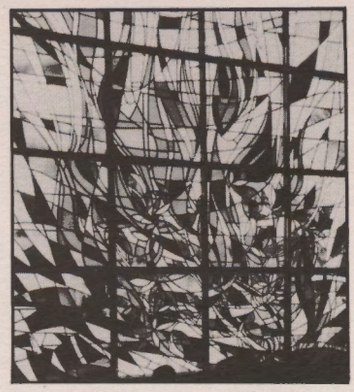
RELIGION

Journal of the KSR



Vol. 27 **No. 3** **August 1990**

Islamic Revival and the Implications for Interfaith Dialogue

by
Jane I. Smith

When I told a colleague in Islamic studies the topic of my conversation with you this evening he responded, "Well that ought to be the shortest talk on record. There are no implications for interfaith dialogue in Islamic revival!" And in fact he was pointing to several realities about which I can offer little argument.

In the first place, much of what we see going on in the Islamic world is taking place precisely because many Muslims have had enough interaction with and influence from Western Christendom and are going about the business of establishing the kinds of Islamic societies that they feel are encumbent on them if they are to assume the responsibilities outlined by God in the Qur'an and the *shari'ah* (Islamic law). Secondly, and closely related, is the reality that many of the Muslims who are involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue sessions, through the World Council of Churches or other ecumenical agencies, are frankly not much in the mood to engage in dialogical conversation that is genuinely dialogical. They feel, no doubt quite rightly, that the history of encounter between the two traditions has been one in which Christians have had a not very hidden agenda for trying to turn Muslims away from their faith. (As one Muslim has put it on behalf of his colleagues, Christians want us to enter the door of dialogue and exit the door of conversion!) Now is the time for Muslims to talk—to explain to Western Christians who they are, what they believe, and how they intend to live in order to be faithful and responsible citizens of God's community.

So then what do we have to discuss this evening? I chose this topic for two reasons. One is to say that in fact there are some areas in which conversation between Muslims and Christians can and must take place, and that it is happening. The other is that I would like to share with you some of my understanding of how and why we in the Western Christian community need to be much more sensitive to the ways in which we can help to foster such conversation. It is no secret that as tensions escalate in a number of areas of the Islamic world there are immediate repercussions in America: Because of the very unbalanced picture of Islam that is transmitted in the media we find ourselves less and less in tune with what Islam really means to the vast majority of its adherents at the same time that we think we are learning more about it. And our inevitably mounting feelings of frustration with and anger at Muslim movements which we find to be repressive, violent and in general quite opposed to what we think religion should be about manifest themselves in responses and acts of genuine intolerance to the growing Muslim community in this country.

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Dr. Smith completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at Michigan State University, Bachelor of Divinity at Hartford Seminary Foundation, and her Ph.D. in the History of Religions at Harvard University in 1970. She then taught for two years in Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University before joining the faculty at Harvard University where she continued her teaching in the History of Religions and served in administrative positions in the Center for the Study of World Religions and Harvard Divinity School to 1986. She then moved to her present position at Iliff School of Theology.

These remarks were given at the 1990 Kansas School of Religion Banquet in April.

In order to justify my theme this evening—the implications of Islamic revival for interfaith dialogue—I should first begin with what I intend by the term revival. It is extremely important to clarify that I do not mean by it what is generally (although inappropriately) called Islamic fundamentalism. Those who make it a business to provide technical definitions of the many terms that describe current Islamic political phenomena argue that a better term for fundamentalism in the Islamic context is Islamism, a movement of radical Muslim activity. Be that as it may, I want to say that I do not intend to look for implications for interfaith dialogue with those whose current dedication to Islam leads to some of the kinds of extremes that our journalists most enjoy reporting: The Ayatollah Khomeni's religious heir Ayatollah Ali Khamenei renewing the call to kill Salman Rushdie for blasphemy against Islam. Or militant Islamic students in Tunisia, members of the Islamic Nahdha (renaissance) movement, carrying knives, iron bars and planks studed with nails to use against police. Or the condemnation of Tunisian author and journalist Youssef Seddik by the

Supreme Islamic Council for putting the Qur'an into comic strip form (Seddik has also been charged with apostasy and his book banned throughout the world). Or the accusation by Muslim conservatives that one Jordanian woman was guilty of atheism and apostasy from Islam because she ran for election to Parliament. Those who levied this accusation wanted an Islamic Shari'ah court to declare this woman a nonperson, dissolve her marriage and grant immunity to anyone who killed her. Or the fact that Iranian women who wear make-up or sheer stockings in public, or expose their hair in what is considered a vulgar way, are liable to punishment by whipping.

