A Note from the Chair
Dewey Wallace

Having taken up the mantle cast down from the chariot of departing department chair Alf Hiltebeitel, I congratulate him for his achievement in leading significant departmental growth. Irene Oh, Assistant Professor of Religion and Program Director of Peace Studies has just completed her first year with us, in which she was featured in an April Columbian College newsletter, and in fall 2010, having postponed her arrival for one year, Xiaofei Kang will join us, enriching our offerings on the Religions of China. In addition, Derek Malone-France, already a member of the GW faculty, has joined us by a courtesy appointment, and is introduced in this newsletter. Among other things in this newsletter are “A Note on Religion and Political Dissent” by Derek, a book recommendation from the chair, reports on the Ziffren and Berz lectures, and news about a summer course abroad led by Paul Duff. We also congratulate our graduating majors and minors, those who earned departmental honors, and those who were inducted into the Theta Alpha Kappa academic fraternity in Religion. Honoring Harry Yeide, who retired last year, there is an item about Michelle Dexter, the first recipient of the Harry E. Yeide Jr. Prize for Excellence in Religious Studies. Finally, I extend the department's gratitude to those who have donated to our departmental fund or the fund for the Yeide Prize.

A Book for Summer Reading: Ronald C. White, Jr., A. Lincoln, (Random House, 2009)
Dewey Wallace

I am pleased to recommend to readers of our departmental newsletter a book that is not brief but eminently readable, as well as important and even inspiring. It has been highly praised by such an eminent historian of the Civil War era as James McPherson. Its spare title is taken from the fact that Lincoln usually signed his name with no more than the simple initial A plus his family name. White is the author of two previous books about Lincoln that focused on his speeches and closely examined their rhetoric and language. White’s careful examination of Lincoln’s words is apparent in this book too, and gains him entry into the mind of the tragically assassinated president.

A Lincoln is solidly researched and provides what one might expect: a detailed narrative of Lincoln’s life, an examination of Lincoln as a politician, and a sympathetic portrayal of the tribulations of a sensitive wartime president who agonized over the death and destruction that had been unleashed in a civil war that was the most traumatic event ever to befall the United States. Lincoln is shown struggling to understand and communicate in words what it meant. White is particularly adept and convincing in tracing Lincoln’s ideas about race and slavery as they developed out of a consistent early conviction that it was wrong for persons to wrest wealth out of the labor of slaves.

(continued pg. 2)
The Religion Department looks forward to Xiaofei Kang joining us as Associate Professor of Religion this Fall, coming from Carnegie Mellon University. She is busy selling her house and getting ready to move at this moment. She will be teaching "Confucian Literature in East Asia" and "Daoism in East Asia" in the Fall, and "Religious Culture in China" and "Myth, Ritual, and Folk Religion in East Asia" in the Spring 2011. She is working on finishing a collaborative book project with Donald Sutton at Carnegie Mellon on religion, ethnicity and tourism in northwestern Sichuan, and is researching a new project on elder women and Chinese religion. Some of the preliminary findings of the latter have just been published in China Perspectives (in English and French), under the title, "Rural Women, Old Age, and Temple Work: A Case from Northwestern Sichuan."

Introducing Derek Malone-France-- Dewey Wallace

It is my pleasure to announce to the readers of our newsletter that Derek Malone-France, who is Assistant Professor of Writing and Deputy Director of the Writing in the Disciplines program at George Washington University has been given by the Religion Department a courtesy appointment as Assistant Professor of Religion. During the spring semester of 2010 he taught Contemporary Philosophy of Religion for the Religion Department, and will teach another class next spring on Religion and Political Dissent.

