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Martin E. Marty

## THE MENACING FAITHS OF STRANGERS

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Dr. Martin Marty presented the 13th Annual LWF Humanities Lecture to a standing-room audience of more than 300 people. What follows is a transcription of Dr. Marty's talk. As a transcription, we have retained the conversational, and occasionally digressive, tone of the lecture, rather than editing it into a formal essay.

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# THE MENACING FAITHS OF STRANGERS

Humanities. I'm a great devotee of the state humanities councils. I've spoken to the national organization on occasion, and I really do believe that's the way the humanities get propagated among publics. If you have 3,500 events in this state, you get a sense of how diffused it gets from the world of the universities. Years ago I sat on a humanities commission, and we were supposed to define the humanities, and we couldn't, but we could point to it. It's the world of cultures based on literacy; you like texts, but texts can take the form of a choreographic chart or a cathedral. It all finally comes down to increasing our human potential by making it possible, or helping make it possible, for us to imagine what it would have been to be someone else, somewhere else some other time.

Religion in the humanities. When the first federal legislation for the national humanities came, they didn't quite know how to handle that because they thought it might be a problem with church and state – government and religion. And so they said it would be alongside philosophy, history, linguistics, language, literature – comparative religion. I think that was a safe way so it didn't look as if the government was going to commit itself to a particular one, but I always thought of the Archbishop William Temple of the Church of England, who said there is no such thing as comparative religion; there are people who are comparatively religious. But religion has indeed won its way, and it's had to win its way. The word "humanities" really came not to be anti-religious, but simply to suggest that it dealt with texts, whether they were religious or not, and that's how the word got patented. But much of humanities learning in the last three centuries is the heritage of the Western Enlightenment, and that often represented, thanks to philosophers like Descartes and Kant and Hume, a divergence from religion, separating their way from all the other dimensions of the humanities. So there were several options: One, you could relocate religion, and you would do that in the drafty corners of universities called divinity schools. Or you could picture religion diminishing, and I think that was the characteristic, Western humanistic way of looking at things. Every time you looked out the window there would be a little less religion than the year before, and whatever you see would be a little more moderate and mild than the year before.

The world is different. Some time ago I directed a six-year project on militant fundamentalism around the world. My colleague, Scott Appleby, now at Notre Dame, and I kept a lot of clippings, and one was from the Iran war of 1979. When the head of the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner, was on "Issues and Answers," February 4, 1979, he was asked how could the CIA have missed the Iranian takeover of Shiite Muslims. He said, "Well, the CIA pays attention to everything that's important, so in the case of Iran, we know their cinema, we know their banking, we know their universities, we know their customs. The only thing we paid no attention to at all was religion, because religion has no power in the modern world." It was fifteen years later that Appleby said, "Marty, last week I was teaching an advanced class in religion at St. Xavier in Chicago, tomorrow I'm meeting Colin Powell, and the next week I meet the War College. Today the State Department has got religion."

And therefore the humanities are studied in a special way, and I want to concentrate here on why so much of the unrest in the world issues from religion, which is – a religion I know – dedicated to shalom: wholeness, peace. I'll try to deal with that paradox. All those years that we were studying this, we had a large grant from the MacArthur Foundation, and we were very worried that at the end of six years and \$3 million and 220 scholars and five volumes we'd be irrelevant, because a lot of topics get irrelevant in a

hurry. I finally reported to the American Academy when it was all finished in 1996. Who could have foreseen how busy we would be with the study of some of the militant forms of religion in our society?

Today while flying here I noticed several newspaper and magazine stories on religion – in just one day from publications that are not particularly devoted to religion. *A New York Times* editorial discusses religion and the Democratic Party; another paper's story looks at the Catholic Commission on gays. Sometimes the conflict is not across religion boundaries; it's often within, and if you're near or a member of the Episcopal Church you're highly aware of the conflict there. The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski once said of such things, "Aggression, like charity, begins at home."