Unreasonable and infuriating as these things may seem to us, they do illustrate some of the many different kinds of Islamic attempts to be responsible in the eyes of God and society in the midst of the frightening turbulence of rapidly changing times. But they are not what I intend by revival, and in general they do not represent attitudes reponsive to the prospect of dialogue. To be absolutely fair, I have to say that revival in any case is a difficult term for many Muslims to accept as a characterization of their attempts to appropriate and be faithful to their tradition. They would argue that it is a Western concept with little correspondence to what Muslims intend by their adherence to the principles of Islam. The objection, of course, is that to revive something is to imply that it has been dead. In the same way they object to other "re-" words that Westerners have used to attempt to understand recent movement in Islam—renewal, renaissance, revivification—on the grounds that Islam never has been, and never could be, other than a living reality.

Despite these considerations, which in fact are very important if we are to understand Islam on its own grounds, I want to say that there *are* Muslims today who are extremely interested in rethinking the relevance of Islam to the contemporary world. (It is important here to emphasize that they are not rethinking Islam, which insofar as it is considered to be eternal in the mind of God cannot be rethought, but rather what it means to be Muslim today and to understand and interpret the faith.) They would argue that one of the basic principles of Islamic thought is what is called *ijtihad*—opening the mind and heart to independent interpretation of the faith so as to discover its appropriateness to and relevance for one's own time and place.[1] At this particular moment in world history the prevailing sentiment among many Muslims in a position to make such determinations is to reject this kind of reinterpretation and to reaffirm with both vigor and tenacity the ancient principles that have governed the community for fourteen centuries. This puts those who cherish the faith of Islam but who deeply fear that it may be in danger of ossification at the hands of ultraconservatives in a terribly difficult position. Let me give only a few examples:

It was about a year ago in Egypt that I spent the evening with the chief justice of the supreme court of that country, Said al-Ashmawy. Our conversation was a painful reminder of the current dangers of advocating reform in Islam, at least in some areas of the world. Ashmawy has gone on record repeatedly decrying fundamentalist Islam and urging the necessity of rethinking how to move the Islamic world forward, calling his brand of Islam "liberal" as opposed to "political" (Islamist). He is disgusted by the influence that he sees conservative Muslims exercising over the lives of his and other Muslim peoples, citing such things as the Saudi government subsidizing the wearing of Islamic dress (he claims that young women are sometimes paid L.E. 9 for wearing a headdress, and L.E. 15 for a full face veil). An official of the state, Ashmawy is secure in his position for life. It is his life, however, that he recognizes may be in danger as he continues to speak out for reform.

It is problematic, of course, to get caught in the attempt to discriminate by the use of such categories as liberal or conservative. While Ashmawy and others like him are in fact self-avowedly liberal, many who are also engaged in the attempt to rethink Islam by their own understanding are not. Few Westerners have heard of the Sudanese reformer Mahmud Taha who was assassinated only a few years ago for his innovative attempts to demonstrate the relevance of the Qur'an. Taha was a conservative and a pious follower of Islam whose mistake in the eyes of his opponents was in attempting to differentiate between those parts of the Qur'an that are God's eternal message for all times and those intended as one time illustrations. There are a number of scholars in the contemporary Islamic world—conservative and otherwise—who greatly admire Taha's attempt to understand the Qur'an as both eternal and at the same time a revelation to a particular people at a particular time and age. But he lost his life for it.