Professor Malone-France received his B.A. in Philosophy from Wofford College and earned a Ph.D. in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion at Claremont Graduate University in 2001. From 2001-2005 he was a Mellon Postdoctoral Writing Fellow and an instructor in the Philosophy and Political Science departments at Duke University. There he was also for two years Associate Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Writing and was given a Trinity College Distinguished Teaching Award. His book Deep Empiricism, an examination of the metaphysics and epistemology of Kant and Whitehead, was published in 2006. He is also author of numerous articles. A forthcoming book and a new project for a book are described in his entry among faculty updates. In 2008 he received GW’s Bender Award for Exceptional Undergraduate Teaching, and in 2009 he was elected a member of International Whitehead Research Project. Our department has been enriched by his joining us.

This book is particularly relevant for this newsletter because of the care and precision with which White both examines and works into his narrative the religious views of Lincoln. White’s training was as an historian of Religion in the United States and he has taught courses related to that subject both in a liberal arts college and a theological seminary; he currently teaches at UCLA. In September 2008 I joined Ron White and one other person on a panel on Lincoln’s religion at the annual meeting of the Religion Newswriters Association, in which I described the religious context of Lincoln’s era but left the delineation of Lincoln’s religion to White. As anyone who has delved even a bit into that topic soon finds out, not only are there many books about Lincoln's religion, but it is contested terrain: some are certain that Lincoln was a conventionally pious Christian and others that he was an anti-religious skeptic (he could do very comical imitations of revival preachers). But the truth about the religious views of this frequent churchgoer (at least in his later years) who never joined a church, resides somewhere in between, and is fraught with complexity. What is reasonably clear is that the later Lincoln gave much thought to the ways of divine providence and was deeply skeptical of those who were certain that they knew exactly what God was up to. Among historians of American Christianity some, from Sidney Mead to Mark Noll, have considered Lincoln a profound if unconventional theologian.

A Book to Read over the Summer, continued from pg. 1
David and Sherry Berz Lecture, 2010

Professor John Kelsay gave the David and Sherry Berz Lecture on January 28, 2010. Kelsay is Distinguished Research Professor and Richard L. Rubenstein Professor of Religion at Florida State University, and a prominent authority on Islam and the just war tradition. His most recent publication is *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2009). His lecture, “Islam & the Political Future,” was greeted by a standing-room only crowd of students and faculty. Kelsay described the current international political climate with regard to Islamic extremism and paid particular attention to the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. He concluded that one significant way in which the United States could mitigate tensions was implement policies and military strategies to minimize the death and injuries inflicted upon Muslim civilians in war zones.

Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, 2010

This year’s Ziffren lecture, held on April 1st, 2010, featured Professor Parimal Patil from Harvard University. Parimal Patil’s talk titled “On why it was and still is important to think about a Hindu God” honored Abbie Ziffren’s interest in India. The talk highlighted the importance of studying debates between the different religions of India for our understanding of South Asian religions. Professor Patil discussed in particular the debate between Hindus, Buddhist and Jains about the existence of a God-like deity called Iśvara and analyzed how the different Indian religious and intellectual traditions shaped and were shaped by one another. He further argued that in the intellectual and religious traditions of South Asia, seemingly irrelevant and abstruse discussion -- such as the proper form of inferential argument -- play a crucial role in the understanding of broader themes in South Asian religious history. The rich presentation was followed by a lively discussion. The lecture was well attended by students and faculty from GW and neighboring institutions.
Faculty Updates

Eyal Aviv published two articles this year. *Turning a Deaf Ear to Dharma? The Theory of Śrutavāsanā (聞熏) and the Debate About the Nature of the Hearing and Mind in 20th Century China* was published in *Critical Review of Buddhist Studies* (Hanyu Foxue Pinglun) in Chinese. The second “The Root that Nourishes the Branches: The Yogācārabhūmi’s Role in 20th Century Chinese Scholastic Buddhism” is forthcoming at the end of this year as part of a book at Harvard Oriental Series. Professor Aviv also gave a presentation at the AAR in Montreal about the nature of hearing and its controversial meaning in modern China. This June he will present a paper at the conference of the Historical Society for Twentieth Century China titled “The Inner Studies Institute’s Revolutionary Impact on Buddhist Education.” He also organized a panel for next year’s International Association of Buddhist Studies in Taiwan (August, 2011) titled “The Role of the Laity in the Formation of Modern Buddhism: A Cross Cultural Examination.” Professor Aviv also a part of an ongoing international research project on the impact of Buddhist philosophy on modern Chinese intellectual history headed by two professors from Australian National University.