Upon arrival I checked the Phoenix phone book. I always have to look up churches when I go somewhere. Alphabetically, they follow chiropractors, just before cigars. There are 120 denominations and many, many pages of religious groups here, all living in peace with each other. Baptists fight Baptists, but they don't fight Methodists, so my topic may seem a little remote at first, but I'll try to bring it in close.

Recently, I attended a talk by a University of Chicago economist, so you can probably figure where this is going to come out. He said, "I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the market has won; it's simply won, the game's over. Communism has imploded." And that's what you get Nobel Prizes for at the University of Chicago, if you say that often enough. And then he said, "We haven't the faintest idea with what personal, cultural, social, and political philosophies to greet this change." I think we all thought we'd have some years to do that adjusting, and then came 9/11, and we are suddenly thrown into another world where we have to make sense of these things along the way. In the search for a philosophy, and I like to think the humanities are a big part of this along the way, we are exposed to many resources that teach us some of these things.

Now, as I said a moment ago, if you look at the Yellow Pages of a metropolitan phone book, you might wonder why anybody like Appleby and Marty are concerned with – as I'm using the word tonight – the "menace" of the stranger's faith. We get along so well, most of the time. Are we, what Reinhold Neibuhr called us fifty years ago, a "gadget-filled paradise" suspended in a Hell of international insecurity? We were, but not since 9/11. What really happened with 9/11 is that we joined the rest of the human race. Most people have always been insecure. No longer do two oceans protect us; no longer does military power or wealth protect us. We are now vulnerable, and we are busy making sense of peoples that had once been at a distance.

Menace. I looked it up. I believe it comes from the word which means "projection" or "pinnacle." You'd put these around your stockade so enemies couldn't run their horses there; they were there for "menaces." Harold Isaacs in his book *Idols of the Tribe* describes how these menaces relate to each other around the world. My slight paraphrase: Around the world, there is a massive, convulsive, in-gathering of peoples into their separatenesses and over-againstnesses to protect their pride and power and place from others who are doing the same. But I've tried to find out what they have in common, and more and more I'm coming to develop a thesis that "the stranger" is the problem. In a way in the Anglican Church, the stranger is the booming Anglican Church of Nigeria, which is a very, very different culture than the Episcopal Church in the United States; and therefore they may share their faith in God, their faith in Christ, their faith in and use of the prayer book, and yet they are strangers to each other in this vast cultural difference.

My source for this concern is a German sociologist of a century ago, Georg Simmel, who wrote a short essay, a profound essay, called "The Sociology of the Stranger," in which he divides the world into the people who belong, or believe they belong, to a place, and the stranger – not the stranger who is here for a tourist weekend, but the stranger who stays is a menace because she or he might bring and does bring qualities that aren't an exact match to what had been there. Now again, in a republic like ours with

tremendous diversity of ethnic and religious groups, for all the tensions in the past we've had, we tend to celebrate these differences.

We love menus of every other group. I live in a part of Chicago where any night of the year we can eat Arabian, Bohemian, Czech, Slovak, Lithuanian, Latvian – and many others. I have a niece who is a member of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, whose pastor is a gypsy and whose members are mainly from Burma. The world has changed. We even like the décor of the other, as long as it's safe. I've been to El Rancho in Nova Scotia and I have no doubt there's a Ye Olde Tavern in Phoenix. At Gettysburg where they commemorate an American Civil War battlefield there used to be a shop – maybe still is – called The Blarney Stone run by a German couple who sell Southwest turquoise jewelry.

What I'm doing in that rather lighthearted paragraph is saying, if you have a republic and you have people who find ways to overcome strangeness, you can get the assets of the other and not live only with the liabilities and fear. But most people in the world don't have that luxury, and therefore they are exploitable by many violent movements; and we have just enough of it so we can have an empathy for it. "We belong and you don't" is usually the way these things occur.

