voices and experiences within this discussion and working out the logic of their inclusion, challenges abstract theological production with embodied, embedded and dynamic religious identities arising out of the intersection of gender and religion and being constructed across religious boundaries.[2]

Invited into the multiplicity of subject locations inhabited by 'women' we realize that gender is not the only factor impacting our embodied and embedded lives, but 'woman' is an infinitely, internally diverse category. Intersectionality informs all religious persons, distinctively shaping their beliefs and identity. That is, just as claims to truth and religious identities are informed by gender as a distinct dimension of our being human, so too features of age, education, sexual orientation, culture and race (among others) impact belief and religious identities. The internal diversity of our religious traditions was brought to the fore, for me, in theological texts by women of color – womanist theologians, mujeristas, Asian theologians and postcolonial writers from India – who insisted that not only gender but race is a critical vector through which to understand the production of religious knowledge and religious identities.

As a Christian feminist theologian, I have been interested in the ways attention to gender informs theologies, interreligious dialogue and interfaith studies. As evidenced in recent issues of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, gender regularly frames explorations and critical questions in the field.[3] But if gender has opened us up to intersectionality, one might wonder why other crucial features of our identity have not been pressed to the fore in the interfaith conversation. That is, where is race in the dialogue of religions? As a White theologian trained with theological practices whereby White is a non-color, Willie James Jennings and other scholars of color have compellingly helped me to see "America as a space profoundly marked by whiteness."[4] I am compelled now to ask, what difference does it make to situate interreligious study and interrogate our theologies of religious pluralism through the lens of race, racialized difference and *racism*? To ask these questions, it is insufficient to remain at the level of theological belief and practices of dialogue. The question of race brings us squarely into our embodied and embedded lives, with a recognition that White theology has taken a toll on non-White bodies. Interfaith dialogue must be seen in the landscape of racialized disequilibrium.

Christian Hegemony, White Supremacy

In 2011, the Pew Research Center starkly reported that in the United States: "The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households."[5] Wealth disparities along race lines indicate poverty disproportionately weighs upon persons of color as indicated also by homeownership (where "an owned home is the most important asset in the portfolio of most households"[6]) and personal assets.[7] Access to education intertwines with this racialized financial disparity[8] when the Chronicle of Higher Education can report that 28% of Whites in the U.S. (25 years or older) hold a degree from a 4-year college, while 17% of Black and 13% of Latinos do; this building on an 80% high school graduation rate for Whites, 62% for Blacks, 68% for Latinos and 51% for Native Americans. Health disparities as well illumine a disproportionate number of Black and Latino Americans uninsured; with health measures like diabetes and infant mortality favoring White Americans.[9] Incarceration rates for Black and Latino Americans further demonstrates that the weight of the world has been racialized.[10] On nearly every measure of our human landscape, the weight of our world falls disproportionately on men, women and children of color. To incorporate race more fully into the dialogue of religions, we must grapple with this landscape of racialized disparity. But we must also recognize the religious ideologies that created these disparities in the first place.

On each of these markers of human well-being, we can see a tragic history of political and legal decisions which prioritized the growth, transcendence and 'evolution' of White Christians over other racialized populations. We see over two hundred years of enslavement of Africans for the building of White colonies and White industry. Founding ideologies legitimating slavery were based on theologies of religious pluralism that were theologies of Christian supremacy and (often erroneously) identified African peoples as Muslim and justified enslavement on religious grounds.[11] White Christians continued to enslave African others on the assumptions that White Christianity was the highest form of religion, and that the more evolved race should have rights and religious responsibilities over the superstitious other. These deeply embedded Christian ideologies furthered White supremacy as the legalized enactment of social safety nets – like social security and the Federal Housing Administration – included racialized policies which kept benefits of home ownership and social security from African Americans in the 20th century.[12]

The dispossession of native American peoples was also grounded in a Christian theology of religious pluralism, this time impacting directly claims to the land. The 'doctrine of discovery' was legalized in an 1823 Supreme Court decision which traced ownership of land to the Pope's pronouncement that gave rights to Christians over 'pagans'.[13] In the desire for salvation of souls, White Christians erased native practices and native wisdoms, which was seen as a project of 'progress' and 'civilization' required for the evolution of the people who needed to move beyond their "pagan darkness." The assessment of indigenous peoples of North America as less-than-Christian not only expanded White land ownership (from colonial times through the early 20th century), but also helped to establish institutions of higher education for White Americans in the mid-19th century with the profits of sale from recently 'Indian' land.[14]

While we can see that the evolutionary story of progress has been built on the labor and exploitation of 'others', it is important to take seriously the history that Christians have not been mere re-actors to the processes by which some 'evolved' at the expense of others. Christians have actively enacted these barriers to our 'others" well-being on social and religious grounds. The ideologies which provided theoretical and theological legitimation for the many

discriminations that created disparities were rooted in evolutionary thinking where white European expressions of religion, culture and race were the pinnacle of progress, justifying the colonization and exploitation of those who were religiously, culturally and racially other.[15] Religious beliefs about the superiority of Christianity informed White Christian identities of self-protection and advancement at the expense of others. Haunted by this history, we must wonder how these ideologies continue even today, as legislation against migrant workers and undocumented immigrants are enacted, while employing their work-power to feed and serve our nation.[16]

White Christian theologians interested in interfaith work and interreligious dialogue must come to terms with the ways in which our heritage includes not only the assertion of theological supremacy, but the establishment of White supremacies – once forged as a theology and ideology now inherited as the landscape of disequilibrium where White bodies regularly inherit benefit where others are compromised by generational dispossession. It is within *this* landscape that the White American theologian must attend to the question of constructions of Christian identity.

Christian Identities: Tribalization or Cosmpolitanism in a Weighted World

If previous constructions of Christian identity informed racialized injustices, how might we reconceive Christian identity such that it authentically learns from and grows with those who are 'other': racially, culturally, religiously? Our current condition for considering this question is informed not only by past injustices but by the present realities of dynamic shifting and moving bodies. Situated as we are within global systems of information, economics, migration and travel we increasingly have the sense of the world as "a single place."[17] The same lines of communication, travel and economic joining have also made it possible for multi-religious 'others' to move through these systems, creating places where religious difference is found very close to home. Religion and race create multi-dimensional communities where the religious other may also be a racialized other.

How do we shape a religious identity in *this* landscape. My proposal is that we need to shape ourselves with cosmopolitan religious identities in an interconnected, multireligious world, for the possibility of our evolving together toward the future. Our first step is to move carefully through the logic of religious identity guided by the insight of Elizabeth Spelman who reminds us that, "Since people can be classified and catalogued in any number of ways, overlapping ways, how we catalog them, in particular how we sort out the overlapping distinctions, will depend on our purposes and our sense of what the similarities and difference among them are and how they should be weighed."[18]

Too often, in the landscape of religious identity we define ourselves by who we are not. In this logic of identity, boundaries are established and criteria identified to determine who's in and who's out of the collective. As one set of researchers described, "All religious groups need boundaries. Boundaries strengthen collective identity by showing clearly who are members and who are not, and maintenance of boundaries requires clear rules and markers." Taking Catholic identity as the center of their concern, this group of prominent researchers goes on to offer that American Catholicism has four main boundaries, arguing, "If any of them become blurry, Catholic identity over and against the outside-the-border region will become confused, and many young Catholics will begin to wonder if the boundary makes sense."[19] So, one approach to the pluralism which globalization has brought is to ensure the clear establishment of boundaries and criteria for particular religious identities.

While the clarity of this approach may be appealing – we know who we are by contrasting ourselves with who we are not – it runs some real risks. As Linell Elizabeth Cady writes, "Indeed a major response to the increased pluralism and globalization of life in the late twentieth century has been a reassertion of tightly bounded personal and communal identities, what some have called tribalization."[20] Seeking religious identity over-and-against our 'others' can manifest in a fortress mentality that experiences one's own faith and tradition as 'under siege'.[21] But it is precisely this siege mentality that might be contrasted with a cosmopolitan religious identity.

Sociologist and theorist of globalization Ulrich Beck looks at the globalized landscape and argues that we have a choice in how to orient ourselves toward difference. Sure, we can imagine ourselves under siege and construct a boundary around ourselves and our 'tribe', and this is largely what's been done in modernity. The construction of a tribal identity could lead to simple 'indifference' about our racial and religious others, but Beck sees tribalization as supported by an unspoken establishment of 'hierarchical difference' since we look out from our tribe and judge ourselves to be 'the best'. But, beyond indifference and hierarchical difference, we've certainly moved in late modernity toward tolerance and acceptance of other identities. Yet, Beck suggests that this can sometimes take the form of 'sameness universalism'. He writes, "Universalism obliges us to respect others as equals in principle, yet for that very reason it does not involve any requirement that would inspire curiosity or respect for what makes others different. On the contrary, the particularity of others is sacrificed to an assumed universal equality which denies it its own origins and interests."[22] He concludes: "The voice of others is granted a hearing only as the voice of sameness, as self-confirmation, self-reflection and monologue."[23] Sameness universalism rests on the assumption that we're all the same so we don't need to spend too much time on the differences within our identities.

By contrast, Beck offers a constructive proposal for a different sort of approach to difference, which he captures with the idea of 'cosmopolitanism'. He describes instead a stance in which persons simultaneously view themselves as part of a narrow, localized collective which might be bound by some elements of sameness, and as part of a wider, global world interconnected with those who are different. In his words, a cosmopolitan outlook is one "in which people view themselves simultaneously as part of a threatened world and as part of their local situations and histories."[24] Cosmopolitan vision does not see oneself cut off from those who are different in an enclave of distinctiveness, but interwoven with the lives and futures of those whose culture, religion, and outlook are different. These differences are not the source of hierarchical assessment, or indifference, or painting as all the same, rather, the differences themselves enhance the encounter and provide resources for thinking together about our common future.

Cosmopolitan religious identity would require that we recognize those many ways that our religious identity has been constructed from out of conversation and engagement with diverse ideologies and different religious traditions. By Beck's description, it would also require that we see our past and our future wrapped up with the well-being of those who are not members of our community. With a cosmopolitan religious identity, one commits both to the distinctiveness of a particular community, and to the well-being of all, not by ignoring, erasing or judging their differences as 'less-than' our way of being, but by engaging in relationships across differences; relationships of mutual transformation of ourselves and our world.

In the United States and in many other parts of our world, globalization's transnational dynamic has brought religious difference close to home. The religious other is neighbor, colleague, and friend whom we meet in our complex identities and whose presence may

positively alter our theological reflection. It is time for our religious traditions to embrace a cosmopolitan vision in pursuit of dynamic religious identity for a globalized world. In the process, living, breathing, embodied interreligious encounters in their many and diverse forms may foster a theological shift in our appreciation of religious difference. As Kwame Anthony Appiah notes, social practices and ideologies change not so much from reasoned arguments across difference, but from getting to know *people* who hold different views.[25] Globalization's transnational dynamic and interreligious encounter provides a unique opportunity, then, for remaking religious identities as cosmopolitan responses to our interconnected world.

But, the encounter among religious others is simultaneously an encounter within the landscape of America's racial project, where White Christians have historically received benefits and privileges at the expense others. So the remaking of religious identities must be especially attuned to the continued disequilibrium that marks our world. In what ways do race and religious diversity intersect to exacerbate the weight of the world as it has been shifted from some and onto others? The 'point' of our interfaith work must rest in its theo-political dimension; in the ways that theology impacts the material-social-political well-being of persons in the world. What we produce as theologians cannot be disentangled from the social and political worlds in which we live: Christian theologians are either culpable in the patterns of white supremacy or they are actively resistant in producing anti-racist theologies. To understand this claim, we might consider what Mark Lewis Taylor has termed the 'agonistic political' reality of our very being.[26] In Taylor's social site ontology, we as human beings are irreducibly enmeshed in relations and locations through which capital flows: capital that is both economic (providing material realities that sustain and enhance persons) and symbolic (with the power of 'recognition' that creates and affirms persons). Within the flow of this enmeshment, certain regimes are identifiable as guardians of symbolic capital making decisions about what it means to be human and who counts as worthy of recognition.[27] The religious sphere is among them. The theologian then, in a particular way informs the well-being of some and the death-dealing misrecognition of others through theologies that trade in symbolic capital.

In the context of white, Christian dominance in US society and politics, my call as a White Christian theologian is to learn about the material and social struggles of my neighbors and to mobilize my tradition's resources in a project that combats white supremacy and Christian hegemony. Politically, this work matters because people in this country are regularly denied their full humanity on both religious and racialized grounds. But Appiah's invitation to see our minds changed by encounter with persons and not simply ideas challenges further the interfaith work in a weighted world, where systems of disequilibrium maintain privileged spaces to which our 'others' have little or no access. In crafting together an interfaith world and the richness of cosmopolitan identities attuned to the racialized dimensions of our weighted world, the Christian theologian and our colleagues across faith traditions are called into new spaces to do our work, not merely in the cool calm of our libraries and our dialogue halls, but in the heated struggles in our streets and in our world.

The work to be done here is manifold. On the theoretical level, students of interfaith might pursue questions of religious belief and religious identity that take into account the great range of internal diversity within religious traditions emergent from intersectionality. If gender and race matter, what other dimensions of our subject positions inform religious belief and religious identity? How might sexual orientation or economic status inform the particular identities of our dialogue partners? When interfaith studies foreground internal religious diversity, in addition to diversity among faith traditions, we can begin to ask the political questions of whose voices and insights matter. We can interrogate the mobilization of religious identities when they come at the expense of some among our human family.

On a theological level, theologians of all faiths might ask in what ways their work trades in symbolic capital that shifts the weight of the world. If all persons struggle for recognition in a world characterized by the 'agonistic political', how does our work as theologians confer recognition on human beings who struggle for material well-being and for recognition in our weighted world? From another direction, White Christian theologians producing theologies of religious pluralism might learn from the past to see the material outcomes of our theological production especially on non-White bodies.

On a practical and political level, perhaps all of us intent on interfaith work might see the necessity of raising the practical-justice questions in the midst of a landscape that continues to privilege White Christian identities. How might we commit ourselves to interfaith work in the public sphere whereby the well-being of our neighbors of *all* faiths is the center of our concern?

Attention to intersectionality -- to gender, race and more -- invites interfaith studies to a place of critical engagement within a landscape of White Christian supremacy. That is, for many involved in interreligious dialogue the 'point' of interfaith work is in its theo-political dimension; in the ways that theology and the material-social-political spheres intersect. In the context of white, Christian dominance in US society and politics, my call as a White Christian theologian is to learn about the material and social struggles of my neighbors and to mobilize my tradition's resources in a project that combats white supremacy and Christian hegemony. The many projects of interfaith studies might help us stand together as we stand on the side of the marginalized.

