

The George Washington University
Department of Religion

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Newsletter

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A Note from the Chair

Dewey Wallace

This is the last year for which I will write the Chair's note for the Department of Religion Newsletter, and my last "chairly" duty before beginning a sabbatical leave for the academic year 2011-2012. It has been a year of important developments with regard to our departmental faculty, as it has been the first with us for Associate Professor Xiaofei Kang, who has enriched our program with an array of courses dealing with Chinese Religion, and the second year for Irene Oh, who was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of Religion in May, 2011. She has also advanced the Peace Studies Program so that it can be chosen as a Columbian College major—she describes the program elsewhere in this newsletter. Derek Malone-France was also promoted to Associate Professor and reports in his update on his role as a moderator of debates. There is also a report on a conference on Afghanistan for which Professor Kelly Pemberton was one of the organizers and our usual updates of faculty activities. Two of our part-time Professorial Lecturers, Balaji Hebbar and Natalie Houghtby-Haddon, who also works full-time at the university as Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in Public Leadership, published books which are described in this newsletter. Houghtby-Haddon's book is based on her dissertation directed by Paul Duff in the Human Sciences Program. Also in this newsletter is a report on the advising and mentoring activities of another of our Professorial Lecturers, Mohammad Faghfoory. Some exciting new courses have graced our offerings this past year: Professor of Law Robert Tuttle taught a course on Religion and Law, and Richard Boles, graduate student in the Ph.D. program in American Religious History taught a course on African American Religion. Administratively there has been much to do: all courses had to be renumbered for the change from a three to a four digit system and much faculty effort went into transforming some of our courses so that they met the new college-wide system of General Education Perspective Analysis and Communication (GEPAC) requirements. It was a good year for our students as well: I congratulate the eleven who were inducted into Theta Alpha Kappa, the winner of our Yeide Prize for Excellence in Religious Studies, the three undergraduates and one graduate student who were awarded Seyyed Hossein Nasr Prizes for Islamic Studies, and the two graduate students who completed M.A. theses. They will all be named elsewhere in this newsletter. Descriptions of the lectures sponsored by the Department of Religion also follow, as does a bibliographical essay on the 400th anniversary of the King James translation of the Bible.

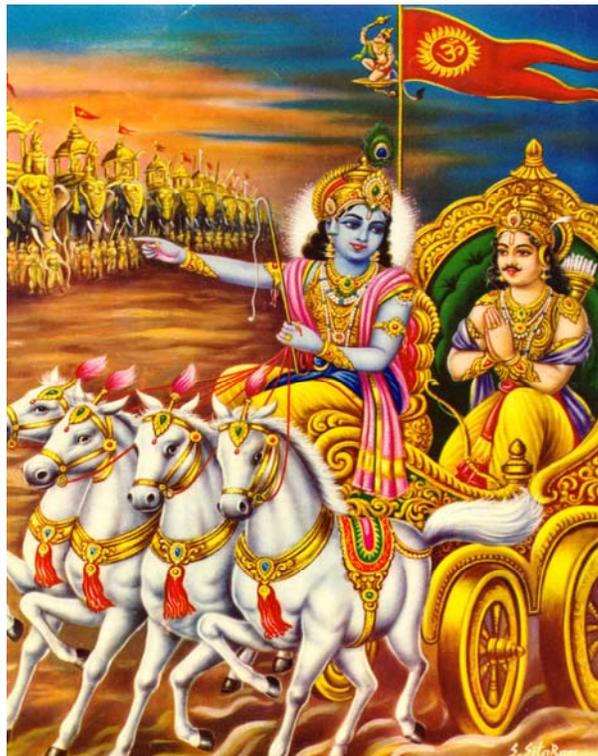
Update from Irene Oh, director of Peace Studies:

Peace Studies continues to grow as a program in the Columbian College. It has recently been approved on the college level to be a major. It will continue to be offered as a minor. The Peace Studies program offered a new course this spring in Peace Building, taught by Tareq Massarani.

David and Sherry Berz Lecture, Fall 2010

This year's annual Berz Lecture, supported by the David and Sherry Berz Fund for Religious Studies, was given in September 2010 by Gurcharan Das, a columnist, business leader, and public intellectual well-known not only in India but in the United States. Das spoke about his recent book, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma*, which describes India's great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, in which he draws out ethical paradigms from among the quandaries and dilemmas of different heroes and heroines of the epic, and relates them to current business and political issues faced in today's world. Das tailored his well-attended and well-received talk to include issues faced as well in academia, back to which Das comes having graduated from Harvard University in philosophy and politics. A lively give-and-take discussion followed the talk.