Mary Pfeifer, who wrote the book *Rescuing Ophelia*, has a recent book out called *In the Middle of Everywhere*. She moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, which was chosen by the immigration services as one of eleven cities where there was a hospitality; and in her book she shows how in that city now there are over sixty languages spoken by parents of schoolchildren. You're going to the middle of nowhere? No, I'm going to the Middle of Everywhere. But that doesn't always work if you are not hospitable.

I'll take a recent case study; it's hardly even controversial it's so clearly defined. Judge Roy Moore in Alabama, who put the Ten Commandments, first on his wall in a woodcarving (it always occurred to me that he carved it and the first commandment is "Thou shalt make no graven images"). People ask, how can I be nervous about that and not be nervous about the fact that there are these religious symbols, for example, in the Supreme Court; and I think there is a big difference here in the way nations symbolize things, in that the religious inheritance of the people can be a natural thing, but his effort is what I would call in-your-face. "We belong and you don't." That's the message. You can get the Ten Commandments all kinds of places; you don't really need it in a court building because it defines. Moore was asked, before his Chief Justice, what about people who don't have that God, because that God is very belligerent in the First Commandment – a jealous God, and I'll womp you for four generations if you don't follow me. That's not real cheerful for a Buddhist. Moore said we are not a Buddhist state, we are a Christian state. That's not what the Constitution says. What Moore said is, classically, "We belong and you are the stranger. We define and you don't."

I took an egregious case because they may inform things; most people aren't thinking in these terms but here it is: What is it about faiths – religions if you want to say it – what is it about them that gives the power that can be used both for healing and for defining over against the other? Most of my life is devoted to the healing side of religion; my little cell phone had three calls this afternoon from people with whom I'm in touch – one will die in a couple days. I am a pastor and I see the healing power of faith. More people are probably being healed in this city tonight by people in the name of religion than anything else, so I could make a good talk about that. What is the root of it?

I think they're all born in awe. The classic one is the story of Moses and the burning bush. "Take the shoes off your feet because the ground you're standing on is holy ground." And the religions tend to have that sense, that there is a face of the other who is not tyrannous, not a tyrant. Then you form community; you form community normally because you get an overload of experience, or you would like to share it or do things together; and therefore those that share that experience acquire – need – an identity. Again, in a nation like ours where you may be ten things; you may be a Rotarian and a Republican and a Roman

Catholic and twenty other things. That's not the same as in the poor world where you are "of the tribe," and that defines you. When my wife and I, who have eleven projects in Guatemala, go to visit our projects, I first check that my Visa will be useful there, and the University of Chicago health plan will cover me there, and then I'm ready to be a traveler. We go to the Mayan villages, and they know nothing of credit cards, nothing of these things, and yet they heal, because they are with their own. Eight miles away they may not be because it's a different people. If you are with your own, you belong, you have this sense. So, first the awe of the experience of the divine, and then you form community, but here's where problems start coming in because the community of the belongers is suddenly almost always doing some excluding.

And the third, after the awe and community, you have a mission. "Let my people go," "Set my people free," "Preach the gospel in all the world," "Carry on ministries of justice," or whatever. So far, so good. Now, several dimensions of these faiths: If that's all there were to it, we wouldn't have any problem. But notice that in almost every case, that which most means most to the belongers often alienates them from everyone else. I'm going to give six dimensions. I'm using the word "faiths" instead of "religions"; if you use the word "religions" you have to define it, and there goes the whole evening. Smith has a 110-page footnote of historic definitions of religion. I have a simple one. I was one of eight editors of a 16-volume book called *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, and I say, religion is the kind of stuff you write about when you have a book with that title. But I like to use the word "faiths" here, and what are some of them?

