

We know we need to listen to each other, but we also need to learn to see each other. This is at the heart of Nicola Green's remarkable and visionary practice, and this inspiring book.

Edmund de Waal OBE
Artist Author, The Hare with Amber Eyes

Nicola Green rightly considers herself a visual social historian. She has created artworks of major historical significance and an invaluable resource for future generations.

Tristram Hunt
Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum

A journey of hope reminding us of that which we share in common.

The Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin QHC
Chaplain to the Queen and the House of Commons

Nicola Green is a testament to how artists can bring the best out of humanity. Her work is a wonderful bridge, crossing cultural divides.

Saeb Eigner
Author, Art of The Middle East. Patron of Art Dubai

The written word imparts knowledge; the spoken word inspires one to action; and the visual image reaches the soul. For those who think religion is the problem, this book tells a different story.

Heather Templeton Dill
President, John Templeton Foundation

Nicola Green's Encounters is a project of tremendous ambition.

Sandy Nairne CBE FSA
Former Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London

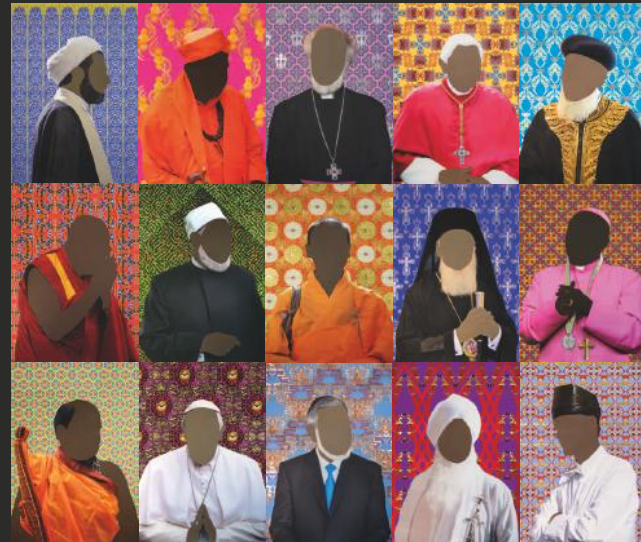


ENCOUNTERS THE ART OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



ENCOUNTERS

THE ART OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



ARTS AND THE SACRED

ART AND CONCEPT BY
 NICOLA GREEN

EDITED BY
 AARON ROSEN

ENCOUNTERS

THE ART OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Artist **Nicola Green** makes a compelling case that we have entered a new era in interfaith relations; a claim worthy of serious theological and historical consideration, as this volume of essays by leading art historians, clergy, theologians, and critics demonstrates through the lens of her extraordinary artworks.

Encounters by Nicola Green, is the result of a decade of painstaking visual and academic research by the artist. She collected thousands of photographs and hundreds of pages of drawings and notes as she accompanied world faith leaders on interfaith summits and meetings around the world, from the UK to Italy, Israel, Egypt, Qatar, India, and the United States. Along the way, she gained access to leading figures including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Pope Francis, the former Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa, former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, and the Dalai Lama.

While in the past such encounters might have been stiff affairs or photo-ops, what is remarkable today – as Green witnessed first hand – is the depth of relationships being formed across historically deep divides. Leaders of many of the world's faiths have begun, often for the first time, to sit down together and consider possibilities for cooperation, dialogue, and friendship. Together they are leading the way towards a dialogue which respects and honors other religions, without compromising the truth of their own traditions.

176 pages, over 240 illustrations in colour

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Arts and the Sacred

Encounters

The Art of
Interfaith Dialogue

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Arts and the Sacred

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The Art of
Interfaith Dialogue

**Art and concept by
Nicola Green**

Edited by
Aaron Rosen

BREPOLS  PUBLISHERS

This book is dedicated to the possibility of transformative encounters.

In memory of Khadija Saye, who died in Grenfell Tower, and who in her life and work shone a light on the themes contained in this book.

Art and concept by Nicola Green

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Foreword

Rowan Williams



'Religious leaders' are a class of persons intermittently interesting to the British public at large because they are vaguely expected to say things from time to time that offer a perspective on public events that is a bit different from that of others. The difference involved seldom guarantees that they will be listened to very hard, let alone agreed with, but they add a certain picturesqueness to public debate. What does not generally come across is what it actually means to hold a particular kind of position or exercise a particular kind of authority in a living community: go beyond the picturesque, and what is the substance of this sort of authority?

Nicola Green has an unusually full and varied experience of reflecting through her art on people who are associated with power of one kind or another, having shadowed Barack Obama on the election trail and produced a powerful set of images that open up the viewer's reflection on his extraordinary profile and career. I vividly remember my first visit to her studio and the impact of this work as I encountered it for the first time. It was a privilege – and



Fig. 1.1. Galilee, 2012

Fig. 1.2. The Oval Office, Washington DC, 2017

Fig. 1.3. Bangalore, 2010

a somewhat daunting one – to be invited to be involved in the present project. This meant welcoming Nicola's always unobtrusive and attentive presence at a variety of events where religious leaders of several traditions met – including the wonderful experience of sharing with her in a trip to India during which I was due to meet with a group of senior Hindu teachers, a meeting which is reflected in the works reproduced here.

In addition to different kinds of photographic portraiture, you will also find here a range of images in which the actual features of the persons involved have been blocked out. Dress and gesture will indicate where these figures belong; but the images are not meant to be about individual personalities. Nearly every serious tradition will insist that religious authority is never the canonization of a personality – and that if it becomes this, something has gone badly astray. Yet whatever this authority represents, it is undeniably mediated through the specific shape of a human body at a particular time and place. Nicola's images subtly balance this particularity (the figures are not meant to be unrecognizable) with the acknowledgement of a formal role, a role which means that some dimension of the personality has to become absorbed into or veiled by a darkness through which the holy can communicate. Most people who live with and in these roles struggle constantly with the challenge of how to allow this darkness to draw them in so that their own peculiarities, their individual strengths and charisms, and failings and confusions, do not become the focus of interest. It is precisely this, I think, that Nicola points up and invites us to think about.

If the figures represented here are more than (more or less) colourful illustrations in the margins of a society that has generally lost interest in religious symbolism, it is important to

coax the viewer to look at the shape of a role, a 'persona', not in the sense of an artificial extra level to someone's action or speech, but as something that focuses the values and visions of a community and a history, and speaks with 'authority' because of that – yet without simply becoming a mouthpiece for timeworn commonplaces. Nicola coaxes us in just this way, offering images that are simple and accessible, yet searching, for the viewer and for the subject. Anyone being photographed or painted knows that they are being probed in more ways than they realise; this project made at least one of its subjects more deeply aware of the strange territory inhabited by figures of religious authority in a secular environment, and of the importance of not becoming hardened to the oddity of it all. One reason among many to be grateful for this ensemble of images.



Fig. 1.4. Studio of Nicola Green, 2009

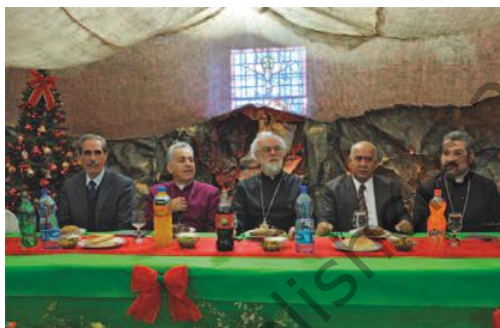
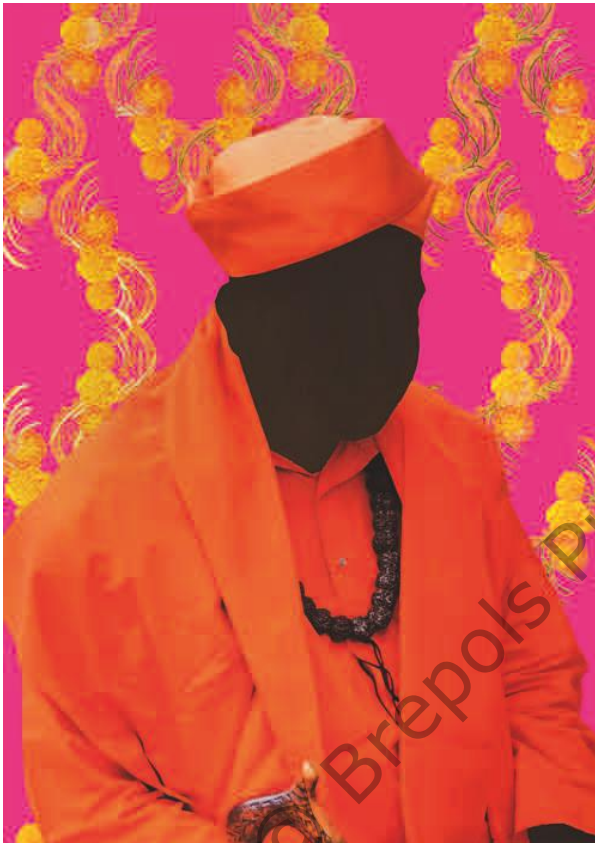


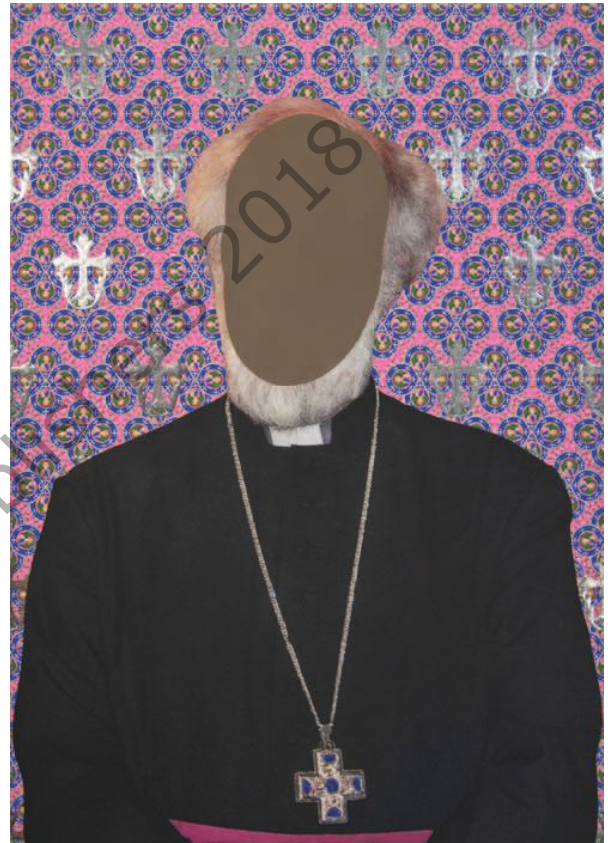
Fig. 1.5. The Vatican, 2011
Fig. 1.8. West Bank, 2012
Fig. 1.11. Jerusalem, 2012
Fig. 1.14. The Vatican, 2011

Fig. 1.6. The Vatican, 2011
Fig. 1.9. West Bank, 2012
Fig. 1.12. Assisi, 2011
Fig. 1.15. Lambeth Palace, 2010

Fig. 1.7. Rome, 2011
Fig. 1.10. Cairo, 2011
Fig. 1.13. Lambeth Palace, 2008
Fig. 1.16. Jerusalem, 2012



Ill. 1. *Encounter*, Naranga 2018



Ill. 2. *Encounter*, Chromium 2018



Ill. 3. *Encounter*, Amaranth 2018

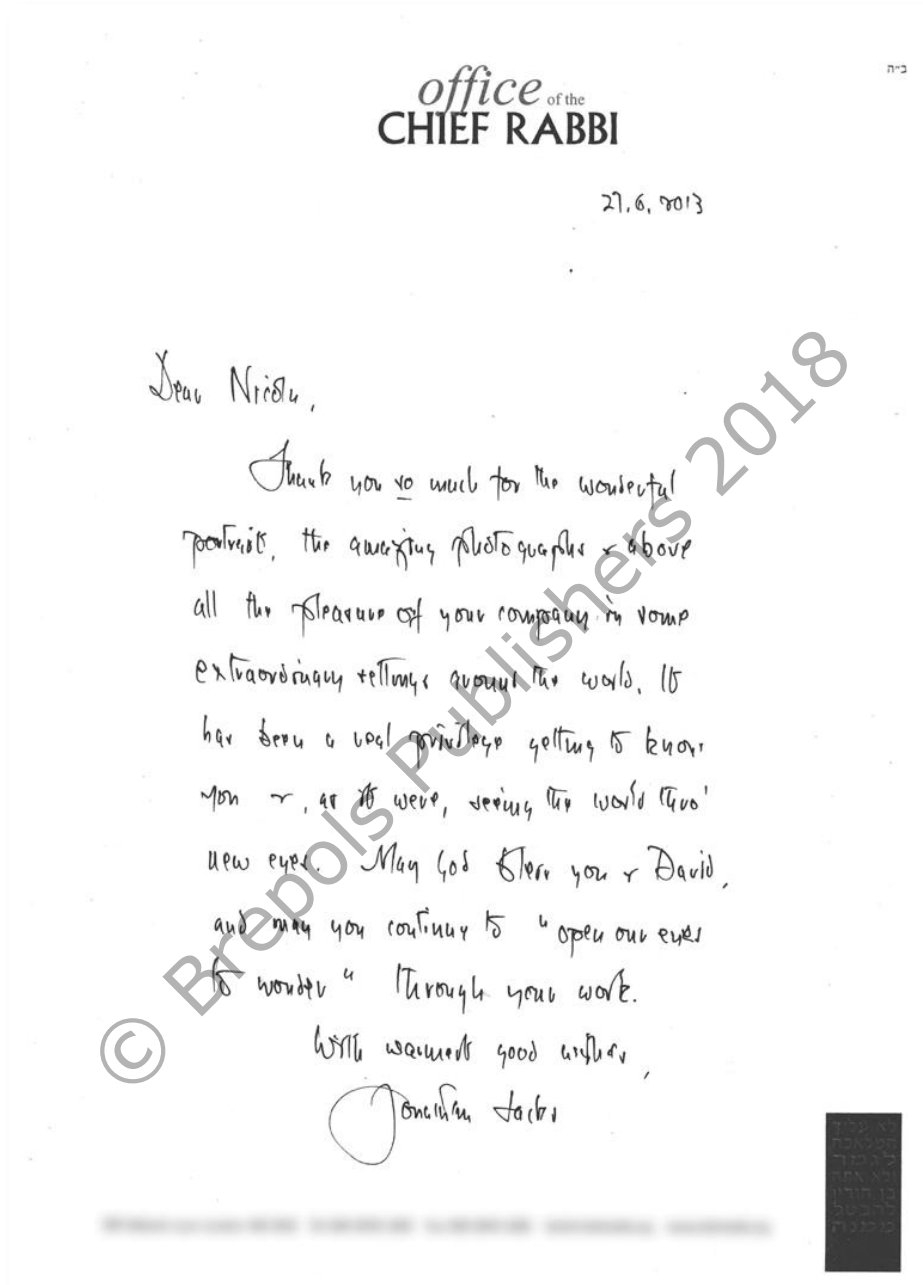


Fig. 2.1. A letter to Nicola Green from Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Preface

Jonathan Sacks

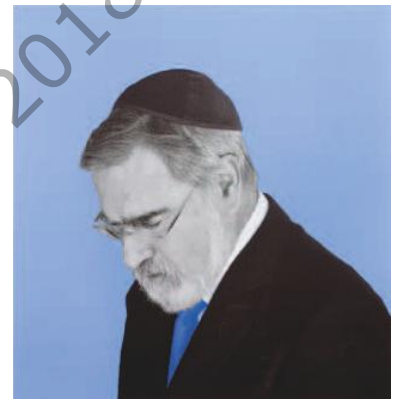
When Nicola first approached me about this project, I was a little reluctant. In general Judaism is sceptical about appearances. Worshipping the invisible God, Judaism tended to devalue the visual in favour of covenants and the oral and aural: words heard rather than appearances seen. We are, after all, the People of the Book.

Yet as Nicola explained her rationale for the project, I began to see its value. She spoke of how she wanted to witness faith and gain an insight into how we understand, respect and defend other religions without compromising the absolute truth of our own.

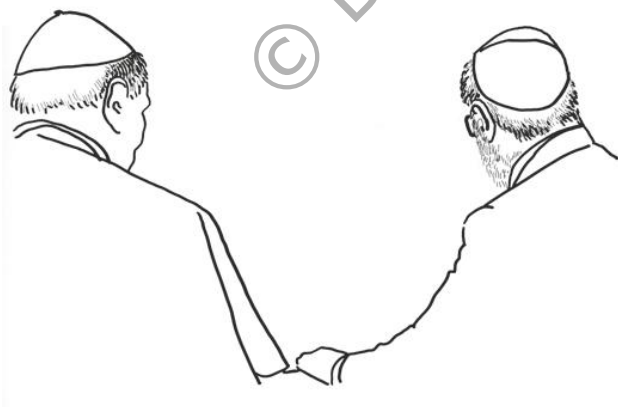
I was also struck by her passion for the project and had the privilege to see this first-hand as she joined me and my team on visits to the Vatican for an audience with Pope Benedict XVI, and then to Jerusalem, New York and many other interfaith events I attended as Chief Rabbi.

What I learned from her observations of me and the discussions we had was how she saw the events she attended: the body language, the small gestures, stances, the semiotics, the choreography and the value of what Nicola described as “the embodied experience”.

At the unveiling of her portrait of me for the Jewish Museum I was struck by the blue in the background, which Nicola called “Chief Rabbi Blue”. This is because blue is a very symbolic colour in Judaism. It was at the time of the Exodus, as the Israelites were about to cross the Red Sea, that Moses looked not outwards across the water, but upwards towards the heavens, to God, to the sky which was blue. For Jews, blue represents the divinity and wisdom of God. That is what it means to truly *see*.



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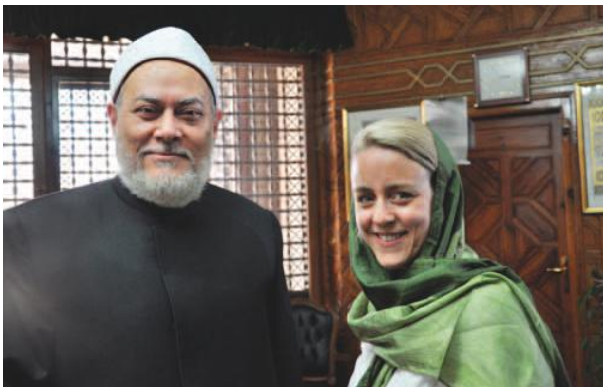


Fig. 3.1. The Vatican, 2015
Fig. 3.3. Assisi, 2011
Fig. 3.5. Cairo, 2011
Fig. 3.7. Cairo, 2011

Fig. 3.2. Jerusalem, 2012
Fig. 3.4. Jerusalem, 2012
Fig. 3.6. Cairo, 2011
Fig. 3.8. The Studio of Nicola Green, 2009

Encounters

Nicola Green

In my role as an artist, I have been privileged to attend a series of historic meetings between spiritual leaders around the globe, from Popes to the Dalai Lama to Chief Rabbis, Grand Muftis, Archbishops and Swamis. During this time, I have taken nearly 10,000 photographs, and made countless drawings and notes. These have been the foundations of my *Encounters* project. I have made twenty-two trips across the Middle East, Europe, the USA and India. I visited Cairo at the height of the Arab Spring and Assisi for Pope Benedict's global interfaith conference in 2011. My journey has taken me to Lambeth Palace in London, the inner sanctum of the Vatican, the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and then back to my North London studio, which happens to be based in a church. I'm exhausted just writing this down!

Over the last decade, religious leaders have begun meeting to articulate publicly their understanding and respect for other faiths, without compromising the absolute truth of their own beliefs. This interfaith dialogue has gone largely unreported, and yet it is one of the most significant religious, cultural, and political developments for contemporary society. My own journey, as a witness to this movement, began with one small event and has snowballed into a monumental undertaking. My aim is to present images that invite a deeper understanding of this dialogue, which can seem remote to many people; show that the world's faith leaders are changing their attitudes to each other; and suggest how all humanity may benefit from this new development. I hope to embody the way that these meetings – sometimes personally and theologically difficult – can create a ripple of hope and optimism that continues long after the encounter is over.

When I was a child, my mother, Julieta Preston, a pioneering female travel photographer working for tourist boards and airlines, would bring home images from around the globe. I grew up aware of the beauty beyond my immediate environment. My personal heritage – which combines Ashkenazi Jewish, Russian Orthodox, and Anglo-Catholic lineages – along with my inter-race, inter-cultural family, has inspired a commitment to understanding other cultures, other faiths and other languages, both spoken and visual.

At the age of seven, my own faith journey began when I was devastated by the death of my younger sister. I became interested in the idea of legacy, of what we leave behind, which has influenced my artistic practice profoundly. Growing up, I held on to a very strong faith in order

to make sense of my early experiences. As I got older I became more agnostic, spending time exploring and trying to understand other faiths, and how they fitted in with my own belief, or lack thereof. I travelled extensively in Asia and the Middle East, encountering and immersing myself in other cultures, beliefs, and ideas. Through this recognition of the uniqueness and differences of others, I returned to a strengthened self-assurance in my own faith.

I studied History of Art at Edinburgh University, and Drawing and Painting at Edinburgh College of Art. My education at Edinburgh was unusually global in range. I was encouraged to see beyond the Western tradition and the European Renaissance. I studied Chinese, Japanese and Indian art, and specialised in Islamic art and architecture under Robert Hillenbrand, a leading scholar in the field. I discovered that whilst modern Western art is broadly considered secular, the global history of art is saturated with religious themes, images, and symbols.

My own work as a portrait artist is a continuation of this exploration of identity, particularly understanding difference through the lens of gender, heritage, culture, religion, race, leadership, and power. I have come to see myself as a social historian as well as an artist. I am particularly interested in documenting human stories that are happening now but have a legacy we do not

yet understand. I have applied my experience in portraiture to themes of identity in ambitious works, often presented in a linked series or installation.

These have included a series of paintings about contemporary slavery, the European, African and indigenous origins of carnival, as well as *In Seven Days...* a series of seven large scale silk-screen prints distilling my experience of Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, which I witnessed first-hand. For each project I collect artefacts, images, newspapers, books and letters while painstakingly researching my subject through my travels, conversations, observation and workshops. I spend hours in my studio, in an almost 'monastic artistic silence' (Armstrong 5), reflecting on these materials, alongside my primary sketches, notes and photographs, aiming to concentrate everything into relatively simple imagery.

While working on *In Seven Days...* in early 2008, I read an article announcing that the Dalai Lama was coming to Britain for a rare, private meeting with the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at Lambeth Palace. Despite being a tiny article in the back pages of the newspaper, this was immediately intriguing to me. Nearly twenty years prior, at the age of nineteen, I went to live with the Yolmo Tibetan Sherpas, in Helambu, north-eastern Nepal for six months, teaching English and living with a group



Fig. 3.9. The Studio of Nicola Green, 2018

Fig. 3.10. Helambu, 1991

of nomadic people. I immersed myself in trying to understand Buddhism and was lucky enough to attend a public address by the Dalai Lama at Dharamshala. The Dalai Lama said at that time:

We should accept that there are many different religions and that each one is valuable. Each religion has a special technique and message for humanity. Naturally among humanity, there are so many different kinds of thinking and mental dispositions. Therefore, in reality the more different religions there are, the more benefit for people... A clear example is if we look closely and in an unbiased way, we can see many good people in those different religious groups. That clearly shows that despite having different philosophies, all religions have the potential to produce good human beings. Therefore, we can see the usefulness of these different religions to humanity and on this basis we can generate genuine harmony and mutual respect. According to my own experience, personal contact is essential and very effective. Although we can learn through books, I think that personal contact is very, very useful... So why can't we people from different religious traditions find ways and means to co-exist? (Smith).

I began to reflect on how little progress seemed to have been made by global religious leaders. I was inspired to learn more about interfaith dialogue, and realised I was witnessing a new trend in history. As I researched this topic, it became apparent to me that interfaith meetings were often somewhat ad hoc, not really coordinated in any substantive way, and were therefore not being recorded beyond the immediate context of each occasion. I decided then that I wanted to understand and witness what seemed to me to be a new era of cooperation. I wanted to capture it for future generations, even if I wasn't entirely sure what it was yet!

Emboldened by the experience of my work on Obama's 2008 campaign, I asked to attend the meeting between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dalai Lama. At first, the Archbishop's staff gaped at what appeared to them a preposterous suggestion! But later I heard about Tim Livesey, thought to be the first Catholic to be employed by Lambeth Palace since the Church of England split with Rome in the sixteenth century (Bates). I thought he might be interested in my quest, so I got in touch with him. He told me that Rowan Williams saw ecumenical and interfaith discussions as a priority and that he might be interested in seeing how the visual image could bring a new perspective to these encounters. After an extensive exploration of my intentions, I was given permission to attend. We agreed that I would be a witness; conversations would not be recorded, but I could take photographs and sketch. It was an incredible experience, and privilege, to be the only other person in the room with these two extraordinary men. They sat side by side discussing delicate matters. They were not always in agreement, but the Dalai Lama held the archbishop's hand throughout the meeting as a way of bridging the gap between them. This act made a lasting impression on me.



I was subsequently invited to meetings that the Archbishop had with other leaders. On meeting these leaders, I managed to persuade some to let me accompany them on their visits to meet yet more significant religious leaders. I travelled thousands of miles in their company, to sacred sites and assemblies around the world, where I witnessed more historic encounters. It was not all plain sailing. Often at the last minute someone would change their mind and my enthusiasm to attend appeared to be thwarted, then at the eleventh hour I was invited in, usually by virtue of persistence and an acceptance that art might indeed contribute to the wider interfaith agenda. It was important to try to blend into whatever environment I found myself in. I wanted to be as invisible as I could. I was not with a press corps and had no official role, and so was able to witness the encounters from a unique and fresh perspective.

On the one hand, I was often the only woman in the room; on the other, I was the only person wearing trousers, surrounded by men in long skirts! Whilst I knew that the domain of religious leadership was predominantly male, it was still shocking to me that in the twenty-first century I encountered so few women on this journey. My act of witness raised many questions about female leadership and notions of gender and power, and I still haven't fully understood what impact the fact that I am a Western woman had on my experiences.

A decade of trips around the world confirmed to me that something new was happening, not widely reported. Religious leaders were organising these meetings individually; there was no co-ordinated effort from outside institutions. They were making efforts to discuss their differences and commonalities and to develop respect for one another, moving away from superficial tolerance towards a deep understanding of other viewpoints. They were learning how to articulate their respect for other faiths at a personal level.

Of course, I have not covered all of the interfaith meetings that have occurred in the past decade. I see this as an incomplete journey, dependent on the access that I was able to gain as well as balancing my experiences, research and distillation of the material in the studio. I have achieved my aim of meeting leaders of many religions, but not all. Perhaps I could with another decade. To my knowledge, no one else has attempted to document this phenomenon. I see *Encounters* as an act of witness to an historical development that I feel is of seminal importance and will have a legacy long into the future.



Fig. 3.11. Jerusalem, 2012
Fig. 3.12. Bangalore, 2010



I have spent countless hours sifting through and curating my material, experimenting with images in several media to find the best expression of my experiences. I wanted to focus on themes including interdependence, 'the Other', similarity, difference, and hope; playing with light, iconography, and semiotics. Using silkscreen on paper and Perspex, as well as paint and gold leaf, collage, photography and drawing, I have created artworks featuring the principal characters I met, incorporating visual symbols present in the meetings. The pieces in the *Encounters* project are presented in two forms, *The Light Series* and *The Encounter Series*, as well as some primary source photographs and sketches.

The Light Series is made up of twelve life-sized Perspex figures of religious leaders. These portraits show my own start on this road, and also introduce the global story I'm telling. The figures are hand-painted with pearlescent, metallic and fluorescent paints; the hand process reflects my physical presence as a witness. The intention with these open Perspex figures is to bring the leaders to life, so the viewer can feel they are meeting them. If framed, they would be restricted and isolated. The leaders, men who have long stood facing away from each other, are seen standing together. The life-size, free-standing figures embody their permeability and their relationships with one another. I hope they will convey my experience of witnessing their encounters, allowing people to think about the interfaith movement, the difficulties involved, and the light given out.

The viewer's first impression will be the spectrum of light emanating from the figures. Each is backed with live-edge Perspex in red, blue, yellow, green and orange, which creates a glow around them. No special lighting is involved: the effect is created by ambient light. The significance of the colours to each religion has been carefully considered. Like the individual faiths, different colours combine to make up the spectrum of visible light. Only then can they create something transcendent, beyond the individual; the colours are each strong and beautiful, but together they create a more glorious whole. Light can be a metaphor for faith: it coexists with darkness, but the light that emanates from interfaith meetings gives hope for the future.

The Encounter Series consists of 31 portraits. Each has its own background created from the iconography, symbols, artefacts, architecture, and costumes of the subject and their religion in the context of the meetings I witnessed. The objects, their arrangement, and colors have been selected to enhance their theological relevance. I have chosen to

Ill. 6. Detail of Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, 2018
Fig. 3.13. St. Petersburg, 2017



conceal the subjects' flesh. Their face and hands have been hand-painted. This highlights the background, the body language, and the semiotics of the subjects while raising questions about identity. In concealing the face, the subject is removed from their individual office, identity and ego. They become a symbol of their religion as a whole. It creates a blank canvas on which we can project our own image, stimulating questions of our relationship to those who are different from us. I wanted to move away from the modern Western tradition of portraiture, and my approach also references the veiling or concealing of faces in religious traditions through the ages, notably in Orthodox icons and in Islamic and Jewish art. The muted, neutral grey/brown tones used for the flesh obscures the race, culture, age and gender of the subjects, encouraging people to see the similarities between the leaders.

With my series and exhibition *Encounters*, I aim to present this new departure in interfaith dialogue and explore what it could mean for society and the future. When Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, was awarded the 2013 Templeton Prize for his 'life-long work in advancing spiritual principles', he gave a speech describing the traditional African belief of *Ubuntu*:

Ubuntu – a person can be a person only through other persons. You can be generous only because you learnt from another how to be generous. How God longs for us to know that – you know what – we were created for togetherness. We were created to be members of one family, God's family, the human family.

These words articulate the essence of this project for me. Hearing him describe this, I felt he was speaking to the work, almost 'christening' my project. The leaders I have seen over the past ten years appear to have a common desire to achieve a unity and understanding which can hold profound differences with mutual respect.

What difference does dialogue make? Above all, it promotes understanding: you speak, you listen, you gain insight. In the case of modern interfaith dialogue, it is too early to predict the outcomes. Because these meetings don't end with a grand resolution, it may seem nothing more than groups of elite men paying lip service that leads nowhere. Rather, they are making slow and uncertain but quiet progress. There is a rising desire among them for mutual understanding between human beings.

As an artist, I am primarily interested in visual imagery and its legacy. I sought to witness and visually record this new phenomenon of respecting opposing beliefs to one's own, in order to understand it and document it for future generations. Yet, on a deeper level, I hoped to create images that could make a lasting impression, that might leave an indelible mark on the mind of those that encounter them, and in turn inspire new acts of respect. I hope that *Encounters* helps people to think about interfaith dialogue in a deeper way, and perhaps use my journey as the beginning of their own.