Das is a versatile and prolific writer whose prior works include the best selling *India Unbound* (Knopf), which has been translated into a dozen languages and filmed by the BBC; the novel, *A Fine Family* (Penguin); three dramas; and a book of essays. He writes a regular column for the *Times of India*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Eenadu* and other newspapers, and occasionally for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Newsweek* and *Foreign Affairs*. He was CEO of Procter & Gamble India before he took early retirement to become a full time writer.



Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, Spring 2011

Julie Galambush, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary, was the Ziffren Lecturer this year, presenting a thought-provoking exploration of whether the writers of the gospels were actually anti-Jewish, as present-day readers of the gospels often assume. Dr. Galambush proposed that the anti-Jewish rhetoric in the gospels is really an internal conversation among various Jewish groups coming to grips with the destruction of Herod's temple in 70CE by Rome. In answer to the question that served as the title for her lecture, **"The New Testament: Jewish or Anti-Jewish?"** she came down on the side that it was not anti-Jewish to begin with, but that once the New Testament text moved out of its original social and cultural context, it could certainly be read as anti-Jewish...and has been over the centuries. Some of the students who were present at the lecture offered the following reflections:

I was also blown away by her vast knowledge of the Bible. When questions were asked she knew references and was very well versed on all things in the Bible. She was very enthusiastic and lively about what she was discussing and that made me all the more interested. It was also interesting to me that she went from being Christian to a person of Jewish faith.

Julie Galambush's lecture was one of the most interesting I have attended in my time at George Washington. The way in which she explained the manner that Jews are portrayed in the New Testament was something completely new to me. I had recognized some of the undeserved prejudice towards Jews before, but she really enhanced my understanding of the topic.

The Ziffren Lecture is presented each year by the GW Religion Department in memory of Abbie Ziffren, a long-time member of the Department, whose interests included peace studies and South Asian religions.



Faculty Updates

This year **Eyal Aviv** received an honorary appointment at the Elliot School. In addition to a course about East Asian Buddhism, he taught a new course about Buddhist philosophy. Professor Aviv published a book review titled "Buddhism Meets Modernity" and continued to work on his book project on the role Buddhist Philosophy played in the formation of modern Chinese intellectual history. Professor Aviv also wrote an article that he intend to publish on the tension between traditional Buddhist historiography and so-called scientific historiography in mid 20th century Taiwan.

Professor Aviv will present two papers this summer in international conferences. A paper about the changing role of lay Buddhism in modern China will be presented in the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Taiwan. The second paper concerns the theory of Buddha Nature in the thought of a modern Buddhist Philosopher Ouyang Jingwu and will be presented in Cape Town South Africa this July. These papers will also be sent out for publication.

This year **Paul Duff** has completed the following articles:

"The Book of Revelation." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, edited by Michael Coogan (forthcoming)

"Paul's Elusive Opponents: Reading 2 Corinthians 3 without the False Apostles of 2 Cor 11:13," *Biblical Research* (forthcoming)

He was placed on to the GW "Wall of Fame" in 2011. As a result, his caricature will be hanging in Marvin Center, 5th floor.

Professor Duff stepped down as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies on June 30.

This past year saw the publication of Professor **Rob Eisen**'s latest book, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* with Oxford University Press. The book is a sweeping survey that analyzes the tensions between peaceful and violent aspects of Judaism throughout history. It provides important insight into the current Middle East conflict by explaining how these tensions manifest themselves in contemporary Zionism. Professor Eisen is also conducting research on a number of other topics, including attitudes to war in Jewish law and a comparison between the self-perceptions of Jews and Muslims both past and present. He has also introduced a new course this past year that ties in with his research interests entitled "Peace and Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."