Number one. Paul Tillich's words, "ultimate concern," the whole ball of wax, that which you live by or that you die for. Almost everybody has that, even if they think they have a faint attachment; sooner or later, if pushed to the wall, they will have this. And these become so close to you, so much a part of you, it's hard to imagine not. I like to think of the humanities as a place where you imagine what it was to be somebody else; you don't have to lose your commitment. I've been involved in ecumenical and inter-religious things for fifty years, and nobody's ever said, "Now you've got to give that up to be part of the conversation." No, that's not the term. But it's still puzzling: how can they be that different? Maybe if you got rid of religion you wouldn't have this problem, but wasn't Soviet communism a matter of "ultimate concern"? In Arthur Koestler's play *Darkness at Noon*, where the young one who is going to execute the old Bolshevik says, "We made the revolution, we lived by the revolution, we died for the revolution, we drank wine to it, we made love to it"; and the Bolshevik says to the young guy, "And you're the generation born without a navel." Nazism was a total "ultimate concern." Millions died for it. Maoism, same thing. So the fact that the other lives by something that different is puzzling to us, and the other's community now becomes a problem. "We belong, you don't" – this active definition. *[No section numbered two.]*

Third, the religion moved by myth and symbol. For me myth is not true or false, it's just the only way to tell the story. Every religion has myths, and they are very different in character; and you'll never understand a person of faith until you get into their stories. They may share a lot – I believe they do. I've been spending some time recently with an inter-religious group where the point is made very strongly that the Vatican II document, that human dignity is held too by the religions, defined different ways. George Santayana said we don't talk language, we talk *a* language, and so we don't talk faith, we are of *a* faith. He says they have a lot in common, but their particular motivating and saving power is in the particular stories they tell. And if you stand outside those stories, they really get you. Right after 9/11 the papers were just full of passages from the Koran where it says you can kill somebody in the name of faith. Well, their papers had the Book of Judges where God commanded people to kill all the men, women, children, animals, plants, and everything else. That's not what Judaism or Christianity are about, but it's in the text somewhere, it's in the myth somewhere, and you have to deal with that. Try to get somebody an eighth of an inch away from biblical thought to make sense of the Abraham and Isaac story.

And the crucifixion story. Now if you're inside them it's not a problem. Well, it's a problem of its own sort, but it's not the problem of dealing with the other.

I'll give you an illustration – how different stories are if there's an eighth of an inch difference. I'm a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, and we're really kind of weird because we celebrate the Ascension, and not many Christians do; it's a Thursday night, not a good time to get a quorum. But it's our name and we love it; we're proud of it and we believe in it. So I'm in Israel and I start at the Dome of the Rock, where they show me the rock from which Mohammed's horse took off at Ascension, and there's a little footprint there. I'm a student of the history of religion where you learn to suppress all the things you'd probably say if you weren't a student of religion, but one side of me probably thinks it's really strange that people think that's where a horse took off! Well, then I go up the Mount of Olives to the Chapel of the Ascension, which is Moslem-owned, but it's celebrating the Ascension of Christ, where there's a footprint in stone. I think some 11th-century Syrian chipped it there (by the way, the Moslems got his right foot and the Christians got his left foot, and both believe in it). Now, I don't know whether anybody in the Ascension Lutheran Church has a literal sense of physics that has to take off like this, but it is our way of speaking about how Jesus of Nazareth becomes the Exalted Lord. And it didn't strike me at all strange, but I bring a Moslem up there and he thinks, "Well, that is a strange story, that God can take human form and disappear that way."

So, the myth and symbol – and religious people favor them. You can do that a lot of ways. Abraham Lincoln didn't say eighty-seven years; he said four score and seven years ago. Nations live with myth and symbol too – a quasi-religious dimension.