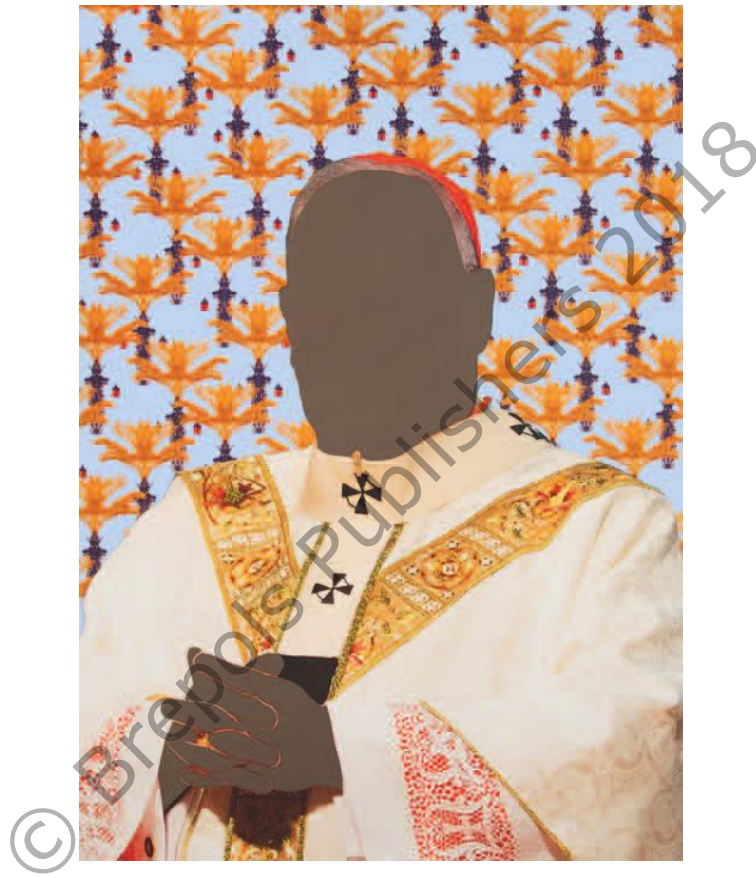




Ill. 9. *Encounter*, Tekhelet 2018



Ill. 10. *Encounter*, Veridian 2018





Introduction

Aaron Rosen and Ben Quash

When we first sat down with Nicola Green to discuss this project, the artist used a word one does not often hear from contemporary artists: thesis. She declared, unabashedly, that *Encounters* would present viewers with an intellectual proposition. There are a number of artists today who describe their work as research, backed up by archives, interviews, and even archaeological digs. Some go out of their way to accentuate this process, creating exhibitions that resemble a police detective's evidence board, or a *Schatzkammer* full of curios. However, it is rare for an artist to muster research into sustained arguments, inviting debate about their work not only *qua* art, but as intellectual proposition.

There are good reasons why most artists are hesitant to broach such boundaries. On the one hand, there is a risk of being perceived as a dilettante, stepping into territory zealously policed by academic experts. On the other hand, a powerful visual argument can run the risk of looking an awful lot like propaganda, taking an aesthetic shortcut through reasoned discourse to reach a predetermined, emotionally charged conclusion. Green skillfully navigates between this Scylla and Charybdis, presenting a suite of works that are that rare *mélange* of good art *and* good thinking. Her nuanced investigation of interfaith dialogue in the twenty-first century makes a compelling case that we have entered a new era in interreligious relations – a claim worthy of serious theological and historical consideration, as this volume of essays will demonstrate.

Encounters is the result of a decade of painstaking visual and academic research by the artist, who collected more than 10,000 photographs and compiled hundreds of pages of drawings and notes as she accompanied world faith leaders on over twenty interfaith summits and meetings around the world, from the UK to Italy, Israel, Egypt, Qatar, India, and the United States. For an artist, she gained extraordinary access to leading figures including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, the former Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa, and former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth Jonathan Sacks. She accompanied these figures when meeting with other Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Jain leaders including the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Swami Chinna Jeeyar, Sayyed Jawad Al-Khoei, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria, Dhalla Homi Burjor and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople. While in the past such encounters

For ease of reading, references within chapters have been kept to brief parenthetical citations. Readers are directed to the Works Cited list at the end of this volume for full bibliographic details.



might have been stiff affairs contrived to generate a politically expedient photo-op, what is remarkable today – as Green witnessed first-hand – is the depth of relationships being formed across historically deep divides. Leaders of many of the world's faiths have begun, often for the first time, to sit down together and consider possibilities for cooperation, dialogue, and friendship, in which they actively articulate their respect for other faiths without compromising the truth of their own tradition.

Such engagements would have been seen as irrelevant, objectionable, or outright intolerable to many faith leaders in the past. It is important to recall, for example, that even when thinkers from earlier epochs talked about religious others they rarely talked *to* them. Saint Augustine, who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, is an instructive example. He discusses Jews at length in *City of God*, and various homilies, sometimes in more positive tones than both precursors and successors. And yet these 'Jews' remain very much a theological construct, helpful for clarifying Christian thinking rather than real people with their own dynamic traditions and identity.

Jews themselves have long cherished the tale of the King of the Khazars in central Asia, who according to legend summoned Jewish, Christian, and Muslim authorities to his court in the eighth or ninth century to affirm the virtues of their respective faiths, before ultimately choosing Judaism for himself and his people. Inspiring as this legend is, the story is probably a literary invention, and the wider conversion narrative has been hotly contested by scholars. Better attested are the formal disputations which were convened across Europe by medieval Christian authorities, who dragooned Jewish scholars into public 'debates' designed to prove the superiority of Christian doctrine. Even the comparatively more open Barcelona Disputation of 1263, featuring the renowned Rabbi Nahmanides, had a predetermined result, which set the scene for reprisals against 'stiff-necked' Jews, who refused to convert in the face of rhetorical defeat. To identify more positive interactions between faiths in this period, it is necessary to look to the Middle East, where Jews and Muslims in centers such as Cairo and Baghdad engaged in fruitful dialogue and mutual influence in a number of arenas, including theology and philosophy.

Fig. 4.1. The Vatican, 2015

Fig. 4.2. Assisi, 2011



In early modern Europe, the Reformation had profound and far-reaching consequences for debates about religious diversity. A central question in Protestant countries was to what extent Catholics could be trusted to abide by civic obligations in a Protestant nation when they recognized the Pope as their spiritual authority. John Locke addressed this question in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), laying the conceptual groundwork for religious pluralism; arguments which would eventually be extended to Jews and others. In Holland, Benedict Spinoza, who had suffered the effects of excommunication from the Jewish community for his alleged atheism, made a compelling case for separating theology – and its attendant judgments – from philosophy and politics. The seventeenth century also saw an historic meeting between Oliver Cromwell and the Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, who negotiated with the Lord Protector for the readmission of Jews to England.

In the eighteenth century, as the Enlightenment hit its stride, leading Jewish figures began to meet Christians on something closer to equal footing, as epitomised by the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn's and Immanuel Kant's warm embrace in Königsberg in 1777. With the formation of the Board of Deputies in 1760, British Jews had, for the first time, a body empowered to represent their community to the government and the established church. And, roughly a century later, Lionel de Rothschild was finally able to take his seat as the first Jewish Member of Parliament, when no longer required to take his oath of office 'on the true faith of a Christian'. The prominence of Britain's Jewish community established them as de facto ambassadors on behalf of the Jewish people more broadly, and Moses Montefiore met with world leaders including the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in order to secure better treatment for foreign Jews.

By the turn of the twentieth century, discourse about religious difference in many countries in Europe and the Americas began to shift from a terminology of toleration to dialogue, despite glaring exceptions, especially for indigenous peoples. A signal moment for interfaith dialogue came in 1893 with the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, held in conjunction with the World's Fair. For the first time, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain delegates sat alongside representatives from the Abrahamic religions, sharing a public platform. Interfaith organisations began to proliferate,

Fig. 4.3. Lambeth Palace, 2013

Fig. 4.4. The Vatican, 2011

often with a focus on social justice. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded, for instance, at the start of the First World War, championing spiritually rooted approaches to nonviolence. Yet despite such progress, the century was ultimately defined by the staggering scope of religious intolerance. In Nazi hands, Christian supersessionism, pseudo-scientific racial theories, and political opportunism, combined to form a virulent strain of anti-Semitism. As the Holocaust unfolded, some religious leaders remained painfully mute, while others rallied to raise awareness of the annihilation in progress, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the British Chief Rabbi, who co-founded the Council of Christians and Jews.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, a new epoch of religious dialogue began to take root from the rubble. When Pope Paul VI convened the Second Vatican Council to reexamine, and in many cases reframe, Roman Catholic practice and doctrine, he extended special invitations



to observers and guests from Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and other churches, whose presence exerted a subtle but important influence on the proceedings. In addition to taking a bold stride forward in ecumenism, Vatican II produced a groundbreaking declaration, *Nostra Aetate* (In our Time), opening the door to more positive engagement with non-Christians, and Jews in particular. This clear renunciation of anti-Semitism was, at least in part, the product of discussions that the Pope and Cardinal Augustin Bea had with the influential rabbi and theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel. Back home in the United States, Heschel marched with Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. and others in pursuit of civil rights for people of colour. By the end of

the twentieth century, Jewish-Christian dialogue increasingly expanded to include other religions, marked auspiciously by the centenary celebration of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993, at which the Dalai Lama gave the keynote address.

With the turn of a new millennium still recently behind us, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the current period. There certainly appear to be opposing tendencies. On the one hand, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the so-called War on Terror that followed, introduced the West to the toxic ideologies of Al-Qaeda and later Boko Haram and Daesh. In the West, there has also been suspicion and violence directed against Muslims, as well as Sikhs and other groups (often mistaken for Muslims). Prejudice against these religious groups has been stoked by members of nationalist and populist parties in Europe and the United States. Elsewhere, tensions between Jews and Muslims continue to simmer in the Middle East; fierce rhetoric by Hindu nationalists is inflaming tensions in India; and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims has reached dramatic and highly distressing levels in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar.



On the other hand, such frightening spikes of resentment and animosity have also awakened people across the world to an urgent need for interreligious dialogue. Since his installation in 2013, Pope Francis has extended olive branches both inside and outside the Christian faith, including meeting with Patriarch Kirill, the first time Catholic and Russian Orthodox leaders had met in nearly a thousand years. Prominent Jewish leaders have also taken fresh steps towards interreligious dialogue. Building on the public statement *Dabru Emet* (Speak the Truth), signed in 2000 by Jewish leaders from various denominations, in 2015 a group of Orthodox rabbis issued their own historic document entitled 'To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians'. In 2007, Muslim leaders from around the world signed 'A Common Word Between Us & You', a letter emphasizing Islam and Christianity's shared commitment to 'love of the One God, and love of the neighbor' as the basis for coexistence ('A Common Word'). In the political sphere, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Sultan Qaboos of Oman have recently played prominent roles in encouraging interfaith cooperation, both domestically and internationally. And this is of course to say little of the numerous meetings documented and analysed in this volume.

As this brief survey suggests, interreligious relations have passed through many different permutations, in vastly different geographical and cultural contexts. While there were certainly sporadic moments of reciprocity between individuals of different faiths in earlier periods, it seems fair to state that interfaith dialogue as a concept and practice only truly begins in the modern period. Within this period, it is possible – in the West at least – to draw a distinction between pre- and post-Holocaust dialogue, when a more profound vocabulary of reconciliation was forged. The twenty-first century has continued this progress, extending Jewish-Christian rapprochement, for instance, into an 'Abrahamic' discourse in which Islam is increasingly welcome. There has been a positive tendency to focus not simply on acts of forgiveness for the past, but interfaith cooperation for the future, especially when it comes to facing worldwide challenges such as climate change. It would be foolish to ignore the mistrust, animosity, and outright violence that this century has already witnessed between religious groups. Nevertheless, these very acts have also given

Fig. 4.6. Jerusalem, 2012



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interfaith dialogue fresh vigor and urgency, especially among world faith leaders. Green's argument is not that interfaith dialogue has suddenly won a sweeping, permanent victory over intolerance. What she presents instead is compelling evidence that within these confusing, troubling times there is nonetheless an unprecedented willingness among religious leaders to engage in genuine, constructive dialogue.

Green is not content just to demonstrate that such dialogue is occurring. She makes a profound contribution to our understanding of *how* such dialogue is happening. Above all, she shows that successful dialogue is never simply cerebral, it is *embodied*. The most successful encounters she witnessed did not begin with theological abstractions, but with handshakes, hugs, bows, smiles, and carefully selected gifts. They were not sustained only by lofty intentions but by good food, company, and laughter. The success of these meetings was seldom defined by the drafting of new tracts, treaties, or geopolitical strategies, but rather by small acts of humility, intimacy, and affection. The authors in this book take their cues from Green's works, and her unique gift for capturing and foregrounding such moments.

One might well ask at this stage: if such interfaith engagements are already occurring on the ground, spurring practical breakthroughs, do we need a theology of interfaith dialogue? Do we need comprehensive theories about how religions have related or indeed should relate to one another? The study of religions and their interrelations has not always been well served by universalizing or highly 'conceptualist' approaches. Such approaches have tended to dominate the field – not least through deploying the overarching, problematic category of 'religion' to deal with highly diverse and complex traditions. A paradigmatic instance of the conceptualist starting point is the work of the British theologian John Hick (1922–2012), whose thought is still a dominant influence on a pluralist theology of religions, though it has been thrown into question by a number of scholars in recent years. A Hickian approach – which has parallels in the work of the Swiss Hans Küng, the American Langdon Gilkey and others – aims to argue that all religions are instances of a common cultural instinct to honor a transcendent source of being, and to live life in a way that seeks 'salvation' through the enactment of virtuous and altruistic ideals (Hick, 23). Given this alleged common root, a Hickian approach undercuts any suggestion that one religion may claim superiority over another.

This approach has been used frequently in the public sphere to buttress claims for the central importance of 'tolerance' as an interfaith 'virtue'. It may not seem tendentious at first

Fig. 4.7. Jerusalem, 2012
Fig. 4.8. Bangalore, 2010

glance, but on closer examination this response to religious diversity invites a number of serious criticisms. These center especially on what we might call its hidden imperialism. Whether in its theocentrism – dubious, for instance, as a description of Buddhism – or its deployment of salvation as an organising category, it can be accused of retaining a Judaeo-Christian framework in certain key respects. There is a further danger. In its insistence that particular claims or practices are dispensable, culture-specific adjuncts to a ‘purer’ religious instinct, this approach risks being unable to say anything at all about the ‘divine’ to which it claims all traditions point (so de-particularized must that ‘divine’ become).

Hick’s pluralist approach can be seen as part of a more general Enlightenment challenge to religious particularism in the name of ‘universal reason’. A central part of the problem lies with its starting point, which is a *theory* about religions rather than a form of *close attention* to them. Significant traditions are amalgams of many influences that provide often surprising connections with other traditions. Before moving to posit a conceptual justification for comparing religious traditions – or assuming their inability to communicate without such a framework – one should listen and look at these actual influences.

This means being committed to exploring the importance of *encounters between religious traditions*. It is this commitment that Nicola Green’s work both manifests and explores. Religious traditions are, at least in part, defined by such encounters. They are sometimes renewed by them, even if sometimes wounded by them. This notion of the importance of boundaries and interactions can be evidenced from the historical and textual roots of the traditions themselves, as well as from their present-day practices. Encounters are not somehow irrelevant or peripheral to their developments, they are indeed integral and inseparable.

So a good intellectual approach to the study of religious traditions will be marked by a concern with their *interactive particularity*. This entails the claim that the space of Interreligious encounter is one created by and within the relations between religious traditions. It is not simply ‘there’, and cannot be underwritten by appeals to a universal religious instinct that is supposed to be ahistorically present in all cultures and individuals. We must attend to the identity-bearing particularities of traditions and their formation, including the practices associated with these identities. Such work will yield deeper understanding of the complex core identities of the religious traditions studied in their interrelations. And through this, they may be brought into more profound engagement with one another.

The role of *bodies* in such engagements is, we have said, no minor matter, and is rightly at the heart of what Green explores. Green recognizes and investigates a complex dynamic at play in engagements between religious leaders. She reveals how the faces and hands and physical frames of her subjects are, at the same time, bearers of the vesture and insignia of whole traditions. These people do not only speak for themselves. Their clothing, their accoutrements, and even (in formal settings) their gestures, are not theirs alone. They are representative clothes, representative accoutrements, and representative gestures as much as they are modes of individual expression.



This brings into sharp focus one of the great challenges in an era which celebrates personal authenticity and readily impugns the motives of those who take on the role of representing others. How may anyone speak for anyone else without betraying herself (or the one for whom she speaks)? What is it to speak for a tradition and for a community when you are only one person? A powerful contemporary logic insists that I may only be my own representative. The leader of a religious tradition, who must conserve and translate the commitments of past ages and mediate the diversity of current opinion, will often publicly and uncomfortably fall foul of this ethos. Arguably, a loss of faith in representative

speech, in representative action, and (indeed) in representation itself is not only one of the religious crises of our time, but also one of the political ones.

Green's exhibition points up the tension between personal integrity and the duty to represent others, present and past. Where she displays her subjects with their faces and hands 'suspended' in favor of their clothes, hats, and other signifiers, she also invites us to reverse the dynamic. What would happen if you did it the other way round? What if the outward garb were in brackets, and the faces and hands were the carriers of meaning and the agents of encounter? Would we be looking at anything more than a set of diverse individuals, disposed to more or less warm encounters with each other?

The fact is, as Green well knows from her prolonged study, that both matter. Encounters between religious traditions are both symbolic (the representative meeting of traditions and communities) and personal (where individual chemistry translates into effects in the world). They involve the formalized gestures of religious life (the choreographed accompaniments of 'namaste', 'salaam aleikum', 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'...) and the inclinations of the head, the widenings of the smile, the holdings of hands, which are as important a part of the currency of trust and affection as formal statements and staged dialogues. Sometimes, these two dimensions of encounter overlap and are indistinguishable. What is indisputable is that both the

human bodies of the religious leaders she studies and their religious trappings are *material*, and that in their materiality they participate in a world of signs. Both their bodies (with their capacity to embrace or draw back; smile or frown), and their wardrobes (rich with the bequests of tradition), give them resources for their meetings: things to offer and things to receive. The materiality of Nicola Green's art is an appropriate medium for exploring this sheer materiality at the heart of the meetings of faiths.

Interfaith dialogue is far from being a comfortable and affirmatory exercise, nor should it be. It is one in which a very great deal is at stake. There is the



Fig. 4.9. Cairo, 2011
Ill. 13. Bangalore, 2010

possibility of communication between them in many areas, but the differences that inevitably arise cannot, because of conciliatory intentions, be made subsidiary to dialogue. There are matters for strong objection, and those who are unprepared to put forward and in turn to receive strong objections (in other words, who are not very deeply committed to the full and challenging implications of interfaith dialogue) will not be adequate to the task. We might echo Thomas Kuhn's famous theorization of how scientific theories evolve through moments of tumult and the suspension of previous certainties. If one is to take up residence in the sphere of 'extraordinary science' then one must be prepared for a realm in which paradigms clash (Kuhn, chapter 8).

That said, words like 'clash' and 'crisis' are intended to suggest the *import* of what must take place in interfaith dialogue, but not necessarily the tone. In fact, if anything, the momentous issues at stake in such dialogue only increase the responsibilities of the participants, requiring them to be generous and humble as well as honest if they are serious about the outcome. In the works of art that Green presents in this project, there is much that hints at this generosity, humility and honesty.

Green evokes this tone of encounter by paying attention to factors including gender, gesture, clothing, and space. In doing so, she provides a properly embodied perspective on interfaith dialogue. Her approach refuses to see religion in a vacuum, placing faith fully within the context of visual, material, and sensory culture. Such open-ended engagement between traditions can explore matters that lie at the heart of their distinctive identities, making mere 'tolerance' seem depressingly anodyne.



Fig. 4.10. Jerusalem, 2012



Ill. 14. *Encounter*, Bianco 2018



Ill. 15. *Encounter*, Cyan 2018

Beyond Photo
Opportunities:
A Personal Journey into
Interfaith Dialogue

Ibrahim Mogra

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Some years ago, I was approached by a friend about his nephew who had just finished university. He said: 'Shaykh will you mentor him and take him under your wing?'. I agreed, and after a few days he discovered that I wasn't on social media at all. So he decided to bring me into the twenty-first century, and set up my Facebook and Twitter accounts. He wanted to find a picture to put on my profile, so I gave him a collection, and he found some on the Internet. Of all the pictures that he could have used, the one that he chose was of me with Reverend Lord Leslie Griffiths, a Methodist minister wearing a clerical collar, on our visit to a refugee camp to inspect the work of Islamic Relief a year after the Haitian Earthquake. Now, this young man didn't know Leslie from Adam, but he just felt that this was a very powerful image – a picture of me and a minister – and he was drawn to it. I've reflected on that, and I've become more and more convinced that pictures of faith leaders together are extraordinarily powerful; to such a degree that this young man, who didn't really have an interest in interfaith dialogue, was immediately compelled by its power.

Deep friendships have developed out of these encounters and some of those moments have been captured by Nicola Green. There is one particular photo that I think is just fantastic. It shows me, former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and the now Bishop of Bradford Toby Howarth laughing our heads off. I think this photograph would bring a smile to any viewer's



Fig. 5.1. Haiti, 2011
Fig. 5.2. Doha, 2011



face as we do not always see these kind of pictures of religious leaders. Anyone who thinks that Christians and Muslims cannot get along would have to think twice if they saw that photograph! Nicola's other photographs from a seminar in Doha, Qatar show a diverse group of people of different religions and ethnicities working together and getting along. I hope that this image would challenge the prejudiced ideas of people who think that the Other is necessarily the enemy.

For some outside observers, it may seem like these encounters are just photo opportunities, that religious leaders are just coming together, having a lovely picture taken, and that is it. However, those photographs and that connection have grown into work which is critically important; we have talked about difficult issues that affect faith communities, but particularly Muslim communities in this country. We have discussed tough questions such as the persecution of Christians in predominantly Muslim countries, and have tried to address those issues. All this is thanks to the deep friendships we have developed over the years.

After the horrific terrorist incidents we have experienced in the UK, all the different religious leaders decided to organise a peace walk through the streets of London. All of us in our religious attire set off one early morning from a mosque, to a synagogue, to a church, and then to Parliament, carrying a banner promoting peace. These photographs were seen by thousands of people on social media and through other outlets, but this event was not just about the walk, it was not just about the photo. All of us in that group have continued to work together in many different areas ensuring that our communities are able to live harmoniously together.

Not only do the photographs act as a catalyst for the important work that comes afterwards, but the images themselves are incredibly powerful. When we are seen together as a group in a photo, joyous in the company of other faiths and religions, we are hoping that we can be seen, in our harmonious co-existence, as role models in our respective communities. I believe this gives

Fig. 5.3. Doha, 2011



them not just a sense of warmth, but also encouragement that we can all live together peacefully and happily. We are all different, we all have different beliefs, and we do things very differently from one another, but here we are together, respectful of one another, and working towards the common good.

I am part of the multi-faith chaplaincy team in Canary Wharf. We have Christians, a Jew and a Muslim, all working together. One day, I and my Jewish colleague, Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman, decided to go for a walk on one of the roof terraces at Canary Wharf during our lunch break. There was a couple who saw us approaching, walking together, chatting, having a laugh. The lady stood up and approached us and said: *'Seeing you together has just made my day!'* She asked to take our photograph, a picture to capture that moment for eternity. I am certain that she looks at the picture occasionally, to delight her heart with the warmth and hope of that friendship.

My first taste of an interfaith encounter was as a student in the mid-eighties when an open day was organised at the seminary where I was studying. The local communities of Ramsbottom and Holcombe Village, near Bury in Greater Manchester, were invited to the Darul-Uloom Al-Arabiyyah Al-Islamiyyah, Institute of Arabic and Higher Islamic Education. The Darul-Uloom was previously a sanatorium that was purchased by the Muslim community in order to establish the first seminary in Europe. The building is perched on a hill on the edges of the West Pennine Moors and sits in the shadow of Peel Tower. In my time there I enjoyed the views of the Lancashire countryside from around the tower and the window in my room. I remember my excitement when I woke up to see the entire landscape covered in snow. I was born in Malawi and had never seen snow before!

The idea behind the open day was to give our neighbours an opportunity to visit the students and hear first-hand from us about our life in this groundbreaking institution. The Darul-Uloom attracted students from all over the world who lived and studied in their village for six to ten years.

Fig. 5.4. London, 2015

It was also a golden opportunity for us to meet our neighbours and hear what they thought of our seminary. I was very fortunate to be selected as one of the 'official' tour guides. That day we made new friends – non-Muslim ones! One couple who visited us were John and Meg. We became friends and they invited me to their lovely home, the Pinfold Cottage. I got to meet their teenage children and their friends and get a glimpse into their life. John worked on the Piper Alpha, a North Sea oil rig that was struck by tragedy when a fire broke out; thankfully he was not on duty, but he lost many friends. I felt truly honoured when John and Meg accepted my wedding invitation and joined my family in Leicester. There they got to meet and talk to many more of us – and of course, enjoyed the delicious food. All of that was before the age of the smartphone, so there are no pictures that captured those moments. However, the memories are treasured in our minds and they bring much warmth to me when I recall them. This whole experience was the catalyst that would drive me to reach out and connect with others.

After graduation I began to welcome non-Muslim groups to a number of mosques in Leicester. I also began to visit schools and talk to students in assemblies. Through this I formed a partnership with my dear friend, now retired, Reverend David Clark. Reverend Clark and I had met when we were both guests at a Muslim wedding. We were introduced by the host, just by chance, but we struck up a conversation and decided we would meet up. Within a few days, David was at my door, and we were sitting in my front room having a chat. The journey of our long friendship began. Whilst visiting schools, the pupils, especially Muslims, were astonished and surprised to see us together, different but respectful and admiring of each other's faith and culture. We both like to think we touched and inspired many of them to reach out and build such friendships with those who are different, whilst at the same time developing our own understanding of each other's faith.

David then introduced me to Canon Dr Andrew Wingate, a pioneer in interfaith relations, who had just moved to Leicester from Birmingham. Andrew and I began to work together. I remember all the visits we made to remote village churches, often on grey, cloudy days and murky evenings. We would go into churches and meet with people – sometimes no more than a handful – and we would sit and talk to them about Islam, helping to build a greater understanding. We like to think that we enabled people to understand Muslims better and that we helped to create a more cohesive society. Those early encounters then led to bigger things. Before long, I was involved in interfaith dialogue at a national level and was being invited to religious institutions for meetings. I remember Andrew telling me, when I said I'd been to Lambeth Palace three times, that he had never been there. He joked and said: '*I must be in the wrong religion!*' Sometimes I sit back and I wonder how I started with little things, which propelled me forward to form close personal relationships with many of the world's religious and faith leaders on a national and global level.

Andrew and I hosted visits to mosques and churches, and travelled the country to meet with different congregations. This later developed into some more fun activities. We had the first ever imams and clergy football and cricket matches, which developed into joint teams of religious leaders playing against the police and civil service. This work then took on an international

character. We had a team from Sweden come to play with us, and an English team go to Germany to play with clergy and imams there. Alongside the fun and games, we did a lot of charitable work together. We fundraised collectively for a Christian-administered hospital in India and a Muslim-administered orphanage in Gaza, and helped provide water to a village in Africa. This was all the fruit of those friendships and encounters.

I believe these events are much more than a photo opportunity. When you encounter other people and you build that connection and maintain that relationship, the positive outcomes are limitless. For example, as a result of these encounters, I have been involved with the partnership between the Christian Muslim Forum and St George's College in Jerusalem. Every year we take a group of Muslims and Christians – potential leaders of their communities – to Israel and Palestine. We spend time studying, learning, and sharing scripture together, visiting the holy sites of all the Abrahamic traditions, and having photos taken at iconic buildings and holy places. We have had amazing times, returning as even better friends, ready to continue our work at home.

Through my work in interfaith dialogue I have encountered people of many different religions, ethnicities and identities. My father came from India, and I felt it was crucial that in light of the tension between Hindus and Muslims there that I work with leaders of the Hindu community. Over the years I have worked with many Hindu leaders and organisations, visited Hindu temples – including one in Lisbon while visiting for an interfaith event – chaired public dialogues, and addressed gatherings at Hindu festivals. It is wonderful to be able to build these friendships, and it is very important that we continue to work together and improve our understanding of each other.

I have also had very meaningful encounters with Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, and I was in attendance when he was made Chief Rabbi. I have been invited to his home for dinners, sat with him on panels, and tried to support him as much as I can – as I'm sure he would do for me. Because we have this mutual respect for each other and friendship, I am able to pick up the phone and talk

to him every time violence erupts in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinians. I think that were it not for the friendship that we have built over the years, it would not have been possible to now have this kind of relationship.

Through Religions for Peace UK I have engaged the faith leaders of the Bahá'í community. We've worked on a number of issues, and I was given the opportunity to add my voice and appeal for the release of seven Bahá'í leaders imprisoned in Iran with a video message. I was later able to be with them at the bicentenary celebration at the Palace of Westminster and show solidarity and friendship.



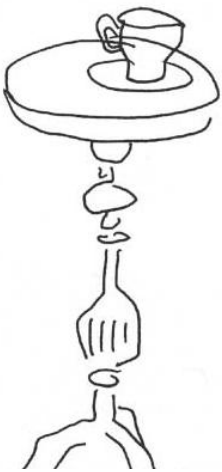
Fig. 5.5. London, 2015



Working at the national stage meant that I was approached by the now retired Bishop of Oslo, Gunnar Stålsett, who sat on a panel of judges for the Niwano Peace Prize committee in Tokyo. He invited me to join as a judge alongside him and nine other people. I served on that committee for six years, and in the course of that time we awarded the peace prize to some incredible people, who are doing amazing peacebuilding work within their communities and countries. These friendships have far-reaching impact, and positive consequences for people on the ground. I will probably not ever meet them, but I believe it helps transform their communities and create more peaceful societies.

As I continued to be involved with interfaith matters at a national level, and became more and more active, I was kindly contacted by Building Bridges to participate in their annual seminars. Again, this came out of a personal friendship with the then Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Rowan Williams and Reverend Dr David Marshall, who is in charge of the Building Bridges seminar, whom I had encountered at Lambeth Palace. Through those seminars we've all learnt so much about interfaith relations, and about topics that we've discussed, especially through studying each other's scriptures. To be in the company of thirty international, world-renowned scholars, religious leaders, and academics is a real privilege and honor.

Many programmes, events, and actions have been carried out in the aftermath of these meetings. For instance, a group of us as imams have been meeting with Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. It started with just tea and biscuits, and gradually





developed. We've looked at how we can help homeless people and educational policy regarding faith schools. This led to working with St Mary's University in Twickenham, where it is now possible to obtain a certificate in Islamic Studies. This friendship also led to an invitation to the Vatican for a private audience with the Pope. We had an amazing experience, and the Pope gave us some very sound advice. We were told that millions had witnessed our visit on news channels around the world. In a time where there is so much violence and enmity towards and amongst people of both these religions, Muslims and Christians watching those scenes on television, newspapers, and on the internet, could clearly see that we can still be friends. Indeed, we *have to* be friends. My only regret – and I'm still kicking myself for this – is that I did not ask the Pope for a selfie! I think it would have gone viral. Muslims and Christians around the world would have seen two very different religious people interacting as friends.

I am also working very closely with Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh on the *Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, which has been welcomed at an international



Fig. 5.7. The Vatican, 2017
 Fig. 5.8. The Vatican, 2017



level. I was privileged to be invited by Bhai Sahib Mohinder to join an interfaith delegation to Amritsar in the Punjab, the spiritual and cultural centre for Sikhs. They took me along with a number of other religious leaders – Jews, Hindus, Jains, and members of the Salvation Army – and it was an amazing experience to learn about the place, the people, and the Sikh religion. Bhai Sahib Mohinder and I have been members of Religions for Peace UK, and also the European Council of Religious Leaders, and through that we have become colleagues and friends. The delegation was for people from Birmingham, and when Bhai Sahib Mohinder invited me I said, ‘but I’m from Leicester!’. He replied, ‘No no, you’re from the Midlands and that counts!’. He is fond of me, and so he very kindly took me along. Whilst on the trip I took many photos, some of which I’ve kept on my iPad. Occasionally, when I come across a Sikh person, either on a train or at a meeting somewhere, I take the opportunity to show them these photos. You can see the delight on

Fig. 5.9. Lambeth Palace, 2012

Fig. 5.10. Amritsar, 2014

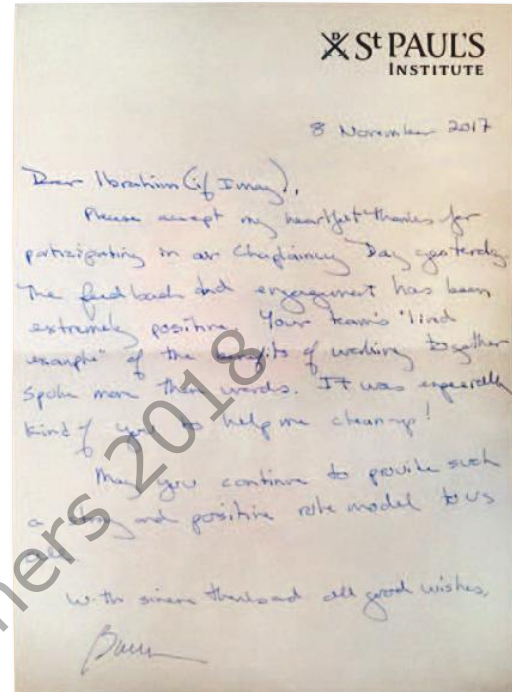
Fig. 5.11. Amritsar, 2014

their faces. They are so excited to see that I have been to their holy place, and they really appreciate me sharing this with them.

