ARC

50th Anniversary Volume

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*A*rc has much to celebrate this 2022–2023 academic year. This year marks, not only our migration to an open-access digital platform, but also fifty years of *Arc* and seventy-five years of the School of Religious Studies (SRS), formerly the Faculty of Religious Studies. The confluence of this move and these momentous anniversaries could not have been more fortuitous: as these anniversaries called us to reflect upon our history, the digitization of our archives provided us with the perfect opportunity to dig into this history in earnest.

Institutional history can be a fickle and slippery thing, especially when you are dealing with a publication that dealt exclusively in paper for the first thirty or so years of its existence. Paper fades, gets moved, lost, filed and forgotten about, and – almost inevitably – meets its end in the recycling bin. Moreover, while the history of bigger institutions – such as the SRS – tends to get recorded,[1] to be more immediately understood as having posterior significance, this is not always so with smaller institutions, which often, as in the case of *Arc*, don't understand themselves to have earned the status of "institution" to begin with. But with fifty years under its belt, *Arc* is indeed best referred to as an institution, indeed deserving of a bit of historical reflection.

In this address we would like to share some of this history, and, in commemoration of the happy confluence of anniversaries noted above, will follow this introduction with a Director's Address

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1. See H. Keith Markell, *The Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University: 1948–1978* (Montreal: Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill university, 1978), https://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/files/religiousstudies/markell_history_of_frs.pdf.

celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the SRS.[2]

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Arc – then stylized ARC[3] – was established in 1973 by founding editors Robert C. Culley (1932–2013), Joseph C. McLelland (1925–2016), Peter Richardson (1935–), and Art van Seters (1934–2011). It was denominational (Presbyterian), aimed at a ministerial audience, and sought to provide "stimulus" to the "average working minister."[4] It had three sections – biblical (edited by Richardson), pastoral (van Seters), and theological (McLelland) – and, rather ambitiously, sought to publish quarterly, a practice maintained for three years (1973–1976) before moving to a biannual publication in 1977 and an annual publication in 1990. (Lest the reader think we've been getting lazy over the years, it should be noted that while the issues published quarterly ran between 12–20 pages per number, from 1990 onwards they have averaged between 150–200 pages, with the *Festschrift* for Frederick Wisse clocking in at an impressive 540 pages!).

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2. The historical retrospective that follows would not have been possible without the help of Arvind Sharma. Professor Sharma has been a part of *Arc*'s history since his first visiting professorship at McGill during the 1983–1984 academic year (he officially joined the Faculty in 1987), as a contributor, editorial committee member, and the driving force behind *Arc*'s merger with *Religious Traditions*, the journal he co-founded with Ian Kesarcodi-Watson in 1978. Professor Sharma was kind enough to provide us with a brief history of the major developments *Arc* has undergone during its fifty-year history, which we have further researched through our archives and fleshed out here.

3. *Arc* was stylized as either ARC or *ARC* from 1973 until 2009. In 2010, rather inexplicably, it began to be stylized as *Arc*, a stylization that has since been retained. For the sake of consistency, we have opted to refer to *Arc* throughout using the present style, save quotations.

4. Part of that stimulus, as readers who explore our archives will see, was comical, with the first three volumes of *Arc* containing highly entertaining parody pieces.

While the first five years of *Arc* largely kept to the orientation initiated by its founding editors, by 1978 we can begin to see the tides of change. As McLelland, by then Faculty Dean, writes in his introduction to vol. 6, no. 1 – an issue dedicated to celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Faculty – "our Faculty has come of age." What he is referring to is a rather momentous shift in the Faculty's history: the shift from Divinity to Religious Studies. "In 1978 […] we have a phenomenon undreamt of in 1948 […]: the academic study of religion as a subject intended for others than ordinands." In subsequent volumes we see this shift reflected in *Arc*, which slowly began to move away from its explicitly Christian roots to become a forum for discussions reflecting the traditional and methodological diversity of the modern discipline of Religious Studies. Christian theological and biblical perspectives were now published alongside works on ancient *sutras* and sociological commentary.

Throughout the course of the 1980s, *Arc*'s output was prolific: in addition to keeping with its biannual publication schedule, *Arc* also published four "supplements," edited volumes comprised of conference papers presented at various McGill symposia.[5] In 1990 *Arc* took on its first title change, officially becoming "ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University." This title remained until McGill's Faculty of Religious Studies became its School of Religious Studies in 2016, at which point "ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies" became "*Arc*: The

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5. They are as follows: *Encounters with Luther: Papers from the 1983 McGill Luther Symposium* (1984); *Huldrych Zwingli, 1484–1531: A Legacy of Radical Reform: Papers from the 1984 International Zwingli Symposium, McGill University* (1985); *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509–1564: Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium, McGill University* (1987); *Truth and Tolerance: Papers from the 1989 International Symposium on Truth and Tolerance, McGill University* (1990). All were edited by Edward J. Furcha (1935–1997), former Professor of Ecclesiastical history at McGill.

Journal of the School of Religious Studies."[6] 1990 was also the year, we are told in the front matter of all volumes published since 1990, that *Arc* was restructured into a formal scholarly journal.

Despite our best efforts, we remain somewhat in the dark about what exactly this means. While it is clear that early volumes of *Arc* were not peer-reviewed, throughout the 1980s *Arc* became less ministerial and more scholarly, and thus began to publish pieces that read as sound scholarship – were none of these articles peer reviewed? Or was it simply that the peer review occurred in a more informal manner than desired for a publication wishing to become indexed in academic data bases? Unfortunately, we have not been able to answer these questions with any certainty. However, we hope that the ambiguity surrounding the peer review status of our pre-1990 volumes won't stop readers from combing through these archives and enjoying them as much as we have.

Also of note is *Arc*'s 1998 merger with *Religious Traditions: A Journal of the Study of Religion* (ISSN 0156-1650), founded in 1978 by Arvind Sharma, then at the University of Queensland, and the late Ian Kesarcodi-Watson (1938–1984) of La Trobe University. Information on the details of this merger is sparse, but through it *Arc* gained *Religious Traditions*' subscribers and a new team of editorial advisors and consultants.

The final shift that must be noted in this abridged history is the most current: our migration to an open-access digital platform. When we took over *Arc* in 2019, its proud legacy threatened to be forgotten. The world had become fully digital, but *Arc* was still decidedly analogue, producing paper volumes that got shipped to a

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6. Readers with a keen eye might note that our 2015 volume bears the name "*Arc*: The Journal of the School of Religious Studies" – while we would like to attribute this to the prescience of *Arc's* then-current editors, alas we cannot. That volume was simply a few months behind schedule, only going to print in the Spring of 2016 after the change had been announced.

dwindling number of print subscribers. *Arc*'s only online presence was mediated by a paywall, and, in an age where "online visibility" rules, authors began to hesitate to submit to a venue where their published article wouldn't come up in a Google search.

Although the situation seemed to be looking rather grim, a glimmer of hope emerged on the horizon. We learned that the McGill University Library, in an effort to support open access publishing, had launched an initiative to host an open access journal platform. Under this initiative members of the McGill community could, with the assistance of a team of dedicated librarians, either create a new open access journal or migrate a pre-existing journal to the new open access platform.

The decision was easy. Not only would the migration to open-access solve *Arc*'s online visibility problems and open up new funding opportunities, in a context where granting agencies are increasingly specifying (and for good reason) that funded research must be published in open-access venues, it was clear that these venues represent the future of academic publishing. We are happy to report that *Arc* is now fully open-access, fully digital, and almost fully archived – while our full peer reviewed catalogue (1990–2022) is now accessible online, our historical archives and supplements will follow in the 2023–2024 academic year.

For those more interested in historical marginalia, a burning question still remains: Wherefore *Arc*? Why this particular moniker? In 2000, then-editor James Mark Shields writes "the name *ARC* has been a matter of some disputation for almost a decade now: wither its origins? Should it be retained? And, most pressingly, *what does it mean*? The short answer to the last question is simple: no one knows. The original intention behind the naming process is lost in the mists of time (it was, after, all the 1970s)." Going on to speculate, he writes

> It could have been short for the suitably spiritual, yet non-exclusivist 'arc of the heavens,' […] some have whimsically suggested a link to the Maid of Orléans (and thus a covert Catholic undercurrent to our work), others an analogy with the all-encompassing boat of Noah […].
>
> Our resident philosophers raise the potential link to the so-called 'hermeneutical arc' which informs much contemporary interpretation, while more pragmatic (and prosaic) types insist that it simply means 'Annual Religious Criticism.' Personally, I feel the best answer may still be the first: no one knows.

Shields' bold proclamation – "no one knows" – was clearly viewed as a challenge by his successor Philip L. Tite, who, by the next volume, had made the pilgrimage to the McLennan Library to search deep in the stacks for the holy grail that promised answers: *Arc* vol. 1, no. 1.[7]

According to the founding editors, the moniker "Arc" was chosen for its rich polyvalence. It recalls "the biblical idea of *covenant*, a partnership involving two parties in mutual interaction." "That two-way encounter," they continue, "created a space in between [an Arc], cleared for action and pregnant with possibilities." Arc also calls to mind the *parabola*: "when Jesus taught in parables he was using a familiar device, throwing one thing alongside another (para-ballo) so that a comparison and contrast could generate a new idea, an insight or revelation." Finally, they note a "more modern"

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7. We would be remiss not to note that Shields can hardly be blamed for not knowing the volume was catalogued. We ourselves had a hard time tracking it down, despite our access to a much-more modern interface for searching the library catalogue. For some reason, a simple search for "ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of the Religious Studies" or "Arc: The Journal of the School of Religious Studies" yields nothing. One must enter in the print ISSN to locate the archived volumes, even those created before an ISSN was assigned.

sense of the term Arc: "the electrical spark that jumps from pole to pole because of the field of force we call energy."

Reflecting on these comments, Tite writes "although the journal has moved away from its strictly Christian theological, indeed primarily confessional, roots to a more inclusive, academic study of various religious traditions, our founders' dream of creating an intellectual *ARC* is still very much the distinctive nature of our journal. *ARC* strives to generate a 'field of energy' where a space is truly created for insightful research, pedagogical reflection, and engaged dialogue." We believe these words still ring true in 2022.

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In the 1978 issue quoted from above, McLelland writes that anniversaries provide a good time to let "Janus be our Guide" and "ponder past and future." "Looking both ways," he writes, "is hard on the neck but good for the soul." The theme for this fiftieth anniversary volume – "Looking Backward, Looking Forward" – follows McLelland's Janusian impulse and offers a selection of articles that reflect on past conversations, present interventions, and the generative possibilities of both for the future. Opening the issue is Sydney Sheedy's piece, which brings together ethnography and queer historiography to explore how the occult has come to be imagined as a kind of kin hermeneutic to queer politics. Next is Jonah Gelfand's fascinating account of how liberal neo-Hasidic movements in America have managed to position themselves within a Hasidic lineage while simultaneously rejecting traditional Hasidic leadership models. Ndiaga Diop, writing in French, explores the notion of pluralism provided by the West African Sufi mystic Tierno Bokar. The following piece, co-authored by art education scholars Laurel Campbell, Jane E. Dalton, and Seymour Simmons III, argues for the future dividends of addressing spirituality in art education. The

penultimate article, authored by Mark Glouberman, offers a compelling, albeit rather subversive, argument: the biblical creation of the earth and humanity should not be understood through the category of exceptionalism, nor should the election of Israel as God's chosen people above all other nations. Closing the volume is Douglas Farrow's incisive piece, which illustrates how Agamben's work can be critically appropriated to advance our understanding of Pauline texts, Christian eschatology, and political theology more broadly.

In parting, we would like to express our many thanks to a number of people: our School Director, Garth Green, whose support for *Arc* during his tenure has been palpable, the members of our editorial committee, particularly Dan Cere, who helped us with the administrative navigation required for our digital migration, as well as Jennifer Lynn Innes, who, as the manager of the McGill Library's open access journal publishing program, has proved to be an invaluable resource as we learned how to navigate our new digital platform. Jessica Lang, who helped us modernize our author agreement and answer any and all copyright questions, must also be mentioned, as must Daniel Fishley, our book review editor. In parting there is one final person, who, although long since passed, also deserves our eternal thanks: Jean Philippe McLennan III (dates unknown), *Arc*'s first patron, without whom, we are often reminded in early issues, *Arc* might not be here today.

In honour of our first and most venerable patron, we have, below, decided to reprint the letter he wrote in *Arc*'s very first issue. The publication of this letter was one of the main conditions of his support, and reading it was one of the highlights of our archival explorations. We hope present readers enjoy it as much as we have.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in *Arc*,

– Elyse MacLeod & Amanda Rosini

A Letter from A Patron and Sponsor[8]

My dear editors, friends, and readers of Arc:

Without doubt you are asking yourselves a question. Why should I, Jean Philip McLennan III, a francophone and a catholic (small "c"), undertake to support this modest publishing venture which is being edited by four members of some tiny and obscure religious group about which I know little, understand less, and (to be very frank) care nothing? That, my good friends, is a question which often returns to haunt me late at night when sleep is denied me due to a recurring gastric disorder too delicate to be described in these pages. (Too much good food, my friends—one pays a price).

But to return to the question. How came my support? Well, these four gentlemen, your editors (journalists *manqué* so to speak) arrived on my doorstep late one evening to seek help. I was their last hope. They had approached every Presbyterian businessman of some importance (and a few of no importance) in Greater Montreal in search of a pitifully small amount of capital needed to launch their venture. They had been turned down flat by every last person they approached and in many cases actually driven out with words found only in modern novels and student newspapers. They had come to me because of my rather tenuous connection with this particular religious group to which they adhere. My great-grandfather was a Scottish Presbyterian, alas long dead but still on the role of a small Presbyterian Church in the Townships as a member in good standing. (I still receive regularly copies of some journal called the *Presbyterian Record* addressed to him which incidentally I find extremely useful for stuffing cracks in the wall of my summer home).

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8. "A Letter from A Patron and Sponsor" *Arc* 1, no. 1 (1973): 9–10.

Well, what was I to do? Could I say no to these four haggard creatures standing on my doorstep? I am a kind man, generous to a fault, like my fathers before me. Anyway, this is not the first time our family has been afflicted by grasping Presbyterians eager to exploit even the slightest connection to further their cause. My dear Father allowed himself to be talked into a generous donation to something called *Presbyterian Comment* which I still receive but decline to describe the use to which I put it. And so I offered my four editors a gift of some shares in my munitions and small arms factory. They began to look ill and politely refused the gift. I perceived that I may have offended some deeply entrenched scruple. Perhaps they were worried about the use to which my guns and explosives were put? I hastened to explain that I sold to all parties, right or left, Maoist guerilla or fascist colonel. No discrimination was practised. But our four gentlemen still declined the gift.

There was one other possibility. I own another company, the English Ladies Genuine Whalebone Corset Company Ltd., and I offered them a gift of a few shares in this company if they can produce one hundred subscriptions. However, to be frank, this is not as generous as it may sound. The demand for genuine whalebone corsets has not been great in recent years. Nevertheless, the odd order from portly clergymen is just enough to keep the business from bankruptcy. I hasten to explain that these clergymen purchase our corsets to wear under their cassocks. It keeps the tummy in and brings to an end rude remarks from little boys about imminent blessed events and so on. All in all there should be enough return from the shares in my corset factory to float the Arc (if I may be permitted to put it this way—my irrepressible sense of humour).

But I must confess another reason for my generosity in supporting Arc. My dear mother, Jeanne, is directly descended from that brave young heroine burnt at the stake by the English, Jeanne d'Arc. Indeed, my dear mother still hides the matches when English

friends come to our home. And so, when I saw the title of this little venture, "Arc," it was like a sign. Could it be that in some mysterious way these four anglophone gentlemen, perhaps even unconsciously, are seeking to do penance and make amends for the past? Could it be that they are resuming in some way the mission of that French girl long ago, picking up the torch so to speak? We can hope so. Perhaps they too hear voices. Let us hope that they find some measure of success for then my dear mother will no longer feel compelled to hide the matches when English visit.

<div style="text-align: right">

Most respectfully,
Jean Philippe McLennan, III[9]

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9. As noted above, early volumes of *Arc* took pleasure in including fun parody articles, some attributed to fictional persons. We haven't been able to determine with any certainty whether Jean Philippe McLennan III falls into this category, and thus choose to believe that he was a real person and sponsor, one who, as a "catholic (small 'c')" and francophone, delighted in the opportunity to undertake some English protestant lampooning. We will let readers form their own opinions.

Director's Address

Across the 2022–2023 academic year, we in Religious Studies are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Faculty, and now School, at McGill. At the same time, we also celebrate fifty years of the journal thereof; *Arc*. In this latter context, the editors have invited me to record a Director's Address, to consider the significance of this confluence of anniversaries and celebrations.

Arc itself helps me to do so. The thirtieth anniversary of the Faculty of Religious Studies occasioned the publication of a special issue with a series of reflections from past Deans on the character, history, and future trajectory of the Faculty,[1] as well as H. Keith Markell's well-known volume *The Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University; 1948-78.*[2]

The fortieth anniversary issue of *Arc*, in particular, has helped me to best understand the significance of this academic year for the School, and *Arc*'s own fiftieth anniversary.[3] Both will be readily available to all very soon, as our enterprising editors, Elyse MacLeod and Amanda Rosini, digitize the entire range of *Arc*'s publications. In the interim, I would like to note some of our predecessors' reflections, in order to suggest their current relevance, and even importance, for our understanding of our own anniversary celebrations. In this as in so many other cases at the SRS, our

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1. See *Arc* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1978).
2. See H. Keith Markell, *The Faculty of Religious Studies*, *McGill University*: *1948–1978* (Montreal: Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill university, 1978), https://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/files/religiousstudies/markell_history_of_frs.pdf.
3. See *Arc* 16, no. 1–2 (Autumn 1988). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations that follow come from this issue.

historical past serves as an excellent guide to our present, and to our possible futures. The fortieth anniversary issue began with Dean Donna Runnalls – who became the first female Dean in McGill's history, in 1986 – reflecting on her own predecessor's contribution to the thirtieth anniversary issue. Dean Joseph C. McLelland (1975–85), in "From Divinity to Religious Studies,"[4] suggested that the Faculty had "come of age." It had developed "from its beginnings as a B.D. program for the ordinands of two affiliated theological colleges to a five-program complex." Runnalls noted that "ten years later the activities of the Faculty are a continuation of that configuration with the B.Th. remaining stable," while "the B.A. and the graduate programs [are] becoming increasingly popular." Gratefully, the BTh program remains stable still, while the BA program and our graduate programs have continued to grow.

Other salient continuities obtain. Professor Gregory Baum wrote that "what is most characteristic of the McGill Faculty of Religious Studies is its pluralism," and not only in its range of programs; "at the Faculty, we use a plurality of methodologies. We have professors and students who understand themselves as Christian theologians and who therefore engage in research and reflection guided by a particular faith perspective. And we have professors and students who are engaged in Religious Studies in a more detached manner and who use one or several methodologies to arrive at a scholarly understanding of the phenomenon of religion and the place of religion in human history." He further wrote that "what I hope for the future of the Faculty is that this pluralism remains intact."

Intact indeed! Our constitutive hybridity remains a character and a strength – amongst our peer programs, even the largest and historically most important institutions typically attempt religious

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4. See *Arc* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1978): 2–3.

and theological studies through distinct, even distant, units. Professor Baum continued; "a pluralism of this kind in a relatively small academic unit is manageable only if there is mutual respect, tolerance of alternative views, and the spirit of friendship." I am grateful that this spirit continues to characterize us, and to sustain our pluralism. Douglas John Hall's appreciation of the unit in 1988 thus remains relevant; "I remain […] very grateful for many things that cannot be taken for granted in the modern university, such as civility, courtesy, mutual respect and support amongst colleagues, and a concerted effort to sustain academic excellence." Such institutions, he adds, "without disparaging what they have been and are, ask what they might still become." I am grateful to be a part of an institution that is actively engaged in exercising its futural imagination, and in becoming what it intends.

In the latter context, Professor Baum hoped for a change; "it is my hope that the Religious Studies Faculty of the future will be able to engage in a more extended dialogue and cooperation with members of other departments." As we reflect on our position and priorities in this, our seventy-fifth year, we can see that our new institutional setting in the Faculty of Arts, and our several cross-appointed colleagues – Professors Fiasse with Philosophy, Kaell with Anthropology, Lai with East Asian Studies, and Wendt with History and Classics, for example – have realized this, Professor Baum's hope.

Amidst the challenges and prospects of each academic year, the importance of the origin of Religious Studies at McGill can be forgotten. Anthony Capon reminded us that "apart from one experimental programme in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), the cooperative effort which led to the formation in 1912 of the Joint Board of Theological Colleges Affiliated with McGill University is the oldest

example of ecumenical theological education in the world." Its development is as important. We can too easily forget the example of our predecessors, including those who not only navigated, but shaped, the field of Religious Studies, such as W. C. Smith, the Birks Professor of Comparative Religion and founding Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies, and those who led within it, at McGill and institutions such as Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions, like R. H. L. Slater.

Stanley Frost, for his part, supposed that, intellectually, "scholars of the distinction of R. B. Y. Scott and George Caird put its academic standing beyond cavil," while institutionally, "James Sutherland Thomson, brought from the presidency of the University of Saskatchewan to become Dean in 1948, gave it immediate prestige." These early generations "began to diffuse McGill's reputation in matters of religion far beyond the boundaries of Canada." This international prominence was amplified by subsequent generations. We have every reason to celebrate Gregory Baum and Douglas J. Hall in the development of twentieth century Ethics and Theology, and Raymond Klibansky and Joseph McLelland in Philosophy of Religion. There is every reason to celebrate the legacy of R. B. Y. Scott in Hebrew Bible, James Caird and N. T. Wright in New Testament Studies, and Richard Hayes in Indian Religions and Buddhist Studies, to name only a very few.

As a result of their impact and influence, Dean George Johnston (1970–75) was right to suggest that "McGill's place in scholarship" is "pretty distinguished and should be made better known." On this basis, he speculated possible futures: "the numbers of students in our Arts courses will continue to increase, with a few ups and downs between 1988 and 2038," while "numbers in theology will be pretty static." This, he warned, "unless there is a wonderful new recruitment programme for […] people from the Third World,"

an international reach that has occurred, to the benefit of our B.Th. and S.T.M. programs, and "unless there is a revival of Union talks among the great denominations of Canada," which has not occurred. He also speculated that "interdisciplinary courses and/or Centres will increase and FRS will be a part of them," as we were with our Centre for Research on Religion and may again be soon. Johnston also predicted that "before long the Birks Building will need to have a companion (named for some future benefactor) to provide staff offices." He wished that he "could foresee the millionaire who will put up the cash to make that possible." Indeed, Johnston supposed that "money to meet all our needs will remain rather inadequate until 1998 or thereabouts, but I have hope that during the twenty-first century we will be recognized as *the* place to study," and that "the necessary money will be forthcoming." He even predicted the era; "if any readers of *ARC* have a few millions to spare, send them now so that I won't have to dream any longer, so that the Runnalls era will go down in history and be famous!"

Johnston's prophecy was imprecise with respect to time, but benefactors' recognition of the quality of our teaching and research has indeed led to important philanthropic advances. The Barbara and Patrick Keenan Chair of Interfaith Studies (given by a former student of W. C. Smith in recognition of the impact and quality of his teaching), the Ray L. Hart Bequest (given by a former Chair, Director, and Dean of Theology at Boston University as well as Executive Director of the American Academy of Religion), and the Robert L. Stevenson Chair for Religion and Literature (given by the Molson Foundation and Molson family members in honour of Professor Robert Stevenson, the first ever alumnus to join the ranks of the faculty of FRS when he was appointed in 1966 in Comparative Religion) are the most prominent. For each, Johnston's conviction, that "McGill's place in scholarship is distinguished and should be

better-known," was in fact the motive for transformative philanthropy.

In this context, it is relevant that Monroe Peaston wrote that "in 1970 we became the Faculty of Religious Studies, and two years later, in keeping with that revision, Divinity Hall became the William and Henry Birks Building." In this way, Peaston supposed, "we were able to preserve to posterity the name of a Montreal family whose interest, concern and munificence have conferred on the Faculty incalculable benefits." They still do. H. Jonathan Birks remains an indefatigable champion of our character and mission, and an energetic contributor to our advancement. The Birks family continues to provide important financial contributions to the School – the recent Birks Forum for Religion and Public Policy and Birks Doctoral Fellowship perpetuate the tradition of giving, first evident in the Birks Building, Chapel, and Reading Room, the Birks Professorship of Comparative Religion, and the Birks Lectures. At the same time, Jonathan provides support and counsel to the unit as, for example, the Advisory Board Chair and the Chair of our Transition Team. We can predict that the confidence of these members of our extended School community, and these, their endowments and investments, will help to secure our vitality across the next seventy-five years.

Dean Runnalls, in her contribution, also wished to identify "moments in our history which should point to the future as they reflect on the past." I wished to reiterate this gesture in this context, as we reflect on our history and project possible futures. I would like to note from Dean McLelland's contribution that the characteristic (and constructive) tensions of a constitutively hybrid unit, clear to its members thirty-five years ago, are still clear to us today. I would like to note from Professor Baum's contribution that it is (only) a collegial

collaborative spirit that allows such a hybridity to continue and flourish. I would like to note, from Professor Johnston's contribution, the extraordinarily high level of scholarship that has been sustained across the history of our Faculty of Religious Studies and that continues today to characterize the life and purpose of the School of Religious Studies. It is this that establishes, or not, the impact and influence of our model – as Clifford Geertz taught us, a *model of* is a *model for* – on the fields of religious and theological studies nationally and internationally.

But Dean Runnalls situated this historical context in order to ask a futural question; "what will the next generation of faculty and students experience as the high points of their life in the Faculty?" As we each address that question to and for ourselves, we should acknowledge that recent accomplishments are many. These include a first-ever ten-year accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. They include faculty renewal, with new appointments in, for example, Catholic Studies, a program of study that has enlarged our ecumenical horizon, Chinese Religions (Buddhism), and South Asian Religions. It is my hope that these anniversaries themselves, and our celebrations of them, will provide such high points.

We decided this past year not to confine celebrations to a single occasion, or to restrict the character of our celebratory activities to festivities. We decided that the best way to honour the legacy of excellence accomplished by our predecessors is to commit to a range of activities, in many though not all, of our defining areas of past and present commitment. In this way, we hoped to remember and reiterate the areas of excellence that have defined the School to date, and to advance our own, current, impactful scholarship in that context. These activities included the Numata Visiting Professorship and Lectureship in Buddhist Studies, the Wadsworth Lecture in Calvinism, the South Asian Religions Distinguished Lectureship, and

of course the Birks Lecture. The Birks Forum, the product of a relatively recent gift in the area of Religion and Public Policy, supported a large-scale conference and workshops on Indigeneity and Christianity in global contexts.

New activities have been sponsored. Two Lilly Foundation grant sponsored symposia on inter-faith encounter, a conference dedicated to Technology, Ecology, and Religion in North America, a Sanskrit and Tibetan Translation Workshop, and a joint McGill-Concordia conference in Biblical Studies were also offered at different points of the academic year. A Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) sponsored conference in the philosophy of religion, the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Society for Philosophy of Religion, a second SSHRC-sponsored conference in the area of Church History, and the release of a thirty-hour series of video interviews on Hinduism with Professor Sharma, were also part of a full year of innovative programming. This Fall semester, the third of a trilogy of symposia on "Who is My Neighbour?," organized by Professors Kirkpatrick and Sharma, will take up religious phobias that target the Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish communities. The year of celebrations will conclude with the School's own homecoming event, which will coincide with the University's homecoming events in October. In all of these ways, Professors Kirkpatrick and Sharma have led a year-long celebration of a legacy of accomplishments and commitments. *Arc* itself is a part of this celebration, as the SRS has committed to more extensive support for *Arc* than ever before.

It is good that we recount this history, in order that its claims upon us, as we consider the best possible ways forward, be felt. I am grateful to the editors of *Arc* for assisting us in that effort. In her reflection, Dean Runnalls asked; "Will the next ten years see as much change as the last ten?" I believe that we have endured more change

than ever before, in fact, during the past five years – from the unit's transition from Faculty to School, to the societally transformative event that was the pandemic. But we will encounter still more in the near future, as we become responsible for envisaging, and enacting, an expansion in our ranks.

Peaston concluded his remarks with his view that "a fortieth anniversary gives us as good an opportunity as any for saying that we are proud of what we are and of what we have achieved. We have every reason to look forward with confidence and hope." So, too, I imagine, does a seventy-fifth anniversary of the School, particularly when seen in tandem with the fiftieth anniversary of *Arc*. The latter initiative and commitment allows us to chart the trajectory of Religious Studies at McGill, and intimate its influence on the field more generally. It allows us to see that the character and strengths of the unit in its fortieth year, with its attendant problems and prospects, remain those of its seventy-fifth year. I am grateful to participate in the life of the School in this important period of its history, as I am to the editors of *Arc* for the opportunity to address the reader on the occasion of this fortuitous confluence of celebrations.

Cordially,

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Folk Survivals, Spurned Witches, and Thwarted Inheritance, or, What Makes the Occult Queer?

Sydney Sheedy, *Concordia University*

Astrology is booming, and it's queerer than ever,"[1] muses a think piece writer in 2018, the year I started my PhD on this topic. In the past few years psychic healing and occult practices like astrology and tarot have exploded in popularity, and lay writers have increasingly documented the ways they are married to a progressive politics among millennials looking to summon the power to resist.[2] Queer people have been central to this "revival," formulating the occult as a form of self-knowledge that has the capacity to heal, and thus empower, those cast out of communities.[3] In my own experience in Montreal, I have witnessed (and participated in) the flourishing of nonbinary tarot nights, queer tattooers offering astrology-themed flash days, crowd-sourced queer tarot decks, being asked my birth chart on the first date, essential oils tailored to your star sign, not to mention the thousands of conversations I have overheard, or participated in, that have spun out the question "why

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1. Heather Dockray, "Astrology is Having a Moment, and It's Queerer Than Ever," *Mashable*, last modified May 4, 2018, https://mashable.com/article/astrology-lgbtq-stars-resurgence-diverse-voices#sDZLVl9XBgqV.
2. Katie West and Jasmine Elliot, *Becoming Dangerous*: *Witchy Femmes, Queer Conjurors, and Magical Rebels* (Newburyport, MA: Red Wheel, 2019).
3. Dockray, "Astrology Is Having A Moment."

do queers love astrology?"[4] While astrology is the poster child of this so-called revival, I refer to the practices emphasized here under the umbrella term "occult," as a means to call into question a broader range of approaches that are, in the eyes of their practitioners, part of a hidden or undervalued subculture related to magical healing.

This article forms part of a larger project, in which I explore, through interdisciplinary research and ethnographic fieldwork, how queer followers of tarot, astrology, or self-reported "occult" formulations in Montreal, reflect on their practices as forms of divestment from regimes of power, as well overwhelmingly justify their involvement as part of a kind of queer legacy of scorned witches and silenced healers: a "transcestry of elders."[5] Prompted by the pervasive claim that the occult is the natural inheritance of the outsider,[6] my PhD research poses the question: "by virtue of what theory of history is the occult queer?" Put differently, how did the occult come to be imagined as a kind of kin hermeneutic to queer politics?

In this particular paper, I aim to historicize the putative queerness of the occult by looking at the ways it came to represent the constitutive outside of modernity, including how this relationship has been invested in both by its detractors, and contemporarily, its sympathizers. Demonstrating how this oppositionality was actively constructed in the long nineteenth century through a boundary war over what constituted legitimate knowledge, how to interpret phenomena, and who should have access to scientific authority, scholarship on Victorian scientific cultures has been generative,

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4. Chani Nicholas, "Why Do Queers Love Astrology?" *Chani*, August 23, 2022, https://chaninicholas.com/why-do-queers-love-astrology/.
5. Anonymous informant, in interview with Author, April 2022.
6. Author's Fieldnotes, March 2022.

bringing into relief the stakes of jockeying for epistemic power in an era of uncertain empire. By interrogating Victorian scientific cultures, I hope to show, not only how the occult came to represent an (always contested) illegitimacy, but also how its relation to the hegemonic was a temporal one, wherein certain bodies, practices, and modalities of knowledge were relegated to a temporally distinct "elsewhere." In so doing, I am interested in persuading the reader of two things. First, that the occult can be understood as a historiographical concept, which has been suggested by some scholars.[7] Second and more pointedly, that looking at the occult as a historiographic concept brings into relief the stakes of witchcraft or other related occult currents as forms of critical historical encounter. In imagining themselves to be recuperating an object that was apparently erased or repressed, informants in my interviews position themselves in opposition to the disciplinary power they see as responsible for such a relegation. By exploring the modern as emergent through marking out certain bodies, knowledges, and lifeways as historically prior, I am able to theorize the taken for granted "countercultural" bent of the occult as inextricably linked to a theory of history in which the past comes to represent the enchanted detritus of modernity, thus available for practitioners to reclaim in order to imagine alternative routes of the social other than those we currently have.

While perhaps (fittingly) a little unorthodox in a journal of religious studies, I see my contribution to the current issue as primarily an incitement to take seriously the queer occult as a significant phenomenon, and to consider this magical counterculture as a kind of knowledge relation that has the potential to deconstruct

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7. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

certain historical "truths." Despite being widely considered as trashy, regressive, and out of joint with secular modernity,[8] I am interested in how the designation "occult" is bound up with technologies of discipline and power which designate certain populations, worlds, and knowledge as *past* in the first place, so that modern magic can only ever be legible as a revival: indeed, how the status of "revival" is part of its political appeal. With respect to the current theme, this means that I take the prompt not necessarily as an opportunity just to "enter into past conversations," but to interrogate how the human sciences, including religious studies, have helped to construct the past itself, as a distinct "elsewhere" legible through modernity's putative rupture. How have the human sciences, including religious studies, ripened through the expulsion/incorporation of certain traditions of knowledge, and in what ways does this expulsion form an ontological foundation for current social critique? Answering this question also means taking seriously the ways in which interventions into past conversations in religious studies or spiritual life are *already happening* outside of academia, which ethnography offers a way to access and analyze. What motivates some people to take up the occult as a way into history, and how are its methodologies construed by many as always already queer?

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8. See, for example: Theodor Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture,* ed. Stephen Crook (New York: Routledge, 1994); Barry Singer and Victor A. Benassi. "Occult Beliefs: Media Distortions, Social Uncertainty, and Deficiencies of Human Reasoning Seem to Be at the Basis of Occult Beliefs," *American Scientist* 69, no. 1 (1981): 49–55; Paul R. Thagard, "Why Astrology Is a Pseudoscience," *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association 1978*, no. 1 (1978): 223–234; Tevfik Uyar, "Astrology Pseudoscience and a Discussion About Its Threats to Society," *Journal of Higher Education and Science* 6 (2016): 1.

The article unfolds in the following way: In the first section, I highlight scholarship interested in how Victorian investigative cultures set up the occult as an allegory of the modern, and the stakes of this epistemic crisis. Second, I discuss the disenchantment thesis, or the supposition that modernity is defined through a rupture from an enchanted past, and how burgeoning disciplines such as anthropology of religion and folklore studies evolved to map out this rupture. Next, I consider how contemporary occultists themselves operationalize the occult's oppositional status as a location from which to speak to power, wherein evocative myth is heralded as a form of reparation in the face of historical violence. Drawing from interviews with informants, I put occultism in conversation with work on queer temporality in order to begin to theorize its appeal as a "way into history," bringing into relief the stakes of this phenomenon in terms of current social crises of belonging, inheritance, and identity.

The Epistemic Crisis of Victorian Science

In Western esotericism, religious studies, history of science, anthropology, and other fields that have challenged the secularist thesis, any consideration of the apparent "paradox" of magic's persistence within modernity relies on interrogating the very concept of modernity itself, and how the occult operates as an allegory for it.[9] In this article, I bring together scholars who do not take for granted the occult's status as "rejected knowledge," but rather go to work on deconstructing this as a relationship to power. Such a deconstruction involves "examin[ing] the terrains which governed its appearance,

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9. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn, eds., *Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

shaped its potential utterances […] and created its believers and skeptics."[10] Thinking of the occult/modern relationship as a crisis of method rather than belief,[11] I can begin to sketch out a context for understanding why my informants may refer to their practices as resources or forms of attunement to the unknown – as "an alternative wisdom source,"[12] or, "a space to speculate and imagine something else."[13] Literature which focuses on the ways modernity works through disciplinary technologies is useful to understand what is at stake in targeting certain knowledge and bodies for correction, as well as to theorize how the consequent status of "rejected" offers an appealing location from which to criticize such disciplining.

The period where psychical investigative cultures like Spiritualism and Mesmerism reached their peak in the US and Britain is the same period which saw the emergence of the "modern" as a horizon of expectation and desire whose temporal and spatial boundaries were actually co-constituted with the nascent scientific cultures it claims to have engendered, and whose legacies continue to shape what is recognizable as occult knowledge today.[14] According to Roger Luckhurst, "one of the appeals of analyzing 'marginal sciences' like Mesmerism and Spiritualism in the nineteenth century has been to question the assumptions behind demarcations of science

10. Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepath*y (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10.
11. Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
12. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author, May 2022.
13. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other group participants, June 2022.
14. Jason Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

and non-science, proper and improper knowledge."[15] Indeed, if the late Victorian era in general has become of special interest to scholars in recent years because it represents "an important conjuncture for comprehending the contours of our late modernity,"[16] the fact that the proper pursuit of science and its function for society are a chief subject of this writing makes a case for how central these disputes are to the modern itself. Examining debates in this period over what counted as evidence, how to interpret phenomena, and who should have access to scientific authority have been fruitful to expose the boundaries between orthodox and heterodox knowledge as constructed and volatile rather than given, with their legacies of what constitutes the occult or marginal still felt today.