The fourth: rite and ceremony. Everyone's rites are different than the others, and the strangers therefore strike us strangely. There was a book a few years ago called *December Wars*, about how in America we fight over the rites and ceremonies every December. Somebody wants a crèche on the courthouse lawn, so let's add a Menorah, and now we have a crescent. Finally the Supreme Court settled this in the Pawtucket, Rhode Island case, which we call the two-plastic-reindeer-and-Jesus symbol. If you have enough secular symbols there, you take away all the religious meaning, then you can have the religious symbol there. But, when somebody else's rite or ceremony intrudes on your own, there are rites of almost all religions which even their best friends are not welcome at. I will die before I get full communion with Roman Catholics; I'm terribly offended, I've worked hard to make some changes with it, but I understand. But here again, the rites and ceremonies are also distancing.

The metaphysic is the fifth dimension – the bigger story behind the story. We don't just live out our ordinary lives, but we have a sense there's a bigger story behind it – usually in religion acquired from a sacred book. And these books have a lot in common, but they also don't match.

The Hebrew consequences is the sixth one. Your faith, my faith, some other faith – you do things differently in the light of it. Very often in diet. When we did the Fundamentalism Project we had people from thirteen religions at every meeting, and the poor caterer had to ask, "What do Sikhs eat? What do Muslims eat? What do Jews eat?" At the twelfth meeting she finally said, "I sure like you Christians, you'll eat anything." But we know a certain way to bring up our children; we know how we'd like to educate them.

Now, wouldn't we solve it all if we just got rid of religion, if it does this distancing? I would argue that the secular world does the same, with its ideologies or whatever, and I think that the religious world has some advantages if we learn to use them. I think we have to start with just saying, "They're here and they're not going to go away." A larger percentage of the people of the world today are practicing religion than they were a century ago. We don't see that so much because Western Europe, North America – I call it the Spiritual Ice Belt – sort of holds its own. There are 3,000 fewer Christians in the northern world

than 24 hours ago; there are 16,000 more in sub-Saharan Africa alone, and the Muslim growth: every seventh person in the world was Muslim 40 years ago, and now every fifth is. So, it's here, and therefore you ask, "What are we going to do with these energies?" Not how do you wish them away.

Secondly, I think the fact that they have transcended references – if we can turn, almost by a spiritual jujitsu, take the force of what's coming at us, and turn it around to the positive, because it *does* lead you to think about the eternal. It doesn't deprive you of rationality or argument or anything else, but it does say we're operating against a bigger screen along the way.

Well, look at our own history. I've sort of celebrated us tonight. Oh, we get by very nicely, but that's not how the world sees us. First of all, as people in this state are highly aware, the extirpation of, the reserving of, the Native Peoples was done in religious terms. All of the language of the Europeans who came was religious. We were God's new Israel, we were Zion, we were the City Set upon a Hill. The greatest blight on our history after that, slavery, justified always in religious terms. We've had our own crusades: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, even Dwight Eisenhower's more benign crusade in Europe. We have had many occasions in which we've had true interruptions – anti-Semitism, anti-this or that small religious group, anti-Mormon, anti-newcomer. They're the stranger, and in my plot tonight they therefore look menacing along the way.

Much of the world today sees us as an American empire that justifies our own ways theologically without consulting them, and thus we become more strange and so do they. But the latency is there I think for things to be different.

Why is the stranger a menace? Why is a projection protruding, and so on? This is the question people had to ask when they formed this republic, which is a republic that the Court officially calls wholesomely neutral about religion. The Constitution is silent about religion, and intentionally so. This is the first time in 1,400 years that had happened, that Christians were going to share space with others constitutionally and legally. Jefferson said this has to be a place where the Jews, the Turks, and the infidels have to feel as much at home as anyone else. That was our charter and, think back, could you have had a republic had you kept a religious establishment? Voltaire, who's often quoted by Madison, said, "Where there's a one-religion society, it does what one-religion societies always do: it kills everybody else." The stranger. Two-religion societies do what two-religion societies always do: they kill each other. He said England has thirty, and so they have to learn to live with each other. When this was taken over here, Madison said it was the multiplicity that helped along the way. Why was it so hard? Because they were mainly dragged screaming into it – always the stranger.