Alf Hiltebeitel's two books on the concept *dharma* came out this past year: a small volume written for undergraduates titled *Dharma* (University of Hawaii Press, 2010), and the far bigger *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*. South Asia Research Series, Patrick Olivelle (Oxford University Press, 2011). For an October 2010 double panel honoring the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Pune Critical Edition of the *Mahabharata* and the work of V. S. Sukthankar, its first editor-in-chief, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Annual South Asia Conference, he gave a paper titled "On Sukthankar's 'S' and Some Shortsighted Assessments and Uses of the Pune Critical Edition," which has since come out in *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, 2 (2011): 89-128. ["S" was Sukthankar's notation for variants found only in the *Mahabharata*'s southern recension.] At a February 2011 conference in New Delhi titled "Jaya Utsav: Celebrating Living Traditions of Mahabharata," sponsored by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Hiltebeitel gave a keynote address with edited video titled "Aravan-Kuttantavar, from Kuvakkam to Coimbatore: 'Making That Young Bride a Widow, Whoever She May Be.'" While there in Delhi, he also gave an invited talk at Gargi College titled "Divine Mothers of the *Mahabharata* Patriline." In April 2011, at a commemorative conference titled "Du texte au terrain, du terrain au texte: dialogues disciplinaires autour de l'œuvre de Madeleine Biardeau," Journée du Centre d'Étude de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, he presented under the title, "You Have to Read the Whole Thing': Some Reflections on Madeleine Biardeau's *Mahabharata*." Also now published is: "Just My Imagination? Puzzling through a Duryodhana Festival near Dharmapuri, Tamilnadu," in Hilary Rodriguez, ed., *Hinduism in Practice*. 87-103 (London: Routledge, 2011)—a book for undergraduate students on how scholars in different fields approach fieldwork on religious life and practices in India. He continues serving as Editor in Chief, *Hinduism*, OBO (Oxford Bibliography Online) and as Board Chair of the South Indian Term Abroad Program.

Xiaofei Kang: I enjoyed my first year of teaching at GW. I taught "Confucian Literature in East Asia" and "Daoism in East Asia" in the fall and "Religion and Philosophy in East Asia" and "Myth, Ritual and Popular Religion in China" in the spring. I am at the final stage of finishing the collaborative book project (with Professor Donald Sutton of Carnegie Mellon University) on Huanglong, an old multi-ethnic pilgrimage center and a new UNESCO World Nature Heritage Reserve in southwest China. A co-authored article, "Making Tourists and Remaking Locals: Religion, Ethnicity, and Patriotism on Display in Northern Sichuan," appeared in Tim Oakes and Donald Sutton eds., *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism, and the Chinese State*. Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. I have begun research and writing for another project on religion and women in the Communist discourse of revolution. I have written two papers on the subject. One was presented at a conference in December 2010 in Taiwan, and the other will be delivered at the Conference on Women, Gender and Chinese Religions in June 2011 at the University of Macau. I also served the AAR's International Connection Committee and two steering committees and was on the executive board of directors of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions.

Derek Malone-France served as Interim Executive Director of GW's University Writing Program this year. His essay "Between Hartshorne and Molina: A Whiteheadian Conception of Divine Foreknowledge" was the lead article in a "Special Focus" issue of the journal *Process Studies*, which included several responses to his essay, as well as his replies to these responses. In October, he delivered an invited lecture at the University of Chicago, as part of a special symposium on "Politics as a Moral Question," sponsored by the Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion and the University of Chicago School of Divinity. In February, he moderated a debate at GW between former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich and former Governor of Vermont Howard Dean, which was televised live on C-SPAN, and he delivered an invited lecture at the US Library of Congress as part of a special symposium on "The Legacy of Alfred North Whitehead." In March, he moderated a panel on "Democracy and Public Argument" at GW's School of Media and Public Affairs, which featured New York Times columnist, Bob Herbert; Director of eStrategy for the Romney '08 Presidential Campaign, Mindy Finn; Director of the Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media, Bud Ward; and former Political Editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Albert May. Also, in March, at the invitation of First Lady Michelle Obama, he gave a special workshop on College Writing at the White House for the President and First Lady's high school student mentoring program. And, in June, Derek was promoted to Associate Professor.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr published two titles: *In Search of the Sacred* and *Islam in the Modern World*. He is also working on editing vol.3 of the *Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*. In March 2010 Professor Nasr travelled to Turkey to give lectures on "Rumi, Beauty, and Art", "Religion, Modernity, and the Future" (a dialogue with Harvey Cox), and "Alliance of Civilization" (under the auspices of the Prime Minister of Turkey.) He headlined the October 2010 Interfaith Summit on Happiness at Emory University, along with the Dalai Lama, Jonathan Sacks, and other noted guests. On November 30, 2010, he received the Joseph B. and Toby Gittler Prize. In January 2011 he participated in "A Christian-Muslim Conversation on Jefferson's Statute" with Martin E. Marty at the University of Mary Washington. He gave keynote addresses at Yale University and Oberlin College in April 2011, and published several articles throughout the year.