Paul B. Duff continues in his role as Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies for the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. He is also continuing his work on his book about 2 Corinthians 3, focusing on St. Paul’s use of the imagery of Moses and his veil (which Paul gets from Exodus 34). Professor Duff also wrote a 7500 word article for the forthcoming *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* on the Book of Revelation.

Rob Eisen’s book, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism*, was accepted for publication by Oxford University Press and is due to come out in the fall. He is also co-editing a volume, *Just Peacemaking in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* that will appear with Pilgrim Press in the coming year. He has also begun work on a study entitled *Jews and Muslims As Mirror Images of Each Other* that will compare the historical experiences of Jews and Muslims. Professor Eisen continues his interfaith work. In the fall, he was invited to Qatar to give a talk on the subject of “Human Solidarity in Response to Wars: The Case of Jews and Muslims”, for a conference sponsored by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. He was also invited to participate in a two-day colloquium at Georgetown University on Jewish-Catholic relations, in February 2010.

During this past academic year, Alf Hiltebeitel was on sabbatical during the fall of 2009, and throughout the year saw four books to near publication. His *Dharma*, a short introductory book for undergraduates, is now in press and due for November publication by the University of Hawai‘i Press in its “Asian Spirituality Series,” Henry Rosemont, ed. His “Big Dharma” book, tentatively titled *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* (South Asia Research Series, Patrick Olivelle, ed.) is in preparation for final submission to Oxford University Press. He also worked on assembling two books of his selected essays with their editors Vishva Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, titled *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata*, vol.1; and *When the Goddess Was a Woman: Mahābhārata Ethnographies*, vol. 2. Both have been accepted by Brill Publishers, Leiden, Netherlands. Each volume will include new unpublished essays. Vol. 1 will include three recent conference papers, including the Kyoto paper mentioned below. Vol. 2 will include a fieldwork-based chapter written last summer titled, “Making that Young Woman, Whoever She May Be, a Widow.” During Fall, Alf worked in Spain (October, early November) with members of el Grupo de Investigatigación y Departamento, *Grupo de Estudios Historiográficos* de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Málaga, Spain. There he delivered a paper titled “Draupadī and Sītā: Powerful Women of Two Different Kinds” for the University of Malaga Department of History, and for Casa Asia in both Madrid and Barcelona, invited by these respective sponsors. He also gave his Kyoto paper titled “Why *Itihāsa? New Possibilities and Limits in Considering the Mahābhārata as History*” at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, Japan. This Spring he gave the following three papers: “The Southern Recension Reading of the Śakuntalā Story as Its First Reading: What It Can Tell Us about the Original and the Second Reading by Kālidāsa,” at the University of Delhi, Department of English, Miranda House Conference on “Revisiting Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśākuntalam: Land, Love, Languages: Forms of Exchange in Ancient India*” (January); “Mokṣa and Dharma in the Mokṣaṭadharmā,” at a conference held by the Brown University Department of Classics on “Philosophy in the Mahābhārata” (April); and “Between History and Divine Plan: The Mahābhārata’s Royal Patriline in Context,” at a conference held by the Department of Religion of the University of Cardiff (Wales) on “Genealogy in South Asia” (May). The following two articles came out this past year: “Mapping Bhakti through Friendship in the Sanskrit Epics,” in Sheldon I. Pollock, ed., *Epic and Argument in Sanskrit Literary History*, pp. 91-116 (Delhi: Manohar, 2010; a Festschrift for Prof. Robert P. Goldman, Berkeley); and “Recontextualizing Satire of Dharmaśāstra in the Aggañña Sutta,” *Religions of South Asia* 3.1 (2009): 77-92.