Another interesting example of a committed Muslim (here I will avoid either liberal or conservative as a description) attempting to demonstrate the relevance of Islam to today's world is my friend Riffat Hassan of the University of Kentucky. A Pakistani woman deeply devoted to Islam as a religion and a way of life, Riffat is also committed to showing that Islam in its true sense provides rights and opportunities for women equal to those for men. Her model is not, like Taha, to say that some of the Qur'an is eternal and other parts conditioned. Rather she says that everything beyond the Qur'an—that is the development of law and tradition—was fashioned by males and thus is not part of revealed Islam. She begins with two irreducible theological claims: God is just, and God has revealed eternal truth in the Qur'an. Therefore if we find in that book anything that appears to be unjust in relation to women, suggesting for them an inferior capacity, the problem is not the Qur'an but our interpretation of it. She has set for herself the (very difficult) task of what might be called a feminist interpretation of the Qur'an, an undertaking not at all dissimilar to what I see some of my conservative Christian female friends doing in relation to the New Testament.

Reasons for Establishing Dialogue with Muslims

There are, then, many different kinds of things going on in Islam today that suggest the workings of revival—and much of that with the clear end of reform. How can we in the West try to communicate with our Muslim colleagues so as both to support them in these efforts and to learn from them? I think there are at least three very important reasons for us to consider what dialogue with Islam, and with Muslims, can mean. And these correspond closely to the kinds of goals for dialogue and conversation that those who have been involved in interfaith talks have long identified. Briefly, dialogue is for purposes of (1) exchange of information, (2) working together for the resolve of common problems, and (3) learning theologically from each other so as to enrich our own understanding of what it means to be religious.[2] If we accept by the term Islamic revival the self-conscious attempt of Muslims to understand what their tradition means to them and to interpret it so as to be able to cope with a world approaching the 21st century, it is possible to lay out what dialogue between Muslims and Christians can mean, especially insofar as we are facing many of the same challenges.

Exchange of Information

1. Let us look first at the matter of exchange of information. As I indicated earlier, this seems to be the time in the history of interaction between the two traditions when exchange is best understood in terms of Christians listening and Muslims talking. Our Western record of imperialist outreach is very clear in the eyes of Muslims. Despite our best efforts to justify that kind of outreach, in the understanding of many Muslims we have been imperialists since the days of the Crusades and have continued to be so in a variety of ways. Our Christian missionaries to Muslim countries have tried to lower the birth rate of Muslims by introducing birth control methods, to outlaw what they saw as the shameful customs of multiple wives and so-called easy divorce, and of course to convert them away from their faith to ours. All of that, say the Muslims, has been part of a longstanding fear and hatred of Islam on the part of Christians and Westerners and a concentrated effort to do away with Islam and to make Muslims into something else. They see the same kind of imperialism expressed educationally, culturally as for example in the intrusion of Western feminism into Islamic societies, and now politically in the support of Zionism that they identify as yet one more manifestation

of the longstanding plot to do away with Islam.

So now very well may be the time for us to just listen. What can we learn about the ways in which Muslims understand the religion of Islam? It may be a surprise to some of us to discover that while we consider it to be the youngest or most recent of the world's great religions, Muslims see it as the first, the primal, the original human response to the oneness of God. And while those of us whose knowledge of Islam is both informed by and limited to what we read in the press hardly find "pacific" a term that we would immediately identify with that religion, for the Muslim Islam is in its essential nature a religion of peace. It is acknowledgement at the human level that the divinely ordained natural order *is* a condition of peace, harmony and coordination, recognized in the very name Islam which is cognate with the Arabic words for peace—*silm, salam.* To be truly open to listening, to receiving the information that Muslims which to give us about their faith and their way of life, means that we must suspend the natural responses that so often come from my audiences when I try to talk about the deepest and best qualities of Islam. "How can you say they believe in peace, when . . ." It also means that we must see as the Muslim sees that the ideals of Islam are often far from the realities of the words and deeds of those who claim to be its adherents—just as we would have to say about all religions. So the first task of dialogue with those who are concerned for reviving the true meaning of Islam is listening.

Resolution of Common Problems

2. The second reason for engaging revivalist Muslims in conversation, corresponding to a second stated goal of interfaith dialogue, is to find ways in which to work together for the resolve of common problems. If Islam is a religion of peace it is also a religion of justice insofar as the recognition of the oneness of God relates to human integrity. In the Islamic understanding, as one recognizes God's unity one appropriates to one's self the implementation of that unity through living a life of integratedness, integrity and justice.