In their introduction to the book *Strange Science*, Karpenko and Claggett write: "for Victorian audiences, thinkers, and scientists, the category of the scientific […] was remarkably if not jubilantly unstable and existed in a disorderly space marked by heterodox methods of inquiry."[17] By historicizing the process of scientific institutionalization, some scholars have emphasized the ambiguity and dynamism of science in this period, and thereby explore what was at stake for its nascent professional disciplines, the public it was increasingly cleaved from, and the state itself. Representative of the work on the ways that occultism overlapped with, and helped to constitute, the core sciences is Alex Owen's *Place of Enchantment* (2004), in which she focuses on psychoanalysis and psychology as drawing from the same well of ideas on human perception as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and other magical societies

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15. Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, 2.
16. Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, 4.
17. Lara Karpenko and Shalyn Claggett, "Introduction," in *Strange Science: Investigating the Limits of Knowledge in the Victorian Age*, ed. Lara Karpenko and Shalyn Claggett (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 2.

active in Britain in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Her aim is to demonstrate that the so-called occult revival of the period was integral to the emerging concepts of the "modern," rather than an example of what it was leaving behind. She refutes the theory that magical societies operated as a kind of surrogate faith, an approach that scholars like Robert Cox have also criticized.[18] Theosophy, for example, claimed it alone pursued the true mission of science by investigating phenomena that exceeded the materialist limits that normative scientists imposed. The notion that the human mind was only partially knowable, and that strategies of self-realization are needed to harness its power, is a core Theosophical/magical concept that became reformulated in modern psychology as the repressed unconscious. This example is typical of the ways that "science" and "the occult" diverged more so in terms of method and perceived stakes of their investigations than in the object of study. While magicians actively pursued multiple selves in order to expand their self-awareness across multiple realities, early psychologists pathologized the fractured self as a crisis in need of repair.[19]

At the heart of scholarship on Victorian science is the debate over what constitutes an expert scientific investigator. In scholarship on this spiritualist "hothouse" era, there has been a shift in perspective from framing spiritualists and their kith as credulous fools to considering them as radical empiricists with their own standards for what constitutes proper scientific inquiry and its stakes for society at large.[20] For spiritualists, it was important that anyone

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18. Robert Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2017).
19. Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, 126.
20. Emily Ogden, *Credulity: A Cultural History of US Mesmerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

be able to participate in séances, and many even welcomed skeptics, stressing that their claims were based in observation which others should see for themselves.[21] Theosophists shared this dedication to empiricism, although they operated according to a more elitist structure than the parlour room table, requiring years of intensive training for someone to be able to achieve the status of Adept.[22] Put this way, anxiety over the popularity of these kinds of practices in Victorian Britain has less to do with their obvious falsity than their proximity to methods of scientific inquiry concurrently becoming enshrined in the nation's institutions. In unmooring "occult" and "science" from opposing poles, Victorian scientific cultures appear as a struggle for power between kissing cousins rather than a Manichean tug-of-war. "It is important to note the unevenness and ambiguities of expert knowledge and the tactics of inclusion and expertise […]. Sciences like psychical research were not counterhegemonic but another emergence along the fault-lines of a new structure."[23]

What was at stake in this jockeying for power across these nascent investigative cultures? Most scholars have focused on how the disputes over occult phenomena helped to demarcate a scientific professional body against the lay public. Richard Noakes argues that "spiritualism threatened to make accessible scientific discoveries that were normally the domain of a trained group of experts."[24] However, far from secure or discrete, this boundary between expert and public

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21. Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1989).
22. Owen, *The Place of Enchantment,* 59.
23. Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, 21.
24. Richard Noakes, "The Sciences of Spiritualism in Victorian Britain: Possibilities and Problems," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism,* ed. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 30.

was still in the process of crystallizing, and other readings emphasize the extent to which maintaining the boundary between science and everything else was a matter of national importance, foundational to a state's imagined claims to progress, or its path toward modernity's horizon. Corinna Treitel, working in the German context, puts it poignantly in her case study of Anna Rothe, a prominent medium working in Berlin whose arrest for fraud in 1902 and two years' jail time was highly publicized and controversial.[25] Referring to the accusation that Rothe faked the magic appearance of certain objects from the spirit world, Treitel asks: "How […] are we to interpret the fact that Anna Rothe was treated and punished as if she were a serious public threat, when all she had done was pull two flowers out of nowhere?"[26] According to Treitel, Rothe *was* indeed a public menace, in that she threatened the "epistemological order" of *fin-de-siècle* Berlin, the "boundary between science and public, between those who produced new knowledge and stoked the engines of socioeconomic and cultural progress and those who enjoyed its fruits but did not participate in its production."[27] Put differently, the voracity with which the state descended on Rothe as she carried out a private séance among satisfied customers only makes sense in the context of a growing German liberalism which upheld the interdependence of science and social progress. On trial was not the parlour tricks of a middle-aged woman, but rather the role the public should be allotted in participating in the scientific enterprise, which was increasingly becoming a synecdoche for German enlightenment itself.

25. Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
26. Treitel, *A Science for the Soul,* 166.
27. Treitel, *A Science for the Soul,* 166.

The epistemic crisis and the struggle to legitimize certain methods of inquiry over others provides a good context for understanding the way the occult always emerges in opposition to something else, the constitutive outside of an inchoate modality seeking the seal of enlightened modernity. Importantly for the purposes of this topic, it also temporalizes this opposition, wherein framing something as illegitimate tends to occur through associating it with the undesirable past, as an unlikely survivor of modernity's sweeping transformations. Before exploring this temporal relationship more deeply, I also want to point out the durability of the oppositional thesis of the occult beyond Victorian debunking periodicals and German courtrooms. Scholars themselves have attempted to "resolve" the paradox of Victorian spiritual cultures without challenging the occult-modern binary. For example, Ann Braude's now-canonical *Radical Spirits* (1989) was instrumental in re-framing spiritualism in the U.S. from mass credulity to the first seed of feminist organizing, by describing trance speaking as a transitional phase that allowed women to break through limitations on their roles in public.[28] Braude's analysis has been highly influential to a school of writers interested in unearthing Spiritualism's more radical agendas and locating the movement at the centre of a social liberalism that America would come to cherish as uniquely theirs.[29] At the same time, some have pointed out that locating enchanted states as exterior to power ironically reproduces the secular imaginary.[30] In other words, for Braude, spiritual practices only coexist with modernity because they are vehicles to achieve modern (and thus secular) liberal self-possession. This

28. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 98.
29. Karlyn Crowley, *Feminism's New Age: Gender, Appropriation, and the Afterlife of Essentialism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).
30. Ogden, *Credulity*, 230.

conversation lays bare a major conundrum of the "field" of occult studies: how academics across different epistemological traditions have recaptured occult phenomena according to their own investments in what constitutes a proper pathway to thought or action. In the case of American studies or feminist theory, some scholars have been overeager to find in Spiritualism a portent of later developments central to their fields, rather than stay with the trouble of the strange bedfellows that were made in this era of drastic religious, social, and national reformulation. As I will explore in the next section: if all disciplines in some way create their own object, what might we gain from approaching the occult not as a set of stable practices or beliefs "out there," but as something that emerges as an effect of disciplinary knowledge itself?

The Myth of Disenchantment

Exploring the ways that modernity, construed as "enlightenment," was intertwined with a variable and inconsistent rubric for defining the occult, it becomes apparent that table rapping, astral projection, telepathy, and the other occult doubles of *fin-de-siècle* transatlantic scientific culture were not simply stubborn "survivals" that would inevitably disappear, but instead represent, in the words of Hanegraaff, "the dark canvas of presumed otherness modernity needs in order to paint the outlines of its own identity."[31] In Treitel's discussion of how the state sanctioned one particular community of scientists to monopolize the discovery of knowledge, she contributes a particularly literal example of the "disciplinary" aspect of knowledge and the academe. Thinking of discipline as a verb, rather than as a noun, lays bare how the human sciences actually

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31. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 254.

constructed the very objects they purported to describe or manage. This is the subject of Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment* (2017)*,* a work which highlights the inextricable connection between the goals of the emerging sciences and the colonizing impulse of the states which circumscribed their contours. For Storm, modernity requires a magical or enchanted elsewhere, which the human sciences, still inchoate in the nineteenth century, evolved to describe and usher in.

      Storm sets out to disrupt what he calls the "myth" of modernity by tracing "its most important subtype – the myth of disenchantment."[32] He argues that modernity is only legible through rupture, and one of the most pervasive stories of rupture we subscribe to is the idea that the West was once enchanted, and it is no longer. In other words, modernity becomes visible as both temporally and spatially distinct from the pre-modern through the putative loss of magic. As one example of how the sciences developed to describe and reify this rupture, he turns to one of the most famous popularizers of modern disenchantment: the anthropologist E. B. Tylor. In Tylor's well-known theory of cultural evolution, religion represents an outdated form of human rationality which will eventually disappear, of which any remaining traces threaten the integrity of the natural evolutionary pathway. "Superstition," or beliefs and practices seemingly at odds with modern society were thus marked as prior cultural remnants, and for Tylor, "the goal of ethnography is precisely 'to expose the remains of crude old culture […] and to mark these out for destruction.'"[33]

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32. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment,* 309.
33. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. 2 (London: Murray, 1891), 253, quoted in Josephson-Storm, 99.

The new discipline of anthropology, then, in a sense created the dis/enchantment it was tasked with classifying and managing. By constructing an enchanted elsewhere as an object of study, anthropology produced work that was founded on the belief that the observer was essentially different from who he (as it was naturally "he") observed, an essentially colonizing relationship which necessitated the latter's prior temporality. Ogden, like Storm, argues that enchantment itself is a "modernizing gesture,"[34] and always appears as the negotiation between those who are aiming at modernity and those whom they see as retrograde, a negotiation which was urgent within the burgeoning "weird" sciences. Some of the most vehement debunkers of spiritualism were themselves researchers into psychical phenomena, desperate to gain some credibility by turning the rubric of quackery onto someone else. Tylor himself is a good example, whose "harsh condemnation of occultism as the "lowest known stage of civilization" cannot be read outside of his own anxiety to differentiate his own emerging science of anthropology from those he took as subjects."[35]

However, modernity's putative rupture from an enchanted past was far from unequivocally embraced as good, and was often beset by anxiety, ambivalence, and even staunch resistance. Forged through a narrative of disenchantment, modernity necessarily communicates a kind of loss, a loss which even the most hardcore cultural evolutionists mourned as industrialization and urbanization increasingly romanticized a receding age. Nowhere is this ambivalence better represented than in the advent of folklore studies, which was first institutionalized in 1878 as a kind of "internal" or

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34. Ogden, *Credulity,* 10.
35. Christine Ferguson, "Recent Scholarship on Spiritualism and Science," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism,* ed. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 424.

domestic anthropology largely focusing on the Celts as the cultural precedent of the Brits who studied them. Folklore was a way to measure a given population's imagined distinctiveness from modern rationality, as the only people who seemed to lack folklore were urban, educated, English Protestants, against whom all others were racialized.[36] But folklorists also lamented what they saw as the inevitable disappearance of the myths and customs they studied. This new field was thus both a site of the consolidation of empire and resistance to imperialism, because it marked out and racialized local knowledge systems at the same time that it worked to preserve them.[37] This ambivalence is not a paradox, but the result of the ways that in the myth of disenchantment, magic appears as always already disappearing.

Accessing the Romantic Past

For the purpose of my project, I am interested in the forms the lamenting of "magic's disappearance" takes, as well as the ways it fits within the modernizing gesture. What of those figures for whom the non-modern was seductive, and who had no interest in the validation of a growing institutional scientific body, or in endorsing modern science as the route to a desirable future? How did enchantment become available to some people as a way to criticize the alienation of modern society and its paranoid hierarchization of systems of knowing, and can this provide a context for understanding the strategies witches and other occult practitioners invest in today?

The desire for the pre-modern actually operates as its own modernizing gesture, which naturalizes the gulf between a magical

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36. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment,* 129.
37. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment,* 129.

elsewhere and the inquirer seeking refuge from the ills of alienating modern life. Theosophists and members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, for example, attempted to unearth arcane knowledge through Egyptology, travels to India, anthropology and other exoticizing processes which temporalized distant places as pre-modern, in the hopes of finding some key to a universal doctrine or principle underlying all things.[38] The celebration, even lauding, of magic, rather than disproving the disenchantment thesis, helped to naturalize it by locating this magic always in some exotic other place, attached to peoples whose beliefs and practices colonial expansion and its scientific handmaidens made increasingly available. Contemporary occultism emerges from this context, still concerned with what paths we have "out" of the structures of modern life through seeking some pre-existing form to anchor itself to. Any inquiry into this phenomenon today must interrogate, not only what motivates the pursuit of "past" knowledge as a tonic for modern life, but also what such a maneuver risks – namely, the risk of reifying the rift between centre and margin and thus justifying the violence it requires to maintain.

Elsa Richardson's discussion of early anthropology[39] and its overlap with Spiritualism is really successful in laying bare how the fetishization of the non-modern and the modern are two sides of the same coin. Examining occult practices in Victorian England through the lens of colonialism, she reformulates them, not in opposition to the emergent scientific institution, but as *peer technologies* that both consign Britain's colonial other to the pre-modern. Richardson critically reflects on the stakes of constructing a particular place or

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38. Owen, *The Place of Enchantment,* 28.
39. Elsa Richardson *Second Sight in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

time as being with or without magic, and also considers how folklore
studies and anthropology were central to both the romanticization and
appropriation of racialized knowledge. In her book *Second Sight*
(2017), she puts questions of nationhood and the supernatural in close
proximity to each other in order to ask what processes of colonization
are at stake in constructing second sight as an ancient Gaelic
tradition.[40] In particular, she explores "how myths, customs, and lore
were harvested from marginalized communities and put to work in
the forming of elite knowledge and the metropole."[41] While work on
Victorian science tends to feature urban elites, Richardson focuses on
local seers, such as illiterate fishermen and crofters, in the Scottish
Highlands in order to displace the putative "science-magic"
opposition through an approach more strongly informed by
colonization, class, and race. For Richardson, the Scottish Highlands
provides an ideal case study in the process of constructing the
enchanted elsewhere. The Highlands represented a pre-modern
landscape saturated with odd superstitions and inexplicable realities,
an "imaginative resource" for the English, whether it was
romanticized as evidence of a golden age or demonized as a threat to
the empire's collective enlightenment.[42] Occult or magical practices
were central to maintaining this enchanted imaginary, and as
Scotland became more unified with the empire, this was an image
that was invested in by both outsiders and nationalist Scots alike.
"Second sight contributed to the marketable image of the poetic
ancient premodern land which provided refuge from the industrial
South,"[43] a place that could be enjoyed by growing numbers of

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40. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 4.
41. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 4.
42. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 45.
43. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 73.

domestic tourists as well as locals who wished to maintain their distinctiveness from England.

"Victorian spiritualism has been read as a site for working-class protest, radical gender politics, alternative to narratives of secularization and disenchantment and a form of proto-modernist aesthetics. Less has been said about its interaction with popular theories of evolution and scientific disciplines such as anthropology."[44] Looking to ancient peasant traditions, distant cultural practices, and racial gulfs in order to try and identify an underlying universal principle, "spiritualist histories utilized the same taxonomic and stylistic gestures as comparative anthropology."[45] While anthropology tended to predict the disappearance of second sight and other local forms of "pre-modern" knowledge, members of societies like Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn tended to cherish these as routes away from the ills of modern life. Where these two viewpoints converge is the shared belief that modern Victorian Britain was evolving away from enchantment, which could still be accessed elsewhere, whether as a means of marking out evolutionary difference or as a means of re-learning what they had now lost.

An exploration of the ways in which occultism overlapped with other modern sciences demands investigating the circulation of knowledge itself, as well as the imperial structure that informed how anthropologists and magicians alike related to the subjects under scrutiny. Richardson and Storm both show how "modern science expanded through the selective absorption and expulsion of local knowledge systems."[46] In the case of second sight, what had once

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44. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 107.
45. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 116.
46. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment,* 14.

been the "odd portents of a remote people" were made available to British elites as examples of cultural backwardness to consume and delight in.[47] As Richardson puts it,

> [T]ales of dark portents and uncanny pre-sentiments were constituted under the new concepts of body and mind circulating in midcentury culture. […] [W]hat had once existed as part of the folklore of a geographically, culturally and linguistically distant people could now be observed at work in middle class parlours, theatres, lecture halls and medical schools across the country.[48]

Richardson uses an example of a fieldwork expedition to the Highlands by members of the Society for Psychical Research to trace both the colonial extraction of knowledge and the ways these findings fueled the Celtic revivalism of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In fact, one of these field workers shared membership in both groups. "The SPR's expedition into the Highlands took place in the same moment that the HOGD was attempting to excavate the remains of an ancient system of belief from the ballads, ceremonies, and tales of the modern Celt."[49] While anthropology had normally been done "armchair" style, collecting testimonials by private correspondence, the members of this expedition looked to the local seers themselves to collect their data. Freer, one of the ethnographers, was also a medium, and she considered herself the "ideal fieldworker" as a result of having a foot in both worlds.[50] In the attempt to recover what she considered to be ancient traditions bound by orality, Freer constructed a Celtic lineage for herself, aligning herself with the

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47. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 2.
48. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 60–61.
49. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 201–202.
50. Richardson, *Second Sight*, 203.

traditions she was seeking in the hopes of recovering ancestral memory. For Freer and others in the expedition, the construction of a particular tradition as pre-modern justified its extraction and recuperation by those in a colonial relation to it. Furthermore, Freer's appropriation of second sight as ancestral memory demonstrates how the construction of the pre-modern manifests as an intimate relationship to inherited power and lineage. As I will explore later, the problem of how someone gains access to secrets and traditions is central to their justification for practicing.

In this section I have zeroed in on several authors who delve into Victorian scientific cultures in order to expose the secular modern as a myth, or a prescription whose putative rupture from an enchanted past never occurred. Of particular significance is writing that has shown the ways in which the human sciences themselves evolved in order to discipline and revise what we now think of as "occult" knowledge as an investment in this rupture. Thought of this way, contemporary occult practices come into relief as always already in excess of, or opposed to, sanctioned methodological and epistemological rubrics. At the same time, situated within matrices of power, the "oppositional" nature of the occult, or its taken-for-granted subversiveness, is complicated by the fact that even countercultural pursuits like spiritualism and theosophy still participated in marking out and appropriating certain populations and their systems of belief/knowledge as pre-modern, available for their extraction and redeployment. As we will see in the next section, contemporary occult practices, such as witchcraft, gain their currency in terms of this very oppositionality, even as they paradoxically challenge the disciplinary technologies they identify as creating such a dichotomy.

Contemporary Witchcraft and the Queer Occult

So far in this paper I have attempted to historicize the occult's status as always already oppositional to the dominant order of things. While this oppositionality is somewhat of a misrepresentation of the ways that certain forms of heterodox science, now labeled occult, have been internal to and constitutive of the scientific rationality they are described as opposing, in this section I will explore the ways in which this antagonistic relationship is something that is actively invested in by witches, NeoPagans, and other occult practitioners *themselves*, as a form of political maneuvering. Furthermore, I will explore some of the ways that I see the hermeneutic of "rejected" as key to understanding the particularly queer bent to the current popularity of occult phenomena.

Over the spring and summer of 2022, I conducted interviews with thirty-seven people who responded to the call for "paid collective discussions and interviews on the queer occult in Montreal." I undertook twelve individual interviews, and three group sessions with 8–15 participants each. The tagline of the poster asked: "What does it mean to claim rejected knowledge practices, like astrology and tarot, as forms of queer politics? Is it possible to disrupt its historical whiteness?"[51] I was assisted by five community members who gave feedback on the research design, and who I trained to be part of the process of peer facilitation. They were recruited through the same process as other participants and took part in group sessions. Inclusion criteria was simply any adult who lives in Montreal, identifies as queer, and is involved in a practice that they consider to fit under the umbrella of occult or rejected knowledge. Over eighty people responded to a couple of social media callouts

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51. Author's recruitment poster, circulated March 2022.

and paper posters put up in popular queer spaces in Montreal. Individual interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours, while group sessions lasted 2.5 hours. Many of the participants expressed interest in joining follow-up sessions or workshops related to the topics we covered. While coding of the interviews is still underway at the time of writing, I feature some of the discussions here as a way to justify how ethnographic work can give shape to further investigation into this phenomenon.

Considering the shifting contours of science and the scientific investigator in the late nineteenth century, I argue that the best way to define the occult is not through a set of inclusion criteria, but as something which the interlocutor herself considers as having been at one point rejected or deemed illegitimate. Put this way, it seems likely that the occult appears attractive to many queer people as a kind of parallel to queerness in its most political sense, as legible only in terms of its relationship to some kind of hegemonic order which requires its denigration. In my current fieldwork, as well as in online think pieces and lay articles that are increasingly popping up on this subject, many queer people consider their practice to be a kind of "inheritance" because of their relationship to power. The pervasive observation among informants that queers have some reason to be skeptical of things labeled unnatural emphasizes the political stakes of challenging a taken for granted system of valuation, one that queer people have likely had intimate experience with. As one informant shared:

> I think for a long time I like, really saw myself as, like, I'm crazy, I'm insane […] it was […] actually, like, important to me to, like, see myself that way because I felt like I was like resisting conformity. I think that there is a really acute connection there for me between craziness, queerness and magic. I feel like being queer is also being

> against that order, orderly like boxy world of reason and light and truth that was like, really imposed on like Western society. And so it's for me, I think like being queer and crazy and practicing magic all kind of go against it.[52]

While a fuller exploration of the stakes of the queer occult as I see them lie outside of this article's scope, in this final section I want to begin to outline a theory for why queer people find oppositional culture in astrology, tarot, and other popular occult practices satisfying, and ground this in the concept of the occult as a historiographic modality. The contours of such a theory will allow me to begin exploring the ways in which the occult is taken for granted as subversive, and also to explore its hermeneutics of absence, which construes all occultism as a recuperation of lost knowledge. Finally, it will also allow me to explore how contemporary witches and other occult healers, in connecting to putatively ancient or timeless traditions, understand themselves to be doing a kind of critical history, one that marks a striking continuity with the goals of the feminist new age spirituality of half a century ago. The key to the political stakes of this kind of "queer" historiography lies in how followers either implicitly or explicitly make some claim about the disciplinary technologies which they see as having engineered the rejection or erasure of these belief systems in the first place. As one informant rhetorically asked the group: "I was taught that this was the world, and it's actually another world that I relate to, so is there anything else? Is there anything else that has been, like, that's been hidden from me?"[53] By looking at invented

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52. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other participants, April 2022.
53. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other participants, April 2022.

tradition and reconstructionist mythology as strategies to reclaim power, I highlight the ways that contemporary occultism views the past, as well as its instrumentalization in social transformation and justice.

New Age and "Goddess" Spirituality

Making sense of current motivations for an occult "revival" require a brief reminder of some of the key concepts of the New Age movement of the late twentieth century. If Spiritualism and related reform developments of the nineteenth century were driven by a kind of millennial optimism, evidenced by a dedication to the "ability of humans to direct their own lives and to perfect the world around them,"[54] a dissatisfied 1960s counterculture re-deployed these ambitions to heal social unrest in more eclectic and expanded ways that dovetailed with the goals of a waxing feminist movement. While the methods and priorities of New Age healing over that century varied, all those who participated found something broken in a material world wracked by war, inequality, and environmental catastrophe,[55] and located the means of fixing this within the self. For the burgeoning feminist movement, sexuality and gender were sites where healing and personal and social transformation were most needed, and the New Age offered the language to place sex and the body securely within the realm of the sacred.[56] Consistent with what

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54. Sara Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 45.
55. Stephen Hunt, *Alternative Religions: A Sociological Introduction* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 135.
56. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan*, 115.

some have argued is the New Age's detraditionalization of the self,[57] whereby participants turn away from established institutions to find authority within, feminists found a spiritual justification for a situated view of knowledge that privileged each woman's personal experiences as inherently valid, offering a means to ward off gender-based trauma.[58]

Using the personal narrative as a means to understand the political implications of our lives has been one of the most championed forms of feminist knowledge, and the healing narratives at the heart of New Age spirituality coincided with feminist aims to understand and find empowerment through individual and collective trauma.[59] Experience, instead of belief, is at the core of this spirituality,[60] and women looked to themselves as holy sources of wisdom,[61] consistent with the New Age focus on autobiography, as opposed to history, as a dominant way of making sense of things.[62] "To genuinely love the world, to value it, is to want to tell its story,"[63] and investing in the "myth of ancient matriarchy"[64] is one way that women not only imagined a more empowering role for themselves in the cosmos, but sought historical justification for an inherited legacy.

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57. Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: Religion, Culture and Society in the Age of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996).
58. Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*, 54.
59. Catherine Albanese, "The Magical Staff: Quantum Healing in the New Age," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. J. Gordon Melton and James R. Lewis (New York: SUNY Press, 1992).
60. Hunt, *Alternative Religions*, 133.
61. Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*, 37.
62. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan*, 74.
63. Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "The New Age Movement and Feminist Spirituality: Overlapping Conversations at the End of the Century," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. J. Gordon Melton and James R. Lewis (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 173.
64. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan*, 128.

While belief that a goddess lies dormant in all women is a common New Age belief,[65] some women – especially those in lesbian separatist traditions – aimed to recall what they saw as a matriarchal, Goddess-centric past that was struck down by heteropatriarchal Christianity,[66] and found "evidence" for this in the research of archaeologists and revisionist feminist historians.[67] The wildly successful Goddess movement held that women used to rule the earth, and will again, as long as women learn how to "remember" this origin story.[68] "Goddess worshippers strategically used memory to construct a prehistory that gives them access to bodily power," memory that had been "erased" through the trauma of patriarchy.[69]

The conscious construction of mythology, the valorization of personal knowledge, and harnessing lost ancestral memory represent important forms of healing in feminist spirituality which endure today amongst queer people in Montreal and elsewhere. Importantly however, most of my informants and other media I have come across emphasize a deviation from earlier forms of countercultural spirituality through stricter anti-racism and decolonial frameworks. While mostly white middle class women in the last century bypassed Christian and European contact narratives in order to liberate a more authentic, or indigenous nature,[70] my informants attempt to resolve charges of earlier spiritual genocide through an anxious self-reflection over their own identity and situatedness. As Molly, a queer tarot reader, writes in a post in a now-defunct blog: "in order for

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65. Hunt, *Alternative Religions*, 140.
66. Scott Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 132.
67. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan*, 119.
68. Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*, 113.
69. Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*, 116.
70. See Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*; Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*.

healing to succeed, we need to acknowledge the depth of the wound."[71] Addressing a white audience, she commands: "Let's take an honest look at our spiritual frameworks, mantras, and practices. Where do we uphold white supremacy and oppression?"[72]

According to Storm, "the more something is marked as anti-modern, the more it becomes attractive as a site from which to criticize modernity."[73] Like the myths that feminist New Agers invested in and circulated to recapture the divine feminine, queer occultists emphasize their opposition to given social orders they see as oppressive, such as heteronormativity, capitalism, and white supremacy. "[F]or queers cast out of communities […] queer astrology gives us space to be reminded that we're holy and connected to the stars, even if there are people who don't see us that way."[74] Many people subscribe to the idea that there existed at some time a worldview/methodology/epistemological framework that posed a threat to an emerging system of power in the West, and thus was relegated to the margins. In pledging a kind of allegiance or political responsibility to recover these frameworks, occultists expose certain forms of power as themselves historical, and strategize different forms of divestment from them in order to usher in something else. "It's about situating yourself almost as the Other, and drawing mythic power from that Otherness."[75] The myth of the "Burning Times," for example, or the idea that there was at some

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71. Molly, "Calling in the New Age: Identifying Oppressive Ideals in Our Spirituality," *Witchy and Bitchy* (blog), August 14, 2017, (no hyperlink is available as the blog is no longer active).
72. Molly, "Calling in the New Age."
73. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment,* 16.
74. Dockray, "Astrology."
75. Regan Lynch, "A Curse on Capital: Queer Occultism as Radical Spirituality?" *Overland Journal*, May 20, 2016, https://overland.org.au/2016/05/a-curse-on-capital-queer-occultism-as-radical-spirituality/.

point in European history a femicide which targeted wise women healers as threatening and dangerous, is foundational in modern witchcraft and NeoPagan lore.[76] According to Luhrmann, in her canonical ethnography of London witches, it is not important for witches whether the Burning Times is myth or fact; rather, what is important is its evocative pull.[77] Moreover, many witches would agree with Storm that modernity should be demystified: that it was/is in no way an inevitable stage of "progress," but rather is the means and end to a violent mythology that one has the responsibility to disturb and de-naturalize. History, rather than representing an inalienable, universal truth that has been faithfully recorded, is to witches simply the overrepresentation of a worldview whose violence they wish to disinherit. However, the idea of "rupture" so central to Storm's thesis of modernity, remains very much intact as evidence of what witches lost and wish to recover. Turning to myths is one way of creating a satisfying oppositional culture,[78] wherein the real passage of time is subjective and magicians are able to develop a personal mythology that takes some of the power out of the official record. In this way, contemporary occultists both subvert and reinscribe the myth of disenchantment: they expose modernity as myth at the same time that they need its inherent rupture as a trope to celebrate its enchanted double.

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76. Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); see also Pike, *New Age and Neopagan*, and Crowley, *Feminism's New Age*.

77. Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 242.

78. Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, 185.

Queer Time

Hanegraaff has called his own scholarly approach to Western esotericism "mnemohistoriographical": while historiography describes what actually happened in the past, mnemohistoriography describes the "genesis and historical development of what a given culture imagines to have happened."[79] While I take this distinction to be redundant (all historiography is mnemohistoriography, according to this definition), he argues that one is able to move beyond *a priori* criteria of truth toward an evaluation of the esoteric as one of many dynamic, contradictory, and overlapping methodologies deemed dubious in the eye of whoever purports to have the monopoly on truth. If the occult in this paper has represented a methodology, queer temporality scholarship helps elucidate why it may be considered by some to be a particularly "queer" one.

Queers are "untimely,"[80] both because of the ways homosexuality has been pathologized as "backward," and in the difficulty of anchoring the queer figure to some historical precedent that might grant them grounds for political posturing. Queer theories of temporality have privileged time as a key index of the social, often referring to queer time as a "fold," in that it "resist[s] the straightforward movement of causality in favour of an exploration of the multiple possibilities that may emerge when time works otherwise."[81] If cultural competence itself is a matter of timing, then

79. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 375.
80. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, "Introduction: Becoming Unbecoming," in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), 7.
81. Dana Luciano, "Nostalgia for an Age Yet to Come: *Velvet Goldmine's* Queer Archive," in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings,* ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), 131.

"queer time generates a discontinuous history of its own,"[82] one that must be understood as providing its own structures and logics of belonging outside of the empty homogenous time of nationalism, identity, development, and other stories of normative progress.[83] Queer temporalities are known in their forms of interruption,[84] departing from straight time's frames of recognition, inheritance, and directionality, and thus also its methods of evaluating what appears as historical.

In this article I have explored how the occult becomes legible as a theory of the historical, wherein its status as rejected or regressive is recaptured by practitioners as an opportunity to mythologize about what kinds of things were "lost" or violently repressed through the ongoing pursuit of the modern and its requisite obfuscation. I see this hermeneutics of absence or loss as a key node to explore in theorizing what it is about the occult that makes many contemporary practitioners claim there is something "inherently queer about magic and other forms of witchiness."[85] Queer historiography itself traffics in a "romance of negativity,"[86] a structural paradox in that queer histories can only be known through their absence: wherein evidence is gained through unconventional lines of flights and ways of looking.[87] Just as magic can only ever appear as disappearing, queer historiography represents a kind of

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82. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xi.
83. Freeman, *Time Binds*, xxii
84. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
85. Anonymous informant, conversation with Author March 2022.
86. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 10th anniversary ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 12.
87. Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 7.

impossibility of knowing, wherein any remnant only serves to prove the rule that nothing else was visible. If queer historicism has been forged through a recognition of epistemological impossibility, I see the occult as kind of case study of the queer historical impulse, reconstructing and revalorizing what has been rejected in the attempt to gain some foothold of power – a form of world building that might be at least familiar, if not appealing, to queer people in its methodological aims. As one informant shared, "The literal act of having to re-write your brain and how you understand culture or society or spirituality or religion or science or whatever […] is very similar between like the path of discovering your queerness and discovering the occult. Because you're having to deconstruct and reconstruct within your own mind. To like find where you want to be standing."[88]

This hermeneutics of "re-writing" is inherently political, not only because it rests on a theory of knowledge as inherently tied to power, but because it threatens to expose the constructedness of that power. Magliocco argues that magic is form of cultural critique which involves training the imagination to see patterns where they have been overlooked,[89] and the political stakes of the queer occult lie within the recognition of why this training is necessary in the first place. For those who are interested in indexing power relationships in their lives, systems of in/visibility form a central part of tracing how that power moves: critically apprehending what is overlooked "points to the limits of the entire apparatus of vision that is the inheritance of colonial modernity."[90] In the words of one informant:

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88. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other participants in group, June 2022.
89. Magliocco, *Witching Culture*.
90. Gayatri Gopinath, *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 8.

"I realized there's a lot of things that were robbed of us, you know, robbed from us or things that were hidden, burned, destroyed, that we had, that was, you know, like a knowledge and a richness of knowledge […]. These practices […] were kind of like at risk of disappearing. A lot of them survived. All of them survived for some reason."[91] The notion of survival is the cornerstone of the modern-occult allegory: calling something a "survival" connotes not only the object itself, but some event which could have – or in the minds of progressives like Tylor, should have – killed it. For queer people, that something can survive against attempts to thwart it is the *raison d'être* of queer liberation, giving some insight into why certain forms of occult practice can be easily incorporated into a queer politic. "[F]olk magic is, is complex because it never dies and it's, it's passed on and in ways and maybe not through the worship of the written word, you know [...]. But it's passed on and it, and it, it, it mutates to survive."[92] Survival is construed as resistance to erasure: to valorize it as a process is automatically a critical position against the forms of oppression which the sympathizer considers as an obstacle to that survival.

I want to gesture toward one last element of the occult I see as central to its popularity amongst queer people today, and which I am in the process of investigating further in conversation with work on critical race, postcolonial and whiteness studies. This has to do with what some have theorized as queer people's "overwhelming desire to feel historical,"[93] the drive to weave a pathologized subjectivity into a form of collectivity. Consistent with some of the

91. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other participants in group, April 2022.
92. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author, April 2022.
93. Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 8.

invented traditions of feminist Goddess spirituality, many informants in my research are preoccupied with their inheritance of power and, especially for white people in Montreal, the ways that seemingly ancient or timeless magical practices might provide a form of ancestral genealogy that is much more preferable to that which they otherwise know they inherit on stolen land. As one person said, "There's, there's…there's guilt for me with regard to ancestors […] because I come from [colonizer] descent […]. And so there's this, this, there's been this refusal for me to engage with the ancestors [...]. I don't want to heal them or be healed by them […]. But I have to deal with it. [White people and descendants of Europeans have to do this work too.] I really wish I had like a lineage and a tradition that I can hold on to and elders […]. But I just, I can't do that. And it's, it's, it's like, painful and complicated."[94] In this quote is evidence not only of the shame of the legacy one is connected to, but also the grief of what it means to navigate the severance from that, and the desire to connect to the past in another way that might resolve this violence. Taking seriously the occult "revival" as a methodology which allows, in this case, queer people to *do* something with history, can provide important insight into the ways that alternative spiritualities are pulled into (and indeed, have always been part of) a broader conversation about whiteness, settler colonization, and the explosion of heretofore taken for granted narratives of truth and belonging. Looking at these conversations through a queer lens also highlights that queer people have a vexed relationship to the historical, and suggests why there may be a particular urgency to resolve or reconstruct certain feelings of placelessness. Many people who practice occult or other related spiritualities describe it as a feeling of

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94. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other group participants, April 2022.

"homecoming," or a process of "develop[ing] a relationship with myself […] outside of the mainstream."[95] Informants who participated in my research were recruited based on their interest in talking about whether the occult can offer a homecoming not rooted in whiteness and the naturalization of settler inheritance. In theorizing the entry into past conversations, this anxiety of how to "enter" into the past while maintaining a reflexivity over how one is situated within power, is, I think, where the most compelling research into the queer occult can happen.