---

[1] I am grateful to Joachim Viens and the entire community of the Theologian in Residence program in Ft. Collins, Colorado for the invitation to present my work in the 2013-2014 series. This article is based on my presentation of March 31, 2014. Work with this theological community has impacted the evolution of my thinking.

[2] Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (Continuum, 2005) and *Motherhood as Metaphor: Engendering Interreligious Dialogue* (Fordham University Press, 2013).

[3] See: "Thinking Differently about Difference: Muslima Theology and REligious Pluralism" by Jerusha Tanner Lamptey http://irdialogue.org/journal/thinking-differently-about-difference-muslima-theology-and-religious-pluralism-by-jerusha-tanner-lamptey/
"Toward a Gender-Aware Approach to Abrahamic Dialogue," by Virginia A. Spatz http://irdialogue.org/journal/toward-a-gender-aware-approach-to-abrahamic-dialogue-by-virginia-a-spatz/
"Gender, Energy Healing, and the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints," by Sophia Lyn Nathenson http://irdialogue.org/journal/gender-energy-healing-and-the-church-of-jesus-christ-latter-day-saints-by-sophia-lyn-nathenson/

[4] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 244.

[5] Paul Taylor, et. al, "Twenty-to-One: Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics" Pew Research Center (www.pewsocialtrends.org). Accessed March 1, 2013. In 2009, the median net worth of households aligned significantly with race differences with White households at $113,149, Asian households $78,066, Hispanic households $6,325 and Black households $5,677.

[6] Paul Taylor, 15. Homeownership: 74% of Whites; 46% of Blacks; 47% of Hispanics

[7] Paul Taylor, 23: "A sizeable minority of U.S. households own no assets other than a motor vehicle. In 2009, that was true for 24% of black and Hispanic households, 8% of Asian households and 6% of white households."
[8] Anthony Carneval and Jeff Strohl, "Separate and Unequal" (cew.georgetown.edu/separateandunequal) Accessed December 19, 2013.
[9] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports the following diabetes rates: 6.2% Whites; 10.8% Blacks; 10.6% Latino; 9.0% Native American. The Center for Disease Control reports the infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births: 6/1,000 Whites; 12/1,000 Blacks, 6/1,000 Latino, 8/1000 Native American. (cdc.gov) These figures will hopefully be improved with the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.
[10] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, revised edition (New York: The New Press, 2012). Alexander charts the way that racialized application of drug laws in the United States have led to the policing of non-White communities and the incarceration of non-White persons radically different from the policing and incarceration of White communities and persons. Centering in on drug laws that have disproportionately jailed Black and Latino men, Alexander writes, "the war on drugs could have been waged primarily in overwhelmingly white suburbs or on college campuses." (page 124). But it was not.
[11] Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 21.
[12] Jennifer Light, "Nationality and Neighborhood Risk at the Origins of FHA Underwriting" *Journal of Urban History* 16 June 2010 http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/06/14/0096144210365677.
[13] Stephen Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Discovery* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2008).
[14] The legal enactments of the Indian Relocation Act in 1830 and the creation of the Reservation System in 1851 critical historical moments in the lives of native peoples of the First Nations. In 1854, the Federal Government abolished the northern half of Indian Territory and established the Kansas and Nebraska Territories, which were immediately opened up to white settlement. Many of the tribes occupying the land ended up on vastly reduced reservations. Shortly thereafter, the Morrill Land Grant 1862 uses sale of land to give funds to states for establishing Land-Grant Universities for the building up of (white) citizens. See Gary Sandefur, "American Indian Reservations: The First Underclass Area?" http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc121f.pdf. (University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work and Sociology, in the Institute for Research on Poverty). Accessed July 2, 2014.
[15] Kwok Pui Lan and Jeorg Rieger, *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[16] See "Harvest of Empire: The Untold Story of Latinos in America" documentary by journalist Juan Gonzalez.
[17] This is Robertson's term also. See his "Church-State Relations and the World System," in *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions,* ed. Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1987) 39-52.
[18] Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1988), 173.
[19] William D'Antonio, James Davidson, Dean Hoge, and Katherine Meyer. *American Catholics: Gender, Generation and Commitment* (Altamira Press, 2001), 31.

[20] Linell Elizabeth Cady, "Identity, Feminist Theory and Theology," in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition and Norms*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 17-32 at 26.
[21] See, for example, Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "Feeling Under Seige, Catholic Leadership Shifts Right" *National Catholic Reporter*, July 4, 2012. http://www.npr.org/2012/07/04/156190948/feeling-under-siege-catholic-leadership-shifts-right
[22] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cabridge, UK: Polity, 2006), 49. Beck is not talking about religion but about other forms of difference encountered under the conditions of globalization. His assessment applies well to Christian responses to religious difference.
[23] Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 51.
[24] Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*.
[25] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006), 77.
[26] Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Fortress Press, 2011).
[27] Taylor identifies the family, the education system, religious systems, and the state as guardians of symbolic capital. See Taylor, 94-97.

Prof. Hill Fletcher joined the Fordham faculty in 2001 and teaches at the intersection of Systematic Theology and issues of diversity (religious diversity, Christian cultural diversity, race and gender). She also serves as the Faculty Director of the Service-Learning Program for undergraduates of Fordham College Rose Hill and Lincoln Center. Prof. Hill Fletcher is also co-chair of the Roman Catholic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion, and liaison with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition.

When Victim Meets Perpetrator: The Question of Atonement and Forgiveness: Buddhist and Christian Reflections [1]

By Ruben L. F. Habito

In a highly gripping and thought-provoking work titled *The Sunflower,* Simon Wiesenthal, well-known for his pursuit and identification of Nazi war criminals leading to their prosecution after the Second World War, relates a first-person story as a prisoner in a concentration camp who encounters a young German soldier in the throes of death.[2] In those last crucial moments of his life, the soldier seeks him out, a Jew, to ask for his forgiveness for the atrocities committed against the Jewish people by the Nazi regime, of which the soldier himself was a willing participant. Wiesenthal invites his readers to put ourselves in his place, as the Jew whom the Nazi soldier approaches to ask for forgiveness, and throws this question straight at us. "What would *you* do?"

The latter section of the book includes the transcripts of a symposium, with theologians, philosophers, religious leaders, journalists, and others offering their own responses to Wiesenthal's question. A second edition of the book, published some twenty years after the first American edition (1976), adds thirty-two responses from other prominent individuals who are sent the manuscript to read and asked to respond to the same question. To forgive, or not to forgive: that is the question. Simon Wiesenthal's own response, as he describes in his narrative, was one of numbed silence. He relates how this response tugged at his conscience, drawing him to seek out and visit the mother of the deceased German soldier after the war and continuing on in a process of self-reflection many years thereafter.

Each of the essays in *The Sunflower* offers an earnest and well-considered response that issues forth from the respondent's fundamental stance about life. As is evident, by no means do these responses settle the issue once and for all, one way or the other, so we can move on to the next question, as it were. We are cautioned by many of them to be fully cognizant of the complexity of the matter at hand, thus making us less prone to making simplistic statements of outright forgiveness or of plain refusal to do so.

Included among these is a short piece by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. His message is, "Forgive, but do not forget." In reading his statement initially, I must confess a doubt that arose. Is he not falling into a simplistic mindset here? In his advice to forgive, he seemed to be brushing aside the enormity of the calamity that befell the Jewish people, and by extension, all those who have been subjected to acts of genocide and senseless violence throughout human history, calling for restitution as a cry to the heavens. Indeed, most of the other respondents, whose statements are recorded in the book, emphasize that cheap "forgiveness" cannot and will not do justice to the enormity and complexity of all that is involved, in our individual lives, in our collective lives, in our history, in our incipient future.

For a victim of betrayal, of molestation or rape, of grand theft, or of physical or some other form of unimaginable violence to one's person or to one's loved ones that can make anyone shudder, "forgiveness" is the last thought to come to mind. One may need time, perhaps a whole lifetime, to come to terms with what one may have suffered through. It may take a long, arduous therapeutic process seeking healing, getting one's life back on track, if at all.

We can never and must never forget. Indeed, as long as we are the human beings conditioned as we are in our finitude and embedded in our karmic history and in our current

dysfunctional global state of affairs, we cannot afford to forget the sufferings, especially of those who died and those who continue to live under the threat of death through violence by our fellow humans beings, lest we keep repeating the same mistakes. And yet we do forget, and we do repeat those mistakes, over and over and over. Our contemporary global scene attests to this forgetfulness.

Turning back to the Dalai Lama, with his advice to "forgive, but do not forget," he recalls a Tibetan monk who was imprisoned for eighteen years by Chinese authorities who came to see him after he was released. Asked what he felt was the biggest threat or danger he felt while in prison, the monk's response (to the surprise of the Dalai Lama himself) was that his greatest fear was "losing his compassion for the Chinese."

The monk's response comes from a state of mind that far exceeds ordinary human expectations of anyone put in the situation of intense pain and suffering through long years of imprisonment and deprivation. In ways different from the monk's case, the Dalai Lama himself has been the subject of ongoing persecution and harassment by the Chinese authorities since his exile from Tibet in 1959, but he has always maintained a stance of loving-kindness and compassion for his persecutors. For this he has often been criticized, including by those within in his own Tibetan community, and by many others who support the cause for Tibetan independence, for "going too easy" on the Chinese.

Against the impending and very real threat Tibetans perceive of having their entire culture, their centuries of tradition, their very people, wiped out from this earth by the bulldozing effects of Chinese aggressive policies vis-à-vis Tibet, many of the Dalai Lama's followers have lost their patience with him and his path of non-violent resistance and are considering other ways to counter the aggressor's threat. Chinese authorities consider the Dalai Lama *persona non grata* and continue to exert pressure on other governments and public entities to have him barred from official functions in or visits to their countries and locations. And yet the Dalai Lama continues to turn the other cheek. This stance is, in the eyes of many, simply beyond human comprehension.

Perhaps it is precisely because he refuses to take up arms (or to encourage others to do so) against his and his people's oppressors that these oppressors find him all the more dangerous a threat, a subversive element of a powerful moral force challenging their official stance, their acts, and their policies. The Dalai Lama exposes Chinese practices and attitudes towards his people to the scrutiny of the entire world. Armed rebellion is countered and quashed by corresponding military force, and there is no doubt the Chinese can and will do that in such a case. A non-violent form of resistance like the Dalai Lama's and his followers' continues to cry out loud and clear throughout the world, for all people of good will to hear, thereby challenging and calling those people to take a stand.

In our times, the transformative power of such forms of resistance is attested to by figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and so many others who have not found their names in the headlines. They remain a truly efficacious source of vision and inspiration that can motivate us to dedicate ourselves for the long haul to the tedious and burdensome yet exhilarating work of liberation from oppression of all sorts. The oppressive elements can be found in the externally observable and analyzable human-made structures that comprise the political, social, economic, ecological, and other dimensions of life as a global society. These oppressive elements can also be found in the internal forum, in our individual and collective psyche, in our received cultural attitudes and ways of seeing, even, or perhaps especially in our religiously motivated habits of mind and of behavior. Wherever these

oppressive elements may be located, rather than just passively putting up with them, taking an active stance of resisting them becomes a transformative power, a subversive force that can undermine and hopefully ultimately overcome these prevailing oppressive structures in our public and private lives.

"Forgive, but do not forget," the Dalai Lama advises us. If this suggestion were to be uttered by anyone else, giving Holocaust survivors "advice" on what to do with the horrendous crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies and supporters against the entire Jewish people and against humanity, it would be dismissed outright. But beholding the stature of the one who is uttering this, and what he and his people have been through and are still struggling with, and how it is costing him and his people, one is more readily disposed to lend an ear.

This is nothing at all like cheap grace, a platitude that is easily mouthed by anyone from the sidelines who would prefer to avoid the oppressively immobilizing matter at hand and come out smelling like a rose in the midst of a garbage pile. This is a state of mind reached, if at all, only with years and years of unflagging practice, of going deep into one's own being, clearing through the debris that one's individual psyche and self-centered egoistic identity, and finding an opening that leads out to a vast expanse, an infinite horizon of unconditional love.

Forgive, but never forget. Neither can this utterance be taken as a state of mind that makes light or sets aside the demands of justice, for restitution, even for a condemnation of the heinous acts and murderous structures embodied in the likes of the Nazi regime, apartheid, the various forms of genocide throughout history, and so on, that poisoned the minds and hearts of so many "decent" people who otherwise would be characterized as persons of "good will." This may not ignore or set aside the enormous task facing us as a global community in working toward a different kind of world for all of us and of our children. What do we do in such a world where the scandalously rich get even richer, while the vast sectors of the middle class and the multitudes of the poor, who now live on survival mode, are deprived of even the basics of a decent human life and are progressively losing the little that they still have? What do we do when those who actively promote the arms race and fan the flames of war and conflict continue in their astute ways of exacerbating the sense of global insecurity, calling for "protective measures" that would call for more arms and assure their own profit? What do we do, as we witness with shock how our Earth is on the verge of ecological destruction in a seemingly irreversible process that relegates thousands of living species to extinction on an annual basis, and with the more and more palpably observable effects of global climate change threatening the stability and sustainability of our societies throughout the world? We cannot afford to forget, as long as the work of rectifying injustice, the arduous work of striving toward the transformation of minds and hearts as well as of our political, social, economic, and other human-made structures keeps confronting us right in our face. This truly seems to be an impossible task given our human propensities, and so forgiveness does not seem to be the order of the day.

I once had an opportunity to be in the same company with a well-known Palestinian leader, a respected intellectual and advocate of his people's cause, at a symposium on "Love and Forgiveness." Asked how he viewed this theme from the experience of his own people, his response was, "Love is there, but forgiveness? We're working on it." Those are the words of one who continues to be in the middle of the conflict, in the never-ending struggle for justice and equality and for a state of affairs we can only strive for.

A conscientious reader, or any human being who seeks to live authentically and justly for that matter, cannot just set Wiesenthal's question aside and say, "I wasn't there, this has nothing

to do with me." Can anyone of us say, "the Shoah ("Holocaust") has nothing to do with me, so I do not have to face that question Wiesenthal poses"? Or for that matter, can we say this as we put before us what we now know of Mao's Red Purge, Stalin's Gulag, Pol Pot's Killing Fields, Bosnia, Rwanda, and so many other incidents of mass atrocities and murder of innocent people, just to mention those perpetrated over the last century? A series of events that looms large in my own mind at this point is the torture, rape, murder, dismemberment of hundreds of women between the ages of ten and thirty in Juarez, Mexico in the recent years. Can we say this of so many any other events in our human history involving violence by humans against other humans for political, economic, ethnic, religious, personal, or a combination of so many other reasons, on a large or small scale, that has occurred and continues to occur on this Earth of ours, that "I was not there, this has nothing to do with me"?

