

Weeden, Sr. Theodore J. A Faith Odyssey. In *When Faith Meets Reason: Religion Scholars Reflect on Their Spiritual Journeys* (Ed., Robert W. Funk e. al.). Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press; 2008; pp. 88-90.

I was taught that boys and men are superior to girls and women; African Americans are an inferior and incompetent race; Jews are intrusive, money-grubbing opportunists, who put Jesus to death; Catholics are papists, conspiring to turn our Protestant nation into a papal state; and homosexuals are abhorrent sexual deviants. I was also taught that unless you are Christian and believe that Jesus died for your sins, providing, thereby, the only path to God, you will not have eternal life. Those other religious traditions “need not apply.” ([Weeden 2008](#): 88)

*Christian bigotry.* While living in Appleton, Wisconsin, from 1995-2004, I was invited by the Fox Valley Muslim community’s Imam to be a panel member on his public access TV program devoted to Islamic and Christian approaches to critical issues of the day. The Imam soon became a good friend. He often invited me to the Muslim community’s festival celebration, on one occasion as guest speaker. Warm, self-effacing, compassionate, and serene, he is both devout in his faith and respectful of others’ faith. Indeed, he is “Christ-like.” Yet, he is a Muslim! I deplore and reject Christian bigotry that thinks it knows who is loved and accepted by God. ([Weeden 2008](#): 89)

*Homophobia.* Throughout childhood and adolescence, the family member I felt closest to was my father’s brother. Affable, gregarious, and caring, my uncle was both deeply serious about life’s vital issues himself a pastor and delightfully playful. He introduced me to classical music, a life-long love, for which I am eternally grateful. After two failed marriages, he apparently came to terms with his homosexuality. Recognizing that my beloved uncle was inherently gay cured me of my own homophobia. The transformation was further facilitated by my sister’s daughter, a wonderful lesbian niece. Accordingly, I reject any religious dogma, ecclesiastically or biblically grounded, that considers homosexuality deviant or sinful. ([Weeden 2008](#): 89-90)