A Writing Exercise

In asking what motivates queer people to take up the occult, I do not want to suggest that the phenomenon is only a means to an end: an expression of secular political rationality that takes an unexpected detour through the magical. Rather, I want to think of this phenomenon as a *refiguring of the political,* as a response to the failure of secular progress narratives to be good enough in the kind of liberation they promise. Queer political movements and the theories that grew out of them have been so bound up with the secular that, in hegemonic understandings of LGBTQ freedoms, queerness itself is illegible outside of it.[96] Considering how secular time maintains that history will uncover ever more freedom, including freedom from religious feeling, Ann Pellegrini asks: "how might

95. Anonymous informant, in conversation with Author and other group participants, June 2022.
96. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

queer theories of temporality intervene in such an opposition?"[97] This article is not a starting point, nor a finished work, but a kind of broadcast from the middle of thinking through what the goals of the queer occult mean to disciplinary thinking, political claims, forms of reparation, and the ways method and belief are intertwined, which share terrain with religious studies in taking as its starting point a critical position toward the mythology of secularism as a location or rhetoric that is anything other than anticipatory. If "queer theology is a sentimental re-education in divine beauties that we were earlier taught to despise,"[98] I see the queer occult sharing a similar goal with respect to the dedication to train oneself to look otherwise. This goal is at its core historiographic in its assumption that there can be some return to a time prior to this despising.

In the anthology of transcripts and other writings from the first ever Queer Astrology Conference in San Francisco in 2013, the editor asks: "What if our received wisdom no longer comes from cultures which prize domination and which are blind to their own privilege? What if our techniques seek not to stabilize in sameness, but rather orient toward and embrace difference?"[99] For the speaker, like many who are part of the target audience of this question, the occult offers an occasion to exercise a kind of intervention into legacies of knowledge, wherein inheritance is something that can be problematized and opted out of in favour of some other orientation:

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97. Ann Pellegrini, "Queer Structures of Religious Feeling: What Time is Now?," in *Sexual Disorientations*, ed. Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press), 241.

98. Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology Lost," in *Sexual Disorientations*, ed. Kent Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 301.

99. Ian Waisler and Rhea Wolf, eds., *Queer Astrology Anthology* (San Francisco, CA: Queer Astrology, 2014), 5.

a queer interruption which is itself a world. Looking at the evolution of scientific investigative cultures in the late nineteenth century and historicizing how the occult emerged in ontological opposition to the modern lays bare some of the key aims of contemporary occult practices as attempts to divest from, and denaturalize hegemonic formulations of, race, gender, and sexuality. If "queer theology is not a field, but a cue—a prompt for a writing exercise,"[100] I consider my informants as taking up this particular prompt in order to navigate worlds that they have heretofore been barred from, wherein the writing is an end in itself. In many ways, this article has been my own writing exercise to reconstruct what "looking backward" means, as well as to ask what forms of training the queer occult proposes in order to look beyond what one has been taught to see. In the modern's false binary of believers and skeptics, grounding the queer occult in a historiographical enterprise allows a certain kind of reversal to be made, wherein the practitioners featured here emerge as the true skeptics. For queer occultists, the gender binary, homonormativity, and white supremacy are dangerous mythologies, while fairies, witches, and queer magic are real.

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100. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology," 306.

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"Fellow Travellers Along the Path": Charismatic Fallibility in Neo-Hasidic Leadership[1]

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I
n the early 1960s, the spiritual landscape of North America shifted. As part of the broader counterculture movement, formerly secular people became convinced that there had to be "more" to life and began looking for someone, somewhere, sometime, who had lived a more meaningful existence. Their gaze quickly landed on religion and a spiritual revolution began. Integral to this re-engagement with religion was finding a spiritual teacher who could guide them along this path, and thus we see the mid-century explosion of Buddhist monks, Hindu swamis, and Hasidic rebbes claiming to have answers from ancient wisdom traditions. Some seekers found what they were looking for in traditional religiosity, others scoured the World Religions to piece together a syncretic New Age movement, and still others found a way to meld together modern sensibilities with traditional sources. Yet, a common denominator for each of these camps was the presence of charismatic

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leaders. These types of holy teachers are prevalent across religious divides, and while many groups maintained the traditional model, others understood that for many American individualists, submitting to a spiritual teacher was not an easy task. For this latter group the need to rethink leadership models became a pressing issue. How can one individual be uplifted as a divine intermediary in a worldview that values autonomy and individuality over all else?

One community that developed substantive models of leadership in response to this question was the North American "neo-Hasidic" movement.[2] Generally speaking, neo-Hasidism refers to those who draw on the rich spirituality of Hasidic Judaism but maintain their sociological position outside of its contemporary communities. This impulse manifests differently in the liberal and Orthodox worlds, and this project will focus specifically on the liberal manifestation stemming from the counterculture movement. Since one of the defining features of Hasidism is the presence of charismatic leaders called rebbes, to truly understand this liberal neo-Hasidism we need to understand how its modes of leadership both draw and differ from conventional Hasidism. How can neo-Hasidism position itself within a Hasidic lineage while diverging from this basic tenet?

An exploration of North American neo-Hasidic leadership will show that redefining leadership models was in fact one of the central ways this movement differentiated itself from traditional Hasidism. The redefined conception of leadership was not that of perfected rebbes acting as divine intermediaries; rather, what emerged was a conception of rebbes as "fellow travellers" who are charismatic by virtue of their fallibility. By presenting teachers as

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2. Although there are manifestations of neo-Hasidism in other parts of the world – such as Israel, Australia, England, and France – I will not be discussing them here as they are outside the scope of this article.

being "just like you," they became more relatable. Various communities actualized this in different ways – some continued to use the title "rebbe," while others rejected it in favour of the title "Teacher." And yet, even this updated model comes with the dangers of abuse inherent to the centring of any charismatic leader. The strands of non-Orthodox liberal neo-Hasidism that I will be exploring are the Jewish Renewal Movement and those inspired by the Havurah Movement.[3] Before beginning my analysis, I will need to situate our discussion by defining what is traditionally meant by the term "rebbe."

What Is a Rebbe?

"Rebbe" is the Yiddish pronunciation of "rabbi." Despite this linguistic origin, the term came to mean much more within the eighteenth-century Eastern European mystical revival movement known as Hasidism.[4] In this tradition, "rebbe" became conflated with the term "tzaddik" (pl. *tzaddikim*), which is often translated as "holy man." Literally meaning "righteous one" in Jewish mysticism, this

3. This non-Orthodox scope differentiates our communities of study from those surrounding Shlomo Carlebach (who is very much a part of this story but somewhat maintained his position within Orthodoxy), current neo-Hasidic figures in the Modern Orthodox world, such as Rav Moshe Weinberger, and the Israeli neo-Hasidic movement. It is also worth noting here that the Havurah movement does not exist in the same formal way that the Jewish Renewal Movement does to this day.

4. For more of the movement's history, see *Hasidism: A New History*, ed. David Biale, David Assaf, Benjamin Braun, Uriel Gelman, Samuel C. Heilman, Moshe Rosman, Gadi Sagiv, and Marcin Wodziński (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017). For scholarship focused specifically on leadership, see Arthur Green, "Around the Maggid's Table: Tsaddik, Leadership, and Popularization in the Circle of Dov Baer of Miedzyrzecz," in *The Heart of the Matter: Studies in Jewish Mysticism and Theology* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

title became identified with the channel of divinity into the world. In Hasidism, we see a mass movement formed around those claiming it.[5] In virtually every case these central figures were men, and the pilgrimage-based spiritual fraternities surrounding them were male spaces.[6] While there is great diversity among different Hasidic dynasties and their various theologies, the only thing that can be called specifically "Hasidic" across the board is this institution of the *tzaddik*. In fact, many scholars have argued that this institution, termed *tzaddikism*, is the central revolution of Hasidism.[7]

Defined by Gershom Scholem as "the unlimited religious authority of an individual in a community of believers,"[8] *tzaddikism*'s four main components have been described as charisma (real or inherited), mutual devotion and responsibility, the embodiment of the divine dialectic, and linking the divine and material.[9] Due to the multifaceted nature of this role, a Hasidic *tzaddik* has been described

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5. The proof text for this is Proverbs 10:25, which states that "the tzaddik is the foundation of the world," (צַדִּיק יְסוֹד עוֹלָם). To learn more, see Moshe Idel, "Zaddiq as 'Vessel' and 'Channel' in Hasidism," in *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 189–207.

6. For a survey of the scholarship on the place of women in early Hasidism, see Tsippi Kauffman, "Hasidic Women: Beyond Egalitarianist Discourse" in *Be-Ron Yahad: Studies in Jewish Thought and Theology in Honor of Nehemia Polen*, ed. Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse (Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019). One historical figure that breaks this model is the legendary Maiden of Ludmir; see Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World* (Oakland: University of California Press: 2013).

7. Gershom Scholem, "Hasidism: The Latest Phase," in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), especially 338–344; Rachel Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 126; Immanuel Etkes, "The Zaddik: The Interrelationship between Religious Doctrine and Social Organization," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996); Joseph Dan, "A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism," *Modern Judaism* 11, no. 2 (1991): 175–193.

8. Scholem, "Hasidism: The Latest Phase," 342.

9. Elior, *The Mystical Origins*, 130.

as a combination of a rabbi, a prophet, a king, a priest, and a preacher. This amalgamation was presented as a one-stop-shop for Eastern European Jewry's problems, both spiritual and material, and supplemented the traditional position of the *ba'al shem* (a practical Kabbalist who acted as a folk healer).[10] Moshe Idel has emphasized the centrality of this magical capability in their leadership,[11] as a *tzaddik*'s prayer was understood to be able to cosmically shift the outcome of a situation. This was textually proven by the Talmudic dictum, "God issues a decree and the *tzaddik* nullifies it."[12]

Once formalized into a dynastic mass movement, the only way for the Hasidic masses to attain the rebbe's higher level of consciousness or interact with the divine realms was precisely *through* relationship and proximity to the rebbe.[13] The Hasidic *tzaddik* thus became understood as the "cosmic facilitator"[14] or even the "living incarnation of the Torah."[15] It is important to note that Scholem distinguishes this from the earlier idyllic Torah scholar, in that "it is no longer his knowledge but his life which lends a religious

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10. See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Oakland, University of California Press, 1996); Samuel C. Heilman*, Who Will Lead Us? The Story of Five Hasidic Dynasties in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 1; Green, "Around the Maggid's Table," 125.

11. See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

12. Babylonian Talmud, Mo'ed Katan 16b. Green has pointed out that this quote is one of Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev's most oft-quoted rabbinic sources. See Arthur Green, "Levi Yizhak of Berditchev on Miracles," in *The Heart of the Matter: Studies in Jewish Mysticism and Theology* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 259.

13. See Scholem, "Hasidism: The Latest Phase," 342.

14. Elijah Judah Schochet, "Hasidism and the Rebbe/Tzaddik: The Power and Peril of Charismatic Leadership," *Hakirah; the Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought* 7 (2009): 56.

15. Scholem, "Hasidism: The Latest Phase," 344.

value to his personality."[16] This can be seen in the oft-told story of a Hasid going to a rebbe not to hear his teachings but to watch him tie his shoes.[17] Scholar and neo-Hasidic leader Arthur Green goes even further, and argues that the Hasidic *tzaddik* represents a "transference of sacred space imagery to that of sacred person," thereby endowing their court with the role that Jerusalem normally plays in rabbinic Judaism.[18] Moreover, Ada Rapoport-Albert has shown that the *tzaddik* was actually uplifted to a secondary "focal point" of worship in Hasidism.[19] These descriptions clarify how these figures were seen to be more-than-human and infallible – a tenet of leadership that most strands of neo-Hasidism reject outright in favour of some level of egalitarian communalism.

Central to claiming the title of "rebbe" was their relationship with Hasidim (sing. Hasid: this term literally connotes "pious one" but comes to mean "devotee" in the Hasidic context). A rebbe cannot be a rebbe without having a relationship with disciples; the title is bestowed upon them by their community.[20] This reality confirms

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16. Scholem, "Hasidism: The Latest Phase," 344.
17. See Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim,* books 1 & 2 (New York: Schocken Books, 1947–1948). This story is often told in neo-Hasidic circles.
18. Arthur Green, "The Ẓaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45, no. 3 (1977): 327–329. Green makes sure to clarify that this is in addition to, and not instead of, honouring Jerusalem (330).
19. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship," *History of Religions* 18, no. 4 (1979): 296–325.
20. This idea is explored in many places, such as Samuel C. Heilman, *Who Will Lead Us? The Story of Five Hasidic Dynasties in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 258, and Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, 203–204. While teacher-student relationships have always been central in Judaism, the innovation of Hasidism in this realm relates to how a Hasid is drawn to a specific rebbe by virtue of their shared soul root. For more on this soul relationship, see Ebn Leader, "Leadership as Individual Relationships: A Close Study of the No'am Elimelekh," in *Be-Ron Yahad: Studies in Jewish*

sociologist Max Weber's assertion that "recognition on the part of those subject to authority is decisive for the validity of charisma."[21] "Armed with the power of [cleaving to God]," Rachel Elior asserts that the rebbe "is obliged to occupy himself with the terrestrial in its social and material manifestations."[22] This is to say that the rebbe's power of attorney in the heavenly court must be used in support of their constituency, or else it is wasted. Similarly, a Hasid cannot be called as such without being a "Hasid of someone."[23] And yet the answer to this question becomes foggy in neo-Hasidism, where the traditional emphasis on finding a rebbe is drastically reformulated.[24]

What Is Neo-Hasidism?

The basis for neo-Hasidism can be found in the diverse interwar writings of Europeans like I. L. Peretz, Martin Buber, and

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Thought and Theology in Honor of Nehemia Polen, ed. Ariel Evan Mayse and Avraham Yizhak Green (Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019), 185. It is important to note that this shifted as dynastic succession took hold and rebbe-hood became inherited, but the successor still only maintained their legitimacy through the acceptance of the community.

21. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press Incorporated, 1968), 242–243.

22. Elior, *The Mystical Origins*, 125.

23. Heilman, *Who Will Lead Us?*, 256; Dan, "A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism," 178. To see this question as it relates to neo-Hasidism, see Ebn Leader, "Does a New Hasidism Need Rebbes?" in *A New Hasidism: Branches*, ed. Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), 318.

24. Interestingly, this "fogginess" can already be witnessed in the late nineteenth century, with the advent of Jewish urbanization. See the phenomenon termed "a la carte Hasidism" in Marcin Wodziński, "War and Religion; or, How the First World War Changed Hasidism," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 106, no. 3 (Summer 2016), 298.

Hillel Zeitlin,[25] but in America, its literary origins can be traced more specifically to the writings of Buber and the influence of Abraham Joshua Heschel.[26] Its lived origins begin in 1949 when two rabbis from the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement were sent by their rebbe to the new campus of Brandeis University to bring secularized Jews back to tradition.[27] This pair of rabbis – Zalman Schachter (later Schachter-Shalomi) and Shlomo Carlebach[28] – would not claim the mantle of neo-Hasidism for many years. However, their exposure to the beatnik and counterculture movements resulted in both eventually leaving Chabad and becoming the "rebbes of the hippie movement."[29] Part of what they absorbed from this countercultural influence was a

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25. This group bridges the gap from totally secular Yiddishists (Peretz), to religiously observant former Hasidim (Zeitlin), to Buber's unique non-obligatory conception of Jewish spirituality. For more on the use of Hasidic tradition by non-religious writers, see Nicham Ross, "Can Secular Spirituality be Religiously Inspired? The Hasidic Legacy in the Eyes of Skeptics," *AJS Review* 37, no. 1 (2013): 93–113.

26. For more on Heschel as a neo-Hasidic thinker, see Arthur Green, "Abraham Joshua Heschel: Recasting Hasidism for Moderns," *Modern Judaism - A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 29, no. 1 (2009): 62–79.

27. Their rebbe was the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn. It has been pointed out to me that this narrative is contested and many different versions of it exist. I received this version in Burt Jacobson, *The Spirit of the Ba'al Shem Tov: A New Hasidism in the Making* (unpublished manuscript).

28. It is important to note that neither Carlebach nor Schachter-Shalomi were raised Hasidic, but rather "joined the Hasidic group in [their] quest to find a new spiritual and intellectual meaning to life." See Yaakov Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967–1977," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 13, no. 2 (2003), 140.

29. This phrasing was used in Jacobson, *The Spirit of the Ba'al Shem Tov*. A similar sentiment is expressed in both Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius," 61, and Arthur Green, "Renewal and Havurah: American Movements, European Roots," in *Jewish Renaissance and Revival in America: Essays in Memory of Leah Levitz Fishbane*, ed. Eitan P. Fishbane and Jonathan D. Sarna (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 146.

pull towards egalitarianism that will become relevant in our discussion about leadership. In fact, this willingness to draw from diverse non-traditional sources represents one of the unique aspects of the neo-Hasidic projects emerging in their wake.

"We come to modernity as full participants in the modern and postmodern world," writes Green, who was close collogues with Schachter-Shalomi. "But we come with this very deep rerooting in those essential values. 'Avodat ha-Shem – we are here to serve the One."[30] Just like traditional Hasidism, neo-Hasidism holds as its primary mission the spiritual life but asserts that it will use all the tools at its disposal to live it – including influence from other faith traditions and the secular world. Its use of Hasidism is therefore always "selective,"[31] and related to an attempt to provide spirituality "without reverting to beliefs and norms that the […] secular conscience and conviction prevent[s] them from accepting at face value."[32] This is put well by Green's old friend Barry Holtz, who said that their community "took elements from Hasidic prayer, but it had a kind of modern Americanized spin to it."[33] And yet different communities manifest this balancing of Hasidic influence differently.

As mentioned, this study will focus mainly on the non-Orthodox leaders within and around the American Jewish Renewal Movement founded by Schachter-Shalomi and those inspired by the Havurah movement co-founded by Green.[34] Although intricately

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30. See Jordan Schuster, "A Closing Conversation with the Editors," in *A New Hasidism: Branches*, ed. Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2019), 429.
31. Ariel Evan Mayse's comments in Schuster, "A Closing Conversation," 425.
32. Ross, "Can Secular Spirituality be," 111.
33. Barry Holtz, "Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project," interview by Jayne K. Guberman, *University of Pennsylvania*, Dec. 21, 2016, transcription, 50.
34. Both movements will be defined below.

intertwined, Green himself shares a story to highlight the differences between the two leadership models:

> I want to tell you about two [students] of mine […] Ebn [Leader] […] and Or Rose. […] One summer Or was invited to speak at the National Havurah Institute, which is the descendent of Havurat Shalom that I created in Boston. Ebn went to speak at the [annual Jewish Renewal conference]. The same week they happened. They both came back and told me about their experiences. And Or said "When I gave my session it was very nice. And then I went to some other people's sessions and there were interesting things to hear. I learned a lot and I liked the people there and it went very well." And Ebn came back and said, "After my first session, they asked me to lead [prayer], and then they asked me to do more, and then they all wanted to make appointments to talk to me, and then they were doing this, and they were doing that, and I saw […] if I stayed five more minutes, they were going to make me into a rebbe." And I understood that [the ALEPH community] were Zalman's [students] and these were my [students].[35]

This illuminating story shows not only the inherent differences in the two movements, but also that it's not the leaders themselves, but the communities, that bestow rebbe-hood onto the leader. And yet, the underlying ideological agreement that connects these two communities to each other – and differentiates them from *tzaddikism* – is the idea that their leaders are ultimately "just like you."

Leaders as Fellow Travellers

An important component of what Holtz termed the "Americanized spin" on Hasidism was a general discomfort with endowing teachers with cosmic significance. That a leader was on a

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35. Rabbi Arthur Green, personal interview with the author, June 8, 2021.

level inaccessible to virtually all their followers was uncomfortable to this community steeped in the countercultural values of egalitarianism and autonomy.[36] Instead of seeing their leaders as quasi-divine or cosmic facilitators, many neo-Hasidim prefer to think of them as "fellow travellers" who just so happen to have been on the path longer than the student. This accumulated experience – not an inherently closer relationship with the divine – is what equips them with valuable wisdom and insight that is meaningful to their students. In an essay entitled "Does a New Hasidism Need Rebbes?" Rabbi Ebn Leader argues that the traditional devotional relationship to the rebbe is no longer warranted in our day and age. Leader asserts that this traditional relationship was defined by recognition of the distinction between the spiritual practice of the leader and the followers. In theory, then, the spiritual attainments of the *tzaddik* are available to anyone who is willing to devote the effort to achieving them (though in some versions this also requires a particular skillset). Practically speaking, however, this spiritual leader model assumes that the *tsaddik* is serving a larger community of people who are not on the path to becoming *tsaddikim* themselves.[37]

Leader posits that this framework should be diffused and replaced by a matrix of mentors and a community of deeply engaged spiritual seekers,[38] and thus understands the perfected rebbe figure to

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36. It is worth noting that there are instances of counter-culturalists joining traditional communities structured around a charismatic leader, but a full analysis of this nuance is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, we are looking at those who chose not to go that route.

37. Leader, "Does a New Hasidism," 318–319. This claim became increasingly true as Hasidism ossified over the centuries, but is complicated by the writings of the earlier generations where the rebbes were trying to support their students in becoming *tzaddikim* themselves,

38. Both Green's Havurat Shalom and Schachter-Shalomi's B'nai Or (both mentioned below) have influenced this position. Not to mention earlier neo-Hasidic proposals for intense spiritual community, such as Hillel Zeitlin's

be a thing of the past. For him, then, the ideal neo-Hasidic leader needs to be on the same path as the community.[39] The dangers of allowing a teacher to live according to a different set of standards have been seen in many charismatic leader-based communities and will be unpacked further below. This egalitarian impulse is obviously an immense divergence from the infallibility of traditional *tzaddikism* and represents one of neo-Hasidism's primary innovations. A teaching shared with Dev Noily, senior rabbi at Oakland's Kehilla Community Synagogue, communicates this well:

> You're beginning rabbinical school. You maybe think you're on your path to becoming some kind of rebbe. And what this means is that you will know more than other people; you're gonna be better than other people; you're gonna have a stronger connection to [the divine] than other people. And guess what? You're a person. You'll have good days; you'll have bad days. You might help some people. Hopefully you will. But you'll also be that rabbi [who makes mistakes].[40]

A fellow traveller is meant to be relatable, and what is more relatable than making mistakes?

Charismatic Fallibility

Paradoxically, the decentering of the leader's uniqueness can function to legitimize their charismatic authority. Katie E. Corcoran and James K. Wellman Jr. have shown, in the context of American megachurches, that the ordinariness of charismatic leaders "can be a

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Yavneh. For more on this, see "Hillel Zeitlin," in *A New Hasidism: Roots*, ed. Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019) 15–25.

39. Leader, "Does a New Hasidism," 320, 325.

40. Rabbi Dev Noily, personal interview with the author, July 1, 2021.

part of their charisma."[41] This complicates and revises Weber's definition of charisma, which emphasizes that charisma stems from the individual's "otherness." Weber says that charisma is:

> A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a "leader."[42]

In his classic essay "Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma," Stephen Sharot has already shown how the traditional Hasidic *tzaddik* exists within Weber's model of a "mystagogue" whose authority derives from their "personal charisma, as opposed to the priest's charisma of office."[43] As a result, unlike the *tzaddikim* who fall into the aforementioned "supernatural" and "superhuman" categories, the charisma of a neo-Hasidic leader is rooted in their charismatic "naturalness" rather than "supernaturalness." Although they may still be seen as exceptional Teachers – as will be discussed below – they no longer represent unreachable heights. Therefore, the neo-Hasidic leader may colloquially be called "rebbe," but is never seen as a *tzaddik*.

In the article "People Forget He's Human," Corcoran and Wellman compare the charisma of leaders in New Religious Movements and institutionalized religions and make a distinction

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41. Katie E. Corcoran and James K. Wellman Jr., "'People Forget He's Human': Charismatic Leadership in Institutionalized Religion," *Sociology of Religion* 77, no. 4 (2016), 310.
42. Weber, *Economy and Society,* 241.
43. Stephen Sharot, "Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19, no. 4 (1980), 328.

between their "backstage" and "onstage" personas. Their study showed that, when leaders are seen as infallible onstage, their followers experience cognitive dissonance when they see them in different contexts or witness them display human flaws, resulting in a desire to keep the idealized leader at a distance. "In New Religious Movements that rely on the leader being seen as divine," Corcoran and Wellman explain, "if people interact with them a lot they see that they are only human and their divineness goes away."[44] On the other hand, in movements that consciously present their leaders as imperfect or "just like you" (such as in neo-Hasidism), their backstage and onstage personas actually merge into one identity: a flawed teacher who can be revered inasmuch as they exemplify how to work through the imperfect humanness that we all experience. These leaders are therefore charismatically fallible, rather than infallible. In these communities running into the leader in normal places was a privilege and not cause for cognitive dissonance.[45]

Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan illustrates this when she recounts how she ran into Schachter-Shalomi in a coffee shop before a book talk. She was excited to "grab Reb Zalman's time," but he was playing tic-tac-toe with his wife and was "just totally impatient." She said that she "got so used to seeing him spacious all the time. But it was like [he only had] fifteen minutes […]. [And I could] see that: he's humanity. He's fallibility." When probed about what effect that had on her calling him her rebbe, she enthusiastically insisted, "It helped!"[46] In fact, most neo-Hasidic teachers' views on traditional conceptions of infallibility were quite strong. Above all, Leader insisted that infallibility is:

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44. Corcoran and Wellman, "People Forget He's Human," 311.
45. Corcoran and Wellman, "People Forget He's Human," 327.
46. Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan, personal interview with the author, June 28, 2021.

> such a stupid idea to even begin with. The only people who can say
> something like that are people who have never had a real personal
> relationship with the rebbe. […] You can only hold the infallible thing
> if that's how you know them. If you know them as figures on your
> bookshelf. Once you actually get close to the people […] [the rebbes]
> have the sides and moments in life when they will be shining, and they
> will be holding something immensely. And they'll have moments in
> their lives where they're screwups.[47]

The notion of the idealized teachers can only function if they maintain
distance from their constituency. Once the leader and followers are
in close contact – which Leader argues is necessary for this type of
relationship to be worthwhile – their infallibility fades away as their
humanness comes to the forefront. And yet Corcoran and Wellman
have shown that this humanness sometimes functions to make the
leader's charismatic authority even stronger.

Rabbi Nancy Flam takes Leader's point even further by
arguing that infallibility is unhelpful for the spiritual development of
the constituency. "It's not a good example to be infallible," she says.
"How could I relate to that person? How could that person relate to
me?"[48] Here she is reiterating the idea that the spiritual teacher is a
fellow traveller who is further along the path. After all, if they were
walking a different path altogether, then they could not tell us where
the roadblocks and hazards are along our way. This mentality also
informs neo-Hasidic interactions with the historical rebbes. By
tending to engage with early texts where dynastic succession was not
yet established, neo-Hasidim are thus able to draw from the example
of rebbes who were still teaching their Hasidim how to become

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47. Rabbi Ebn Leader, personal interview with the author, June 14, 2021.
48. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021.

tzaddikim.[49] Through this focus, neo-Hasidism can slightly bypass the infallibility model and conceptualize the early rebbes as being extreme examples of those "further along the path."

For Flam, this manifests in the plausibility that the early rebbes had what she termed "superhuman powers." This wordplay is meant to convey powers that are exceptional but still fully available to all humans who put in the spiritual work, such as "clairvoyance, or deeply, deeply intuitive skills and gifts. Special powers of a contemplative sort to really concentrate the mind."[50] This explanation of traditional rebbes' seemingly supernatural capacities depicts a being who, through spiritual practices that are still available to us today, was able to achieve high levels of consciousness. This understanding enables some in the neo-Hasidic world to hold onto the loaded title of "rebbe" while restructuring it to mean something radically different. This understanding will be explored in depth below, but first, it must be noted that the charismatic fallibility that I have argued is central to neo-Hasidic leadership can also easily lend itself to abuses of power.

Dangers of Charismatic Fallibility

Although charismatic fallibility is an attempt to correct the traditional model, it still centers on charisma and thus maintains the inherent dangers of abuse contained therein. In the history of neo-Hasidism, we need not look any further than to one of its formative teachers for evidence of this: Shlomo Carlebach and his sexual

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49. Additional justifications for turning to earlier generations include the potential for antinomianism to be read into older generations and the lack of clarity over who is the legitimate heir to their legacy.
50. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021.

abuse.[51] Despite being slightly outside of our area analysis because of his continued involvement with the Orthodox world, his connection to Schachter-Shalomi justifies including him in our discussion. It is important to note that, uniquely in neo-Hasidism, Carlebach was seen by many followers as being on a "higher" level – there are even mentions of his prayers connecting those around him closer to God[52] – yet he is still understood to be fallible.[53]

Carlebach's teachings have been termed a "Torah of brokenness"[54] by one of his students, and although it is unclear if this was meant to refer to his history of sexual abuse, it is evident that her

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51. For the first exposé of his abuses, see Sarah Blustain, "Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Shadow Side," *Lilith Magazine*, March 9, 1998, https://www.lilith.org/articles/rabbi-shlomo-carlebachs-shadow-side/. How to deal with Carlebach's legacy is a polarizing issue in both the religious and scholarly worlds of neo-Hasidism. For some examples of its scholarly treatment (or lack thereof), see primarily Sarah Imhoff, "Carlebach and the Unheard Stories," *American Jewish History* 100, no. 4 (2016): 555–560. For further discussion of Carlebach's legacy see *A New Hasidism: Roots*, 191; Natan Ophir (Offenbacher), "Evaluating Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Place in Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 100, no. 4 (2016), 543; Yaakov Ariel, "Can Adam and Eve Reconcile? Gender and Sexuality in a New Jewish Religious Movement," *Nova Religio* 9, no. 4 (2006): 53–78.

52. Jacobson, *The Spirit of the Ba'al Shem Tov*.

53. Despite acknowledging his fallibility, Carlebach's followers still elevated him to a level that made confronting him almost impossible. Blustain quotes Sara Shendelman in her exposé as saying that when attempts were made to address his actions while he was alive, people got "cold feet" because they "felt he just had 'too much light' to be confronted" (Blustain, "Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Shadow Side"). From this, we see that Carlebach somewhat straddled the line between traditional *tzaddikism* and the neo-Hasidic model, but a full exploration of this nuance is beyond the scope of this paper.

54. Mimi Feigelson, "Jewish People and Ideas: Conversations with Jewish Thought Leaders," interviewed by Barak Hullman, *Stitcher*, March 24, 2020: 48:55, https://www.stitcher.com/show/jewish-people-ideas-conversations-with-jewish-thought-leaders/episode/mimi-feigelson-orthodox-female-rabbi-68260047.

sentiment can be connected to the discussion which I have labelled as "charismatic fallibility." She explains that his life was a lesson in how our leaders are not perfectly aligned with Torah,[55] and that this lesson presents a realistic model to follow. But the Carlebach story also shows that relatability by virtue of humanizing can be dangerous. Sarah Imhoff, for instance, sees his abhorrent actions as continuous with his theology. She argues that "consent was irrelevant for the kind of [utopian] love Carlebach preached."[56] Similarly, Rachel Werczberger argued that the abuse by another neo-Hasidic leader was "the result of a juxtaposition of three forms of authority: charismatic leadership, the authority of Jewish tradition and morality, and New Age spirituality's creed which emphasizes the authority of the self."[57] Whether or not this assertion can be mapped onto Carlebach's situation is difficult to judge, but it does make clear the potential dangers of charismatic leadership.

Some in the neo-Hasidic world feel that Carlebach should be fully cast aside and relegated to a dark past from which the community is healing. Others just caveat their conversations with mentions of "inappropriateness," but even those references come after long discussions of his positive effect on the Jewish world and the beautiful Torah he offered. Regardless of how individuals personally feel, Imhoff points out that much scholarship on Carlebach focuses on the oral stories surrounding him, and argues that "we must take all the stories about him seriously, whether they are positive or

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55. Feigelson, "Jewish People and Ideas," 49:40–50:20.

56. Imhoff, "Carlebach and the Unheard Stories," 558–559.

57. Rachel Werczberger, "Spirituality, Charisma, and Gender in a Jewish Spiritual Renewal Community in Israel" in *Spirituality against Religion: The Role of Gender and Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013). I thank Professor Werczberger for sharing this source with me.

negative."[58] Similarly, if we are going to be talking about neo-Hasidic leadership and the role of charismatic fallibility therein, we must tell all the stories – including how that very fallibility can result in serious harm.

When discussing this potential for abuse by charismatic leaders with Maggid Jhos Singer,[59] he used an example from his own life to show how the love bestowed upon idealized leaders by followers can quickly become a slippery slope. He shared, "I had one occasion of somebody confessing that they were in love with me. That was a breaking point for me."[60] He explained that he was going through a difficult time in his own life and feared putting himself in a situation where he might act inappropriately. He acknowledged that since leaders are equally flawed individuals who can feel unexceptional, permitting idealized love can lead one to believe that they are exceptional and thus, potentially cause them to act in inappropriate ways. Moreover, Flam notes that:

> People want to project on you all the time. So, if someone starts projecting on you – 'You're so great. You know so much.' – it's my job to cut that down immediately. 'Nope, a fellow traveller. You want to see my warts? I'm gonna show you them.'[61]

In Singer's case, he was able to extricate himself from that community and relocate to another congregation where he permitted no rebbe sentiment from his constituents. His ability to distance

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58. Imhoff, "Carlebach and the Unheard Stories," 560.
59. "Maggid" is the traditional Jewish title for "preacher." Although this term has fallen out of vogue in modern times, its relevance in Hasidic history means that some neo-Hasidic leaders (mainly in the Renewal world) take on that title as an alternative to the traditional rabbinate.
60. Maggid Jhos Singer, personal interview with the author, August 13, 2021.
61. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021.

himself from that community so that he could work on himself and not permit idealization by his new constituency shows the best-case scenario; the example of Carlebach shows the worst.

This possibility for abuse thus represents a primary reason why neo-Hasidism needed to reconceptualize *tzaddikism*.[62] As Green puts it, "we have to avoid that […] sense that there is a master who takes over your decision-making and your spiritual life."[63] To create safe religious communities, the centralized rebbe model that permits idealization to such a degree that certain individuals are seen as "too holy" to confront, must be dismantled. And the first step in this restructuring is to conceptualize the teachers not as on a different level but as merely "further along the path" – irrelevant of whether they use the title of "rebbe" or not.

Jewish Renewal's Functional Rebbes

Most neo-Hasidic leaders who claim the title of "rebbe" are found within the Jewish Renewal Movement. Founded by Schachter-Shalomi, the Jewish Renewal Movement has been described as "a modern and countercultural American 'post-Hasidic' Hasidism,"[64] something which represents "the mystical legacy of Hasidism and

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62. The potential for abuse inherent to the rebbe model is acknowledged by Green in his discussion of the early Hasidic movement organized around the Maggid of Mezritch (d.1772). He notes that the unmediated spread of Hasidism and the centrality of its leaders "created a situation ripe for abuse, and the many reports of abuses were surely not only the product of the anti-Hasidic imagination" (Green, "Around the Maggid's Table," 121). Green argues that the Maggid did not want his students to "go public" with their ideas, and even goes so far as to assert that the potential abuses of their leadership model were a reason for this hesitance (Green, "Around the Maggid's Table," 133).

63. Green's comments in Schuster, "A Closing Conversation," 442.

64. Shaul Magid, "Rainbow Hasidism in America: The Maturation of Jewish Renewal," *The Reconstructionist* 68, no. 2 (2004), 34.