While it is certainly unwise to underplay the significance of the fundamentalist—or Islamist—uprisings that really are taking place across the Islamic world, it is also true that the vast majority of Muslims are disturbed by the intolerance and appalled by the violence that often accompanies revolutionary movements. Basic to Islam is the clear recognition that the right way for humans to relate to each other is justly and fairly, out of concern, compassion and mutual respect. Here is the grounding and basis for the kind of cooperation that can help all of us concerned with how to live ethically in an increasingly complex world.

One way in which Westerners might begin in this process is to try to understand some of the reasons why Muslims find themselves so often drawn to the very kinds of extremist versions of Islam that are so incomprehensible to us. In many cases these reasons are economic—people in many areas of the world are finding it increasingly difficult to survive and are turning to the promises of the Islamists to create a better and more viable society. Peasants migrating from rural areas in hopes of a better life find themselves jammed into squalid urban slums. Students graduating from secondary schools and universities have little hope of finding employment. Islamic banks (those based on the principle of no interest, a requirement in strict Islamic terms) offer credit and would-be borrowers are eager to demonstrate a pro-Islamic stance. Foreign debts and rising prices seem out of control in many areas, engendering a conservative religious response that often seems to be the only alternative for hope.

And in many instances the reasons are political. The vision of a truly Islamic state, consistent with the theocratic nature of Islam, is always there as an ideal to be hoped for. What we see as the fanaticism of crazed terrorists in assassinating Muslim rulers (perhaps the most painful example for us was the murder of Nobel Peace Prize winner Anwar Sadat), some understand as the final result of a very natural antipathy toward those who claim to be ruling in the name of Islam while catering to other—especially Western—interests. And there is no question that much of the extremism that characterizes many Muslims in the Middle East today is a result of deep discouragement on the part of, and for, Palestinians as they see continuing U.S. support for Israel and experience no progress toward peace.

Perhaps the area in which Westerners might find the greatest sympathy with Islamic conservativism is that which relates to an evergrowing fear of the breakdown of moral and ethical standards. Drug abuse is sweeping the Islamic world. Despite the most creative efforts of Middle East governments, it appears that the spread of AIDS cannot be stopped. A new slogan soon to appear on public buses in Kuwait says "Knowledge and virtue protect you from AIDS," appealing to the population's traditional sense of Islamic virtue to stop the spread of the deadly disease. (Sexual intercourse before marriage is absolutely taboo in Islam and many would say that it is because of the licentiousness of the West that the plague of AIDS has reached Muslim countries.)

In the Muslim population of the United States, which is estimated at between two and three million and is growing at a fairly rapid rate, there is deep concern for what is perceived as a loss of basic American ethical and moral standards. Muslims fear that their young people, if allowed to stray from the fundamental principles of Islam, will become pregnant before marriage, will be involved in drugs and crime, will join gangs and fall into the terrible traps that seem set for so many of the youth of this country. They worry that if Muslim women do not dress conservatively and thereby acknowledge their affiliation to conservative Islam they will be targets for the unwanted advances of men and will be put into positions that both compromise them and inevitably contribute to the sexual revolution that they find so dangerous to the harmonious functioning of society. By dressing so as to affirm their Islamic identity, by refusing to let their children date or gather outside of the safe environment of the home or the mosque, by recognizing the authority of males in the family structure as a way of trying to avoid the perils of family breakdown—that is to say, through many of the responses that we as non-Muslims label reactionary—Muslims are trying to cling to a way of life that they see as the only viable alternative in a deeply disruptive society.

So what does all this have to do with dialogue? I would suggest that beyond simply helping us to understand why Muslims are trying to be more Muslim, it brings to light a number of areas in which we can begin to talk together for the purposes of living and working together. We do in fact share many of the same kinds of economic concerns, although they may manifest themselves somewhat differently in different societies. Prominent on the Western as well as the Islamic agenda must be the question of how to address the universal problems of unequal distribution of wealth. And we can actually work together to effect certain kinds of political changes. A Muslim-Christian-Jewish dialogue group to which I belong in Denver has met for over two years. We have not made much progress in discussing theological concerns, but we have succeeded in coming to some quite astonishing consensus in relation to the question of Palestine and are working to make our voice (and now it is one voice) heard in various political arenas. And surely there is the basis for common concern as we identify together problems that challenge us on the deepest ethical and moral level. How do we make decisions in today's world—not just as Christians or Muslims or Jews—but as persons trying to understand our common calling to live lives of ethical responsibility. It seems increasingly evident that dialogue is not only possible, but that it is essential.