Derek Malone-France just completed a two-volume, edited anthology, titled, *Political Dissent—A Global Reader, Vol. 1: Ancient to Early-Modern Sources* & Vol. 2: *Modern Sources*, which is scheduled for publication later this summer by Lexington Books. He is now working on his next book, tentatively titled, *The Virtue of Anxiety: Faith, Fallibility, and the Logic of Liberal Autonomy*, which is to be published by Palgrave MacMillan. He presented portions of this new book project in November, at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, in Montreal, QC, where he gave a paper titled “Creaturely Freedom and Divine Anxiety”; in
February, at the annual meeting of the Society for Philosophy of Religion, in Claremont, CA, where he gave a revised and expanded version of the “Creaturably Freedom” paper; and in April, at Wofford College, where he gave an invited lecture titled “Fearless Anxiety: Authentic Living in an Age of Uncertainty.” In July, in his role as Deputy Director of the Writing in the Disciplines Program at GW, he gave a presentation on “Disciplinary Diversity, Writing Assessment, and Institutional Transformation,” at the annual meeting of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, in Minneapolis, MN. He was also elected as a Research Member by the Board of Directors of the International Whitehead Research Project, and he served on the Review Committee for the Open and Relational Theologies Unit of the American Academy of Religion for the upcoming 2010 annual meeting.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr: During last year I went to The Republic of Azerbaijan to give the keynote address in the international conference on Ibn ‘Arabi and to London at the invitation of Temenos Academy and in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales to give the main speech in a memorial gathering for Martin Lings. Also I went to China where I gave the keynote address at the Beijing Forum and several lectures at Peking University where a group has been formed to translate my books into Chinese. During the year I also participated in the activities of the Common Word project and gave the closing talk along with Cardinal McCarick in the Georgetown University conference on the Common Word.

As far as writing is concerned, I continued my work on An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, the third volume of which appeared in London this year and the fourth is already in Press. Although I did also write a few articles, most of my writing time was spent on the Study Qur’an project of which I am the chief editor. We hope to hand the work to Harper by 2011.

Irene Oh: My first year at GWU has been both fun and filled with activity. I taught Ethics and the World Religions and Introduction to Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in the Fall, and the Peace Studies Capstone Seminar and Current Issues in Bioethics (with Paul Tschudi and Melissa Goldstein) in the Spring. I also advised two honors theses: Human Organ Donation and Transplantation: An Islamic Jurisprudential Perspective by Sana Idrees, and Human Trafficking in Albania by Helena Bala. I participated in a workshop in September on civil society and Islam at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy; gave a paper on moral authority and motherhood at the AAR in Toronto in November; and presented a paper on mothers and martyrdom for an edited volume to be published by the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions in March. A couple of articles on comparative religious ethics are currently in the process of being published in the Journal of Religious Ethics, as well as a piece on women in the academy for the Journal of the Feminist Study of Religion. Finally, the Peace Studies program and website have both been updated this year. I revised the requirements for the minor to reflect current course offerings, and the website has been upgraded so that students may more easily learn about the program. Peace Studies was highlighted in the CCAS newsletter in April.

Kelly Pemberton spent much of the year working on two monographs. One, published by University of South Carolina Press as Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India, will be in print in August, 2010. The other monograph looks at the revival of Galeno-Islamic medical therapies in India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Egypt today. She also published a paper in the Muslim World journal on a noted Pakistani jurist and scholar (‘alami), which appeared as “An Islamic Discursive Tradition on Reform as Seen in the Writing of Deoband’s Maulana Taqi ‘Usmani” in the July 2009 issue. Later that fall, she delivered a talk as a panelist at the Muslim Women Peacebuilders workshop, held at American University on September 15, 2009. In January, 2010, she traveled as part of a delegation to Libya by invitation of Al-Fatah University and Brown Lloyd James, LLC, a global strategic communications firm. In Libya she met with university faculty and staff and government ministers on the subject of women’s rights in that country. Finally, Professor Pemberton has partnered with Professor Sean Aday of Media and Public Affairs and others in the Columbian College and Elliot School of International Affairs to bring together a round table of experts from the United States and Afghanistan to discuss women’s role in building civil society in that country. The round table, as well as a related keynote address, is expected to take place in spring 2011. This work is also connected to her role as part of the President’s Task Force to establish the George Washington University’s Global Women’s Institute. This summer Professor Pemberton will travel to London’s British Museum and Wellcome Library for the History of Medicine with the help of a stipend from GW’s Institute of Middle East Studies. There, she will collect documents for a project that investigates the influence of pre- and early Islamic forms of medical knowledge upon the development of Galeno-Islamic medicine (tibb).