Kabbalah in dialogue with a variety of religious, social, and cultural developments in contemporary American life."[65] Its origins can be found in Schachter-Shalomi's unrealized call for a quasi-monastic Jewish order in the sixties and his eventual forming of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal in 1993.[66] Coming out of the traditionally Hasidic world of Chabad-Lubavitch where he had a devotional relationship with its rebbe, Schachter-Shalomi maintained that there is a psychological-spiritual need for some sense of hierarchy in the spiritual path.[67] Without reimagining the rebbe role, he believed that neo-Hasidism would remain an abstract theology and not a lived, "devotional practice."[68] This belief eventually resulted in his formulation of the "functional rebbe" model.[69]

This terminology of "function" comes from Schachter-Shalomi's habit of shifting words that are normally construed as nouns into verbs. Gan-Kagan explains that "he coined the term 'God is a verb,'" and notes that "if God is a verb, and Judaism is a verb, of course rebbe-ing is a verb."[70] In other words, although having a rebbe

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65. Ariel Evan Mayse, "Renewal and Redemption: Spirituality, Law, and Religious Praxis in the Writings of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi," *The Journal of Religion* 101, no. 4 (2021), 456.
66. See "Schachter-Shalomi," in *A New Hasidism: Roots*, ed. Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), 230–240.
67. The importance he placed on spiritual hierarchy can be found in his dissertation-turned-monograph. See Zalman Meshullam Schachter-Shalomi, *Spiritual Intimacy: A Study of Counseling in Hasidism* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1996).
68. Magid, "Rainbow Hasidism in America," 38.
69. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Netenel Miles-Yepez, *Wrapped in a Holy Flame: Teachings and Tales of The Hasidic Masters* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 10–15. For a full exploration of this model see Shaul Magid, "From Sainthood to Selfhood in American Judaism: Artscoll's New Jewish Hero and Jewish Renewal's Functional Rebbe," *Modern Judaism* 32, no. 3 (October 2012): 270–292.
70. Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan, personal interview with the author, June 28, 2021.

is essential, rebbe-ing itself is a role that anyone can step into. In his exploration of this theology, Shaul Magid explains that full horizontality would mean no flow of spiritual energy. To adopt a "functional hierarchy" – where the role of rebbe is constantly shifting – thus avoids either extreme (i.e., a firm hierarchy or complete horizontality).[71] This "functionality" can be seen in the fact that Gan-Kagan called Schachter-Shalomi her rebbe, and, moreover, permitted some of her students to call her rebbe as well, but she was not the rebbe for all her students. As she explains, "to some of them I became a rebbe, but that's because they wanted it."[72]

Schachter-Shalomi termed this model "organismic," as it portrays each member of the community as a vital – and yet unique – organ.[73] To justify this radical restructuring of the traditional rebbe model, he writes:

> When we are playing – yes playing – Hasid and Rebbe, something good happens. I like the idea of play, and I don't want you to think of it as 'mere play.' By 'playing,' we make sure we don't get stuck in thinking that we always are that Rebbe. We understand that these are temporary roles that we assume for the benefit of that mutuality that we try to create.[74]

The archetypal example of the functional rebbe is the story of Schachter-Shalomi sitting at the head of a table and giving a sermon, then asking everyone to stand up and shift to the left, leaving a new

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71. Magid, "From Sainthood to Selfhood," 281.
72. Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan, personal interview with the author, June 28, 2021.
73. Schachter-Shalomi and Miles-Yepez, *Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, 13. See also Schachter-Shalomi, *Spiritual Intimacy*. Levi Cooper pointed out that this concept has roots in traditional Hasidic texts, such as *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* by Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov.
74. Schachter-Shalomi and Miles-Yepez, *Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, 14.

person to act as rebbe and share Torah.[75] Magid asserts that this shifting authority "maintain[s] the notion of hierarchy without undermining equality."[76] Whenever one speaks to followers of Schachter-Shalomi about matters of leadership, this story of shifting chairs inevitably comes up as a beautiful example of how willing he was to step down from the head of the table. Leader, however, does not view the story as exemplary. He recounts a conversation where he raised this with Schachter-Shalomi:

> Hasidim love telling that story about moving one to the left on the table, and so on […] and I asked [Schachter-Shalomi], "You know, your [community] like[s] telling this story [and] it sounds like bullshit to me" […]. You can't sit in a chair and become a rebbe. It doesn't work that way. It's like me singing the lead role in an opera at the Met; it's a role. It's true; it's a role. But you have to fill that role. You have to spend a lifetime of practice, of work, of developing, of bringing yourself to it. I can't go in, stand on stage, and sing that role. The confusion between saying "It's a role" and saying "Oh, OK, so I'm just gonna go in and do it" is absurd. It is a totally absurd thing. […] So Zalman said […] "Of course, you're right. But I felt at that point people needed the kind of empowerment to know that they could."[77]

This window into Schachter-Shalomi's rationale complicates the feasibility of a functional rebbe-hood. It might have been possible for Schachter-Shalomi himself to step in and out of the role because he was practicing it all his life, but for just anyone to pick up one day and sit at the head of the table would be unrealistic. Additionally, although they might believe that their constituents also have this capacity, the lived reality of many Renewal communities is such that

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75. Magid, "From Sainthood to Selfhood," 281.
76. Magid, "From Sainthood to Selfhood," 283.
77. Rabbi Ebn Leader, personal interview with the author, June 14, 2021.

there is usually one communal leader at the front of the room. And as different as these functional rebbes are from Hasidic *tzaddikim*, it is important to note that this leader is often still willing to give out blessings to their communities.

Lastly, it is significant to note that charismatic leadership extends beyond traditional gender boundaries in Jewish Renewal.[78] Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb's ordination by Schachter-Shalomi in 1980 was a huge turning point in legitimizing women's leadership in neo-Hasidism and Judaism more broadly.[79] The weight of this cannot be understated and represents the importance placed on egalitarianism in neo-Hasidism. Thus, we find statements from teachers like Rabbi David Wolfe-Blank that Jewish Renewal is "Hasidism meets Feminism."[80] Additionally, the movement left space for its constituency to develop what Chava Weissler terms a "gender-differentiated" leadership model, called *Eshet Hazon* (Woman of Vision), which was particularly important when non-male rabbinic ordination was still uncommon.[81] Schachter-Shalomi encouraged "women rabbis in the Renewal movement to cultivate their distinctive leadership styles rather than imitating traditional male models."[82] Although gender in neo-Hasidic leadership merits much more exploration than a mere paragraph, it is unfortunately beyond

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78. Chava Weisler, "'Women of Vision' in the Jewish Renewal Movement: The Eshet Hazon ['Woman of Vision'] Ceremony," *Jewish Culture and History* 8, no. 3 (2006), 65.

79. To learn more about Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb's rabbinate and extensive social justice work, see http://www.rabbilynngottlieb.com/.

80. Chava Weissler, "Folklore and History," *American Jewish History* 98, no. 1 (2014), 9.

81. Weissler, "Women of Vision," 63.

82. Reena Sigman Friedman, "Women in Jewish Renewal," in *The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Reuther (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 803.

the scope of this paper. Regardless of their titles, Jewish Renewal teachers are often central charismatic leaders at the front of the room, which is different from the other neo-Hasidism we are exploring.

Havurah-Inspired "Teachers"

The above model of functional rebbes differs very much from the other primary stream of neo-Hasidic leadership developed by leaders of the Havurah[83] movement, most notably Green.[84] Although not everyone in these communities was overtly neo-Hasidic – and some were specifically not – Hasidism was drawn upon heavily by many of the founders of the first Havurah, called Havurat Shalom. Therefore, in this article, I have chosen the phrasing "Havurah-inspired" to describe the leaders that fall into this second camp, rather than just "leaders of the Havurah movement." Created in 1968 in Somerville, Massachusetts, by a few of Schachter-Shalomi's younger colleagues,[85] Havurat Shalom was originally designed as a countercultural rabbinical school that offered Vietnam War draft deferrals to its students.[86] This intention to ordain rabbis quickly melted away to be replaced by a new form of community that was

83. A "Havurah" is a small fellowship of Jews who gather to pray, learn, and/or do Jewish rituals together. In the late sixties, the Havurah Movement was founded to create such groups that were countercultural alternatives to the suburban synagogue. To learn more broadly about the Havurah Movement see Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989).
84. To learn more about Green and his work as a neo-Hasidic pioneer, see Ariel Mayse, "Arthur Green: An Intellectual Portrait," in *Arthur Green: Hasidism for Tomorrow*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W. Hughes (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 1–52.
85. These colleagues were Arthur and Kathy Green. Schachter-Shalomi was also a guest teacher for the first year of Havurat Shalom's existence.
86. Holtz, "Jewish Counterculture Oral History," 17.

somewhere between a traditional "religious fellowship"[87] and "a Jewish spiritual cooperative."[88] In 1972 Green wrote:

> We know that each of us must find his own spiritual path and we would seek in the Havurah the context, knowledge, and atmosphere that would enrich this search for each of us. It is hoped that we will grow in the ability to share elements of this search with one another, and that we will all be concerned with one another's spiritual and personal growth.[89]

In this short explanation, we see a joining together of American liberalism's emphasis on individuality with the traditional Hasidic emphasis on communal spirituality. The result of this mixture is an uplifting of personal religious agency within the context of communal obligation and a complete lack of "rebbe" language to refer to themselves or their teachers.

One rationale for this can be found in what Green designates "the legitimacy of religious personalism"[90] and a subsequent distrust of submitting one's agency to a charismatic leader. Thus, there was never a fixed leadership, and all decisions "took place in egalitarian, nonhierarchical settings."[91] Reflecting on its formation in a recent interview, Green said that despite founding it, he tried to be

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87. Arthur Green, "Havurat Shalom: A Proposal," in *Contemporary Judaic Fellowship in Theory and in Practice*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc, 1972), 149.
88. Judy Petsonk, *Taking Judaism Personally: Creating a Meaningful Spiritual Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 8.
89. Green, "Havurat Shalom: A Proposal," 150.
90. Green, "Havurat Shalom: A Proposal," 150.
91. Prell, *Prayer and Community*, 94.

"just another voice in the community" and empower all the members to co-create the space.[92]

Green has often discussed why he avoided rebbe terminology.[93] Noting that he "had two of the greatest candidates in the Western world to be [his] rebbe: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Zalman Schachter,"[94] he explains that he was not willing to submit his will to them, and thus did not deem it fair or possible to ask others to submit their will to him. He notes that:

> I was always worried about disillusioning somebody and hurting them. That they would wind up seeing that I was not who they thought I was, and they would be disappointed and hurt. I didn't want to do that to anybody. So, I just couldn't let myself do it.[95]

The title that most people in Green's lineage were comfortable with was "Teacher," in which the uppercase "T" is intentional to show the way in which this can still be a revered role, but understood in a less cosmologically-significant manner than "rebbe."[96]

Although Green doubled down that he "will not send you kugel" (as in the traditional Hasidic practice of *shirayim*),[97] he conceded that "I feel I'm a little in the business of *rebistve* [being a

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92. Penn Libraries, "Art Green Interview," July 16, 2019, YouTube video, 3:24:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsD-2rdFR7s, 2:54:14.
93. For one such example, see his comments in Schuster, "A Closing Conversation," 442.
94. Rabbi Arthur Green, personal interview with the author, June 8, 2021.
95. Rabbi Arthur Green, personal interview with the author, June 8, 2021.
96. None of my interviewees expressed this grammatical differentiation (the uppercase "T") to describe themselves. It is merely meant to convey their sentiments succinctly. Of course, most of these leaders use their ordination title, whether that be "rabbi," "maggid," etc.
97. *Shirayim* is a practice wherein Hasidim receive leftover food from the rebbe's table. For a brief theological explanation of this practice, see *Hasidism: A New History*, 195.

rebbe], though I haven't admitted it to myself. I'm less afraid of it than I used to be."[98] He explained that as he got older and the age gap between him and his students grew, the peer relationship he used to aspire to was no longer possible. When asked directly about people publicly calling him their "Teacher," he said, "I'm very happy to have them say, 'I'm a student of Art Green.' I have no hesitation about that. Now if they said, 'Art Green is my rebbe,' I might flinch a little bit, but at this point not too terribly anymore."[99] From this quote, it is possible to see that the binary of using or avoiding rebbe language between the Renewal and Havurah camps is more nuanced than the clear-cut divide we have drawn above.

And yet their differences are still apparent, especially when entering a religious service. As Rabbi James Jacobson-Maisels point out:

> If you look at a traditional Jewish service and you look at a Renewal service: Renewal services are much more held and led. You're being told what to do at any moment. There's the charismatic leader who's taking you along, right? And Havurah services are […] in a certain sense more traditional, in that there's more space. But also, they may do things like there's not only one leader for that service; there's like five different people or each person is doing a piece.[100]

These differences are ultimately manifestations of the two movement's divergent theologies around leadership.

The extent of this deviation was highlighted by Leader when he shared that, "Zalman [Schachter-Shalomi] worked with *ruach*

98. Rabbi Arthur Green, personal interview with the author, June 8, 2021.
99. Rabbi Arthur Green, personal interview with the author, June 8, 2021.
100. Rabbi James Jacobson-Maisels, personal interview with the author, August 30, 2021.

hakodesh [the holy spirit]. Art [Green] would never do that."[101] This is to say that Schachter-Shalomi opened himself to the possibility that the divine spoke actively through him, and if a stranger came to him for advice "he would trust *ruach hakodesh* to give [them] an answer."[102] Leader asserts that those in Green's lineage would never allow themselves to do that. Although he seemed to agree with the functional rebbe idea that anyone could theoretically have this capacity, he asserted that its proper use required extensive training that was not a worthwhile investment.[103] For the Havurah-inspired lineage, teachers would rather empower their students to answer their own questions than trust that *ruach hakodesh* will bring it to them. This is why Flam described her only true rebbe as being wisdom itself, and explained that her job is not to answer students' questions, but to "help people discover the wisdom that's running through them." She beautifully deemed this work as "much more midwife than it is guru."[104]

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101. Rabbi Ebn Leader, personal interview with the author, June 14, 2021. It is worth noting here that in an early meeting with Reverend Howard Thurman, Schachter-Shalomi (who was still a good Lubavitcher Hasid at the time) was expressing reservations about being in non-Jewish spaces and Thurman asked him "don't you trust the *ruach hakodesh*?" (Daniel Epstein, "Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi," *Portraits in Faith*, July 22, 2021, https://portraitsinfaith.org/reb-zalman-schachter-shalomi/). This experience was a shifting point in Schachter-Shalomi's understanding of other religions, and he eventually referred to Thurman as one of his rebbes.

102. Rabbi Ebn Leader, personal interview with the author, June 14, 2021. It must be noted that the teacher did not hold a monopoly over access to *ruach hakodesh*, but just might be the most practiced at channeling it.

103. Rabbi Ebn Leader, personal interview with the author, June 14, 2021.

104. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021.

Conclusion

As we have seen, restructured leadership models are a primary avenue through which North American neo-Hasidism differentiated itself from traditional Hasidism. This is because the central tenet of *tzaddikism* – namely, the uplifting of the leader to some level of divine intermediary – is precisely what many countercultural neo-Hasidim have had issues with. Instead, they conceptualize leaders as "fellow travellers along the path," which makes them more relatable by virtue of their imperfectness. Thus, their charisma is based on their fallibility, rather than traditional *tzaddikism*'s infallibility. And yet, this correction does not automatically eliminate potential abuses of power, a possibility that still needs to be actively combatted.

While the Jewish Renewal movement retains a claiming of "rebbe" language – albeit only inasmuch as it is "functional" – the Havurah-inspired lineage rejects that title. Although there is so much more about neo-Hasidic leadership that remains in need of scholarly exploration – such as the place of gender, sexuality, and further updates since Schachter-Shalomi and Green's models – these are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this paper.

And so, with all this in mind, we must ask: how can these leadership models help in the production of healthy neo-Hasidic communities today? Ultimately, a religious landscape that contains perfected teachers and imperfect followers is one that remains uncomfortable for this strand of neo-Hasidism. Although there may still be a place for the historical figures as exemplary archetypes, the lived community requires a more nuanced and relatable vision of leadership. Therefore, neo-Hasidism's ability to combine traditional religious influence with contemporary cultural disposition can

provide an example for overcoming this obstacle, one that many religious traditions today face.

One potential avenue forward is avoiding communities built around one central teacher. As Flam shared, "we used to joke that our tagline should be 'friends don't let friends teach alone.'"[105] By maintaining a few teachers at the front of the room, the possibility of making one into the idealized rebbe decreases, since it is immediately countered by the presence of another. "It's always more about the teaching than the teacher," she continued. "We don't want it to be about us … we want wisdom to lead."[106] This emphasis on teaching over teacher is the "fellow traveller" model par excellence and presents a path forward for the neo-Hasidic future.

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105. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021. Here she is referring to her work with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality.
106. Rabbi Nancy Flam, personal interview with the author, September 1, 2021.

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Le pluralisme religieux selon Tierno Bokar Salif Tall[1]

Ndiaga Diop, *l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar*

> Il ne faut pas croire que sa propre religion soit seule à détenir la vraie foi […]. La religion, celle que veut Jésus et que Mahomet ne déteste pas, c'est celle qui, comme un air pur et libre, est en contact permanent avec le Soleil de Vérité et de Justice dans l'Amour du Bien et de la Charité pour tous.
>
> *Tierno Bokar*[2]

> À chacun de vous nous avons ouvert un accès, une avenue. Si Dieu avait voulu, Il aurait fait de vous une communauté unique mais Il voulait vous éprouver en Ses dons. Faites assaut de bonnes actions vers Dieu. En Lui, pour vous tous est le retour. Il vous informera de ce qu'il en est de vos divergences.
>
> *Le Coran* (5 : 48)[3]

> La différence des croyances comme celle des couleurs et des langues sont des faits avec lesquels il nous faut vivre.
>
> *Tariq Ramadan*[4]

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1. Je tiens à remercier tous mes collègues qui ont pris le temps de relire cet article, me faisant ainsi profiter de leurs remarques avisées. Je nommerai : Dr Malick Badji, Dr. Bouna Faye, Dr Samba Doucouré ainsi que mes amis Daouda O. Kane, Mourtala Amar et Mamadou Ndiaye.

2. Cité dans Théodore Monod, « Un homme de Dieu : Tierno Bokar », *Présence Africaine* 8–9, no. 1–2 (1950) : 149–158. https://doi.org/10.3917/presa.008.0149.

3. Traduction de l'arabe par Jacques Berque, *Le Coran*, *Essai de traduction de l'arabe annoté et suivi d'une étude exégétique* (Paris : Albin Michel, 1995).

4. Tariq Ramadan, *Jihâd, violence, guerre et paix en Islam* (Edition Tawhid, 2004).

Pour aussi bref soit-il un panorama de l'histoire du soufisme en Afrique subsaharienne offrirait un tableau d'histoires diverses et variées. Si en effet la doctrine du soufisme incline naturellement à la tolérance et au pacifisme, des maîtres spirituels soufis au sud du Sahara se sont pourtant lancés dans des *jihâd* armés tout autant qu'intra qu'extra religieuses.[5] C'est le cas pour le maître *qadiri* Ousmane Dan Fodio (1754–1817) et pour le khalife-propagateur *tijani* le cheikh El-Hadj Omar Tall (1797–1864). Il faut dire que le développement du soufisme, notamment sous sa forme confrérique dans le sud du Sahara, fut intimement lié à la politique.[6] Mais la prégnance de la politique a aussi laissé dans une quasi-indifférence certains soufis subsahariens se focalisant davantage sur des préoccupations d'ordre religieux ou spirituel conformément à la doctrine du soufisme, qui exalte la perfection spirituelle s'obtenant au prix d'un *jihâd* intime et par conséquent personnel. On peut évoquer pour justification à cette attitude le propos prophétique qui aurait caractérisé la guerre armée comme « petit *jihâd* » en comparaison du « grand *jihâd* » qu'est l'effort de purification intérieure, de spiritualisation de l'être devant Dieu.

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5. Voir Adriana Piga, *Les voies du soufisme au sud du Sahara : parcours historiques et anthropologiques* (Paris : Karthala, 2006) et Hamadou Boly, *Le soufisme au Mali du XIXème siècle à nos jours : religion, politique et société* (Thèse de doctorat., Université de Strasbourg, 2013), https://theses.hal.science/tel-01058564.
6. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, « L'islam et l'ouest-africain : une histoire intellectuelle », dans *L'Afrique et le monde : histoires renouées. De la Préhistoire au XXIᵉ siècle,* sous la direction de François-Xavier Fauvelle et Anne Lafont, SH / Histoire-monde (Paris : La Découverte, 2022), 73–89.

Dans un contexte politico-religieux qui occasionna une crise globale du soufisme *tijani*[7], Tierno Bokar Salif Tall (1875(?)[8]–1940), cheikh soufi et dignitaire de la *Tijaniyya* resta, écrivit Louis Brenner, « a man who was, in a way, untouched by wordly accretions brought into the Tijaniyya through the course of the *jihad* ».[9] Au-delà de la politique et du sectarisme confrérique, il eut en effet pour préoccupation majeure la condition d'une vie religieuse que traduisit un questionnement permanent sur l'homme et la religion cherchant à déterminer leur signification essentielle. Or, en dépit du contexte politico-religieux dans lequel il vécut, « his views [sur la religion] were not dogmatic, but were singularly tolerant and sensitive ».[10]

Étant donné que ses préoccupations spirituelles transcendèrent et les contingences politiques et le sectarisme confrérique, quelle a pu donc être la position de Tierno Bokar par rapport à la diversité des croyances religieuses elles-mêmes ? Loin de tout exclusivisme, s'agit-il pour lui de promouvoir leur unité spirituelle conformément au principe islamique de l'unité de Dieu (*Tawhid*) ? On sait qu'en islam le principe du pluralisme renvoie

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7. Pour des détails historiques concernant la voie soufie *Tijaniyya* et son expansion en Afrique subsaharienne voir Boly, *Le soufisme au Mali*, 66–83.

8. La date de naissance exacte de Tierno Bokar ne fait pas l'unanimité chez ses biographes. Dans sa biobibliographie, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar : le sage de Bandiagara,* Amadou Hampâté Bâ – qui l'a pourtant connu et vécu auprès de lui – indique la date de 1875, mais affirme immédiatement que ce n'est là qu'une probabilité. Dans « Un homme de Dieu : Tierno Bokar », Théodore Monod situe sa date de naissance vers 1884. Louis Brenner quant à lui indique prudemment la date provisoire du début des années 1880. Sa date de mort (1940) par contre ne fait pas l'objet de divergences. Pour plus de détails biographiques cf. Louis Brenner, *West african Sufi : The religious heritage and spiritual search of Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal* (Berkeley & Los Angeles : University of California, 1984) et Malek Chebel, *Changer l'islam. Dictionnaire des réformateurs musulmans des origines à nos jours* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2013).

9. Brenner, *West african Sufi*, 43.

10. Brenner, *West african Sufi*, 153.

à l'idée de coexistence des différentes croyances religieuses ainsi que la proclamation de leurs validités dans le sens où elles témoignent et participent de la même vérité divine. Pour Tierno Bokar aussi la religion demeure unique, éternelle et immuable dans ses principes fondamentaux quoique pouvant varier dans ses formes. Notre hypothèse dans ce travail consiste à postuler l'idée d'un pluralisme religieux chez Tierno Bokar, qui repose sur la conviction ultime d'une unité spirituelle des diverses religions.

Cet article se propose donc de mettre en lumière la leçon de pluralisme religieux qui est au cœur même de la doctrine islamique et que Tierno Bokar, dans le contexte d'un soufisme ouest-africain plus ou moins pacifiste, exprime avec une très grande netteté. Deux axes majeurs articulent notre réflexion : d'abord nous mettons l'accent sur l'idée d'une unité originelle des religions que traduit éloquemment me semble-t-il la notion de pluralisme religieux. Nous insistons ensuite sur la manière dont cette notion de pluralisme religieux peut participer à éduquer selon le sage *tijani* et à cultiver la tolérance.

De l'unité essentielle de la religion

S'il est indéniable qu'il existe une multitude de voies sacrées, il peut aussi être incontestable qu'elles doivent leur unité à celle du principe divin − que l'islam reconnaît sous le nom de *Tawhid*. Dans le langage d'Ibn Arậbi on parle d'une unité transcendante des religions. En d'autres termes, la religion est Une dans son essence. C'est un principe unique invariable dans le temps mais qui connaît diverses formes historiques exprimées pour les besoins de chaque époque et de chaque espace. Cette unité substantielle des religions, Tierno Bokar invite à la comprendre dans la méditation de ce verset du Coran :

> Acquitte-toi des obligations de la Religion en vrai croyant et selon la nature que Dieu a donnée aux hommes, en les créant. Il n'y a pas de changement dans la création de Dieu. Voici la *Religion immuable* ; mais la plupart des hommes ne savent rien.[11]

En effet, pour le sage de Bandiagara il existe, conformément à l'enseignement de l'islam, une Religion immuable qui se réfracte en une multitude de traditions religieuses mais dont le cœur spirituel reste invariable et tourne autour de l'axe de l'unicité divine. L'une des façons les plus significatives pour exprimer cette idée se rencontre dans sa version de la lecture de la fameuse tradition prophétique (*hadith*) selon laquelle il existe plusieurs voies[12] [sectes] dont seule une parmi toutes les autres sera sauvée. Dans la deuxième leçon qui porte justement sur le thème de la religion « *Maadîn* »[13] et à mille lieux d'une lecture doublement exclusiviste de la tradition susmentionnée, au sens où elle n'envisage la question que dans le cadre interne de l'orthodoxie, il invite à une compréhension « inclusiviste » qui s'applique également aux autres voies sacrées.

Ainsi, à la question qu'est-ce la Religion ?, Tierno Tall répond qu'elle est une voie qui en comporte pourtant soixante-treize. Or parmi ceux-ci, les soixante-douze sont dans un égarement

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11. *Le Coran*, traduit par Denise Masson (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 190, Paris : Gallimard, 1996), 500–501. Tous les versets du *Coran* que nous citerons dans le corps du texte sont de cette traduction.

12. Al-Dârimî (mort en 255 hégire) fait dire à Mohammed : « N'est-ce pas ? ceux qui avant vous furent possesseurs d'écrits (*ahl al-kitâb*) se scindèrent selon 72 doctrines (*millat* ; avec la variante *firkat* ; les deux termes sont aussi chez Abù Dâwûd et chez Al-Tirmidi) et en vérité cette communauté-ci (c'est-à-dire la mahométane) se divisera un jour en 73, dont 72 iront en enfer et une seule en paradis ». Voir Ignác Goldziher, « Le dénombrement des sectes mahométanes », *Revue de l'Histoire des religions* 26 (1892) : 129–137.

13. Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar : le sage de Bandiagara* (Paris : Seuil, 2004), 209.

manifeste excepté une seule, salvatrice, qui est la voie de la rectitude, l'unique chemin menant à Dieu depuis le premier homme Adam jusqu'au Prophète Mohammad. Cette voie promise au salut parmi toutes les autres, le natif de Ségou enseigne qu'elle est celle de la *Hanafiya*[14] et qu'elle a pour nom « islam ». Nous pourrions être induits en erreur si nous pensons que la voie ainsi indiquée, salvatrice, s'identifie à la religion historique apparue au septième siècle de notre ère en Arabie. Au contraire, pour Tierno, cela signifie que l'islam, désignée ici comme la voie promise au salut, s'identifie à la *Religion primordiale*, c'est-à-dire à la voie de tous ceux qui se sont adonnés à l'adoration du Dieu unique d'Adam jusqu'à Mohammad. C'est donc *le principe d'abandon confiant à Dieu et à l'ordre cosmique qui est en jeu ici, et non l'islam historique*[15] qui a épousé les vicissitudes inhérentes à l'aventure humaine sur terre[16], comme l'affirme Éric Geoffroy. Selon Geoffroy, il est nécessaire ici de comprendre la fonction de récapitulation et de synthèse qui caractérise l'islam, historiquement apparu en Arabie cette fois-ci, et qui fait dire à son Prophète : « J'ai été suscité avec la *hanafiyya* souple et facile » ou encore « Que les juifs et les chrétiens sachent qu'il y a de la souplesse [littéralement « espace »] dans notre religion et que j'apporte une règle bienveillante ».[17]

On le voit : pour Tierno Bokar donc, parmi les soixante-treize (73) sectes, celle qui sera sauvée n'est pas une des sectes particulières

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14. Si l'on en croit Jacques Berque « *Hanif* » reste un intraduisible. En revanche, le terme peut renvoyer d'après lui à « celui qui tel Abraham, oblique par rapport aux croyances antérieures, […] « dévie » de tout ce qui n'est pas Dieu ». Voir Berque, *Le Coran*, 435–436. Il est à signaler que c'est selon cette signification que Tierno Bokar le comprend et l'emploie.
15. C'est l'auteur lui-même qui souligne.
16. Éric Geoffroy, *L'islam sera spirituel ou ne sera plus* (Paris : Seuil, 2009), 42.
17. Geoffroy, *L'islam sera spirituel,* 25.

– une des religions historiques quelconque – mais la *Religion primordiale* qui n'exclut aucune religion mais qui les voit toutes comme autant de formes d'expressions de la même Vérité. On comprend ainsi que selon lui la vérité de la tradition des sectes n'est pas celle de l'exclusivisme mais du pluralisme religieux. Sans doute, c'est la même remarque qui conduit Geoffroy à écrire que : « l'islam ne serait donc pas une nouvelle strate religieuse, mais un témoignage (*shahâda*) intégral, une vision panoramique, en fait eschatologique, de la Révélation ».[18] D'où, pour le cheikh de Bandiagara, qu'il n'existe qu'une :

> Religion primordiale, comparable à un tronc dont les religions historiques connues seraient sorties comme les branches d'un arbre. [Or – précise-t-il –] c'est cette Religion éternelle qui a été enseignée par tous les grands Envoyés de Dieu et modulée en fonction des nécessités de chaque époque.[19]

Pour comprendre cependant la manière dont cette unité divine (éternelle) se réfracte en une multitude, il semble nécessaire de comprendre le phénomène de la théophanie divine. En effet, le « théophanisme »[20] ne permet-t-il pas de mieux rendre compte de cette dialectique unicité-multiplicité ? Qu'entendons-nous d'ailleurs par « théophanisme » ? Le « théophanisme » renvoie aux apparitions, c'est-à-dire aux manifestations divines. C'est ce qui fait que « si l'Essence divine, dans son unitude, est insondable, Dieu se fait néanmoins multiple dans la manifestation universelle ».[21]

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18. Geoffroy, *L'islam sera spirituel,* 22.
19. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 153.
20. Nous empruntons cette idée de « théophanisme » comme expression du pluralisme religieux à Souad Ayada. Voir notamment son article « Islam : de la Religion politique à la religion esthétique », *Esprit* 3 (2007) : 328–343.
21. Geoffroy, *L'islam sera spirituel,* 36.

Comprenant sans aucun doute cette vérité du théophanisme, Tierno Bokar invitait à lire derrière les images symboliques de la création tout entière la présence de Dieu, l'unique, qui apparaît pourtant diversement, et en toute gloire, grâce à sa toute-puissance créatrice. Cela veut dire que derrière la multiplicité apparente des différentes manifestations divines se trouve l'unicité divine qui englobe et donne sens au Tout. Pour l'expliciter Tierno Bokar en donne cette version imagée qu'il exprime comme suit :

> L'arc-en-ciel doit-il sa beauté aux tons variés de ses couleurs. De même, nous considérons les voix- [voies]- des divers croyants qui s'élèvent de tous les points de la terre comme une symphonie de louanges à l'adresse de Dieu qui ne peut être qu'Unique. Nous déplorons amèrement la méprise de certains religieux sur la forme des choses divines, méprise qui les amène souvent à rejeter comme discordant l'hymne de leur voisin.[22]

Il invite à comprendre en effet que les religions, autant qu'elles existent, sont des merveilles à partir desquelles, peut-être, nous sommes invités à s'étonner – dans le sens où les Grecs disent *thaumasein* – et à exalter la toute-puissance de Dieu. Il y a donc comme une dialectique de l' « Un » et du « Multiple », nous l'avons dit. Mais au sens où le « Multiple » manifeste et porte témoignage de toute la richesse et puissance créatrice de l' « Un ». On trouve ainsi que le « théophanisme », qui fait ici le lien, peut être regardé comme la figure islamique du pluralisme religieux. Il semble avoir l'intérêt de rendre compte, d'une part, de la multiplicité de fait des religions et, d'autre part, du type de rapport que celles-ci doivent entretenir entre elles. Dans la mesure où le « théophanisme » renvoie aux apparitions et aux manifestations des réalités divines, la pluralité des

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22. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 145.

apparitions traduit sous un certain rapport la diversité des religions. Ce qui amène Souad Ayada à écrire que : « toutes les religions sont pour ainsi dire des théophanies du même Dieu révélé, des expressions diverses rendues nécessaires par les modes humains de perceptions et de compréhensions ».[23]

Le « théophanisme » célèbre donc les différentes formes de religions comme autant de manifestations de Dieu. Bien mieux, à l'instar de l'arc-en-ciel qui exalte la toute-puissance de l'activité créatrice de Dieu, il rend compte de la nécessité du pluralisme en religion. Il y a lieu de préciser toutefois que le pluralisme, comme précise Ramatoulaye Diagne Mbengue, « va bien au-delà de la simple indifférence par rapport aux autres religions, bien au-delà du relativisme qui consisterait à dire « à chacun sa religion ». Bien au contraire, le pluralisme porte en lui l'exigence de la reconnaissance de l'unicité et de l'universalité du message de Dieu à travers toutes les religions. Être pluraliste, c'est [donc] reconnaître comme sienne toute religion issue de la tradition abrahamique »[24] selon la conviction que c'est la même vérité qui se manifeste sous divers visages de la croyance.

Comprendre cette unité originelle des religions n'est-ce pas donc se convaincre qu'une seule chose compte par-dessus tout : « confesser l'existence de Dieu et Son unicité ».[25]

Le pluralisme religieux à l'épreuve de la tolérance

Le message clé de Tierno Bokar consiste à mettre en exergue que le fait du pluralisme religieux est un principe fondamental posé

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23. Ayada, « Islam : de la Religion politique », 343.
24. Ramatoulaye Diagne Mbengue, « Pluralisme et dialogue interreligieux chez Amir Ali », *Présence Africaine* 195–196, no. 1–2 (2017) : 483.
25. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 147.

par l'islam et qui doit se traduire, chez tout musulman, par le respect des autres religions qui reconnaissent l'unicité de Dieu. Très explicitement, il sermonne :

> Frère en Dieu qui vient au seuil de notre zaouïa, cellule d'amour et de charité, ne bouscule pas l'adepte de Moïse ! Dieu lui-même est témoin qu'il a dit à son peuple : *Demandez le secours de Dieu et soyez patients. La terre appartient à Dieu et il en fait héritier qui il veut parmi ses serviteurs. L'heureuse fin sera pour ceux qui le craignent.*

> Non plus, ne bouscule pas l'adepte de Jésus. Dieu, en parlant du miraculeux enfant de Marie, Vierge-Mère, a dit : *Nous avons donné à Jésus, fils de Marie, des preuves évidentes et Nous l'avons fortifié par l'Esprit de sainteté* ;

> Et les autres Humains[26] ? Laisse-les entrer et, même salue-les fraternellement pour honorer en eux ce qu'ils ont hérité d'Adam, de qui Dieu a dit, s'adressant aux anges : *Lorsque je l'aurai harmonieusement formé, et que j'aurai insufflé en lui de mon Esprit : Tombez-vous prosternés devant lui.* Ce verset implique que chaque descendant d'Adam est dépositaire d'une parcelle de l'Eprit de Dieu. Comment donc oserions-nous mépriser un réceptacle qui contient une parcelle de l'Esprit de Dieu ?[27]

En vertu de cette conviction, Tierno Bokar va jusqu'à suggérer l'étude des autres religions car, d'après lui, c'est une expérience spirituelle unique incomparable en ce sens qu'elles constituent toutes comme autant d'eau potable sans aucun danger pour la santé morale et spirituelle du croyant. D'où cette utile

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26. Entendons tous ceux qui adorent quelques divinités que ce soient ou même ceux qui n'ont pas de religion, les athées comme on dit.
27. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 148 ; Masson, *Le Coran,* 197, 29 et 564.

recommandation à un disciple : « Tu gagnerais énormément à connaître les diverses formes de religion. Crois-mois, chacune d'elles, quelque bizarre qu'elle te paraisse, contient de quoi affermir ta propre foi ».[28] Sans doute peut-on affirmer donc, avec Souleymane Bachir Diagne, que la croyance en Dieu qui souvent divise les humains et les jette les uns contre les autres crée aussi une sorte de fraternité des fidèles, au-delà des formes que prend leur foi.[29]

On trouve d'ailleurs que le modèle de tolérance qu'incarne le sage de Bandiagara reste entièrement lié à une compréhension particulière de la foi elle-même. Pour lui, en effet, la qualité de la foi détermine le niveau de la vie religieuse et par conséquent l'état d'esprit de tout croyant. Ainsi il existe trois degrés de la « foi »[30] correspondant chacun à trois attitudes possibles. La foi est « solide » d'abord, « liquide » ensuite et « gazeuse » enfin. La première forme épouse toutes les caractéristiques de l'intransigeance, du raidissement, car elle est soutenue et canalisée par une prescription particulière selon une loi-voie sacrée bien déterminée.

Ce qu'il faut retenir c'est que sous cette première forme la foi est incapable de souplesse. Dans la mesure où ce type de foi est étroit, restrictif et « intransigeant » dans ses croyances, elle prédispose à prescrire la guerre par les armes une fois requise pour défendre sa croyance. Donc quand la foi est « solide » le comportement qu'elle commande semble de facto l'exclusion, la violence et l'intolérance. En revanche, la foi est « gazeuse » lorsqu'elle quitte ce niveau inférieur, c'est-à-dire « solide », et se prédispose à comprendre et à

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28. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar*, 150.

29. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Comment philosopher en islam ?* (Paris : Philippe Rey/Jimsaan, 2014), 143.