Consider the state of our contemporary global society, and we find violence staring us in the face. Right at this moment, in different parts of the world, countless numbers of our fellow human beings continue to live under the threat of armed violence, whether from state-organized or other forms of open or clandestine warfare, to gun related violence arising from hatred or conflict between human beings or groupings. Millions of our fellow human beings in different parts of the world are uprooted from their homes for fear of their lives due to political, ethnic, economic, as well as other causes and live as refugees in search of a stable place to rebuild their lives. What's more, an estimated twenty thousand children under the age of five die daily of causes related to hunger and malnutrition.

More and more human beings are adversely affected by the ecological destruction being perpetrated upon the Earth, our shared habitat, by our unsustainable lifestyles in our industrialized society. This is not to mention the devastation wrought upon thousands of living species relegated to extinction annually. Throughout all this, collectively we continue to ravage the Earth's resources, rampantly digging up minerals fossil fuels, approaching a point of foreseeable depletion of these natural resources. At the same time, we dump our toxic wastes on the land, air, and sea, to a degree that has begun to have noticeable effects on the Earth's overall balance of life and on global climatic conditions. In short, we find ourselves in an overall state of dysfunction and dis-ease, a global *dukkha* that affects all of us inhabiting this Earth.[3] Given all these interconnected facets of violence in our deeply wounded global community, we find it harder and harder to deny that we are heading toward a disastrous scenario for our collective future.

Here it may be helpful to distinguish three levels of violence that prevail in our global community, as physical violence, structural violence, and ecological violence. One way or the other, we may be able to identify as victims affected by this violence on its many levels. At the same time, as we closely examine ourselves in our concrete socio-economic, political, cultural, ecological, and other contexts, we may also be able to recognize and acknowledge our roles as perpetrators of this violence to varying degrees of involvement and responsibility.

The cartoon character Pogo famously said, "We have met the Enemy, and he is us."[4] Similarly, surveying the state of our global community and examining our role in all of this, the victim meets the perpetrator, and comes to realize, "I am that."

Vietnamese Buddhist monk, spiritual teacher, and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh wrote a well-cited poem that opens our eyes to a different horizon than the kind we are accustomed to as we live our busy self-centered lives.

"Call Me By My True Names" contains the following passages:

... I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river,
and I am the bird which, when spring comes, arrives in time to eat the mayfly.
I am the frog swimming happily in the clear pond, and
I am also the grass-snake who, approaching in silence, feeds itself on the frog.
I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks,
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.
I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.
I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to my people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.[5]

The poem points directly to the depths within the very hearts of each one of us, as we are able to pay attention in silence to this intimate place within us, that place were the walls of separation between "myself" and "my enemy" has been overcome and has given way, not to some euphoric and imagined state of "oneness," but rather to the deeply seated and soul-searing pain in both victim and perpetrator. This shared pain is called "com-passion," literally, "suffering-with." This is not some fuzzy feeling of commiseration for another's suffering from a detached, lofty standpoint, but rather a state of being wracked in intense pain crying out to the heavens, and yet a state of being paradoxically also marked by indescribable and inscrutable equanimity coming with an acceptance of the fact that *I am that, in the midst of it all*, that I bear responsibility for it all. This is a peace within oneself that does not mean the lack of turmoil and struggle in life. Nor is it a peace based on any resolution of the painful or impossible situation. One might almost say, this is a non-human kind of inner peace, peace truly beyond understanding, peace that the world cannot give. Indeed, this is beyond human comprehension, unrealistic, perhaps beyond what is conceivably possible.

There is a spiritual exercise in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, described in 8th century monk Shantideva's work titled, *Guide to the Way of the Bodhisattva*, called "Exchange of Self and Other," found in the eighth chapter of this work. We cannot go into detail on the intricacies of this exercise, which comes as a culminating point of a series of practices that guide those in the path to awakening and the cultivation of wisdom and compassion. In rough summary, it involves placing oneself in the shoes of an Other and learning to see everything from this standpoint. This spiritual practice of "Exchange of Self and Other" can be engaged in only as one has matured in meditative and contemplative practice after a considerable period of time. In daring to take this practice on, though, it may bring one to a totally new level of awareness, perhaps even a different level of being. This is the kind of exercise that we can imagine must have propelled and empowered the Tibetan monk in the Dalai Lama's account and, most likely, the Dalai Lama himself. Needless to say, such an exercise is not offered to anyone indiscriminately, not for beginners, not for those of us still struggling with the hurts and pains of having been a victim of violence and festering with thoughts of revenge on the Perpetrator.

Notwithstanding, the practice of "Exchange of Self and Other" invites one who feels ready to put oneself in the place of the perpetrators who have committed unspeakable crimes. In doing so, we are not thereby seeking to find an "excuse" for their behavior, nor to wallow in sentimental fantasy of their own tortuous and complicated lives that put them in the role they found themselves as perpetrators. It is neither to exonerate them nor to dole out cheap grace for them, conjuring a quasi-sympathetic sentiment of "understanding their situation that led them to do those deeds." It is instead to look squarely at reality from the very standpoint, earnestly,

from the heart of these individuals and of all the individuals in history who have committed acts harmful to others as well as themselves. It is to assume culpability for all those acts and to sit in silence, in horror perhaps, to gaze intently at all this, and to embrace it in our hearts and our entire being. And perhaps, as we do sit there and take all this and hold it in our hearts, weighed down by the enormity of it all, we may simply be led to admit our powerlessness, acknowledging our complicity, and weep bitterly, as Peter wept after he realized he had betrayed Jesus three times. (Luke 22:62)

The spiritual exercise noted above invites us to truly see what this is saying to us, as we recall instances of pain and suffering brought about by human conflicts, and also as we behold the enormously complex and tremendously heavy tasks we face as a global family, asking ourselves, "What have I done that caused all this" and then, "what can I do in the face of this?" In asking this in earnest, I may be moved to chant the verse that Buddhist practitioners recite together in the ritual concluding their meditative silence: *"All harmful karma ever committed by me since of old, on account of my beginningless greed, anger and ignorance, borne of my body mouth and consciousness, now I atone it all."*

The thought comes: *Atone*? *I,* atone? I, atone *it all?* How can I be as preposterous as to utter this? I once attended a meditation session and listened to a talk by a Zen Master in upstate New York, who addressed this question. He clarified that in this chant, "atone" is used in a way different from the way many Christians use the term in their own religious tradition. It does not at all mean "getting off the hook" because somebody else, someone who happens to be the Son of God, has taken the rap on my behalf, by taking upon himself the punishment deserved by dying on the cross for the sins of humanity. This in rough outline seems to be what many Christians understand by "atonement" in Christian tradition. To use this "doctrine of atonement" to get a free ride to heaven seems to be nothing more than cheap grace facilely doled out to those seeking a way out of the enormous weight of our human condition.

In his talk, the Zen Master pointed out that the word as used by Buddhists in this ritual chant needs to be taken with a hyphen in the middle: "at-one." In short, to "atone it all" is to realize that I am AT-ONE with all the harmful karma ever committed, not just by myself as an individual, but by all sentient beings since the beginning of life in the universe up to this point in time. In realizing that I am at-one with all this, in realizing *I am that*, I dare to proclaim that I am ready to open myself to take responsibility for all that and open myself to bear the consequences of it all in my own being.

The only way to be at-one, to "atone," may be to accept my guilt, as the perpetrator, bear the consequences, and be ready to burn in hell forever. And accepting my responsibility for all this is simply to accept the karmic burden of my acts upon myself. Ironically enough, doing so may be the only way I can find peace within myself, accepting my fate to burn in hell for all the harmful karma I have imposed on our fellow human beings and on myself. There are stories of once hardened criminals who, having realized the immensity of the crimes they have committed, seek to find peace by taking upon themselves the full punishment they feel they deserve.[6] They would rather jump into hell, suffer as much as their bodies and minds and entire being will allow, and thereby find peace within themselves by doing so, than seek refuge for themselves in an undeserved heaven. Here the Christian doctrine of Christ's descent into hell comes to mind, a hardly noticed or sometimes omitted item in the Apostle's creed. Its point seems to be that there is Good News of salvation, even to those in the midst of hell!

There are indeed some deeds so horrendous that we humans can demand nothing less than that the perpetrators burn in hell forever. This very thought is perhaps too easily used as a

supporting argument for the Christian doctrine of Hell. Even with God's boundless love for all us, having been created in God's own image, which gives each of us our infinite worth, we have a choice. If we choose to reject that love and choose to go against it, doing harm to ourselves and to whoever is in our way, our freedom to do so is respected, and we bear the consequences of our choice. And yet, "the forgiveness of sins" is also a longstanding Christian doctrine, recited in the Apostle's Creed. This means that no matter how unimaginably horrible a willfully committed act or series of acts may be, the forgiveness that not any human, but that only the unfathomable mystery of God's bounty and grace can provide, is there, even for the most hardened of us, to seek refuge, when so moved from the heart. This is an affirmation in faith; somehow that wide, open, and infinite horizon of unconditional love is there, even for those individuals whom we cannot imagine as deserving of it, including ourselves.

"Now I atone it all." An audacious utterance indeed, no less audacious than the utterance of Zen Buddhist practitioners of meditation when they together recite the four vows of the Bodhisattva (Being-toward-Enlightenment) in the closing chant ritual:

Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.
The Dharma Gates are boundless, I vow to master them.
The Enlightened Way is unsurpassable, I vow to embody it.

The impossible situation of our global *dukkha* draws forth an impossible vow, an impossible dream. How can I, this puny, limited, self-centered being that I am, dare make such vows and mean it? And this is precisely where the sacramental power that this ritual utterance harbors within itself, given the earnest intent of the one proclaiming it, is activated and made manifest: in so daring to proclaim the above as my intention, as my vow, as my (impossible) dream if you will, I am taking myself beyond this puny, limited, self-absorbed being I tend to be and putting on the mind and heart of all the Awakened and Compassionate Ones and all Bodhisattvas, past, present, and future. It is this mind and heart of the Awakened, and not the ordinary mind of my puny little insecure self, that proclaims this *in me and through me*. I thereby open myself to being at-one with that infinite horizon of boundless compassion that bears the burden of the world's harmful karma.

As I take on upon myself this monumental weight of humanity's harmful karma, I am bound to be crushed by this unbearable burden and can only open my arms in total surrender. The only word that bursts out is a cry of total abandonment from the depths of my being, not unlike what a Man on the Cross is said to have uttered in those agonizing moments: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46) This is a cry from the depths, a cry from Hell itself no less.

The figure of this Jewish man, an itinerant preacher who some two thousand years ago walked the villages of Galilee and gained a small following of men and women through the power of his words and the magnetic impact of his life, comes to the fore. Branded as a subversive element by the Jewish religious leaders of his time, he was brought to judgment before the Roman authorities and condemned to death. On the verge of a cruel and ignominious death as he hung upon a wooden cross, the form of capital punishment used in those times, arms outstretched, he is also said to have uttered in a loud voice, with his face upwards to heaven, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) While one of the thieves nailed on the cross by his side reviled him, the other one could not even look him in the face, knowing his own guilt. To this man, his message was clear. "Today you are with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

What is the point here? Many followers of this man, Jesus, called the Christ, who now all together make up the biggest religious community in the world and comprise around one-fifth of the world's total population, may readily repeat his words and in facile and even irresponsible ways use them in their own favor to avoid confronting the matter at hand and getting off with self-absolutions. It is easy to take the doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins as a means of escaping the responsibilities of genuine atonement that can enable the healing of the deep, unimaginable wounds of our innumerable sisters and brothers, and of our entire Earth, and getting an easy ride to an afterlife in Heaven.

For those of us tempted to find an easy way out by mouthing a platitude, by citing Scriptural texts or the sublime words of others, we are first invited to gaze again at that Figure on the Cross and listen in our hearts. We may come to understand then that He is there not as a scapegoat, not as the whipping boy that God used to give us all a free ride, but as an invitation for all of us, whether Christian or not, to take on the wounds of our humanity together, seeking true at-one-ment.

As we continue contemplating this Figure on the Cross, a new horizon may open up that may bridge the chasm separating the victim from the perpetrator, the humanly unbridgeable gap between my "self" and my "neighbor" upon which our social, political, economic, and other dimensions of life are built. In embracing the world's suffering with open arms on the Cross, embracing victim as well as perpetrator, the man from Galilee opened up this horizon for all of us, a horizon of grace, a horizon of hope.

At an interfaith gathering held in Munich, Germany that I was privileged to attend, part of the program involved a visit to the nearby site of the former Dachau concentration camp, now open to visitors as a memorial and a museum. After walking through the various areas of the Dachau site, with the help of a guide who described to us the various facets of the suffering and agony of the more than two hundred thousand prisoners of the camp during the Nazi era, we were hosted for tea by the Catholic nuns of the Carmelite Order who had established a convent adjacent to the site. Participants of our interfaith gathering, which involved around thirty religious leaders and scholars of the three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), and what the organizers termed the Dharmic faiths (Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism), were able to sit in a big circle with some of the Carmelite nuns who hosted us and engage in a heart to heart conversation.