Dewey Wallace began a term as department chair in July, 2009, and found the task challenging, as this was the year when GW departments were required to develop desired learning outcomes and methods of assessment for these outcomes for our courses and students. Besides administrative tasks he taught his courses on Religion in the United States and on the History of Christianity. His book manuscript, entitled Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation, has been accepted by Oxford University Press, to whom it will be delivered in final form this summer.
Yeide Prize, 2010

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.

In this inaugural year, the Yeide Prize was awarded to Michelle Dexter. Michelle wishes to express her sincere gratitude to the donors who contributed to the Harry Yeide fund and those who selected her for this award. At GW, Michelle says she had the privilege of taking a wide range of religion courses, including the History of American religion, Mythologies of India, Buddhist Philosophies, Man and the Natural Environment, and Judaism. Her studies at GW have enriched her scholarship and her life. Michelle graduated this spring with a degree in religion and a minor in sociocultural anthropology. After graduation, Michelle will be teaching Indian Philosophies at an adult education program in Maryland, as well as creating on-line course curricula for distance learning. Michelle hopes to raise the bar for on-line education, using her background in both eastern and western religions to facilitate learning and interfaith communication. Michelle will also be working on learning Tibetan with GW adjunct faculty member Ani Kunga Chodron, in preparation for her future plans to study Tibetan Buddhist medicine for her Ph.D.

The Religion Department congratulates Michelle on her achievements and on receiving this prize!

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 2009-2010 academic year (July 1, 2009-May 31, 2010)

Dr. Cheryl Beil, PhD ’84 & Dr. Stephen J. Wayne
Dr. John Gordon Boswell, BA ’53 & Mrs. Claudia S. Boswell, BA ’55
Dr. Peter J. Caws & Nancy A. Beslin, M.D., RES ’87
Mrs. Dolores Bedford Clarke, AA ’53 BA ’58 MA ’69
Mrs. Katherine Y. Eynon
Dr. Elizabeth Ann Fisher
Dr. Wesley Schlotzhauer, Jr., AA ’57, BA ’59 & Mrs. Janet G. Schlotzhauer, BS ’60
Neha Hemant Shah, M.D., BA ’98, MD ’02
Mr. Max D. Ticktin
Ms. Martha Kristina Yeide, MA ’89
Ms. Heather M. Young, BA ’94, MA ’96
Mrs. Carolyn Hetzer Zuttel, BA ’78

Theta Alpha Kappa
Congratulations to our 2010 Inductees!

Usayd Casewit
Madeline DeSantis
Julienne DeWalt
Najah El Bash
Sapan Hapangama
Albert Jones
Carol Needleman Karr

The Religion Department proudly mentions the work and artistry of its Executive Aide. Please visit Allison Taylor’s online shop: astitchtowear.etsy.com
In late May and early June, 2010, Professor Paul Duff led a group of 9 students on a new short-term study abroad course entitled, "Early Christianity in its Pagan Context." The group visited Athens, Corinth, Delphi, and Epidauros in Greece and Bergama (ancient Pergamum), Izmir (Smyrna), Sardis, Laodicea, Aphrodisias, and Pamukkale (Hierapolis) in western Turkey. While traveling, the class read Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, Lucian of Samosata's "Alexander the False Prophet", Euripides' *Bacchae*, Paul's letters, the Acts of the Apostles, the Book of Revelation, and Ignatius of Antioch's Letter to the Smyrneans. Follow their trip on Professor Duff's blog at [http://duffkeller.blogspot.com](http://duffkeller.blogspot.com)