30. Dans son ouvrage très informé sur la pensée religieuse et spirituelle de Tierno Bokar, Louis Brenner analyse copieusement cette catégorisation des divers aspects de la foi chez le maître soufi. Voir Brenner, *West african Sufi*, 154–157.

apprécier la voix-voie de tous ceux qui parlent de Dieu. La foi « liquide » peut ainsi se sublimer et s'élever comme de la vapeur contre les guerres ou incompréhensions engendrées par une foi qui n'admet aucun compromis dans sa quête de Dieu. Cette forme est donc meilleure que la première en ce sens qu'elle semble plus fluide et flexible sachant ainsi se confronter à l'altérité et recommander une attitude tolérante envers elle. Cependant le plus haut degré de la foi est celle parvenue au stade « gazeuse ». Cette forme caractérise particulièrement la foi de ceux qui ont trouvé Dieu dans la contemplation et l'adorent en vérité et en silence. L'attitude qu'elle commande est toute empreinte de compréhension et de tolérance, car à ce stade la foi prédispose le croyant à voir en chaque être vivant, animal ou végétal, l'œuvre de Dieu. Diagne soutient que c'est « cette forme de la foi qui éduque au pluralisme car elle peut ronger les rochers de l'intolérance ».[31]

Comment dès lors, selon Tierno Bokar, maintenir la foi « liquide » ou « gazeuse », c'est-à-dire faire en sorte qu'elle ne soit pas susceptible à la violence ou à l'intolérance, surtout religieuse ? Par l'Amour et la Charité, suggère-t-il. Pour Tierno, remarque Oscar Brenifier, « Amour et Charité sont les deux faces indissociables de la Foi et l'amour de Dieu ne pouvait s'entendre sans l'amour des hommes ».[32] Or, comme la « foi » est semblable à un fer chaud qui en se refroidissant devient difficile à façonner, il importe dès lors de la chauffer dans le haut-fourneau de l'Amour et de la Charité. Le mode opératoire consiste ainsi à être toujours sensible à l'élément

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31. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Philosophie et Théologie en Islam* (Dakar : Feu de Brousse, 2010), 54.
32. Oscar Brenifier, « La tradition soufie moderne en Afrique : Amadou Hampâté Bâ et Tierno Bokar », dans *La civilisation arabo-musulmane au miroir de l'universel. Perspectives philosophiques,* sous la direction de Pilar Alvarez Laso et Qian Tang (Paris : UNESCO, 2010), 133.

vitalisant de l'Amour en gardant ouvertes à la Charité les portes de nos cœurs. Cette attitude le maître d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ l'illustre très parfaitement. Pour l'attester son disciple et biographe écrit ce qui suit :

> Plongé dans la mystique – entendons par là non une vie coupée du monde, mais une vie où la relation intérieure avec Dieu accompagne et éclaire chaque moment vécu en ce monde – Tierno Bokar était l'incarnation même de l'amour et de la bonté. Amour pour Dieu, d'abord, absolu, sans réserve ; puis amour pour toutes les créatures vivantes, depuis l'homme jusqu'aux créatures les plus modestes de la nature, animales ou végétales.[33]

Est-il utile de rappeler que cet amour universel pour ainsi dire trouve sa puissance d'expression, chez Tierno, dans la source rafraîchissante, vivifiante du soufisme,[34] capable de revigorer constamment ceux qui s'affaiblissent comme le haut-fourneau à partir duquel la « foi », toujours, peut continuer à se réchauffer. On trouve aussi que ce à quoi cette compréhension de la « foi » peut conduire par-dessus tout, c'est vers une attitude de tolérance religieuse. Car aimer tous les hommes, avoir la magnanimité de ne pas s'agripper à les grouper sous des emblèmes religieux différents, mais au contraire être capable de voir en chacun d'eux le dépositaire d'une « parcelle de l'Esprit de Dieu, »[35] c'est, d'une part, honorer la part de divinité présente en chacun d'eux et surtout, de l'autre, faire

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33. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 129.
34. Éric Geoffroy a-t-il raison d'écrire ainsi que : « Pour beaucoup de soufis, ce n'est pas en termes de simple tolérance qu'il faut envisager l'universalisme de la Révélation, mais *d'unité transcendante des religions*. De façon logique, les ésotéristes ont tendance à être inclusivistes, puisqu'ils perçoivent la trame, la grammaire commune à toutes les religions ». Geoffroy, *L'islam sera spirituel,* 47–48.
35. Masson, *Le Coran*, 564.

preuve de tolérance vis-à-vis d'eux peu importe la religion qu'ils confessent. Sommes-nous maintenant en mesure d'apprécier convenablement cet appel de Tierno Bokar pour une unité spirituelle de toutes les religions, seul gage, selon lui, de la tolérance et d'une paix durable entre elles. Comme pour prophétiser, le sage soufi dit :

> De tout mon cœur, je souhaite la venue de l'ère de réconciliation entre toutes les confessions de la terre, l'ère où ces confessions unies s'appuieront les unes sur les autres pour former une voûte morale spirituelle, l'ère où elles reposeront en Dieu par trois points d'appui : Amour, Charité, Fraternité.

> Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu. De même il ne peut y avoir qu'une seule Voie pour mener à Lui, une Religion dont les diverses manifestations temporelles sont comparables aux branches déployées d'un arbre unique. Cette Religion ne peut s'appeler que Vérité. Ses dogmes ne peuvent être que trois : Amour, Charité, Fraternité.
> Cette réconciliation plusieurs fois prédite, préparée et tant attendue, que ne l'appellerait-on : « Alliage véridique » ?

> En vérité, une rencontre des vérités essentielles des diverses croyances qui se partagent la terre pourrait se révéler d'un usage religieux vaste et universel. Peut-être serait-elle plus conforme à l'Unité de Dieu, à l'unité de l'esprit humain et à celle de la Création tout entière.[36]

Conclusion

En définitive nous retenons que même si la notion de pluralisme religieux paraît presque entièrement absente dans le registre conceptuel de l'enseignement oral du maître Tierno Bokar, il ressort pourtant, de tout ce qui précède, qu'elle demeure centrale dans sa conception de la religion. Bien mieux, adossé sur un héritage

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36. Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar,* 147.

important de l'islam et du soufisme, ouest-africain en particulier, les concepts clés de pluralisme, de tolérance, de charité, d'amour et d'unité spirituelle marquent sensiblement sa pensée et son expérience religieuse. D'une manière évidente, et au-delà même de la tolérance qu'elle doive impliquer, cette figure éloquente de la spiritualité ouest-africaine exprime l'idée fondamentale que la pluralité religieuse comporte un enseignement : la promotion d'une unité spirituelle de toutes les religions en vertu même de l'Unicité du Dieu qu'elles invoquent.

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Experiential Pathways to Infusing Spirituality in Pre-Service Teacher Art Education

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In 2008, the National Art Education Association welcomed a new advocacy group, the "Caucus on the Spiritual in Art Education" (CSAE). Among its stated concerns are "to study the relationship between the spiritual impulse and the visual arts, to examine the spiritual aspects of art from various cultures and historical eras […] and to define spiritual concepts in art education." Here, we argue for the importance of infusing spirituality in contemporary classrooms, especially given current controversies around issues related to religion in schools, and because of the divisiveness that increasingly imperils public education among other aspects of society. By contrast, we assert that addressing spirituality through art can help connect students rather than divide them, enabling them to find common ground both through learning about art and through experiences of making it. In this sense, integrating spirituality offers a holistic approach to teaching and learning that is student-centered.

Often the question of whether spirituality should even be associated with U.S. public education mires down discussion that could otherwise expand and broaden the understanding of the myriad ways that infusing spirituality into art classrooms can enhance

teaching and learning. So understood, spirituality as a pedagogical approach can provide deeply felt personal experiences which make education in and through art meaningful to all students, not just the so-called "artistically gifted." This is the way it is explained by Peter Abbs, a supporter of spirituality in education, who writes:

> In a quite fundamental way, spirituality can be conceived as a part of, as an unplanned outcome of, the natural world, yet opening up within new dimensions of reflection, prophecy, and possibility. It is this distinctive power of consciousness attending to consciousness through sustained acts of recognition and affirmation which illuminates the true nature of spirituality. It is the spiritual in us which aspires toward wholeness, seeks connection, pattern, circumference.[1]

Acknowledging the significant value of the individual and the personal search for spirituality, whether by artists, art teachers, or students of art, we therefore encourage art educators at all levels to consider how spiritual traditions and/or practices can strengthen teaching and learning. Furthermore, we provide a brief look at ways of infusing spirituality in art education, with examples of pedagogical approaches for pre-service art educators.

Spirituality in Art Education: Perspectives and Historical Underpinnings

Spirituality, as discussed below, has deep roots in the history of art and art education, but we will first place it in a contemporary context. In our view, spirituality in art education can serve several widely held educational aims: supporting an integrated approach to

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1. Peter Abbs, *Against the Flow: Education, the Arts and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003), 35.

learning and human development, embracing holism, and offering curriculum content that encompasses individual, national, and global perspectives, whether sacred or secular. However, that said, we also recognize challenges associated with the topic for those who teach in U.S. public schools and for those who prepare future teachers due to the constitutional separation of church and state. Countering such concerns, we explain below that there is no need to equate spirituality with religion. For example, while the term, "religion," is typically defined in terms of an "institutional system of […] attitudes, beliefs, and practices,"[2] "spirituality" can be conceived in much broader terms, such as the awareness of the interconnectedness among all living things. Yet, with or without its association to religion, arguments for addressing spirituality in teaching art can be made both from student-centered and curriculum-centered perspectives.[3]

From a student-centered perspective, concern for the spiritual in art education goes back to some of its early practitioners. Spiritual subject matter was, for example, a focus in the Picture Study movement.[4] Equally, spiritual issues provided inspiration for creative self-expression among progressives, especially those who were therapeutically inclined.[5] Indeed, some theorists, such as Herbert Read and Henry Schaeffer-Simmern, found in the spiritual domain an ultimate aim for the educative enterprise.[6]

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2. *Miriam Webster*, s.v. "religion," accessed August 31, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion.
3. John Dewy, *The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902).
4. For more on this, see Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 146.
5. Florence Cane, *The Artist in Each of Us* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1951).
6. See Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943), and Roy E. Abrahamson, "Henry Schaefer-Simmern's Research and Theory: Implications for Art Education, Art Therapy, and Art for Special Education," in *The History of Art Education: Proceedings from the Penn State Conference*, ed.

As with any topic addressed in genuine student-centered education, issues of spirituality were considered important because they mattered to children and affected their development. The fact that spiritual issues still matter to children around the world today has been demonstrated by psychiatrist Robert Coles, in his book *The Spiritual Life of Children* (1990). Coles, who spent over thirty years documenting the lives of "children in crisis," used drawing to help young people formulate, reflect upon, and communicate their deepest spiritual questions, ideas, and feelings. Importantly, Coles did not set out looking for spiritual issues. Rather such concerns emerged in conversations with children. Topics that came up in this way included: the nature of God, the supernatural, the ultimate meaning of life, and the sacred side of things.[7]

From a curriculum-centered perspective, spiritual matters have been essential subjects of world art from the dawn of civilization through the modernist era[8] and into contemporary art.[9] The importance of the spiritual in world art is indicated by philosopher and historian of Indian Art Ananda Coomaraswamy, who has claimed that, within both "Oriental" [sic] and Christian philosophies, the predominant, or "normal," view of art has been that it always had "a spiritual meaning."[10] While Kandinsky and other modernists argue that spirituality has not always or necessarily been associated with

Harlan Hoffa and Brent Wilson (College Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1985), 247–255.

7. See Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1990).

8. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

9. *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, season 1, "Identity," directed by Deborah Shaffer, created by Susan Sollins and Susan Dowling, aired September 28, 2001, https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s1/identity/.

10. Anna Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover, 1956), 40.

religion,[11] this association remains the historical and contemporary "norm" in traditional art and craft as addressed by Coomaraswamy.

In view of the diversity and complexity of historical and contemporary associations between art and spirituality,[12] Robert Emmons feels the need to caution against framing spirituality and religion in polarized terms – i.e., as always conflated or always incompatible – which he maintains is not helpful for researchers.[13] He advocates for a view which, by identifying areas of overlap between the two concepts, comes to define spirituality as a broader concept which can, but need not necessarily, encompass religion.[14] Emmons thus defines spirituality as "a deep sense of belonging, of wholeness, of connectedness, and of openness to the infinite."[15] This definition allows non-religious people to express their spiritual experiences, and makes it possible to consider spirituality outside of religious beliefs, although religion can certainly house spirituality.

Search and Research:
Spiritual in Art and Education

For the authors, the quest for the spiritual in art and education has been both a matter of *search* and *research*. It has been an ongoing search for teachings and practices that nourish our artistic and holistic development in personal as well as professional practices. In terms of research, we have looked for theories of art and spirituality along with works of art reflecting those theories as applicable to teaching

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11. See Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.*
12. Robert A. Emmons, "Spirituality: Recent Progress," in *A Life Worth Living: Contributions to Positive Psychology*, ed. Mihaly Cskiszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega Cskiszentmihalyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62–81.
13. Emmons, "Spirituality," 65.
14. Emmons, "Spirituality," 66.
15. Emmons, "Spirituality," 64.

art, K–12 and beyond. The position taken here is that at the core of artistic efforts is, most importantly, the concern to express and experience our humanity. In this sense, "spiritual" is included as it relates to self and the world as an essential component of consciousness *and* cognition. Janis Lander, in *Spiritual Art and Art Education* (2014) connects spirit, consciousness, and cognition, saying, "separate from religion, that operates within primarily social, moral, fiscal, and community constructs, spiritual is understood as 'consciousness conveying intuitive knowledge to those who experience it.'"[16]

Another association between spirit and cognition, and one more concretely connected to education, is offered by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner in *Intelligence Reframed* (1999), where he considers extending his original seven intelligences to include a spiritual intelligence.[17] While he stops short of granting the spiritual full status, he does give it half-credit, recognizing the cognitive dimension of the spiritual in asking existential, or ultimate, questions, like: "Why do we exist? What is the meaning of life, of love, of tragic losses, of death?"[18] Such questions have been posed directly or indirectly through art from the dawn of civilization up to the present, for example, in Gaugin's 1897–1898 painting, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*[19]

In thus addressing spiritual questions, art education certainly engages the intellect, but extends learning beyond the intellect alone

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16. Janis Lander, *Spiritual Art and Art Education* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.
17. Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
18. Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 54.
19. See also Seymore Simmons III, "Living the Questions: Existential Intelligence in the Context of Holistic Art Education," *Visual Arts Research* 32, no. 1 (2006): 41–52, and *The Value of Drawing Instruction in the Visual Arts and Across Curricula*: *Historical and Philosophical Arguments for Drawing in the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

to include emotional, sensory/physical, and moral aspects, i.e., the whole person. As such, it has the potential to help students move toward their full potential, enlarging their entire capacity for learning in and beyond the arts. Indeed, holistic development is often associated with the spiritual in education. Even if it doesn't reach this far for each individual, it can at least provide momentary relief from the "culture of constraint" and homogeneous learning predominant in schools driven by testing and accountability. Along with such personal benefits, this alternative vision of education can have significant academic impact.

Drawing upon both their affective and cognitive capacities, spirituality in education invites students to explore connectedness between subjects, develop global awareness, and expand their cultural literacy. Ultimately, it can help students remember that education is more than the mere acquisition of facts; that it can include self-knowledge and social/environmental responsibility. In this regard, a growing body of research suggests that a contemporary understanding of spirituality provides a foundation for students to explore universal and collective values such as "wisdom, compassion, loving kindness, joy, beauty [and] peacefulness."[20]

Moreover, researchers are currently developing a research paradigm in order to help define a methodology for investigating spirituality in a variety of subjects. According to Lin, Oxford, and Culham,

> A spiritual research paradigm requires an ontology that considers all reality to be multidimensional, interconnected, and interdependent. It requires an epistemology that integrates knowing from outer sources

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20. David Ray Griffen, *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern* Exploration (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 271.

as well as inner contemplation, acknowledging our integration of soul and spirit with the body and mind.[21]

They further identify some qualitative methods as suitable for investigating spirituality, such as phenomenology, narrative, and autobiography; however – noting that these methods neglect spirituality as a topic of research – they maintain that a spiritual paradigm, or framework, "will provide researchers from the social sciences and education the tools and abilities to systematically explore fundamental questions regarding human spiritual experiences and spiritual growth."[22] An acceptance of this paradigm will open many doors for researchers in the future. Another methodological possibility is explored by Campbell in her study of spiritual art educators,[23] where she employed "portraiture" as developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Davis (1997).[24] However, the methodology did have limitations in that it was fairly unknown and rarely used.

Children are schooled to know about facts and figures and events and places in society but rarely about themselves, let alone the nature of their full human potential. The arts, with their rich repertoire for exploring paradox, allow for inward focus and expressive investigations, thus providing children with tangible and accessible tools to examine the spiritual questions of life that are an integral part of the human experience. Today, according to Fowler, the arts continue to strengthen identity and relationship with the

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21. Jing Lin, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Tom E. Culham, eds., *Toward a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2016), ix.
22. Lin, Oxford, and Culham, *Toward A Spiritual Research Paradigm,* x.
23. Laurel H. Campbell, "The Spiritual Lives of Artist/Teachers," *American Educational Research Association* (Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 2003).
24. See Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis, *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

world by humanizing the curriculum and strengthening the interconnectedness of knowing through multiple modalities.[25] Through the arts, students can artistically and creatively envision a more just and loving community by attending to their own internal development, as well as to their relationships with others.

Spiritual and Pedagogical Approaches to Pre-Service Teacher Education

This section offers several examples of pedagogical approaches to teacher development/pre-service teacher education that align with the aforementioned definitions associated with the spiritual that can be applied within a secular educational context.

Pathway One: Holism and Deep Ecology, Laurel H. Campbell

Holism is an approach to education in which the focus is on student-connecting experiences.[26] Holistic education thus attempts to develop a pedagogy that is interconnected, in contrast to much of traditional education that tends to be static and fragmented. Holistic education also includes spirituality, which is dependent on the educational context and the manner in which it is introduced.

According to Ron Miller, researchers from diverse fields such as science, medicine, psychology, and social theory have suggested that a holistic approach is viable, thus offering holistic

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25. Charles Fowler, *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
26. John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

educators confirmation and new insights.[27] Holistic educators further encourage students to become active and committed citizens who believe in social justice and ethical living. How does spirituality play a part in this approach? Wright considered the idea of communal spirituality, whereby students search for meaning in their lives together with others.[28] Furthermore, bell hooks (1999) believes that communal spirituality must be taught. She states,

> To be guided by love is to live in community with all life. However, a culture of domination, like ours, does not strive to teach us how to live in community. As a consequence, learning to live in community must be a core practice for all of us who desire spirituality in education.[29]

It should be added here that living in community requires learning skills such as collaboration, cooperation, and tolerance, all of which are compatible with a holistic approach where people strive to live peacefully with others.

In schools, teachers can help students create a sense of community and access their spiritual dimension through carefully planned educational activities that enhance the possibility of students caring more for each other, the earth/environment, and their own potentiality through interconnected pedagogy. This is what psychologists Lakoff and Johnson describe as a spiritual approach, in that it seeks "deep insight into who we are, how we experience the

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27. Ron Miller, *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic* Education (Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2000).

28. Andrew Right, "The Child in Relationship: Towards a Communal Model of Spirituality," in *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, ed. Ron Best (London: Cassell, 1996), 139–149.

29. bell hooks, "Embracing freedom: Spirituality and Liberation," in *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, ed. Steven Glazer (New York: Tarcher/ Putnam, 1999), 119.

world, and how we ought to live."[30] Holistic concerns for a community of care and connectedness mirror the holistic sense of connectedness within, between intellect, emotions, and body. Together, they exemplify the relationship between the whole and the part and suggest that teaching and learning approaches need to be rooted in a larger, i.e., holistic, vision. The following example inspired my research into spirituality as interconnectedness, inside and out.

In my several years of teaching pre-service teachers, I have encountered many students who spoke of a deep concern for their students, for art, and for the act of teaching. They act out this concern in many ways, including through spiritual art that encompasses their own transformation during the process. One such example occurred in a methods course that was described in an *Art Education* journal article, "Holistic Art Education: A Transformative Approach to Teaching Art."[31] While discussing personal, holistic growth as teachers, students began to create memory boxes that represented either a loved one or their own experiences through visual art pieces. This project was recreated several times in various locations, all in college art education classes. In all cases, we realized that each person was making visible a personal and spiritual experience, sharing with others their sense of wanting to belong, connect, and transform others through visual representations. This exercise consistently created a sense of community.

What does this mean for our collective teaching practice? We come together in classrooms, sometimes as strangers and sometimes as friends, who need to relate to one another and share experiences

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30. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 551.
31. Laurel H. Campbell, "Holistic Art Education: A Transformative Approach to Teaching Art," *Art Education* 64, no. 2 (2011): 18–24.

both in and out of the classroom. The practice of searching for answers to "Who am I as a teacher or person?" is not only allowed, but strongly encouraged by an educator seeking to bring out the whole person. This means having a spiritual presence in the classroom while striving to be a person who is open to creating art that has meaning, and who is capable of representing important searches for answers to our inner questions. From this point, we create curricula that focus on forging communal acts of sharing. As stated in the aforementioned article,

> Holistic approaches to art teaching and curriculum planning address post-modern educational concerns such as multiculturalism, diversity of perspectives, respect for the individual learner, and critical thinking as strategies for helping students interact with visual images.[32]

A diversity of perspectives, in my view, includes a varied and individual concept of spirituality that can and should exist in a contemporary art classroom.

A second example of holistic practice in the art classroom, specifically a pre-service methods class, is one that I created during a summer visual art course based on fibre arts. I required the artists/educators to write a fibre arts craft curriculum that focused on social justice issues or craftivism, an approach which brings social and political issues to the forefront of art making.[33] They chose a variety of issues, including environmental degradation and endangered species; danger to sea life; bullying among students; homelessness in the local community; and the need to recycle, reuse

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32. Campbell, "Holistic Art Education," 22.
33. See Elizabeth Garber, "Craft as Activism," *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 33, no. 1 (2013): 53–66, and Betsy Greer, *The Art and Craft of Activism* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010).

and recreate with fibres and clothing. In guiding these pre-service artists/educators through this project, I recognized in them a sense of deeper understanding that conjured up thoughts of spiritual concern for others, our larger community, and the world.

They talked with each other throughout the exercise about such issues, which they were seeking to illuminate and share with the class. Each curriculum that was written included space and time for students to discuss with the class their thoughts on creating change for each problem they addressed. It was clear that these artists/educators felt positive about their chance to address issues for which they cared deeply, and this practice is in keeping with the tradition of artworks that express social or political ideas. Further, it is important for these exercises that the environment of the class feel safe for students to look inward and express outwardly their thoughts and beliefs through their works of art. Holistic education and spirituality in art education necessarily allow for the opportunity for open and thoughtful discussions that promote a personal sense of caring.

Pathway Two:
Contemplative Practices, Jane E. Dalton

Recognizing that even in "ordinary life," students come to school with spiritual issues, this pathway focuses on the benefits pre-service teachers can gain from contemplative practices which help them get in touch with their spiritual impulses and their own spiritual questions.

Beyond that, contemplative practices offer opportunities for students to create lives of purpose and meaning by providing experiences that put them at the center of their own learning, finding the material within themselves and making holistic connections to content. "Personal introspection and contemplation reveal our

inextricable connection to each other, opening the heart and mind to true community, deeper insight, sustainable living, and a more just society."[34] Contemporary contemplative pedagogy draws upon practices such as meditation, mindful sitting and walking, beholding, and silence and solitude in nature, all of which are aimed at cultivating focused attention and an inward gaze to bridge the inner world with the outer. These practices have been fundamental to wisdom traditions across time and cultures. As such, they can help dissolve divisions between different religions, but it is only recently that these practices have found their way into teaching and learning.[35]

Contemplative practices also add a missing element that enhances both the rational and sensory. Different than traditional modes of acquiring knowledge through the assimilation of information, contemplative awareness opens space for receptivity and embodied knowing: that is, knowing that is located in the lived body.[36] According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the body *and* the mind, are what understand and experience the world; the two are entwined.[37] Contemplative practice, therefore, depends on cultivating an understanding of oneself, as well as one's relationship and interdependence with others and the world. Moreover, this holistic engagement and attention foster the student finding themselves in the material. And, while many educators might wonder about the benefits

34. Daniel P. Barzbeat and Mirabai Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2013), xv.
35. See Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, and Arthur Zajonc, *When Knowing Becomes Love: Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2009).
36. Jane E. Dalton, "Artfully Aware: Contemplative Practices in the Classroom Classroom," *International Journal of Arts Education* 11 (2016): 33–40.
37. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962).

of cultivating a student's inward gaze, there can be little disagreement about teaching them to focus their attention!

Meditation, Mindfulness and Centering

One form of contemplative practice is meditation, in particular, mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness practice reaches thousands of years into the past and is often associated with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, but also has roots in all major religions that aim to cultivate an inner experience of equanimity, awareness, and connection. "Mindfulness is both a process (mindfulness practice) and an outcome (mindful awareness)."[38] As a process, mindfulness is not only a matter of the mind, but is rather holistic in both its practice and its results. Among the latter, research on the effects of mindfulness training indicates contributions to cognitive development, attention skills, and the building of executive function; but equally, it supports immune function and emotional regulation, all leading to improvement in test scores, reduction in impulsivity, and overall, an enhanced sense of well-being.[39]

Mindfulness has become increasingly popular in response to today's overactive and overly distracted lifestyles. By contrast, it means drawing awareness to the present moment, stilling the mind to absorb the experience. In schools, it enables students to take a break from their thinking mind while offering a different way of being and knowing. To engage mindfully, one becomes comfortable with being present in the moment, which is quite the opposite of what schooling

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38. Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, 95.
39. Daniel. J. Rechtschaffen, *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 4–5.

often emphasizes. Ellen Langer, in *Mindful Learning* (1997)*,* writes that,

> From kindergarten on the focus of schooling is usually on goals rather than the process by which they are achieved. This single-minded pursuit of one outcome or another […] makes it difficult to [have] a mindful attitude toward life. Questions of 'Can I?' or 'What if I can't do it?' are likely to predominate, creating an anxious preoccupation with success or failure rather than drawing on the child's natural, exuberant desire to explore.[40]

Creating a mindful experience for teaching and learning is at the core of bringing mindfulness into pre-service art teacher education. Mindfulness is about direct experience, which, in the arts, is not only relevant but beneficial to the process of ideas, materials, and maker.

The connection between meditation, mindfulness, and art has long been recognized. Rosch, for example, explains that "both meditation and the arts tap into basic intuition [...] meditation and art can illuminate each other and can do so beyond particular artistic styles or practices."[41] The experience of art, when offered as a mindful practice, thereby provides an alternative way of knowing that quiets the mind, cultivates sensory qualities, strengthens creativity, imagination and insight while also enhancing divergent thinking.[42]

Practically speaking, mindfulness in the art classroom provides a deeper connection with the material, enabling students to value the present moment and engage with full-bodied awareness, an

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40. Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 33–34.
41. Eleanore Rosch, "If You Depict a Bird, Give it Space to Fly," in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, ed. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 38.
42. See Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning,* and Rechtschaffen, *The Way of Mindful Education*.

embodied learning that involves physical, sensory, emotional, and cognitive capacities, while balancing the precision of an analytical mind with the more intuitive functions involved in affective knowing. Embodied knowing, therefore, acknowledges that the understanding of material content and experience is shaped by feelings that lie beyond the realm of objective knowledge and cognition. While such ideas may be relatively new in general education, they have long been a part of art education. For example, Kenneth Beittel explains that "art develops through the physical realm of medium and process, in and through the body […] and through a history of their interaction along with an intentional path which takes on its own purpose and reality in action."[43]

We can be mindful in many ways besides meditation; however, I believe meditation provides an entry point into cultivating awareness in pre-service teachers. Simply put, it means pausing and connecting with the ever-shifting experience at any given moment to observe the nature of our relationship to that experience in the present.

Preparing pre-service teachers to incorporate such practices requires recognizing how, in their future classrooms, they will bring their whole selves to the practice of teaching and learning. Toward that end, offering two minutes of silence and centering before beginning each class is one approach that allows pre-service teachers to leave behind, even if just for a few moments, the business of the day. At the beginning of class I provide pre-service teachers with a short meditation experience focused on the breath, a common tool for engaging mindfulness awareness aimed at centering and cultivating presence to each other and to the course material. This short and

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43. Kenneth R. Beittel, "Art for a New Age," *Visual Arts Research* 11, no. 1 (1985): 26.

simple grounding exercise has demonstrated that uniting students through simple breathing synchronizes students' attention and cultivates presence. The oftentimes chaotic energy of entering and settling into the classroom is thereby replaced by centered and focused attention, enhancing teaching and learning.

Mindfulness can also include guided visualization as a form of meditation. Offering a short, three-to-five-minute guided visualization before an art experience provides pre-service teachers with an embodied experience that informs their making and nurtures creativity and imagination. In addition, these short, guided visualizations can align with thematic curricular design around any topic, such as love, justice, beauty, nature, etc. For example, leading students in a guided visualization recalling an experience of expressing love or receiving love establishes a personal foundation for creating a work of art based on that theme. What is felt or embodied then contributes to a more expanded approach to creating from personal experience, whether painting, drawing, sculpting, or using expressive marking making. Students engage with breath, body, sensations, and the present moment. It is complex, yet it is simple. One breath, one moment, and an expanded range of experiencing, understanding, and learning is available to pre-service teachers.

Closing Thoughts

Whether or not the spiritual dimension of art education is taught explicitly, implicitly, or not at all, the "spirit" behind it, that is, the interconnectedness between us and the essential commonalities among us, are critical for education in today's schools. This is especially true as student populations become increasingly diverse. Central to that spirit is the recognition that diversity is an asset and not a deficit; that we can all learn from one

another, and that what we learn from one another feeds our shared humanity.[44]

There is an importance to educating the "spirit," which some prefer to call the "'soul,' and others the 'heart' or 'heart-mind.'"[45] We believe the discussion of the role of spirituality in education is not only essential to learning, but critical to the wholeness of both students and teachers. We, therefore, offer up a question for our pre-service teachers in hopes that this will extend to conversations beyond higher education and take place in K–12 classrooms: What kinds of research into spirituality can teachers themselves do and how can this apply to their focus on student growth as whole persons?

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44. See New York University, s.v. "An Asset-Based Approach to Education: What it is and Why it Matters," *Thought Leadership* (blog), October 28, 2018, https://teachereducation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/an-asset-based-approach-to-education-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters/.
45. John P. Miller, "Seeking wholeness," in *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground*, ed. John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, and Diana Denton (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015), 234.

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Exceptionalism in the Bible:[1] There Is Less Than Is Thought, and What There Is, Is Biblically Problematic

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When in the biblical narrative a thing is on theological grounds assigned a special status among things of its kind, students of the chapters and the verses apply to it the word "exceptional." Few would contest that the following three things qualify: the actual world among possible worlds; men and women among creatures; the nation of Israel among nations ("the chosen people"). These three are also widely regarded as foundational pillars of the Bible's worldview.

Before I get down to the main business of this essay – namely, to show that from the Bible's own perspective the exceptionalist credentials of the first two things are invalid and the stamp of approval on the third is smudged – let me field a couple of questions. One: Since, as Matthew puts it, "even the hairs of your head are all counted" (10:30), is not everything in God's world exceptional? The prepositional phrases in the characterizations of the three indicate how this flattening can be resisted. Granting that all things are exceptional is compatible with characterizing the ones that are *elevated* from among things of their kind as exceptional in the primary sense. Two: Does the sabbath day not qualify as much as the

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three listed? The sabbath is elevated among the days of the week, is it not? As reasonable as this line of questioning may be, it is easy to see that the sabbath is not as basic as the three. The final day of the primordial creation, it is designed for men and women among creatures, and its observance is singled out in the Ten Commandments as incumbent on the Israelites. I imagine that the same could be argued for other presumptive candidates.

The conception of persons dramatized in the picture of God vivifying the first man with his breath of life – in my view a conception of persons as *non-exceptionally* special – is the Bible's foundation.[2] As I see it, the Bible was written *because* the thinkers behind it came to understand themselves in this unprecedented way. Does it follow that a book devoted entirely to Israel's career would not have been produced if chosenness had the significance that many adherents to Judaism non-negotiably ascribe to it?[3] It doesn't. All that follows is that such a book, a religious history of the nation, would not sort with works that are consulted for answers to the questions that reflective people ask about what they are and about how they are to live their lives. To western culture such a book would not be what the Bible is: its charter document.

Here is the biblical status of exceptionalism as I see it:

	Actual world	Men and women	Nation of Israel
Special status	X	√	√
God-backed status	X	X	√

2. Obviously, I must show that it is interpretively mistaken to assign to God an active role in what is pictured. Otherwise, the man (and by descent from him each one of us) would qualify as *exceptionally* special. "Why, if so, is the conception unavailable to worshippers of what the Bible calls 'other gods'?" The essay in its entirety provides the answer.
3. One can cobble up such a book by selecting from biblical materials. This, we shall soon see, is what Rabbi Isaac would have us do.

With the overarching goal of establishing that the middle column is the Bible's pillar, I turn now to the task of justifying the ticks and the crosses. To begin, I put under the microscope a rabbinical disagreement about two items of my three.

Rashi Answers Rabbi Isaac

"The Torah should have begun with Exodus 12," says Rabbi Isaac. This assertion, along with Rabbi Isaac's reasoning for it, is reported in the opening entry of Rashi's commentary on the Bible:[4]

> The Bible is the charter of the Israelites, and verse 2 of Exodus 12 – "This month [Nissan, the month of liberation from Egypt] shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you" – promulgates the first law to, specifically, the nation. By contrast, the first chapter of Genesis applies as much (or as little) to the Ammonites and to the Moabites as it applies to the Israelites.[5]

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4. See Rashi on Genesis 1:1, in *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary*, trans. and annotated by M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann in collaboration with A. Blashki and L. Joseph (London: Shapiro, Vallentine and Co., 1929–1934), https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis.1.1?lang=bi&with=About&lang2= en. Rabbi Isaac is unknown to us apart from Rashi's mention.

5. Rabbi Isaac selects a verse that is about the children of Israel and that, like Genesis 1:1, is about a beginning. Usefully for Rabbi Isaac, on the traditional understanding of the calendar the creation does not take place during the month referred to in Exodus 12:2. Would God's call to Abraham not have done Rabbi Isaac's job equally well – even, for coming a good deal earlier, better? "I will make of you a great nation," God says to Abraham in verse 2 of Genesis 12. Is not the appeal of the verse augmented by the fact that "lekh lekha" (go forth) (in verse 1) resembles "bereshith bara" (in the beginning created) both in its repetition of consonants and in announcing a fresh start? There is a good reason, which I will discuss later, for Rabbi Isaac not to choose 12:1–2 as his 1:1.

In Rabbi Isaac's view, the Israelites know *bereshith* (in the beginning) that they will be the heroes of their story. This advance knowledge is based in an article of theology. *God chooses the Israelites for a favoured position, a special mission, a unique destiny*.[6] Accordingly, or so Rabbi Isaac is committed to say, if in composing *their* scriptures the scribes of other nations place Israel elsewhere than at the center, the accounts that they offer skew away from the truth.

Rashi, although in agreement that the basis of the Bible's Israel-centricity lies deeper than the fact that the chapters and the verses are by Israelites, of Israelites, and for Israelites, resists Rabbi Isaac's strictures on the creation story. "Had the Bible not commenced as it does, the people of other nations would have scoffed when the Israelites cited the Bible to back up their territorial ambitions. 'The world came into being independently of the deity who chose you. Your claim to have a God-given right to the Promised Land isn't therefore worth the parchment on which it's inked.'"[7]

Chosenness – Israelite election – is, according to Rabbi Isaac, the basic biblical doctrine. So unqualified is his commitment that he

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6. God identifies the basis for his differential treatment of the Israelites. "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you […]. It was because the Lord loved you" (Deuteronomy 7:7–8). I take it to be true that A's love for B, not C, is not favouritism towards B and bias against C.

7. Don't temporal rulers deed lands? A high level of control, that is to say, seems to be sufficient for deeding. It's possible that Rashi endorses the stronger view for a broadly political reason. His dates, 1040–1105, enclose the dates of the First Crusade, 1096–1099. "The First Crusade," Daniel J. Lasker states, "was the occasion of the initial widespread massacres of Jews in western Europe" ("The Impact of the Crusades on the Jewish-Christian Debate," *Jewish History* 13 [1999], 23). Under the circumstances, the stronger the claim on the Promised Land the better, even if the effect was mainly for co-religionists. This interpreting of the interpreter, needless to belabour, is conjectural. It implies, however, that Rashi does not at the deepest level connect the two exceptionalisms so closely.

is prepared in its name to purge God's creative work from Holy Writ. It may seem that Rashi's response – that the account of creation has a bearing on the subject and its biblical importance derives from that – enables Rabbi Isaac to have his cake and eat it too. Since the emergence of humankind is part of the creation story, it may seem, also, that those who go along with Rashi do not have to make a choice between the view of men and women as special and the view of Israel as favoured. This happy-sounding outcome is, however, as unreal as cake had when eaten. Missed is the significance of the fact that what I referred to as "the creation story" has two parts: one in Genesis 1, and the other in Genesis 2. Factor the two-parts in, and it turns out that Israelite exceptionalism must be denied basic doctrinal status.

Removing Genesis is for Rabbi Isaac removing, and retaining Genesis is for Rashi retaining, the story of the creation of the world in which we find ourselves. The legitimacy of the deeding of a piece of this world to the Israelites is what is at issue. But world-generative activity continues past the seventh day. The fashioning and enlivening of the man and woman are described in Genesis 2. It is in the course of *this* account of beginnings that the specialness of men and women emerges, not in the course of Genesis 1. Under the sun that God is said to make on the first Wednesday, either everything is special or (in my view) nothing is.

A Widespread Mistake

Rashi *mistakenly* treats the creation story in Genesis 2 as a magnification of a component of the Genesis 1 story. He has lots of company. Here, speaking the majority view is Richard Elliot Friedman:

> Like some films that begin with a sweeping shot that then narrows, so the first chapter of Genesis moves gradually from a picture of the skies

and earth down to [in the second chapter of Genesis] the first man and woman.[8]

In what Friedman refers to as "the first chapter," the man and the woman *are never mentioned*. In fact, the move from the first picture to the second, far from being gradual, is abrupt. So far as the treatment of men and women goes, Friedman, we see, *assumes* that the shift from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2 is no more than one of focus – from wide angle ("humankind") to close-up ("the man").