In May, **Irene Oh** received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor of Religion. She recently published "Motherhood in Christianity and Islam: Critiques, Realities, Possibilities," and "Sexing Comparative Ethics: Bringing Forth Feminist and Gendered Perspectives," with Elizabeth Bucar and Grace Kao in the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, as well as a review of John Kelsay's, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* in the *Journal of Church and State*. Her article, "Islamic Voices and the Reconsideration of Human Rights," has also been accepted by the *Journal of Church and State* and will appear this winter. She continues her work as a board member for both the Society of Christian Ethics and the Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics, and as a member of Steering Committee for the Comparative Religious Ethics group of the American Academy of Religion. Last year, Irene taught the introductory course to Peace Studies in the fall, and the capstone seminar in the spring, in addition to bioethics.

Kelly Pemberton returned to work this spring semester after the birth of her daughter in October, 2010. She continues to work on a monograph about the revival of Galeno-Islamic medical therapies in India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Egypt today, and will be travelling to Istanbul, Turkey, this summer to complete a final set of interviews with traditional medicine practitioners in that country and to conduct research at Bogazici University. She has several pieces of writing forthcoming. These include a chapter titled "A Chishti Response to Communal Strife in India Today," in Charles Ramsey and Clinton Bennett, eds., *In Search of South Asian Sufis*; an article, "The Production of Islamic Modernities: Contemporary Didactic Literature for Women in Turkey" for *Near East Quarterly*, a review of Nisrine Abiad's, *Sharia, Muslim States, and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations: A Comparative Study*, and an article on civil society in Libya. On March 30, Professor Pemberton and Professor Sean Aday of the School of Media and Public Affairs and the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, along with sponsorship from the Department of Religion, Peace Studies, and the Women's Studies Program, convened a round table of experts from the United States, Canada, and Afghanistan to discuss women's role in building civil society in Afghanistan. An audio file of the program, "Women, Reconstruction, and the Challenges of Civil Society in Afghanistan," is featured on the website of the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication.

Dewey Wallace completed his last year as chair of the department, and as of July 1 will begin a sabbatical year in which he will work on a book tentatively entitled *Preachers and Puritans*, which will examine the various ways in which nineteenth-century American Congregationalist, Unitarian, and Presbyterian clergy variously celebrated, reinvisioned, and repudiated their Puritan heritage. His book *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation*, was published by Oxford University Press in April. Several entries he wrote appeared in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and a book review in the journal *Interpretation*. He is under contract with Oxford University Press to write a chapter on the theology of John Bunyan (author of *Pilgrim's Progress*) for a collection of essays about Bunyan. In May he was interviewed by Atlantic Television News on the subject of "Recent Trends in American Religion" for a program to be broadcast internationally.



Yeide Prize, 2011

In 2009, Professor Harry Yeide retired from the Religion Department after decades of teaching and service. In honor of Harry and his service to the Department and University, the Department established The Harry Yeide Prize for Excellence in the Field of Religious Studies to be awarded each spring to an outstanding graduating Religion student.

This year, the Yeide Prize was awarded to **Santina Polky**. Santina graduated in December 2010 and spent the Spring working as an events coordinator for Easter Seals, a non-profit, from her home in Maine. In July she left for Asia for six months where she will be doing volunteer work and traveling. Three months of her trip will be in India where in the fall she will be doing independent research on religious events while staying with various host families. Eventually she would like to go to graduate school in religion.

The Religion Department congratulates Santina on her achievements and on receiving this prize and wishes her best luck in her future endeavors!



A special thank you to our donors who funded this prize. The department continues to welcome contributions to this fund in recognition of Harry's scholarship, leadership, and friendship. If you would like to preserve Harry's presence in our department, please see the last page of this newsletter for how to contribute.