A participant from our interfaith group asked the question of the nuns, "So what is it you do here?" In response, the Prioress and several nuns shared from their hearts about their life of prayer and contemplation, in solidarity especially with the victims of Dachau and of all those who suffered and died in the Nazi concentration camps, and likewise of all the victims of human violence perpetrated by other humans throughout history. They pointed to Jesus on the Cross as their inspiration, as one who had taken upon himself the sufferings of all humanity throughout all time, in atonement for the sins of humankind. They also derived inspiration from one of the pillars of their Order, St. Teresa of Avila, who gives detailed descriptions of the life of contemplation in her written works, consumed by the love of God.[7]

In the course of the exchange with the nuns, one participant brought up the uncomfortable question of the controversy surrounding their sister convent in Auschwitz, criticized for insensitivity, in setting up Christian symbols right there adjacent to the site of the abject humiliation, intolerable suffering, and extermination of countless numbers of the Jewish populace perpetrated by (self-described Christian) Nazis. The nuns were aware of this issue and

took the question head on, noting also the fact that Joseph Mengele, noted for his inhuman experiments on the inmates of concentration camp in the name of "scientific knowledge," was a devout Catholic who went to Mass regularly, among others. It was conveyed that the nuns included the Perpetrators in their prayers of atonement and reconciliation, in solidarity with all who were victimized by those perpetrators in their untold suffering. The Figure on the Cross kept looming on the horizon, with his prayer uttered before he breathed his last, "Father, Forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Several of the respondents in *The Sunflower* emphatically noted that, in the face of immense violence suffered by our fellow human beings, we humans have neither the power nor the right to forgive. As my Palestinian activist friend noted of himself and of his people, we need to keep working on this throughout our lives. In the end, forgiveness may be something beyond us, and we can only entrust it to a horizon surrounded in an unfathomable mystery of unconditional Love that embraces us all. In his last cry before he dies, asking for forgiveness for his perpetrators, the Man on the Cross opens to us a glimpse of a horizon that is totally beyond our human comprehension. This is the horizon that Christians point to as they recite in the Apostle's Creed, "I believe…in the forgiveness of sins." The unsaid part of this is, "even those sins we humans deem to be unforgivable." The Roman centurion, beholding the Man on the Cross, must have had a glimpse of this horizon, as he exclaimed, "Surely, this is the Son of God." (Mark 15:39)

I am the Nazi soldier… I am the prisoner of the concentration camp… I am the corporate executive spearheading my company's ventures for profit above all… I am the mother with nothing to feed my children, because we lost our land to the banana corporation… I am the advertising agent trying to sell my company's products with enticing slogans, astutely using half-truths and misleading imagery… I am the customer enticed to want this product… I am the employee of the arms factory needing this job to support my family… I am the three year old girl killed accidentally in gunfire in a gang-infested neighborhood… I am the gang member finding a sense of belonging in hanging out with these tough guys… I am the storeowner who needs to pay "protection" money to the gangs, and who needs to jack up the prices to make up for it… I am victim… I am the perpetrator… I am the victim… I am the perpetrator…

This is the same horizon that the Tibetan monk imprisoned by the Chinese is pointing out to us, which bleeds out of his life of earnest, assiduous lifelong spiritual practice. It is the horizon that sustains the Dalai Lama as he continues to inspire his people to bear the unbearable, while providing a vision to a way of peace that embraces the oppressor and forging the path to a shared future. It is the horizon that we are all invited to open ourselves to and see how it may transform our own lives and give us a ray of hope against hope, in living the Now toward an alternative future together.

Christians who look to the Man on the Cross as a ticket to cheap grace and "getting off the hook" in a "salvation in the next life" may have some important things to learn from Buddhists. The message and invitation of salvation, of healing, of wholeness, is right here being presented before us, as we learn to appreciate and embody in our own lives the arduous yet liberating path of "at-one-ment" for the wounds of our Earth community.

For all of us seeking a way out of this messy, wounded world with all of us entangled in a complicated and interconnected web as victims and perpetrators, this message of at-one-ment may provide a key. Whether Buddhist or Christian or Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Sikh, Baha'i, or agnostic or atheist or humanist, whatever belief system we may hold to sustain our fragile lives

or whatever label we may go by in marking our social identity, this message seems to be addressed to all of us. Allowing this horizon to open up and shed light on the way we see ourselves, as members of a global family whose destinies are inevitably and intimately tied up with one another's, we may be able to work together to forge a less violent, more equitable, ecologically sustainable future for ourselves and for our children and down the generations.

Pentecost, 2014
Maria Kannon Zen Center
Dallas, Texas

---

[1] This is a thoroughly revised and rewritten essay based on an earlier draft, entitled "Confronting Impossible and Violent Situations: Buddhist, and also Christian Musings on Love and Forgiveness," submitted for a volume with other papers from a symposium on the theme *Love and Forgiveness in the Humanities* held at the University of Notre Dame-Louaize in Beirut, Lebanon (edited by Edward Alam, publication forthcoming).
[2] Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. With a Symposium edited by Harry James Cargaas and Benny V. Fetterman. Revised and Expanded Edition. (New York: Schocken Books, 1998).
[3] *Dukkha*, the First Noble Truth of Buddhism, often translated as "suffering," describes our human condition of dissatisfactoriness and dysfunction, from the image of a wheel being badly aligned. Its opposite is *sukha*, a state of well-being and happiness, whereby the wheel is centered and functioning properly.
[4] By cartoonist Walt Kelly, 1913-1973. First used for a poster on Earth Day 1970, which appeared in a strip of Pogo soon afterwards, later used as a book title for a collection of Kelly's works published shortly before his death in 1973.
[5] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Call Me By My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh*. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1996).
[6] Albert Speer, one of the architects of the Nazi regime and Hitler's minister of armaments, accepted responsibility for actions of the Nazis and was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Invited to contribute to *The Sunflower*, he declares, "I can never forgive myself for recklessly and unscrupulously supporting a regime that carried out the systematic murder of Jews and other groups of people. My moral guilt is not subject to the statute of limitations, it cannot be erased in my lifetime." (p. 245).
[7] (Though this was not brought up in the conversation, St. Teresa is also noted for saying that, given the choice between an eternal life in a Heaven of bliss for herself and an eternal destiny of suffering in Hell out of the love of God, she would choose the latter.)

Professor Ruben L.F. Habito teaches at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. He also serves as Guiding Teacher of the Maria Kannon Zen Community in Dallas, Texas and is author of several books, including Zen and the Spiritual Exercises (Orbis, 2013) and Healing Breath: Zen for Christians and Buddhists in a Wounded World (Wisdom, 2006). He is married to Maria Reis Habito, and together they are blessed with two sons in their early twenties, Florian and Benjamin.

Between the Heart and the Spring: Nahman of Bratslav, Paul Tillich, and the Theology of Anxiety

By Benjamin Resnick

In a well-known passage from the *Tale of the Seven Beggars,* Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav describes the pain and paradox of spiritual striving:

> There is a mountain and on that mountain stands a rock and from that rock flows a spring. And all things have a heart. And likewise the universe as a whole has a heart. And this heart of the universe is a complete human form with a face and hands and feet, etc...The mountain of the rock and the spring stands on one edge of the universe and the heart of the heart universe stands on the other edge of the universe. And the heart stands opposite the spring, longing and yearning constantly to go over to the spring, and crying out with great desire to be united with the spring. And so too the spring desires the heart. But the heart has two weaknesses. The first is that the sun pursues him and burns him because of his longing and his desire to be close to the spring. And his second weakness stems from the pain of his longing and his desire.[1]

Nahman shared this parable with his followers near the end of his career, in the throes of a battle with tuberculosis that would ultimately take his life during the Sukkot festival of 1810. One can feel his urgency. The text very nearly overflows with unconsummated spiritual desire, a sense of unfinished, cosmic business. Some two hundred years later, it is still deeply evocative, a classic flight of Western spirituality.

But like Nahman himself, the parable of the heart and the spring remains a mysterious and complicated puzzle, at once a mystical reflection on the nature of religious struggle and also a existentialist fable about the theological reality of despair. And while both of these readings are, I would argue, genuinely native to Nahman's thought, it is to this second conception of the rebbe that I will devote the lion's share of what follows. The reason for this emphasis is two-fold. First, it is the experience of religious despair that provides the underlying animus for so much of Nahman's work. Second--and perhaps more importantly--it is Nahman the existentialist who, I want to contend, has the most to offer postmodern theology.

Still, before proceeding, it will be useful, at least from a heuristic standpoint, to situate ourselves in the context of what we might consider a "traditional" approach to the text. Like most all of Nahman's tales, the parable of the heart and the spring demands to be read, at first blush, in light of the dense, mythical symbology of the kabbalistic tradition to which Nahman was deeply indebted. Following in the footsteps of earlier Jewish mystics, Nahman makes extensive use of a variety of gnomic tropes that symbolize different aspects of the divine anthropos. Thus, the anatomical description of the world reflects the underlying structure of reality, which, in Nahman's kabbalistic imagination, also mirrors the human form. According to this schema, the heart and the spring--tropes that Nahman elsewhere associates with the divine attributes of *binah* (understanding) and *hochmah* (wisdom) respectively--represent distinct aspects of the Godhead, whose internal movements and erotic longings for one another comprise the underlying structure of all that is.

This reading, which was offered by the 20th century Bratslav scholar Aryeh Kaplan in the annotation to his well-known English translation of the *Seven Beggars*[2], is no doubt a sensible way of approaching the text. Nahman, like all of the classical hasidic rebbes, was steeped in the

Jewish mystical/theosophical tradition - a tradition that grew from the fertile soil of medieval Neoplatonism and then, under the agency of creative religious fantasists like Moses De Leon, Isaac Luria, and a great many others, took on a life of its own. According to this strain of Jewish thought, the universe is itself the product of a series of increasingly complex divine emanations, which, like the spring, flow into creation from a sacred point of origin. Eventually, either because of a cosmic accident or because of the very nature of creation itself, the Source becomes distant from its own emanations, thus inaugurating a lengthy process of cosmic repair. For the Jewish mystic, as for the neo-platonist, the whole drama of the spiritual/intellectual life is played out against the backdrop of a baroque, yet broken, cosmic architecture, the reparation of which, through the soul's ultimate reunification with its supernal source, becomes the highest purpose of religious activity. In Nahman's language, the heart's final return to the spring represents the very *telos* of spiritual history, the supernal endgame of being itself.

But to read Nahman's work solely as a poetic recapitulation of earlier mystical ideas is to dramatically shortchange the text in front of us. Nahman was more ambitious, his mind more restless. And the literature he left behind is much more than simply a kabbalistic paint-by-numbers.

Nahman, after all, understood himself, as did many other kabbalists throughout history, as a mythical figure. Very much like his Christian contemporary William Blake, Nahman created an elaborate mythological universe in which he himself was a seminal figure. For Nahman (and so too for his followers), his life and work represented a spiritual endeavor of the very highest order, a religious project, which sought to effect nothing less than a mythological re-ordering of reality. Though Nahman was plagued, throughout his short life, by searing moments of doubt and self-loathing, he saw himself, quite self-consciously at times, as a transformational figure in the whole history of the universe, the last reincarnation of a very great soul (that is, the soul of Moses) who had the potential to bring about the final reparation of the broken cosmos.[1] Thus, from the perspective of the Bratslav tradition, the inimitable life of the Rebbe, along with the literature that he left behind, are artifacts of singular significance, mystical ciphers against which the careful student might decode something of the very core of religious experience.

But what, precisely, is the spiritual vision that Nahman wants to communicate?

As in many of Nahman's tales, the mood here is one of intense personal and even existential anxiety. William Wordsworth once defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"[3] and, as a lens through which we might read Nahman's oeuvre, Wordsworth's axiom is at least as useful as earlier mystical typologies.

As one of the foremost progenitors of European romanticism, Wordsworth insisted that great art must be primarily rooted in the emotive and imaginative faculties of the individual. Reacting against the perceived coldness of Enlightenment rationalism, Romantic poets such as Wordsworth sought to restore a kind of emotional immediacy to the activity of poesis, through which the poet could literarily--or perhaps, for the more mystically inclined among them, even

---

[1] The parity between the *tzaddik hador*--i.e. the extraordinary spiritual leader of the generation--and the redemptive, messianic figure of Moses is a theme that appears throughout the literature of Bratslav Hasidism, very often as a veiled reference to Rebbe Nahman himself. See, for example: *Likutei MoHaRan* 64 and 118.

[2] In his essay "The Master of Prayer," David Roskies offers a somewhat similar reading of this parable, arguing that Nahman's artistic and spiritual innovation can be located in his conception of a "Paradoxical faith that calls out for God's distance rather than His presence." There, Roskies suggests that this unique conception of Jewish spirituality reflects the experience of prayer, in the context of which the one praying

literally--recreate the world, in all of its emotive splendor and intensity. Though the poet must modulate and refine his work through careful poetic craft, for Wordsworth and his literary comrades the poetic activity was at base an act of drawing out, in which the poet taps into the hidden wellsprings of human emotion and brings forth their sacred waters.

In this vein, the baroque intensity of Nahman's own personal mythology commands, in my view, special attention, not only with respect to the content of his religious thought, but also with respect to his prodigiousness as a literary artist. Nahman is, of course, well known for his literary creativity, a feature of his religious personality that seems to have been centraI, particularly near the end of his life, to his conception of himself as a spiritual leader. "What am I?" he famously asked. "Only that which my soul creates."[4] It is under the agency of this reading that Arthur Green, in his classic biography of Nahman, suggestively wrote that "Nahman has much in common with his English contemporary William Blake, who, as a mystic living at the edge of the industrial revolution, sought to restore to his readers the life of dream and fantasy of which he felt they were being robbed at the onset of modernity."[5] But as of yet, to my knowledge, there has been no systematic scholarship that seeks to read Nahman's entire body of work not as the spiritual instruction of a rebbe (or at least not only as that), but rather as the mythological vision of a highly original romantic poet, a poet who, in the language of twentieth-century scholar of religion Mircea Eliade, struggled to uphold and, indeed, resurrect a mythical conception of Sacred Man.

This approach, I would argue, carries two distinct advantages. The first is that it broadens the scope of how we might read many of the classical hasidic masters, whose work, in the context of the academy, has for the most part been the sole provenance of Judaic Studies or Yiddish departments. Reading hasidut more broadly, in close conversation with contemporaneous European literary trends, offers the student a variety of potentially illuminating points of contact, including not only earlier Jewish mystical thinkers, but also poets like William Wordsworth, William Blake, and A.C. Swineburn. Our readings will be thus greatly enriched.

The second advantage--and this one remains very close to my heart--is that it will heighten the overall visibility of classical hasidic thought, which, to my mind, has much to offer the contemporary religious landscape and, which, placed in the proper context, offers the religious comparativist a great many opportunities for meaningful dialogue and deep ecumenical encounter.

Returning now to our parable--a shining example of Nahman's poetic creativity--one gets the distinct impression that, mystical symbolism not withstanding, the longing of the heart, as expressed by the voice of the poet, reflects a deep inner struggle. In what amounts to a classical hasidic turn, Nahman imports the mystical architecture of the kabbalah inward. The primary movement of the spiritual life becomes not a mystical ascendance into the cosmos, but rather an journey into the boundless depths of the mind of man, which, ultimately, becomes a means to the same end.[6] The cosmic brokenness of the universe becomes the existential brokenness of the human person. For Nahman, whose own religious psyche was fueled by his experience of God's radical absence, the heart's inability to reach the spring is itself a stark theological meditation on the potential absurdity of the human condition.