In what remains the best general introduction to the Book of Genesis, E. A. Speiser describes Genesis 1's relation to Genesis 2 thusly:

> The account before us [chapter 2 of Genesis] deals with the origin of life on earth, as contrasted with the preceding statement about the origins of the universe as a whole. The contrast is immediately apparent from the respective initial sentences. The first account starts out with the creation of "heaven and earth" (1:1). The present narrative begins with the making of "earth and heaven" (2:4). The difference is by no means accidental. In the other instance the center of the stage was heaven, and man was but an item in a cosmic sequence of majestic acts. Here the earth is paramount and man the center of interest […].
>
> Yet despite the difference in approach, emphasis, and hence also in authorship, the fact remains that the subject matter is ultimately the same in both versions.[9]

Speiser's assertion that Genesis 2 deals with "the origin of life on earth" embodies the same mistake that Friedman commits. Men and women apart, the only living things that rate a mention in Genesis 2

8. Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2012), Kindle Edition.
9. E. A. Speiser, *Anchor Bible Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964),18–19.

are plants and herbs. The earth figures as a source of material for making the man and a locale where, once made, he can go about his business. True, in Genesis 2:19 God also forms "every animal of the field and every bird of the air." This does not happen, however, until the man's need for companionship is noticed.

"[T]he origin of life on earth" referred to in the passage above is the origin described in Genesis 1. Like Friedman, Speiser does not allow Genesis 2 to speak for itself.

Commenting on the inversion of Genesis 1's "heaven and earth" to Genesis 2's "earth and heaven," Robert Alter describes Genesis 2 as "more vividly anthropomorphic":

> Whatever the disparate historical origins of the two accounts, the redaction gives us a harmonious cosmic overview of creation and then a plunge into the technological nitty-gritty and moral ambiguity of human origins. [10]

Again, we have a bird's eye view, Genesis 1, and a worm's eye view, Genesis 2. Again, also, uniformity of subject-matter is assumed.

How does the error affect Rashi's answer to Rabbi Isaac? It makes good sense to say that if the world is God's product, he has the right to apportion it as he wishes. And so, for the reason that Rashi gives, it looks like the Genesis 1 part of the creation story supports chosenness. The fly in the ointment is the if-clause. The complex forces behind Genesis 1, when resolved, resolve to a naturalistic, God-free, story.[11] The Bible only appears to hold that the world in

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10. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 7n4.

11. Thus, my claim that the biblical account does not mark the creation as exceptional (the reference is to Genesis 1). One can read Maimonides to support a reading on which the Bible says what the thinkers behind the text do not mean. An exoteric story of the creation of the natural world *for the masses* is laid atop an esoteric story of the natural world's eternity *for the learned*. In *Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the Medieval Jewish Philosophers of*

which we live and breathe is special; that it has a non-natural origin; that it is, for its being, beholden to God. Plainly, if this world is not God's handiwork, it cannot be argued that he can deed it to this nation or to that nation because he created it. As to the part of the creation story in Genesis 2, for a reason that I adumbrate in a moment, it too cannot support chosenness.

The account of the advent of men and women in Genesis 2 is *not* naturalistic. The arguments that work to establish that the story of the emergence of humankind in Genesis 1 is naturalistic do not transpose to the second chapter. If so, it may seem that Rashi can use the distinction between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 to his advantage. But although non-naturalism and theology *are* linked in the minds of the thinkers behind the Bible – quite apart from the interest in the Bible that we have, are they not linked in our minds too? – in the case of Genesis 2 the link is fragile. Under analysis it emerges that Genesis 2's non-naturalism, the position in the text that readers casually express in the words "men and women, qua inspired with God's breath, are partly outside nature," has *no* theological content. That, I mean, is the position that analysis uncovers in the Bible itself.[12] Also, this time more directly, given that what Genesis 2 says goes no less for individual Ammonites and for individual Moabites than it goes for individual Israelites, how could the Genesis 2 case,

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Provence (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2015), 49, Howard Kreisel offers this telling remark. "Maimonides had every reason to present his true [Aristotelian] position on this issue in a […] veiled manner […]. By proving creation, Maimonides has removed the philosophic obstacles to a literal reading of Scripture on these issues, though he nevertheless rejects such a reading on many points quite explicitly."

12. What kind of position does the Bible hold about human specialness? It's a philosophical position, sorting with what is found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The thinkers behind the Bible are advancing a thitherto unrecognized category of being. Their revolution is ontological, not theological. The god of the Bible, God, thitherto unrecognized, serves as the vehicle for introducing the category and functions as its emblem.

whether or not it has theological content, lend support to Israelite exceptionalism? So Rashi's middle option has to be excluded from a list of real possibilities.

In giving strong precedence to one of the positions about special status, the reading that I sketched resembles, formally, Rabbi Isaac's. As I indicated a few paragraphs back, the creation story of Genesis 1 does not in my understanding assign special status to the world whose coming-into-being is narrated in Genesis 1. As for chosenness: since it conflicts with the special status of men and women, defence of the Bible's integrity requires that *it* be shunted to the margins, perhaps even purged.

Important to establishing the primacy of the view of men and women as special in the Bible; to showing, as the Rabbis would put it, that among all the things in creation individual persons are nearest and dearest to God; is showing how sharply the account of human origins in Genesis 2 differs from the corresponding thing in Genesis 1.[13]

PART I: GENESIS 1 AND GENESIS 2

A Wrong Answer to *the* Question

This question arises for those who view the Bible as Israel-centric. *What is it that makes the nation of Israel special among*

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13. The focus of the argument in this essay is the proposition that Genesis 1's treatment *of living things* is naturalistic. A similar interpretation of Genesis 1's treatment *of the non-living part* of the creation is given in several discussions of mine. An early version is found in "Artificial Respiration: What does God really do in the beginning?" *New Blackfriars* 99, no. 1083 (September 2018): 578–600. A fuller version is the (as-yet unpublished) essay "Genesis 1 and Genesis 2: Interpreting the Beginnings."

nations? The answer given is *God's choice*. A similar question arises for those who, like me, view the Bible as person-centric.

God made the other creatures. God made the species that comprises men and women. The nations differ one from the other. The species differ each from each. It is only to be expected that men and women will have top billing in their own story. This does not however mark them as special – not, that is to say, other than on their own marquee. If cows had a charter, it, the Greek philosopher Xenophanes quipped, would be vaccocentric. *What is it in the Bible that makes men and women special among creatures?* An answer that corresponds to "God's choice" in the case of the Israelites is needed, and from this answer it must follow that men and women are at the center of the story of the cow in the way that the Israelites are according to Rabbi Isaac and to Rashi at the center of the story of the Ammonites and of the story of the Moabites.

Readers will say that verse 26 of Genesis 1 contains the answer, and the answer, they will say, *is* a version of "God's choice." *God gives dominion to humankind.* In the usual reading, it follows that the vaccocentric scripture *would* be faulty.

Here are three grounds for questioning the reading, two of them text-based, the third conceptual. One: The verse does not say what readers always say that it says, namely that God gives dominion to humankind. Written is "let them [sc. humankind] have dominion." True, "letting A have B" often means "giving B to A." But there's another sense that often attaches to the phrase: "not taking B away from A." Johnny's parents hear a muffled ring. They find one of the devices in his school bag. "Honey, let him have the cellphone," says the mother to the agitated father. "Let them keep the dominion that they have." That, in fact, is what God is saying in verse 26. Two: Dominion, whatever the possession of it comes to (what it comes to will be made clear shortly), has nothing to do with the position that individual persons are special in the creation. It has to do only with

human difference. Specialness with regard to our sector of being does not appear until Genesis 2, whose story about men and women differs fundamentally from the Genesis 1 story. Three: The claim is easily understood that the Israelites would not have a special status if God had not chosen them. Obviously, this does not mean that the nation of Israel would not have existed independently of God's election of it. It means that the nation of Israel would have been just one nation among the many. What however could it mean to say that men and women would have been just like the other animals if God had not given them dominion? In imagining the truth of what the if-clause states, we are not imagining men and women who are deprived of something that we men and women have. We are imagining a world in which there are no men and no women.[14] Such a world is possible. Evolution might have taken a different path. This, however, is not a world in which the Bible has any interest. "Couldn't God have given dominion to cows?" Had he done that, the species would have comprised boviform persons rather than persons of simian appearance.

The difference between the case of the nation and the case of the human species is clear. Being chosen is not essential to being Israelite. Like the singing ability of the Welsh, it's an add-on. Having dominion is by contrast constituent to humankind.

God, we may conclude, has nothing to do with what, in Genesis 1, is described as the characteristic that sets men and women apart. It is no objection that the text puts the words "Let humankind have dominion" into God's mouth. Indeed, we now appreciate better how good a thing it is that "let them have" can have the meaning that I specified with the vignette about Johnny. "Let the world be structured in a way that allows such a species to emerge." The world,

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14. In footnote 20, I try to give sense to what not letting men and women keep the dominion that they have would amount to.

of course, is that way. Not that the thinkers responsible for the text could have predicted the emergence of our species from the initial chaos. Rather, they have the benefit of hindsight. Here the species in fact is! *Ab esse ad posse valet consequentia*.

Genesis 1 and Darwin

The opening chapter of Genesis involves no divine contribution in regard to men and women. "Let them have dominion" does not express a donation from on high. To determine what if anything God does do to and for men and women, I will now examine more closely the relations between the two cosmogonic chapters of Genesis.

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 do not relate as would two different perspectives on the same thing. They are two quite different stories of the beginning, neither dispensable.

Observe a pair of reversals as between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. One: In Genesis 1, first come the locations for things to occupy. Only afterwards do the occupants appear. In Genesis 2, only after the man is "formed" (6) is his initial abode, the garden, "planted" (8). Two: In Genesis 1, humankind comes into existence on the afternoon of the sixth and final day of activity. In Genesis 2, the primary creative effort consists in fashioning the man and then in fashioning the woman.

A reflection of Rashi's answer to Rabbi Isaac is discernible. In Genesis 2 the world is made for its human inhabitants. This is the point whose denial Rashi advances as underlying the position.[15] The implication is that the case in Genesis 1 differs.

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15. Rashi's answer, transposed to this context, might only give men and women justification for living in a tamed, artificial, cultivated, place. Their position in the wilds would not *ipso facto* be secured. Other animals might have an equal place (in the Genesis 1 account) in it. Obviously, this would also have

Up until Friday morning, is not the world as a whole the location created for the things that first see the light later that day? It is not. Genesis 1's story can be reconstructed along Darwinian lines. In the story, the locations precede the occupants. Sticking to living things, this, dimly, is the point that nature abhors squatters.[16] Each species comes to occupy the niche that it occupies because its members can flourish there at least as well as, and usually better than, the members of other species. Genesis 2 resists being read thus. Here, the order, both temporal and logical, is the reverse.

If Genesis 1's story of humankind is a naturalistic (i.e., God-free) story, what is it doing in the Bible? Part of the answer is that the thinkers behind it cannot believe that accounts like Darwin's are explanatorily fit to deal with the non-human world. The selection of occupants for locations does not, they think, come about naturally. Since God's role in Genesis 2 is not dispensable in this way – the creation of the man and of the woman, and the creation of the garden, are, ineluctably, purposive acts – they run the two accounts together. Might *this* be the underlying, tactical, thought? Given that the non-naturalism of Genesis 2 is basic, the more weak spots there are in the naturalistic story the better.

Look again at the fact that the Genesis 1 account first gives the locations, and only afterwards the location-fillers. The text does not describe God as fitting out the locations for the locals. I doubt that anyone would say that God, an omniscient deity, knows without trial-and-error that fish would do poorly aloft. In Genesis 2, by contrast, God plants the garden for the man and the woman to live in.

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implications for how extensively men and women enclose and for how intensively they tame and cultivate.

16. The Bible would characterize the Canaanites as squatters in Israel.

The garden, a cultivated place, is the product of design.[17] Absent an agent to "[t]ill it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15), it reverts to wilderness.[18]

Prior to Darwin, the mechanism was a mystery. There are signs enough in the text to discourage immediately taking the mystery as a final biblical thing. The questions needing answers are these. *Where* is this fundamental difference stated in the Bible? *What* is this fundamental difference?

"Have you not," I expect some readers to complain, "passed over the fact that in the Genesis 1 account God intervenes on behalf of men and women? Them, and them alone among creatures, God fashions (26) 'in [his] image, according to [his] likeness.'" I have not passed it over. The likeness of which verse 26 speaks is the commodity referred to as "dominion." To shake the thought that "being according to God's likeness" and "having dominion" name two things, suffice it to do two things. Attend to the fact that verse 27, the poetic reprise of verse 26, mentions "image and likeness" but not "dominion." Consider that "dominion" is cognate with "Dominus," a Latinate denomination for God.

When we – men and women – reflect on our condition in the world, we perceive ourselves as oddities. Our species is odder relative to the other species than any one of the latter is odd relative to any other. Certainly, we stand over-and-against the rest; not in the sense that we rule (a pitched battle has been waged with quite a few viruses over the centuries: to the next we might fall), but in the sense

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17. The garden turns out not to be a place that is ideal for the man. Here, God does experiment, as we do with our dwellings and acreages. A major issue in Genesis, once the garden is in the rearview, is whether the city is a habitat in which men and women, understood as per Genesis 2, can flourish. There is no such "whether" about trees in the natural world. They are not found where they are unable to flourish.

18. In the debate that William Paley started, it is not disputed that watches are products of design. Only the alleged parallel between (say) the human eye and a Rolex is disputed. That the garden aligns with the Rolex is agreed.

that we do not fit. The mentioned features of Genesis 1, although they seem to have theological anchorage, are in the first instance used to flesh out that antecedent sense of difference. Men and women are represented as standing to the rest of the creation as God stands to the creation as a whole. How does God stand to the creation as a whole? He stands *outside* it. Could there be a clearer way of not fitting in than to be located on the outside? God, qua creator of nature, is in virtue of that very fact apart from nature, essentially so. Thus God is (by the reflexivity of likeness) Godlike, and God, qua creator, dominates. It is clear, however, that the coming-into-being of humankind in Genesis 1 is understood to be the coming-into-being of a natural species. Men and women, then, belong to a natural species with a striking difference. *The fitness of the species is its misfitness*. The theological characterizations ("likeness and image," "dominion") are attempts to bring out the difference, which is *antecedently* understood.

Observe in this regard that God lets humankind have dominion only after the whole is created. Were the rest adjusted to their needs, this would be coal to Newcastle. Moreover, men and women would merely displace the creature highest at noon on Thursday.

Indubitably, the text wavers. The representation in Genesis 1 reacts to the strong (extra-scriptural) feeling that we, men and women, are more different from lions than lions are different from wolves; even more different from lions than lions are different from earthworms. The strong (extra-scriptural) feeling is that we are qualitatively different. Neither theological note helps here, however. To say that men and women are like God is not to say that they, men and women, have creative power over the rest of nature. They do not. To say that men and women have dominion is not to say that men and women are dominators of the rest of nature. They are not. Those who appeal to theology explanatorily would agree that theology does not

account for there being a difference. A main point of contrast has to do with the matter of location and occupant. *Only the non-human creatures have distinctive habitats.* This feature of men and women, their cosmopolitanism, can be characterized as Godlikeness: God is above the whole, and in that sense ranges over all of it. Do not Darwinians say that the evolution of higher intelligence is what fits men and women to depart their native land and their parental home in a way that no other creature does, or can? This is the idea to which the Bible is putting words with the theological infusion. I said, "higher intelligence." We could say, "dominating intelligence" and then opposable-thumb a ride on the etymology of "dominion" to construe this, correctly I maintain, as "intelligence that extends the domain." To have dominion, then, is not to dominate. To have dominion is to be unrestricted to a specific domain. And this *is* to be Godlike.[19]

After the human species is up and running, God, it is written, "blessed them" (Gen. 1: 28). "Does this not," some readers will ask, "count against the naturalistic reading of the creation?" In what I see as a *deliberate* move to prevent the question from being asked, the Bible, just six verses earlier, had applied the same words to fish. "God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Gen. 1: 22). "Do you really think," I ask these readers, "the Bible is suggesting that we are mistaken to treat fish in a naturalistic way?"

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19. To the criticism that "dominion" and its cognates are too distant from the Hebrew to be enlisted interpretively, I respond thus. In the original, the word that I am glossing with "dominion" and its cognates is based on the infinitive "r-d-h": literally, "to descend." In its biblical use, the word carries the sense "to come down [hard] upon." This is entirely consistent with what I'm saying: 1) The claim is that by virtue of their character, men and women affect the equilibrium of non-human things. Which indeed they do, usually by interfering in a way that has negative consequences: destruction of habitat, mass predation, etc. 2) And men and women do "enter the niches/domains of non-human things" from outside. "From above" is the theological version of "from outside."

The giving of the blessing to humankind responds to the fact that the species does not have a specific niche, domain, or habitat, and hence, since the members by nature move from the known into the unknown, propagating their genes requires some luck. Applying the blessing to fish is a clever way of making the point that not having a niche does not take the species out of nature. The point is that one natural species, the one to which we belong, exhibits a plasticity lacking in all other species. Oysters have their shells. The world, heavens and earth, dry land and wet areas, is *our* oyster.[20]

Genesis 2: The Fundamental Difference

This concludes the brief for the proposition that humankind is no less natural than everything else dealt with in the Genesis 1 story. In Genesis 2, the shakiness about the <location, things for location> structure in Genesis 1 is gone. It's <thing, location for

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20. The fish move *every which way* in their watery world: up and down, left and right, forward and backward, diagonally. Of men and women too, it can be said that they have no set course, as by contrast do the sun and the moon. The world of the fish is in this respect a model. Men and women, for lacking a set course, can go wrong without outside interference. (See Robert Sacks, *The Lion and the Ass: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* [n.p.: 1970], 43, https://archive.org/details/RobertSacksACommentaryOnTheBookOfGenesis/mode/2up). Having dominion, I said, is an essential feature of humankind, and on the basis of its having this status I concluded that God could not give it to men and women. Being what they are, they (cannot fail to) have it. Cognizant of the difficulty of drawing the line between the invariant and the variable, the philosopher in me is prepared to pressure this claim. *Could* God have made men and women in such a way that they would lack dominion? What if men and women needed to be at longitude A or at latitude B to survive? That would keep them out of the niches of (many) other creatures. But would it not then have to be the case that their intelligence and resourcefulness would not provide them with the wherewithal to wander? Maybe they would have to be stupider, so much stupider as literally to be hairless apes. The multiple counterfactuals here signal how difficult it is to evaluate the suggestion.

thing>. And the only thing is a creature whose sort (species) is brought into being on the afternoon of Genesis 1's day six.

All this, important though it is for extracting the Bible's message, is only preparatory. The underlying difference between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 explains the reversal of order. The difference is implicit in the shift from the plural syntax of Genesis 1 to the singular syntax of Genesis 2.

Genesis 1 operates on the level of the species. It does this both for non-human things and for men and women.[21] In Genesis 1, God says "Let us make humankind in our image" (26). "Humankind" is not, grammatically, plural in number. But it is not, semantically, singular. It is a type term, a generic term, as is the subject phrase in "The turkey is America's national fowl." "Humankind" is a compendious label for all men and women.[22] In this sense, it is semantically plural. Here is the NRSV's verse 27: "so God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male

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21. The death of all the non-human animals, save for those aboard the ark, is not viewed in the Bible with dismay. This is not because biblical thought is Cartesian, classifying animals as machines. According to the Bible, non-human things are correctly thought of in species terms. No species perishes due to the Flood. When it comes to our species, the text is problematic. The description of Noah as "blameless in his [wicked] generation" (Gen. 6:9) is, we feel, an attempt to get away with murder. How can we not think of particular people, including innocent children, drowning? The same unease grips us regarding the sulphureous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Speaking for us, Abraham pleads with God (Gen. 18:23): "Will you […] sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" The thinkers behind the Bible, with their complex agenda, are trying hard to disarm our human sympathies. If some species is harmful to us, we would not object to its deliberate extinction even if there are a few members who do us no harm. Surgeons remove healthy tissue at the margins of a malignancy. The case of the Amalekites does not fit what I am saying here. But despite heroic rabbinical attempts to finesse it, the injunction to remove them from the earth down to the last animal comes from a place that is hard to access.
22. "The X is Y," where "the X" is a type term, has more or less the logical character of the typical analytic philosopher's claim "A necessary condition for being an instance of X is being an instance of Y."

and female he created them." The original has the Hebrew (third person) singular pronoun in place of the first "them," and it has the Hebrew (third person) plural pronoun in place of the second. There is no inconsistency. *Pace* the NRSV, the first pronoun is in apposition to "humankind," the type term, not to the same plural "male and female" to which the NRSV's second "them" refers back. Although the singular pronoun is, therefore, syntactically accurate, the whole sentence is, semantically, plural. The subsequent verses are clear of all this pronominal shifting.

In Genesis 2 God creates "the man."[23] The word that serves as the type term in 1:26 appears here with the definite article.[24] It remains thus throughout the chapter. The NRSV is far off target here. Obviously, the translation is bad. Worse follows. The NRSV of Genesis 2 continues using the type term. Here is verse 7. "[T]hen the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living thing." The Hebrew word translated as "man" in "formed man" is the same as the word translated as "the man" in "the man became a living thing." In both cases, we have a definite article + common noun. The verse should be translated "[T]hen the Lord God formed the man & co."

The NRSV fosters the impression that the acts of creation described in 2:7 and in 1:26 are identical. Genesis 2's whole point is

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23. Even when it would be natural to use the plural, e.g., in verse 18 where God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone," the Bible sticks to the usual singular form.

24. English translations render as "Adam" what, in Hebrew, is almost always the definite description "the man." Although the proper name is often a mistake, use of it won't necessarily mislead, since the definite description refers to a particular. In "Splitting the Adam: The Usage of ʾĀadām In Genesis I-V," *Studies in the Pentateuch*, Series: *Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements, Volume 41 (1990), Richard H. Hess identifies proper/personal name uses of "Adam" in Genesis 4:25 and in the genealogy of chapter 5.

however that men and women do not comprise a species among species. Men and women are a set of individuals.[25]

The NRSV's rendering – misrendering – corresponds to the understanding – misunderstanding – of Rashi and of Rabbi Isaac. Running Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 together,[26] they miss the biblical point.

This, then, is the basic view of the Bible. It lays bare the root meaning of the claim in Genesis 2 that God breathes his breath of life into the man whom he forms. The constituents of the human sector of being are autonomous individuals. *The autonomous person is the rock on which the Bible is based.* Why God's breath? Because God is one. To have God's kind of life is to be genuinely one.[27] This

25. Speiser's translation, *Anchor Bible Genesis,* 14, gives both occurrences of "ha-adam" in verse 7 as "man." But then, in verse 8, the same Hebrew is rendered "the man." This, in reverse, elides the theoretical difference between Genesis 2 and Genesis 1.

26. Rashi knows Hebrew, does he not? Heirs to massive scholarship, the NRSV's translators probably know it even better. Actually, there is a pertinent difference, but it only makes Rashi's commission of the error seem worse. The NRSV's translators are native English speakers, as were those behind the Authorized Version. In English, the second person singular personal pronoun is identical to the second person plural pronoun: "you." Too, the possessive pronominal forms are the same: "your." Like Hebrew, the non-Hebrew languages with which Rashi had direct contact distinguish the forms.

27. Being one is not the same as being unique, i.e., being one of a kind. Genesis 1 contains several things, like the sun and the moon, which are (thought of as) unique. A mark of one-ness is non-fungibility. Consider the $20 bill in your wallet. Any other $20 dollar bill would serve you equally. The same goes for the cashier at the supermarket or your plumber. Neither the sun nor the moon is in this sense one. Consider now a marital partner, or a child. God, in the Book of Job, is said to make the protagonist whole again. He remarries. He fathers more children. But the person who was Job's wife before he was afflicted, and the persons who were Job's children, are gone forever. To be sure, the restoration cannot realistically occur in any other way. The writers seem sensitive to this, sticking to relational terms ("brothers," "sisters," "children") in describing the successor persons. If persons were fungibles, our sense of the problem here would be merely sentimental.

one-ness is absent from Genesis 1. Genesis 1's (natural) world is a system: a place for everything and everything in its place. That is what God's declaration at the end that it is "very good" (1:31) means.

In Genesis 1, the creation of human beings is the creation of the biological species, with its striking difference. Everywhere is *its* (really: "their") place.

In presenting the case against Rashi, I remarked that the doctrine of human specialness is a position about the kind of being that individual men and individual women have; an ontological doctrine, it lines up with the project of categorial analysis that Aristotle pursues in Metaphysics Z. I can now return to this.

The Bible tells the Genesis 2 story as a story about how individual men and individual women come to be. Its operative content lies, however, in the specification of what each human person is. The position is that each of them is something that no natural thing is or can be: one. Obviously, to say that God imparts to each of them his one-ness presupposes an understanding of one-ness. The fact that one-ness is associated in the biblical story with the central subject of (Western) theology does not make it a theological concept. In fact, it would be truer to say that the antecedent understanding of *our* one-ness – understood as a characteristic that sets us apart from all the other creatures – dictates the biblical characterization of the deity than to say the reverse.

To cap this off, here are a few lines about how the treatment of dominion in Genesis 1 and the treatment of one-ness in Genesis 2 differ and how they are alike. Differ: God-likeness in Genesis 1 has an analogical sense. A non-physical thing cannot literally be "above," or "outside." In Genesis 2, men and women have exactly what God has. God is one, and so is each of them. Each of them – each of us – is in the Bible's view God in miniature. Alike: In neither case does the relationship require that God give anything to the world.

Rabbi Isaac is right about Genesis 1. But his reasoning is not. The Bible is not Israel-centric. It is particular-centric.[28] Genesis 1, particular-free, does not have to do with men and women as at the most basic level each of us conceives themself. Genesis 2 does.

In my philosophical reading over the last while, I have come across the error. This signals how broad the misunderstanding of the Bible is spread about. I will give one instance.

G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, commenting on their compilation of passages from the Presocratic philosophers, remark on a similarity between Greek and Babylonian cosmogonies and Genesis.[29] "[T]he abstract Elohim of the [Genesis 1] is replaced by the fully anthropomorphic and much cruder Jahweh of [Genesis 2]." Since Greek "rational" thinking moves in the direction of the general and the abstract, Kirk and Raven find the "anthropomorphic" god in Genesis 2 "much cruder" and "more primitive." But the two chapters are *not* perspectives on the same thing. Genesis 2 is making the ontological point whose theological expression is monotheism. The deity of Genesis 2 is the monotheistic deity. The monotheistic deity is the principle of particularity.

Among the Believers

I quoted, critically, several commentators/interpreters who, as Rashi does, run Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 together. But there are

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28. My preferred word for an autonomous entity is "particular." The choice is not ideal, since "particular" calls up "part" and "particle." But the *prima facie* preferable alternative, "individuals,' has a recognized philosophical use. "Particular-centric" and "human-centric" are effectively interchangeable, since men and woman are the only particulars in creation.

29. *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 35–36.

those whose treatments do not steam-roller the distinction. Here is Robert Sacks:

> [T]he author or redactor thought it necessary to include both [Genesis 1 and Genesis 2]. This decision implies that he did not believe either one of the accounts to be literally true […]. Two possibilities remain open. Either he believed one of them to be true but was not sure which, or, as seems more likely, the author […] presented us with two accounts, each of which reveals certain aspects of the foundations while obscuring others. Perhaps he thought it was not possible for man to give a single and complete account of the beginning.[30]

Like the other commentators/interpreters, Sacks endorses the Documentary Hypothesis (DH) as the model which best explains the origins and composition of the Bible. The question for interpreters who accept DH is a pointed one. "How could a text assembled from documents produced at different times by different hands for different purposes in different parts of the Israelite world have a single meaning?" As we've seen, Friedman, Speiser and Alter maintain that the whole comprising Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, which all DH-ers assign to different sources, is interpretable. But this – interpretability – they take to require that the two chapters differ only superficially, in emphasis, for instance. Sacks is at least open to the idea that whoever put the whole together was imparting with the whole, the message that reality lacks unity at the most basic level. A distant parallel would be quantum theory and relativity theory. To say that physical theory needs both is not to say that the physical world is uninterpretable. It's to say that the complexity of the physical world goes right to the bottom.

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30. Sacks, *The Lion and the Ass*, 48. Although Sacks appreciates that the two stories are not in harmony, he is hard-pressed to locate the dissonance outside the mind.

I explained why I take that view about the Bible. The anthropology of Genesis 1, which deals with the species, humankind, is fundamentally different from the anthropology of Genesis 2, which deals with individual men and individual women, and neither is dispensable.[31] I will return to the explanation after indicating how the view can help us understand better the Bible's position on a few crucial matters.

The Bible has been accused of placing men and women so much at the center as to ignore the environment, except as it impinges on their welfare. A high-profile prosecutor is the American historian and ecologist Lynn White Jr., who argues that a main root of current environmental problems is Judeo-Christian arrogance towards nature.[32] The Bible, as I just said, distinguishes humankind as a biological species (Genesis 1) from individual men and women (Genesis 2). Does White (who has the Genesis 1 giving of dominion in mind) think that humankind's niche-freedom is arrogance? We are talking about a species characteristic, and there is nothing anthropocentric about that. Would White say that it is a nerve on our part to have opposable thumbs? Indeed, individual men and women, inspired with God's breath of life, can limit the effects of (God-like) humankind's niche-freedom by restricting men and women from encroaching on certain habitats. It is not the species that is

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31. Leo Strauss seems to take such a view: "human nature is composed of two root tendencies in tension with one another." But, as I will argue, Strauss misunderstands the character of the tension in Genesis. (My discussion of Strauss draws on Jonathan Cohen's "Strauss, Soloveitchik and the Genesis Narrative: Conceptions of the Ideal Jew as Derived from Philosophical and Theological Readings of the Bible," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 5 [1995]: 99–143. The quotation about human nature is from page 102 of Cohen's essay. For reasons of space, I will not discuss Soloveitchik.)

32. See Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967), 1203–1207. See also footnotes 15 and 17.

behind attempts nowadays to emulate Noah in attempting to prevent endangered species from going extinct.

The distinction between the two chapters is also relevant to the vexed problem of evil. The Book of Job does not examine human-caused evil. The issue is natural evil: being struck by lightning, contracting a terminal illness, and so forth. The distinction enables us to absolve God of responsibility or of complicity. (Note that the harm to Job is inflicted "out of the presence of the Lord" [1:12].) In fact, there's no evil in nature. The death of an antelope in the jaws of a lion is good for the antelope *and* for the lion. Should the antelope evade the lion, that too benefits the herd *and* the pride. The natural world, described as "very good," is a system in dynamic equilibrium.[33]

Sacks' reading, which is receptive to (if not acceptive of) such applications, is indebted to Leo Strauss. But Sacks steers clear of Strauss's defence of (as Strauss sees it) the Bible's revelatory character, and so do I. Drawing on the preceding analysis, I will distill what Strauss says and indicate how I diverge.

The Bible, for Strauss, is, axiomatically, a religious work. Thus the contrast, with which Strauss's name is so closely associated, of Jerusalem and Athens. And thus, his defence of revelation. In my reading of Genesis, the issue of a revelatory source of truth simply does not arise. Genesis 1 is a naturalistic account, and God's role in Genesis 2 is a dramatized way of saying something ontological that can be said without reference to a deity. The something may not be Athenian, but that only makes it non-philosophical if we cede reason to Athens.[34] Indeed, I have an answer to the question that Strauss thinks unanswerable: "'Who states 'In the beginning'?" It is the

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33. See Mark Glouberman, "'Where Were You?' God, Job, and the Quinizer," *The Heythrop Journal* 56, no. 1 (2014): 1–14.
34. In "Deities and Categories," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 8 (2023), I identify what Athens

person who first comes reflectively to understand the new categorization. Among the Bible's *dramatis personae*, that person is Abraham. (See footnote 42.) To understand Abraham's insight, one needs here to keep Genesis 1 apart from Genesis 2. As the naturalized reading of Genesis 1 indicates, the chapter gives us a version of the (pagan) creation story that was accepted in Abraham's native land and in his father's house.[35] It is in Genesis 2 that the narrator offers the new view, the view that involves departing that land and that house and setting out on God's way.[36] In effect: Abram : Abraham :: Genesis 1 : Genesis 2.

Strauss sees in the Bible's story of the genesis of men and women an account not only of how we came to be but also of what we, essentially, are. And what he finds in the two opening chapters are two different aspects of human nature.

The description in Genesis 1 of humankind as uniquely among creatures fashioned in God's image contains, Strauss maintains, the characterization of men and women as "the most quickened and enlivened of the creatures – the most like the living God Himself."[37] But what do we have in these words other than a turbo-charged description of the niche-freedom to which the Bible's attribution of dominion to humankind boils down? Moreover, qua species characteristic, it is not something that individuals can (choose to) emulate or shun, any more than they can (choose to) emulate or

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(represented by Aristotle) is missing. God, in being "one," is, as I said earlier, the emblem of the missing category.

35. All interpreters recognize that Genesis 1 borrows motifs from Babylonian materials. What is not recognized is that Genesis 1 de-mystifies this material. It does not replace it. See the remark about Maimonides quoted in footnote 11.

36. An early development of this line is found in my essay "The First Professor of Biblical Philosophy," *Sophia* 52 (2013): 503–519.

37. Cohen, "Strauss, Soloveitchik and the Genesis," 108.

deviate from having a functionless vermiform appendix.[38] I suppose that we might, in a poetic mood, describe as "more lively" a (kind of) creature that lives in more places than other (kinds of) creatures; whose life shows great variety of locale. (Have we not descended to the ocean floor and walked on the moon?) This does not mean that a person uninterested in travelling is turning their back stiff-necked on their god-likeness.

In his reading of Genesis 2, Strauss singles out the "inclination for untrammeled inquiry."[39] Needless to say, many persons are very little so inclined, and perhaps not very much the worse for that. But it is a characteristic of each and every person who lives a normal span to set out on their own; to depart the parental fold, and one can read the story of Adam and Eve as a story of having one's nose rubbed in some harsh realities as one takes control of one's life. *Pace* Strauss, disobedience is not therefore what Genesis 2 denounces. Reverent subservience is not being pitted against prideful self-assertion. God says to the woman: "What is this that you have done?" (2:13) Although this is always read as accusatory, it can be read as voicing regret and dismay – regret at the end of innocence and dismay at the difficulties that impend for the newly-enlightened

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38. Strauss applies unmodified "man" to the human sector of being in both Genesis 1 and of Genesis 2. Consider Cohen's paraphrase, "In [Genesis 1], it appears that man and woman were created simultaneously; in [Genesis 2], man was created first and woman fashioned from one of his ribs" ("Strauss, Soloveitchik and the Genesis," 107). This commits the error that I charged against Friedman, Speiser, and Alter. It is not man who is created in Genesis 2; it is the man, "Adam" we call him. And since the topic of Genesis 1 is the origin of species, how could male and female not come as a package? Indeed, in Genesis 1, *the sex difference is stated only of human beings*. This falls into place once we appreciate that men and women are also thought of as individuals – the topic of Genesis 2. Pets aside, we do not think of non-human animals in this way. The Bible's point would therefore get lost if in Genesis 1 it were said of them too that they are sexed.
39. Cohen, "Strauss, Soloveitchik and the Genesis," 111.

as a result. "Look what you have gone and done. That part of your life is now over. You are on your own, and you will have to face the music."

I will lower the curtain on this perfunctory description with two comments. One: The act of disobedience is a dramatized way of accentuating the autonomy that being inspired with God's breath imparts. That inspiration is the giving of one-ness which would otherwise not be present in the physical world.[40] Two: To follow God's way is to break free of the thitherto dominant way. Abraham is enjoined to depart his native land and his father's house. This, *mutatis mutandis*, is what the enjoiner had done.

PART II ABRAHAM AND CHOSENNESS

The Goldilocks Zone

Cosmologists speak of *the Goldilocks Zone*: the region in the field of a star in which from the standpoint of temperature life as we know it is possible. Framed in these terms, the position that I endorse is that the natural is too cold, the national, too hot, to support biblical life. The Bible's center lies in the character of individual men and individual women. Individual men and individual women are the only things in the creation inspired with God's breath – whatever, ultimately, that comes to. But this inspiration is as true of individual Ammonites and of individual Moabites as it is of Reuben, of Simeon, of Levi, and of Judah. Nations, if Godlike, can be Godlike only in the same borrowed sense.

Exceptionalism with regard to the actual world is not a position that the Bible takes, however much it seems to be one on a quick reading. In this part of the essay, Israelite exceptionalism,

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40. I elaborate on this in Part II. See footnote 53.

although it is certainly a position that the Bible takes, will be shown to be advanced in a highly ambiguous and even, ultimately, self-undermining way.