Special Thanks

We thank the following people for their contributions and support during the 2010-2011 academic year (July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011)

- Dr. Cheryl Beil, '84
- Dr. Paul Brooks Duff
- Dr. Mohammad H. Faghfoory
- Dr. Henry J. Ferry, '60
- Ms. Emily A. Filler, '03
- Ms. Santina E. Polky, '11
- Dr. Jim Rider, '72
- Mrs. Janet G. Schlotzhauer, '60
- Dr. Wesley Schlotzhauer, Jr., '59
- Ms. Keturah S. Solomon
- Ms. Gael D. Summer, '75
- Mr. Richard N. Taliaferro, Jr., '60
- Mrs. Michele B. Wahba, '99
- Peter R. Wahba, M.D., '99
- Ms. Rachael E. Whitley, '08
- Ms. Sara Ann Winters, '11
- Ms. Heather M. Young, '94
- Mr. Michael C. Zito, '01
- Mrs. Carolyn Hetzer Zuttel, '78



Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr Prize for Islamic Studies

This year, the Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr Prize for Islamic Studies was established in the Department of Religion.

The undergraduate prizes are awarded to Religion majors in their junior or senior years who have demonstrated an interest in Islamic and Shi'i studies and a commitment to interfaith comparison and understanding including the study of Islam and of at least one other religious tradition. This year's undergraduate prize recipients are:

- Sarah Casewit
- Kendrick Kuo
- Sara Winters

The graduate prize is awarded to graduate-level students in the Department of Religion. Candidates are expected to have taken courses in Islamic and Shi'i studies and to demonstrate interest in and a commitment to interfaith comparison and understanding.

This year's graduate prize recipient is:

- Laila Ghauri

**Theta Alpha Kappa
Congratulations to our 2011 Inductees!**

- Sarah Casewit
- Fatemeh Hosseinpour
- Kendrick Kuo
- Justin Lanciault
- Kabeer Parwani
- Akhilesh Pillalamarri
- Adam Weiner
- Sara Winters
- Stephanie Wiseman



Spotlight on Adjunct Faculty

Natalie K. Houghtby-Haddon's book, *Changed Imagination, Changed Obedience: Social Imagination and the Bent-Over Woman in the Gospel of Luke*, was published by Wipf and Stock Publishers in April 2011. The book develops and applies a model of the Social Imagination to Luke 13:10-17, an encounter between Jesus and a woman who has been crippled for 18 years that takes place on the Sabbath in a synagogue. Exploring mythic, communal, social, and cultural elements of the story, Natalie suggests that the Bent-Over Woman embodies Jesus' claim in the Nazareth synagogue that "today, these scriptures are fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:16-21), and that the woman is a metaphor for the post-Pentecost community that gathers in Jesus' name. Students who have taken Prof. Houghtby-Haddon's courses will find the Social Imagination model she develops very familiar, since they have applied it in various ways in those courses over the years. She is very grateful for their insights and recommendations for improving the model!

Mohammad Faghfoory

Report on student advising activities

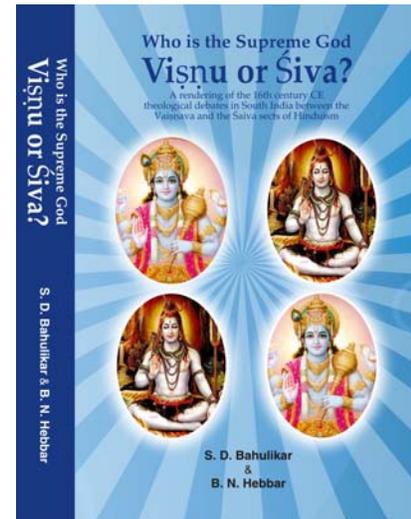
Professorial Lecturer Faghfoory advised Sarah Casewit, an undergraduate Religion major, and recommended her for an intensive Arabic language course in Damascus. He also recommended a former advisee, Sina Azodi, to the Elliott School for International Affairs, and he has since been admitted to the Master's program at that school.

Professor Faghfoory was an advisor and mentor for Laila Ghauri, who is completing her MA in the Religion Department. Professor Faghfoory introduced and recommended her for an intensive course in Arabic language in Damascus where she spent eight weeks last summer. He also introduced her for an internship in a week-long interfaith leadership training course at Yale University, and sent her for a 12-day long seminar at the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, VA. In the IIIT internship students from Muslim countries as well as American Muslim students attend seminars taught by eminent Muslim-American scholars. Professor Faghfoory recommended Laila for doctoral programs to several schools. Laila will be beginning her PhD coursework at Temple University in the Fall 2011.

The Religion Department appreciates Professor Faghfoory's commitment to helping our students.

Balaji N. Hebbar

This year saw the publication of a book co-written by Professorial Lecturer Hebbar.