In my role as part of the multifaith Chaplaincy Team for Canary Wharf, we visited St Paul's Cathedral to talk to a group of leaders at the Saint Paul's Institute. We received a thank you note which read: 'Please accept my heartfelt thanks for participating in our chaplaincy day yesterday, the feedback and engagement has been extremely positive. Your team's lived example of the benefits of working together spoke more than words'. I hope to continue, together with others, to be an example to the world for how one can articulate respect for another faith, whilst maintaining the integrity of one's own faith, and working towards a more peaceful society.

Whilst I have had many wonderful experiences, these visits have also been a lot of hard work. They mean time away from family, returning to see work that has piled up, and meeting new people in strange places. Challenges also arise. There have been photos in which I have appeared alongside men and women at interfaith gatherings and there have been some people on social media who have condemned me, making comments like 'well there we go, off on a holiday to some nice place, having lovely pictures taken'. When I have attended services at cathedrals and churches over the years, some Muslims have objected to it. Some people criticise me, and do not understand the need for us to engage in this way.

As with all new and innovative activities that people engage in, there will always be resistance, criticism, objection, and misunderstanding about motives. I listen to people's complaints and their criticism, and acknowledge that they have the right to disagree. I'm sure my colleagues from other religious backgrounds have all faced this from their own communities. Nevertheless, we know why we are doing this, and we can see the benefit and need for it, and will continue with the hope that others will be inspired to do the same. I use the knowledge that my teachers have given to me, hopefully a bit of wisdom, and continue to do what I'm doing, which is engaging with everyone who is willing to engage. When I face these challenges I focus on the fruits of our work and it makes it all worthwhile. I hope that the critics will also see the positive outcome of all this work and eventually appreciate it rather than condemn it.



I have been invited by the Dean of Westminster Abbey to private meetings and delicious private lunches with faith leaders. I have also been invited to observe events, such as the Commonwealth Day service in Westminster Abbey. These important events are attended by Her Majesty the Queen, the royal family, by ambassadors of Commonwealth countries, and many other dignitaries. I am able to be there, respectful of the Christian place of worship, without feeling any pressure whatsoever to compromise my own faith or belief, without feeling any pressure to participate in the ritual dimension of the Christian service. I can be respectfully present amongst Christian people, observing them at worship and even offering a Muslim prayer in my own tradition. These events are televised, and millions can watch how all these different religious people are there in one place together, for the same reason, and praying in their own different ways. These are very powerful images and we are yet to discover what their impact and result will be for those individuals who are watching in their living rooms. We may never know for how many people this was the spark that led them to take up interfaith engagement and encounters in their local communities. I believe these events can have an immeasurable ripple effect.

I hope that my example can inspire confidence and that Muslim people watching me in such settings will have the self-assurance to present themselves in similar situations in their communities. They will see that it's okay for a Muslim person to be in a church, to observe and be present whilst Christians are worshiping, and offer their own prayer. They can do this with integrity, without compromising their faith. For me this is very powerful. There may be many Muslims who want to engage but are uncertain about whether it is permissible, or are anxious about whether it might compromise their beliefs. You can be yourself, as I have been. I have no hesitation in going to these places, and there has never been an event where I have had to compromise my faith. Perhaps people of other faiths can draw a similar lesson.

Difference can be observed by everyone. I remember a rather funny encounter at Lambeth Palace when we were invited to honour the Queen. I was standing next to Bishop Richard Cheetham, at the time my co-chair at the Christian Muslim Forum. I was in my turban and my robes and he was in his violet shirt and his clerical collar. As the Queen came along we were introduced, she looked at Richard, then she looked at me, and she said, '*hmmm... very different*'. She recognized that the two of us looked so dissimilar, and yet here we were telling her about our work bringing people of different religions together. Difference is visible and that can be a good thing. It is right there and we often see it, but it is what we do with that difference that really matters. If our actions are right, then they will speak louder than our words, and many times a picture is much more powerful than words.

Having been closely involved with Lambeth Palace in many interfaith activities, I was invited to the installment of the current Archbishop, Justin Welby, at Canterbury Cathedral. We have worked together on a number of issues. We have discussed serious international matters, such as the role of our government and armed forces in the conflict in Syria, and I was able to share my views and advise him. We have also shared many joyous occasions such as Iftar dinners – the

breaking of fast during Ramadan – at Lambeth palace; a measure of Archbishop Justin's Christian hospitality. I have also had the privilege of studying scripture with him over Lent. Archbishop Justin and I stood together in front of the British media to condemn the horrendous murder of drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich. Those photos of us together condemning this act of terrorism have been seen by millions around the country, demonstrating once again that religions are united against terrorism and call on their followers to live peacefully with everyone.

I am motivated by a verse in the Qur'an that reminds us that we are all made by God from a male and a female: 'People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware' (49:13). The Qur'an also tells us: 'If God had so willed he would have made you one community, but he wanted to test you through that which he has given you, so race to do good, you will all return to God and he will make clear to you the matters you differed about' (5:42). That is what really drives me and it's an opportunity for me to share my faith with others and to learn about others and learn from their wisdom. I strive to reach out to fellow human beings, regardless of their faith and culture. They are my neighbours and my fellow citizens, and – to use the words of Anglican liturgy – 'It is meet and right so to do'.



Fig. 5.13. London, 2017



Ill. 17. *Encounter*, Indigo 2018



Ill. 18. *Encounter*, Alizarin 2018

Through Scripture and
through Prayer:
Leading Edges in Interfaith
Engagement

David F. Ford

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In the photograph below, taken by Nicola Green during the Muslim-Christian Building Bridges Seminar on Prayer in Qatar in 2011, Christians and Muslims are gathered together. Reading and praying are both happening. Some are reading the text, some have eyes closed, all are silent, and no one knows what is going on in each other's minds and hearts. The occasion had been carefully shaped with sensitivity to each tradition, and there was no suggestion that each identifies God in the same way. Most of the seminar was spent in intensive discussion around texts on prayer, all with some reference to Christian or Muslim scriptures.

There are at least three convergent reasons why reading and praying are practices that should be at the leading edge of interfaith engagement, why they have been at the heart of some of the most fruitful interfaith engagements so far, and why, therefore, their neglect anywhere is a missed opportunity. Reading and praying are different, and how they can each best contribute to worthwhile interfaith engagement is a challenging question. In what follows I will explore those three main reasons for the importance of both reading scripture and prayer in that engagement, and will reflect on how they can best contribute to it. Nobody stands nowhere. I speak as a Christian who for the past forty years has been involved in various forms of interfaith engagement.



Fig. 6.1. Doha, 2011

Why Scripture and Prayer? – Depth, Breadth, and Surprise

Depth

There are innumerable forms of well-intentioned interfaith engagement, most of them valuable in some way. In a world where there is a crying need for better relationships between religions, such initiatives are worth encouraging. The principle ‘Let a thousand flowers bloom’ has a good deal to be said for it. When I lived in Birmingham for fifteen years, one of the most religiously diverse places in Britain, I observed, and sometimes took part in, a range of activities through which members of different faith traditions came together. There were polite social, conversational gatherings; there were practical, collaborative projects; there were deliberation and negotiation around religious

education; there were academic programmes of interfaith study and research, and there were joint delegations to bodies in which leaders from different traditions supported each other for the sake of the common good.

However, although much of that interested me and was worthwhile, somehow none of it gripped me. As often happens, I did not realise what was missing until I discovered it. In the early 1990s, I was among a small group of Christians who used to sit in on the meetings of Textual Reasoning, a group of Jewish text scholars, philosophers and theologians. Inspired by the Rabbinic practice of *chevrutah*, they intensively studied and discussed passages from Jewish scriptures (Tanakh),

Rabbinic tradition (Talmud), and medieval and modern Jewish thinkers. The sheer energy in argument, the depth of learning, and the humour of the meetings, were extraordinarily attractive. In time, some of them and some of us Christian fringe members decided to form Scriptural Reasoning (SR), and were soon joined by Muslims. Our sessions, usually with six to twelve in each group, tabled short passages from Tanakh, the Bible and the Qur’an on a particular theme, and, after a short introduction, we would intensively discuss one text after another, and explore their interrelation.

The next section will describe what developed from this beginning. For now, as I look back over a quarter of a century of involvement in Scriptural Reasoning, the point is what made it so different from what I had experienced in Birmingham. The main thing is depth. At its best, Scriptural Reasoning has been a way in which I and many others have been able, through interfaith engagement, to go deeper and deeper in multiple ways. The obvious way has been through going deeper into the scriptures of other traditions – for me, being guided by Jews into Tanakh, Talmud, and the Rabbinic tradition, thought and practice up to the present, and by Muslims into the





Qur'an, the Hadith, and Islamic tradition, thought and practice up to the present, has brought an opening up of the depths of those traditions that is hard to imagine happening otherwise. Some of the most instructive times have been when Jews or Muslims around the table have discussed or argued among themselves.

Yet it has not only been a journey deeper into Judaism and Islam. It has also meant going deeper into my own Christian texts and traditions. Jews and Muslims inhabit long traditions of reading and interpretation that have been at home in many cultures, historical periods and spheres of life, and are carried on around the world in many settings today. These traditions contain varied ways of reading and very experienced readers, and to find myself studying my own scriptures and related texts alongside them has been a repeated stimulus to reread, to ask new questions, and to discover fresh interpretations. It has also generated fruitful conversation and argument among the Christian participants.

Fig. 6.3. Doha, 2011



So there can be a double deepening of meaning through one's own tradition's texts and those of others. But that is not all. There is also a further possibility, one that the next section will show has been realised in many forms. This is a deeper engagement together in our shared world. All the Abrahamic religions worship a God who created, sustains, blesses, and judges the world, and calls people to serve God's good purposes within it. Studying our scriptures together does not by any means always involve agreeing on how to serve the world, but it may include that. It may also mean facing deep disagreements, and that too can help. Scriptural Reasoning can help identify

not only areas of agreement, overlap and potential collaboration, but also areas of conflict, disagreement and tension. Improving the quality of disagreement, understanding better the what and the why of each other's convictions and differences, is as important for living together in peace as is agreement.

There has also been a further deepening: in relationships. For members to be able to study with others the texts that mean most to them, allows them to share from the depths of their faith. None of the activities I had known in Birmingham had allowed people to share like this,

Fig. 6.4. Lambeth Palace, 2012
 Fig. 6.5. The Vatican, 2011

face to face, faith to faith, year after year. Because each Scripture is inexhaustibly rich, let alone all three in interaction with each other, the conversation around them is endless. This long-term conversation that shares deep meaning is a fruitful setting for nurturing strong relationships. The experience has in fact been that this happens frequently, often leading to friendships.

What does in effect mean most to Abrahamic readers? The obvious answer is: God. Here is the infinite depth, height, length and breadth, beyond all measurement. There is a complex question about whether Jews, Christians and Muslims pray to the same God. Perhaps for each the answer should be yes, our reference is to the God of Abraham, the One who creates, sustains, blesses and judges; but each of us identifies that One differently. Yet, whatever the answer, joint study of our scriptures can deepen our understanding of God in our own tradition and those of others.

That leads to the question of prayer. There are at present sharp differences among and between many Jews, Christians and Muslims about interfaith prayer. There is not space here to explore them, so I will simply give my testimony arising out of experience over many years, especially in Scriptural Reasoning, but also in gatherings such as the Building Bridges Seminar (the two I have taken part in have been on Scripture and on Prayer), and through some friendships.

As a Christian, I pray in the name of God, who in the Bible (as read by most of the world's Christians) is named by the 'tetragrammaton' (literally, four letters, the Hebrew YHWH, which Jews never pronounce, as in Exodus 3:15), and also named as Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy Spirit, and through many titles, attributes, metaphors, and narratives

(cf. Soulen; Kendall Soulen, who has also contributed to Scriptural Reasoning, is especially perceptive on interfaith and gender issues related to the naming of God). Neither Jews nor Muslims can name God in the same way as Christians (one key difference being the divinity of Jesus Christ), so there can be no full prayer in unity together.

Yet there can be much else deeply related to prayer: learning from each other's understanding, wisdom, and practices of prayer, and from testimonies to experience of it; being inspired – intellectually, imaginatively, affectively and practically – by others' dedication to prayer; improvising in our own prayer by analogy with what we find in Jewish

and Muslim prayer; being present with others praying, and entering into it insofar as we are able; practicing silent prayer together; and more. At the heart of it is acknowledgement that we simply do not have an overview of how God receives any of our prayers, that God is free to relate to people differently, and that God is immensely mysterious, before whom we need to be radically humble – and, above all, prepared for surprises (on which the third reason given below expands).

Reading scripture and praying, while they are related, are different, and they play very different roles in interfaith relations. For normal, long-term interfaith engagement, reading scripture together

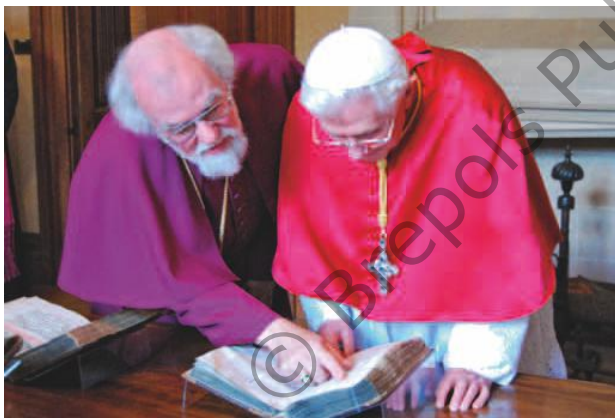


Fig. 6.6. Lambeth Palace, 2010

can be a staple, regular practice; but I doubt whether praying together can. It is immensely enriching for prayer to inform, and be informed by, study of scripture; but, as a wholehearted practice of relating to God named in a particular way in a community that is shaped primarily through one particular scripture and tradition, full Jewish, Christian or Muslim prayer is inseparable from a whole way of life. It is simply not possible to live simultaneously as a fully orthodox Jew, Christian and Muslim. Jewish prayer, Christian prayer and Muslim prayer are each self-involving, community-involving, life-involving, and God-identifying in distinctive ways, and to be fully involved in one is to exclude being fully involved in either of the others.

This is the point of the second of Nicola Green's photographs, below, also taken at the Qatar seminar. It is taken at the celebration of a Roman Catholic Mass, and the presence in the photograph of myself, an Anglican, underlines the point: many fellow Christians, let alone Jews or Muslims, are not allowed by the Roman Catholic Church to be full participants in this central act of worship. Yet, if a leading mode of ever-deepening interfaith engagement is not praying together, but reading, interpreting, discussing, arguing and meditating centred on scripture, followed through in ways such as the next section will describe, then all the fruitfulness in relation to prayer suggested in the previous paragraph can be experienced.

I conclude this section with an example of scripture and silent prayer coming together in a fresh and rewarding way. In September 2011, Benedictine nuns from Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire, who had taken part in an open Scriptural Reasoning session that was part of Cambridge University's Festival of Ideas, suggested accompanying this sort of interfaith scripture study with their practice of *lectio divina*, so uniting a practice rooted in rabbinic discussion with a form of meditation developed in monastic settings. The result was that twenty or so Christians, Muslims and Jews



Fig. 6.7. Doha, 2011



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spent a day at Turvey Abbey. We decided on three texts, divided into two groups, and studied the texts in the modes both of Scriptural Reasoning and of *lectio divina*. When we gathered in plenary to reflect on the experience, we were unanimous that each mode had complemented the other, and that we had had a rich, deep engagement with the texts and with each other. One practical result has been that now, in Scriptural Reasoning sessions, attention to a particular text sometimes opens with a reading of it, followed by a time of silent meditation and sharing of one word, phrase or thought by each participant, before proceeding to discussion.

Who knows what further helpful interfaith practices involving scripture and prayer, yet respecting diverse ways of identifying God, will be improvised in the future?

Breadth

The second reason why reading and praying are practices that should be at the leading edge of interfaith engagement is their breadth.

Scriptural Reasoning has spread, first of all through academic settings, then alongside that in a range of other settings, such as local synagogues, churches and mosques; schools, prisons, hospitals, civil society bodies, businesses; national and international leadership programmes, and peace and reconciliation initiatives. A few of the academic landmarks have included: two waves of Scriptural Reasoning-related development in the University of Virginia, both led by Professor Peter Ochs, a

Fig. 6.8. Doha, 2011

Jewish philosopher – first, masters and doctoral programmes, then the transdisciplinary Initiative on Religion, Politics and Conflict; the founding in Cambridge University in 2002 of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, which has sponsored both academic work and community-oriented projects; research and courses in the Free University of Amsterdam; seminars in the University of Tuebingen; the founding of the Institute for Comparative Scripture and Interreligious Dialogue in Minzu University, Beijing, where Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Confucian and Daoist texts are studied together; and the new Hindu-Christian-Muslim initiative in Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya University in Haridwar, India, in partnership with Birmingham University and Rose Castle.

Significant landmarks beyond the academy have included Faith in Leadership's programmes in Windsor Castle for senior Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders; Scriptural Reasoning work in Israeli hospitals with Jewish, Christian and Muslim staff; the Al Amana Center's development of Scriptural Reasoning in Oman; and the establishment of Rose Castle, a center for reconciliation, interfaith engagement and conservation in the Lake District of Northwest England, as the UK hub for SR beyond the academy. Rose Castle also hosts the website www.scripturalreasoning.org. That brief selection should be enough to indicate the breadth of SR: it has worked as an interfaith practice in a variety of geographical locations (one could add Russia, South Africa, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya, Ireland, Canada, Egypt, and more), with several religious traditions, in many social settings, with people of diverse educational background, and with leaders and ordinary members. And this breadth reflects the breadth of the various scriptures, which can be fruitfully related to so many questions of meaning and so many people.

What about prayer? That too has immense breadth – its concerns are as broad as God and the whole of creation. For the reasons given already, it is not so well suited as joint reading of scriptures to being a core interfaith practice. Yet it can be vital in the formation of religious readers, and enhance the practice of joint study in profound ways, as exemplified by the Qatar Building Bridges Seminar and the Turvey Abbey combining of SR and *lectio divina*. Indeed, if SR were to spread further without participants who pray, and who contribute through prayerful reading, its integrity in relation to each of the scriptural traditions would be seriously compromised.



Surprise

Surprise is the third reason for reading and praying being at the leading edge of interfaith engagement. A leading edge implies heading into an unknown future and being open to surprises. Prayer is a basic practice of orientation towards the future, and for theists involves engagement with a God who is free to surprise us. One way this can happen is through the meanings of scripture and the contributions of other readers.

Scriptural Reasoning has, in my experience, been full of surprises. Often in a SR session one has the sense that never before in history has this specific set of short texts (say, on anger, debt, leadership, beginnings, violence, hope, or other subjects) been studied in relationship to

each other by members of the scriptural traditions being discussed. Usually, this is a recipe for surprises, intensified by the diverse experiences, 'internal libraries', and contexts that are feeding into the discussion. The surprises can be of many sorts – illuminating, painful, confusing, divisive, generative, transformative. Sharing them, and working out how to cope with them, is a key part of being at the leading edge, and should intensify both the quest for good responses to them and, inseparably, the turn to prayer by each in their own way.

Witnessing Prayer in Silence; Reading Scriptures with Conversation

Peter Ochs once suggested that when Jews gather to worship there should be present in the synagogue a Christian and a Muslim who keep silence – playing no part in the service, but witnessing the event, and being a silent reminder of the communities they represent. Likewise, there should be a Jew and a Muslim present as silent witnesses in church services, and a Jew and a Christian in mosque prayer; and, at other times, members of the three communities should gather to practice Scriptural Reasoning. Perhaps it is only that sort of combination – both recognizing the centrality of God and prayer, and energetically seeking wisdom, truth and understanding together around our scriptures – that can help to enable, at the leading edge of interfaith engagement, the sorts of depth, breadth and generative surprises that please God.

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Fig. 6.9. Doha, 2011



Ill. 19. *Encounter*, Lapis Lazuli 2018



Grace-full Bodies:
Interreligious Encounters in
the Art of Nicola Green

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There is no such thing as 'art for art's sake'. Art is never innocent, but reflects a given time and place, as well the judgments and perspectives of the artist – each of which can be evaluated morally. This ethical dimension comes to the fore in art that portrays interreligious meetings. The artist must decide how to depict these encounters – whether as an experience of loss or gain, as an exercise in empathy or enmity, or as a moment of vulnerability or resistance. In the process, artists and their artwork deliver a message regarding the value of such meetings. In this sense, Martha Nussbaum is right to say that 'the aesthetic is ethical and political' (344). The artist bears responsibility for portraying a complex reality truthfully and, at the same time, awakening in us the sense of 'things that can be' (360). Such a 'projected morality' is an exercise in the 'civic use of the imagination' that aims to awaken in its audience empathy and emulation (343).

In this essay, I consider three of Nicola Green's photographs of interreligious encounters, treating each as an example within the visual arts of the civic use of the imagination. Drawing from Yolanda Covington-Ward's work on gesture, I organise my thoughts around three somatic performances: the body as *center*, *conduit*, and *catalyst* (227–232). Within each, I consider Green's depictions of Christian engagement with one of three religious traditions – Tibetan Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism. I cannot do full justice to the many layers in this artwork or the interreligious



Fig. 7.1. Bangalore, 2010

encounters Green depicts. Consequently, there are shifting emphases in what proceeds. My discussion of Buddhism highlights the intersectionality of religion, history, politics, and power over deeper discussions of particular religious beliefs and practices. My discussion of Judaism and Hinduism dwells less on this intersectionality and more on beliefs and practices. In the process, I hope to sketch the broken terrain surrounding interreligious encounters in contemporary art, theology, and life. By exploring the gestures Green lifts up, I also hope to identify the reconciling path that religious leaders walk in interreligious encounters. These gestures should inform our own, provided we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Body as Center

In interreligious encounters, the *bodies* of religious leaders play a central role as representatives of their faith traditions. In Christianity, we see an inkling of this role in the writings of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (35–108 CE). In a farewell letter to the church in Magnesia-on-the-Maeander, Ignatius reported that he caught a ‘glimpse’ of the whole church ‘in the persons of your saintly bishop, Damas’ and accompanying clergy. In other words, Ignatius believed that in seeing their bishop and clergy, he saw the whole church. Toward the end of the same letter, Ignatius painted a picture of the bishop in prayer holding on to his priests and clergy as if they were his ‘beautifully woven spiritual chaplet’, that is, his prayer beads (*Early Christian Writings*, 71,74).

When deployed in interreligious encounters, the centrality of religious leaders’ bodies offers the opportunity to re-narrate the history of relations between traditions, ethnicities, and nationalities. Consider Nicola Green’s photograph of the meeting in May 2008 between Lord Bishop Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury, and Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. Sitting side-by-side on a couch in Lambeth Palace, and occasionally reaching out to hold each other’s hands, the two religious leaders discussed the ‘priority of compassion in all religious traditions’, a visit that ended before a larger gathering with ‘a time of shared silence’ (‘Archbishop Welcomes His Holiness’). The comfortable intimacy between the two, their shared private space on a couch, their respectful tenderness, and the deep listening between them, all set the foundation for a scheduled time of meditation and prayerful silence afterwards.

Each of these actions performed a body politics that deliberately departed from the history between Britain and Tibet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Immortalized by Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), Tibet had been a chess piece in the ‘Great Game’ between imperial Britain and Russia. In an attempt to protect colonial interests in India and to establish ‘a *cordon*



sanitaire along the Himalayas', Britain invaded Tibet in 1903, in a grand, and ultimately failed, gesture of imperial overreach – the 'last aggression', Jan Morris writes, against 'that last stronghold of obscurantism, Tibet' (125). Viewed from this perspective, the meeting between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dalai Lama seeks to build an empire of empathy to replace the empires of old – one based on equity rather than asymmetry, on the cosmos rather than the metropole, on transcendence rather than tradition, on silence rather than speaking, on practice rather than ideology.

The meeting also tried to find a point of equilibrium between the two religions – a shift from viewing one, or the other, as superior. As such, if not representing a settled reality, their meeting set in motion a new, emerging reality. In Kipling's *Kim*, for example, Tibetan Buddhism represents – in a manner – England's conscience, a purer and more spiritual alternative to Christendom. This new equilibrium is again evident in Green's photograph of the Archbishop and Dalai Lama. That they are seated side-by-side projects an image of Christianity, and by implication Britain, among other faiths and in the world that is at once larger and more restrained. Rather than legitimating colonization, the Archbishop embodies a more recent understanding of Christian mission as bearing witness to the world that God so loves.

Fig. 7.2. Lambeth Palace, 2008

Green's depiction of the encounter also offers commentary on our less optimistic present. Taken in 2008, the meeting in the photograph seems worlds away from the recent encounter with Buddhism by the former foreign secretary, Boris Johnson. On an official visit in 2017 to Myanmar, Johnson toured the sacred Shwedagon Pagoda while audibly reciting Kipling's *The Road to Mandalay* (1890), a poem in which Kipling portrays a retired serviceman's erotic remembrance of an encounter with a young Burmese girl ('Boris Johnson'). With this recitation, Johnson performed a body politics based on nostalgia ('Look Back'). Ironically, his actions were just as firmly located in the body's desires as the Archbishop's and the Dalai Lama's, with the exception that the desire Johnson elevates – *libido* – parodies the empathy exuded in Green's photograph. Like Kipling's serviceman, Johnson projects a 'patriotic manhood and racial virility' that is, as Ann Laura Stoler writes, 'not only an expression of imperial domination, but a defining feature of it' (16). Despite this display of machismo, however, Johnson's actions can only muster the remembrance, rather than the reality, of *Pax Britannica*.

The body politics revealed in Green's photograph represents a deliberate moral commitment and stance regarding interreligious meetings in an increasingly globalized world. Green's image tells the viewer that, as the world becomes smaller, we face the choice of whether or not to become smaller, too. Building an empire of empathy requires the courage to refuse the lure of discredited national myths and to see one's own actions and beliefs in deep relationship with others. The Archbishop and the Dalai Lama, then, were not just meeting on an individual level, but revealing how their religious, ethnic, and political communities might inhabit new global realities through shared faith, hope, and love.

Body as Conduit

The bodies present in interreligious meetings also serve as conduits for a complex interaction between objects, ideas, and practices. Religious leaders carry within their bodies the incorporated knowledge of their traditions, which have become in them an inscribed performance that speaks a kind of body language. The bodies of religious leaders are therefore not only representative, but *communicative*. In this sense, as Paul Connerton notes, there is a congruence between 'works of art' on the one hand, and 'bodily expressions, gestures, postures and movements' on the other. Both invite 'interpretation'. Each can be read as a kind of 'text' (94–95).

This body language is clearest when religious leaders preside over a ritual or liturgy. In the choreography of movements, there is a blending of ceremony, gesture, and mode that express – at

once – identity, authority, and memory. These performances look forward as well as backward, as every ritual or liturgy improvises and adapts to an evolving congregation and context. In this sense, religious leaders resemble artists, and vice versa. Like ‘the body in live, performed art’, the religious leader’s body is, to quote Kristine Stiles, ‘a means of association and juxtaposition like a connector, a bridge, a synapse, between two mutually identifying human beings’ (Blocker, 33).

When religious leaders ceremonially interact with sacred texts, or scriptures, multiple signifiatory networks emerge. Scriptures bind together time and space, enabling communities to compare their beliefs and practices against what has been written before and elsewhere. Further, scriptures reveal knowledge unobtainable from observation or experience alone. As a result, in every religion that has scriptures or sacred texts, approaches have developed to bridge the distance between what is written and what is embodied.

The religious leader is therefore an embodied commentary and lexicon of the scriptures. This interpretive performance does not undermine the scriptures’ authority. Rather, the opposite occurs, particularly in ritual settings when a ceremonially dressed cleric reads from ornately decorated scriptures. The book, and the religious leader bearing it, mutually reinforce each other in the eyes of the congregation and, by implication, in the eyes of God.

Recovering this interplay between text and body is key in order to address Christianity’s long history of oppressing Jews and Judaism. Christian interpreters historically employed two interpretive strategies for reading Judaism out of the Scriptures the two traditions share. The first was to read the word ‘Israel’ in the Hebrew Bible as not a reference to any visible, embodied Jewish community, but to an idealized Christian ‘Church’. This practice was justified, Peter Ochs writes, by the belief that ‘with the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, Israel’s covenant with God was superceded and replaced by God’s presence in the church as the body of Christ’ (1).

The second was to try to bridge the distance between Scripture and its interpretation by setting up an opposition between the ‘letter’ of the text and the ‘spirit’ of its meaning. This influential approach is part of a theory of communication that originated with Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE). All communication, Augustine argued, makes connections between two basic categories: the ‘sign’ (*signum*) and the ‘thing’ (*res*) to which it refers (*On Christian Doctrine*, 523). Signs point to interior and exterior realities; they comprise the words we use – both those we carry in our minds and those materially embodied in speaking and writing. Whether mental or material, their purpose and value resides in the truth they convey, not in themselves. ‘Letters have been invented’, Augustine reasoned, ‘that we might be able to converse also with the absent; but these are signs of words, as words themselves are signs in our conversations of those things we think’ (*On the Trinity*, 209).

Augustine justified his theory on the basis of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word (*logos*) made flesh (*sarx*). ‘Just as when we speak’, he reasoned, ‘the word which we have in our hearts becomes an outward sound and is called speech’ without ‘being modified in its own nature by the change, so the Divine Word, through suffering no change in nature, yet became flesh, that he

might dwell among us' (*On Christian Doctrine*, 526). As such, embodiment itself becomes purely functional. In and of themselves, our bodies teach us nothing. Like words, they are imperfect vessels to be used and not independently valued or enjoyed. True communication, for Augustine, is not the clumsy interactions we so often see between bodies and words – whether spoken, written, or read. Rather, it is the meeting of minds, the unmediated union between spirits. Augustine believed that Scripture itself, the ultimate sign, said as much in the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:6): 'the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life' (*On Christian Doctrine*, 559).

One of Augustine's prime examples of broken communication is 'the Jewish people'. Imprisoned by a 'blind adherence to the letter', they mistakenly 'take signs for things'. As such, they are unable 'to lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created, that it may drink in eternal light'. Ironically, Augustine believed, this adherence to the letter was driven by a belief in the God who is greater than all words: 'not knowing to what the signs referred, still they had this conviction rooted in their minds, that in subjecting themselves to such a bondage they were doing the pleasure of the one invisible God of all' (*On Christian Doctrine*, 559).

This meant that Jews and Judaism, for Augustine, are imperfect and subordinate witnesses to the Christian faith – preservers of the word (*signum*) but blind to its meaning (*res*) (Fredriksen, 190–209). This generated, in the Christian West, varying levels of tolerance and oppression in the generations that followed him (Efroymson, 209–214).

The roots of antisemitism therefore run like a subterranean river through Christianity's inherited interpretive practices. They are not merely found in those moments, say, in the Gospel of John where Jesus, a Jew, is portrayed in conflict with 'the Jews' (Brown, 157–175). Nor are they merely found in the evolution of a racist ideology distinct from 'religious Jew-hatred' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Arendt, xi–xvi). They are also found in the way Western Christians have interacted with their own Scriptures, which created an order of thinking and a disordered theology.

To remedy these interpretive practices, Jewish and Christian theologians have tried to repair the way Scripture is approached theologically. This approach makes sense as far as it goes, because generations of philosophers and theologians have planted in the interpretive rows Augustine hoed (Ochs, 1–31). However, it is just as important for Christians to broaden their own understanding of communication as presenting not only opportunities for finding a shared *identity* but for respecting an observed *difference*. For difference, as Peters writes, 'crops up everywhere', even 'in our communions with texts like ourselves' (73).

This overview of the interactions between the body, ritual, text, interpretation, and anti-semitism helps place into the foreground Green's remarkable photograph of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and Pope Benedict XVI. The occasion of the meeting, which took place in December, 2011, was for Rabbi Sacks to present the Pope with a copy of his recent translation of *The Koren Siddur* – an authorized prayerbook (*siddur* means 'order' in Hebrew) that provides individual prayers and Scripture readings to frame each day – including daily observances, seasonal celebrations, and occasional services ('Chief Rabbi Meeting Pope Benedict XVI').



Sacks' *Siddur* represents a recovery and performance of particularity and identity – an opportunity to re-inscribe the Jewish tradition on the bodies of contemporary believers. As an object, the book is beautiful. The text of the prayers has been arranged poetically, so that the eye of the reader is forced to slow down and linger over the words (Sacks, xlvi). The Hebrew letters reflect a middle ground between traditional and contemporary fonts to provide a double-witness to persistence and adaptability. The *Siddur*, then, has been created with the body in mind, with the assumption that it would not simply be read or studied, but performatively prayed. The book, then, is designed to recall and represent the bodies its prayers and readings will shape in the process of reading. Finally, as a prayerbook that frames readings from the Scriptures with prayers and liturgies, the *Siddur* is a script that worshippers can use to perform their own interpretations of their Scriptures.