Often it is prudent, even necessary, for the originators of a new way to focus their mission on a small, tightly-knit, group. Unless nurtured for a time in a nursery, the delicate shoots might quickly perish. Abraham, (represented as) encountering resistance in his early attempts to spread the word, does in fact turn kinwards. But if this *situational* need is what lies at its basis, chosenness is, from the Bible's own perspective, a stop-gap. Which is how I see the Bible to be. But rather than being replaced as it should when the time comes, the nursery becomes the permanent domicile. And as is only to be expected, in that domicile a large number of customs and usages develop that are peculiar to its dwellers.[41]

At the center of the Bible's center is a combination of Genesis 2 (the creation of the first man and of the first woman), Genesis 12 (the beginning of Abraham's mission), and Exodus 20 (the Commandments). Together, the three – the first in ontological terms, the second in a historical register, the third in practical terms – set out the basic principle.[42]

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41. The representation (in Genesis 12) of Pharaoh as appropriating Abraham's wife Sarah, whom he, Pharoah, finds "very beautiful" (14), inflects the idea of an outsider's receptivity to the group as immorality – a violation of Commandment Ten. This seems to signal an unwillingness to transplant the shoots outside the hothouse even after they have become sturdy enough to make a go of it on their own. The story is of course enigmatic. It can also be read as a hostile takeover. When we add context, some of the ambiguity is removed.

42. I can now identify the good reason for Rabbi Isaac not to choose Genesis 12:1 over Exodus 12:2 as his beginning. Moses's mission is national throughout. Abraham's anti-paganism, a philosophical thing, is the idea that individual persons are autonomous. I would say that Abraham's following God is (=) his acting on this idea. The idea, I would also say, is *his* discovery – which explains why he would leave his native land and his father's house in answer to a call from, as it first seems, he knows not who. How did the idea come to him?

In stating his position, Rabbi Isaac refers to the first verse of Genesis 1. But Genesis 2 also contains a bringing-into-being story. The similarity between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:4 is impossible to miss. "In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." Why does Rabbi Isaac not (also) make his claim about Genesis 2? It is because he *does not* distinguish between them. Like Rashi, like the majority of interpreters, Rabbi Isaac regards the chapters as thematically uniform.

My position is that Genesis 1, the account of the natural creation, is external to the center of the Bible's center. The development in thought that precipitates the Bible is advanced in Genesis 2. The negative implication for the doctrine of Israel-centricity is clear. Superimposing Genesis 2's account of the human sector of being upon Genesis 1's account can create a false sense of unity here. Imbued with something of God, men and women, as described in Genesis 2, are un-natural. Intermix the treatment with the account of humankind in Genesis 1, and it can seem as if the collective thing, humankind, is also imbued with that something. And this supplies a (specious) opening for the thesis of Israelite exceptionalism.

Abraham Hits the Road

Monotheism is the theological face of the view that each person, each man and each woman, is a particular, and that this ontological condition has implications for the conduct of human affairs. God's appeal to Abraham in Genesis 12 is an appeal for one man to spread the word. The word is not that God should be worshipped because God is the only deity. God should be worshipped because that worship is linked to a proper human self-understanding, and hence to proper, productive, behaviour. The word is the truth about the condition of men and women.

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation" (Genesis 12:1–2). Abram (as he is called at that juncture) accepts God's call. "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him" (4). We must distinguish the call that Abraham receives and Abraham's departure.

A recurring feature of the Bible is that when action B follows action A, this is not to be understood as the B's resulting causally from the A or the B's occurring temporally after the A. It is more like "Having travelled to Egypt, Abraham left his place" than it is like "Having travelled to Egypt, Abraham encountered Pharaoh." The B-ing is not what the A-ing leads to; it is what the A-ing comes to. Here are two instances from early in Genesis. One: The man and the woman, having disobeyed, are expelled from the garden. Are they shown the door because they transgressed? In reality, for them to disobey, to assert their autonomy is (=) for them to be no longer under God's tutelage. God says it plainly: "Because *you* have *done* this" (3:14, my emphasis). Two: "[Y]ou will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (12) God says to Cain after he kills his brother Abel. Appreciate that the "killing" is the snuffing out of Abel's tried and tested way of life, and we understand that Cain's wandering is not geographical. To have killed Abel is (=) to be anthropologically and ethically in limbo.[43]

Likewise, Abraham. He does not depart Haran because he accepts God's offer. To have accepted the offer is (=) to have left Haran. To be a Mesopotamian is not (≠) to accept God, possibly because of never having heard about God.

In the subsequent chapters, Abraham is geographically very much beyond the borders of Haran. Scrutinizing his conduct, we see that he *is* holding up his part of the bargain. His actions are sensitive

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43. The nomadic shepherd does not wander; the stationary farmer does!

to the particularity of men and women. Seeing that, we see that there is, on God's side, a deviation from the agenda of Godlikeness. *This deviation is the national element.* As a crude generalization, it would be accurate to say that Abraham, in resisting God, is acting in the name of the basic divine call; he is struggling to remain within the Goldilocks Zone. The particularistic basis of Genesis 2 might, he fears, get sunk back into the collectivistic one of Genesis 1.[44]

Willing Covenanter, Reluctant Patriarch

Abraham is a willing party to the covenant. He is prepared to break with the culture in which he first saw the light of day. God says that in return for leaving his native land and father's house, Abraham will become "a great nation." At the point in time when God speaks these words, Abraham is on his own. The words must therefore mean that the way that he inaugurates will flourish. But is it not also a prophecy about Abraham's bloodline? Does national existence inhabit the Goldilocks Zone?

Abraham's career probes this issue. Usually, commentators and interpreters treat the various episodes as stages in a growing understanding on Abraham's part of what agreeing to the covenant with God entails. In fact, they explore a tension, even a clash, between Abraham's (as I see it *accurate*) understanding of what being God's man comes to, and the issue of chosenness.

In Genesis 11, Abraham's father, Terah, is said to have departed Ur of the Chaldeans and to have travelled as far as Haran. "Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, son of [Terah's deceased son, Abram's brother] Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife" (31). In Genesis 12, God is said to have

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44. "On what grounds," it will be asked, "is the fear attributed to Abraham?" The question is answered in footnote 42.

appeared to Abram, and to have made the crucial offer. Then (verse 5) "Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, […] and they set forth [from Haran] to go to the land of Canaan."

Lot, Abraham's nephew, is from one perspective a competitor. The text telegraphs that Abraham will prevail. Nevertheless, Lot is represented as an entrant in the race. A salient difference between the two is that while Lot during the biblically most significant part of his career is an urbanite, Abraham throughout dwells in a tent. Lot, that is, has departed the less stationary ways. "Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and moved […] as far as Sodom" (Gen. 13:12). Through Lot the Bible explores city life as a way of life. It does this as a sequel to the exploration, with Abel and Cain, of shepherding and farming as earlier post-gathering ways.

After their visit to Abraham in "his tent" (Gen. 18:1), the angels "went towards Sodom" (Gen. 18:22). There "in the [city's] gateway" (Gen. 19:1), they encounter Lot. The purpose of both visits is to gather information about how things are with the ex-Haranites. What the visitors find in Sodom is the last straw, at least for this phase of the anthropological exploration.

Why was the potential of city life not resolved in a sequel to the life of Cain, i.e., as part of the straight(er) anthropological enquiry? Why is the issue addressed directly only *after* the issue of God's new way is raised?

A pertinent difference between what the angels find is that *chez* Lot the family has been disrupted. Sarah plays an active role in hosting the visitors; Lot's wife is nowhere to be seen. The point is proto-national: the family is a natural collection and the city is artificial.[45] And the Bible thinks of nationhood in the former way.

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45. Having taken up residence in Sodom, Lot does not dwell among his own. Abraham interacts regularly with other peoples and tribes. But he lives apart from them.

The nation is an extension of the family. Sodom represents a certain kind of supra-family entity; one that the Bible disapproves of. Its idea of nationhood is different.

When Abraham departs Haran for Canaan, he is "seventy-five years old" (12:4). His wife is only a decade younger. Why doesn't he leave Lot in the care of the other relatives? Having been told that God will make him a great nation, Abraham harbours a doubt as to whether he will father any children. Sixty-five is post-viability for a woman. What is God's view of all this? God, we know, will arrange a "proper" son for Abraham. Consider now Abraham's redemption of Lot (Gen. 14). Lot, although just a bystander, is taken captive in the war of "four kings against five" (Gen. 14:9) that rages in the Jordan River Valley. Hearing that his nephew has been imprisoned, Abraham rides forth with a tiny retinue – "three hundred and eighteen" (Gen. 14:14) – and redeems him. A number of points are enfolded here. Abraham displays a great deal of bravery. This, I think, is a secondary point, however. Primary is the point that he proceeds on his own initiative.[46] It could be, again, that Abraham, childless, still considers Lot the instrument of continuation. But, as in the preceding case, God again takes the idea of "mak[ing] you a great nation" more literally. From God's viewpoint, Abraham is like a runner who stops to lend a hand when a competitor stumbles. Think how Nike might react. "Nice guys finish last. Let's back someone less sentimental."

Throughout his career, Abraham exhibits the best of traits: courage, derring-do, loyalty, steadfastness, perseverance, generosity. But on one occasion his behaviour seems shockingly out of character. The reference is to the misrepresentation of Sarah in Pharaoh's court. How can he who sallied forth against the combined armies of several

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46. The parallel between Abraham's liberation of Lot from captivity and God's/Moses's liberation of the Israelites is impossible to miss.

kings to liberate a nephew be so spineless in a confrontation with one king in regard to a wife? The response that Abraham does not like his chances does not work. The odds in the Jordan Valley were long too. There, with tactical savvy, Abraham "divided his [outmatched] forces" (Gen. 14:15) and, in a lightning attack from two directions, prevailed. What he tries, in this case, is no brainwave to protect Sarah. "[T]hey will kill me" (Gen. 12:12) he says, taking cover behind her skirts.[47] "Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account" (Gen. 12:13). In the event, Pharaoh turns out not to be a Paris at all, which makes Abraham look even worse. This Helen the Egyptian king returns, complaining that Abraham was (again against the text's grain) deceitful.

A literal reading is hard to accept. But, of course, the stories are not reportage. We are supposed to read them as moral tales. What could the moral here be?

Think back to the Lot case. Abraham was prepared to pass his nephew off as a son – as the next in line, the person to inherit the patriarchal mantle. Here he is prepared to misrepresent his wife as a sister. How, relevantly to the case, do a wife and a sister differ? A sister is available to another. A wife isn't. The message is plain. Being God's man does not require so rigid a defence of bloodlines.

The story of spousal misrepresentation is told twice more; once (Genesis 20) involving Abraham, once (Genesis 26), with Isaac in the lead role. In both cases, God steps in. The message seems clear. Should a patriarch show signs of deviating, God will see to it that the national agenda is adhered to. It is most revealing about the text that the examination of patriarchy and nationhood should be slanted

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47. We would have expected something like this: "Let's try to outfox Pharoah. Say you are my sister, which, in a loose sense, is true. Then we'll see what happens." Compare Exodus 1:10.

heavily in the Bible by portraying the patriarchs as cowardly, not to say as pimps, when their resolve slackens.[48]

The negative inflection in the stories dissipates when the issue is seen from the standpoint of Genesis 2, the Bible's core. The matter comes to concentrated expression in the episode called "the Akedah," the sacrifice of Isaac. It is productive to let this story interact with the story of the banishment of Ishmael.

In the case of Ishmael, we are dealing with a conflict between the national agenda and the more general issue of spreading God's word. Once again, Abraham is torn. Without offspring by Sarah, he pleads with God for Ishmael (Gen. 17:17): "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" He then goes on beseechingly (Gen. 17:18): "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" God is unmoved: "No" (Gen. 17:19). It is not just that Abraham believes that he will have no more offspring. Rather, he has no objection to Ishmael. This comes out in the Akedah.

God appears to Abraham and, the text says, "tested him" (Gen. 22:1). "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will show you" (Gen. 22:2). But Isaac is *not* Abraham's only son; nor has Abraham exhibited towards Isaac the fatherly feeling that he displayed towards Ishmael. The fact is that Isaac is Abraham's only son from *God's* point of view; and he is the beloved son from, again, that Abraham-displaced position. No one

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48. One might just see Lot, whose wife is not present when the angels come calling, as a pimp. The episodes are pre-plays of the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt. Jacob is also made to confront, and to fail, a similar challenge. The story of Shechem the Hivite confirms that the text wants us to think of Abraham as pandering. "Should our sister," Simeon and Levi ask rhetorically (Gen. 34:31), having murderously prevented Shechem from taking Dinah as a wife, "be treated like a whore?"

would suggest that because a parent is cool towards a child, the sacrifice of the child is made easier. But once we appreciate the distinction between the two viewpoints, God's and Abraham's, and add in the lessons of the other episodes, the story takes on a new look. Abraham was prepared to give up Sarah. Why not take one's cue from this for reading the sacrifice of Isaac? The question, if so, is whether Abraham is willing to give up God's designated Abrahamic offspring, the offspring of Abraham as a patriarch. Is he willing to abandon the national enterprise as God conceives it? The answer that the story delivers is clear. *God* steps in and saves the child. Abraham does not see the revolutionary change in human self-understanding that he is associated with as requiring a national agenda.

Someone behind the text is of a different opinion, and continues to express it. The episode of Shechem the Hivite brings it all to a head. Here we have a sister and a potential wife; a deception; a shocking betrayal; a patriarch represented as weak because he bends to outsiders. Jacob, apprised of what Simeon and Levi have done to the Hivites, says: "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed. Both me and my household" (Gen. 34:30). This is an explicitly national version of Abraham's fear in the land of Pharaoh. "[T]hey will kill me" (Gen. 12:12). The dramatic change from one episode to the other leaves the message intact: the patriarch who does not defend the nation needs help. Also, the nation has here to be interpreted narrowly, as the extended family, the bloodline.

Somehow, the idea of Godlikeness has come to be associated with the nation. Abraham is craven in Pharaoh's court. God must step in. But Abraham does know what Godliness is. It, the idea advanced in the creation story of Genesis 2, is *his* idea.

Think of it from God's perspective. God (being one) is the principle of particularity. God imparts some of this mode of existence to the items in the human sector of the creation. For God to prefer one group of humans over another for more than local or temporary reasons violates that principle.

A turn of the screw is performed in Exodus. Here, God's word is again imparted. But the recipients in this case are the newly liberated Israelites. From a propagandistic viewpoint, this is an excellent way of soldering God's word to the Israelite collective.[49] Abraham was one man. Receiving the word, he left his native land. There is no sign that he was under pressure. The Israelites have just been through generations of enslavement. Their survival depends on internal solidarity and group resolve. Is the message of Genesis 2, Abraham's departure from the culture in which he grew up, biblically emblematic, or is it the Israelites' flight from a culture that enslaved them? The Commandments are given to the Israelites at Sinai. But the ordinances, stated in imperatives directed at (singular) "you," are obligatory on each and every man and woman, including, if there were any, the strangers in the midst of the throng assembled at the mountain. This is something that Rabbi Isaac appears to have overlooked.

In Genesis 2 God creates a man and a woman, and from the pair, all of us derive. Let us try to say about Genesis 2 what Rashi says about Genesis 1. "Because God created you and created me, he can […]." What can he do? He can give all of us dominion over some or all of the (other) animals. How are distinctions *within* the set of particular men and women justified?[50] To be sure, as long as there

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49. The story of the relations between the Israelites and the Moabites, told in Numbers 25, is a grisly replay of the story of the Hivites, with Aaron's grandson Phinehas playing the part of Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi.

50. After discovering the transgression in the garden, God states to the woman: "Because you have done this […] your husband […] shall rule over you" (3: 14,

are nations, an individual's flourishing might require their nation's forceful defence. But chosenness in the Bible goes beyond secular politics. In the absence of an ontological basis, the only other non-instrumental or non-prudential basis available is emotional, and the Bible well knows (as do we all) how unstable that is.[51]

Here, again, are God's words to the children of Israel (Deut. 7:7–8): "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you […]. It was because the Lord loved you." But God disapproved of Jacob's passion-based preference for Rachel over Leah.[52]

The Bible's Disunity and a Perennial Question

"At the center of the Bible's center," I wrote earlier, "is a combination of Genesis 2, Genesis 12, and Exodus 20. Together, the three – the first ontologically, the second historically, the third practically – set out the unifying principle." The second creation story introduces the idea of particularity that the theologically

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16). But the subordination is because of what she does, not because of what she is.

51. I said earlier that A's love for B and not C is not favouritism towards B or bias against C. The other side of the coin is that the brand of love of which God speaks is not based on reasons. (I would say that it's a-rational; not irrational. There's nothing irrational about one's tastes in food, although it may be irrational, given the health effects, to indulge them.) This is relevant to understanding "because the Lord loved you."

52. The story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel) displays God's attitude towards the forcible dispossession of an owner. We're presented in the episode with a multiple violation of the Commandments: theft, adultery, covetousness, murder. Might not the nations of the world grieve against God for taking Israel from among them? Does David not lose the child of the adulterous union because of what he did? God has come close to suffering the same loss on several occasions over time.

unprecedented idea of a deity as one reflects.[53] Abraham's story sets in motion the process of spreading the new understanding of human nature and of developing ways of living that accord with it. The Commandments blueprint the basic practical rules, the rules that govern the comportment, personal and interpersonal and social, of beings who understand themselves to be as Genesis 2 describes their originals.

Genesis 1, a de-mythologized version of the cosmogonic story told in the pagan cultures whose view of men and women the Bible is attempting to supersede, is also an indispensable entry in an encyclopedic account of things. So even after correcting for the problematic status of chosenness, erstwhile adherents of the Bible's teachings confront the question of how to reconcile what Genesis 1 says about all with what Genesis 2 says about each. They need not feel that this criticism leaves them exposed. For the question remains a live one for each and for all. "What is man?"[54]

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53. The effective contrast between a pagan pantheon and the Bible's pantheon is not that the former comprises several deities. In the former, rather, there are no true unities. A blob of mercury can bead into smaller blobs or merge to form larger ones. A pagan pantheon is like that. When a blob divides, are the smaller blobs "really" fragments of a monoblob? When a number of blobs merge, is the larger blob "really" a clumped polyblob? The implication is that pagan ways of rationalizing the world cannot make proper sense of the human sector qua comprised of particulars, true unities.

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Engaging Agamben on the Time that Remains

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O n the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus encountered the
Glory of the Lord. Some think that, just as he heard what
Ezekiel heard – "I send you" – so he saw what Ezekiel saw
– "the likeness of a throne" and, seated above it, "the likeness, as it
were, of a human form ... with the appearance of fire" and a
"brightness round about." Here, however, there was no "as it were"
in what he saw. For the voice that came from the throne,
commissioning him to go both to his own rebellious people and to
the great sea of nations, was the voice of Jesus of Nazareth, who is
the visible form of God and the very Word of God.[1] Saul was thus
"untimely born" as Paul, Apostle of Jesus. His world, the world of
men conducting business as usual, had been ruptured. He came soon
to understand that the whole cosmos had been ruptured and
rearranged by the appearance within it of the Glory of the Lord.[2]

In his earliest letters, Paul looks forward to the great rupture
or disruption yet to come, in which that Glory will appear to all. The
dead will then be raised and both the living and the dead will gather
round the throne, the faithful "being caught up with the clouds" (the

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1. See Ezek. 1:1–2:7.
2. See Acts 9:1–18 and further accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 22 and 26,
the substance of which is reflected in numerous passages found in
Thessalonians, Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, Ephesians and elsewhere;
compare, for example, 2 Cor. 3:7–4:18 and Rom. 8:7ff.

allusion is to Daniel 7) at his appearance, "so as to welcome the Lord in the air." They shall then behold the One seen from behind on Sinai, but face to face on Tabor; and they shall not part from him, but "shall ever be with the Lord." On that day, writes Paul, "when he comes to be magnified by his holy ones and to be marveled at among all who have believed," they shall enter his royal presence with rejoicing, while the rebellious and unbelieving "suffer the penalty due them: eternal destruction, far from the face of the Lord and from the splendor of his might."[3]

Such is the vision articulated in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, framed by Paul's own experience, by the Sinaitic and New Sinaitic paradigms of Exodus and Ezekiel, and (still more fundamentally) by the gospel narrative and its liturgical expression. It is this vision that in turn frames the dark and differently disruptive interval discussed at 2 Thess. 2:3–12, in which are revealed the mystery of lawlessness and the man of lawlessness. We are introduced to that through a rich complex of Sinaitic allusions at 2:1–2: "We beg you, brethren, with respect to the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to him, that you not quickly be shaken from your senses or disturbed...." We only see it for what it is, however, when we see it in the light of the Glory that has broken through in the incarnation, that continues to break through in the eucharistic mystery, that will again break through in a final dispelling of the darkness at the Lord's return.

All this I tried in my commentary to communicate, but in treating chapter two of 2 Thessalonians I failed (through sheer forgetfulness) to engage Giorgio Agamben's reading of that chapter, a deficiency I want to make up here. The new situation generated by the global crisis of the past few years makes this deferred

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3. See 2 Thess. 1:5–12. Quotations from Thessalonians are in the author's translation, which can be found in *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 23f.

engagement timely after all, as we shall see. First, however, we must follow Agamben's own quite different line of approach in *The Time That Remains*, his fascinating riff on Romans performed for the benefit of Walter Benjamin aficionados.[4] While we will concern ourselves, not with Benjamin or with the work as a whole, but rather with its treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2, there are some preliminary matters to be dealt with and some other Pauline texts to be considered, lest we take that treatment out of context. We begin with Agamben's theology of time, or certain features of it.

Remnant Time in 1 Corinthians 7

Paul says that "at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λεῖμμα κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν, Rom. 11:5). He is referring, with the prophets of old, to a remnant of the Jewish people. Agamben, however, focusing on τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, finds here a remnant by grace of time itself. The time in view, the "now" time which he also calls messianic time and kairotic time, still belongs to chronological time, to ordinary history, but is that part of it "which undergoes an entirely transformative contraction" such that it participates also in eternity. It lies at the overlap between time and eternity, where the one begins to end and

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4. On the cover of *The Time That Remains: A Commentary of the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005; trans. Patricia Dailey from *ll tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani,* 2000), we are told that the book advances the claim "that Benjamin's philosophy of history constitutes a repetition and appropriation of Paul's concept of 'remaining' time," which is at once the remainder of time and a time for learning to abide or remain. My purpose here, however, is not to engage Agamben's engagement with Benjamin (cf. Brian Britt, "The Schmittian Messiah in Agamben's *The Time That Remains,*" *Critical Inquiry* 36, Winter 2010, 262–87) but rather to engage his engagement with Paul, coming in due course to his reading of 2 Thessalonians 2 – a reading at once as insightful and as problematic as his concept of remnant time.

the other begins to take its place. It is time insofar as it readies itself for eternity.[5]

The idea of contraction he draws from Paul's practical theology in 1 Corinthians 7. There Paul is trying to help Christians work out how to live under the conditions of the messianic rupture. Should they withdraw from the lives they have been leading, even perhaps from their marriages if their spouses aren't interested in preparing to meet Christ at his return? If they are unmarried, should they remain so, since it is a new and transformed world they are expecting, a world in which, as Jesus said, marriage will no longer be a feature of human life? They have written Paul to enquire. Here is his reply, as rendered in the *Revised Standard Version*:

> Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the impending distress [διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην] it is well for a person to remain as he is.... I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short [ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν]; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away [παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου].

Agamben, however, does not read the passage thus. At 7:29 he translates ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν as "time is

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5. *Time That Remains*, 64. That is, "messianic time is presented as a part of the secular eon that constitutively exceeds *chronos* and as a part of eternity that exceeds the future eon, while being situated in the position of a remainder with regard to the division between the two eons." It is "a caesura which, in its dividing the division between the two times, introduces a remainder [*resto*] into it that exceeds the division."

contracted."[6] With the Corinthians, he wants to know what it means to live properly in the time that somehow remains "between time and its end." What shall we do with this time, particularly when we don't know how much of it there is? Shall we simply carry on as we are or attempt some radical change, boldly leaving behind what is familiar and dear to us in favor (as Jesus suggests in Luke 14:25ff.) of some costly new construct?

With Paul, Agamben wants to think also about the nature of this time that is contracting itself and beginning to end, this time that is left over, that has no longer any "teleological linearity" since in Christ the goal of time has already been reached.[7] These two concerns, the theoretical and the practical, are both evident as Agamben tries to show us "that this clear choice, this delineation between two paths, is a fiction." There is, writes Julie Gafney, "an alternative, one that makes use of the strange potentiality of the messianic moment and of the time that remains."

> First of all, in the condition of messianism, change is inevitable; there is no standing in place. Instead, "every juridical status and worldly condition" is transformed, irrevocably altered, "because of, and only because of, its relation to the messianic event." So much for indifference.... The transformation is not, however, the same kind of radical change the apostolic call represented in Luke. The idea is not to give up everything that mattered to you before this moment and embrace a whole new set of laws and ideas. Instead, the action is something more like reorienting your

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6. *Time That Remains,* 166; cf. 142ff.

7. Messianic time, he says, "is *the time that time takes to come to an end*, or, more precisely, the time we take to bring to an end, to achieve our representation of time" (*Time That Remains,* 67f.; italics his). But did I say "with Paul"? This way of speaking would certainly puzzle Paul, nor is it clear how it characterizes messianic time rather than all time under the conditions of the fall. For "it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27; cf. 10:26f.).

vocations or pursuits *toward* the messianic event, understanding how it fits into this new framework, rather than choosing a vocation or pursuit that is entirely new. Agamben beautifully names it an "almost internal shifting … by virtue of being called."[8]

This internal shifting is a "nullification or canceling out," a having yet not having, pursuing yet not pursuing, being yet not being, even as regards being married. "The binary distinctions here fold into one another, just as time has folded in upon itself." So Paul is not asking us to forsake everything in the most literal sense, but to engage everything in a transformative way that reorients it to the new messianic reality. That is how we should live in remnant time.[9]

Now, I also render 1 Corinthians 7 differently from the common translations. For in the mysterious expression at verse 26, διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην, we must stretch semantically both of the key words to arrive (with the RSV) at "in view of the imminent distress." It seems sounder to say, "because of the present constraint." Or more expansively: "because our age is bracketed before and behind, because it is already consigned to its proper end." Such a reading does not invite dismissal of Paul's practical theology as the consequence of a misguided imminentism, as if "the time that remains" must necessarily be very brief. It allows us to

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8. Julie Gafney, *The Point,* 12 April 2020 (https://thepointmag.com/examined-life/the-time-that-remains). "Unbelievably, almost ludicrously," she observes, even in remnant time life seems to go on as before. "People get up, and eat breakfast, and gossip over the Tiberius treason trials, or over what Simon told Rachel at the beach last weekend, and go about their day. People are married, people get buried. People fall in love, and exchange stolen glances, furtive smiles, across the well." To understand how in remnant time the ordinary ends of temporal existence and the true end achieved by Christ are related is the task.
9. Thus Gafney, following Agamben; our task, however, is to discover how far Agamben is following Paul.

keep thinking with Paul.[10]

But what does Paul mean? What constraint is operative? Verse 29 tells us: τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν[.] τὸ λοιπόν, ἵνα καὶ οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ὦσιν…. I think we must translate this differently as well. Not "the appointed time has grown very short," but rather: "The *kairos* [we await] has been prepared; so in what [time] remains let those who have wives live as those who do not." The verb Paul employs in the first line is συστέλλω, which means to prepare or ready something for dispatch. Luke uses the same verb at Acts 5:6 even for wrapping up a corpse to be carried out for burial.[11] The time left to us is no corpse, but it is a remnant, a remnant of that which has already been delivered in Christ himself. It is this time that is now under constraint. Why? Because it too has been summed up in Christ and, just so, readied for its own delivery to God. All history has been recapitulated in the personal history of the Messiah, who in the midst of it, in the heart of the darkness and void, entered the womb of Mary; who walked among us and was handed over to death; who was freed from death's grip and raised up from the grave, before ascending to the throne of God. In him God has effected, as Agamben says, a "summary judgment" on the whole of time and matter and human existence.[12]

That judgment rendered, it is left to us, whether as individuals or as a race, to respond as we may. For our response, we

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10. See *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 198–202, on the distinction between imminence, properly conceived, and immediacy.

11. The verb is employed here as a perfect passive participle. In the infinitive, we may say "to draw together, limit, shorten" (*BAGD*); or "to cover or wrap up for removal," as at Acts 5:6 (ἀναστάντες δὲ οἱ νεώτεροι συνέστειλαν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξενέγκαντες ἔθαψαν: "having arisen, the younger men covered him up and, having carried him out, buried him"). In the present context these senses may be combined.

12. *Time That Remains*, 76.

have an opportunity of indeterminate duration – indeterminate to us, not to God, who not only constrains but restrains it – until the full judgment is handed down. [13] Here is Paul a little later in 1 Corinthians:

> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers [παραδιδῷ] the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death… When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one. [14]

This full and final judgment, unfortunately, does not come into focus in *The Time That Remains.* Other things also seem to be missing, then, in Agamben's account of remnant time. Mistakes are made that eventually distort his reading of 2 Thessalonians 2. I want now to identify some of those, making important adjustments to the picture he presents.

Reframing Remnant Time

First, we must keep in mind that Paul's focus on the time that remains is missional before it is pastoral. [15] This time is

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13. Restraint may be said in two senses: the individual's life span is limited, and the age itself is limited. "If those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:22, RSVCE; the verb here is κολοβόω, to "lop" or "cut short").
14. 1 Cor. 15:22–28 (RSVCE); the last phrase is more appropriately rendered "all in all."
15. See *Time That Remains,* 59–61. The chapter in question is subtitled

preeminently time for the announcement – the same announcement that came to Paul so dramatically on the Damascus road and must now be made to everyone – that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and that the Messiah is the very "image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation," in whom all things cohere and whom all ought to obey and adore.[16]

Second, it is misleading to say: "What interests the apostle is not the last day, it is not the instant in which time ends, but the time that contracts itself and begins to end."[17] This misleads both because Paul most certainly *is* interested in the last day, and because he does not equate the last day with the instant in which time ends. He has no such instant in mind at all. The last day is the day of the public parousia of Jesus Christ, hence the end of what we might better identify as "preparation time" time than "remnant time." It is also Day One of what Jesus called "the regeneration of all things." That universal reconstruction is a process that begins when "the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory" and all shall attend him, whether willingly or unwillingly, as he passes judgment on all.[18] It is a process completed by the dissolution of the old creation and the advent of the "new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells."[19] Here, and here only, can we speak of an instant in which time ends – ends and begins again as time that no longer dissolves itself and runs away into the void, but rather runs on toward God,

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"Apostolos," and the distinguishing mark of the apostle, as opposed to the prophet, is that "the apostle speaks forth from the arrival of the Messiah," not in prediction of the Messiah. From this distinction Agamben proceeds to his claim that "Paul's technical term for the messianic event is *ho nyn kairos,* 'the time of the now.'"

16. See Col. 1:15–20.

17. *Time That Remains*, 62.

18. See Matt. 19:28: ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ.

19. 2 Pet. 3:11–13, which is followed by a reference to Paul's own teaching.

who sustains it with his eternity.[20]

Third, the present time is directly linked to the time of the new heavens and earth only through Christ; which, for us, means epicletically and eucharistically. Only thus can we speak of an overlap between the two, and we must speak of it as Paul does in 2 Corinthians, on which more in a moment. Agamben, unfortunately, does not consider the pneumatological and liturgical dimensions that are so important to Paul.

Fourth, Agamben supposes that "Paul decomposes the messianic into two times: resurrection and parousia, the second coming of Jesus at the end of time."[21] But this overlooks the ascension of Jesus. It is the ascension, rather than the resurrection, to which the anticipated parousia is counterpart. To live ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ is to live in the rupture or caesura in time opened up by the ascension, made manifest at Pentecost, and closed again at the parousia. It is to live poised in the Spirit between the glorification of Jesus in heaven and the revelation of this glory on earth. It is to live eucharistically between the temporal form that is passing and the eternal form that is coming.

This warrants further elaboration. Agamben is quite right that the present age, considered chronologically, is not as such a transitional age. It does not itself yield the kingdom. Nor is it for pursuing, as Kant or Hegel would have it, a kingdom that is always deferred. Rather it is an age in which "two heterogeneous times ... are coextensive but cannot be added together." But here we need what Agamben largely ignores, the ascension; otherwise we will misconstrue the parousia, the very thing he says we must correctly

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20. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.25 (with 2.28 and 2.34), 4:20 (with 4.38f.), and 5.36. It is the ungodly who "shall walk in a circle" instead of always going straight on toward God, as Augustine argues in *Civ.* 11–13 (cf. 12.14 and 12.22) and 20–22.
21. *Time That Remains*, 69.

understand.[22] We will also misconstrue the way in which these heterogeneous times are held together as both press towards the parousia.

The ascension is the presentation of Jesus before the Father to receive the glory due him. The parousia is his royal presence with us, openly and in person, "to be magnified among his holy ones and to be marveled at among all who believe."[23] The former is the goal of the Messiah's own time as he effects our salvation.[24] The latter is the focal point of that salvation, just as the cross and resurrection are the fulcrum thereof. The operational time we are given between ascension and parousia is most fundamentally eucharistic time, with its own fulcrum in the epiclesis – the time of being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."[25] As such, it is also apocalyptic time, in which is revealed the reality of the tension between the times and the prospective completeness of the one as opposed to the increasing vacuity of the other.[26] Through the consecration and *conversio* the stuff of this age is seized and brought forth to fulfillment, to borrow Agamben's expression. It is voluntarily delivered up to God with and in Christ.[27]

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22. Agamben (ibid., 70) tries to understand it etymologically instead of historically, biblically, and theologically, which cannot be done; cf. *1&2 Thessalonians,* 86–88.
23. 2 Thess. 1:10 (trans. mine).
24. See Aquinas, *ST* 3.57.6.
25. Rev. 1:10. See the chart provided at p. 158 in *Ascension Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), which in its lower register outlines the Church's participation in the anaphoric work of Christ, to which the liturgy gives witness in the perfect tense (Christ has died), the present tense (Christ is risen), and the future tense (Christ will come again).
26. See *1&2 Thessalonians,* 121–25, 165–68, and. *Ascension Theology*, chapters five to seven.
27. *Time That Remains*, 71. Just so, eucharistically, is that "small door" opened to the Messiah, an image Agamben borrows from Benjamin. But Agamben here misses the eucharistic allusion altogether, turning aside to an analogy between Paul and Kafka when he ought to have been thinking with the fathers

Approached thus, through the law of prayer, the law of faith also becomes clear. Approached as Agamben approaches it in *The Time That Remains*, one never arrives at the parousia in any sense but Bultmann's: a revelatory moment, a mystical disclosure time, a time between the times that is no time at all.[28] The pivotal function of the eucharistic thank-offering does not appear, through which the baptized are continually prepared anew for delivery to God, so that they have always as their end the One who has no end.[29] When Paul says to the Corinthians that they are those "unto whom the ends of the ages have come" (εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν) he is still using martial imagery, something Agamben fails to notice. The statement belongs to a eucharistic warning passage:[30] The long ages of contest are come to a climax. Love of God and love of idols stand opposite one another in pitched battle. The moment, the common moment, is one of great opportunity and great peril.

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about the relation between the week of creation and its *eighth* day. On the eucharistic *conversio*, see chapter six of my *Theological Negotiations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

28. Genealogically it is Heidegger who stands in the background and gets noticed here. See Jessica Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 149: "For Paul, Heidegger writes, 'the parousia depends on how I live.'" But Heidegger is wrong, and so are Bultmann and Agamben, all of whom suppose that that one lives differently by seeing differently, and that this *is* the parousia rather than something that makes a difference *at* the parousia.

29. Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.17f., 5:1f., and Augustine, *Civ.* 10:20ff. It won't do to say that "the kingdom does not coincide with any chronological instant but is between them, stretching them into *parousia*" (*Time That Remains*, 73) or to account for the kingdom's "nearness" or availability in that way. The first claim may be true but the latter is false unless ascension, Pentecost, the Eucharist, and the second coming are properly deployed as the requisite frame of reference for interpreting the so-called *Zwischenreich* and for answering questions about the millennium.

30. 1 Cor. 10:11; see 8:1–11:1. As for "settling our debts with the past" (*Time That Remains*, 78), that is the business of baptism, is it not?

"Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."[31]

Agamben is working with a different set of interests. He sees chronological time and ordinary history as the realm of law, whether Torah or the *ius gentium*. This is a realm that can never be properly salvific, except insofar as Torah is fulfilled by the Messiah, who in fulfilling it also nullifies it. Eternity, Agamben seems to think, knows neither law nor time. In remnant time, the contraction of time and of law is already experienced by the faithful, as eternity begins to appear. They become the beneficiaries of a "tendential lawlessness" as the obscuring veil of law, of the legal mindset, is nullified messianically.[32]

There is an important moment of truth here, derived from Paul, though it must be handled with caution, lest a false dichotomy between law and gospel arise.[33] Paul, for his part, as his second letter to Corinth so marvelously displays, remains focused (even in

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31. That being so, the messianic is not, as Agamben claims, the relation between type and antitype. He has got off on the wrong track here, with his talk of *Olam HaZeh* and *Olam HaBa* "contracting into each other without coinciding" (*Time That Remains*, 74) – unless we are to take that, too, in military terms, with the understanding that the resolution of the struggle will appear precisely at, and only by way of, the parousia. This is not to make the common mistake of viewing messianic time "as oriented solely to the future" (*Time That Remains*, 77), but neither is it to allow that the messianic recapitulation, which takes place for the sake of "the economy of the fullness of times" (εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, Eph. 1:10), renders each and every "now" open to fulfillment in some hidden depth dimension. Paul was not a Continental philosophical theologian; he did not think in such abstract terms.

32. 2 Cor. 3:16. As elsewhere, Agamben translates καταργεῖται "rendered inoperative" (172).