Enriching Our Own Religious Understanding

3. Which brings us to the third way in which dialogue can be envisioned. And in fact it is happening in a number of areas between Christians and those who are seriously rethinking how to understand Islam in the contemporary world. That is the area that I want to call theological, bearing in mind both that for most Christians the term is too esoteric to be engaging and that for Muslims there is a real question whether or not theology is even an appropriate or translatable category. Again begging that ques-

tion, let me say that it is in the exchange of our respective understandings of the ways in which the divine has impinged on human life and made demands on it that I believe lies the possibility of growth for all of us.

A recent meeting of the National Conference of Christians and Jews was devoted to a Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogue concerning the meaning of revelation. The discussion quickly turned from the ways in which the several traditions have understood the meaning of revelation to a sharing of the deepest purposes of dialogue. As one participant observed, such conversations are in fact "community-forming moments which encompass all of humanity." While it commonly affirmed that the end of such interfaith conversations is not to come out with some form of new religion, it was also a shared conviction at that meeting that it is in the encounter with the other that the greatest possibilities lie for a genuine reconstruction of the self. As one Muslim put it, "Islamic 'rethinking' is in fact occasioned by the interaction with the other."

Muslims and Christians alike recognize that the exchange of deeply held convictions among persons of differing theological persuasions is a very problematic business. One response is to "objectify" one's study, to assume that the most direct way to understand the faith of another is to bracket one's own beliefs (the phenomenological *epoché*) and to look dispassionately at what others have held to be true. It is not only not necessary to form judgments about what one is studying, that position would hold, but to do so clearly would get in the way of objective understanding. To accept this model is to take us back to the area of information exchange and to deny that a third category of dialogue, that in which minds may be changed, is viable. And I personally believe it is the case that by objectifying another's perspective, i.e. by not taking it personally seriously, one greatly lessens the possibility both that one will in fact understand it and also that those of us who are teachers will be able to communicate to students what that perspective has meant to those who hold to it dearly.

So another alternative is to test the convictions of the other against one's own deeply held beliefs, to try them on, so to speak. This has obvious problems of another kind. An old professor of mine once commented that to try to understand the faith of other persons is a very dangerous venture. Real understanding, he insisted, implies conversion. By this he obviously meant not the switching of faith allegiance but the possibility of personal change, to a broadening of one's own religious vision. It seems to be true that no matter what position one takes, what kind of theological orientation one adopts in relation to the study of another faith tradition, it is in fact a dangerous business. I think it is fair to say that for a number of Muslims and Christians today it is nonetheless a risk well worth taking.

This is not to say that even reformist Muslims, those engaged in rethinking what it means to be Muslim, are open to what one might call theological negotiation. For most of the history of Christianity the dominant theological stance vis-à-vis other religions is that the message of the gospel is simply and basically right, or true, and to the extent that other revelations or understandings differ with that they are by definition wrong. Those of us who have grown up with a more liberal orientation are perhaps uncomfortable with this kind of exclusivist position. The fact is, however, that it not only characterizes the understanding of many within the Christian community today but it has been the classical position of persons of faith within virtually *all* religious traditions of the world throughout history to the extent to which they have been aware of the existence of different belief systems. And—I cannot stress this too strongly—it is the position of most Muslims today, even those most deeply engaged in interfaith conversations.

For some persons, however, even some within the Islamic community, sacrificing the possibility that the faith of others might in fact be valid even if it contradicts or compromises the tenets of their own faith is no longer emotionally or intellectually viable. What are the alternatives for such persons? One possibility is to say that when you get right down to it we all pretty much believe the same thing anyway. If I reinterpret my beliefs a bit, and you reinterpret yours a bit (we may say in dialogue with our brothers and sisters representing other religions), we will find that the common human experience leads to an essentially common perception of the divine. Revelation in this understanding has taken somewhat different forms, but ultimately these are simply culture-bound variations of understanding masking the commonality of divine-human relationship.