Fig. 7.3. The Vatican, 2011

In Green's image, Pope Benedict looks on as Rabbi Sacks opens his *Siddur*. The fact that Rabbi Sacks holds the book and opens it re-narrates Christianity's relation to Judaism – rather than colonizing their Scriptures, Christianity receives them as a gift and legacy. Further, Rabbi Sacks is opening the book from right to left, as the Hebrew-English translation has been arranged to grant priority to Hebrew, which reads from right-to-left. This lends authority to Hebrew as the original language of the Scriptures. Thus, instead of the unity developed by agreement over meaning (*res*), Rabbi Sacks's gift enables a different unity performed over a shared debt to a capacious and hospitable Word (*signum*). This kind of unity opens up the possibility that Jews and Christians can approach their interpretive differences as opportunities for a communion that is embodied and concrete rather than ideal and reified.

Green's photograph also captures the Pope in a subordinate position. Instead of portraying him as the teacher of religious knowledge, Pope Benedict becomes the student as another with superior knowledge opens – literally as well as figuratively – the book. This communicates a remarkable message concerning the attempts by the Roman Catholic Church to repair the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

The photograph captured the culminating moment of deliberate steps Pope Benedict and Rabbi Sacks took toward each other in the months before their meeting. In a visit to the Synagogue of Rome in early 2010, Pope Benedict rehearsed the steps Roman Catholic leaders have taken since 1965 to improve their church's relations with different branches of Judaism. Begging 'forgiveness for all that could in any way have contributed to the scourge of antisemitism and anti-Judaism', Pope Benedict hoped to build a new relationship of 'closeness and spiritual fraternity' based in 'the Holy Bible', which 'constantly reminds us of our common roots, our history and the rich spiritual patrimony we share' ('Visit to the Synagogue of Rome').

This desire to restore a shared familial relationship to the Scriptures was followed by an encounter between Rabbi Sacks and Pope Benedict when the Pope visited the UK in 2010. As he left a meeting with clerical and lay leaders of non-Christian faiths, the Pope turned to Rabbi Sacks to make a personal appeal. Rabbi Sacks described the meeting in this way:

© [There] was a little epiphany as far as I was concerned, because just as the Pope was leaving, he stopped and took both of my hands and told me how much he valued the Catholic-Jewish relationship and about how much he wanted the work to continue and in his words to deepen. I regarded that as a very blessed moment indeed. Soul touched soul across the boundaries of faith and there was a blessed moment of healing. It was for me a genuine I, thou, encounter.

(Inaugural Pope Benedict XVI Lecture)

Nicola Green's photograph recalls, then, not only the shared practice of reading Scripture in each religious tradition but also a departure from the violent ways that Christians have read the Hebrew Scriptures they inherited from Judaism. It also recalls the first Holocaust memorials, which were not made of stone, or glass, or steel, but took the form of memorial books, *Yizkor Bikher*, that commemorated lost lives and communities and served as substitute graves through which the dead could be visited and honored (Young, 7). The peaceful way in which Rabbi Sacks opens the book in the portrait, with the Pope looking on, represents the attempt of each to 'turn the page' and start a new chapter in the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Green's portrait invites Christian and Jewish viewers – as well as any other traditions in which the Scriptures are fundamental – to perform new rituals of reading together. In this sense, Green's portrait depicts a liturgy, not an ordinary meeting – a ritualized presentation intended to create space for a renewed and healed world. Adoration and worship before the Word, an embodied experience, provided an expression of unity in diversity.

Body as Catalyst

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The bodies of religious leaders are *catalytic*, that is, they create new knowledge and networks. In interreligious meetings, religious leaders not only *shape* received meanings but *create* new meaning. In this sense, religious leaders practice graced improvisation that reveals their mastery over their sacred texts and traditions that no received ritual can convey.

Within Christianity we see such a catalytic encounter in the Gospels of Matthew (15:21–28) and Mark (7:24–30), in an exchange between Jesus and a gentile woman. While traveling, Jesus is confronted by the woman, who pleads with him to heal her daughter who is being tormented by a demon. Jesus initially demurs, because he is a Jew and she is a Gentile, which means that this request exceeds his mission, which is to tend to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt. 15:24). Contained in his response is an ethnic and racial slur, 'dog', which suggests that he has received both the knowledge and the prejudices of his inherited tradition (Mt. 15:26). The woman's brilliant answer, however, both affirms Jesus as the hope of Israel and argues for herself as a person of 'faith' within the reach of his message (Mt. 15:29). The passages thus reveal a new, universal dimension regarding Jesus' mission. Further, as Pablo Alonso notes, the meeting is 'an invitation' to the followers of Jesus 'to cross boundaries as Jesus and the woman did' of 'gender, ethnicity, social class, culture, and religion'. In such 'transformative encounters' we learn 'to accept the other's word because in it God's voice comes' to us (343).

A similarly catalytic encounter occurs in Green's photograph of Lord Bishop Williams' interaction with Shri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji of Shri Puthige Matha, a large monastery with centers in Australia, Canada and the United States ('Shri Purthige'). The photograph captures the first gestures between the two religious leaders at an ecumenical center in Bangalore during Archbishop Williams' visit to India in 2010. Like the other encounters we have explored, the meeting was carefully choreographed and comprised a select group of both Christian and Hindu leaders from India.

The meeting was framed by a lecture Archbishop Williams gave five days before, in New Delhi, on the topic of pluralism. Often viewed as a political problem to be managed, Archbishop Williams argued that pluralism was an asset. The 'political realm' is nourished by the 'experience of co-operation and passionate concern for the common good that is nurtured in particular communities, especially by a religiously informed ethic of self-giving'. These religious virtues create political sensibilities that make democracies viable – particularly when many religions coexist. Interreligious encounters therefore need to celebrate and reinforce the 'interconnected



Fig. 7.4. Bangalore, 2010

differences' among the practitioners of diverse faith traditions, in which 'overlapping' cultures and religious traditions have 'commerce with one another, mutually altering and shaping one another' (Archbishop's Chevening Lecture).

In such a context, Archbishop Williams argued, 'comparative theology' plays a pivotal role in cultivating these public sympathies by practicing spiritual curiosity. The religious leader 'seeks to enter into the world of the believer of another faith, to experience some of what they experience as a genuine and personal spiritual discipline and means of discovery and growth and so to understand more fully the relation between basic narratives and daily practice' (Archbishop's Chevening Lecture).

Archbishop William's lecture helps unpack Green's photograph of the first gesture he makes as he meets the Swamiji. The Archbishop's hands are clasped together in a gesture that resonates with both Christianity and Hinduism. Within Christianity, his hands recall the *immixtio manuum* ('the mixing of hands'), a feudal rite of submission in which a vassal folded his hands together, as if in prayer, and placed them between the embracing hands of his lord. As Jacques Le Goff writes in a seminal study, this rite developed in Europe in the eighth century as part of a larger liturgy that involved speech, gesture, and objects of designated authority (237–287). Through it, the lord could mystically extend the reach of his physical hands through his designated servants, whose hands became his through the *professio in manibus* ('profession of hands'). Adopted by the church, initially by medieval monastic communities to celebrate the profession of new members, the rite continues to be practiced in different liturgical and academic contexts (Auge, 315–330). As Le Goff notes, although more limited in its scope and claims, the gesture is part of a ritual that is similar to the sacrament of baptism in terms of its sanctity and totality (241).

Viewed from a Christian perspective, then, Archbishop Williams was engaging in a remarkable gesture of reverent submission by liturgically placing himself in the hands of the Swamiji. By clasping his hands together, he expresses his willingness to not only meet as equals but to take a posture that, within his own Christian tradition, is read as deliberately subordinate. As such, he is renouncing the inequality that has been part and parcel of the West's engagement with Hinduism, a religion that has been shaped, and even misleadingly defined (in Western terms) as a result of colonization (Doniger, 66–67). He is willing, in other words, to enter into the sacred space and practices of Hinduism as a novice, as one willing to learn and accept the spiritual leadership of another. Although his actions are similar to Pope Benedict's reading of Rabbi Sacks' *Siddur*, rather than deepening his knowledge of the roots of his own tradition, here Archbishop Williams catalytically creates new knowledge and networks of meaning.

Archbishop Williams' gesture can also be read as a respectful appropriation of a Hindu gesture, the *Namaskara* or *Anjali Mudra*. As a formal way of greeting, the *Anjali Mudra* is used to greet both deities and human beings, either by holding the hands together over the head (when greeting a god) in front of the face (when greeting a teacher) or in front of the heart (when greeting a peer). The gesture then reflects that, as C. J. Fuller notes, in Hinduism there is 'no absolute

distinction between divine and human beings', and that in 'many contexts, human beings are seen as actually divine in one way or another' (3–4).

The gesture also is, like the *professio in manibus*, one of subordination. As such, as Fuller notes, the gesture's context expresses an 'inherent asymmetry' between the one bearing it and the one receiving it. This posture of subordination, however, gives way to a relationship between equals if the gesture is returned by the recipient. In Green's photograph, it is hard to know which party has initiated the gesture. Williams has placed his hands in front of his heart, indicating that he is reaching out to Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji as a peer. The careful way he holds his hands is also a reminder that one popular explanation of this gesture is that it represents the rejoining and reconciliation of our world's oppositions. In other words, embedded in the gesture is a sign of peace (*shanti*) and liberation (*moksha*). Archbishop Williams' formality is met by the Swamiji's more familiar iteration of the same gesture. The message of reciprocity has been conveyed, the space between them has been consecrated, and they stand together as spiritual equals.

Another intriguing facet of Green's photograph is that Archbishop Williams is its subject. Everyone else is either viewed from the back, partially depicted, or slightly out of focus. This invites the viewer to 'see' the Archbishop from an Indian point of view, which, in turn, invites us to imagine what this interreligious encounter might look like from the perspective of Hinduism. When viewed in this way, the role of sight in worship, or *darshan*, in Hinduism immediately comes to mind. As Diana Eck notes, *darshan* (or *darshana*) is translated from the Sanskrit as 'seeing' or 'viewing'. Within Hinduism, *darshan* is a kind of reciprocal act of blessing between the worshipper and the image that embodies and makes present the divine it represents. 'Since in the Hindu understanding', Eck explains, 'the deity is present in the image, the visual apprehension of the image is charged with religious meaning'. Thus, 'beholding the image is an act of worship, and through the eyes one gains the blessings of the divine' (4).

In addition to the *darshan* or temple images and sacred places, there is the *darshan* of holy persons, who also embody the divine presence. In this regard, it is possible to read Green's photograph as the portrayal of Archbishop Williams as a *sant* (translated as 'saint'), or a teacher and scholar who represents a community (Eck, 71). The image of the Archbishop – luminous in his white, 'summer' cassock – invites the viewer to reverently gaze upon him as he embodies his own spiritual disciplines, even as he tries to inhabit those of another.

Finally, Green's photograph expresses *rasa*, an elusive and yet fundamental aesthetic category through which the divine is understood and achieved. As Susan Schwartz notes, *rasa* is distinct from emotion (*bhava*) and bliss (*ananda*) (16–20). It is best understood as a sensibility, a 'taste', 'essence', or 'flavor'. As these words indicate, the fundamental analogy for *rasa* is gustation, the sense one experiences when a recipe combines ingredients in such a way that the whole takes on a life of its own (9).

Rasa is the standard and goal of all artistic and religious practice. To speak more precisely, *rasa* explains why there is no real distinction between art and religion in Hinduism. More generally, it

also provided the fundamental means through which the religions in India – whether associated with Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, or Sikhism – interacted through the arts, primarily music and dance (Schwartz, 19). Finally, it inspired a devotional movement, *bhakti rasa*, in which a dance of devotion is performed, often by the dancer enacting a narrative from a religious tradition other than her own (Zubko, 33–35).

As Katherine C. Zubko writes, one can therefore find in *bhakti rasa* an indigenous model for Indian interreligious practice. The ‘performer’s and audience’s own perceived religious and cultural identities’ are transformed, as well as ‘their perceived identities of others’ (23). In other words, *bhakti rasa* renders bodies catalytic. In this sense, Green’s photograph catches Archbishop Williams performing a sacred dance of devotion. By learning these steps, and following this rhythm, so are our own beliefs deepened, broadened, and transformed.



Fig. 7.5. Bangalore, 2010



Ill. 21. *Encounter*, Saffron 2018



Ill. 22. *Encounter*, Turquoise 2018

Women as Witness:
Gender and Participation in
Encounters

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We do not see Nicola Green in *Encounters*. She is behind the camera as she documents interfaith meetings; witnessing, shaping, framing, but never visible. Not only is Green absent, other women are only occasionally present in the gatherings she photographs. This essay will explore the binaries of visibility/invisibility and outsider/insider in reference to Green's work. It will question what effect, if any, her physical presence as a woman has on these encounters and the photographs that she produces. Is Green working within a biblical trope of woman as witness, observer, and supporter? Or, alternatively, does her role as photographer challenge this assumption by establishing her not only as an active participant but also as the deliverer of the images we see?

From biblical times to the present day, women have often been placed 'outside of the frame' of religious spectacles and events (Raphael 66). Throughout the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur'an, where women have featured, they are mostly represented as conforming to certain categories of woman, one of these being witness. This phenomenon is perhaps unsurprising when we consider how many of these texts have historically been written and preserved by men. However, the impact of such constructions of women as inactive or uninvolved in religion cannot be ignored. Even in significant moments such as the Crucifixion, anonymous women are acknowledged but isolated from the action they are ostensibly supporting: 'And there were also some women watching from a distance ... these women followed him and served him' (Mk. 15:40-1). As a result, women can appear superfluous in biblical narrative, and often individuals and their



Fig. 8.1. Assisi, 2011



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stories are generalised into representatives of their 'types', be it mother, slave, temptress or otherwise (Brenner-Idan 87). Scholars such as Amina Wadud argue that in Islam the separation of genders is less rooted in the text and more of an inherited social custom (152). In textual examples and conservative religious congregations, however, female believers have been largely reduced to incidental spectators and are very rarely active participants in the events described.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes the Bible as a 'text which either marginalizes women and other non-persons or which eliminates them altogether from the literary record' (35). This could be a result of laws or expectations set out for these groups, or their relative invisibility or passivity in narratives that directly involve them. The story of the so-called Hospitality of Abraham epitomises this tendency, as featured in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 18:1–15), New Testament (Heb. 13:1–2) and Qur'an (51:24–30). According to the Hebrew Bible, after the arrival of three strangers to Abraham's home, his wife Sarah is immediately sent away: 'And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes"' (Gen. 18:6). Meanwhile, the conversation that takes place between the four men concerns her body: 'Then one said, "your wife Sarah shall have a son"' (Gen. 18:10). Sarah herself is conspicuously absent in the meeting until the very end. This is where, according to the Qur'an, she first appears: 'His wife then entered with a loud cry, struck her face, and said, "A barren old woman?"' (51:29). In both versions, during the conversation Sarah positions herself at the entrance of the tent where the men are gathered, listening in and witnessing this mystical encounter but making no immediate physical or verbal interventions.

Fig. 8.2. Bangalore, 2010

This is a pattern we consistently see with women in religious texts, even for two of the most fully formed female characters in the Hebrew Bible: Sarah and Hagar, her so-called handmaiden. Despite being renowned in Judaism, Islam and Christianity – with countless artworks and commentaries devoted to them – they remain virtually mute throughout their narratives (Levine 89). The absence of women in biblical texts can appear shocking to contemporary readers, whose assumptions may be guided by the enormous presence of biblical women in the canon of Christian art. The famous depictions of Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, Eve, Judith, Susanna, etc., give a misleading sense of presence when of the ninety-three women who speak in the Bible, only forty-nine of them are even named (Freeman 4).

Nicola Green explores the idea of invisibility and anonymity in *The Encounter Series*, which features portraits of prominent religious leaders. The blank faces, which are hand-painted by the artist, deliberately obscure the individual identity of her sitters whilst the elaborate and colourful backgrounds are emblazoned with symbols associated with their faith. In this series, it could be argued that the removal of the face signifies the role of a religious leader as representative of their whole community. Green has removed the individual personality from the piece, rendering their gender, expression and age unintelligible. The viewer is left with the gestures of the figures (which are also explored in *The Light Series* as well as in the iconography in the background). The sitter, along with these objects and patterns, becomes a symbol of their faith much like they do in the interreligious gatherings they attend.

As an observer, Green is placed on the periphery of the interfaith meetings she documents. Her position is one that is looking in and witnessing, and the trace of her presence, or any other woman for that matter, is minimal. In all the private audiences she attended, and a large majority of the public ones, Green was the only woman in the room (Green personal interview). Upon viewing her images of faith leaders, some viewers may not notice this imbalance of genders immediately, although so many people have been brought up without questioning this imbalance in general that it might remain hidden in plain sight to some. Instead of representing women in the meeting, Green is made an 'honorary male' for the occasion. Abigail Solomon-Godeau argues that there is an existing 'presumption of a universal male photographer and a universal male spectator' where the term 'spectator' implies that the spectacle is enacted for the male viewer's benefit; they are the reason for and the beneficiary of the events photographed (7).

The assumed male photographer and spectator adopts the position of the 'insider' in these interactions, with unquestioned participation and privileged knowledge. The female photographer (in a sort of mirror image of the female religious leader) is an exception relegated to the 'outsider' position; 'an alienated and voyeuristic relationship that heightens the distance between subject and object' (Solomon-Godeau 49). If a female photographer is 'voyeuristic', the implication is that her presence is not wanted, or her gaze is not appropriate. Nicola Green's outsider status is, however, not purely limited to her gender or role as photographer or artist. In an interfaith setting, where multiple truths and realities live side by side, she is not clearly identified with any

of them (Lizardy-Hajbi 53). Although she is present for the significant encounters between Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa and former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, Pope Benedict's visit to the UK and Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' meeting with Pope Francis amongst many others, she is not directly involved in the meetings and her own faith was generally assumed to match the group she accompanied to the meeting (Green personal interview), thus absorbing the identities of the men around her rather than being an individual in her own right.

As a woman and as a silent observer of the meetings, Green was on the outside of the interfaith encounter in multiple respects. The artist explicitly wished to remain as 'invisible' and minimally invasive as possible during the assemblies (Green personal interview). This may in part be due to her deliberate neutrality on the contents of the conversations she documented, but it also suggests she was striving for an impartial representation of her subjects. The late photographer and theorist Alan Sekula described the camera as 'an engine of fact ... independent of human practice' (56). This documentary-based definition of photography could well apply to the aims of a commissioned, official portrait photographer of religious leaders. However, Green is none of these things. As a woman, a Christian, and an artist, her identity is inextricably linked to the work that she makes. The art theorist Margaret Olin argues that many factors influence how we view an image. This also applies to taking photographs as 'the personal and social lens through which the beholder is looking can bring what she or he sees into focus, or distort it beyond recognition' depending on their own ability to identify with their subject (99). If the act of looking



Fig. 8.3. Lambeth Palace, 2013



is indeed this subjective, then Green's apparent identity as an outsider must be significant in our interpretation of the images she makes. Her personal perspective is just as integral to the image as the mechanics of her camera.

What may be less apparent for a beholder of Green's work is how far these meetings were impacted and altered by her presence, both as a woman and as an artist. Whether the act of photographing another person is invasive or not is highly contested. Susan Sontag argues in her seminal text *On Photography* that 'the whole point of photographing people is that you are not intervening in their lives, only visiting them' (41). However, she suggests earlier in the text that the photographer is an aggressive figure who violates their subjects (14). Green has explored this notion in her work before. The fifth image of her *In Seven Days...* series, *Fear* (2010), depicts an anonymous photographer pointing an extended lens directly at the viewer. The photographer's

Ill. 23. *Day 5 Fear, In Seven Days...* 2010

Ill. 24. *In Seven Days...* 2010

face is obscured and faded, with red gloves and a photorealistic image of the camera lens being the only details that are highlighted. The figure personifies how Green saw most of the press and news photographers on Barack Obama's campaign trail. She saw their disregard for space and privacy as dehumanising, whilst the sheer number and persistence of the photographers was intimidating. As an artist who uses photography in her practice, it is interesting to question how she reconciles this view of photography with her own use of it. How does the artist employ these tools without becoming one of the faceless lens operators she depicts in *Fear*? Green commented that she sees photographs as more intrusive than the sketches she also did of the encounters she attended, as they had the potential to affect the encounter greatly. She attempted to avoid this and the distraction of a constantly clicking camera by using a small, relatively cheap digital camera and only photographing when she felt she was able to, and that it was appropriate. The bigger the camera, the artist has explained, the more it becomes about the end result of the photo and the artist's position as the witness. She felt the project was not as much about focusing on the photo and being stuck behind the camera as it was about quickly capturing a moment whilst having as minimal an impact as possible on the encounter.

The artist acknowledges that while the photos and drawings she produced ultimately formed the primary basis of the artwork, she maintains that they were very much a means to an end (Green personal interview). Furthermore they could be said to demonstrate her desire not to intrude, to 'just visit', in Sontag's words. Whilst a reluctance to intervene could be mistaken for a passivity or reticence associated historically with women, the trust and respect she cultivated formed the basis of Green's relationships with her subjects and was therefore key to the project's entire existence. The idea of her being invisible in the encounter had not initially occurred to the artist and she confesses that she had not fully considered the implications of her being a woman whilst having this unprecedented access to exclusive and predominantly male spaces. However, her 'visiting' of these events gave her a unique and disembodied perspective rather like that of the 'angels' that visit Abraham in the biblical episode recounted at the start of this essay. In Hebrew, the word *malach* means both angel and messenger. This is mirrored in Islam and Christianity where angels act as intermediaries between God and his subjects. In a sense, Green also takes on an intermediary role *qua* artist, delivering images and messages from religious leaders to the viewing public.

Green's sense of purpose in her art has been very strong from the beginning. In *In Seven Days...*, she commented that she set out to be a 'witness' on behalf of her mixed race children, focusing on the importance of the Obama campaign in the long trajectory of history. Documenting and interpreting the social history of this historic occasion, Green hoped that her images could serve as a point of reference for future generations and not just as ephemeral media images. The notion of being a 'witness', rather than an active participant, is key to her work – a feature that differentiates her from other portrait artists (Green personal interview). For the *Encounters* project, it was a strong sense of wanting to witness the relatively new occurrence of public-facing interfaith meetings that led Green to contact Lambeth Palace and Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. The mutual



trust and respect in her relationships with prominent religious figures such as Williams and Jonathan Sacks could, in part, be attributed to her desire to create an artwork rather than a news story.

Green's reluctance to have any visible presence in the meetings, or indeed in the subsequent work, could be viewed as reinforcing a model of female passivity akin to those described at the outset. On the other hand, by removing herself from the proverbial frame, Green is repositioning herself in a different role: that of the creator. Green occupied a position of power in her access to these sensitive and guarded meetings. She was trusted not to misuse this power and was privy to confidential, potentially controversial, conversations. Thus, while the artist is invisible to us, her presence alters the meeting irreversibly. Green has access to a side of her subjects that is unavailable to public and press alike. It is pertinent to consider whether she would have been granted such permissions and relied upon quite to this extent if she had been a male artist proposing the project. The invasive, greedy image of press photography is, after all, inextricably connected with masculinity and aggression. Green's position as an outsider, as a lay person, an artist, and as a woman, was not necessarily a disadvantage. In this case it bought her freedoms as well.

The same cannot always be said for women's daily, lived experience as religious subjects. Wadud reminds us that regardless of women's attendance in the mosque or the degrees of gender separation, the public prayer leader (imam) is always male in traditional services, a fact that

Fig. 8.4. The Vatican, 2011



could imply that women's presence in prayer is minor or unnecessary for worship (152). Likewise, the Catholic Church is yet to ordain women and in Orthodox Judaism ten adult *men* are required for minyan, or group prayer, reinforcing the idea that women are peripheral to worship. The persistent removal of women in biblical narratives, such as Sarah eavesdropping outside of the tent, or the female followers of Moses kept away from the holy mountain, set a physical and psychic precedent that is still present in contemporary religious practice. As Melissa Raphael contends, 'Orthodox women watch and hear Judaism through a barrier [in this case a *mechitzah* or screen in the synagogue] to the senses whose symbolic power extends beyond the sphere of worship and into the possibility of their imagination' or visibility to God (77). On the other hand, it is important not to portray even Orthodox Judaism as monolithic in this respect given efforts, for instance, to form Partnership Minyanim with women as well as men.

Similar to Raphael's example of the *mechitzah* or the leadership imbalance in some Christian churches, Wadud notes that the position of women in the mosque is separated and usually in an 'inferior place', either behind the male prayer lines or invisible to them in the congregational setting (154). It could be argued that these invisible groups are in some way watching a performance. The male congregants act out the rituals with the full knowledge they are being watched but do not acknowledge their audience, as they either cannot see them or are encouraged to act as though they cannot. Of course, these restrictions are not universal across entire religions. Different denominations and movements within a faith will have differing, even contradictory approaches to gender difference in the space of worship. Teresa Berger reflects that in Christianity alone 'Some churches have authorized rituals for the blessing of same-sex unions; some are ordaining openly transgender priests. Other churches continue to struggle with the ordination of women, [and] churches rooted in more traditional contexts maintain seating arrangements that separate women and men' (Berger). A pointed question to ask, however, is how much agency does this idea of spectatorship in sacred space afford women? Is their presence inconsequential or does it have a wider reaching effect on the experience of worship for both the 'performers' and themselves?

In the Qur'an one of God's names is 'witness' (4:166), and God is routinely described in the sacred texts and prayers of all three Abrahamic

faiths as observing and overseeing people's actions, and indeed witnessing their internal thoughts. Rachel Neis develops the notion of the spectator as a divine force. In biblical times, when the concept of monotheism was still developing, she explains, 'God's capacity to see was inversely related to the human ability to see him; God was the 'unseen seer' (Neis 155). Perhaps, then, women watching religious spectacles from invisible vantage points in a synagogue, mosque, or elsewhere take on this disembodied perspective as well; one endowed with an almost divine clarity. This comparison may seem ironic when we consider how the primary, creative function of any kind has historically been attributed to men (Delany 11). In Green's work, the dynamic is much the same. She is gazing upon her subjects: sketching, photographing them, whilst they do not engage with her. Her position of being both independent from any religious organisation and disconnected from the specific content of the meetings legitimized her objectivity, or detachment. She is behind the lens, and whilst the gaze is often conceived of as masculine, aggressive or acquisitive, and the visual object as feminine or passive, Green's gaze is unobtrusive and purposeful, like the unseen creator's (Mulvey 20).

Whilst Green is evidently not *the* creator in a religious sense, she is the creator of her work, and her act of witnessing can hardly be categorized as passive. Sekula defined artistic photography as surpassing documentary 'when it transcends its reference to the world, when the work can be regarded, first and foremost, as an act of self-expression on the part of the artists'. Green would most likely agree as she does not consider herself a photographer. Her practice is more of a 'translation' of the visual information from her camera and sketches into her finished artworks (Green personal interview). Through this process, the artist reconfigures the meetings, taking topical public events and producing works that emphasize the symbolism of interfaith dialogue and hope for a more cooperative and mutually beneficial future. Focusing on the leaders as anonymous representatives for a whole religion in *The Encounter Series*, she removes any notion of ego from her sitters. Since the individual, recognizable pioneers in the life-size figures of *The Light Series* retain their identities, the artist admits that this aesthetic distinction between the two series makes the absence of women in *The Light Series* more pointed. However, she hopes that this absence will not be accepted readily and will start conversations amongst viewers and inspire future initiatives (Green personal interview). In both collections of work, she is highlighting the



Ill. 26. *The Light Series* 2018



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importance of symbolic language, which is communicated in body language and the semiotics of the gesture just as clearly as with clothing and regalia.

The Light Series consists of twelve Perspex figures of religious leaders whom the artist witnessed in interfaith gatherings. They are a mixture of silk-screen printing and painting backed with fluorescent Perspex, which emit a different coloured natural light. The artist chose to use this technique for the first time with these pieces as she did not want to frame the images, which would create a literal barrier between them and the beholder. Although part of a series, the figures are individual works that bear no obvious relation to each other apart from the interfaith theme. Green decided not to group the pieces together when displayed as this would require her to position them and create a forced, spatialised relationship between them which was out of context (Green personal interview). The focus of this series, then, is not just about the personalities and status of the leaders depicted, but – perhaps even more importantly – the public's interaction with them. The imposing stature and photographic replication of these famous faces creates an atmosphere in which the viewer becomes more aware of their own body and how it relates to others around them. Green magnifies the gestures of her chosen subjects, encouraging her audience

Fig. 8.5. Assisi, 2011

Fig. 8.6. The Vatican, 2015

to respond and start a dialogue. The figures are diverse in their cultural backgrounds and beliefs, but all male. Nonetheless, Green is in control of the placement of the figures, including their size, shape and position. As the deliverer of these images, the power is in her hands.

The figure of woman as witness is an established biblical and religious trope that Green's work might initially appear to reinforce. However, her work in fact subverts this idea through both her methods and subject matter. Green wanted to witness interfaith meetings for posterity and to translate their gestures, symbols and optimism into art. Green had to build trusting relationships to gain access to these meetings and her intentions remained apolitical throughout the project. Her presence as a woman, however, is essential to our understanding of this work as she had a place in meetings in which very few, if any, other women could participate. Green negotiated the role of being both an insider and an outsider, visible yet invisible, as both an artist and a woman. Her unobtrusive approach located a liminal space between aggressive shooting and passive observation. Her work demonstrates and records the wider symbolic significance of the interfaith encounter outside of the specific meetings, and alongside this she leaves her own trace as a female artist. Her presence is integral and necessary to our perception of these meetings as she is the creator – the unseen seer who has created our images of them. We are exposed to *her* view of interfaith relationships as we witness *through* her, not alongside her or despite her. This work has become about far more than a series of meetings. Green delivers the viewer a message of hope and optimism for the future of interfaith relations, but she also demonstrates, first hand, that unlike in the past these new stories will not – and should not – be created, preserved and told exclusively by men.





Ill. 27. *Encounter*, Rashi 2018



Ill. 28. *Encounter*, Amber 2018

Framing Encounters, Performing Difference

Lieke Wijnia

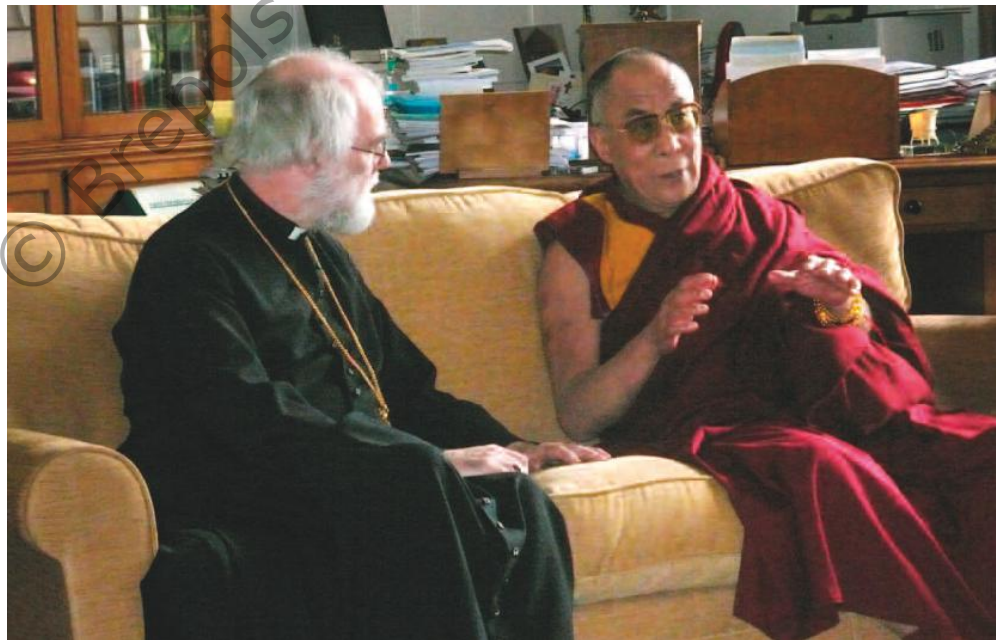
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Introduction

On 23 May, 2008, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, met with the leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama. Their meeting took place in Lambeth Palace in London, where they sat next to each other on a fluffy couch. The only other piece of furniture in their proximity was a chair, which was taken up by Nicola Green. As a guest of the Archbishop, Green had gained permission to take photographs and produce sketches during their meeting. Rather than prepare

extra seating for the occasion, so they could sit across from one another in a more formal arrangement, the space was left as it was. This created an intimate setting, with the leaders in much closer proximity. At one point, the Archbishop lay his hand on that of the Dalai Lama. For

a while, their hands remained touching. This tender behavior resulted from the material circumstances of the few pieces of furniture in the room. However pragmatic and banal this reason may seem, it significantly impacted the character of the interaction between the two religious leaders. Green's presence, too, impacted and framed the setting of this encounter in subtle ways.



