

Introduction

The past 50 years or so can be described as the modern period of inter-religious dialogue. During this time, interfaith activity matured into a world of ever-greater complexity and sophistication. Distinct aspects and elements of interfaith embedded and nascent in undifferentiated forms in earlier efforts became distinct.

The other shocking, indeed horrifying thing to note about this same time period of interfaith maturation is that this development coincides with our descent into the single worst state of interreligious relations in human history.

If we are honest we will acknowledge that we teeter on the brink of global nuclear holocaust on matters pertaining unequivocally to interreligious conflict. Shiite Iran simultaneously supports martyrdom schools (a purely religious concept) and races down the path to develop nuclear weapons capabilities. Neo-Christian United States (already a nuclear power) similarly trains volunteers to be willing sacrifices to expand U.S. culture and values and, finally, Israel is a known nuclear power.

Leaving Muslim Pakistan, and Hindu India aside (both of which are nuclear powers), this is the current state of interreligious relations after 50 or 60 years of the most rapid, highly funded advance of inter-religious activities, institutions, and consciousness in human history.

Why is this juxtaposition not more widely considered, especially among the bumper crop of interfaith organizations blossoming forth by the dozens and hundreds?

I do not exempt my own organizations and institutions in expressing concern over why the ever maturing and expanding interfaith movement has carried on its work under the shadow of such unthinkable and apocalyptic developments?

Dr. Moon, founder of organizations associated with this journal repeatedly called for the establishment of an enlightened body of religious leaders, leaders who transcend historical parochialism, leaders who laboring an environment of committed and unmitigated collaboration with each other first, and then with one accord with leaders of

secular institutions (including governments). There is a good record of the many occasions in which this call was made publicly, beginning with his August 25, 2000 speech in the United Nations.

The interreligious dread that surrounds us today is directly related to insufficient efforts to implement these inspired insights. No organization with a keen and devoted interreligious mission in their brief should imagine themselves to be without responsibility for the current state of global affairs.

It is thus with a heart of repentance and renewed dedication that I move on now to introduce this valuable collection of articles and essays.

This issue of *Dialogue and Alliance* is an excellent guidebook to what interreligious dialogue has become, how it has diversified and become ever more complex. The once undifferentiated fledging world of interfaith now flows through threads and streams that have taken on trajectories of their own.

This issue traverses along a trajectory from most theoretical to most applied, covering a range, from reflection within a single tradition (on the interfaith implications of its tenets), through analysis of interfaith strategies in an article on meta-theory, all the way to reflections from a scholar in an interreligious marriage. Thus, this issue of *Dialogue and Alliance* is called “A Spectrum of Dialogue.”

The first article from Abduljalil Sajid, orthodox Islam is analyzed for interreligious implications. Sajid’s “Common Moral Basis for a New Model of Global Governance: An Islamic Perspective” offers the reader a valuable compendium of Islam’s best interfaith insights, and further supports these passages with parallel thoughts from other world religions. Sajid’s article can help true Muslims reclaim the ground of interpretation from militant theorists.

Our second article inquires into the dynamics and building blocks of dialogue itself as a phenomenon. Elizabeth Ingenthron looks at cultural differences in approaches to dialogue. She offers important and innovative observations about such matters as this and perceptions of time and how that affects dialogue. Other similar keen points of analysis make Ingenthron’s article an important read, both for scholars and for interfaith practitioners. Dr. Ingenthron’s piece also has implications for the relationship between science and religion, as

well as promising observations for the pursuit of liberation and the evolution of women's rights.

The progression moves next to a classic form of interfaith study. Arvind Sharma juxtaposes the positions of two religions on a significant point of theology and doctrine. The doctrinal comparison and insights in Sharma's "Apostolic Islam and Apostolic Christianity: An Eschatological Comparison" are especially needed at this time.

Stephen Healey conducts his interreligious reflections from still another imaginative starting point. His "Saintly Purpose: Commitment Without Anxiety" charts a piece of territory that lies in between major interfaith impulses to date. There are three classical approaches to interfaith: one, dialogue on doctrine, piety, and religious (ecclesiological) structures; two, action (common purpose) types; and three, mystical types (common spiritual experience). Healey surfs between the dialogue types and the mystical types, grounding his article in the spirituality of the "saints." Healey uses the term saints to refer to people more commonly described as "founders," such as Confucius, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Paul, and the Prophet Muhammad. The particular point of focus for Healey regarding the spiritual giants of history is the paradoxical relationship between purpose and "purposelessness."

Anton Karl Kozlovic makes a very strong and meaningful contribution to this issue. "Four Tactics for Reducing Religious Tensions and Cultural Divisiveness through Interreligious Dialogue," is carefully researched, and proceeds with gravitas. He covers "An appeal to sacred texts," "An appeal to religious authority," "An appeal to behavioral modeling," and "An appeal to quest-for-truth argument." All areas are analyzed and assessed for their strengths and weaknesses. In his conclusion Kozlovic offers a holistic and universal view and set of recommendations. The enterprise and dreams of interfaith only stand to be well served by those who take the time to digest this noteworthy article.

Continuing on our venture outward toward embodiment we come to an applied exercise in interfaith in Allen S. Maller's article entitled, "I Am a Reformed Rabbi and a Muslim Jew." While such suggestions to many might seem heretical or shocking, any who engage deeply and consistently in interfaith dialogue know that one's own religious foundations are constantly augmented and supported by practices and

benefits derived from the spirituality and insights of your dialogue partners. Perhaps Maller's only heresy is saying what we all know (and perhaps doing it in a playfully provocative way). At any rate it is a pleasant and worthwhile account of the constructive interrelatedness and mutually beneficial qualities of sincerely embraced Judaism and Islam.

From a multiplicity of religions living in a single individual, we move finally to interreligious reality living in a couple, in a family. Ata and Morrison proffer for our readers an erudite yet intimate glimpse into a life-long interfaith reality most will never know. "Dynamics of Interfaith Marriage: An Eschatological Vocation Beyond the Limits of Dialogue," takes up "intermarriage," or what Ata and Morrison explain as "crossing ethnic, linguistic, religious, racial, and national boundaries by a woman and a man into life's most intimate union." Perhaps this is the most dramatic, fullest, and most complete and thoroughly vulnerable interfaith experiment. With the rich reflections of this couple we complete this *Dialogue and Alliance* tour across the "Spectrum of Dialogue."

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