A number of efforts have been made along this line in recent years by scholars and others interested in finding the common ground of dialogue. It also provides a way of avoiding the exclusivism of the position that says I am right and therefore you are wrong. We need to understand, however, that such a position is looked on with great suspicion by Muslims. The fact is that at this present moment in history most of them do not care a great deal whether or not Christians see their own experience and their theology as common to that of Muslims. They know that the revelation of the Qur'an is valid and true and eternal. And they are also getting very savvy in seeing that what is often being done by those who hold such a position is really a rearranging of Muslim beliefs so that they sound more Christian. The effort is then revealed as a kind of disguised version of the position which holds finally to the absolute truth of one's own religious understanding and thus the relativity of another's. For the Muslim it often appears as another example of the cultural/religious imperialism for which we Westerners have legitimately been called to task by our Eastern colleagues a great deal of late.

Two processes seem to be at work here. One is the attempt to discover where commonality really lies, and the other is to see where one is willing to step outside the bounds of one's own faith tradition to see how it might feel to stand in the shoes of the other. As to the first, many find this option of looking for commonalities attractive precisely because they are not easy with the alternatives. It is here that Muslim-Christian dialogue generally finds itself today, and the process of discovering that in fact we really do have more in common than our history of mutual antagonism might lead us to believe is a truly exciting one. And yet sometimes nagging at the edges of our discussions is the danger of a kind of syncretism that destroys the vitality of our individual revelations and puts our most cherished beliefs into a bland mixture of mutually palatable doctrines. Here is where we meet the challenge of trying to find a different way in which to affirm our own understanding while still honoring the integrity of the understanding of the other.

At this point in the conversation most Muslims, even those willing to engage in dialogue, will say that there are clear lines beyond which they can not cross. While most Christians probably agree, some would say that we might talk about the lines that we have not yet been able to cross. In any case, it seems clear that in the very process of dialogue new understandings are being revealed not only about the other but about ourselves. Fumitaka Matsuoka of the University of Chicago recently commented in an article entitled "A Reflection on 'Teaching Theology From an Intercultural Perspective'"[3] that in the dialogue encounter "both parties become conscious not only of their own cultural and linguistic worlds, but also of the liminal world that is born between them through encounter with each other's self-reflection." (p. 39) It is my clear sense that in the discussions in which I have participated involving Muslims and Christians, there have been the glimmerings of discovering together something new, neither unrelated to nor unduly constrained by the traditions that inform us and sustain us.

Here, then, we might actually find the way to move past the search for mutual information and for commonalities. Acknowledging the presumably infinite resourcefulness of the divine, we can take up the challenge of contemplating different perspectives playing off against one another to reveal new understandings of our own doctrines and dogmas. It may serve the purpose of freeing us from the guilt of seeking refuge from the complications of diversity by retreating into our own individual traditions, and therefore allow us to proclaim the unique and original truths of those traditions with renewed vigor. This could, in fact, be a new cut on the old theme of proclamation, while the very insistence on the necessity of multiple perspectives itself would preclude falling into the trap of exclusivism. It is perhaps not a coincidence that one of the most accomplished Western

Christian scholars of Islam and a frequent participant in Muslim-Christian dialogue, my former professor Wilfred Cantrell Smith, is himself a leader in the quest for this kind of advance. In his *Towards a World Theology* he observes that "The exciting new phase in religious history, into which we are just on the threshold of entering, is the emergence of . . . a global and verified self-consciousness of religious diversity."[4]

I would encourage all of us, then, to search for ways in which to engage the Muslims whom we will increasingly find in our communities in conversation toward all of these ends: For better exchange of information, particularly so as to enable us to understand that the worldview of Islam is not encompassed by the reactionary and fearful responses of those who often seem to dominate the world stage. For a sharing of mutual problems and concerns and seeking for ways in which to work together for their common solution. And for those moments of deep sharing in which differences are recognized, diversity applauded, and perhaps together steps taken into that liminal world that is born between parties involved in dialogue through the very process of encounter with each other's self-reflection.