Ill. 29. Lambeth Palace, 2008
Fig. 91. Lambeth Palace, 2008

This chapter seeks to explore how material settings, and the physical encounters they engender, impact interfaith encounters, looking both at how Green records such dynamics, as well as frames them herself. By means of Green's *Encounters* project, *The Light Series* and *The Encounter Series*, three aspects are analysed in particular. First, I examine how, during interfaith encounters, religious leaders continuously negotiate their individual identities in relation to their leadership roles. The majority of the encounters that Green attended, were intimate, small-scale meetings. This allowed for a different self-presentation than participation in several larger interfaith meetings she witnessed. Second, I will discuss various aspects of the *performance* of interfaith encounters. Interpersonal and ritual behavior is not only informed by theological traditions, but also by physical and material environments. In observing and discussing objects from other traditions, it remains to be seen to what extent religious leaders are participants or spectators during interfaith meetings. This question can also apply to how people relate to Green's artworks. Those engaging with the paintings and photographs are art viewers, of course, but can we also consider them extended participants in the encounters? Thirdly, one of the main driving forces in the *Encounters* project is the notion of heritage, the concern with what a person or community leaves behind. Green's artworks not only document the encounters, but actively contribute to, and offer a frame for, the legacy of the religious leaders. By doing so, she also shapes her own artistic legacy. Ultimately, this chapter deals with the dual concern of how religious leaders frame their participation in interfaith encounters and how the resulting artworks constitute an invitation to an interfaith encounter.



Fig. 9.2. The Vatican, 2015

The Leader and the Individual

During the ten years in which the *Encounters* project unfolded, Green attended twenty-two interfaith encounters of various formats, ranging from one-on-one meetings between two religious leaders to a large-scale summit with 289 participants from fourteen different faiths and worldviews. Every format requires a different positioning – or framing, if you will – from participating religious leaders. It opens questions concerning the extent to which leaders represent their broader religious tradition but also to which they demonstrate their individual interpretations and beliefs. The small-scale meetings Green attended usually took place in the context of a larger, more official meeting. The meeting of the Archbishop of Canterbury with the



Fig. 9.3. Lambeth Palace, 2012

Dalai Lama, for example, occurred before the Buddhist leader met with a larger, more varied group of religious officials on the occasion of an official visit to the United Kingdom. The smaller interfaith encounters are predominantly based on individual efforts, away from the spotlight of the media or eyes of an audience.

As Diana Eck, a professor in comparative religion, has observed, these types of encounters with difference do 'not usually begin with philosophy or theory, but with experience and relationships' (2). In the case of the encounters attended by Green, these relationships have a dual identity. On the one hand, the meetings were initiated on institutional grounds. The individuals building a relationship are doing so because they are representatives of a particular institution and tradition. On the other hand, when these leaders are meeting *en petit comité*, they are able to relate to each other on a very personal level. It demands a negotiation of the tension between showing respect for the other's faith, while not neglecting the (often) absolute and missionary character of one's own religion. According to Eck, ongoing globalization has made it a necessity to deal with this tension. 'Individually and collectively, our experience has now begun to challenge traditional thinking and to contribute decisively to the reformulation of our theologies' (2). The key to Eck's argument is that confrontations with difference not only have the potential to create more open-minded attitudes towards



the world at large, but are just as essential for understanding familiar and seemingly self-evident worldviews.

The tension between communities at large and individual sensibilities is materialised in Green's work. *The Light Series* consists of life-sized pieces in various media, a combination of photography, painting, and Perspex. The selected, cut-out photographic portraits strongly focus on gestures, clothing, and accessories, drawing attention to the institutional representative rather than personal side of the individuals portrayed. Just as the spoken word does, material features have the potential to communicate religious values, norms, and attitudes (Olson, entry: Material Dimension). As such,

religious dress or objects can even overwhelm individual sensibilities. Green acknowledged this tension and challenged it with hand-painted layers on top of the printed photographs. While the faces and hands are left untouched, the brushstrokes on the clothing and accessories convey a layer of personal experience: the leaders' experience of participating in the encounters, as well as the artist's experience of being witness to these meetings. The layers of paint communicate a nuance, softness, and intimacy, which would be lacking in purely photographic documentation.

Ritual Encounters

The interaction during interfaith encounters is shaped by spiritual and material considerations alike. In addition to conversations about religious themes, material objects are also crucial in guiding ritual behavior. Green's work effectively captures both immaterial and material interactions; the former constituted by the touching of hands or communal prayer, for example; the latter by the discussion of sacred books or liturgical objects. While in *The Light Series*, gestures and bodily postures are a central feature, *The Encounter Series* transforms and celebrates material details from the meetings. Both express, as Eck describes the vocabulary of interfaith encounter: a 'language of mutuality, not power' (19). Every religion, every worldview has its own materialisation in symbols and objects, which co-exists with that of others. During interfaith meetings, diverse religious thoughts, materials, and rituals are brought into conversation with one another. Within this shared space, however, various degrees of participation can exist.

Participation during an interfaith encounter can cover a spectrum ranging from ritual



engagement in another's tradition to more detached spectatorship. This spectrum is a highly debated topic in the field of ritual studies, for instance in anthropologist Roy Rappaport's distinction between ritual and theatre. While he recognized that a theatrical performance has the power to express meaning, he argued theatre, as opposed to ritual, has no moral consequences. Yet, ritual is of performative nature, able to fundamentally transform its participants. It led Rappaport to the conclusion that, '[r]itual performance is humanity's basic social act' (107).

Moreover, Rappaport reinforced the difference between an audience and a congregation.

Those present at a ritual constitute a congregation. The defining relationship of the members of a congregation to the event for which they are present is *participation*. Those present at theatrical events include, on the one hand, *performers* and, on the other hand, *audiences*. Audiences and performers are more or less radically separated from each other, always in function, almost always in space, often clearly marked off by raised stages, proscenium arches, curtains, and so on. [...] The defining characteristic of audience in contrast to performers on the one hand and congregation on the other is that they do not participate in the performance: they *watch* and *listen* (39).

In the context of interfaith encounters, the question becomes what happens when members, or more specifically representatives, of different congregations come together. The observed congregational representatives partially become audience members when confronted with each other's rituals. They bring their own performative potential, while stepping onto the ritual terrain of others. Furthermore, Rappaport judged *watching* and *listening* to be of an inferior participatory character to ritual performance. Yet, arguably, during interfaith encounters, these two practices are of utmost importance. If one is not able to watch carefully and listen attentively, dialogue has a small chance of succeeding. Fulfilling the role of audience may just as well be a key type of participation here.

A nuance to Rappaport's strict distinction between audience and congregation can be found in the work of musicologist Christopher Small. He moved away from claiming an inferior position of the audience,

emphasizing instead their crucial role in the realisation of musical performance. Concerned with the ritual character of performance, he transformed the word *music* into the verb *musicking*, reinforcing a shift in focus from object to activity (9). For Small, musicking was an activity that established human relationships, both as they are in reality and as they are wished for.

If [...] musicking is an activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world, not as they are but as we wish them to be, and if through musicking we learn about and explore those relationships, we affirm them to ourselves and anyone else who may be paying attention, and we celebrate them, then musicking is in fact a way of knowing our world [...] and in knowing it, we learn how to live well in it (50).

This approach to performance, and its potential to transform the realities of its participants, offers a wonderfully apt parallel to the activity of interfaith encounters. Such encounters are initiated not only to emphasize current relationships between different religions, but also to ponder their potential, and desired shape in the future.



Fig. 9.4. The Vatican, 2011



In her work, Green did not only pick up on the personal dimension of individuals participating in the encounters, but also on the potential for mutual engagement via material objects. By looking together at a Jewish text given to the Vatican library, Pope Benedict XVI and Chief Rabbi of the United Congregations, Jonathan Sacks, related to each other's worldviews. The object and its guardianship, more so than its theological content, initiated a conversation between the two religious leaders. To realise dialogue, it is not necessarily required for one religious leader to fully join in the ritual practices of the other. Instead, observation, engagement, and relation are valuable in themselves, to the extent that one's own ritual framework is informed by that of the other.

This is pertinently captured in *The Encounter Series*, in which the backdrops to the portraits consist of details from the photographed religious clothing and liturgical objects in the space where those encounters took place. In every portrait, various details are combined and transformed into colorful patterns. Parallel to the role of the objects during the encounters, these patterns invite the viewer to engage with the portrayed individual and the institution he or she represents. Again,

Ill. 32. Detail of *Encounter*, Amaranth 2018

Ill. 34. Detail of *Encounter*, Amber 2018

Ill. 33. Detail of *Encounter*, Manganese 2018

Ill. 35. Detail of *Encounter*, Heliotrope 2018

these works are not primarily concerned with theological insights, as they invite engagement and participation via the levels of materiality and artistic interpretation.

The encounters' material dimensions simultaneously express religious difference and mutuality, which is reinforced in Green's work. The primary concern of both *The Encounter Series* and *The Light Series* is not the divine itself, but the various forms of its earthly representation; and, in turn, how the artist observed these representatives as they interacted with one another. These different layers are embedded in the combination of photography and painting, resulting in a combined effort of documentation and witness statements. It also demonstrates how the *Encounters* project is, in the final analysis, concerned with human interaction. Faith and its accompanying religious institutions seem to function as an entry point into a larger understanding of human communication and structures of representation.

Transforming Heritage

Ultimately, the leading concern for Green is that of heritage – the question of the legacy one leaves behind. For those engaging in interfaith encounters, it is potentially a legacy characterised by tradition and by ongoing transformation of both spiritual and institutional nature. Eck described this latter form in her experience of interreligious meetings.

[I]t is always with a profound sense of dissonance that I view the formalities of many world interfaith events, where the colorful male panoply of swamis, rabbis, bishops and metropolitans, monks and ministers line up together for a photograph of interfaith fellowship. They are portraits of a fading world, for women's hands and voices are reshaping all of our traditions (17).

Arguably, one of these women's hands is Green's. She opens up the closed world of interfaith encounters to a larger audience, including women and non-believers, which gets to watch and engage with different faith leaders through visual art. Just as the objects during interfaith encounters shape ritual interaction, art invites ritual participation varying from spectatorship to embodied interaction. As the themes of communication and representation are crucial features in interfaith encounters, these also return in the resulting artworks. They are embedded in Green's materialisation of her witnessing the meetings and in her preconceived ideas about the audience's interaction with the artworks. As such, she creates the opportunity for those engaging with the

paintings and photographs to become later, extended participants in the original encounters. Or, the other way around: with her artistic interpretations Green extends the encounters over time, geographical location, and circumstance. Each in their own ways, *The Encounter Series* and *The Light Series* invite the viewer's participation and provide the works with a ritual quality.

The Encounter Series consists of thirty-one portraits of religious leaders, with blanked-out faces and meticulously construed backdrops. As a result of the anonymous portrayal of the religious leaders, viewers are asked to relate to the institution they represent through their clothing, posture, and details in the background. The series title suggests the timeless nature of the portrayed figure, and indirectly of the religious tradition he or she represents. Simultaneously, the colorful pattern in the background is of a very timely character. Moreover, the blank faces suggest a particular accessibility of the religious institutions. For the viewer, it may become easier to relate to it, potentially even triggering a sense of identification with the portrayed figure.

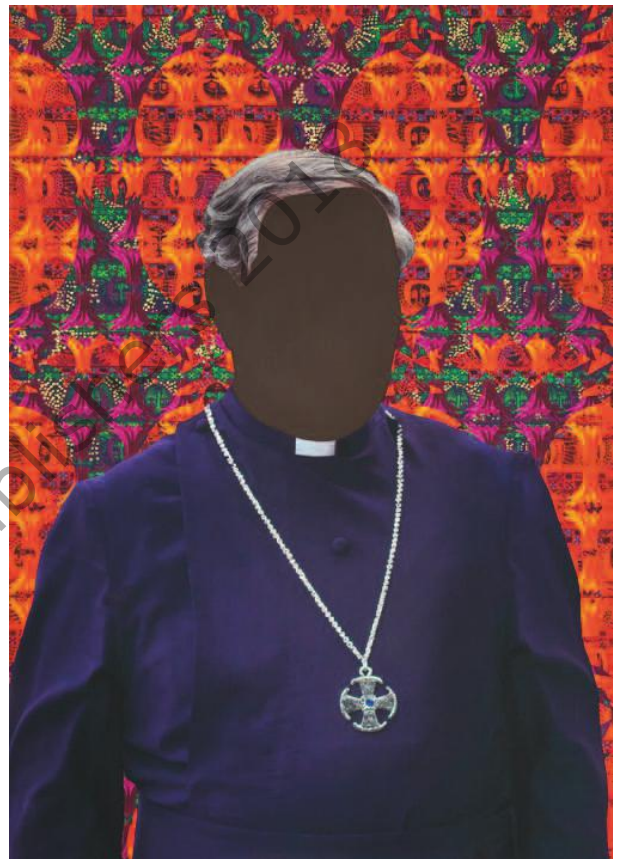
While *The Encounter Series* consists of framed portraits, *The Light Series* comprises twelve freestanding portraits printed on colorful Perspex. The pieces reflect Arthur Danto's definition of art as 'embodied meaning' (37) in a variety of ways. In their shape and positioning, the individual pieces relate to one another, which suggests a sense of encounter. The figures were originally captured in interaction with someone, representing a frozen, timeless moment of communication. This in turn invites a relationship between the viewer and an individual figure or the collective set of pieces. *The Light Series* figures are not framed, which would have made them exclusive and static. Rather, the pieces being cutouts reinforces their subjects' human nature, inviting viewers to become part of the interaction process.

It realises what art historian James Clifton designated with the 'objectual turn' (205), suggesting that 'objects are active interlocutors in a three-way conversation along with museums and visitors to museums [...] and that, like the objects and the viewers, museums themselves stand to be transformed by this interaction' (206). The viewer becomes, as it were, part of a *sacra conversazione* with the displayed artworks and the surrounding exhibition space. A fluorescent Perspex back layer provides the figures with an enlightening glow. For Green, this glow powered by natural light is a metaphor for the hopeful and positive character of interfaith meetings, and their quiet but enduring ripple effects for future engagements; an effect that via the artworks is potentially transmitted to the viewers.

By incorporating the theme of interfaith encounters into her artistic practices, Green shared her witness of these usually closed-off meetings with a wider public. As such, she contributes to building a bridge between the represented religious traditions and the secularizing Western contexts in which the art is displayed. It is telling that the *Encounters* project was conceived and produced in a religious site in North London. On Sundays, a local congregation makes use of the church hall, which during the week serves as Green's studio. It reflects the twenty-first-century necessity for co-existence and acknowledgement of mutuality, which, as Green demonstrates in this substantial project, has the potential to lead to transformative encounters between art and faith.



Ill. 36. *Encounter*, Cobalt 2018



Ill. 37. *Encounter*, Manganese 2018



Ill. 38. *Encounter*, Zaffre 2018



Ill. 39. *Encounter*, Azure 2018

Holy Faces:
Reflection and Projection

Chloë Reddaway

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Nicola Green's images of contemporary religious leaders speak to a twenty-first-century context, in which interfaith encounters are increasingly sought after. However, the works also participate in the longstanding tradition of Western Christian art, exemplified in the collection of the National Gallery in London. The display of Green's works in the exhibition space of the historic church of St Martin in the Fields, adjacent to the National Gallery, provides an ideal opportunity to recognize these connections. This chapter situates Green's bust-length, blank-faced portraits of Christian leaders from *The Encounter Series* in relation to this tradition, drawing on works in the National Gallery. It reflects on the nature of representations of people whose individual holiness, or whose holy office, was considered worthy of visual record and considers how, in the Christian tradition, such pictures are ultimately related to the image of Christ.

Christian art is populated with portraits of religious leaders designed to project a particular image of them and of the Church which, in its many forms, commissioned these visual records. Portraits have also been part of those leaders' ability to control their own 'image', presenting themselves as powerful, pious, wise, and humble, according to their needs; an exercise in which appearance, expression, posture, gesture, clothing, colour, symbolism and context all play a part. With the important exception of expression, Green's portraits work with all these factors but, as we shall see, the unofficial and uncommissioned nature of this work allows for departures from traditional holy portraiture as well as engagement with it.

A particularly influential example of this tradition is Raphael's portrait of the elderly Pope Julius II (b. 1443, pope from 1503–13), which hung in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. Dressed to attend Mass and seated on a throne adorned with the acorn which was his family emblem, Julius is absorbed in his thoughts and partially shielded from the congregation by curtains (for an alternative suggested location see Meyer zur Capellen, 102–03). Raphael originally painted these in ivory, with a pattern of papal tiaras and crossed keys in golden yellow, creating a background with a strong similarity to the colourful, gilded, symbolic



Fig. 10.1. Raphael, *Portrait of Pope Julius II*, 1511. © The National Gallery, London. Bought, 1824



backgrounds of Green's portraits of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Pope Benedict XVI (*Encounter, Violet* and *Encounter, Crimson*), although only traces of these motifs are now visible behind the plain green which Raphael ultimately selected (Dunkerton and Roy 757–59). The portrait was innovative in placing the throne diagonally, rather than frontally, and in the intimacy of its mood, to which this contributed (see also Raphael's depiction of Julius II as Pope Gregory IX in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican: Braham 36). The Pope looks down at his hands, reflective, even melancholy, his sombre mood perhaps related to military losses by the Papal States (Braham 36; Capellen 102). Contemporary crowds were reportedly 'astounded by [the portrait's] truth to life and behaved as if the pope himself were seated before them' (Dunkerton et al. 14). This lifelike effect was heightened both by the assumed viewing point, which implies that the viewers are standing (appropriately) while the Pope sits, and by the lighting, which is probably aligned with the light source in the church (Dunkerton, Foister, and Penny 16).

Raphael's painting expanded the psychological possibilities of the single portrait format, but alternative compositions, such as communal portraits and narrative images, could serve other purposes. In 1472, the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini was commissioned by a Greek cardinal named Johannes Bessarion to paint the door of a reliquary tabernacle containing fragments of Christ's Cross and tunic, which he gave to the Venetian confraternity of the Scuola della Carità. (The separate portrait of Bessarion also commissioned has been lost). Bellini's painting shows the Cardinal and two members of the Carità praying with the uncovered reliquary. He is grizzled, bearded, with a distinctive, bulbous nose, while the brothers have strongly outlined eye sockets and noses, a 'conscious simplification of forms [which] was meant to impress the sitters' characteristics and identity on the viewer's memory' (Campbell and Chong 43). Their presence notwithstanding, Caroline Campbell notes that 'the most important portrait is that of the cross, which dominates the composition and looms over the mortals' (Campbell and Chong 43). The Cardinal is in its presence, rather than vice versa.

Bessarion had already given the city of Venice his library of classical and Christian Greek literature, a diplomatic reminder of their 'debt to Greek culture and religion' and their duty to assist the Greeks

Fig. 10.2. Gentile Bellini, *Cardinal Bessarion and Two Members of the Scuola della Carità in prayer with the Bessarion Reliquary*, about 1472–3. © The National Gallery, London. Bought with the support of a number of gifts in wills, 2002

after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 (Campbell and Chong 36). Bellini's painting records the reliquary itself, the political event of its donation, the recipients, and the donor. Bessarion is immortalised in his desire to ensure the protection of his own people and to unify the Eastern and Western churches, a cause he had championed during the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1431–49) which sought their reconciliation following the Great Schism of 1054.

Like Saint Jerome, translator of the Vulgate Bible, Bessarion saw himself as a mediator between Greek and Latin Christianity, and his coat of arms shows two hands (representing the two Churches) grasping a Greek cross (Campbell and Chong 36).



Bessarion's reliquary was both a diplomatic gift designed to 'perpetuate Greek Christianity within Latin Venice', and a deeply personal expression of belief and hope (Campbell and Chong 37).

Green's portrait of Pope Benedict XVI (*Encounter, Crimson*), based on a photograph taken at a meeting with Archbishop Rowan Williams in 2010, commemorates a modern interfaith encounter and recognizes the role which symbolic objects, such as Bessarion's reliquary, can play in religious diplomacy. The personal register of Reginald Pole, the last Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, was a focus of this meeting, and the background against which Pope Benedict XVI appears incorporates Pole's coat of arms and encompasses the coat of arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury still in use, in visual acknowledgement of the common origins of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, and of the history they share. Although the portrait in its final form shows the Pope alone, its background points to the meeting which it also in some sense records. To this extent it is indicative of narrative as well as person, and of communality as well as individuality.

The use of portraits and, especially, of narrative portraits in the creation of a communal identity was popular among religious orders, which often portrayed the stories of their saintly founders on the walls of religious houses and in the panels of altarpieces, providing both a personal ideal, exemplified by the founder, and a context for this. The

Fig. 10.3. Lambeth Palace, 2010

Fig. 10.4. Lambeth Palace, 2010



presence of Christian exemplars (including canonized founders) is also notable in another form of communal portrait, in the compositional format known as the *sacra conversazione* – a ‘holy conversation’ between the saints – which developed in the fifteenth century in the gradual shift from the polyptych altarpiece, with its many saints set in individual panels, to the single *pala* with its unified space. The new *sacra conversazione* form presented saints in the same picture space, usually surrounding the Virgin and Child, and often selected according to a unifying theme or common concern, forming a particular community focussed on, for example, a city, guild, church, or specific patron.

Thus in a panel painted by Fra Filippo Lippi for the Medici palace in Florence, the seven saints depicted sitting on a stone bench in a garden are all name saints of family members (see Gordon 150–52). In the centre is Saint John the Baptist (the most important figure and patron of the city), flanked by Saints Cosmas and Damian, patrons of the Medici because they were ‘medics’. On the left are Saint Lawrence and Saint Francis and, on the right, Saint Anthony turning towards Saint Peter Martyr. The saints represent the Medici’s interests in heaven and present a heavenly parallel to the interchanges of Florentine citizens, addressing eternal rather than temporal matters.

Portraits, whether single or communal, whether iconic or narrative, whether painted from a live model, or based on an iconographic consensus, are intended to be recognizable. Their recognizability may depend as much, or more, on attributes (the grill on which Saint Lawrence was martyred, for instance) as on facial features, but their faces are not blank. No painter of a pope or archbishop, let alone a saint, omitted his *face*. Indeed, the erasure of an existing face was a characteristic practice of iconoclasm or *damnatio memoriae*, quite at odds with holy portraiture. Green’s portraits, with their blank faces, are both a bold approach to portraying eminent contemporary figures (especially when, dressed in ceremonial garments which denote the

Fig. 10.5. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Seven Saints*, about 1450–3. © The National Gallery, London. Bought, 1861

role more than its occupant, their personal identity is, in visual terms, highly facially-dependent) and a significant departure from the Christian tradition of portraits of clergy, even of saints.

However, these works might not be such a complete departure from images of Christ, which have, in various ways, employed an 'under-determined' portrait of Christ as a reflective surface and as a projection screen. Although there are no extant portraits of Christ created during his lifetime, there are many traditions which describe how Christ wiped his face on a kerchief or towel (the Veronica or Sudarium, and the Mandylion), impressing the fabric with his features in a combination of portrait and contact relic. These 'true images' were reproduced in multiple painted 'copies', and shaped ideas of the authentic image of Christ and artistic re-imaginings of this episode thereafter (see, for example, Belting 47–59; Jensen 134ff; Kessler and Wolf VI).

These 'authentic' images are impressed on a surface, like the imprint of a seal, witnessing to presence and authority in the absence of the author. Yet they are also a kind of self-portrait,

in which Christ is the artist and the cloth-bearer a collaborator, providing the materials, preparing the ground. While images of Veronica displaying her veil to the viewer present her as an 'image-bearer' (with similarities to the Virgin Mary), pictures of Veronica offering her veil to Christ set up the interesting possibility of Christ looking at the cloth that will reflect his image, as if looking in a mirror. Eva Kuryluk points out that while faces themselves 'may act as masks, covering up sentiments', in Christian tradition 'the language of body and cloth reveals truth'. Veronica's cloth is truthful: *vera icon*, true image (Kuryluk 195).

That the cloth on which Christ's face appears might have (or might have had) a reflective nature, is suggestive of the association sometimes found between the Sudarium tradition and mirror symbolism. In Jacopo Bassano's painting, *The Way to Calvary*, this reflective potential of Veronica's veil is emphasized by the reflective shield held by the soldier behind Christ, a hard, aggressive (masculine?) reflective surface, contrasting with the soft, receptive, but also reflective, surface proffered by Veronica. Indeed, in this painting, the reflective nature of fabric extends to the saint's clothes, hair, and even flesh, which mirror Christ. Like him, she kneels in the road with arms outstretched, her plaits, which mirror his crown of thorns, are visible because she has humiliated herself by uncovering her head in public, and the stitching and openings in her garments echo the



Fig. 10.6. Master of Saint Veronica, *Saint Veronica with the Sudarium*, about 1420. © The National Gallery, London. Bought, 1862



marks of flagellation and wounds (see Reddaway). Might the reflective potential of the blank faces of Green's portraits allow for a form of female presence among the ranks of men she depicts?

Portraiture is a commemorative medium and Green's portraits, which originate in the encounters between religious leaders, record particular people and their meetings. Her subjects inhabit a modern context but, for the Christian leaders, these images have a historical relationship to the commemorative function of images within Christian tradition, where it is one of the legitimate uses of such images, alongside teaching and inspiration (see, for example, Thiessen 64–71, 142–43). Commemoration in this context is not only a reminder (of what has been 'taught'), but often a form of bearing witness. To understand an image as a site of witness may be to see the artist as a witness, to view figures in the image as witnesses, or to make witnesses of the

Fig. 10.7. Jacopo Bassano, *The Way to Calvary*, about 1544–5. © The National Gallery, London. Bought with a contribution from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, 1984



viewers (this may be especially true where donors are included in the image). Some images – like the Sudarium – achieve all three, but all images of Christ are ‘memory images’ and they usually present an idealised form, a man with both youth and gravitas, whose physical distinctiveness is in the regularity of his features, his calm gaze, and the impressibility of his flesh, its receptiveness to thorns, nails, and blows. Christ’s surface is not only capable of reflection, but porous, capable of receiving projection, even injection.

Often, this porous image of Christ is characterised by a blandness which, as the art historian Peter Parshall has explained in relation to medieval Passion images, could be a key element of the viewer’s interaction with the painting.

Fig. 10.8. Attributed to Pietro Perugino, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, about 1500. © The National Gallery, London. Bequeathed by Lt.-General Sir William George Moore, 1862

By definition the face of Christ must be the flawless face of beauty, indeed of perfection. And yet the meaning of the Passion must simultaneously embrace its opposite, the horror of that very face reduced to the hideous. [...] [T]he idealized image of Christ [...] is a tabula rasa, a wax tablet waiting to be inscribed with the recollection of disfigurement. The very blankness of this canon of beauty, the characteristic blandness of this distinctly Christian mode of idealization, offers the communicant a receptive surface on which the marks of suffering can be projected (Parshall 465).



One can see this in a painting like Perugino's *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, in which Christ is the idealised sacrificial victim, an innocent lamb to be led to the slaughter by the rope around his neck, the symbolism of which is invoked by the halter-like gold cord and pendant cross worn by Pope Benedict XVI in Green's portrait.

In the tension between beauty and ugliness, idealisation and particularity, the painting may encourage the viewer's faith 'through an unfolding process of self-reflection, self-recognition, and finally self-knowledge' (Parshall 468). That is, the mnemonic image, which does not 'represent' someone in the way that portraits usually do, can offer 'a kind of blank, a configured but unadorned space we must fill in for ourselves', giving it 'a distinct and private meaning' (Parshall 468). The face of Christ – whether brutalised or perfected – offers 'a variation on the template of the human face, but a face without an individual human referent [...] the face of all faces' (Parshall 469). By extension, this blandness might apply to other holy figures, and Michael Baxandall has suggested that,

the anonymous and repetitive facial types Perugino employed for holy figures might be understood as blank fields allowing worshippers to project onto them the particular features of familiar persons, and by this means to make the stories of Christ and the saints more immediate and personal to themselves. Perugino's faces then become locations for the deployment of a private and intimate memory scheme (Parshall 465; see also Baxandall 46–7).

In short, the bland holy face can be a canvas for the most memorable and vivid projections by the viewer, 'an armature of pictorial meaning, a figure so familiar as to relinquish its identity, to become a template to which the constituent elements of 'strikingness' might be effectively attached' (Parshall 468).

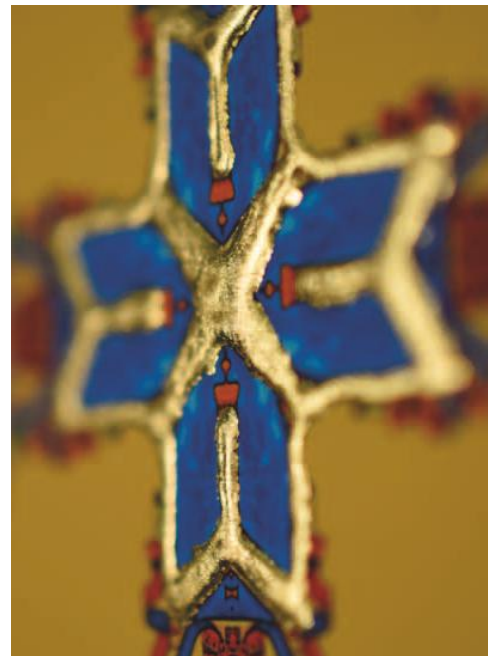
The image of Christ provides the cause and context for all Christian images, including images of religious leaders, not in their physiognomy precisely, but because Christianity understands human

beings to have been created, originally, 'in the image' of God and because, even in a post-lapsarian world, Christians are enjoined to become Christ-like. Reflecting Christ's image in the individual Christian's form, becoming 'christoform', is obviously not a matter of changing one's facial type. Indeed, one way of imagining such conformity to Christ may be *as* the 'face in which identity is dissolved into an abstraction', not in a derogatory or nihilistic sense, but *in order* to reflect God (Parshall 465).