This book contains the translations of four Sanskrit manuscripts of the 16th and 17th centuries CE authored by polemicists in South India arguing out their respective theological positions with great dialectical skill, and with a remarkably encyclopedic knowledge of the Hindu scriptural lore.

Professor Hebbar also had the opportunity to meet with several important Theravada Buddhist monks.



Professor Balaji Hebbar (center) with (far left) Ven. Dr. Wannachai Chayawanno, Dean, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Thailand, and (immediate left) Ven. Uparatana, the chief-adjudicator of the Sri-Lankan Buddhist monks in North America. Professor Hebbar spoke with them about training Buddhist monks in comparative religion.

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible and Books About it:

Dewey Wallace

The year 2011 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible, the most widely read translation in the English-speaking world for more than 300 of those years. It took about a generation after 1611 for it to catch on, but it eventually replaced such earlier versions as the Geneva Bible, beloved of the Puritans in old and New England because of its strongly Calvinist annotations, and the Bishop's Bible, the version preferred by much of the hierarchy of the Church of England; the earlier Coverdale version persisted in the Psalter portion of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Not that everyone liked the KJV: Hugh Broughton, a learned biblical scholar who was overlooked when its translators were chosen, declared that he would be torn apart by wild horses before he would acquiesce in its use—Bible translation has often been contested terrain. In the second half of the twentieth century, with a profusion of new translations, the KJV lost its hegemony, not without contestation: when the complete Revised Standard Version came out in 1952, it begot an investigation by the US House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee of the putative communist connections of its translators and brought forth the threat of fundamentalist preacher Martin Hux of Rocky Mount, North Carolina to publicly burn a copy (he settled for burning one torn-out page). You can read about this, and much else, in Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles Over Translating the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

One could do worse than grow up reading and hearing the KJV. For one thing, it sparked odd puzzlements, as when one read on the title page of some editions that it was authorized by James, “by the grace of God King of Great Britain, Ireland, and France,” and then wondered, was he King of France? For another, it meant that in high school you did not have the difficulty that plagued some students in reading Shakespeare. But the RSV New Testament came out in 1946 and the complete Bible in 1952, to be followed by many others translations that departed more drastically from the KJV than did the RSV, which kept much of the KJV idiom, somewhat modernized. Many set aside what seemed the Bible in an outmoded English, and those fearful of a liberal slant in the new translations eventually settled for the New International Version.

But now we have come full circle, at least in some ways, and not entirely for strictly religious reasons. With the new translations the KJV was left to strict fundamentalists and even a bit scorned; but by the end of the twentieth century there was a revival of interest in the KJV for a multitude of reasons, from nostalgia to the striking beauty of its language, regardless of its accuracy as a translation, granted the discovery of new biblical manuscript material, not least among them the Dead Sea Scrolls. All this has come to a head as 2011 approached, and is evidenced by such phenomena as an issue of *Harper's Magazine* (June, 2011) with four articles about the KJV; by an upcoming fall conference at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, and by many other commemorations.

Among books dealing with the KJV I start with David Daniell, *The Bible in English* (Yale University Press, 2003). Daniell has some strong commitments: he is very severe on an old Catholic world that sought to suppress the vernacular Bible and the gospel as rediscovered by Luther; and makes a strong case for the tragically martyred William Tyndale as a brilliant translator, especially from the Hebrew, who recognized affinities of linguistic structure and concreteness between the everyday English of his time and the language of the ancient Jews. Daniell thinks the excellence of the KJV was partly based on its reproduction of Tyndale's earlier work. Daniell earlier devoted a big book entirely to Tyndale, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (Yale University Press, 1994). Daniell's academic career at London University was devoted to the study of Shakespeare, and this helps account for his proficiency in the literary analysis of early English biblical translations.

Continued on pg. 9

(cont'd from pg. 8)

Other books focus on the KJV and language. Robert Alter, noted literary critic at UC, Berkeley, authored *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton University Press, 2010), studying Abraham Lincoln's speeches, *Moby Dick*, *The Sun Also Rises*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*, among others, for style and vocabulary that follow the KJV. *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language*, by noted linguist David Crystal (Oxford University Press, 2010) examines the oft-made claim of the great influence of the KJV upon the English language. He investigates English idioms, and discusses 260 of them that he believes are based on the KJV (and in some cases, also its predecessors). Here are some of them: "salt of the earth," "a still, small voice," "thorn in the flesh," "giants in the earth," "fly in the ointment," "bread from heaven," "the skin of the teeth," "see through a glass darkly," and many, many more. He asserts that no other book had a comparable influence, not even the plays (collectively) of Shakespeare—but he does give the nod to Shakespeare for coining more new words and grammatical constructions.

