

*From Enemy to Friend: Jewish Wisdom and the Pursuit of Peace.* By Amy Eilberg. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014. xvii + 278 pages. \$25.00 (paper). doi: 10.1017/hor.2015.81

Amy Eilberg's *From Enemy to Friend* should be required reading for all who encounter conflict in their lives. It is a book not just on Jewish-Christian dialogue, Israeli-Palestinian relations, or even Jewish-Jewish interactions, although it includes all of these, but also about human-human relations. The goal of the text is to explore peacemaking, or as Eilberg prefers to say, "peacebuilding," as a spiritual practice desperately needed in the world today. The author, who in 1985 became the first woman ordained as a Conservative rabbi, offers us a work on conflict resolution based on Jewish texts grounded in deep spirituality. Sprinkled throughout the book are descriptions of Eilberg's personal encounters with conflict, or her anticipation of conflict, which allow readers to relate not only to her, but also to the difficulties that arise in their own lives.

Eilberg begins with a fascinating discussion entitled "The Neurobiology of Conflict." In college biology class when studying the brain, we might have learned about the amygdala as part of the limbic system. This pair of almond-shaped structures alerts a person in time of danger to defend him/herself. When fearful, persons often resort to "fight or flight." Eilberg notes that the modus operandi of the limbic system is to "shoot first and ask questions later" (35). Over the years, biologists tell us, the frontal cortex developed to allow for reflection, including rational thinking, critical analysis, and the weighing of alternatives. Unfortunately, differences in race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation are often perceived as threats. These can evoke deep fear and result in hurtful words and actions before we can pause to reflect on how we should respond.

This information is an excellent preface to Eilberg's discussion of conflict, both destructive and constructive. Throughout her reflections she relates passages of the Hebrew Scriptures and interpretations of the Mishnah (the foundational document of Jewish Law) to theories of contemporary conflict resolution. She then discusses the teachings of Martin Buber on dialogue and states: "Buber believed that when we enter into conversation utterly convinced of the rightness of our view, without any possibility of learning anything from the other, we are not engaging with another, only talking to ourselves" (55). The therapy-based Public Conversations Project summarizes this as "conflict narrows; inquiry expands." Eilberg invites us into what she describes as Sacred Listening, fundamental to Jews who recite the Shema prayer sometimes multiple times each day: "Hear, O Israel: Adonai our God, Adonai is one." She sees God as "the Ultimate Listener" (66). If God

listens to us, and we listen to God, then we, in turn, should listen to one another.

On her journey Eilberg also encountered the Compassionate Listening Project, which includes suggestions on how to listen in the presence of conflict. All of this prepares the reader for the chapters that follow: “Peace among Religions,” “Peace among Jews,” and “Peace between Israelis and Palestinians.” In each of these chapters she shares her broad background in pastoral and spiritual direction, grounded in scriptural and rabbinic texts. She then offers practical exercises for dealing with conflict personally, nationally, and internationally.

Eilberg’s many relationships with Jews, Muslims, and Christians enrich the vignettes in which she describes how she has learned and grown from these experiences. Often she puts all Christians in one category, but it might be helpful to distinguish between the varieties in Christianity: Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Protestants—even between mainline and conservative Protestant groups. She describes the similarity between teachings in the Qur’an and Jewish writings (95–96). Perhaps a correspondence between Jewish and Christian writings (e.g., similarities between the sayings of Jesus and the rabbis) would also have been enlightening. Resemblances between the writings of Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas might prove attractive to some Catholic readers (245).

This book is exquisitely written, and both learned and practical. I hope it will be widely used by graduate and undergraduate students, adult education groups, and especially by interreligious dialogue organizations. It could truly enhance our lives with Jewish wisdom and transform many “from enemy to friend.”

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*Moral Choice: A Christian View of Ethics.* By Dolores L. Christie. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. xi + 260 pages. \$35.00.  
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Dolores Christie has written a very good textbook appropriate especially for introductory courses in theological ethics or moral theology. The book is structured in eight chapters, followed by three appendixes that will be particularly helpful tools for classroom instructors in designing assignments and guiding thoughtful discussions.

The book covers most areas traditionally considered key to understanding fundamental moral theology. Chapters 1 to 6 will assist instructors as they