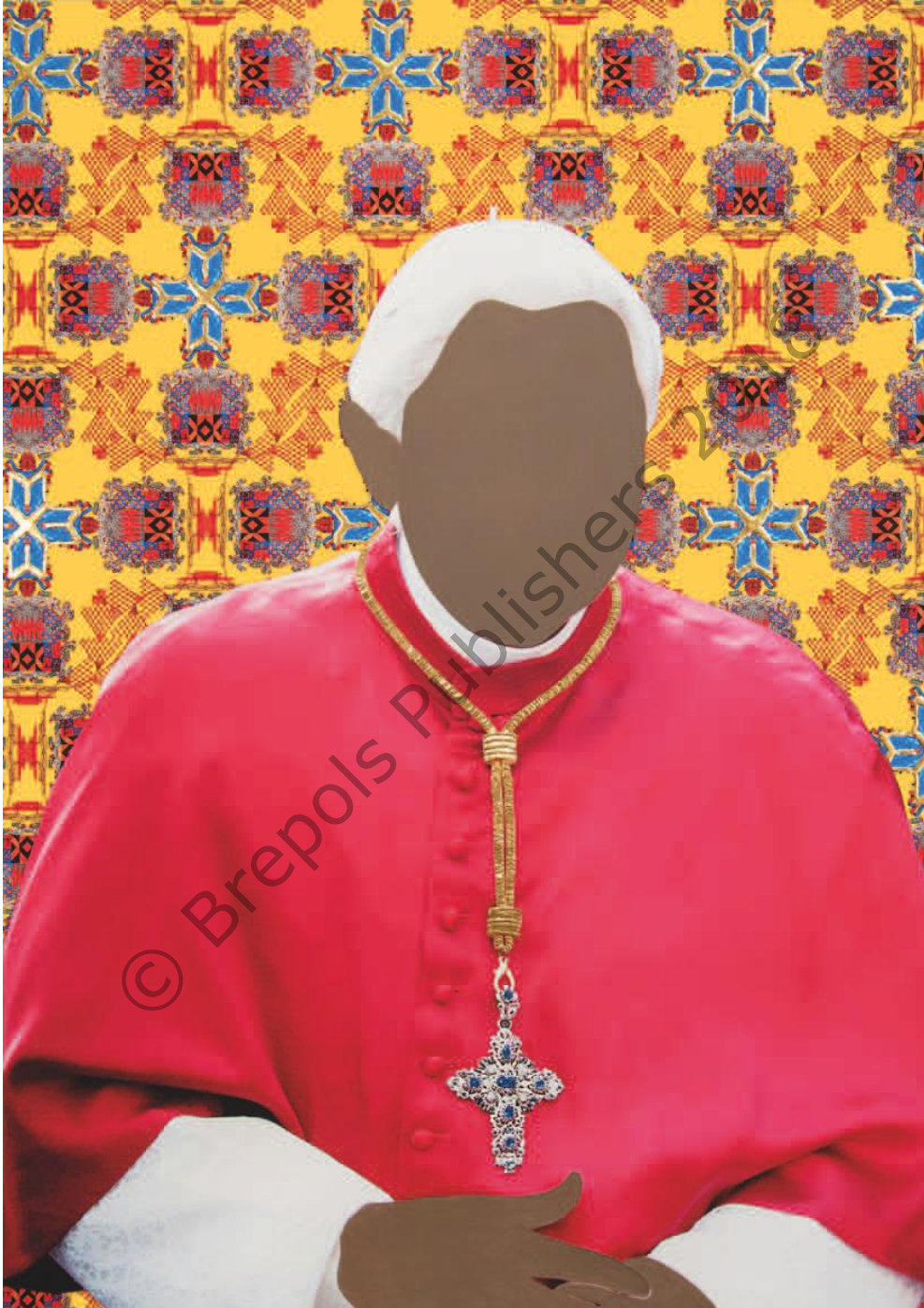
Blank faces go against the grain of portraiture as it is usually understood, but in the context of Christian religious leadership, allowing one's own face to be 'blank', might be understood as an act of ambitious humility, a kind of 'converse Veronica' in which the individual is faceless but surrounded by an aspiration to christoformity vividly depicted in the crosses and official insignia which pattern the background. Without diminishing any of the glorious colour and ornament of their offices, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Pope Benedict XVI appear to be relinquishing control of their individual images to an unprecedented degree in these uncommissioned portraits. Isolated from the encounters in which they were originally photographed, their solitary figures retain the postures they held, remaining open to encounter while relinquishing control too of their conversation partners. As the viewers approach to take the place of these 'missing' interlocutors, there are no frames to distance them from figures whose status usually sets them apart, and the 'faceless faces' of these leaders are both open to the viewers' projections (open to abuse, as well as to positive interchange) and reflective of the viewers' hopes and expectations.



Ill. 41. Detail of *Encounter*, Violet 2018



Ill. 42. Detail of *Encounter*, Crimson 2018



Ill. 43. *Encounter*, Crimson 2018



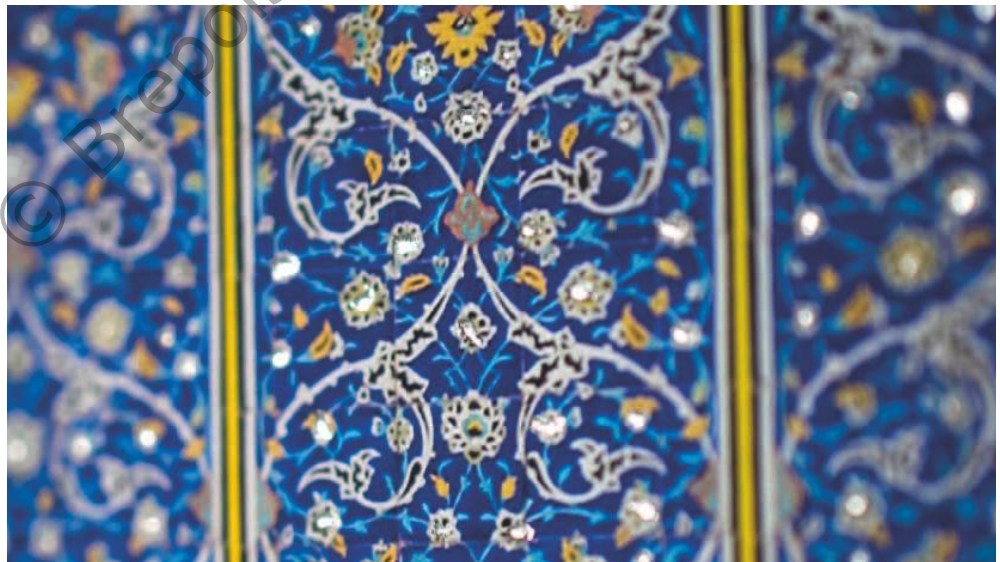
‘Only Connect’:
Drawing Interfaith Parallels
through Art

Dua Abbas

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For *The Encounter Series*, Nicola Green chooses to paint over the faces of religious leaders whom she has photographed meeting each other on various occasions. She isolates their figures and sets them singly against vibrant, patterned backdrops, meticulously made up of glimpses of religious paraphernalia on their persons or flashes of detail from their surroundings. She composes them in the manner of High Renaissance portraits, positioning them neatly within the frames. She then applies coats of nondescript colours to their faces and hands, obscuring all fleshly detail, leaving only such traces of their bodies as beards and hair visible. She does it, she says, because the obscured flesh 'creates a blank canvas' onto which one's own image can be projected.

Looking at *The Encounter Series*, which shows these representatives of different faiths decked out in official finery but with their faces left blank, I am reminded of an Iranian television series, *Wilayat e Ishaq* (2000), on the life and times of the eighth Imam, or spiritual leader, of Shia Muslims. A long time ago, I happened to catch a scene from an Urdu-dubbed episode of this series as my mother watched it, a little teary-eyed, in our living room. A crowd gathered in a dusty courtyard is roused to the sounds of somebody arriving. We are shown a couple of feet in sandals walk gracefully over a threshold. The frame changes to reveal the head and torso of the entrant – only, the head is an orb of light. This is the Imam Ali Reza, a descendant and spiritual successor of the Prophet Muhammad and, to Shia Muslims, one of God's vicegerents on earth.



Ill. 45. Detail of *Encounter*, Lapis Lazuli 2018



In the Shia imagination – and this is what the overexposed rendering of the face purports – the Imams, like the Prophets, are linked intimately with divinity. Numerous, though not all, pictorial depictions of Muhammad and his progeny employ an evasive maneuver in the form of an opaque, white veil in painted miniatures, or overexposure in digitally produced art, when it comes to the face. ‘In general’, writes Christiane Gruber, ‘the facial veil and flaming aureole or bundle serve to express Muhammad’s invisible sacrality and God-given radiance, the latter conceptualized as the Light of Muhammad. According to Shi’ite thought, this light was passed down to ‘Ali and the Imams, who also are described as silhouettes of light’ (Fitzpatrick and Walker 287). The belief persists in contemporary Shia culture; moreover, it encapsulates the idea that adherents to the Shia faith should emulate the Imams in word and deed but that they simply cannot match their spiritual and physical beauty, nor produce a faithful depiction of it.

With this background, it was interesting for me to come across the erased faces in Green’s work and even more so to learn that through the act of eliminating the face, she intends for viewers to engage in an act of imagination. By making her subjects faceless, she also renders them nameless. They could be anybody and we are encouraged to think up their features. I recalled reading a confession by A. S. Byatt about how crucial it is for her that her characters not be represented by pictures of actual people on the covers of her books. ‘I at least am very distressed to find publishers using photographs of real, identifiable people to represent my characters on the covers of novels. It limits the readers’ imaginations’ (Byatt 2). Here, as in Green’s work, we have an example of non-representation or absence being used to prompt imagination. This seems to be in direct contrast to the tendency, in Muslim cinematic and visual arts, to avoid facial representations of persons from the higher echelons of Islamic history and to remind us, by doing so, that we *cannot* imagine their likenesses. The obscuring of the face, in an Islamic context, engenders a remove between the viewer and the viewed subject, instead of fostering a sense of relatability.

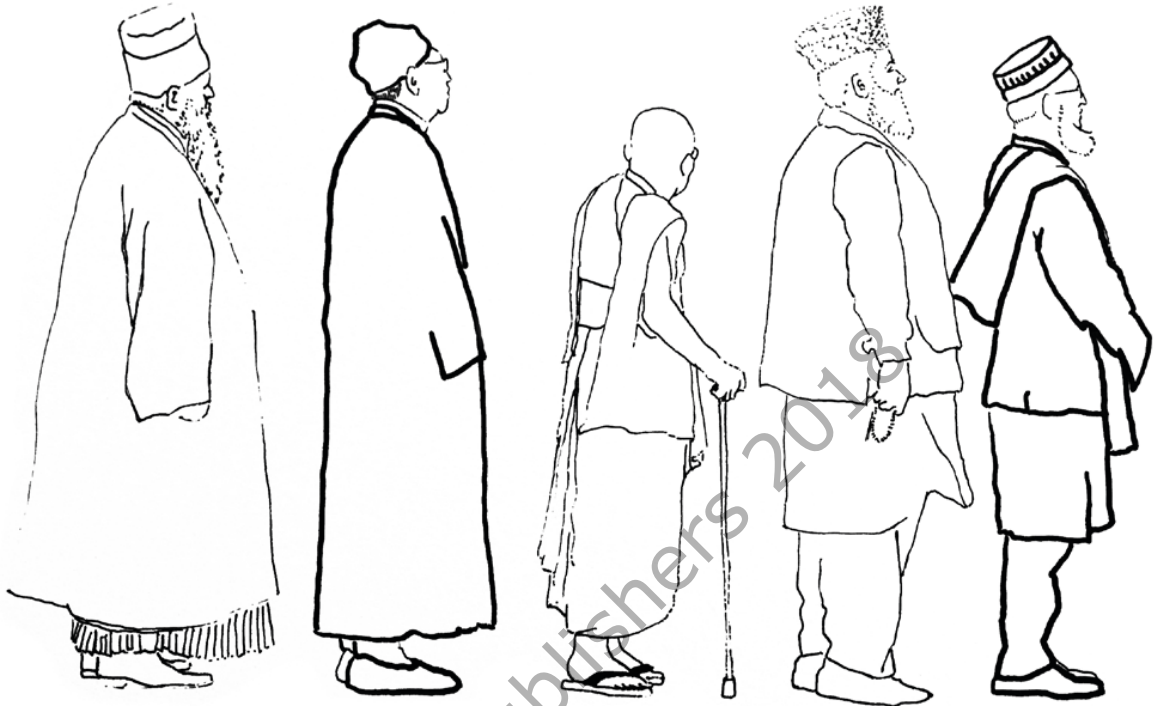
Still, this has not always been the case within the Islamic world. Although aniconism has been dominant at certain points in Islamic history, a trove of examples of figural and facial representations of Muslim leaders, including the Prophet Muhammad, exists. I recently saw one such representation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I had to do a double-take at the caption of this work, which gives the title as *Muhammad’s Call to Prophecy and the First Revelation*. Muslim society’s dissociation from figuration in religious art is an ironically modern phenomenon. It owes largely to a growing influence of Salafi and Wahhabi schools of thought in Muslim countries, including Pakistan, that subscribe to Saudi Arabia’s more conservative version



of Sunni Islam. The conservatism has only been fuelled in recent years by post-9/11 tensions between Muslim countries and the Western world, and the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy of 2005. Having grown up, therefore, in a landscape slowly capitulating to a kind of defensive fundamentalism, I have seen very few works of art which show a physical likeness of Muhammad. Along with many from my generation, I imagine prophets and saints from Qur'anic history as largely faceless. Yet here in this fifteenth-century Persian miniature, glowing from behind a vitrine in New York, was a figure with a round, benign form smiling at an angel from a mountaintop. Muhammad was shown receiving his first revelation, his face not only marked by features but also expressive and kind – in short, approachable.

Gruber stresses the importance of such examples being displayed more publicly and more frequently to counter the common misconception of Islamic art being limited to geometric, floral, or calligraphic ornamentation (Gruber 50). There are depictions of Muhammad in medieval Persian manuscripts that show him flying to the heavens, praying with the prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, or delivering a sermon. His face is portrayed in all of these. Yet in the art produced after 1500, there is a reluctance to paint his likeness. I found this ambivalence, this revision of attitudes regarding religious portraiture in Islamic art, to be reflected also in the display at The Met, where

Fig. 11.1. *Muhammad's Call to Prophecy and the First Revelation*, 1425



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the miniature showing Muhammad's call to prophecy (and his visage) is displayed just a few steps away from another painting – this one on the conversion of the Zoroastrian Salman al-Farsi to Islam – in which the prophet's face is whitewashed completely by a veil.

This ideological shift, coupled with the fact that the artworks showing Muhammad were usually illustrations made for books and folios – kept and perused by the elite and not reproduced and disseminated – left the average Muslim with little chance of accessing or enjoying them. Green's *The Encounter Series* in a way evokes and questions the aniconistic trends that have come to inform Islamic art and culture, whereby the removal of a face from an otherwise complete, convincing, and detailed portrait is an acceptable means of representation. It is not without a touch of sadness that I think of most Muslims being bereft of the joy of seeing unbroken and undistorted portraits of the figures they are taught to revere, whether these are portraits originally painted with an opaque veil obscuring the face or bearing signs of later effacement (as, for example, in a painting of Muhammad giving his daughter in marriage to his cousin, Ali, from the *Siyer-i Nebi* at Istanbul's Topkapi Palace). I feel, inversely, that there is something disrespectful about the deliberate erasure of a face from a portrait. It is alienating – a face wiped clean of features is a face wiped clean of emotion, and emotion is vital in forging a connection between art and audience.

It should be noted here, however, that this conservative approach is adopted for depictions of the holiest figures in Islam only. Those who rank lower in the religious hierarchy, and are in fact closer to the leadership stratum that Green photographs, are not only freely depicted but also take an active part in curating their own images. With digital photography becoming ever more ubiquitous, and design and printing solutions at the ready, many contemporary Muslim organisations active in countries like Pakistan have taken to using photographs of local clerics, preachers, and leaders creatively to increase and strengthen support from the public, announce religious events, issue endorsements and dictums, and even orchestrate religio-political campaigns. Pageantry is an important part of this portraiture and, as in Green's works, the trappings of the office help reinforce the subject's connection to God.

On the issue of pageantry and costumes in the context of religion, I am reminded of Roland Barthes' short essay, 'The Iconography of the Abbé Pierre'. Barthes uses the appearance of the French Catholic priest Abbé Pierre to launch into a brief discussion on the symbology of prophethood. He explains how, through the cultivation of this symbology, saintliness, asceticism, and – by association – spiritual superiority can be conveyed to the public. He comments on the importance of the priest's 'physiognomy' in the development of his cult: 'It is a fine physiognomy, which clearly displays all the signs of apostleship: a benign expression, a Franciscan haircut, a missionary's beard, all this made complete by the sheepskin coat of the worker-priest and the staff of the pilgrim. Thus are united the marks of legend and those of modernity' (Barthes, 49). Similarly, the digitally overwrought depictions of Muslim clerics in Pakistani posters bring together an age-old iconography of the holy man with a modern design and performative aesthetic.

'The beard goes through the same mythological routine', adds Barthes, commenting on the role played by the beard, in particular, in connoting piety.

True, it can simply be the attribute of a free man, detached from the daily conventions of our world and who shrinks from wasting time in shaving: fascination with charity may well be expected to result in this type of contempt; but we are forced to notice that ecclesiastical beards also have a little mythology of their own ... they cannot but signify apostleship and poverty. Shaven priests are supposed to be more temporal, bearded ones more evangelical (Barthes, 50).

The overwhelming majority of faces adorning religious posters in Pakistan these days are bearded, notwithstanding variations in the styles and lengths of their beards. The men who sport them strive to match the descriptions of Muhammad that have reached them across temporal and geographical distances. In turn, they are looked upon by the public as righteous and God-fearing men. The public, according to Barthes, devours these signs hungrily, 'no longer having access to the real experience of apostleship except through the bric-a-brac associated with it, and getting used to acquiring a clear conscience by merely looking at the shop-window of saintliness...' (Barthes 51).



Fig. 11.2. Mehfil e Milaad Poster

Fig. 11.3. Khulfa e Rashideen Conference Poster

Arranged against bejewelled and vivid backdrops in compositions that echo the schemes of medieval Christian works of art with their clusters of saints and choirs of angels surrounding Jesus, these belevies of Muslim preachers constitute a new kind of popular imagery. It is not inclusive, unlike earlier Pakistani poster art, which derived its visuals from the less orthodox teachings of Sufi saints and the more welcoming cultures of their shrines (Dawood). The new posters show Muslim clerics as the caretakers of Islam. Their devotion to Muhammad is paramount, as evidenced by the elaborate, reverential text accompanying their images. The Prophet himself, however, in keeping with the stricter version of Islam now promulgated, is symbolized in these posters by the *Masjid e Nabwi* (The Prophet's Mosque in Medina), a rose, or any other place or object that features significantly in the story of his life.

Ideas of apostleship, of mediation between man and divinity, are similar across religions. The Abrahamic faiths especially, share narratives, rituals, and iconographies and have a mostly recurring cast of characters. Yet with all these grounds for connections, one would think that there would be a greater understanding between the followers of different faiths. However, Muslim communities, prominently over the course of the past couple of decades, have grown insular and intolerant in their opinions, which is lamentable as most Muslim-majority countries have rich, multicultural histories. Take Pakistan, for example. The Islam practised in Pakistan is a synthesis of the many regional cultures that have, for centuries, fed little by little into its rites and practices. Some Pakistani Shia Muslims immerse their *ta'zias* in water as Hindus have immersed, for much longer, their *pandals* in water during *Durga puja*. 'Even the structure of the *ta'ziya* itself was greatly influenced by *pandal* and the Hindu chariot (*rath*) for the Jagannath festival' (Behrens-Abouseif and Vernoit 414). Some Pakistani Sunni Muslims create small-scale, fantastical models of the hills of Mecca, colloquially called *Pahariyan*, on the anniversary of the birth of Muhammad in a manner reminiscent of Nativity scenes or crèches.

So why are these similarities not acknowledged or understood by many Muslims? What has led to the decline of interfaith dialogue within the Muslim community at large? The increasing popularity of orthodox Islamic movements in Muslim regions may be one factor. The movements entail a puritanical cleansing of Islam and the rejection of all un-Islamic influences from its system. This kind of thinking creates enemies where there were none, and so it is that in Pakistan today, Christians fear for their lives and the cross can court the public's ire. Overzealous evangelical Muslims, many of whom are frequent guests on locally televised talk shows, complicate the situation by reassuring the masses that their religion is superior; proselytising is seen in a heroic light. Marrying outside a Muslim sect is frowned upon; marrying outside the Muslim religion is considered preposterous.

Art could remedy this closed-mindedness by presenting associations between Islam and, say, Christianity to Muslim audiences. There are, for instance, miniature paintings made in India during the reigns of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir, and in Iran under the Safavid dynasty that depict Mary and the infant Jesus. Predating even these is a painting from *The Compendium of Chronicles* (a thirteenth-century history of the world compiled and edited by the Mongol vizier Rashid al-Din) showing the birth of Muhammad inspired by artistic depictions of the birth of Jesus.



Ill. 48. Assisi, 2011

Illustrated manuscripts on this subject were extremely scarce, thus the artists of the *Compendium* sought inspiration in different pictorial traditions, from Chinese scrolls to Byzantine religious codices, favoured by the international and multicultural character of Tabriz. Illustrations such as *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad*, a Christian nativity scene in Islamic garb, are clear proof of the availability of Byzantine manuscripts in the Ilkhanid capital and obvious examples of their artistic influence (Evans 400).

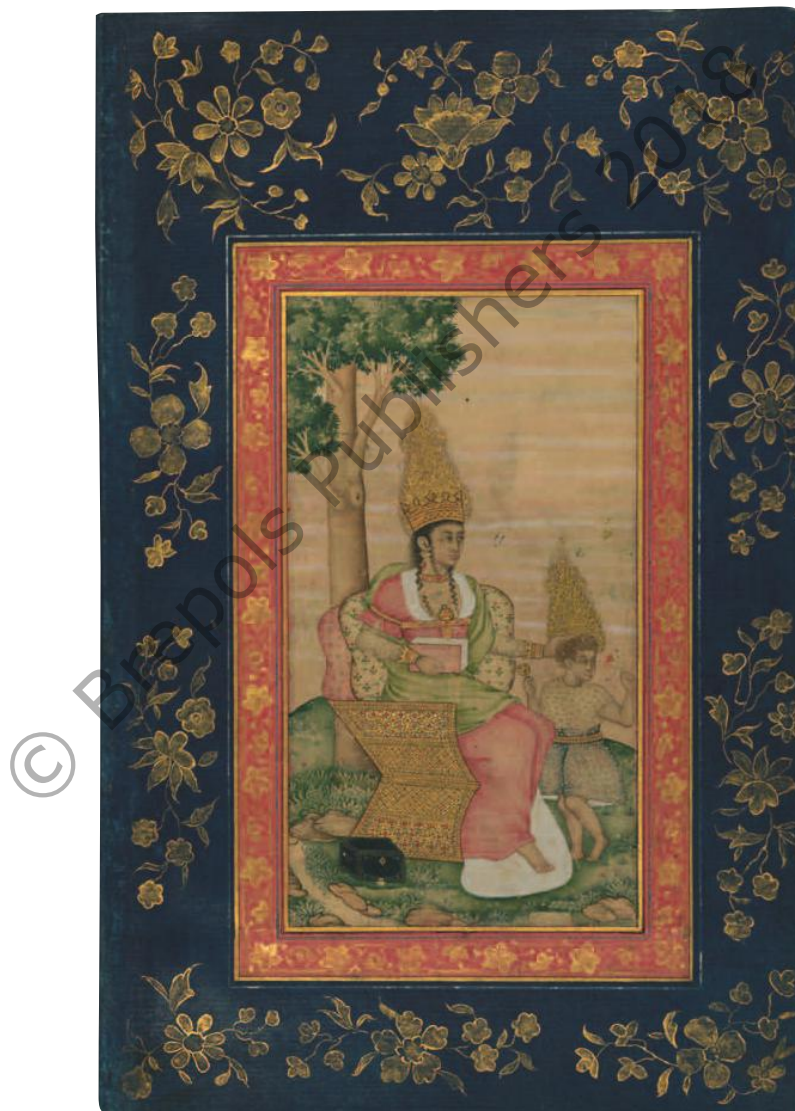
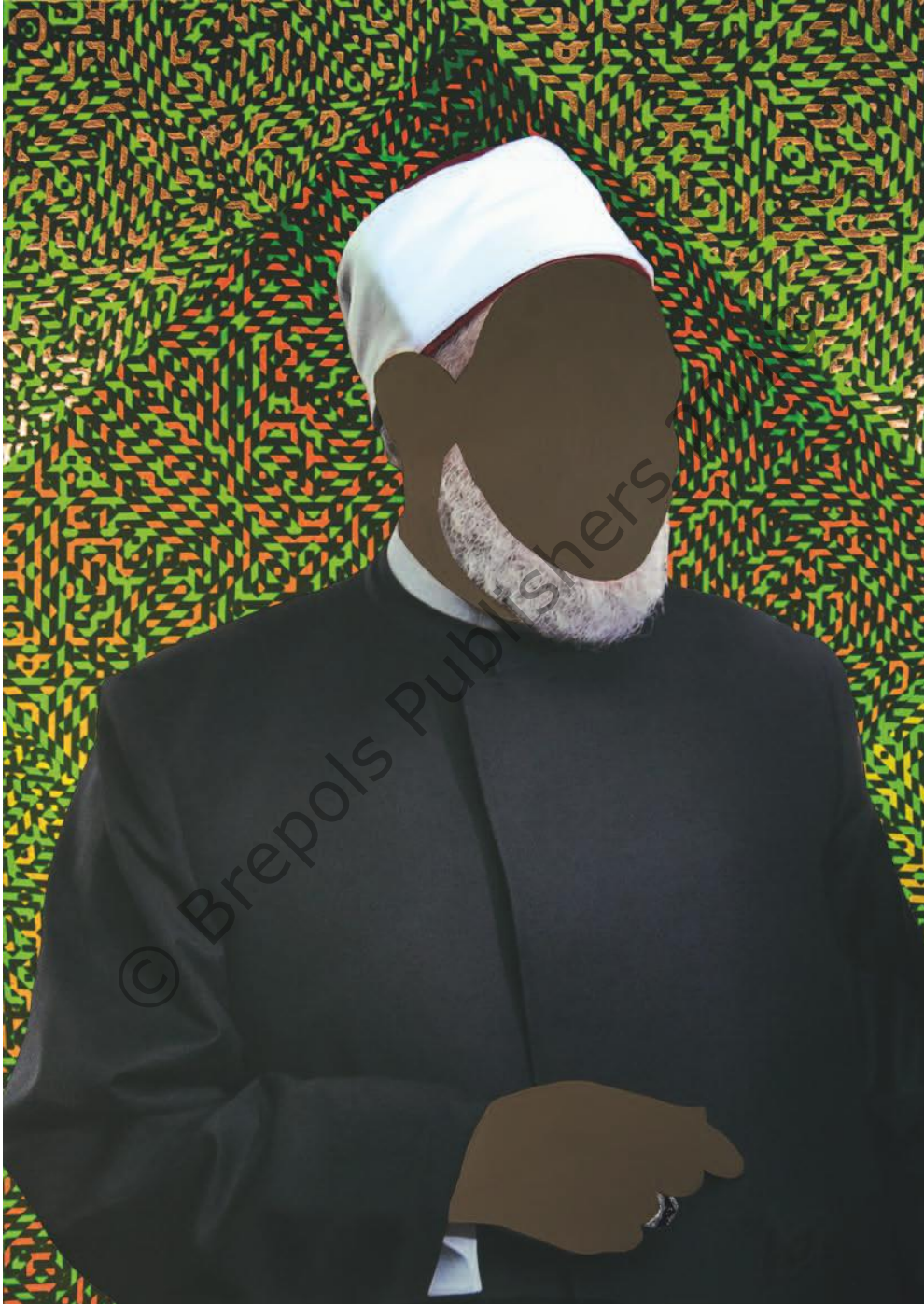


Fig. 11.4. *Mary and Jesus*, Shaykh 'Abbasi, late 17th century (Safavid), Iran

Nevertheless, Muslim artists now, though taught from a principally Western canon of art, are swayed by the demands and lucrateness of the international art market towards working along ostensibly 'Islamic' lines. In a country like Pakistan, where art schools are few in number and art galleries even fewer, contemporary visual art is something of an ivory tower, substantially removed from the public sphere. It is neither a widely understood nor a very rewarding profession. Private galleries strive to liaise with the market abroad and the work many artists end up creating and exhibiting regionally, in the hopes of being discovered by a foreign gallery, is a reflection of the traditions and beliefs typically associated with or expected from Muslim cultures rather than an investigation or celebration of multiculturalism. State sponsorship of the arts is also a sporadic and half-hearted affair and continues to push forms of art that are in keeping with the notion of a Muslim national identity. Consequently, most art that Pakistani Muslim audiences are exposed to still consists of experiments with Islamic calligraphy and Arabic and Urdu scripts; deconstructed versions of Indo-Persian miniature paintings that betray a repetitive preference for geometric or vegetative motifs; or abstract mark-making done and marketed as meditative, 'Sufi' art. Pakistani art critic Nafisa Rizvi touches upon this in her criticism of certain examples of contemporary Pakistani art that are like 'delectable morsels of dessert for western audiences' (Artemesia). She writes, in her online arts journal:

A new wave of art of the aesthetically sensuous kind has swept the galleries of Europe and North America bringing success and quick fortune to artists and we are left to wonder at the compulsion of the artist and the happy collusion of the galleries who are thrilled at the success of these artists. In recent years, the ideas of Islamic art and Sufism are both notions that have been fully employed as panacea to counter the narrative of violent Islam that dominates the airwaves and it works like a charm, especially if the picture is 'lovely' to look at (Artemesia).

How can Muslim audiences begin to appreciate the multitudinous connections that exist between Islam and other religions when these connections are not part of any religious or artistic dialogue in their countries? Art like Green's, which not only documents interfaith meetings but also attempts to unify the systems and machineries of different faiths, can be a critical first step in bridging religious divides. It speaks of shared iconographies and shared histories of image-making and breaking, aniconism and iconoclasm. It is unpretentious and earnest in its goal of fostering interfaith understanding among viewers. It is a look at religion without the conceptual viewing apparatus of otherness. I am hopeful for a time when Muslim viewership – and by that I mean mass Muslim viewership, not the rarefied Muslim audiences made up of art school graduates and diasporas – will be able to look past a fear of figurative pictures, past a distrust of symbols like the Cross and the Star of David and the Om, past prejudices and presumptions, to a world glittering with connections to be made.



Ill. 49. *Encounter*, Malachite 2018



What Does Interreligious Dialogue Have to Say, and to Whom?

Jibran Khan

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Interreligious dialogue carries the simple yet strong message that we benefit not only from talking with our peers in ideology and practice, but also from those with whom we disagree. It is a message with especial resonance in the religious sphere, of course, but the underlying principle is one that applies to civil society in general. It is through contact with the strongest and clearest advocates of dissenting ideas that we elevate our culture, scholarship, art, and politics.

Religions are uniquely a microcosm of culture, belief, law, and human relationships; they are like nations that are not states. As a result, Interreligious dialogue means talking across *fundamental* differences. The present moment feels polarised not only in politics, but in culture as well, in which even someone's choice of television channel can seem a signal for one side or another. This tends to amplify the polarisation further still, because even frames of reference are different. In this milieu, religious leaders can set a good example for toleration – properly understood, as recognition and respect despite disagreement – as opposed to just acceptance. Respecting others' religious preferences can initiate a productive cross-pollination, whereby people engage in dialogue across differences, and work together to preserve religious liberty.



Fig. 12.1. Doha, 2011



Healthy religious communities produce effects that ripple through the broader population, including people without religion, and interfaith cooperation helps them thrive. Across all indicators, religious communities produce strong civic virtues, so they are an essential element to a thriving society. Religion, after all, is not simply a collection of ideas; by their very nature, religions, despite their core differences in theology and doctrine, all contain fundamental practices that involve people collaborating with one another. The numbers bear out a strong case for the social good generated by religious groups in the United States. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, at a Baylor University event, cited Robert Putnam's paper 'Religion, networks, and neighborliness: The impact of religious social networks on civic engagement', which found that the single consistent indicator of increased civil engagement (across every measure) was regular attendance of religious service (Sacks). From 2006 to 2012, the amount of money spent by religious congregations in the US on social programs ranging from drug and alcohol rehabilitation to unemployment assistance to HIV/AIDS clinics and beyond tripled, from over \$3 billion to well over \$9 billion (Grim and Grim). It has likely increased even more since. And because these congregations work from the grassroots, they are able to make the money go further to target the needs of their

local communities than anything designed at a national level.

As Nicola Green writes in her preface, the wave of interfaith discussion over the past decade has been distinctive, not least because it has combined an articulation of difference in core beliefs with an appreciation for dialogue. This is not the same as a wishy-washy 'we are all the same' kind of message. It is something richer, for it does not take much effort nor even deserve much credit when we make overtures to people we already mostly agree with. Religions are distinctive, and characterised by strongly-held beliefs. The fact that they are so, then, means that, at its best, interreligious dialogue can stand out as a model for diplomacy, academics, and politics alike.

The facelessness of *The Encounter Series* drives this point deeply; much as kingship is about the throne more than its occupant, religious leaders are representatives of a tradition, not embodiments of that tradition in its totality. For, as Lord Williams wisely notes in the foreword, 'Pretty well every serious tradition will insist that religious authority is never the canonization of a personality – and that if it becomes this, something has gone badly astray'. The turban, the beard, the cross, the monk's robe: each of these is an inheritance that will be passed on. By letting the

Fig. 12.2. Bangalore, 2010

Fig. 12.3. Washington D.C., 2013



garments stand separate to the face, it is clear that this is an encounter of civilisations, not simply a conversation between individuals.

Even if Interreligious dialogue were merely an academic exercise, by which ideas were exchanged and participants learned more about each other, it would be valuable. But such meetings and discussions have borne some very tangible fruit. One of my favorite nonprofits is the 1st Amendment Partnership – a group that, as its name suggests, represents a coalition of religious groups and advocates for the religious liberty of all. They are adamant that their mission is not limited to any one religion, recognizing that the freedom for religion rests on its equal application. The organisation not only affirms the built-in protection for expression in the US Constitution, but argues at a cultural level for the social good generated by religious groups. Katie Glenn, the Partnership's policy counsel, said to me, a Muslim, 'I'm Catholic so I don't agree [theologically] with a lot of our faith partners, but I can see the good they're doing in their communities'.