As the Qur'an affirms, Islam is a perfect religion given by God to humankind.[5] But Muslims are not perfect—they are human. In their humanity they are subject to painful struggles for identity and self-definition. And those who dare to re-think towards the end of re-form find themselves in a particularly difficult position. If we who observe the unfolding of events in today's world arrogantly continue to assess Islamic movements as reactionary and medieval we will contribute little to the advancement of mutual understanding. But if we see and engage Muslims as members of the human community from and with whom we have much to learn, then perhaps we can begin to view Islam not as an alien and repressive religion, but as one of the many ways through which God reaches out and touches human hearts.

Notes

1. "When it comes to applying the Sharia to the everyday life of Muslims, the choice is between taqlid—that is, dependence on or imitation of the opinions and interpretations of the ulama of the past—and ijtihad, independent interpretation. By and large Islamic reformers have reiterated the believer's right to practise ijtihad." Dilop Hiro, *Holy War: The Rise of Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1989), p. 170.
2. For a fuller elaboration of some of these themes see Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20/1 (Winter 1983).
3. *Theological Education* (Autumn 1989), pp. 35–42.
4. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 124.
5. See Surah 5, verse 3 in which God reveals to the Prophet Muhammad that He has perfected His religion and it is Islam.

KSR Fall Conferences "Compassion and Fatigue: Maintaining Your Compassion Quotient"

The Kansas School of Religion Conference Committee has completed plans for four conferences on "Compassion and Fatigue: Maintaining Your Compassion Quotient" at the following cities in 1990:

Salina	September 20
Hutchinson	September 21
Parsons	September 28
Topeka	September 29

The presenters will be the husband/wife team Rich and Dianne O'Brian of Topeka. Dianne, RN, is the Assistant Marketing Director for Parkview (Psychiatric) Hospital of Topeka. Previously she was Assistant Program Director for the Topeka Hospice program. Rich is an ordained American Baptist minister specializing in small church survival. His full-time position is News Anchor for ABC's Topeka affiliate, KTKA.

The O'Brians will give four presentations at each site where participants will be enabled to:

1. Identify signs of compassion fatigue in oneself and others.
2. Describe ways to compensate for compassion fatigue when circumstances remain unchanged.
3. Discuss ways to recognize the spiritual dimension as a postive force for growth.
4. Identify sources of encouragement for oneself in the midst of compassion fatigue.

A panel consisting of a nurse, social worker, and a member of the clergy will respond to the two morning sessions; following the afternoon address, conferees will be involved in group discussion.

These conferences are sponsored by the Kansas School of Religion, the Washburn University School of Nursing, and locally by the Ministerial Associations of Hutchinson, Salina, and Parsons, and by Interfaith of Topeka.

The cost is $35 and includes lunch for those who preregister. The cost is $40 for those who register the day of the conference (lunch cannot be guaranteed). For further information on these conferences, please contact Judy Ventsam at the Kansas School of Religion, 1300 Oread, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. Telephone 913-843-7257.

Call for Papers

"Visions and Visionary Experience in Religion: An Interdisciplinary Conference" will explore the religious visions in different cultural and historical contexts from a variety of academic perspectives. Sponsored by the University of Kansas Department of Religious Studies, the conference will be held April 7–9, 1991.

There will be three keynote speakers. DR. ANN BRAUDE is professor of American religions and anthropology of religion at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. An expert on American Spiritualism, she is author of *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Beacon Press, 1989). DR. WILLIAM A. CHRISTIAN, JR., is an independent scholar currently residing in the Canary Islands. An expert on popular Catholicism and local religion in Spain, he is author of numerous books, including *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, 1981), and *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (2nd ed., Princeton, 1989). DR. HARRIS LENOWITZ is professor of languages and comparative literuature at the Middle East Center at the University of Utah. An expert on the Eastern European Jewish visionary Jacob Frank, he is editor and author of numerous books, including *Transparencies: Jewish Pages* (Finch Lane, 1984), and *Exiled in the Word,* with Jerome Rothenberg (Copper Canyon, 1989).

Papers are invited from all interested scholars. Abstracts (250 words) should be sent to Professor Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, Department of Religious Studies, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045.

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(USPS 460-280)
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