

Bridging Theological Gaps through Interreligious Dialogue

Antonio and Gale Alves

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In the photo, left to right, is an Episcopalian minister, A Bah'ai member, (in the Bah'ai faith, everyone is a leader and no is a leader), the Baptist pastor and Gale Alves.

The Southern Baptist Church of the Heart of Junction Church hosted an interreligious sharing event on the topic: "**What is Evil, Where did it Come From, and How Does it Manifest in the World?**" on Dec 29.

Representatives of four faiths were present and each had ten minutes to share.

Below is a brief summary of what each faith explained:

The Baha'is believe that evil is darkness, lack of light. It is the absence of good. There is no evil being, no Satan, no evil spirits. Man is part good and also has a lower instincts side within him/her. Hell is the separation of man from God. Good comes from God. We are all responsible for our actions. As man has matured over the ages, we are now able to take more responsibility for our actions.

The Southern Baptist pastor believes in Genesis, "Through one man, Adam, evil entered the world". And he believes in the last three chapters of Revelations, all is rectified. He said Adam together with Eve brought evil into the world. Man ruined goodness. Unnatural evil - that is not of God - has natural consequences. Natural evils like tsunamis, hurricanes, etc. are the result of mankind not taking care of

nature. They believe in an evil being outside of God's realm of goodness.

The Episcopal minister shared that good and evil are like yin and yang. Nothing is purely good nor purely evil. Evil will be conquered by Jesus. God will never leave his people. Try not to classify people as evil, we all have good and evil within us. We cannot judge others until we know who they are, what their background and lives have been.

Gale, although not a minister, represented **The Family Federation for World Peace** and the spiritual teachings of WFWP co-founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his wife Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. She spoke of the serpent representing Satan, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil representing Eve and the Tree of Life representing Adam. That eating the fruit was symbolic of Adam and Eve having a illicit sexual relationship -- that is why they were ashamed they were naked after they ate the fruit. To eat the fruit means to have a sexual relationship which was not meant to happen until they were fully mature. This action was the root of evil in the world known as "The Fall of Man." Gale said that "Everyone just stared at me at the end of the lecture, maybe not knowing what to think!"

Naturally the four representatives had a conversation after the sharing. After listening to each other it seems we could all agree that evil was a separation from goodness and that we all had a responsibility to choose goodness over evil. We all had different ideas from where evil came from. Either from a particular course of events, a natural inclination or from a lower instinctive side. All religions want to bring more goodness into each person's life and community. Through this sharing we can respect our differences and understand our common purpose.

Editor's Note: WFWP Colorado Representative Gale Alves and her husband Antonio are members of the [Grand Valley Interfaith Network](#) (GVIN), a local organization in Grand Junction that fosters cooperation between members of different religious affiliations and promotes community engagement.