Interreligious dialogue is valuable in that its participants speak as representatives of a greater, older tradition that goes beyond themselves, but initiative by individual leaders is also important. After all, every religion has its saints and heroes, even when those figures themselves emphasize that they stand within the broader stream of their faiths. I really enjoy how *The Light Series* complements *Encounters* by focusing on the individual faith leaders in the project. If it existed on its own, it might risk seeming narrowly directed at them, but set alongside *The Encounter Series*, which has a big picture focus on the religious traditions from which these leaders have emerged, it provides a fuller picture of interreligious dialogue. To draw on Williams' foreword once more, 'whatever this authority represents, it is undeniably mediated through the specific shape of a

Ill. 51. Detail of *Encounter*, Saffron 2018

Ill. 52. Detail of *Encounter*, Manganese 2018

human body at a particular time and place'. These individuals and their choice to create dialogue across confessional lines are to be commended, not least because such dialogue has often been missing where it might have been most valuable.

Religious dialogue, at its most probing, invariably intersects with the political sphere. Today, the First Amendment, the bedrock of American liberalism – representative of the Anglo-American liberal tradition in general – has fallen out of fashion. Freedom of expression has been narrowed into 'freedom of worship' – which ought to trouble people more than it does. This type of view, generally articulated by secularists, is necessarily selective in the religions that it applies to, because while some religions are a matter of faith and prayer alone, others come with religious law and strongly defined culture. And such cultures sometimes come into conflict with the mainstream of the day, leading to stigmatization. Under such a 'thin' idea of religious freedom that only accounts for acts of prayer, some of the heroic acts of civil disobedience in American history would not have been possible.

Here, I think of the case of the Schechter brothers, four Hungarian-Jewish butchers from Brooklyn whose adherence to *higher* standards of cleanliness and food sourcing caused them to run afoul of the New Deal's National Recovery Administration (Horwitz). As the Roosevelt Administration set about prosecuting perceived violators, in June 1934, the Schechters were caught in the dragnet, indicted on 60 counts by a grand jury. They raised the ire of the federal government because they were careful to specifically buy chickens who were free of tuberculosis – but under the centrally planned program they would have to buy by coop, which would include chickens unacceptable by *kashrut* laws. The prosecutors were incensed that these immigrant Semites clearly knew poultry and butchery better than whoever had designed the regulation. The Schechter brothers were charged with conspiracy and ultimately sentenced to prison. During the following year, their case was heard by the Supreme Court, which unanimously ruled that the legislation was unconstitutional. The Act had burdened small business owners of all stripes. However, for most of them the risk of resistance was not worth it. In contrast, to these believing Jews, much more was at stake so they *had* to stand against it – and this stance led to the legislation's nullification, which meant that the burden was also lifted from others.

Religious believers will stand up to burdens that affect others as well, because to them it is more than an annoyance: it is a denial of their basic liberty. I am reminded here of the infamous 1940 Supreme Court decision, *Minersville School District v. Gobitis*, where the Court nearly unanimously ruled that the state had a compelling interest in forcing Jehovah's Witnesses to perform the Pledge of Allegiance in schools. In its aftermath, violence against the already distrusted Witnesses erupted across the nation, including arson, lynching, and assaults. The same resistance to symbols of the state that led to the Jehovah's Witnesses resisting the Nazi Regime in Germany caused them to face repression in the country founded on Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*, which enshrined liberty of conscience. The lone dissenter was Justice Harlan Stone, whose words resonate forcefully even today:

The very essence of the liberty which they guaranty is the freedom of the individual from compulsion as to what he shall think and what he shall say, at least where the compulsion is to bear false witness to his religion. If these guaranties are to have any meaning, they must, I think, be deemed to withhold from the state any authority to compel belief or the expression of it where that expression violates religious convictions, whatever may be the legislative view of the desirability of such compulsion.

History teaches us that there have been but few infringements of personal liberty by the state which have not been justified, as they are here, in the name of righteousness and the public good, and few which have not been directed, as they are now, at politically helpless minorities. The framers were not unaware that, under the system which they created, most governmental curtailments of personal liberty would have the support of a legislative judgment that the public interest would be better served by its curtailment than by its constitutional protection. I cannot conceive that, in prescribing, as limitations upon the powers of government, the freedom of the mind and spirit secured by the explicit guaranties of freedom of speech and religion, they intended or rightly could have left any latitude for a legislative judgment that the compulsory expression of belief which violates religious convictions would better serve the public interest than their protection. The Constitution may well elicit expressions of loyalty to it and to the government which it created, but it does not command such expressions or otherwise give any indication that compulsory expressions of loyalty play any such part in our scheme of government as to override the constitutional protection of freedom of speech and religion.

(*Minersville School District v. Board of Education*)

Three years later, the Court would reverse its ruling with *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*. Justices Hugo Black and William Douglas had turned against their earlier position and became strong First Amendment advocates for the rest of their careers. Indeed, the precedent set by *Barnette* on First Amendment jurisprudence and freedom of expression has stayed in practice, applying to Seventh-day Adventists in 1963's *Sherbert v. Verner* and the Amish in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* in 1972. Today, when a student of any or no faith decides that he or she does not want to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance, that refusal can be expressed without retaliation or legal censure, due to the dissent of a marginal religious group nearly eight decades ago. A robust culture of religious freedom secures an atmosphere for free expression and dissent across the board, and interreligious dialogue has proven invaluable for securing these rights.

In the 1930s, the Schechters' lawyer had to try to keep his language as neutral as possible, to minimize anti-Semitic attacks from the newspapers, the courts, and the general public. Today, I would hope this would not be necessary. Today, someone in their position would be able to call upon one of the advocacy organisations that puts interfaith initiative in action, such as the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty or the 1st Amendment Partnership. American interfaith discussion, and religious life more broadly, exist in a space secured by the First Amendment. The United States does not have an Established Church, nor does it have the state mandated erasure of religion as found in French *laïcité* (though the latter perspective has gained some dangerous ground recently in American culture).

In Britain, the situation is somewhat different, given that it has an Established Church, and yet leading Anglicans have made interfaith dialogue a priority. HRH the Prince of Wales, a devout Anglican who receives Holy Communion on his knees at Highgrove, maintains a hermitage of spiritual literature, including the Eastern Orthodox *Philokalia*, and a garden that is built on Muslim principles of design, both in the colors of decorations and in the way that plants are laid out. His Royal Highness believes that all ancient traditions share a certain grammar of design, connecting the spiritual to the natural, and he tries to show these parallels in his work, including a book on the topic called *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*. In this enterprise, he does not limit himself to just the Abrahamic traditions, but engages with Asian religions and even the practices of uncontacted peoples. After all, Interreligious dialogue should not only mean discussions between the world's largest and most famous religious groups.

Prince Charles is the future Supreme Governor of the Church of England and Defender of the Faith, but as the future king of a country that is confessionally diverse, his emphasis on common ground and shared values has won him a reputation as an honest broker. Indeed, the Prince's combination of devout Christian faith and affection for the Islamic world made him uniquely suited to advocate, alongside His Majesty the King of Jordan, the defense of Christians facing oppression in the turmoil of the Middle East. Last year, speaking at the opening of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, he emphasized that the need for interfaith dialogue is greater than ever, saying, 'In the world in which we now live, with fears about 'The Other' – whether that be Sunni, Shia, Jew, Christian, Yazidi, Hindu or Buddhist – stoked and spread through social media, and amplified by those who would seek to suppress understanding, rather than promote it, there is an urgent need for calm reflection and a genuinely sustained, empathetic and open dialogue across boundaries of faith, ethnicity and culture'.

Religious believers who take their faiths seriously obviously differ on fundamentals; if they are able to engage with each other, work together, and find common ground despite that, then there is a pattern that thinkers and leaders of other stripes can follow. And indeed such a convergence is happening. Today, we are seeing developments that apply a similar method to that of Interreligious dialogue to other fields. Jonathan Haidt, social psychologist and author of *The Righteous Mind*, is a political liberal who has studied the psychological bases for ideology and moral reasoning.

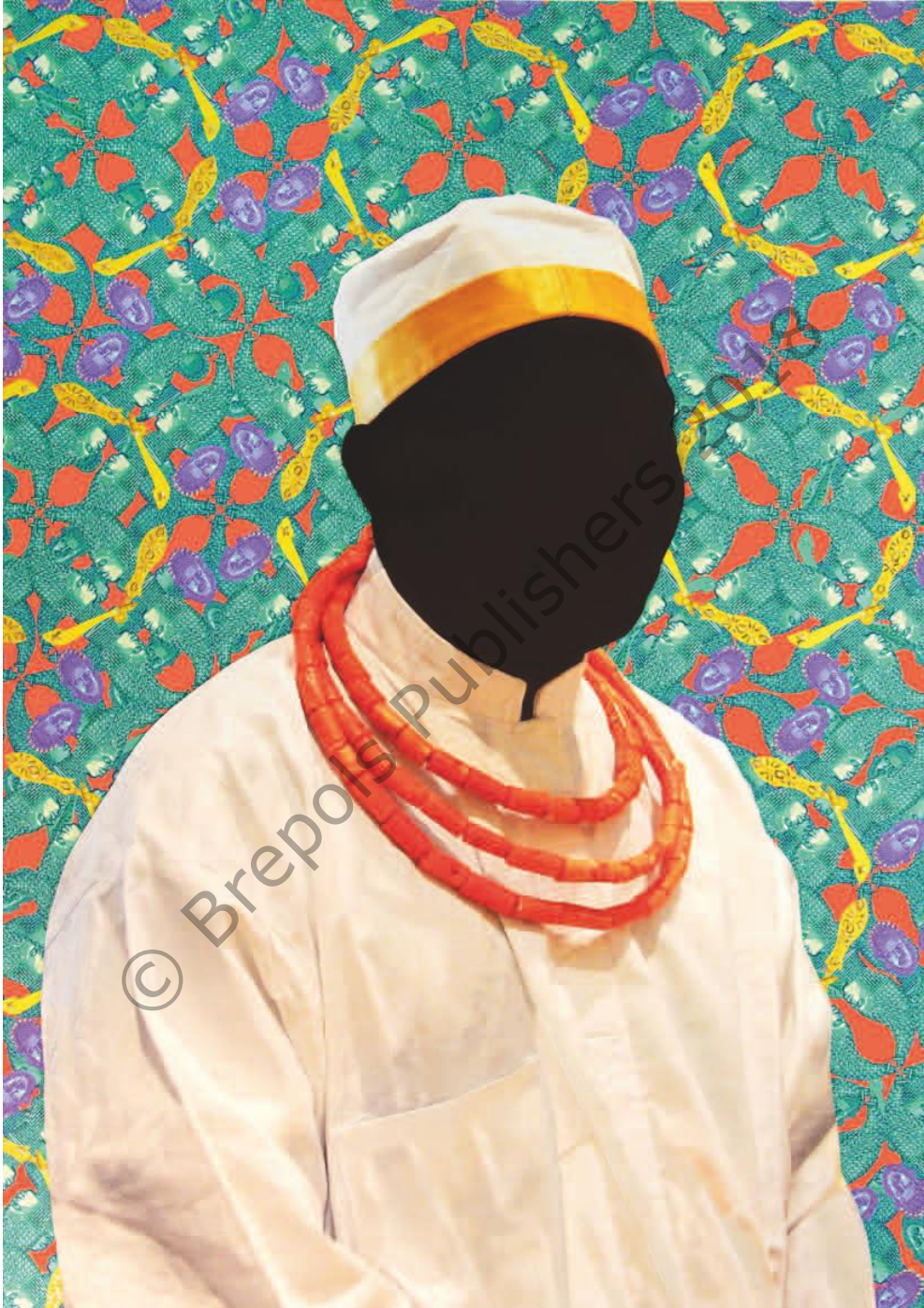
Together with Nicholas Quinn Rosenzweig, a Georgetown Law professor and fellow at the Cato Institute, he founded the Heterodox Academy on the grounds that a truly dynamic and rich academic culture needs to be one that is not a bubble. The organisation advocates ‘viewpoint diversity—particularly political diversity’ because they ‘believe that university life requires that people with diverse viewpoints and perspectives encounter each other in an environment where they feel free to speak up and challenge each other’ (Heterodox Academy). Indeed, initiatives like that of Haidt and Rosenzweig are likely to lead to increased engagement between secular and religious people. It is not only a parallel to Interreligious dialogue, but something that can add another dimension to it altogether.

Such dialogue, between the secular-minded and religious believers, has been a project of Michael Wear, a religious evangelical and the former religious outreach director for the Obama campaign, with acute awareness of the polarisation in public life. He recently wrote, in *Christianity Today*:

Real, lasting progress on the issues closest to your heart, whatever they are, depends on the inclusion of those who disagree with you in the pursuit of change. This is not a call for relativism or for subsuming your conscience in order to advocate for what you think is wrong. It is a call for each of us to resist groupthink within our communities and to create cracks in our echo chambers (Wear).

From the secular side of this discussion, Jonathan Haidt researches the social good generated by religious communities. He advocates dialogue between the religious and the non-religious, writing: ‘every longstanding ideology and way of life contains some wisdom, some insights into ways of suppressing selfishness, enhancing cooperation, and ultimately enhancing human flourishing’. This insight echoes the great economists Adam Smith, Friedrich von Hayek and, in our day, Vernon Smith, all of whom recognize the ways in which religion has enriched and guided the development of civilisation.

Dialogue between committed religious groups ought to continue, and they should keep working together to defend a thick conception of religious freedom: a legal and cultural principle that secures the freedom of expression for all on stronger grounds. It seems to me that the next frontier for such discussion could be an engagement with secular thinkers who value such discussion. There is a very real cultural value in bridging these worlds without sacrificing the integrity of either. After all, it is the sign of a robust intellectual life when ideas are being actively considered rather than dismissed out of hand.



Ill. 53. *Encounter*, Coral 2018



When Empathy Fails:
Managing Radical
Differences

Gabrielle Rifkind

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Understanding the Other is not always a natural state of mind. Empathy is like a muscle that needs training. Our natural propensity is not necessarily to want to get into the mind of the Other and understand the difference between us; more often, we want to convince the Other to see the world through our own eyes.

Complacent assumptions about a secure, liberal, diplomatically disposed world order are now being unsettled by the return of populist politics. This increasingly fractured environment highlights a plethora of disagreements. These fault lines are expressed in a number of different ways which may include religious and secular differences, political differences between conservative and liberal, and – in the case of the UK – Brexit and anti-Brexit. These deep splits accentuate differences. Rhetoric is often harsh, inclined toward forcefully convincing the opposing side. There would seem to be little scope for empathy or getting into the mind of the Other, especially in the face of deeply held values.

The rising power of social media has created spaces where people predominantly engage with those who think alike and seldom foray into worlds where ideas are different. Social media offers the possibility of being better connected than ever before, and yet, in reality, we seem to exist



Fig. 13.1. Assisi, 2011



in hermetically sealed bubbles, communing with those who reinforce rather than challenge our beliefs. There seems to be a diminishing understanding about how the world might look from another person's point of view. The speeding up of ideas has left little time for reflection, responses are often instantaneous and harsh. It is in such a culture that the notion of encounter is so important; a process that is slower, more reflective, and offers the opportunity to get into the mind of the Other.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy. It is about being able to immerse one's self in the Other's frame of mind and understanding how history, trauma and culture have shaped people's identities and how they define themselves. However, we cannot assume that empathy is a natural state of mind, and it is even more difficult when individuals, communities, and nations have been traumatised by war. It is a long journey to discipline ourselves to look through the eyes of the Other. The real challenge is to extend our imagination in order to reach out to others – a process again made more difficult in societies traumatized by the scourge of conflict, authoritarian leadership, or civil war. In these conditions there is little enthusiasm to engage in a search for common ground. A more appropriate place to begin can be found in the attempt to manage radical differences that exist between adversarial groups, acknowledging how trauma can render communication challenging.

Against this backdrop, the artist Nicola Green offers a more positive vision of our society. She documents a new era in interreligious dialogue, which is about an attempt to understand and connect with those who think in religiously different ways. It is her observation that in the past religions considered one another as wholly Other, while now religious leaders at the highest level are seeking to understand and respect each other, without undermining the strength of their own beliefs. She asks: does this indicate a new appreciation among diverse religious leaders that their traditions can flourish 'only through others?' (Green personal interview 2017).

Many religious leaders are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of self-reflection, self-knowledge and empathy as a source for learning and change. Pope Francis has argued that for human beings to grow they need to create a culture of encounter that reflects tolerance and respect for others, but at the same time does not abandon deeply held values (Pope Francis). Such dialogue can offer an example to religious communities that have historically felt threatened by one another and have been unable to engage with each other productively and peacefully. The strength and importance of this contemporary dialogue is to engage, connect, and respect other religions, while also maintaining the strength of different religious beliefs. Green highlights how human connection and understanding is a lifeblood for creating a more

Fig. 13.2. Cairo, 2011

humane society. This is a hugely enriching activity and can act as a significant counterforce against extremism, which is in part an expression of disconnection, marginalization, and exclusion from society.

My experience in this area is based on spending the last two decades working in conflict resolution in the Middle East, immersed in both psychotherapy and geopolitics. I have worked on the Palestine/Israel conflict, the Iran nuclear issue, and the proxy war in Syria. I have travelled for work to Riyadh, Tehran, and Damascus, as well as outside the region to Pyongyang. My route from a comfortable therapy room in North London to these less salubrious settings was not the conventional trajectory of a psychotherapist's career. My work began by asserting the need for empathy and getting into the mind of the Other. I am the co-author of *The Fog of Peace: How to Prevent War*. I still passionately believe in the importance of empathy, but no longer as a vehicle for changing people's minds or finding agreement when people have been traumatised by conflict. In peace-making, you need to actively strive to understand the mind of the Other and how it may differ from your own. Western diplomacy often fails because we think we can get people to think like us and engage with our value system. If we are to be more successful, we have no alternative but to get into the minds of our adversaries.

Those caught in the horrors of war regress and are often monstered by their experiences of emotional trauma and disturbance. It is this disturbance we have to address. Ordinary people are transformed in the destructiveness of war and become capable of doing terrible things to one another. Lost is the democratic spirit of collaboration. Instead, the drive for survival becomes the primary goal. Often there is a regression from benign communal participation to deteriorated states of hatred and paranoia, where 'the Other' becomes the enemy.

This state of mind is often more concerned with retribution than reconciliation. Compromise will often feel like a betrayal to communities at war. The pain of losing members of their family and friends is likely to result in hardened attitudes and an increased gap between warring parties. Violence hardens the heart and calcifies the mind. In intractable conflicts, the positions of the adversaries are far apart. What might be more effective is to recognize radical differences between people and groups.



Fig. 13.3. Bangalore, 2010

Fig. 13.4. Assisi, 2011



Whilst the self can be ultimately fluid, those who have been exposed to the horrors of war may have become frozen in a rigid state of mind that is not conducive to the flexibility needed to express compassion and understand the Other. People in conflict often express a devotion to essential core values, such as the welfare of their family and country, or their commitment to religion, honour, and justice. When threatened, they are absolute and their commitments – whether good or bad – appear inviolable. In these conditions it is hugely important to understand groups' red lines, namely what is non-negotiable to them at a rational level. Recognition of such sacred values may be an essential part of a solution.

Through my work with the Oxford Process we have developed methodologies that recognize the fault lines in communities traumatised by war. They are often not open to the possibility of encounter, and if they are, it can be in order to define the differences that exist between them. Embracing the strategic calculations required to work towards an end of conflict is extraordinarily difficult. With the help of skilled facilitation, the Oxford Process recognizes that, often, radically different positions are not easy to reconcile, and the beginnings of effective mediation are less about the unrealistic search for common ground and more about establishing areas of mutual self-interest.

It takes three generations to heal the traumatic impact of conflict (Rifkind and Picco, 236). People's values are shaped by the dominant values of their governments, their religion, their community, their peer relationships and perhaps most of all their families. In a troubled society, where there is structural conflict, the family will often compensate and embed values of love and care or mirror the violence of the conflict with family violence. Religious values may also reflect this, and both religion and family are capable of setting the foundations for either creative or destructive relationships.

Fig. 13.5. The Vatican, 2014

Art may have something important to say in such conflicts, if creatively used at the right time. Artistic expression is an activity that stretches the imagination and challenges people to see the world through a different lens. The works in Green's *Encounters* ask how we can live in a world in which we can both engage in meaningful understanding of the Other and at the same time hold onto our differences. This is a state to which it is worthy to aspire, and art can be a powerful tool to do this.

The artist challenges us in interfaith and intercultural encounters to elevate regressive aspects of human behaviour and find out more about ourselves through the encounter with the Other. Green rightly believes that this is where our humanity lies and offers us the possibility to lift up the human spirit to find compassion. When heeding this call, we must remember that experiences of trauma require us to start where people are at, and not where we want them to be. This does not mean, however, that over time we should not try to increase human consciousness to try to establish a path for enlightenment or transformation. This may ultimately be the only thing that reduces the likelihood of going back to war.

The experience of positive religious encounters could ultimately be very important in preventing war and may have much to offer in post-conflict societies, when the violence of war has abated. Everything should be done to deter communities from acting out of hatred or calling for retribution. The importance of religious leadership in encounters and finding ways to speak out together against intolerance and hatred cannot be underestimated. Leaders are often in positions of moral authority and have the capacity to influence their communities; especially when they themselves have not been exposed to the scars of war, they may be able to communicate a more positive vision of encounter and living together. Ultimately, people's imaginations will need stimulation to create a more collaborative vision of how to live together. This is when both the notions of encounter and the art of interfaith dialogue can be so important.



Fig. 13.6. London, 2013



Ill. 55. *Encounter*, Vermilion 2018



Encountering the Divine

Skinder Hundal

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Imagine an art gallery in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood struggling to engage a congregation from a mosque directly opposite to it. Need we see the gallery and this sacred space as binary opposites? Or do they each represent a different, but related, pathway to human salvation? Old wisdom understood that the presence of the sacred in art and the transcendental power of communal prayer cross paths. In an increasingly uncertain and changing world, this meeting point is needed more than ever before.

A Process of Unlearning, Deconstruction and Re-imagination

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Change has accelerated in the twenty-first century, and our crowded cities leave us more alone and alienated. Humanity jumps anxiously from one thing to the next, exploring life through consumption and generating a multitude of data. Forgetting to pause and reflect, we rely on algorithms to help us find ourselves. New technologies can reduce complex global events to binary zeros and ones, and digital bubbles envelop our thinking and behaviour as we happily gravitate towards like-minded souls, precluding wider dialogue. In this new paradigm, our fractured sense of 'us' and 'them' keeps solidifying.

Religion, culture, art and science are interconnected subjects, yet we often cluster, within our self-assured networks of expertise, into singular areas, advancing them in silos, failing to calibrate with the wider mantras of life. In so doing there is a danger of our respective realities drifting, producing an incoherent irrelevance.

It is a unique moment when wider spheres of influence come together with the noble aim to create new ways to understand what it means to be human. Rare gatherings such as these, as observed in *Encounters* by Nicola Green, create safe spaces for dangerous conversation, places to unlearn and re-imagine. This approach can result in wider engagement, shift widely held stereotypes, and crumble the foundations of mono-cultural institutional perspectives.

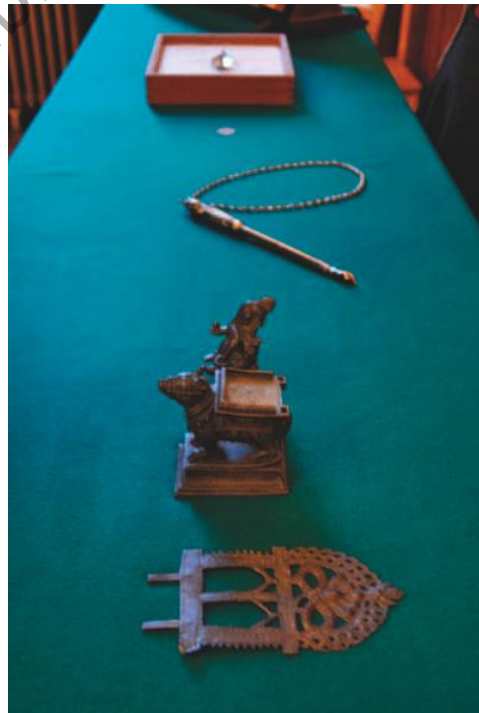


Fig. 14.1. Cairo, 2011
Fig. 14.3. Doha, 2011

Fig. 14.2. The Vatican, 2011
Fig. 14.4. Lambeth Palace, 2013

A Constant State of Flux and Repositioning



Faith and culture are deeply interconnected and must ebb and flow to remain relevant to each era. The fluid nature of each is harder to discern in the present, but both can captivate us with moments we call by names such as truth, awe, communion, beauty, sublime, and spiritual. Faith and culture inform how we construct our identities. In the twenty-first century, identities are more complicated than they have ever been. And somehow, despite the 'progress', most of us feel spiritually impoverished and alienated from our neighbours.

The intersections of culture and faith vary, and can be hard to define. An orthodox Sikh living in Britain may refuse meat, alcohol and tobacco but enjoy a livelihood working as a stock broker and enjoy leisure time with friends in a Black Country 'desi pub'. A young Muslim woman who promotes modesty fashions may take control of identity and express her faith through postmodern hijab designs that reference the hipster, anarchist, and punk. She will also mix in a diverse circle of friends and family that are both traditional and modern, while embracing a matrix of values that enrich and reinvent that controversial and amorphous phrase, 'the British way of life'. Our super diverse towns and cities will only flourish if we embrace multiplicity and otherness without threatening our own carefully cultivated identities. When Windrush elders arrived in Britain from the Caribbean during the 1950s they built makeshift churches in

terraced streets of run-down and dilapidated inner cities. Their forms of prayers introduced new verses and new dreams. In a similar vein, the successive waves of migrants from post-Partition India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh turned factories and warehouses into sacred spaces – invisibly refashioning the streetscape to enact religious rites. These communities also created new myths, new aesthetics, new poetics, and new contexts for others to share their cosmologies. If we choose to acknowledge and share them, these encounters will enrich us all.

Fig. 14.5. The Vatican, 2015

Fig. 14.6. The Vatican, 2015

Art Spaces Offer a Safe Space for Complex and Dangerous Dialogues

The art space is a meeting place for liberating creativity to inform thinking that challenges simplistic, binary frameworks. It brings a new relevance to old wisdoms while championing fledgling voices and seeking to engage new and wider sections of society. Art spaces are not neutral, as they were originally conceived. Progress can be made when there is transparency and certain widely held rules

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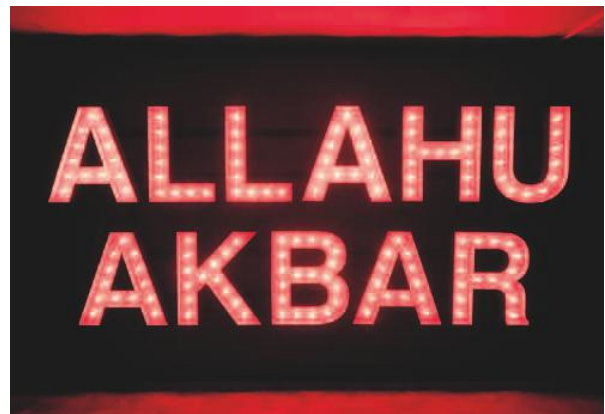


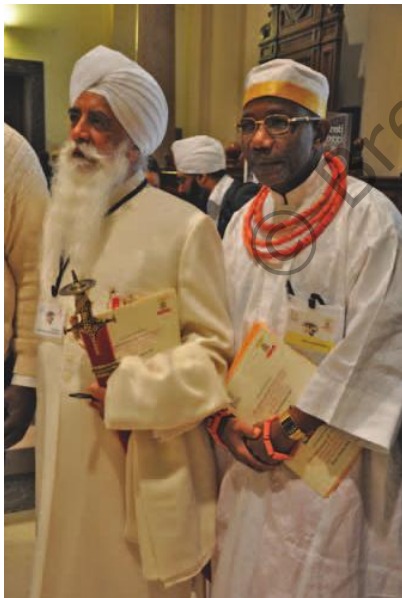
Fig. 14.7. Fazia Butt, *Paracosm* 2015
Fig. 14.8. Dam Pani, 2017

Fig. 14.9. Sarah Maple, *Allah hu Akbar*, 2017

about quality, aesthetics and representation are challenged. This fresh impetus allows dialogue to take place. In the last century, contemporary art was conceived as a secular project but this stance is changing. When art spaces do engage the sacred, a third space of possibility is realised, where interfaith and intercultural dialogues can re-imagine the divine and what it means to be human.

Bill Viola's solo show at Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2016 explored ideas of transcendence and mortality in an eighteenth-century chapel. Tasawar Bashir's experimental interventions at New Art Exchange 2017 and Colombo Biennial 2016, witness the physical manifestation of sacred Sufi sound into contemporary sculpture. Sarah Maple's playful provocations with large red neon lights of *Allahu Akbar* and other film and sculptural installations shatter the western prism and negative assumptions held about Islamic communities in an age of Brexit. Painter Faiza Butt brings to our urgent attention questions about faith and sexuality within a Kaaba-inspired gallery installation. Nicola Green's own portraits and perspex figures, as part of *Encounters*, illuminate the global interfaith movement in the twenty-first century, shaped by the new paradigm in the history of interfaith dialogue on a global leadership level.

The art space offers a key place for complex dialogues, where the argument between faith, art and culture can take place in ways which reconstruct our collective understanding and identities in non-hierarchical ways, allowing us to experience an enriched society as a whole.



Finding the Third Eye of Thought

Interfaith events have often been initiated by religious institutions, and driven by 'men in robes and turbans', with the noble intention to nurture peace and harmony between faiths. Such approaches, however, risk reinforcing a patriarchal bias. Spaces for discourse can remain comfortable and static, even though an uncomfortable reality is unfolding. The phrase coined by lens-based artist Mahtab Hussain 'commonality of strangers' (Hussain) asserts that multi-ethnic religious cultures have much to share. Yet they remain estranged, even as neighbours. Many faith communities continue to meet in homogenous segments, alienated from one another. The modern art space can allow for creative intercultural dialogue – a place for free thought and complex dialogues leading to new ways of seeing, critiquing and understanding the moment we are in and about to enter.