1654 – Governor Peter Stuyvesant, acting like Christian governors had for centuries, saw a ship come in, checked it out, wrote the Dutch West Indies Company, his sponsor, and said, What are we going to do? There are some Jews on that ship. It had come from Brazil; these were Jews who were kicked out of Brazil, having been kicked out of the Netherlands, having been kicked out of Spain in 1492. The Dutch West Indies Company Board had some Jews on it and they said, "Who knows more currencies, who knows more economies? They're pretty valuable, you better take them." But Stuyvesant said if you take them, pretty soon you're going to have to take Lutherans and Catholics, and Mennonites. I always give him the patent on the American phrase, "Damn it, there goes the neighborhood." Dragged screaming into it.

Timothy Dwight, 1802, president of Yale, was very worried because a woman in York, Connecticut was seen wearing a cross – she must be a Catholic. There were no Catholics in New England along the way then, so they had to figure out a policy. They were the stranger. I should be really ecumenical about this. One of my great heroes – I hope he's a hero to a lot of you in the room – is Benjamin Franklin. He always had a problem with the menace of the stranger. He said in Philadelphia, "What are we going to do with these palatinate Boors – Brotherhood Week! – They will Germanize us before we Anglify them." But

he changed, as did everyone else, and they saw the advantage in the diversity that came along the way.

The stranger is a menace because she's different, and therefore she/he might convert us or kill us or cause us to lose faith in our own – or what we're after. That's the strange thing about the allure of the stranger. The stranger at the same time is a menace because of the negative power but also the positive. A lot of people worry in the midst of American pluralism, that no one can have a deep religious conviction – that you have a kind of cafeteria line and you therefore be light about all of them, or that the other will be more alluring.

Strategies – final part. What do we do? Well, you could join the killers and keep the cycle of violence going. The stranger is a menace to us because of his religion, and so let's whip up ours and face it. That's been the pattern in most of human history, and very often it doesn't start that way. When the Russians were fighting in Chechnya, if you track back the television images, it starts out they're just tanks and artillery. Later on, there are green ribbons on them – the color of Islam. There's a very secular part of the Islamic world. Islam was to Chechnyans what Lutheranism is to Swedes. Church attendance there is minus two percent, but everybody is Lutheran. But those who are shooting each other up in the names of these are very seldom, with one exception, deeply involved in the life of the churches. In other words, these same texts that lead them to treat the stranger as a menace, also have another message, which I'll come to in just a moment.

Third, maybe just declare they're all half right and we'll just be tolerant. The problem with tolerance – a beautiful word, a hard one – is again in our culture it's taken on a sense that if I can just get you to leave all the rough edges off and I'll do the same and then we can agree, and again you'll miss the profound stories by which people live.

Or maybe we'll merge them all into one. Thomas Mann says, "The world has many centers and they're not likely to converge into one." Try it someday. Arnold Toynbee thought he was pulling it off; a lot of people thought, that's pretty nice, you've got a synthesis of all the religions, but one of them won't work, it's fossilized, it's Judaism. You're not going to pull off a merger either.

Be eclectic, take a little dab of each. Instead of tolerance, Gabriel Marcel some years ago advocated something he called counter-intolerance – that is, the commitment of people who believe something so deeply they can understand how hard it is for the other to give up, to stop being strange along the way. And you take the depths of your own commitment, hard won as it is, as a warrant, as a guarantee that your relationships are going to be positive. But counter-intolerance is not the word that easily works.

So I've been working with a wonderful concept from the ancient world, particularly biblical – "risking hospitality." What do you do with the stranger? Hospitality can be just a bright little summer resort word – the hospitality industry, which we all like; but I'm talking about risking hospitality. And if you look at the Hebrew scriptures – Christian Bible – there are few things you can do that are more problematic that being inhospitable and unwelcoming. If you think about the culture in which this occurs, this is a nomadic culture; these are people living in tents. There are no safe deposit boxes where you can put the jewelry or anything like that; and somebody comes there and you must take them in. It was a command, and throughout there's always the reminder to the children of Israel – remember, that you were once locked out and now God's accepted you, now you must accept the stranger.