Students eating lunch overlooking the ruins of Corinth

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**Undergraduate Honors Theses**

**Najah El Bash**’s undergraduate honors thesis, titled “Islam and Domestic Violence: Defying its Patriarchal Foundations,” addresses the controversial topic of domestic violence and Islam through a critical analysis of key Qur’anic passages, and exegetical treatments of these passages. Observing that classical and modern patriarchal interpretations of these passages -- and not the principles of Islam -- contribute significantly to the perpetuation of domestic violence within Muslim communities, the thesis demonstrates how exegetes have systematically underestimated the position of women in marriage. The author argues that effectively addressing this social ill requires a holistic reading of the text that takes account of the more gender justice-oriented verses in the Qur’an that discuss marital relations and the status of women in Islam. Professor Kelly Pemberton directed the thesis.

**Sana Idrees** (B.A./M.D. Seven-Year Integrated Program 2010/2014) wrote an honors thesis titled “Human Organ Donation and Transplantation: An Islamic Jurisprudential Perspective,” under the direction of Professor Irene Oh. The work examines organ transplantation as it “comes into conflict with God’s right over the human body,” and ultimately argues that “organ donation and transplantation are conditionally permissible in cases of necessity based upon the principle of the lesser of two harms.” Sana will be attending The George Washington University School of Medicine this fall after graduating with a Bachelors in Religion.

**Peter Muglia**, under the direction of Professor Alf Hiltebeitel, wrote a thesis titled "Destiny Versus Free-Will in the Hindu Epics." The thesis draws from many of the most significant examples of a pre-determining force in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, be it karma, the gods, Time, an enigmatic "Placer," or simply fate qua fate, and attempts to determine whether or not human initiative is depicted as futile, or if human activity can still be considered worthwhile in spite of the overpowering pre-determining forces. Pete is currently working in the General Counsel's Office at the Humane Society of the United States, and considering what graduate programs he would want to pursue; he is leaning towards a Master's in International Conflict Resolution, but also considering going to law school and/or getting a PhD in Philosophy, or a master's in public policy.

**Rishi Sood** completed an honors thesis with Professor Alf Hiltebeitel, titled “Issues of Historical Accuracy in India’s Epic Literature: Truths and Myths”, in December 2009. The thesis critically examines the issues of mythology in both the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa and show how these epics have been used for benevolent and malevolent theological, political, ideological, and nationalistic purposes. Simultaneously the work aims to show how these works have provided a factual, moral, and cultural basis for Indians, Hindus, and Buddhists. Rishi will be starting GWU Medical School in August, 2010.
A Note on Religion and Political Dissent
by Derek Malone-France

For several years now, I have been collecting and researching important examples of written political dissent from throughout history and around the world, for my forthcoming anthology Political Dissent—A Global Reader, Vol. 1: Ancient to Early-Modern Sources & Vol. 2: Modern Sources (Lexington Books). Dissent writing represents one of the great trans-cultural genres of literature, one that pervades human history, revealing both the fundamental similarities and the profound differences that characterize human beings and the societies that we form. And one of the most prevalent and powerful themes within this literature is the influence of religious—and, sometimes, anti-religious—conceptions of peace, justice, and the good.