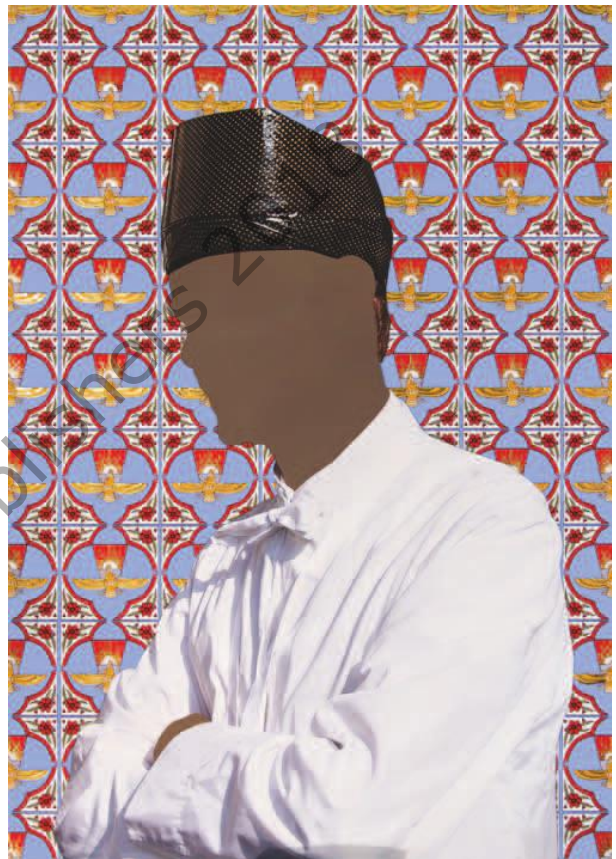
Fig. 14.10. The Vatican, 2015



Ill. 57. *Encounter*, Heliotrope 2018



Ill. 58. *Encounter*, Cadmium 2018



Ill. 59. *Encounter*, Alabaster 2018

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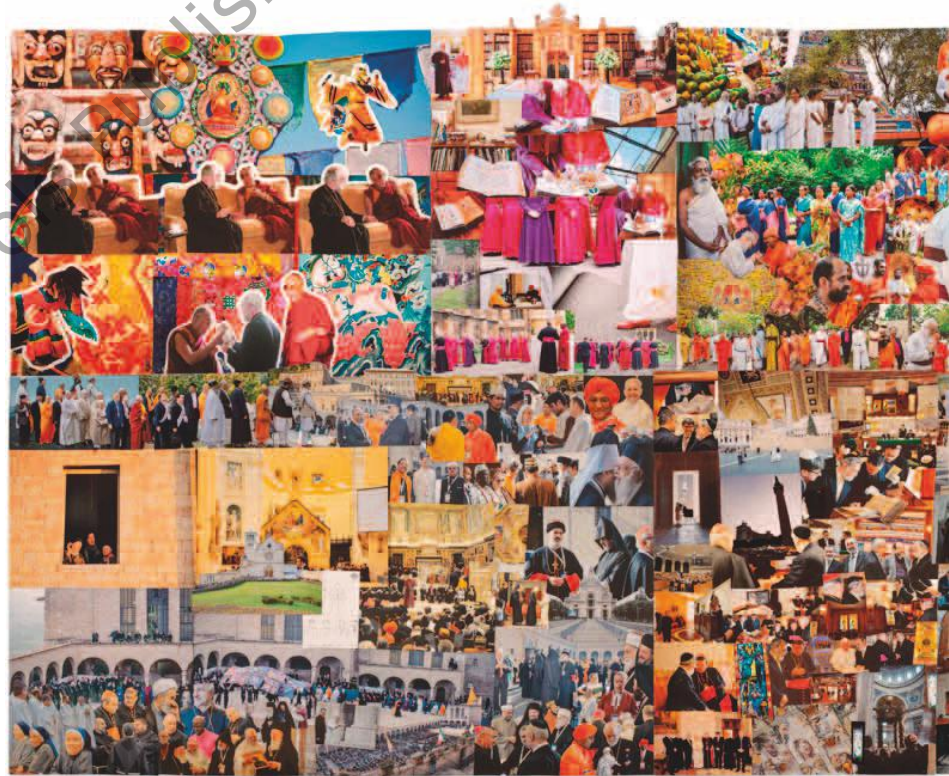
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About the Artist



Nicola Green is an internationally acclaimed artist and visual social historian based in North London. She holds first class honours for her BA and MFA from Edinburgh College of Art.

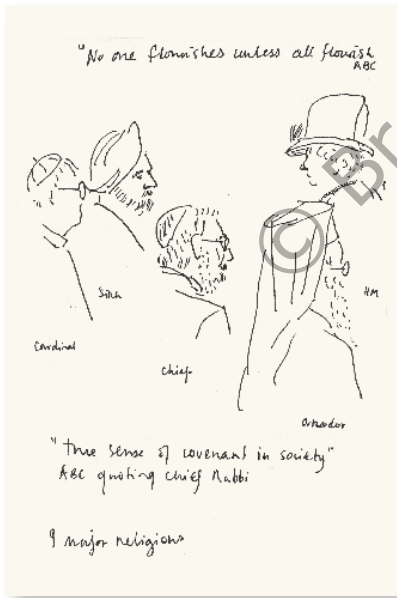
Green began her career as a portrait artist in the late 1990s, working primarily in oils. Her practice developed to also incorporate acrylic painting, reverse glass painting, photography, silk-screen printing, drawing, textile design and gilding; these mediums are interchanged with ease and fluidity in her work. Green works in a three step process. Initially she works to understand her subject by gathering research, taking notes and photographs, sketching as well as collecting newspapers, documents, artefacts, and other paraphernalia. She then experiments with pattern, collage and texture and reduces profile, gesture and context to



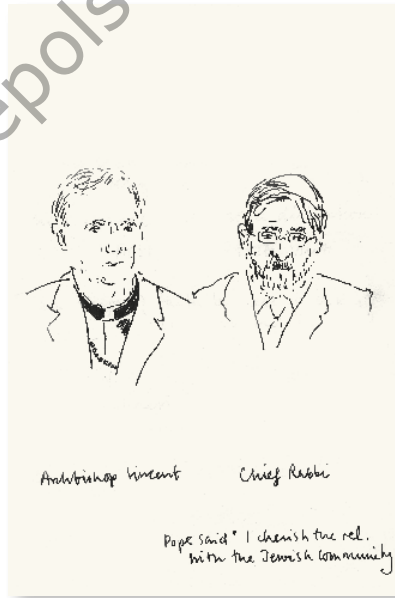
Fig. 15.1. Collage of Encounters Source Photos, 2018



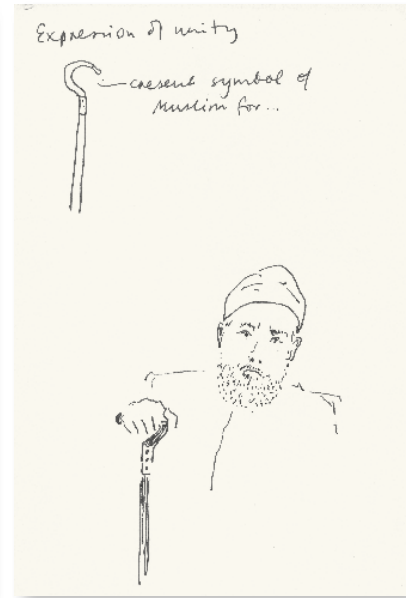
Fig. 15.2. Example of Nicola Green's multi-faceted research process, 2018



Ill. 60. The Queen's Jubilee, 2012



Ill. 61. London, 2010



Ill. 62. Cairo, 2011



the minimum required to maintain critical form. Finally, working on colour and composition, she produces her work.

Inspired by her mixed heritage family, Green seeks to reveal human stories and record them for future generations. Her work as an artist is driven by her belief in the power of the visual arts to communicate moments of historical and global importance. Green explores themes of identity, race, faith, power, gender and leadership. Her approach – supported by a body of work created over several decades – enables her to gain access to iconic and often private figures from the worlds of religion, politics, and culture.

Green gained unprecedented artistic access to Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, culminating in seven large silk-screen prints entitled *In Seven Days...* This work stands as a testament to Green's determination to record historic moments for future generations. It has received international acclaim – described by The Metropolitan Museum of Art as 'an artistic and historic masterpiece' – and has been acquired by museums and private collections around the world, including Michelle and Barack Obama's personal collection.

Green co-founded the Diaspora Platform, an initiative designed to deliver mentoring and professional development for emerging artists and curators from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds. This culminated in the critically acclaimed Diaspora Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale 2017 in which Green also exhibited her *Bate Bola* series exploring the merging of European, South American and African identity through Rio Carnival.

Green is dedicated to providing mentorship, guidance and support for emerging artists. For 20 years Green has been mentoring and supporting aspiring artists from non-traditional backgrounds, and children with learning difficulties. Across the UK she has run art workshops supporting black, Asian, and minority ethnic young people working with art institutions and charities. Green mentored the late Khadija Saye, who tragically passed away in the Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017.

Green's work has been exhibited extensively in the UK and internationally.

Public Collections include: The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; International Slavery Museum, Liverpool; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; The Courtauld Institute of Art, London; Stadium Suite, Olympic Park, London; Sir John Soane's Museum, London; Jewish Museum, London; Paintings in Hospitals, UK; Bruce Castle Museum, London; Royal National College for the Blind, Hereford; Edinburgh College of Art; Anti-Slavery International, London; Vinyl Factory, London.

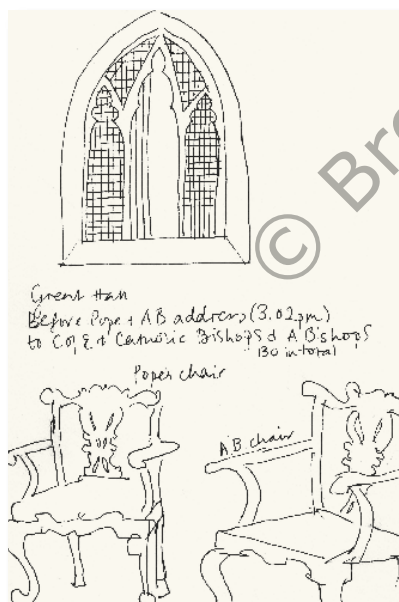


Fig. 15.3. Assisi, 2011

Ill. 63. Lambeth Palace, 2010



Fig. 15.4. With Grayson Perry, Royal Academy of Arts, 2018
Fig. 15.5. *The Bate Bola*, Studio of Nicola Green, 2016
Fig. 15.6 With Khadija Saye, *Dance of Colour*, 2016

Fig. 15.7. Diaspora Pavilion, 2017
Fig. 15.8. With Elle Macpherson, Australian Embassy, London, 2013
Fig. 15.9. With Barack Obama, The Oval Office, 2017



The Encounter Series and *The Light Series*

The Encounter Series 2018 (overleaf)



For *The Encounter Series* Green has focused upon the unique iconography of each meeting she witnessed. She has distilled all of her research, photographs and sketches as well as the complex symbols, artefacts, architecture, and costumes involved into deceptively simple graphic patterns. These are constructed in Green's studio, then embellished by hand with 24k gold, silver and copper leaf and diamond dust. Green has taken the utmost care to consider the theological significance of each unique background, which is particular to the faith of the sitter and the encounter. The subject of each portrait is then hand painted in muted tones, to obscure the face and hands. This references religious practises including the visual strategies seen in Islam and Judaism and the tradition of Orthodox icons, whilst also raising questions of identity and power.

Fig. 15.10. Studio of Nicola Green, 2018

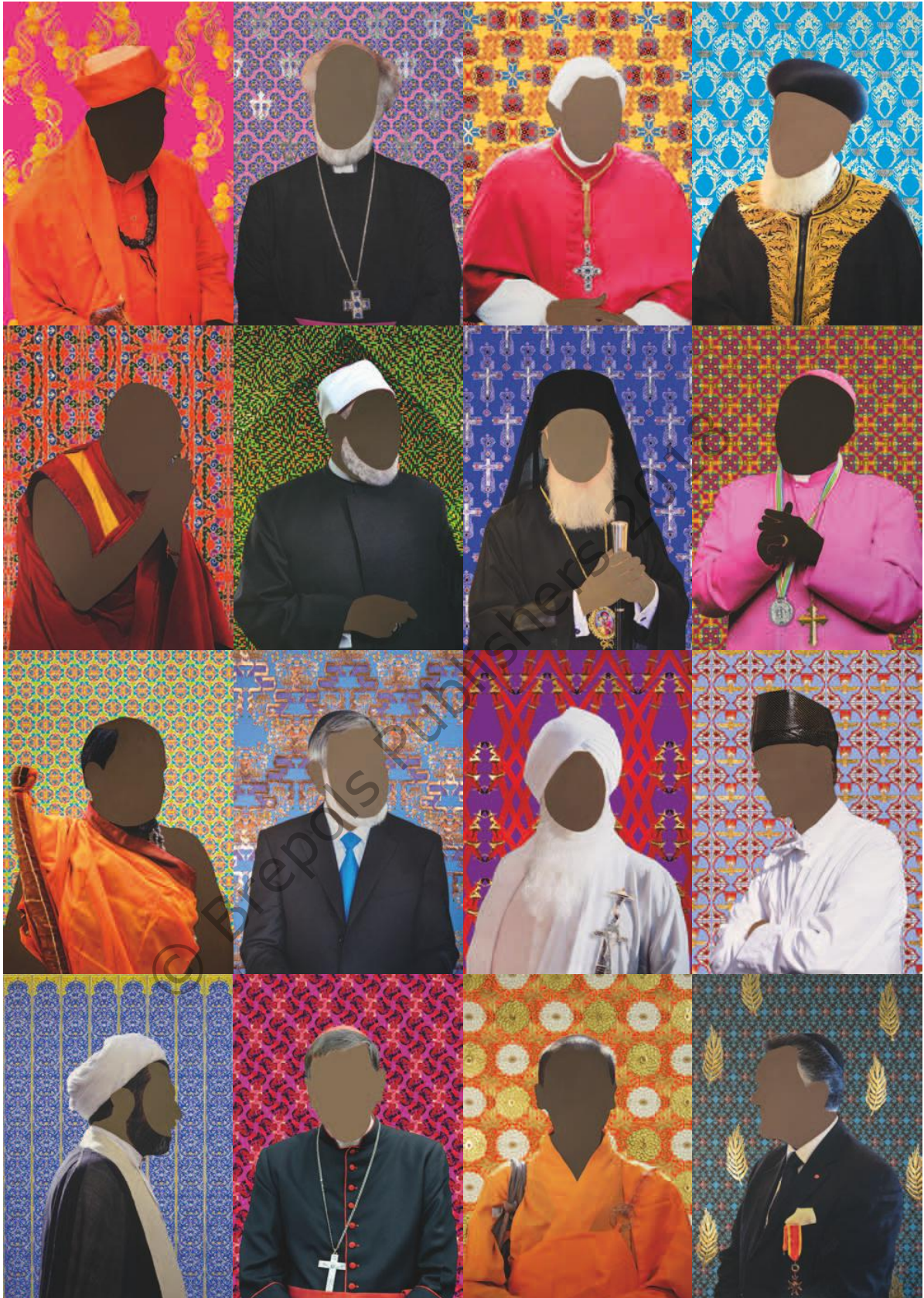


Ill. 14. Encounter, Bianco
 Ill. 17. Encounter, Indigo
 Ill. 54. Encounter, Vermilion
 Ill. 37. Encounter, Manganese

Ill. 36. Encounter, Cobalt
 Ill. 56. Encounter, Heliotrope
 Ill. 53. Encounter, Magenta
 Ill. 39. Encounter, Azure

Ill. 52. Encounter, Coral
 Ill. 27. Encounter, Rashi
 Ill. 49. Encounter, Ivory
 Ill. 57. Encounter, Cadmium

Ill. 11. Encounter, Carmine
 Ill. 10. Encounter, Veridian
 Ill. 3. Encounter, Amaranth
 Ill. 20. Encounter, Ruby



Ill. 1. Encounter, Naranga
 Ill. 21. Encounter, Saffron
 Ill. 22. Encounter, Turquoise
 Ill. 19. Encounter, Lapis Lazuli

Ill. 2. Encounter, Chromium
 Ill. 48. Encounter, Malachite
 Ill. 9. Encounter, Tekhelet
 Ill. 64. Encounter, Rosso

Ill. 43. Encounter, Crimson
 Ill. 38. Encounter, Zaffre
 Ill. 18. Encounter, Alizarin
 Ill. 28. Encounter, Amber

Ill. 55. Encounter, Cerulean
 Ill. 44. Encounter, Violet
 Ill. 58. Encounter, Alabaster
 Ill. 15. Encounter, Cyan



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Left to right:

Ill. 65. *Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa*, 2018

Ill. 66. *The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu*, 2018

Ill. 67. *His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso The 14th Dalai Lama*, 2018

Ill. 68. *His Holiness Pope Francis*, 2018

Ill. 69. *Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh*, 2018

Ill. 70. *Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*, 2018

The Light Series 2018

In making *The Light Series* Green has worked in several complex mediums. A customised clear sheet of 10mm laser cut Perspex is used for the artist's surface instead of a traditional canvas or panel board. Green then begins a many-layered rendering process with the application of a monochrome bitmapped silkscreen print on the faces and hands of her subjects. The clothing, costume, and adornments are then painted by Green using multiple layers of acrylic paint in 'reverse' order. Many layers of paint are applied to the back of the Perspex sheet while the painting is viewed from the other side, the foreground, details and highlights are painted first, then the layers are built up successively, and the background applied in the final stages. This is a counter-intuitive process for Green, as well as a precarious one, in that a single mistake can be disastrous. This references the diverse global heritage of reverse glass painting, an art form which dates back to the Byzantine era's icons as well as emerging in India around the same time, and spreading to Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East.



Left to right:

Ill. 71. Reverend Yoshinobu Miyake, 2018

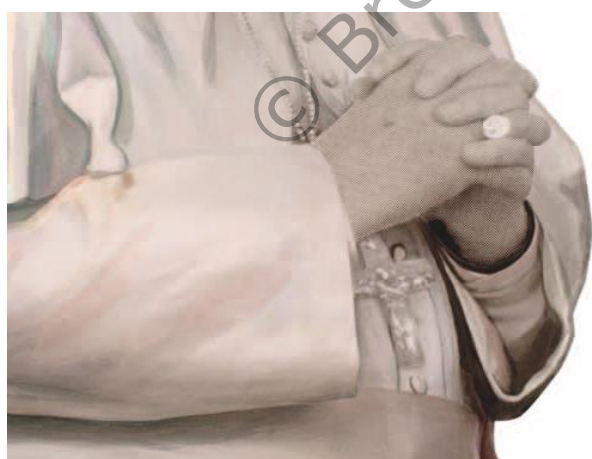
Ill. 72. His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji, 2018

Ill. 73. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, 2018

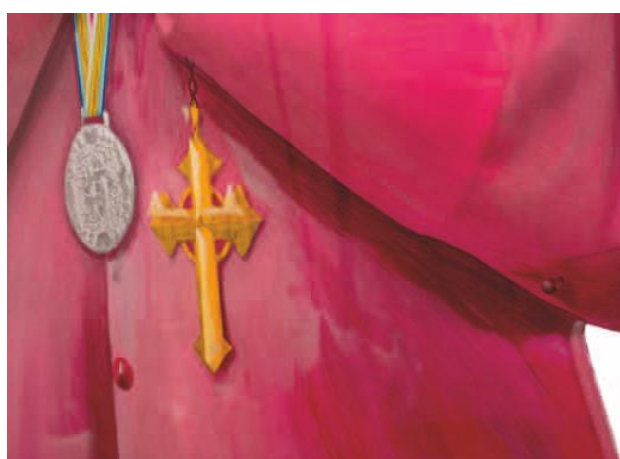
Ill. 74. His Most Godly Beatitude Theophilus III, 2018

Ill. 75. Dr. Homi Dhalla, 2018

Ill. 76. Sayyed Jawad Al-Khoei, 2018



Ill. 77. Detail of His Holiness Pope Francis, 2018



Ill. 78. Detail of The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, 2018

About the Editor



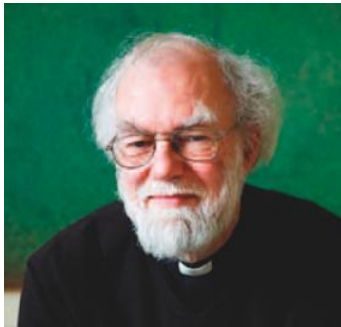
Aaron Rosen is Professor of Religious Thought at Rocky Mountain College and Visiting Professor at King's College London, where he was Senior Lecturer of Sacred Traditions and the Arts. Rosen began his career teaching at Yale, Oxford, and Columbia Universities and has held various honorary posts, including Visiting Professor at University College Utrecht. He received his doctorate from the University of Cambridge.

He has written widely for scholarly and popular publications, and is the author of *Art and Religion in the 21st Century*, *Imagining Jewish Art*, and *Brushes with Faith*, a volume of collected essays. His other edited books include *Religion and Art in the Heart of Modern Manhattan* and *Visualising a Sacred City: London, Art, and Religion*. He is currently working on a book entitled *The Hospitality of Images: Modern Art and Interfaith Dialogue*. He is also the author of the children's book *Where's Your Creativity?* and *Journey through Art*, a multi-cultural history for young people, which has been translated into many languages. Dr. Rosen also curates exhibitions, including *Stations of the Cross*, an international public arts project which has run in London, Washington, DC, and New York City.



Fig. 15.11. Professor Aaron Rosen discusses Güler Ates' installation *Sea of Colour* (2016) with His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols at The Salvation Army International Headquarters during the inter-faith pilgrimage for *Stations of the Cross*, London, 2016

About the Contributors



Rowan Williams is the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Dr Williams is a noted poet and translator of poetry, and, apart from Welsh, speaks or reads nine other languages. He has published studies of Arius, Teresa of Avila, Dostoevsky, and Sergii Bulgakov, together with writings on a wide range of theological, historical and political themes. He was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in Oxford before becoming Bishop of Monmouth, and then Archbishop of Wales. In 2002, he became the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury. He holds honorary doctorates from many universities, and is a Fellow of the British Academy. In 2013, he was made a life peer, becoming Lord Williams of Oystermouth, in the City and County of Swansea.



Ben Quash came to King's College London as its first Professor of Christianity and the Arts in 2007. Prior to that, he was a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College and then of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. Whilst at Cambridge, Quash was also the Academic Convenor of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme developing research and public education programmes in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and their interrelations. He currently runs an MA in Christianity and the Arts in association with the National Gallery, London, and broadcasts frequently on BBC radio. He is a Trustee of Art and Christian Enquiry, and Canon Theologian of both Coventry and Bradford Cathedrals.



Ibrahim Mogra serves as an imam and scholar in Leicester. He was born in Malawi and emigrated to the UK to study and settle. He has been trained in classical theology and the traditional sciences of Islam. He holds religious credentials from Darul-Uloom, Holcombe as well as advanced theological qualifications from Al-Azhar University. In addition, Shaykh Mogra has undertaken a postgraduate degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. As a local community activist in Leicester and a national leader in The Muslim Council of Britain, Shaykh Mogra has been at the forefront in deepening interfaith relations in the UK and around the world. He is a member of the Christian Muslim Forum, Religions for Peace UK and the European

Council of Religious Leaders. Shaykh Mogra makes regular contributions to print and broadcast media voicing concerns and opinions of diverse British Muslim communities and presenting a holistic view of Islam to the national and international discourse.



David F. Ford OBE is Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Selwyn College. He is the author of numerous books and currently works on subjects including: the Gospel of John; theology, modernity and the arts; religion-related violence; and contemporary worldviews. He has been a theological adviser to three Archbishops of Canterbury. Professor Ford was founding Director of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme and a co-founder of the interfaith practice of Scriptural Reasoning. He has been awarded the Sternberg Foundation Gold Medal for Inter-Faith Relations, the Coventry International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation, and an OBE (Honorary Officer of the Order of the British Empire), for services to theological scholarship and interfaith relations.



William J. Danaher Jr. is Rector of Christ Church Cranbrook (Bloomfield Hills, Michigan) and Canon for Interfaith and Ecumenical Relations for the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University and has taught at the University of the South (Sewanee, TN), The General Theological Seminary (New York, NY) and Huron University College (London, ON). He currently holds an appointment as Professor of Theology, Ethics and the Arts at Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, MI. He has received national awards for theology (Luce Foundation) and is a Member of the Center of Theological Inquiry (Princeton, NJ). He is working on a forthcoming publication entitled *Lamenting Art* that explores the interaction between contemporary art, ritual, and social practice.



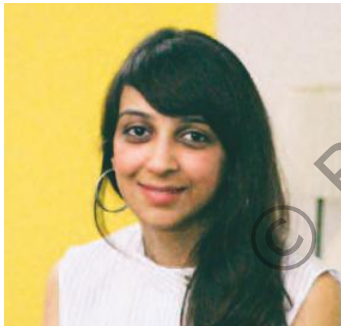
Maryanne Saunders MA, MSt (Oxon) is a PhD candidate in Theology and Religious Studies at King's College London. Her research focuses on contemporary religious art. She has contributed to the *Encyclopaedia of the Bible and its Reception* (De Gruyter) and *Times Higher Education*.



Lieke Wijnia lectures in art history at University College Tilburg and is a postdoctoral fellow of the Centre for Religion and Heritage at the University of Groningen. Her research interests concern modern art at the intersection of religion and heritage. As co-founder of the international research network Visionary Artists, Visionary Objects (1800-now) and as recipient of the inaugural Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park Postdoctoral Award, she conducts research on spiritual dimensions in Piet Mondrian's art and writings. Her contribution to this publication was generously supported by the Catharine van Tussenbroek Foundation / Nell Ongerboer Fund and Rocky Mountain College.



Chloë Reddaway is a researcher and lecturer in visual theology and Christian art, focusing on the potential of historic works of art for contemporary theology. She read Philosophy and Theology at Oxford and worked in the arts sector, before moving to King's College London to study the theology of Renaissance Florentine fresco cycles. As a postdoctoral researcher in the Divinity Faculty, Cambridge, she supported its Inter-faith Programme. From 2014–17 she was the Howard and Roberta Ahmanson Fellow/Curator in Art and Religion at the National Gallery, London. She is currently based in the Centre for Arts and the Sacred at King's.



Dua Abbas is a visual artist and writer based in Lahore, Pakistan. She graduated from the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 2010 with a Distinction in painting, the Shakir Ali Award for excellence in fine art, and the Sir Percy Brown Prize for excellence in the history of art. She has exhibited widely across Pakistan and has had numerous international shows. In addition to her studio practice, Rizvi writes regularly on art and culture for *Dawn*, *Herald*, *ArtNow*, *The Friday Times*, and *Libas International* and teaches drawing, painting, and art theory at the NCA, Lahore.



Jibran Khan is the Thomas L. Rhodes Journalism Fellow at the National Review Institute in New York. He writes on public policy and current events at National Review Online, with a particular interest in economics and religious liberty. As an American Muslim of South Asian descent who grew up moving around the world, he has found that the liminal position he has often occupied has helped him understand better the interactions between ideas and groups. Jibran studied at the University of Edinburgh, where he read Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and King's College, London, where he wrote a dissertation on the economics of Thomas Jefferson as it relates to the Anglo-American liberal tradition and the French Idéologues.



Gabrielle Rifkind is the founder and director of the Oxford Process, which is an organisation that specializes in preventive diplomacy and behind-the-scenes mediation. She comes from a psychological background and is interested in the relationship between geopolitics and the human mind and what motivates people both to get into and out of conflict. A political entrepreneur, Rifkind has, over two decades, created a number of quiet behind-the-scenes round-table discussions, often between groups who are not currently in dialogue with their adversaries in areas of conflict in the Middle East. She is co-author of *Making Terrorism History* (Random House, 2005), *The Fog of Peace: How to Prevent War* (I.B. Tauris, 2016), and *The Psychology of Political Extremism* (Routledge, 2018).



Skinder Hundal has been the Director of New Art Exchange (NAE) in Nottingham since its launch in 2008. He has successfully led the organisation through a significant period of growth. He is passionate about supporting new talent, creating 'incredible encounters', and rethinking and improving how the arts and cultural ecology work. He has successfully delivered complex, large-scale projects, working globally, including the historical Midland's Pavilion at Venice Biennale – Doug Fishbone's *Leisureland Golf*. He has presented thought leaders and artists at TED Global and the NAE was one of the UK's first arts organisations to be selected to present Tanya Habjouqu's *Speed Sisters* on Google Cultural Institute. For Venice Biennale 2017 Hundal was on the selection committee for the artist Phyllida Barlow, who represented Britain at the British Pavilion.

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- III. 20. *Encounter, Ruby* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied silver leaf and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. His Eminence Filaret, Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk, and the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus.
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- III. 22. *Encounter, Turquoise* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and copper leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. His Holiness 1008 Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji.
- III. 23. *Day 5 Fear, In Seven Days...* 2010 © Nicola Green. Five-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink, aluminium powder on cotton paper. 138.0 × 106.5 cm.
- III. 24. *In Seven Days...* 2010 © Nicola Green. *Day 1 Light*, Two-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 2 Struggle*, Three-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink, 24k Gold leaf on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 3 Hope*, Five-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 4 Change*, Three-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 5 Fear*, Five-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink, aluminium powder on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 6 Sacrifice/Embrace*, Two-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm. *Day 7 Peace*, Three-colour silkscreen print with water-based enamel ink on cotton paper, 2010, 138.0 × 106.5cm.
- III. 25. Please see III. 68.
- III. 26. *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with helios yellow, lava orange, mars red, neptune blue, acid green and celestial blue live edge backing. Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa, The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama, His Holiness Pope Francis, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Mr. Sayyed Jawad Al-Khoei, His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji, Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Reverend Yoshinobu Miyake Superior General of Konko Church of Izu, Dr. Homi Dhallia, founder and President of the Cultural Foundation of the Zarathustra World, His Most Godly Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine, Israel, Syria, beyond the Jordan River, Cana of Galilee, and Holy Zion, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem.
- III. 27. *Encounter, Rashi* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism Laura Janner-Klausner.
- III. 28. *Encounter, Amber* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Venerable Miao Guang.
- III. 29. Former Archbishop of Canterbury The Right Reverend Rowan Williams and His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama. Lambeth Palace. Pen drawing on cotton paper. © Nicola Green 2008.
- III. 30. Please see III. 67.
- III. 31. Please see III. 67.
- III. 32. Please see III. 3.
- III. 33. Please see III. 37.
- III. 34. Please see III. 28.
- III. 35. Please see III. 57.
- III. 36. *Encounter, Cobalt* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria, Patriarch of All Africa on the Holy Apostolic See of St. Mark, Evangelist of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.
- III. 37. *Encounter, Manganese* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemühle, 42 × 29.7 cm. The Most Reverend Bishop Mounier Anis of Egypt, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

- III. 38. *Encounter, Zaffre* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. His All Holiness Bartholomew I Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch.
- III. 39. *Encounter, Azure* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and diamond dust on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. His Holiness Mar Aprem Mookan, Metropolitan of the Assyrian Church of the East in India.
- III. 40. Please see III. 43.
- III. 41. Please see III. 44.
- III. 42. Please see III. 43.
- III. 43. *Encounter, Crimson* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.
- III. 44. *Encounter, Violet* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town.
- III. 45. Please see III. 19.
- III. 46. Please see III. 18.
- III. 47. Pen drawing on cotton paper. *Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace*, Assisi. © Nicola Green 2011.
- III. 48. 2 colour silk screen print, with pearlescent ink on cotton paper. *Delegates of the Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace* queuing in the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Degli Angeli, Assisi. © Nicola Green 2011.
- III. 49. *Encounter, Malachite* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied copper and silver leaf and diamond dust, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa.
- III. 50. *Encounter, Ivory* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied copper and silver leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Grandfather Hajji Baba Mondri (Edmond Brahimaj) of the Bektashi Order.
- III. 51. Please see III. 21.
- III. 52. Please see III. 37.
- III. 53. *Encounter, Coral* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Former Isekure of Benin, Chief Nosakhare Isekure.
- III. 54. *Encounter, Magenta* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.
- III. 55. *Encounter, Vermilion* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Dr. Tong Yun Kai President of The Confucian Academy.
- III. 56. *Encounter, Cerulean* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel and the Rishon LeZion Shlomo Amar.
- III. 57. *Encounter, Heliotrope* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold and silver leaf, on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Dr. A.K. Merchant, Head of Bahai Foundation of India.
- III. 58. *Encounter, Cadmium* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Dr Harshad N Sanghrajka, Deputy Chairman Institute of Jainology.
- III. 59. *Encounter, Alabaster* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Dr. Homi Dhalla, founder and President of the Cultural Foundation of the Zarathustra World.
- III. 60. Pen drawing on cotton paper. Religious leaders at the Queen's Jubilee, Lambeth Palace © Nicola Green 2010.
- III. 61. Pen drawing on cotton paper. Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks © Nicola Green 2010.
- III. 62. Pen drawing on cotton paper. Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa © Nicola Green 2010.
- III. 63. Pen drawing on cotton paper. *Papal Visit to the UK*, Lambeth Palace © Nicola Green 2010.
- III. 64. *Encounter, Rosso* from *The Encounter Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with acrylic on photographic print with hand applied 24k gold leaf and diamond dust on 308gsm Hahnemuhle, 42 × 29.7 cm. Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.
- III. 65. *Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with acid green live edge backing.
- III. 66. *The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with acid green live edge backing.
- III. 67. *His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso The 14th Dalai Lama* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with helios yellow live edge backing.
- III. 68. *His Holiness Pope Francis* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with mars red live edge backing.
- III. 69. *Bhaji Sahib Mohinder Singh* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with lava orange live edge backing.
- III. 70. *Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with neptune blue live edge backing.
- III. 71. *Reverend Yoshinobu Miyake* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with mars red live edge backing.
- III. 72. *His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with helios yellow live edge backing.
- III. 73. *Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with acid green live edge backing.
- III. 74. *His Most Godly Beatitude Theophilus III* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with lava orange live edge backing.
- III. 75. *Dr. Homi Dhalla* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with celestial blue live edge backing.
- III. 76. *Sayyed Jawad Al-Khoei* from *The Light Series* 2018 © Nicola Green. Hand painting with pearlescent, metallic, & fluorescent paints and a silkscreen print on Perspex with lava orange live edge backing.
- III. 77. Please see III. 68.
- III. 78. Please see III. 66.

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