

## **Borrowing, Influence and Inspiration: Reflections on Prayer Between Christians and Jews**

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### **Introduction**

Michael von Brück has been a leading figure in the fields of interreligious dialogue, comparative theology and the building of intellectual and experiential bridges between world religions. A Lutheran minister, a Yoga teacher and a Zen teacher, he has lived deeply the experiences of other religious traditions, making them his own, broadening his own religious identity and serving as inspiration to others. While his entire oeuvre is devoted to the knowledge and understanding of other religious traditions, some of his work focuses specifically on the theoretical dimensions of identity and the implications of interreligious borrowing.<sup>1</sup> Most of Michael's work has been dedicated to the relations between Christianity and Eastern Religions. Of course, the questions he engages are as relevant to the foundational relations between Judaism and Christianity. Needless to say, it is significantly easier to engage such questions without the baggage, prejudice and burden of history resulting from the history of Jewish-Christian relations. But it may be precisely through the kind of work cultivated in relation to Eastern religions that a new set of questions, sensibilities and opportunities may open up on the Jewish-Christian front as well. I would therefore like to dedicate my tribute to this great interreligious spirit by exploring some dimensions of Jewish-Christian relations that are not usually explored, and the likes of which Michael has spent decades exploring in relation to Hinduism and Buddhism. Seeing Jewish-Christian relations within the broader framework of global interreligious relations, and in particular the dialogue of spirituality, allows us to move beyond the specific historical questions that often define the Jewish-Christian conversation into broader dimensions of encounter. As is the case in

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1 See in particular the recently published "*A Theology of Multiple Religious Identity*", in: D'ARCY MAY, John (ed.), *Converging Ways? Conversion and Belonging in Buddhism and Christianity*, St.Ottilien: EOS 2007, pp. 181-206. Earlier reflections include *Sharing Religious Experience in Hindu-Christian Encounter*, in: GORT, J. D. et al (ed.), *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1992, pp. 136-150.