In this way, Nahman significantly prefigures a towering, romantic figure like Nietzsche, for whom the void left by God's death required an extraordinary personality--a Superman--to spring into the breach. In the world of classical hasidism, the charismatic spiritual teacher--the *tzaddik*--was just such and extraordinary personality[7], though, as a number of scholars have

observed, his commitment to the community made his role rather different than that of the *Übermesnch* [8]. However, rather than giving the impression of a *tzaddik* serving God with simple joy (as, for instance, the Baal Shem Tov has often been portrayed, perhaps erroneously, by later readers of his legacy[9]), Bratslav literature presents a vision of a *tzaddik* who is tortured, almost without rest, by questions of meaning and meaninglessness, a *tzaddik* whose personal, existential strife is *the* core aspect of his charismatic ministry. Thus, along with his followers, Nahman seems to have understood his own spiritual greatness precisely in terms of his ability to contend with and viscerally experience the acute sting of God's absence from the world, the yawning chasm between the heart and her supernal source. As Green argues in *Tormented Master,* Nahman experienced such intense moments of existential despair that he could not help but incorporate them into his own mythological conception of himself and the universe.[10] And as a Jewish thinker this makes him quite unique.

From this perspective, Nahman may indeed share more with romantic mythologizers like Nietzsche and Blake than he does with his great grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov. Indeed, the fact that Nahman, like Nietzsche, understood the extraordinary individual to be necessary *precisely* in face of God's absence is a striking affinity, which has received surprisingly little attention in recent scholarship. In order to make sense of Nahman as the incisively creative religious thinker that he was, it may be more helpful to read him in conversation with later existentialist theologians than it is to read him in his own cultural/religious context.

One potentially fruitful point of contact is the great 20th century theologian and existentialist philosopher Paul Tillich, with whom, I would argue, Nahman shares certain deep-tissue similarities. For Tillich, who was both an ordained Lutheran minister and an accomplished religious philosopher, mature or "absolute faith" is only possible when traditional ideas about divinity wither away. In his broadly influential *The Courage to Be*, Tillich argues that contemporary god-language must reckon with the fact that the all-powerful, personal God of theism has been rendered conceptually untenable by the whole history of philosophy in the modern West, beginning with the likes of Spinoza and ending with the likes of Nietzsche. It is only by incorporating such knowledge into his religious psyche, Tillich suggests, that postmodern man--thus bereft of spiritual meaning--can fully access with what he calls the "God Above God," an English phrase that has an evocative, if most probably coincidental, parallel in the ancient Hebrew *El Elyon*. This God, Tillich insists, must not be understood as a discrete identifiable being, but rather as coterminous with being-itself. We must, says Tillich, recognize our frailty and finitude. We must feel the full embrace of existential despair. And then we must nonetheless reaffirm our participation in the great and undeniable drama of the fact that we *are*. When we accept, whether stoically, sadly, or joyfully, the very reality of our being, we arrive at "absolute faith." We become aware of "the God who appears when the God has disappeared in anxiety and doubt."[11] Thus, in Tillich's scheme--and so too in Nahman's--Faith is the individualdualability to find the hidden ground of meaning through an emotional, intellectual and, finally, *religious* reckoning with utter meaninglessness.

This is, it strikes me, a potentially rich theological approach for a whole host of postmodern Jews--not to mention spiritual seekers of other persuasions--who are hungry for a spiritual connection to their people and to their God, but for whom the God of theism is an impossible intellectual or emotional proposition. But, Nahman's work not withstanding, this line of thought has not made serious inroads into Jewish theological speculation.

From a history of ideas standpoint, it is not entirely surprising that modern Jewish thinkers have largely sidestepped the kinds of existential questions that, since Nietzsche, have animated their Christian brothers and sisters. To some extent this evasion might be

appropriate. After all, from a Christian perspective, the death of God--quite literally in the person of Jesus Christ--is built into religious experience. It is a necessary precursor to human salvation and the engine that drives all subsequent theological inquiry. For postmodern Christian theologians such as Paul Tillich, the death of God in the Nietzschean sense is but the latest stage in the Christological drama and God's apparent absence from the world is the very thing that makes religious life possible.

As a Christian, Tillich inherited a rich theological language of despair, under the aegis of which he could say that genuine religiosity "mediates a courage which takes doubt and meaninglessness into itself."[12] And although he insists that his conception of religious courage is "without a name, a church, a cult, [or] a theology," he nonetheless argues existential anxiety can only be mediated by "the Church under the Cross, [...] the Church which preaches the Crucified who cried to God who remained his god after the God of confidence had left him in the darkness of doubt and meaninglessness."[13] In language that is startlingly reminiscent of Nahman's, Tillich recasts the figure of Christ on the cross, forsaken by his Father in heaven, as the paradigmatic avatar of the postmodern man, who must bear the cross of existential anxiety and despair. The gospels become a reflection on the ultimate meaninglessness of the human condition and the loss of final salvation. Jesus becomes the Stranger.

Admittedly, this is not a Jewish way of talking. In his essay from *Commentary* magazine, *The Condition of Jewish Belief*, Chaim Potok advances the well-heeled Jewish argument that Nietzsche poses no threat to Jewish theology because Jewish religion does not require the belief in "an old man with a long, white beard who dwells in some distant heaven."[14] And he is right. Jewish religion does not *demand* such a belief (though there are a great wealth of traditional sources which advance just such theological imagery). But regardless, the question of God's death strikes yet a deeper chord, because the death of God hypothesis is not simply about dismantling theological anthropomorphisms. The death of God is about the death of *theism*. It is about the erosion of transcendent, saving Truths--Jews call them *mitzvot*--that order human life and comfort us in our moments of frailty. For the traditional Jew, it is these Truths (and only these Truths) that can break the shackles of profane time, in which she is frail and finite, and usher in sacred time, in which she is timeless. The idea of the death of God speaks to this Jewish conception of divinity just as much as it speaks to Christ on the Cross. To recast the discussion in Nahman's terms, the death of God is the moment when the spring dries up completely, the moment when the heart finally dies of exhaustion.

Of course, in Nahman's mythological universe, we are not yet there. The spring is flowing, if inaccessible, simultaneously the heart's greatest desire and also her greatest source of weakness. What is particularly striking about Nahman's theology is his contention that the radical absence of God is a *structurally necessary* component of the spiritual life. It is the twin reality of desire *and* distance that animates Nahman's conception of Jewish religious experience. For Arthur Green--to whom my present reading of Nahman owes a great debt--it is this vision of paradoxical religious longing (developed both in our parable and elsewhere) that ultimately distinguishes Nahman from his spiritual and intellectual forbearers. Through his use of religious paradox, Nahman reveals himself as utterly unique on the landscape of 19th century Hasidut, a tortured figure who--despite living a life that we might, somewhat anachronistically, call *haredi*--hovers on the very edge of modernity.

And what finally makes Nahman's work brilliant is precisely its willingness to take existential despair seriously as a mode of religious experience. For Nahman, doubt is neither a problem to be explained away nor a religious challenge to be transcended in a Kierkegaard-like leap of faith. Rather, it is an indelible aspect of religious striving itself. As he taught his

followers, the assimilation of doubt--the *makkif*--into one's spiritual consciousness is crucial to genuine religious growth:

> For wisdom is the aspect of *makkif* [doubt, challenge, insoluble difficulty], i.e., that which is impossible to assimilate into one's inward understanding. For the *makkif* is external and internal wisdom receives its life force from the *makkif*. And know that this is the crux of the ability to choose right from wrong [...i.e.] when the *makkif* is assimilated inward human wisdom grows.[15]

Nahman borrows the term "*makkif*" from an earlier stratum of the rabbinic canon. In both the Talmud and in Lurianic Kabbalah the word, which stems from a Hebrew root meaning "to encircle,--can refer to various features of the cosmological scaffolding that *surrounds* God's presence. Here, however, as Arthur Green has observed[16], Nahman repurposes the *makkif* in a very creative way. For Nahman, the *makkif* no longer encircles God, but instead encircles the religious consciousness of man. In an interpretive move that is paradigmatically hasidic--and also more than a little Hegelian--Nahman describes spiritual striving as a dialectical process through which the spiritual seeker (the "*tzaddik*," in the classical hasidic lexicon) encounters and then inwardly imports a series of *makkifin*, or attacks upon his faith. It is only by absorbing these attacks, by reckoning with moments of meaninglessness, that he can enlarge himself spiritually. And as the tzaddik grows in wisdom, the *makkifin* only get more difficult until, depending on Nahman's mood, his spiritual quest either opens out onto a supernal knowledge of divinity, onto a world of unending light and understanding, or until his sense of his spiritual powers becomes so debased, the sting of doubt so intense, that he realizes he will never be able to understand anything at all. And for the *tzaddik* the process can never end, because in Nahman's mind the world is in fact sustained by the *makkif* itself. Circling back to the parable of the heart and the spring, we can now understand its heartbreaking resolution:

> And when the heart needs a little rest, a great bird spreads his wings over him and shields him from the sun, and thus he has a little relief. But even then, in his moment of rest, he looks towards the spring and longs for him. But why, if he longs for him so deeply, does he not go over to the spring? The reason is that were he to come close to the mountain he would not be able to see and gaze upon the flow of the spring, and were he not to gaze upon the spring he would die because his very life issues form the spring. When he stands opposite the mountain he is able to see where the spring gushes forth from the head of the mountain; however, as soon as he approaches the mountain the fount is hidden and he can no longer see the spring and thus he would die. And if the heart were to die then the entire universe would die, for the heart is the life force of all being and nothing can exist without the heart.[17]

In the end, the true *tzaddik* must face and live with the ultimate *makkif*, namely, the paradoxical fact that God must be utterly absent from the world in order to make room for differentiated existence in the first place. It is this absence that fuels the fire of religious longing and it is this longing that ultimately sustains the spiritual endeavor. God may not be dead, but He remains fundamentally inaccessible, even to the *tzaddik*.[2]

---

[2] In his essay "The Master of Prayer," David Roskies offers a somewhat similar reading of this parable, arguing that Nahman's artistic and spiritual innovation can be located in his conception of a "Paradoxical faith that calls out for God's distance rather than His presence." There, Roskies suggests that this unique conception of Jewish spirituality reflects the experience of prayer, in the context of which the one praying is comes face to face with the great chasm that separates her from God. While this approach strikes me as

In the history of modern Jewish theology Nahman very nearly stands alone in his willingness to engage with, and ultimately accept, the potential absurdity of the existential condition. Being a Jew, Nahman teaches, means leading a life of constant spiritual growth, constant striving in the face of problems that are insoluble by their very nature. Thus, a spiritual reckoning with despair becomes the highest form of worship. This is may be a sobering thought, but it is also an invigorating one, one that affirms the necessity--and the sanctity--of human struggle. As the rebbe writes at the end of our parable: "This is the reason that the heart can never approach the spring. All he can do is stand opposite, longingly, and call out."

---

[1] *Sippurey Ma'asiyot*, my translation.
[2] See, for example, Kaplan's commentary in: *The Seven Beggars and Other Kabbalistic Tales of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. (*Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005), 32.
[3] Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads.*
[4] *Hayyei HaRan*, *Seder nesiato le'eretz yisrael,* 5:19
[5] Arthur Green. *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1992), 343.
[6] The impulse to psychologize certain metaphysical and theosophical formulations found in earlier kabbalah is a trend in Hasidism that has been noted by many scholars. See, for example: I. Etkes. *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*. (Waltham, MA: Brandeis UP, 2005), 147.
[7] For a fuller discussion of Nahman's affinity with Nietzsche see: Samuel Abba Horodetzky. "Rabbi Nahman, Romanticism, and Rationalism." *God's Voice from the Void: Old and New Studies in Bratslav Hasidism*. Ed. Shaul Magid. (Albany: State U of New York, 2002), 268.
[8] Ibid. See also: Golomb, Jacob. Nietzsche and Zion. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 172.
[9] Etkes, ibid, pp.131-135. Etkes demonstrates, convincingly, that although joy was indeed central to the Baal Shem Tov's conception of worship and *devekut*, he was--like his great grandson Rebbe Nahman--very often troubled by his inability to maintain his states of spiritual elevation in perpetuity.
[10] Green, pp. 120-123.
[11] Paul Tillich. *The Courage to Be*. (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1952), 190.
[12] Ibid, p. 188.
[13] Ibid, pp. 188-189.
[14] Chaim Potok in: *The Condition of Jewish Belief; a Symposium*. New York: Macmillan, 1966, p. 177.
[15] *Likutei MoHaRan*, 21, my translation.
[16] Green, pp. 292-294.
[17] *Sippurey Ma'asiyot,* my translation.

Rabbi Benjamin Resnick was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2014 and he is currently a doctoral student in Jewish mysticism, also at JTS

---

quite on target, here, in light of the teaching from Likutei MoHaRan, I wish to emphasize additionally that the experience of God's absence is not only a feature of prayer and religious longing, but is also built into the very structure of reality as expressed in Nahman's treatment of Lurianic theosophy. See: Roskies, David. "The Master of Prayer." *God's Voice from the Void: Old and New Studies in Bratslav Hasidism*. Ed. Shaul Magid. Albany: State U of New York, 2002, p. 95.

A Curriculum for Interfaith Study and Teaching

By Michael Shire and Robert W. Pazmiño

Institutional Settings and Histories[1]

In 2001, Hebrew College (HC) moved from Brookline, Massachusetts to a new hilltop campus in Newton it would share with Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS). Two years later, HC, which began in 1921 as a secular cultural institution, created a rabbinical school. For the last twelve years, the staff and students of the newest Jewish seminary and the oldest Protestant seminary in the country—ANTS's roots go back to the founding of Andover Seminary in 1807—have formed a partnership that has changed the way both schools think about their educational goals, curricula for theological education and the nature of their particular communities. Newton's "Institution Hill," named for the other ancestor of Andover Newton, the Newton Baptist Institute, has become "Faith Hill" providing a unique setting for interfaith study and teaching in the formation of religious and spiritual leaders for the third millennium.

ANTS is formally affiliated with two Protestant denominations, the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., and functionally related to the Unitarian Universalist Society, whose members now comprise a third of its student body. Given HC's roots as a cultural institution, and former President David M. Gordis' commitment to religious pluralism, the Rabbinical School was founded as a transdenominational program, welcoming Jewish students from all or none of the denominations (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist). The challenge in curricular work is how to both embrace and celebrate one's faith identity and be open to one's neighbor from a different religious tradition with the common ground of equipping students to be effective teachers of their faith.

Soon after HC moved into its new buildings in 2001, a new feature appeared on the landscape, one that had not been sketched on the official blueprint: a footpath between the campuses made by students who began meeting to talk about their respective traditions, their common vocations, and their personal lives. Even before the faculties and administrations of the two schools offered interfaith courses and public programs, the students of ANTS and HC began to create a dynamic inter-religious culture. They wanted to learn together and from one another as they prepared for careers as teachers, preachers, pastors, rabbis, cantors and ritual makers.