In the ancient world, the religious and political orders of society were sometimes distinguishable, but they were rarely separable. Claims to temporal sovereignty were founded upon assertions of eternal inspiration or appointment. Thus, any dissent against earthly powers had, likewise, to make reference to heavenly sources to justify itself: the prophet Isaiah denounced the rulers of Jerusalem on behalf of the God in whose name they claimed their authority. Confucius founded his arguments against political corruption and social injustice on the dictates of the “Mandate of Heaven.” Socrates defended his unrelenting critique of Athenian complacency as a mission bestowed upon him by the oracle of Apollo. Of course, Jesus famously divided the spiritual and the political—“God” and “Caesar”—but that didn’t stop Roman Christians from accepting the patronage of Constantine I, when he offered it several centuries later, making Christianity the official religion of the empire. And, as the fragments of western Rome sank into the “dark” early phase of the Middle Ages, Muhammad prophesied in the name of Allah, bringing to an end the traditional Arab tribal system of governance, and constructing, in its place, a new global hegemonic political power.

The modern notion of a “wall of separation between church and state,” in Thomas Jefferson’s memorable phrase, began to emerge during the early Renaissance, in the writings of thinkers like Marsilius of Padua, whose dissent against the church’s authority in political affairs and reworking of the concept of national “sovereignty” on a more secularized basis in Defensor pacis (The Defender of Peace), played a crucial role in the development of the modern conception of the state. Yet, throughout the early-modern and Enlightenment eras, political dissenters continued to draw upon the moral authority of religious beliefs and traditions to justify their own positions and to criticize those of their opponents.

Some of these dissenters argued from within an institutional religious context—such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, who used his authority as the first bishop of Chiapas to fight against Spanish colonial injustices, by ordering his Dominican brethren to refuse last rites to anyone who had profited from the exploitation of indigenous peoples, in his ecclesiastical manual Confessionario (On Confessions). Others turned elements of traditional religious doctrine against those who would impose their own conceptions of orthodoxy in the form of oppressive laws—as when John Milton attacked the censorship enacted by Parliament as contravening God’s own decision to grant humanity free will, in his illegally published pamphlet Areopagitica (named for the Areopagus, the famed hilltop tribunal of ancient Athens). And even an avowed secularist like Jean-Jacques Rousseau felt the need to at least gesture toward a notion of transcendent natural law to undergird his account of the conventional status of The Social Contract.

Moreover, religious ideals and sensibilities continued to play a prominent role as Enlightenment appeals to inalienable human rights finally expanded to include all humans, irrespective of gender, race, and class distinctions, in the 19th century. Witness, for example, Fredrick Douglass inveigh against the complacency of the white churches in the United States in the face of slavery in his classic American jeremiad “What to the Slave is the 4th of July?” (a complaint that would be echoed a century later in Martin Luther King, Jr’s. lament over the complacency of white “moderates” in the face of Jim Crow in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail”).

Of course, as the evolution of the modern era progressed, thinkers such as Karl Marx (The Communist Manifesto) and his onetime-ally-turned-rival the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (God and the State) took the critique of religion beyond a call for the secularization of the political sphere to argue for the eradication of the religious impulse entirely—though, Bakunin also presciently criticized Marx and his followers for turning communist ideology into simply another kind of religion.

(continued on pg. 9)
(cont’d from pg. 8)

Yet, despite religion’s increasingly vocal critics, the rhetorical power of religious ideals and imagery has remained a potent force, for good or for ill, in the writings of many influential contemporary dissenters. Thus, Mohandas Gandhi offered a political adaptation of Hindu values of peace and persistence in his “Statement at the Great Trial of 1922.” Sayyid Qutb formulated an aggressive reinterpretation of the Muslim duty of *jihād* in his theological treatise *Milestones* (and, now, liberal reformist Muslims are challenging that reinterpretation on religious terms, as part of their own political struggles against both secular and theocratic authoritarianism). And the still imprisoned Aung San Suu Kyi countered the Burmese junta’s nationalistic rhetoric with a democratic reclamation of traditional Buddhist ideals of kingship in her essay “In Quest of Democracy.”

These are, of course, just a few examples of the important, religiously informed texts of political dissent that I’ve included in the anthology, and which will be explored further in a new Writing-in-the-Disciplines course that I will be teaching for the department in spring 2011, titled, Religion and Political Dissent. Like the anthology, the course will be global in its approach to the topic. It will also connect to the curriculum of the Peace Studies program headed by Professor Oh, as we will discuss the role that religiously motivated dissent has historically played, and continues to play, in the emergence and resolution of political conflicts.