Finally, I call the reader's attention to a book that discusses the cultural context and especially the backgrounds of the KJV translators themselves. They turn out to be a varied, quirky, eccentric, and withal, fascinating lot, vindicating another KJV idiom, "treasure in earthen vessels" (Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Version* (Harper Collins, 2003).

[Caveat lector: I have not read, but read about, the book by Robert Alter]

Professor **Kelly Pemberton** helped organize and present an event titled "Women, Reconstruction, and the Challenges of Civil Society in Afghanistan", in cooperation with Elliott School of International Affairs and the School of Media and Public Affairs. The event, hosted by The Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, took place on Wednesday, March 20.

The roundtable featured speakers from Afghanistan, Canada, and the U.S. who discussed the challenges, successes, and failures of various aspects of reconstruction in Afghanistan as it relates in particular to women and girls. The discussion pivoted on 5 thematic points: building civil society, political participation, security, advocacy, and business and enterprise. The panelists addressed issues ranging from legal and civil structures affecting the role of women in society to the impact of coalition forces on the development and reconstruction of the country.

Other features of the discussion included the success of women-owned private enterprises, such as Kandahar Treasure, that help empower women both financially and socially. NGO funding was another fascinating topic tackled by our panelists with an emphasis on accountability and varying perspectives on foreign aid in empowering women.

An audio recording of this event will soon be available on the website of the IPDGC:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~ipdgc/events/womenandreconstruction.cfm>

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2011 GRADUATES!

Karima Ali
James Anthony
Sarah Casewit
Serdar Dogan
Jacob Jones
Shahid Khan
Kendrick Kuo
Santina Polky
Lydia Terrill
Sara Winters
Jacob Wolf



The Religion Department welcomes news and updates from students and alumni.

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For alumni updates and address changes, please visit:
<http://alumni.gwu.edu/connect/update/index.html>



Religion major Sara Winters with Professor Paul Duff
at the Department's graduation reception

MA Program Graduates, Spring/Summer 2011

M.A. thesis by Shahid M. Khan:

Shahid Khan's thesis, "Mystical Dimensions of Mir Ali Hamadani: Emissary for the Kubrawiyyah order, Conduit for the School of Ibn Arabi," focuses on the teachings of the famous 14th century patron saint of Kashmir, Mir Sayyid `Ali Hamadani (d. 1385), as expressed in his Arabic treatise, *Asrar al-nuqtah* (The Divine Secrets of the Diacritical Point). Arguing that `Ali Hamdani's thought demonstrates the influence of the School of Ibn `Arabi, Shahid Khan analyzes the *Asrar al-nuqtah* in light of this influence, and demonstrates that this work served as a conduit for Ibn `Arabi's teaching. This is a significant claim within the field of Islamic metaphysics and Sufism, since `Ali Hamdani himself represented the Kubrawiyah Sufi Order, which was the first among the Sufi orders to criticize the teachings of Ibn `Arabi's school, particularly its concept of "Oneness of Being" (*wahdat al-wujud*). This study seeks to recast the *Asrar al-nuqtah* as a work of synthesis and reconciliation that marries `Ali Hamdani's Kubrawiyah roots, the teachings of `Ali Hamdani's spiritual master, `Ala ad-Dawla Simnani (d. 1336), and the lexical and conceptual influence of the school of Ibn `Arabi.

M.A. thesis by Serdar Dogan:

In writing his magnum opus, *Risale-i nur*, the Turkish scholar and Islamic revivalist leader Said Beduizzaman Nursi (d. 1960) sought to both reconcile modern science with the Islamic sciences, and offer an alternative to the traditional Islamic schools of thought and spirituality. This is a key observation Serdar Dogan makes in his master's thesis, "The Influence of Modern Science on Nursi's New School of Thought and Spirituality." Serdar's thesis seeks to fill a lacuna in studies of Islamic revivalist movements of the late nineteenth century. Citing the influence of Enlightenment ideas upon Nursi's thought, particularly his adoption of a mechanistic view of the universe, Serdar critiques Nursi's endeavor (citing Nursi's own change of opinion that marked the so-called "New Said" period) and locates Nursi's work within its broader intellectual and political context of Islamic revivalism, which few studies have done before.

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