Spurred by this enterprising group of students, the faculties and administration deepened their commitment to this burgeoning interfaith venture. We created joint academic courses co-taught by Jewish and Christian faculty and populated by students from both schools. We organized a series of "Community Days" during which students, faculty, and staff from both institutions participate together in service projects around Boston and learn of common efforts to deepen religious faith and social ministries. The most recent Community Day included welcoming the addition of a jointly-appointed Muslim scholar to Faith Hill and learning about the American Muslim community. The students formed Journeys on the Hill (JOTH), which sponsors seasonal and thematic events organized around our sacred calendars and other key religious, cultural, and political issues. They also created peer study groups that serve as an important context for relationship building, spiritual exploration, and professional development. Crucial to all these educational efforts is the invitation to develop relationships across the divide of religious difference. The history of the United States has been plagued with the perception that difference equals deficiency and the opportunity to study, learn and work together invites border crossing across faith communities. This border crossing does not

eliminate differences, but serves to clarify what each tradition offers to the common human task in religious education of teaching a faith to rising generations that is vital and transformative.

Havruta Relationship

Havruta is an Aramaic word meaning friendship or fellowship. As an ancient form of textual study, it has become normative in the world of Jewish traditional study in the yeshiva or beit midrash. It involves a pair of students helping each other to read and understand the written text together. The word refers both to the partners engaged in the study as well as the actual process of collaborative learning. There are three types of dynamics involved in Havruta learning. The first is the idea of shared ownership of the text in which both partners equally engage in exegesis and isogesis collaboratively. The second is the active listening and reflecting back of each partner in order to fully understand the stance of the partner. Thirdly, it provides the opportunity for structured debate and sharpening of argument through questioning and focusing on a close reading of the text. Havruta relationships can become lifelong relationships that may begin with the text but continue in a larger context of work, friendship or lifelong study. It becomes a spiritual practice and a means of meaning making between two trusted study and life partners. The learning skills developed in Havruta can include critical reasoning, finely honed argumentation, second person perspective taking, analytical reasoning, appreciation and wonder to name but a few. These learning stances are not dissimilar from the impact of collaborative and cooperative learning. The Havruta model became a conceptual framework for designing a course in teaching and learning across two religious traditions as well as providing a guiding framework for the relationship between instructors and between instructors and students.

In this course, we used Havruta widely and extended it to dyads and larger group work as well as between ourselves as instructors. Student feedback demonstrated the powerful experiences of working closely with colleagues from another religious perspective and tradition and specifically appreciated the Havruta relationship modeled by the instructors. This approach honors both particularism and pluralism among faith traditions. The course content focused the teaching and learning in our two religious traditions in three foci: textual study, teaching and learning for social responsibility and enculturation of customs and ceremonies. These were areas we felt had significant valence in both traditions but with distinct contributions offered by each faith. It was our goal therefore to 'teach about' these foci in two traditions but also 'teach from' these foci towards deeper and broader understanding.

Personal Backgrounds

Teaching both "who we are" (Palmer, 1998, 2) and whose we are in relation to our God and religious tradition, and finding common ground across our traditions were curricular themes undergirding our joint effort. Below is noted how we introduced ourselves to our students on Schoology which is the learning platform that both are schools are using for distance education elements of our courses. A great deal of the course content was supplied to students prior to the intensive course encouraging participants to both read and discuss their reactions to texts. We sought to model a teaching team across religious traditions and actually had students carefully observe and evaluate our own past and current teaching practices. In Bob's case, we showed twenty minutes of a tape made of his teaching in 1984 on the topic of values and valuing in teaching. Viewing and evaluating the teaching episode also served to practice using a presentation evaluation form that was used for providing feedback from team-teaching presentations the students themselves made within a twenty-minute limit. In Michael's case, he effectively demonstrated the use of Godly Play in recounting the nation of Israel's

escape across the desert and deliverance by the hand of God. Observation of the professorial team came through actual classroom interactions during the week.

Rabbi Michael Shire: "I am the Dean of Education at HC and delighted to be co-teaching this course with Professor Pazmiño. We worked together last year on a course I ran at HC so this is the comeback team! I trained in the UK with graduate degrees in the USA at Hebrew Union College (not to be confused with our own HC). I have found that teaching and learning is much more individually focused in Europe than it is here in Massachusetts. In the UK, teaching involved a lot of individual assessment on a daily basis with customized targets for each assignment and assessment. Teachers had to be able to identify learning styles and needs as well as accommodate the curriculum and their teaching strategies for all types of learners. Religious education is part of every state school as a core curriculum subject so teaching about and from religion is part and parcel of every teacher's experience particularly in elementary schooling. I hope this course will enable us all to learn about the nature of teaching for religious education and refine it for own settings. I also hope that we will be able to learn that being in the 'presence of the other' is always enriching for our own faith perspective."

Professor Bob Pazmiño: "I am Valeria Stone Professor of Christian Education at ANTS and it is a joy for me to teach with a kindred spirit in the field of religious education, Rabbi Michael Shire. As Michael notes, we have shared teaching occasions both in his course last year and at a joint Community Day with both our schools two years ago. I am originally from Brooklyn, New York and am currently working on an educational and spiritual memoir entitled *A Boy Grows in Brooklyn* that Wipf and Stock will publish. I have taught at Andover Newton since 1986, previously having taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for five years and other theological schools across the country and abroad. I completed my Ed.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University in cooperation with Union Seminary and my M.Div. at Gordon-Conwell. I have also served as a national consultant for the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion since 2001. I am married to Wanda R. Pazmiño who is a home-school liaison for the Newton Public Schools and we have two children and two grandchildren who live nearby in Newton. We also care for my mother-in-law who lives in a nearby nursing home. I pray that you all will experience the joy of learning more and teaching others both within and across our religious traditions."

Students also read articles and books written by both professors and had classroom access to book reviews of our works to provide perspective on our reflections of teaching and learning. Opportunities to travel on a short field trip to a local Jewish religious day school and an evening meal and panel discussion with local religious leaders also served to develop connections outside the classroom. We also interacted with students over our lunch breaks with a nearby classroom that provided tables for bag lunches we brought with both school's cafeterias closed during the course dates.

Curricular Planning

The particulars of the curriculum planned are noted in the shortened form of the course syllabus appended below, but the team presentations and evening panel with Master religious educators are worthy of elaboration.

<u>Team Presentations</u>

Key to the curriculum design was a planned presentation by groups of students that included ANTS and HC students. The intent of the overall course design was to inform, form and

transform students with the use of interfaith student teams that was planned for the final sessions of the intensive week. . The task required that the groups spend at least three sessions in planning a lesson or unit that reflected the forms of religious education being taught in the course. Then each group presented or enacted the lesson with all members of the group required to be engaged. This was followed by peer feedback (drawing upon the model of teacher evaluation) and finally faculty feedback. As part of the assessment regimen, students were asked to journal their reflections of their own group's presentation in the light of the peer and faculty feedback. The presentations were varied in their style and content though some common elements emerged such as the choice of a common sacred text either of the Hebrew Bible or early rabbinic material (Mishnah). At first this seemed unusual in that the there was a 2:1 ratio of Christian to Jewish students. However on reflection, perhaps the nature of shared canonical texts as reflected in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament were most compelling to student teams. Presentations dealt with environmental responsibility, working with teens, issues around death, etc. Some of the pitfalls students experienced were using troubling texts without preparing students appropriately (the binding of Isaac, texts related to death and dying). In addition, students reflected well the content of a lesson but sometimes handled context and person (learner) less well. It is clear that religious teaching is a disciplined practice that takes many hours of involvement to master. It was also clear that the goal of achieving working teams across religious traditions within two seminaries can be a powerful and multivoiced group within a short period of time able to produce impactful learning opportunities above and beyond any individual contribution.

Master Religious Educators

Students were exposed to Master Religious Educators in an evening program that was opened to the wider ANTS/HC faculty and students in the Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education (CIRCLE) program. The evening began with a traditional 'dvar torah' – word of Torah from President Danny Lehmann of HC speaking from Exodus 18:1-12 highlighting how Moses' gentile father-in-law observed God's blessing in delivering the Israelites from the Egyptians and Pharaoh, and affirming the importance of interfaith relationships modeled for us in this encounter. Serendipitously this was the same historical event portrayed in our Godly Play class demonstration.

Professor Sara Lee, author of one of our required course texts, summed up the interreligious learning experience when she insightfully quoted the need for personal transformation when teaching and learning in the presence of the other. Her experience with Dr. Mary Boys led her to understand how her own religious identity could be shaped by virtue of deeply experiencing the relationship with another person of a different faith. This confirmed the course's intentionality behind personal and group development as one of its aims. She demonstrated how texts could both bring together and divide people depending on the intent of the readers. President Elect Dr. Martin Copenhaver whose teaching ministry as a shepherd pastor was documented and read by students (Siew, 2013) shared his relationship with a local rabbi. They have exchanged congregational visits face-to-face and learned of other religious traditions "shoulder-to-shoulder" in visiting together a spiritual retreat center populated by spiritual and not religious persons.

Instructional Design of a School Visit

One distinct element of the course design was the planning of a school visit to the Solomon Schechter Day School located in Newton, Massachusetts as arranged with Arnold Zar-Kessler, Head of School. The three-hour visit occurred at the midpoint of the course and students read

about the philosophy of Jewish education inherent in the school prior to our visit. The field trip to Solomon Schechter Day School just before their own team presentations served to deepen their observation skills prior to evaluating their own and their peers' teaching efforts planned for the following day. The age groups selected by the teaching teams for their own presentations included both middle and high school age students as their audience, so the school visit served as a reality check for the characteristics of adolescent learners. It is noteworthy that a number of our Jewish students had not visited a Jewish Day School prior to our visit, recognizing that only about one-tenth of the Jewish school age population attends such schools. The aims of the visit itself were stated as the following:

- To introduce Jewish and Christian graduate students to the Jewish Day School system as a means to provide religious and cultural instruction to the Jewish community
- To explore and examine instruction in an educational institution with a focus on the provision of religious and general education for Grades 4-8 in the Upper School
- To extend the three foci of the course by demonstrating evidence of textual study, teaching and learning for social responsibility and enculturation of customs and ceremonies

Students, a number of whom had previous teaching experience, were able to critically note the teaching dynamics of the day school. This was particularly evident in relation to the stated philosophy of the Schechter School system of forming Jews with a clear sense of identity and high academic capabilities, and engaging the modern world as committed Jewish leaders. The formation of Jewish identity included a clear commitment to the nation of Israel globally. This ability to see 'theory in practice' drew upon the early part of the course with its models of religious education. Students were able to see a school not just as a generalized learning institution but with a incisive eye to its own stated ideological purposes. In general, the graduate students were impressed with the quality of teaching observed and student achievement and confidence as young Jewish leaders but noted the lack of commitment to more directly address the communal outreach of the school. Alternative educational philosophies had informed them of he role of religious education in forming students to serve social needs of the wider Boston community while recognizing of the challenges of survival that historically the Jewish community has confronted. Critical evaluation of the school was then placed appropriately in the context of its stated mission.

Evaluation

The ideal was to have an equal number of both twelve Jewish Hebrew College and twelve Christian Andover Newton students enroll in the course in working toward educational equity across both traditions. In reality, we had five Jewish HC students and fourteen Christian and Unitarian Universalist ANTS students, thirteen working at the masters-level and one doctoral student in the course. Our academic calendars differed across the schools and the course met degree requirements in the case of the masters-level students at Andover Newton.

Course evaluations indicated a great appreciation for the course despite the intensity of the full week schedule, along with the variety added by a field trip, dinner and panel discussion. The reading load was viewed as heavy with a desire for more in-depth discussion of the reading that though possible on-line was not extensively engaged. The variety and extent of readings directly related to the desired exposure to both traditions and the fact that in the case of Hebrew College Jewish students, more advanced reading was expected after their previous study in religious education courses. In the case of Andover Newton students, this course could meet just the one required course in a Master of Divinity program. Even with those curricular constraints, participants experienced ample time and safe space for their questions, concerns and discoveries across the traditions and valued learning about "the other" who soon became the neighbor and partner in team teaching presentations. Students noted that they imagined

new ways of teaching never thought about before and that their final projects reflected the learning gained in the course. The sense of community contributed to the perceived connections and relationships made. The Tu B' Shvat celebration shared by the Jewish participants prior to our Thursday evening meal was a rich experience for the Christian participants. One comment was "Eyes opened a little wider to see differences in religious education between our traditions and think more intentionally about why Christian education and Jewish education is the way they are." Shared bagged lunch times were also viewed as productive in that they nurtured "easy, honest and open discussions with professors and students that was open to wondering and curiosity." In relation to the interfaith experience itself, one student shared that we "confronted some misconceptions, dealt with difficult questions, produced insightful conversations and inspired ideas for the future." A number of students hoped the course would be offered again with "learning about the religious other as an imperative" and they intended to recommend it to other students in each of the schools.

Conclusion

We concluded the week long intensive with a recent article by Jack Seymour and Deborah Court (see references) offering a typology of interfaith learning. This typology owes its origins to conceptions of religious education in the European state schooling systems where religious instruction (learning about) has broadened to understanding the religious perspective on life and values (learning from). In this graduate course incorporating inter-religious dialogue into a class on teaching and religious education within and across two faith traditions, we modelled a number of the Seymour and Court typologies. As one student wrote on her evaluation form:

> I learned about Jewish and Christian teaching as well as general teaching methodology and certainly learned from experience and example in class. I loved the interfaith setting and learning with HC/ANTS faculty and students together.

A graduate religious education class that brings together these multiple typologies of learning about, learning from, and learning with offers a cumulative impact. The experience goes to the heart of understanding how teaching and learning in the presence of the Other is not only deeply compelling and crucial in our interdependent age but also personally enriching and spiritually enhancing for all who are involved; faculty, graduate students and future generations alike.