What does that mean? Well, let me take the simplest little example – home. If you come to the Marty house for dinner, people of many faiths are there, and we don't take the crucifix off the wall, or the picture of Mary off the wall, or the saints. I think we talk differently, and we listen differently, and you listen differently. Nobody gets converted by it, but we're both changed by it. Friday night and the Martys are coming to a Jew's home, so they say, "Well, the Martys are here and they're Christian so tonight we'll skip the wine and the candles." No, we're there because of that! How do we learn you and know you?

Risking hospitality. You haven't profaned it, you haven't cheapened it by doing that.

Two nights after 9/11 my wife and I were having a Victorian supper on our Victorian porch in our Victorian house in our Victorian town, and it was dusk and we looked across the street. There was a funny motion with some candles. Well, it was two of our neighbors' kids who live next door to each other, a Catholic and Jew, and the parents were teaching their children a ritual to be mindful of the mosque not far from us which had been attacked right after 9/11. By the way, there have not been many such attacks; this is an amazing thing that does show some durability in the way that Americans have learned to deal with the stranger. But there was an attack there, and as I have tried to de-sentimentalize the concept of the stranger, it was not a pure mosque: one of the people arrested and quite likely funneling funds to terrorists was a member of that mosque. Nobody could know that, but there's a risk with hospitality. But they were teaching them that, and those children are never going to forget – the incorporation of the other. And the rabbi not far north of us said if they come to your mosque again, I have 300 members who will lock arms around the outside and they won't get through to you. This is what I mean by risking hospitality. The one child is not less Catholic, the other is not less Jewish, the people in the mosque are not less Muslim, and they have an absolutely different relationship than they had previously.

Abraham Lincoln liked to talk about drawing on the better angels of our nature – that you reach in deeper; and I think this is what we do with the sacred texts. Some years ago the executive board asked me to review the Koran as if it were a brand new bestseller. I hadn't read the Koran since college, and I said I'm not an Islamic expert; it's not my period and I'm not a textual expert. They said, "No we don't want somebody who knows it too much. We have a lot of business people doing business with the Middle East and Indonesia, and they want to make sense of the people they deal with." So I read it and it was really something; and I think I treated it in terms of Rilke's first elegy: beauty is but the beginning of terror. The two fit together; one passage is wonderful and reconciling and peaceful, and the next one is really scary – just like the scriptures of the Christian world! And what we've learned is to draw on these passages – the promise of Shalom and the promise of reconciliation and to try to set up a circumstance in which people could do that. The humanities can do it, arts can do it.

After the Fundamentalism Project I did a three-year project called Ethno-nationalism at Salzburg, where they filmed *The Sound of Music*, and there are 54 seats each year, and our assignment – Barbara Jordan and I the first year – was to stock it with 54 people from places that are strange to each other: seven former Yugoslavians, two northern Irelands, three South Africans – 54 people, all the "stans": Tajikistan, Kurdistan, and the rest. The last night somebody toasted each table, and a Muslim from Iran said, "I just want to say what I learned out of this week of our conversing openly with each another on even terms – I'm now leaving, and across the table from me is Gary from Tel Aviv, the only Jew I've ever met, and now he's my best friend in this seminar." Now, that's far too romantic a story to think that's how the world works; it shows how some dimensions of the world can work if you set up a circumstance, where people aren't trapped in poverty and hatred and so on. Enough of that has happened, I think, to give us the courage to believe that there are resources in the faiths that can help us overcome the strangeness – keep the integrity and identity of who we are, and meet some wonderful people and beliefs along the way.

It's an honor to give this Lorraine W. Frank Humanities Lecture, thank you for the invitation, and good evening.