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**A Word from Robert Jones**

Many of our readers (at least those of a certain age) will remember with pleasure Professor Robert G. Jones, who some of the younger members of our department faculty met for the first time last spring, at the retirement event for Harry Yeide. Bob wanted me to make a simple announcement that he has pulled together a number of notes, study guides, and handouts dealing with a great many subjects and put them on a CD. Anyone interested in receiving one of these should contact him via email (RobGJones@aol.com) and he will send you one, free of charge, postage paid.

The subjects covered in this material include many topics that he taught both at GW and at his current teaching venue, ORICL: Oak Ridge Institute of Continued Learning, in Tennessee, where he introduces retired scientists to the marvels of the humanities. The following are a few of these topics:

- Job, Prometheus, JB, and Me: The Problem of Evil in God’s Good World
- Genesis: The biblical Book of Beginnings
- The Dead Sea Scrolls
- The Confessions of St. Augustine
- The Literature of Faith and Doubt: from the Enuma elish to Elie Weisel
- The World of Greek Drama
- Manuscripts and Monuments: Studies in Biblical Archaeology
- Poetry of the Hebrew Scriptures
- Major Themes of Minor Prophets
- Voices from the Depths: Prophets of the Exile
- From Nazareth to Nicea: Trajectories in Early Thought about Jesus

Bob Jones—in his inimitable voice—describes these cogitations as “the accumulated lint from an old emeritus professor’s mind, showing that there is at least the simulacrum of life after GW. It also shows what happens when there is no dean to insist that you stay within limits, either of your discipline, or your knowledge.”

-Dewey Wallace
MA Program Graduates, Spring/Summer 2010

M.A. thesis by Ziyan Liang:
Ziyan Liang, who joined our department after completing a bachelor’s degree at Nanjing University in China, graduated from the department’s M.A. program in Hinduism and Islam in December 2009. Her thesis, titled “Ma Dexin’s Virtue Philosophy”, assesses Ma Dexin’s (1794 - 1874) philosophy of virtue, which successfully integrated Islam with the Neo-Confucianism of the scholar Zhu Xi (1130-1200), one of the most influential Neo-Confucian scholars in China. Ma Dexin remains an understudied scholar of Chinese Islam, and the most prominent studies of him out there, the study contends, have employed flawed methodologies in analyzing his thought. Concurring with extant scholarship that the virtue system developed by Ma Dexin promoted Chinese Muslims’ learning of Islam and Neo-Confucianism, the thesis argues that it also facilitated communications between Islamic and Confucian intellectuals, and helped Chinese Islam integrate into the Chinese cultural mainstream.

M.A. thesis by Meghan Lisicich:
As both paragon of Indian womanhood and victim of the ideals of kingship, the epic heroine Sita remains a multivalent figure in India today, notes Meghan Lisicich in her thesis, “Sita’s Sacrifice.” The thesis examines the polarizing figure of Sita with respect to her role in the Yuddhakanda, the sixth and longest book of Valmiki’s Ramayana, in light of two works by noted scholars of the Ramayana: Sally Sutherland Goldman and Stephanie Jamison. The study uses these works to outline three key aspects to the narrative of Sita’s fortunes: 1) that women act as mediators between men and gods through their actions as Sacrificer’s Wife and dispenser of hospitality in the Vedic Soma ritual; 2) such hospitality relations are reproduced, albeit in altered form, in the Indian epic; and 3) this role is not peripheral, but rather, integral to the events of both the ritual and the Yuddhakanda text. The role of the Sacrificer’s Wife is further complicated by the location of active sexuality in the female, which problematizes Sita’s presence and thus leads Lisicich to support Goldman’s argument that Sita’s sacrifice is neither an unexpected nor unforeseen ending to the narrative of the Ramayana.

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