Appendix- Shortened Syllabus:
CMED 680/880 Teaching In and Across Religious Traditions
Winterim January 13-17, 2014, Andover Newton Theological School/Hebrew College
Instructors: Rabbi Dr. Michael Shire, Professor Robert Pazmiño
Description:
The course seeks to explore and practice the art and craft of teaching in the Jewish and Christian traditions. The course will focus on common issues shared by the two traditions but approached in particularistic ways: the teaching of the Bible and the Prophets, teaching social responsibility and *tzedaka,* and cultivating ritual practices and observance of a religious tradition. It also inductively explores what is being learned from interfaith encounters and ministries regarding religious identity and openness to one's neighbors as a religious educator.
One aspect of teaching is the educational methods which addresses the question of: *How* is religious education undertaken and realized? This question will be explored in the context of other educational questions which address the nature, purposes, context, and interpersonal relationships of any teaching ministry.
Learning Objectives:

- To articulate a vision of learning and teaching for religious education and practice skills in teaching
- To be sensitive to and committed to a vision of an interdependent approach to religious education in and across religious traditions
- To become familiar with signature pedagogies through two religious traditions in relation to sacred story, social responsibility and ritual practice
- To be engaged in interreligious dialogue with fellow educators and clergy
- To apply methods of teaching and learning to understanding the nature of self, community, other/neighbor, and God and to gain skills in evaluation.
- To come to know the self as religious educator

Assessment: Assessment will be conducted through case study analysis, Havruta pedagogy, student presentations and self-reflection on teaching that incorporates theological reflection on the *what* and *why* of our teaching. The value of what we do in class will be facilitated if we can initiate effective procedures for evaluation, our evaluation of your work and your self-evaluation.

Schedule:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9.00-12.00	Introduction to framework. (RP/MJS) Teaching Bible Texts case study (Exodus) Personal Stories (Who am I & Whose am I?)	Teaching Social Responsibility & Action (RP/MJS) Personal Stories (Connections with religious traditions)	Teaching customs and ceremonies (RP/MJS) Connections with Worship & Daily Practices	Havruta presentations & evaluation	Reflections on Teaching Final Review & Summary of Insights. Class ends at 1pm
lunch					
1.00-4.00	Lesson & Curricular Planning in two groups Personal Stories of Transformative Teaching: Principles & Metaphors to Guide Future Efforts Havruta time	Frameworks for Social Education Havruta time	Field trip to Solomon Schechter Day School Debrief and review of observations	Havruta Presentations Tu B'Shvat celebration	
			Havruta presentation prep time		

6.00-8.00				Supper and Evening panel discussion with Religious Education Leaders	

Course information:
Improving our competence as teachers will be difficult if we depend exclusively on traditional academic approaches. Therefore, a significant portion of the course will involve your actual practice of teaching and careful observation and evaluation of others in and out of the class. Grading will follow the respective frameworks in the institution in which you are registered.
Requirements:

1. Regular and punctual attendance every session. (Note: This is especially supportive when peers are presenting.)
2. Participation in class discussions, assignments, evaluations and prayer for class participants.
3. Complete assigned readings prior to the course and engage in independent reading for at least an equivalent time to that in class sessions.
4. Maintain a journal and reading log of class sessions and independent reading (**first option**) to be submitted **February 24th.** Journals should include entries of at least one type-written page for each class session (morning, afternoon and evening) or teaching event outside of class. Reading Logs should list author, title and annotated review of parts read. A **second option** is to combine written assignments by writing up an extended rationale for a curriculum and specific lesson plans for a unit of the curriculum as required in item # 6 below. The rationale should draw upon course readings and outline your personal theology/philosophy for teaching and a detailed description of both the persons taught and their specific context. A **third option** is to write up an extended essay on teaching that relates theology and religion to education with specific recommendations for teaching practice. You need to obtain approval from the instructors before commencing one of these assignments. **All written work is due February 24th**.
5. Do one teaching episode in class as part of a chavruta (paired learning) and participate in peer review. Teamwork requires careful planning and practice in and outside of class time and requires the instructors' approval for the teaching assignment.
6. Complete 1 **detailed** lesson plan for your teaching presentation in chavruta. This should include the rationale for the lesson as well as activities and learning outcomes. It should also include a 1 page reflection summary that draws upon the peer review session following your presentation. This should be self-reflective of what you learned about yourself as a religious educator through this process. Lesson Plans **due February 24.**

Resources for Learning:

1. Reading: Reading is considered one of the primary educational resources of the course. It is suggested that you plan your reading to coincide with what we are doing in class and with your own teaching episodes. Recommendations will be made in various sources. A bibliography is provided, but it does not limit your reading in other sources.

2. Reserve Shelf: Required and recommended texts are located there.
3. Periodicals: It is strongly recommended that you do not neglect periodical literature. Periodicals will keep you informed of current developments in the field and acquaint you with a number of useful resources.

4. Texts: **Required**

Boys, Mary C. and Sara S. Lee. *Christians and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other*. Woodstock, VT: Sky Light Paths, 2006.

Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Rosenak, Michael. *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in a Secular Society*. (Part two and three). New York: JPSA, 1987.

Recommended

Bracke, John M., Karen B. Tye. *Teaching the Bible in the Church*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003.

Chazan, Barry. *The Language of Jewish Education: Crisis and Hope in the Jewish School*. New York: Hartmore House, 1978.

Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Holtz, Barry. *Textual Knowledge; Teaching the Bible in Theory and Practice*. New York: JTSA 2003.

Kress, Jeffrey. *Growing Jewish Minds, Growing Jewish Souls*. New York: URJ Press, 2013.

Miller, Helena; Grant, Lisa; Pomson, A. *International Handbook of Jewish Education, Part One: Section 2*. Heidelberg: Springer, 2011.

O'Neill, William. *Educational Ideologies: Contemporary Expressions of Educational Philosophy*. Santa Monica: Goodyear Publishing, 1981. (Appendix 1: Judaism and Jewish Education)

Pazmiño, Robert W. *Basics of Teaching Christians: Preparation, Instruction, and Evaluation*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2002.

Pazmiño, Robert W. *So What Makes Our Teaching Christian: Teaching in the Name, Spirit and Power Of Jesus*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2008.

Westerhoff, John H. *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.

Journals: Christian Education Journal, Journal of Jewish Education, Religious Education, Encyclopedia Judaica

Other articles and references will be provided prior to the course assigned to particular teaching days.

800 Level Course Work: Those taking the course at the *800 level* are expected to address in greater depth theoretically and theologically course assignments and are expected to discuss their work individually with the instructors at the beginning of the course for sources to consider.

The visit schedule was:

1:00-1:30pm Departure and Travel to the school site (Early arrival actually enabled a group photo in front of the school's sign.)

1.30 -2.00pm Arrival and Orientation to the School: Ethos, history, vision, mission, population served, context, organization, background to instructional staffing.

2.00 – 2.40pm: Five groups with a max of 4 persons each to view the following areas:
Teacher Instruction: watching a variety of teachers, speaking to teachers, lesson planning etc.
Student learning: observing students, interviewing students, examining student work etc.
Environment for Learning: School displays, architecture, classroom layout, sensory reception, visual ethos etc.
Curriculum Planning and Development: Hebrew and Jewish Studies curriculum, cross curricula activities, all-school programming, text books etc.
2.45- 3.15pm: Review and Reflection with School team
3.15- 3.30pm: Final Meeting with Head of School or equivalent
3.30-4.00pm: Visitors meet privately for review with faculty members
The observation tasks noted that "observation is work and requires your concentration; be prepared to take notes because we are limited to a small group per classroom" and included:

Tasks

1. Select one particular teacher, student, classroom setting or curriculum practice and flow to observe immediately upon entering the classroom and being situated for observation.
2. Maintain a passive role while observing by saying and doing less than you normally would. Try to remain focused on your observation area regardless of what happens and who else appears on the scene.
3. In the case of observation areas 1 and 2, write down all you can of what one teacher or student does/says in approximately a five minute block.
4. In the case of area 2, estimate the attention spans if observing a particular student in approximately a five minute block.
5. For 15 minutes record all significant behavior indicating intellectual, emotional or social functioning of a teacher or child, how the environment supports or distracts from learning, or how the curriculum takes shape in actual practice in this setting.
6. Review observation recordings and attempt to answer questions below and/or pose additional questions.

Questions for observations:

1.How does your particular person react to the presence of you and others in the classroom?
2.Language in Teaching and Learning
   a. What is the extent of the teacher's or student's vocabulary? How many different words are used in relation to lesson?
   b. How long his /her sentences are (number of words)?
   c. What sort of questions does the teacher or student ask? Are the questions answered? Why or why not?
   d. Is language accompanied by gesturing to indicate its meaning?
   e. Does the language of others appear to control the person's behavior?
   f. In the case of a student, do the teacher's commands or verbalizations of other children interrupt the student's actions? In the case of a teacher, do the students' responses shift the flow of teaching and in what ways?
3. How long is the attention span of the student or teacher?
How long does she/he continue at one activity?
What activities sustain his/her attention and efforts?
What distracts the student or teacher from their tasks?

4. How does the student or teacher solve a particular problem in the classroom activities, such as not understanding a task or needing to get the teacher's or students' attention?

5.Was there any evidence of imaginative or creative thought or activity? What was it? How does the environment support learning and creative expression? How does the curriculum allow for creative expression?
6.How can you describe the interaction of one child with other persons in the room? With teacher? With peers? With you as an observer?
7. What is the nature of the classroom interaction and its general atmosphere?
8. How effective is the teaching and learning in this particular setting and what might better enhance the experiences of students and teachers?
9. Besides the explicit curriculum, how would you describe the implicit, null and evaded curricula in this setting?
10. What most impressed you in your observations and what questions linger from your experience?

REFERENCES

Court, Deborah and Jack Seymour. (2013) "What Might Meaningful Interfaith Education Look Like? Exploring Politics, Principles and Pedagogy," *Religious Education Association Conference*, November 9, Waltham, MA.

Palmer, Parker. (1998). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pazmiño, Robert W. (2014) "Teaching Both Who and Whose We Are: Honoring Individuality and Connection," *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, Vol. 11, No. 2, 421-428.

Ruppin-Shand, Gabriela and Shire, Michael. (2012) "Jewish Ways of learning," in Jarvis, Peter, Ed. *The Routledge International Handbook of Learning*, Routledge, London.

Siew, Yau Man. (2013). "Pastor as Shepherd-Teacher: Insiders' Stories of Pastoral and Educational Imagination," *Christian Education Journal* Series 3, Vol. 10, No. 1, 48-70.

[1] Adapted from http://www.interreligiousleadership.org/about/mission-history that is the web-site description for the joint program of Hebrew College and Andover Newton Theological School entitled CIRCLE, Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education

---

Michael Shire (PhD Hebrew Union College) is the Dean and Professor of the Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education at Hebrew College in Newton Mass. Email: Mshire@hebrewcollege.edu

Robert W. Pazmiño (Ed.D., Teachers' College, Columbia University in cooperation with Union Seminary), serves as the Valeria Stone Professor of Christian Education at Andover Newton Theological School. Email: rpazmino@ants.edu

The Mason Jar Mentality: Conservative Protestantism & Interfaith Cooperation in the American South

By Terry Shoemaker with Research Assistants James Marcus Hughes, Farrin Marlow, Megan Maddern, and Emily Potter

In the summer of 2013, one of the researchers on this project, Terry Shoemaker, worked with Harvard's Pluralism Project to document religious pluralism and interfaith activities in the city of Bowling Green, Kentucky. By the end of the research project, a unique level (for the South Central Kentucky region) of religious diversity was apparent including Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim faith communities. In a region dominated by myriad versions of Christianity, the city has been diversifying religiously since the 1990s. The diversification is fueled by the resettlement of refugees into the area including Bosnian, Burmese, Burundi, and Iraqi immigrants. Yet, even with the presence of religious diversity, very little, if any, formal interfaith dialogue and cooperation was discovered. In fact, in the final analysis regarding the lack of interfaith cooperation, it was concluded that the refugee religious communities were "in early phases of establishing themselves in the region, thus it is likely that much of the energy and focus of these communities is directed internally."[1] Or as one of our interlocutors in this project explained, "I don't really have much interfaith contact. I don't really know why that is. I guess I have just been focused on moving here and getting settled."

Upon further review, the final analysis of the previously mentioned Harvard Pluralism Project report was limited by placing the onus of interfaith responsibility upon the non-dominant religious communities, namely the non-Christian communities. Upon this realization, a more comprehensive, collaborative investigation was conducted to analyze religious attitudes, perspectives, and practices that inhibit interfaith and intrafaith cooperation in the Bowling Green, Kentucky community. Thus, within this paper, the product of the more comprehensive investigation, we introduce the "mason jar mentality" concept, briefly describe the broad implications of this mentality, and offer an analysis of the impacts of this mentality on current and future interfaith possibilities.

Conservative Protestantism in the American South has been an analytical focal point of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and those in religious studies particularly since the emergence of the Moral Majority in the 1970s and '80s. Many of these research projects have indicated low-levels of tolerance toward out-groups by conservative Protestants including measurements detailing conservative Protestants' attitudes toward homosexuals, Muslims, and atheists, as well as others;[2] and attempted to offer an explanation regarding the causes of such religious and political intolerance such as social capital limitations, biblical hermeneutics, or church attendance.[3] While scholars, like Christian Smith, have attempted to offer a more nuanced position of conservative Protestantism by conducting qualitative interviews, the majority of these research projects fail to offer an analysis of conservative Protestants specifically in the American South regarding their attitudes and perceptions of other faith traditions within their local context, which is the methodological objective of the current research project.[4]

Research Context

Bowling Green, Kentucky, a city located along Interstate 65 in South Central Kentucky, houses a high level of Christian churches and religious affiliation. Bowling Green's official city website enumerates approximately 150 religious institutions within the Bowling Green/Warren

County community.[5] Of the 150 religious communities, the majority can be classified as conservative Protestant (Baptist, Church of Christ, Pentecostal, etc), and only three listed were not specifically Christian (Jewish, Muslim, and Unitarian Universalist were listed, while the website failed to list an additional Islamic center and two Buddhist monasteries). Further, data indicate 52% of the population of Bowling Green is religiously affiliated, just slightly above the national average.[6] Most of the religious diversity in Bowling Green is correlated with the city's refugee relocation settlement status since the late 1970s making the city unique in the South Central Kentucky region. Moreover, the research's interviewees of Bowling Green provide a small city/rural perspective on an increasing religious pluralism.

Data for this project consisted of over forty-five qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted with religious adherents in the Bowling Green, Kentucky area including adherents who identified as Buddhist, Muslim, Taoist, no religious affiliation, and Christian (conservative Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and Mainline Protestants). Approximately half of the interviewees identified as conservative Protestant. Questions were developed in five main categories: self-identification, cultural traditions, perceptions of the particular religious community, perceptions of local immigrant and refugee populations, and political leanings. Each particular faith group was selected in order to create as accurate of a sketch of the region's religious landscape as possible. All interviews were recorded and analyzed for reoccurring themes.

The Mason Jar Mentality

Reflecting on conservative Protestants in the American South, Charles Reagan Wilson posited, "Evangelicals had come to see themselves as the moral custodians of their culture and now they were becoming its public defenders against outside attack."[7] Situated into a defensive mode due to the self-proclaimed status of moral custodian and public defender, conservative Protestants perceive themselves to be under attack by an increasingly diversifying landscape and the loss of social and political power. The response has been to utilize their religious institutions to preserve their particular subculture, which includes religious, political, and cultural resources.

To be sure, cultural preservationism within religious communities exists outside of conservative Protestantism. Within our research, a majority of interviewees, of all religious affiliations, noted some aspect of cultural preservation within their religious communities. For instance, one mainline Protestant respondent provided the following reflection regarding the attraction of his particular church:

> It seems that for people [at this particular church], it's the history. So the people that are here, its because "my family has been here so many generations," or "we've been going to this church since the beginning," or "one of my ancestors was a founder." So [the church members] are very proud of the heritage.

And cultural preservationism has particularly been identified within immigrant religious communities who have settled in the United States.[8] But what makes conservative Protestantism in the American South unique is the central emphasis on cultural preservation and their majority status. The defensive mode in a region marked by historical and contemporary dominance, motivates conservative Protestants to work diligently to maintain, strengthen, increase, and protect their heritage and political power. This hyper focus on preservation as a response to a perceived threat from external forces is what we refer to as the "mason jar mentality."

In the American South, it is not uncommon to open kitchen cabinets and discover rows of mason jars containing carefully canned vegetables or fruits. Through the canning process, Southerners preserve the quality of the food for years to come. Similarly, the same survivalist, mason jar mentality that compels canning and storage process of foods works to encourage conservative Protestants to focus attention and energy to the socio-religious preservationist processes. Members must actively preserve their beliefs and practices via isolationism and active proselytism while emphasizing the education of the members. The work of preservation requires sincere commitment, and conservative Protestants perceive even the process of preservation as under attack. One conservative Protestant interviewee expressed her perception that her freedom to exercise her faith is limited: "At the end of the chapter of Matthew, [Christians] are supposed to go out to other countries, expose the Word to them and baptize them, go to all different nations. Yet, I feel like we can't step on anyone's toes here in our country." And although data confirm that a majority of citizens in the United States still identify as Christian, every conservative Protestant interviewee stated otherwise.

The mason jar mentality functions similarly to Peter Berger's theory of religious functionality in *The Sacred Canopy*. Within the work, Berger posits that religion provides interpretive meaning against anomie for devotees. Therefore religion is necessary to explain the unexplainable. Similarly, the mason jar mentality provides assurance for devotees by affirming a constructed teleology and theology. However, the major difference between the sacred canopy and the mason jar mentality is the source of fear. Berger suggested, "there are events affecting entire societies or social groups that provide massive threats to the reality previously taken for granted."[9] For previous generations, the massive threats were largely unknown, but for those with the mason jar mentality in the American South, the source of fear is the awareness that "during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a series of profound social, demographic, and intellectual transformations began to challenge evangelical Protestantism's security, influence, and relevance."[10] And this insecurity creates fear that future generations will not care to maintain their beliefs and resources for "the greatest fear that haunts evangelical parents is that their children will not follow in their footsteps."[11] The response to this fear is the impetus for the mason jar mentality and leads adherents to cluster into larger institutions like megachurches (Bowling Green, a city with a population of approximately 60,000 citizens, houses four conservative Protestant megachurches).

Religious institutions in the American South serve as the mason jars. For it is the religious institution, which facilitates the difficult work of careful preservation including identity constructions (including gender roles), rhetoric, food cultures, hermeneutical practices, political positions, and Southern culture. The connections to Robert Bellah's theory of civil religion, albeit on a regional scale, obviously apply to these practices.[12] To ensure the shelf life of the final product, religious institutions in the American South emphasize proselytizing as a means to exponentially increase preservers. One interviewee explained, "Based on what we believe (God and the Bible), we believe that we should be an example to other people so that they can maybe take on our beliefs." Once converted, the devotee must adhere and advocate for the entire inherited cultural norms. And there tends to be very little room for deviation from these norms. Yet, we are not suggesting here that conservative Protestants maintain prejudicial, racist, or discriminatory practices. As a matter of fact a common response to our questioning was similar to the following comment: "regardless of people's faults or negative actions they have done, we are to love all people, any color, or type." Rather we are suggesting the maintenance of a level of exclusivity based on religious identification is the foundation for the conservative Protestant community in the American South and the preserving of this exclusivity forms boundaries. As the previous respondent continued, "once they become a part of the Christian faith, *then* they become our brothers and sisters in Christ."

Furthermore the mason jar mentality extends beyond the religious world of the adherents into the political and civic realm. Due to the preservationist tendencies institutionalized by conservative Protestants, advancements in public policy, science, and diversification are all viewed with suspicion. The First Amendment is perceived as the sacred, political foundation for the institutionalized mason jar lens. Educational arguments against teaching evolution, unwillingness to extend basic civil liberties to minority groups, and the noncompliance with federal mandates like the Affordable Healthcare Act are all contemporary examples of civil disputes formulated through religious freedom justifications. In all of these instances, conservative Protestants lead the public conflicts due to an attempt to preserve previously held positions.

To be sure, the mason jar mentality does not simply exclude non-Christian groups, but extends to limit intrafaith cooperation within the region. An interviewee explained, "our church participates with other denominations *as long as* they believe in Christ." Of interest is that the interviewee qualified the participation to only those Christian churches that "believe in Christ." Thus other Christian communities must pass through a litmus test before participation can be finalized. As a matter of fact, within the large megachurches with multiple worship services, interviewees mentioned that those that attended outside of their particular service "were mere babes in Christ lacking real spiritual foundations." These subcultures of religious identification create clearly defined limits for their adherents. Responding to a question regarding relationships with non-Christians, one female devotee quipped, "people who do not believe in God and the Bible are not bad people. Its just people who do believe in the Bible have a different criteria of living, different *boundaries* that we aren't suppose to cross."

In sum, conservative Protestant churches supply agential spaces of religiosity and politics offering affirmation and opportunity for adherents to find justification and confirmation of their subculture. Collectively, conservative Protestants continue to unite with thousands of like-minded individuals throughout their weekly schedules to cultivate an amalgamation of common rhetoric, Southern culture, faith, religious texts, and political positions. The conservative Protestant devotees receive continual encouragement to work towards establishing a local and national agreed upon ideal. And the mason jar mentality as described here appears to preclude formalized interfaith or intrafaith dialogue for outsider groups are viewed as antagonistic by preserving their own cultures. Therefore, conservative Protestants with the mason jar mentality perceive all other religious institutions as religious and political competition. This animosity demonstrates itself within the clustering tendencies of the majority of religious communities within the South Central Kentucky area.

Conclusion

While *diversity* is certainly increasing in south central Kentucky, *pluralism* remains lacking. As outlined by the Harvard Pluralism Project, pluralism is not simply the presence of diversity, but is defined by four critical characteristics: "energetic engagement with diversity," "the active seeking of understanding across differences," "the encounter of commitments," and is "based on dialogue."[13] The Harvard Pluralism Project has identified cities around the U.S. that exhibit the characteristics of religious pluralism. Bowling Green is not one of them. The research suggests that religious organizations *are* providing stable community and a sense of identity to their participants. However, that is only a part of the responsibilities of a healthy faith community. To survive as relevant and useful institutions, religious communities must take an active role in community engagement.

The desire to preserve traditions is a natural expression for any kind of community, including religious communities. Mark Mullins proposes three stages of development are found in immigrant religious communities, the first and second of which include efforts to preserve cultural traditions as well as beliefs.[14] As the research here suggests, this tendency is found in dominant religious groups as well. The challenge arises when these preservationist tendencies become primary and inhibit constructive dialogue and cooperation. In a special report evaluating interfaith dialogue, The United States Institute of Peace defines mutual tolerance as "a process that begins with the ability to interact without fear or aggression, and progresses, through empathy and understanding, to mutual respect."[15] The report identifies mutual tolerance as a method for conflict prevention and resolution. Efforts to initiate interfaith dialogue and cooperation among diverse religious communities help to foster understanding among people of different faiths while highlighting similar goals.[16] However, creating space for dialogue is not easy. The Interfaith Youth Core—an organization that encourages young people to engage in and foster religious pluralism across the United States—identifies the key elements of healthy interfaith attitudes:

> Effective interfaith programs facilitate positive meaningful relationships between people from different backgrounds and increase appreciative knowledge of other traditions. Social science data tells us that knowledge and relationships are the primary drivers of positive attitudes. And people with positive attitudes toward religious diversity will seek more appreciative knowledge and meaningful relationship.[17]

Many examples exist of Kentucky cities and organizations that are making progress toward effective religious pluralism. For instance, Louisville, Kentucky is a diverse city and incorporates a variety of interfaith initiatives. One promising example is the Festival of Faiths, which is organized by the Center for Interfaith Relations (CIR) and hosted in Louisville each year. The festival is organized around a different theme each year—this year's theme is "Sacred Earth, Sacred Self"—and includes a series of relevant speakers that bring attention to critical issues around the world, like environmentalism, compassion, and cooperation. The event is intended as a celebration of the diversity of the Louisville area and as a unifying call to action for members of all faith groups. Festival of Faiths is marketed well and has a presence on the web and social media. The website even includes an in-depth digital booklet ("Export Festival of Faiths") that outlines the process and preparation necessary for building a similar festival in another city.[18] As illustrated by this example, successful interfaith initiatives tend to have several factors in common: (1) a specified goal, (2) a broadly targeted appeal, (3) and ties to the local community. While the first goal of interfaith communities is, of course, interfaith dialogue, effective interfaith initiatives are usually organized around another common goal, for instance, developing sustainable energy practices or housing the homeless. Smaller cities like Bowling Green could benefit from the examples set by larger metropolitan areas like this.

But just as formalized religious institutions seem to exclude any type of interfaith collaboration, possibilities seem more plausible in one-to-one relational aspects. Indeed as our respondents moved beyond institutionalized faith exclusions to their own subjective religiosity the boundaries expanded. One Baptist respondent described himself as "very open-minded" while still maintaining Christian values. Further, he admitted that Islam had opened his eyes due to the fact that he has a couple of Muslim friends that have "rubbed off" on him. He agreed, "it is interesting to see what other people believe," and made room for personal relationships not based on religious adherence or preservation. Another interviewee claimed, "its good to be diverse. I think its positive in that it makes you think. It expands your worldview. It's good to realize that people are just like us. They go to work. They go to the café. They're just like us."

The realization that outside of religious identification, others "are just like us" might take time in the American South, like many predominantly homogenous areas within rural United States, but the formation of relationships by individual devotees could eventually break through the mason jar mentality.

As noted in the final report of the previously mentioned Harvard Pluralism Project, as South Central Kentucky becomes more diverse, the religious landscape has the possibility to develop in one of two directions: on one hand, religious communities could turn increasingly inward, becoming more isolated and defensive over time cultivating their own mason jars. However, through education, exposure, and interfaith relationships, the community may be able to create an environment of cooperation and pluralism. In light of increasing diversity, civic and religious organizations must cooperate to work toward pluralism. We maintain that the work of tolerance exists at a relational level, not at a formalized institutional level. During one of our interview sessions, a conservative Protestant mulled over the idea of interfaith cooperation (possibly for the first time): "What would happen if we could find a common ground? We would start there and then see how far we could go."

---

[1]Terry Shoemaker, "Bowling Green, KY and The Nascent Stages of Religious Diversity," Harvard Pluralism Project, 2013. Accessed at http://www.pluralism.org/reports/view/628.
[2] See James Davison Hunter, "Religion and Political Civility: The Coming Generation of American Evangelicals," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23 (1984): 364-380 or Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen, "Evangelicals and Political Tolerance," *American Politics Quarterly* 18:1 (1990): 25-46. Jeremy Rhodes, "The Ties that Divide: Bonding Social Capital, Religious Friendship Networks, and Political Tolerance Among Evangelicals," *Sociological Inquiry* 82:2 (2012): 163-186 or Amy Burdette, Christopher Ellison, and Terrence Hill, "Conservative Protestantism and Tolerance Toward Homosexuals: An Examination of Potential Mechanisms," *Sociological Inquiry* 75:2 (2005): 177-196.
[3] See Wilcox and Jensen, 1990.
[4] Christian Smith, *Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[5] Official Municipal Website of Bowling Green, Kentucky, "Local Worship Opportunities," www.bgky.org/religiousorganizaitons.php. Accessed on May 22, 2014.
[6] Dale E. Jones, Sherry Doty, Clifford Grammich, James E. Horsch, Richard Houseal, Mac Lynn, John P. Marcum, Kenneth M. Sanchagrin and Richard H. Taylor. 2002. *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported for 149 Religious Bodies*. Nashville, TN: Glenmary Research Center.
[7] Charles Reagan Wilson, "Preachin', Prayin, and Singin' on the Public Square," *Religion & Public Life in the South: In the Evangelical Mode* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 12.
[8] See R. Stephen Warner, "Religion and New (Post -1965) Immigrants: Some Principles Drawn From Field Research," *American Studies* 41, no. 2/3 (2000): 267-286; Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 269-288.
[9] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 44.
[10] Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.
[11] Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 93.

[12] Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*. Vol. 96, No. 1 (1967): 1-21.
[13] Pluralism Project, Harvard University, http://pluralism.org/.
[14] Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, no. 4 (1987): 321-334.
[15] Garfinkel, Renee. "What works?: evaluating interfaith dialogue programs." DIANE Publishing, 2008.
[16] Patel, Eboo, Meyer, Cassie "Civic relevance of Interfaith Cooperation for Colleges and Universities," *Journal of College and Character*. Volume 12, Issue 1, ISSN (Online) 1940-1639, DOI: 10.2202/1940-1639.1764, February 2011.
[17] "The Science of Interfaith," *Interfaith Youth Core*, http://www.ifyc.org//sites/default/files/u4/Interfaith%20Triangle%20Poster_Final.pdf.
[18] Festival of Faiths, *Center for Interfaith Relations*, http://www.centerforinterfaithrelations.org/festival-of-faiths/.

Terry Shoemaker has served as the Program Coordinator of the Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility since the spring of 2010 when the ICSR completed renovation of the current location at Western Kentucky University. He has been the creator of innovative student programming like the Wii™ the People bowling league; served as a community liaison for student community-based research projects; and most recently as an adjunct faculty member within the ICSR. He completed his Masters of Arts degree in Religious Studies at Western Kentucky University in the spring of 2013. Civically, he emphasizes the essentiality of religious institutions as locations for community organizing, the necessity of interfaith cooperation for civic vitality, and the need for academic research focusing on interaction between religious organizations and their broader community.