33. To say that one is justified apart from the law, or that the writ of the law was nailed to the tree on which Jesus hung, such that it can no longer condemn us (Col. 2:14), is not at all the same thing as to say that one exists lawlessly in Christ, for Christ is the giver of a new or renewed law, the law of liberty that preserves the old law by deepening and broadening and perfecting it. Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.13.3 and 4.16.5.

mundane monetary matters) on eucharistic gratitude – "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"[34] – and on transformation in the Spirit. He remains focused on conformity to "the image of the invisible God" whom he beheld on the road to Damascus; on "Christ in you, the hope of glory," as he puts it elsewhere. For he immediately goes on to say: "Now 'the Lord' is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."[35] In the time that remains – in that "now" that is pure opportunity, the time of invitation and acceptance, the day in which salvation lies open to us [36] – Paul reminds us that "power is made perfect in weakness," that our "slight, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen," knowing that "though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed every day."[37]

At the parousia, what is mortal will be swallowed up by immortality.[38] This, however, does not entail the cessation of time or of law, for the realm of the creaturely *is* the realm of time and law. It entails rather a change of time and law through a change in

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34. 2 Cor. 9:15.

35. 2 Cor. 3:17f.; cf. Col. 1:15, 1:27.

36. 2 Cor. 6:2, quoting Isaiah: ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας.

37. 2 Cor. 4:16–17; cf. 11:30ff. and 12:9.

38. With 2 Cor. 5:1–10 cf. 1 Thess. 4:13ff. and Rom. 8:18ff. It should not be overlooked that 2 Corinthians 3–6 is recapitulated in Romans 8, on which Agamben oddly has very little to say, though he translates a portion of it for us at p. 157.

the mediation of both.[39] Meanwhile, since the ascension of Jesus and because of it, the old and the new are both operative, just as Agamben says. There is already, to deploy an Irenaean phrase, a greater *operatio libertatis* in play.[40] The relation between the two is presently governed by the nullification and substitution at work in the sacraments: paradigmatically in baptism, which Paul treats in Romans 6 before extending this dialectic into the climactic chapters of Romans.

Nullifications and Substitutions

The time that remains comes with a hidden expiry date – albeit not without warning thereof – as time always has since man was expelled from the Garden. Whether for individuals, or peoples, or the race as a whole, boundaries have been set by God.[41] But messianic time is time to make an end of time in the sense of determining to what end we mean to go. For we who live in the last times live in time that runs toward the coming of the Son of Man in judgment, without which there can be no universal manifestation of the Glory of the Lord. Those who believe in him, who meanwhile also suffer with him, will then be glorified with him. In remnant time we await this glory, which will not appear as a peculiar event by the river Che'bar or on the highway to Damascus, but will appear rather as lightning that flashes from east to west.[42] Our own experience of time, our experience of all reality, will suddenly undergo rupture. It will be subject to an apocalypse. The truth will

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39. Heb. 7:12 is situated near the heart of that work as one of its interpretive keys; see further the final chapter of *Theological Negotiations*.

40. *Haer*. 4.13.3. I have tried to elucidate this for the sphere of law in "The Greater Operation of Liberty," chapter 22 in *Christianity and Constitutionalism*, ed. Nicholas Aroney and Ian Leigh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

41. See Acts 17:24–31.

42. Matt. 24:27.

be laid bare. The history that we took to be our history will turn out to have belonged to him and to his history all along. It will be shown to be our history only in relation to his.[43] All this, both baptism and the Eucharist already declare and, in mysterious fashion, effect. Though we do not see it, they rupture the time of the saeculum by gathering it and us into the time of the self-offering of Christ. In them is hidden the secret of the saeculum.[44]

Viewed thus, there is no need at all to say that Paul is interested in time as it ends rather than in the end of time. He is interested in both, for the former cannot be grasped apart from the latter. There is also no need to think of ending-time primarily in terms of nullification. We may take still more seriously than Agamben the fact that "messianic *katargesis* does not merely abolish; it preserves and brings to fulfillment."[45] One who lives by faith will live by being unattached even to people or things to which one is properly attached: by being a Jew, say, without putting stock in Jewishness; by being a spouse and a parent, without putting family before God and his Christ; by having much or little and being equally content, because not bound up with having or not having – in short, by a certain holy indifference. But this is not the indifference of one who is merely seeking to be emptied of this world and what belongs to it, of one who has no interest in the

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43. Thus Karl Barth, who lays the groundwork – again, lamentably, without reference to the sacraments – for a christological view of time in §47 of *Church Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: T&T Clark, 1960, vol. III.2). For criticism, see my *Ascension and Ecclesia* (Grand Rapids: T&T Clark, 1999), 429ff.

44. See Farrow, "The Secret of the Saeculum," *First Things* (May 2020), 27–35.

45. *Time That Remains*, 99. His critique of Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* is sound, for the latter does tend to confound "the problem of messianic time with the problem of posthistory" (101), producing an "infinite deferment" rather than a fulfillment (103); but compare my own rather different account of the problem in *Ascension and Ecclesia* (186ff.).

present age or of any particular place in it. To think with Paul, we must think in terms not only of nullification but also and especially of substitution.

The key substitution is "Christ in us, the hope of glory."[46] This is what makes us "light in the Lord," conveyors of the brilliance that through the incarnation rends the heavens and pierces the darkness with the glory of God.[47] This is what reveals the lawlessness that is work against the law and more subtly (as Agamben stresses) within the law. We will come back to that in connection with 2 Thessalonians 2, after first noticing the series of nullifications and substitutions presented in Romans 9–11.

First, there is Paul's self-nullification and his Moses-like offer to God. In Exodus 32, referencing the golden virility god by which Israel had betrayed the Glory of the Lord, Moses says to the people: "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." He then intercedes with God to "forgive their sin – and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Likewise, Paul writes, "I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race."[48]

Second, and most decisively, there is the self-nullification of God's incarnate Son, Jesus, who does what neither Moses nor Paul could do, so that God may be found absolutely faithful in his love for both Jew and Gentile. "What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if he has

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46. Col. 1:27.
47. Cf. Isaiah 6–12, 49–55, 60–66; Eph. 5:8–20. See also Luke 2:25–35, where Simeon prophesies that the same one who is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel," will rupture the present order, as the "thoughts out of many hearts" are revealed.
48. Rom. 9:3; cf. Exod. 32:30ff.

done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?" A remnant of both can and will be saved, because the self-nullification of Jesus on the *via crucis* is answered by the gift of new life – the substitution of life for death – in the resurrection and ascension. "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?"[49]

Third, there is the nullification of justification through the law and the substitution of justification through faith in Christ. "For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified."[50] Here it may be remarked that Agamben is right to suggest that Christ is the end of the law in both senses; that is, as *telos* and *finis*. But *finis*, we must add, only in the sense that Torah is no longer the primary reed through which the note of faith sounds, though it is still, in its modulation as "the perfect law of liberty," the register in which it is played.[51]

Fourth, there is the nullification of the Jew for the sake of the Gentile, or rather the nullification of the Jew/Gentile distinction and of circumcision as an effective sign. In their place is put the one ecclesial body of Christ that is accessed by the sacrament of baptism. "The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;

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49. Rom. 8:31f. and 9:22ff.

50. Rom. 10:4, which takes us back, of course, to chapters three through seven.

51. See James 2:8ff.; cf. again *Haer.* 4.13.3: "For He did not set us free for this purpose, that we should depart from Him (no one, indeed, while placed out of reach of the Lord's benefits, has power to procure for himself the means of salvation), but that the more we receive His grace, the more we should love Him. Now the more we have loved Him, the more glory shall we receive from Him, when we are continually in the presence of the Father" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1, 478).

the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For 'every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'"[52]

Fifth, there is the nullification of the nullification of the Jew. This is the thrust of the final chapter of Paul's great account of the faithfulness of God, an account he has already told us in chapter one is for the Jew first and then also for the Gentile.[53] Of the Jews he enquires, at Rom. 11:11, "Have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!"

Sixth, having looked ahead to the ingathering of Jews into the Church, as body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit, Paul points to the nullification of the wisdom of the world in favour of what the world regards as foolishness – the foolishness of God that he has already told the Corinthians "is wiser than the wisdom of men."[54] Thus also the famous final lines of chapter eleven, which begin with the exclamation, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

Finally, there is the nullification of the world itself, as shaped by sin and sinners, and the substitution of life in the world to come for the life of groanings in this present world. For Paul does indeed regard our time as a time of contractions – in the dominical sense of "birth pangs" or "labour pains."[55] Remnant time is really

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52. Rom. 10:11–13.
53. Hence those who have tried to turn the fourth nullification into nullification of the Jew qua Jew are as far from Paul as it is possible to be; see chapter 8 of *Theological Negotiations*.
54. 1 Cor. 1:25ff.; cf. Eph. 2:11–3:21.
55. Rom. 8:22.

prelude time, the commencement of judgment time.[56] That is a note of warning he has already sounded for Gentiles in chapter one and for Jews in chapter two. "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel," writes Paul, that "though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; for the Lord will execute his sentence upon the earth with rigor and dispatch."[57]

Just here we may turn at last to Thessalonians, where Paul first develops this motif. In doing so, we will not make the mistake Agamben makes of trying to subsume what Paul is doing under the rubric of law and lawlessness or of Christ as the end of the law. We will read them as they must be read, within the salvation-historical and eucharistic tension already described. Yet we will find in our disagreement with Agamben about law and lawlessness something on which we can and should agree.

Agamben's Twofold *Anomia*

In Thessalonians, the time that remains is time to prepare for what is to come. It is time for turning from idols, "serving the God who is living and true" and waiting "for his Son to appear from the heavens, whom he raised from the dead: Jesus, the one rescuing us from the wrath that is coming."[58] This time is not idle time. It is time for the conduct of the apostolic mission. It is time for building up the brethren, for perseverance in the good, for enduring growing lawlessness and persecution, until the Judge of all men appears. These things require mention, for Paul's concern in these letters is not with the messianic *katargesis* of law but rather with effective

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56. Cf. 1 Cor. 5; 1 Cor. 11:27ff.
57. Rom. 9:27, quoting Isa. 10:22f., which continues: "Judgment is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord the LORD of hosts, will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth."
58. 1 Thess. 1:9f.

situating of the community in the time that remains, the time we are calling eucharistic or prelude time and may here call waiting time.

When Agamben himself turns to Thessalonians, there is no mention of such things. He appeals directly to the second letter, or rather to one notoriously difficult bit of it – the riddle of the restrainer – in aid of his reflection on *katargesis*, the nullification or "rendering inoperative" of law. His interpretation of this passage stands the traditional reading on its head.[59] Once again it will help to have the text before us, in its standard form, before providing Agamben's alternative:

> Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day [of the Lord] will not come, unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.... And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time [καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ]. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way [μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται]. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus] will slay him with the breath of his mouth, and will destroy him by his appearance and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders [οὗ ἐστιν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ

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59. Agamben's ambition is to "restore Paul's Letters to the status of the fundamental messianic text for the Western tradition" (*Time That Remains*, 1). He is asking what it means "to live in the Messiah, and what is the messianic life" (18). Yet he does not begin where Paul begins, nor trace Paul's own argument even in Romans, never mind Thessalonians. At p. 72, he does mention 1 Thess. 4:13ff. very cryptically in connection with 1 Cor. 15:23–28, but he fails to resume that discussion. So all we are left with is his idiosyncratic treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2.

τέρασιν ψεύδους], and all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.[60]

With this rendering and others like it, Agamben is not satisfied. He translates 2:6–9 thus:

> You know what it is that is now holding him back [*ho katechōn*], so that he will be revealed when his time comes. For the mystery of anomy [*anomia*] is already at work [*energeitai*], but only until the person now holding it back [*ho katechōn*] is removed. Then the lawless one [*anomos*] will be revealed, whom the Lord will abolish with the breath of his mouth, rendering him inoperative by the manifestation of his presence [*parousia*]. The presence [*parousia*] of the former is according to the working of Satan in every power [*dynamis*].[61]

As translated into Italian and thence into English, Agamben's various renderings of this text are somewhat confusing, lacking internal agreement. Two features stand out, however. First,

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60. 2 Thess. 2:3–4, 6–12 (*RSVCE*).

61. I have conflated the translation that appears on p. 109 with the one that appears on p. 110, which reads: "until the person now holding *it* back *gets out of the way*" (italics added). At p. 184 we find a third, more literal, version in parallel with the Greek text. This, with minor adjustments I have introduced for clarity, reads as follows: "And now all of you know the one withholding, for [the purpose of] being revealed himself in his moment. For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only the one restraining now [restrains it] until from the middle he becomes [removed]. And then shall be revealed the lawless [one] – whom the Lord Jesus will abolish with the breath of his mouth and will render inoperative with the appearance of his coming – of which is [the] presence according to [the] working of Satan in every power and [in] signs and prodigies of falsehood and with every trick of injustice to those being destroyed..."

anomia appears as a diabolical counterpart to the work of Christ in bringing the law to an end. Second, the restraint that is operative in this counterpart is a purely tactical restraint that works through law and the power of law, which is the present instrument of lawlessness in the diabolical sense. It is the working of Satan *in every power* rather than "with all power" that Agamben thinks Paul is warning us about.

Most interpreters see the restraint of lawlessness as a function of the good order maintained by the state, which (per Rom. 13:1–7) is ordained of God for that purpose. They understand this order to come first from Roman law and empire, then from Christian law and empire. Agamben begs to differ. He thinks that this view plays into the hands of the very man of lawlessness (*anomos*) whose arrival it fears. For his part, he finds in all worldly claims to authority a kind of antichrist. The *anomos* is the man who after the *katargesis* of law in Christ begins to usurp law for his own purposes, secularizing and idolizing respect for law and authority. In Paul's reference to restraint, Agamben finds anomy's self-restraint, that the *anomos* might appear to the world as the force of law that deters evil, until it finally becomes evident that law and lawlessness are one and the same and that the force working through law today is not God, but Satan.

On Agamben's approach, then, it is still right to say that the state, or some power within the state, is the restrainer, but now in multiple senses: the old sense, appropriated by Hobbes, in which the state purports to be able to block or delay the final catastrophe;[62] a

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62. Agamben (109) quotes Tertullian as follows: "We pray for the permanence [stability?] of the world (*pro statu saeculi*), for peace in things [human affairs?], for delay of the end (*pro mora finis*)." Agamben remarks that "every theory of the State" that views it "as a power destined to block or delay catastrophe, can be taken as a secularization of this interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2."

new sense, in which the state restrains itself lest it tip its hand prematurely, revealing its totalitarian aspirations; and a further sense that is more difficult to articulate because it is more theological. The *katechōn*, says Agamben, is "the force—the Roman Empire as well as every constituted authority [is the force]—that clashes with and hides *katargesis*, the state of tendential lawlessness that characterizes the messianic, and in this sense delays unveiling the mystery of lawlessness."[63]

In none of these senses is the restrainer viewed positively, as in traditional readings. According to Agamben, 2 Thessalonians 2 cannot be made the basis of a Christian doctrine of law or power. For the *katechōn* is every force that restrains or opposes the gospel by refusing to acknowledge the *katargesis* or abolition of law in Christ. It is every force that makes of itself and its own law a saviour.[64] As for the mystery of lawlessness, it seems to be twofold. Positively – and here it can be viewed positively – it is a godly lawlessness in Christ, through whom the law of love cancels out the law that exposes sin and leads to death. Negatively, it is the wicked lawlessness of those who defy God and his Christ by insisting on law while transforming law itself into lawlessness.[65]

For a time, the mystery of ungodly lawlessness operates under the guise of law, deferring disaster. But eventually the pretence is dropped, exposing the ruse for what it is. In Carl Schmitt's terms, the state of exception is shown to be the true ground of law, and the difference between law and lawlessness disappears altogether. The situation of being beyond the law,

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63. *The Time That Remains,* 111.
64. Cf. Farrow, "The Audacity of the State," *Touchstone* 23.1 (January/February 2010), 28–35.
65. It would have been helpful if Agamben himself had identified the mystery of lawlessness in these twofold terms, for it is his attribution of positive messianic value to "the mystery of lawlessness," while yet retaining a negative or anti-messianic sense, that sets apart his reading of this text.

brought about by the crucified and resurrected Christ, is parodied by the state of exception, in which (to employ language from 1 Corinthians) "all things are lawful" for those who rule. Laws and constitutions are suspended in the face of a crisis no longer deferred, and the will of the rulers takes their place. Human life is organized by pure arbitrary fiat. [66]

When this happens, worldly anomy is exposed as such. The *anomos* appears as the antichrist it is and as the "absolute outlaw." For the messianic mystery of "the absence of law" must come to fullness both positively and negatively.[67] But Christ will complete his own salvific work by rendering inoperative this sinful parody. He will win the war of presences by bringing our false representations of time and of law, embodied in the totalitarian state, to an end. He will deliver up the kingdom to his God and Father. This too will be by fiat, by "the breath of his mouth," though Agamben does not attempt to describe it or to say whether it is anything other than the providential collapse of the sinful *anomos*.[68] That is, he does not address the confrontation between the two in the terms of 2 Thessalonians 1, which he passes over in treating 2 Thessalonians 2. But, one way or another, this man that wills to

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66. See *Time That Remains,* 104ff. A link between Paul and Schmitt is found in Paul's concept of a remnant – that is, of a people neither *ennomos* nor *anomos*, since law has suffered *katargesis*. Schmitt's concept of the state of exception, which identifies where true authority lies by virtue of the power to suspend law, raises an irresolvable question about the relation between authority and legitimacy in human affairs. It should be noted that *ll tempo che resta* appeared three years before Agamben's highly prophetic *Stato di eccezione* (2003), which pursued the project begun in *Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (1995).

67. On Agamben's view, if I understand him correctly, the restrainer is simply anomic man, in satanic rather than christic form, operating under the guise of a law that eventually will be exposed as satanic.

68. Such is the meaning, according to Agamben, of 1 Cor. 15:24; but might a more Joachimite representation recommend itself to some, as it did to Lessing?

have neither the old law of Moses nor the new messianic freedom from law but rather to substitute for both his own arbitrary autonomy, his lawless law, will come to nothing. He will be nullified.[69]

In this connection, and in fulfillment of a promise made at the outset, we may mention Agamben's Tyconian instincts; that is, his recognition of the divided nature of the Church, which harbors a secret loyalty to the antichristic rather than the christic mystery of lawlessness. For the Church itself, whether in its members or in its institutional life, is in no small part inclined to cling to law and to idolize respect for authority. It is therefore always in danger of serving to obscure, rather than to declare and live, the gospel of Christ; in danger of substituting an antichristic gospel of restraint. Is this not what we have witnessed in pandemic responses that subordinate the life and mission of the Church to the demands of secular authorities who declare a state of exception – an apparently permanent state of exception in which the Church's authority to conduct its mission of word and sacrament can be suspended in the name of health and safety? And is it not the case that a major part of the Church, in precincts high and low, has quite happily agreed to this?

This is what I had in mind when I spoke of the timeliness of engagement with Agamben, for a new light has been cast by our present circumstances on the manner in which the antichristic mystery emerges into the open and on the ease with which so many,

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69. It is not made clear (this is one of the many lacunae in Agamben's argument) whether the parousia of Christ is historically distinct from the parousia of antichrist. Is the latter somehow destroyed by his own parousia in a failed attempt at absolute power, or is he destroyed rather by the appearance of Christ from heaven with his host of holy ones (1 Thess. 4:13ff.; 2 Thess. 1:5ff.)? Or are these events and causes, *pace* Paul, ultimately indistinguishable?

whether inside or outside the Church, "credit the lie."[70] New light has been cast on divisions within the Church, which has certainly become internally polarized, as if in proof of the Tyconian ecclesiology according to which there is an overlap between the body of Satan and the body of Christ, in the form of a false church within the Church.[71]

In this new context serious thought must be given to Agamben's idea of the kairotic "now" as a time for transformation through a voluntary nullification or letting-go of one thing in particular: the precious idea of church and state as partners in the restraint of evil and so in the delay of the end.[72] Insofar as the state still presents itself "as a power destined to block or delay catastrophe," and insofar as it does this in such a way as to block or delay the mission of the Church and to herd its members into the digital dictatorship desired by the authors of this putative catastrophe – insofar as the state, having declared a perpetual state of exception, supposes itself in a position to grant rights and

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70. 2 Thess. 2:11. By way of illustration, see "Unclean! Unclean!" (first published then unpublished at *The Catholic World Report*, but available on my Academia pages). Infinite deferment seems also to be the ambition of many bishops and church leaders.

71. Augustine expounds Tyconius's view as found in the second of his seven hermeneutical rules. This is the rule "about the twofold division of the body of the Lord." Or rather, it is a rule about "the true and the counterfeit," which requires the interpreter of scripture to beware lest he mistake what is said of the true for what is said of the counterfeit and vice versa. For "the good fish and the bad" are "mixed up in the one net" owing to their common participation in the sacraments (*Doc*. *Chr*. 3.32; cf. the seventh rule at 3.37). While Augustine did not read the Apocalypse with Tyconius as a book about the struggles of a divided Church, he did allow that the Church was a *corpus permixtum* that in the last days would have to be cleansed of its impure element (cf. Zechariah 13 and Rev. 16:19).

72. In *The Mystery of Evil: Benedict XVI and the End of Days* (2013; ET 2017), Agamben attempts a Tyconian reading of the papal resignation, extending this analysis into the Church, but we cannot engage that here.

freedoms at its own discretion, in exchange for submission, rather than to recognize pre-political rights and freedoms as granted by God – it is plainly revealed as lawless in the satanic sense and must be resisted as such, lest it seat itself in the temple of God, declaring itself to be God.[73]

It is no accident that Agamben was one of the first to see through the false claims being made about the coronavirus crisis and to identify the political problem it presented;[74] or, indeed, that he had long since decried the biometric aims which are being pursued today under cover of that crisis.[75] How thin is the line between democracy and dictatorship, how readily "biopower" and "biopolitics" dehumanize man, he had perceived and studied for some time. It was not difficult to apply the analysis of his 2003 work, *Stato di eccezione*, to the situation that emerged in 2020. Paul, I am convinced, would approve, joining Agamben in his rebuke of

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73. There is indeed a catastrophe, but one that shows every sign of being purpose-built and based on a great many deliberate lies. These lies are largely designed to manipulate through fear, for at its deepest level the contest is between what Aquinas called the gift of godly fear and the curse of ungodly fear. With Agamben's work on the topic (see the following note) compare my essays "The Health-First Heresy," "The Emerging Nowa Huta," "Enrolled in the Religion of Fear," "America's War," and others collected at douglasfarrow.academia.edu or published at douglasfarrow.substack.com, including the series on what I call the Public Health revolution.

74. "*Lo stato d'eccezione provocato da un'emergenza immotivata*," *Il Manifesto,* 26. February 2020. See also *La medicina come religione*, Quodlibet, 2 May 2020, and the collection, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Nuova edizione accresciuta, 2021) / *Where are we now? The Epidemic as Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). "We live," he observes, "in a society that has sacrificed freedom for so-called 'security reasons' and has hence condemned itself to ... a perpetual state of fear and insecurity" (*Where are we now?*, 28). And he asks pointedly, of his own nation: "How did it happen that an entire country, without even realising what was happening, collapsed both ethically and politically in the face of an illness?" (ibid. 34).

75. "*Non à la biométrie*," *Le Monde,* 5 December 2005.

the Church. [76] He would not, however, entirely approve of Agamben's reading of 2 Thessalonians 2, for reasons I must now clarify.

Abolishing Law through Lawlessness Disguised as Law

There is certainly much to admire in Agamben's reading, particularly his subversion and inversion of the traditional idea of the state as restrainer. But the state is not the restrainer Paul has in view, either in the old sense in or Agamben's new sense. If we wish to think with Paul here, we cannot be content to use whatever sources we prefer in order to frame the question. We must follow him precisely as a student of the dominical teaching found in the Olivet Discourse and so also as an interpreter of Daniel. Approached just so, in the light of the Olivet Discourse and of the Thessalonian correspondence as a whole, the riddle of the restrainer (who or what is it?) requires another solution than the one Agamben offers.

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76. "At this point, and since I have remarked upon everybody else's, I should mention the most serious responsibility of those who ought to have protected human dignity. First of all, the Church. Now a handmaiden of science – the latter having become the true religion of our time – the Church has radically disavowed its most essential principles. Led by a Pope named Francis, it is forgetting that St Francis embraced the lepers. It is forgetting that one of the works of mercy is visiting the sick. It is forgetting the martyrs' teaching that we must be willing to sacrifice life rather than faith, and that renouncing one's neighbour means renouncing faith" (*Where are we now?*, 36). The Church, of course, has constantly appealed to the second great commandment in defence of its actions, but this defence cannot withstand scrutiny, as I began showing in "Let the Dead Bury their Dead" (*The Catholic World Report*, 18 May 2020). Moreover, it has abandoned its own interpretive advantage, which has been taken up by its opponent, as Agamben astutely notes: "The medical religion has unreservedly adopted from Christianity the eschatological appeal dropped by the latter" (*Where are we now?*, 53); but see n. 91 below.

Without attempting to reprise the arguments of my commentary, I will point directly to the opening of Daniel 12, where the visions of that book are brought to their climax. "At that time," Daniel is told – the reference being to the last remnant of the time that remains – "shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people."

> And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end.[77]

On the basis of this text, in its own context, the correct solution to the riddle begins to appear. Colin Nicholl rightly observes that, in Daniel 10–12, St. Michael is cast in the role of restrainer.[78] It is only reasonable to suppose that Paul has Michael in mind.

At 12:1, however, the words "shall arise" hide an important translation issue. Nicholl contends that the reference to "a time of trouble such as never has been" makes little sense unless the action of Michael, with which that time of trouble is correlated, is not a rising up but rather a standing down. He argues that both the

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77. Dan. 12:1–4 (RSVCE), which adds, as if to underline the distinction between knowledge and understanding: "Many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall increase."

78. See *1&2 Thessalonians*, 252f., and Colin R. Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 234ff. Nicholl supplies copious evidence for the prominence of Michael in Jewish literature of the period, including a later reference to Michael as κατέχων.

Hebrew word יעמד and the word used in the LXX, παρελεύσεται, can refer either to a new action or to a cessation of action, and that it refers here to Michael's withdrawal from the fray, from his post as protector of the covenant and the covenant people. If that indeed is what Daniel is saying, and if Paul (like Jesus) is following Daniel closely, we may take Paul to be saying that there is one presently restraining the mystery of lawlessness, one whom he has earlier identified as Michael, who eventually will no longer do so. The time will come when, at God's command, he will permit the enemies of God free rein.[79]

This clears away a number of difficulties. But Paul's appeal to Daniel being quite complex, we must also consider the vision in chapter seven concerning the ascension of the Son of Man to the seat of divine authority and all that lies between chapters seven and twelve describing the contestation of that authority on earth. That is how we arrive with Paul at a statement both about the restrainer of the mystery of lawlessness and also about the coming man of lawlessness. To make a long story short, Paul's *anomos* is the final embodiment of that serpentine mystery of lawlessness which has been at work on the covenant people and within the covenant people from the very beginning: a lawlessness that in Daniel's day found its fullest eschatological type in the pagan Antiochus and his Hellenizing sycophants.[80]

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79. "Do you not remember that while I was with you I was telling you these things?" (2:5).

80. The beast from the pagan sea, as John has it in Revelation 13, and the beast from the earth, respectively; that is, "the men of violence among your own people" (Dan. 11:14). The former is symbolized in Daniel 11:21ff. as the little horn with the boastful mouth, a deplorable fellow who honours a god of fortresses or refuges (מעזים) for the sake of peace and security. Agamben again, cogently if without reference to such texts: "At issue here is the entire idea of human societal destinies, an idea derived from a perspective that seems for many reasons to have adopted from our declining religions the apocalyptic

When this material is taken into account, one puzzle is resolved while another arises. Which of two sound options for rendering 2 Thess. 2:7 should we prefer, once confident that there is an allusion both to Michael as the restrainer and to the little horn with the boastful mouth who will be allowed to step forward onto centre stage? Should we read, "there is one who restrains until he (the man of lawlessness) emerges," or rather, "there is one who restrains until he (Michael) steps aside"?

My own rendering of the passage, as readers of the commentary will know, favors the former but leaves my indecision on display:

> And now you see what is delaying the day of the Lord; namely, that he [the man of lawlessness] should be revealed in his own proper time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only there is one presently restraining it until he shall emerge from the midst [*or*, until that one is ordered to stand down]. And then at last the lawless one will be unveiled, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth and bring down by the display of his own parousia—the one whose parousia is according to the working of Satan, with all demonic power and with false signs and wonders and with every wicked deceit, a parousia unto those who are perishing for want of love of the truth, which they did not receive that it might save them. For this very reason God sends upon them a deluding influence, that they might credit the lie, so they should be judged...[81]

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idea of an end of the world. Politics has already been superseded by the economy, but now even the latter, in order for it to govern, will have to be integrated into the new paradigm of biosecurity – a paradigm in the name of which all other needs must be sacrificed. It is legitimate to ask if such a society can still define itself as human, or if the loss of sensible relationships, of the face, of friendship, of love, can truly be compensated for by an abstract and presumably absolutely fictitious health security" (*Where are we now,* 57f.).

81. *1&2 Thessalonians*, 242. In a forthcoming essay, "Apocalypsis in 1 & 2

The majority reading of verse seven, in which the second "he" is taken to refer, not to the man of lawlessness, but rather to the restrainer, is certainly viable. So, I contend, is a rendering that makes it refer to the former. The good news for the reader, if not for the translator, is that, whichever referent we supply, we may still understand Michael to be the restrainer and the man of lawlessness to be the one whose unveiling occurs when the prince of the covenant withdraws.

This makes sense of both text and context, including source texts.[82] The mystery of lawlessness, once Michael ceases to restrain it through his support for the covenant people – think of Abraham ceasing to drive the vultures from the sacrifice or Moses arising from his rocky seat and lowering his orant hands[83] – comes to its climax with the appearance of that man of lawlessness before whom the people of God will appear to be defenceless. Rule by decree will again, and universally, bring the sacraments of the covenant and the proclamation of the gospel to a halt.[84] Violence will be done against

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Thessalonians: Paul's Vision of the Day of the Lord," I set this in its context in the two letters to Thessaloniki.

82. One cannot derive Agamben's view from Daniel, or retain it once Daniel is taken into account. It is not "every constituted authority" that is the restrainer but a very specific authority, Michael.

83. Not before the proper time, though Abraham fell asleep (Gen. 15:1; cf. Augustine, *Civ.* 16.24) and Moses needed Aaron and Hur to prop him up (Exod. 17:12). Michael, too, has a little help, even as he lends help (Dan. 10:13), until he is told to withdraw. Perhaps he has already done so. Are we not seeing, in the Church and on a global scale, what begins to look like a time of trouble such has never been, a time in which even the elect seem subject to deception and in need of help (Matt. 15:21–25; cf. Dan. 11:32–35)? Is it still difficult to conceive of "a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given" coming in without warning and obtaining the kingdom "by fear and by flattery," acting deceitfully and becoming strong "with a small people," scattering among his followers "plunder, spoil, and goods" (Dan. 11:21ff.)?

84. See Josef Pieper, *The End of Time: A Meditation on the Philosophy of History* (trans. Michael Bullock, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 119ff.

the people of God on a global scale. Those who will not submit to the mark of the beast, which will serve as the key to its kingdom and as the last great temptation of man, will find themselves without succour or support. [85] They will not in fact be defenceless, of course, or without support; for Christ himself will defend them, as Paul is at pains to say. The God of the covenant will come to their rescue by sending Jesus himself once more into the fray, by revealing to them and to their enemies the One whom all heaven already knows and adores: the Son of Man, arrayed with his proper glory, dominion, and power.[86] That – nothing other or less than that! – will prove the bitter end of the mystery of lawlessness and of the man of lawlessness, individually and corporately. It will bring the world to its knees, just as it brought Saul to his knees on the Damascus road.[87] Divine justice and divine mercy will both be served, divine faithfulness demonstrated. The ascended Lord, to whom "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been committed for its true

85. Rev. 13:11ff. More should have been made in *1&2 Thessalonians* (see 236f.) of the construction of the Internet of Bodies by which the beast will wield its power. The world crisis that began to unfold in 2019 is directed, in no small part, toward that end: the advance of biodigital convergence. By some accident of history, the World Intellectual Property Organization patent application filed by Microsoft in June of that year, for a "Cryptocurrency System Using Body Activity Data," bears the prophetically freighted number WO 2020/060606 A1. How appropriate! Let it serve as a reminder of John's vision of a demonic parody of the instruction in Deut. 6:8 to bind the commandments of God tightly to head and hands. For powerful men, who despise the commandments of God, have proposed implants in heads and hands to bind humans to their own commandments. Which is not merely an accident of history.

86. "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins," writes Paul (Rom. 11:26f.), quoting Isa. 59:20f. and looking forward as well as backward to Christ, with the salvation of "all Israel" in view. See my essay, "Blessed Is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord: Jews and the Parousia of Jesus," *Communio* 45.3–4 (Fall/Winter 2018), 494–514.

87. Cf. Phil. 2:9–11; see further *1&2 Thessalonians*, 203ff.

and proper exercise, will put that authority on full display. The kingdom will come, not by human effort, but with a flash of light and the sound of a trumpet.

In *The Time That* Remains – things are otherwise in Agamben's more recent work – this biblical note remains muffled at best. The note that sounds in its place is the *katargesis* of law. Dialectic displaces eschatology, or distorts it; too much is invested in a single word.[88] The authority granted to Jesus Christ is indeed rendering inoperative all authority that opposes Christ, in whom alone the diastasis between authority and legitimacy is overcome. Putative authority over and among men is expanding, on a global scale, to god-like claims and proportions. In the hollow spaces of this authority, blasphemous words are being spoken, blasphemous images being displayed, blasphemous deeds being done.[89] Yet, as Agamben has pointed out, there is a crisis of legitimacy that cannot be overcome, a gap between word and deed that cannot be bridged. Lawlessness is voiding itself through law that is not law, though the lawless pretenders do not know it and do not see it coming. For, like those subject to them, they too are under the spell of a strong delusion, having not "believed in the truth but taken pleasure in unrighteousness."[90] And what are we to make of this clash? What indeed, if not to send out with great urgency the call to repentance,

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88. Agamben's fixation on *katargesis* is itself a distorting feature, generating untenable analogues between Paul's attitude to the law, on the one hand, and to the mystery of lawlessness on the other. Paul says that the *anomos* himself will suffer *katargesis*, which will certainly render him inoperative! But it will not fulfill or preserve him, except for the execution of his sentence. Words mean different things in different contexts. That ὁ κύριος ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ means that the *anomos* will be ordered to his place of punishment (cf. Rev. 19:20).
89. Witness the words projected onto the statue of Jesus that towers over Rio, *Vacina salva!*
90. 2 Thess. 2:12.

and with great compassion the invitation to "look up and raise your heads, for your redemption is drawing near"?[91] Is that not just what Paul makes of it in 1 Thessalonians 4–5 and 2 Thessalonians 1–2?

God will not forever strive with man.[92] A time is coming, and perhaps now is or soon will be, when restraint will be removed, when the covenant itself will appear to have been rendered inoperative. Then will take place the contest of parousias, in which the lawless one will be destroyed and all the lawless banished from before the Lord's glorious countenance. Then will crowns of righteousness be awarded "to all who have loved His appearing." From his conversion on the Damascus road to his martyrdom in Rome, Paul himself was such a one, "straining forward to what lies ahead" and pressing on "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," to that final assembling around Jesus of the Church militant and the Church triumphant. In the time that remains, that is precisely what he advises us also to do.[93]

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91. Luke 21:28 (RSVCE). Such is not Agamben's conclusion, of course, for he is not reading Paul with the faith of Paul: "We have no nostalgia for the notions of the human and of the divine that the implacable waves of time are erasing from the shore of history. But we reject with equal conviction the mute and faceless bare life and the health religion that governments are proposing. We are not awaiting either a new god or a new human being. We rather seek, here and now, among the ruins around us, a humbler, simpler form of life. We know that such a life is not a mirage, because we have memories and experiences of it – even if, inside and outside of ourselves, opposing forces are always pushing it back into oblivion" (*Where are we now?*, 97). To which it must be said in reply, "God will not always strive with man!"

92. Gen. 6:3. This, I fear, is being overlooked by those Marian maximalists and social kingship theorists who, while seeing a great struggle on the near horizon, have adopted a postmillennialist stance that cannot be found in the scriptures or in the fathers. That, too, is a matter we cannot pursue here, except to note that it is linked also to the papal maximalism I queried in "The Church's One Foundation" (*The Catholic World Report,* 4 March 2019) and in "Dethroning Christ?" (ibid., 30 August 2020), as in chapter five of *Desiring a Better Country* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

93. See 1 Thess. 4:13ff. and 2 Thess. 2:1; cf. Phil. 3:12ff. and 2 Tim. 4:8.

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Book Reviews

Recent scholarship has begun to recognize the importance of material objects in the study of antiquity. No longer understood as "minor marginal notes" fated only to bolster textual sources, material objects are now understood as primary sources in their own right. *Imagining the Divine: Exploring Art in Religions of Late Antiquity Across Eurasia* is a book that addresses the importance of material objects, as it draws attention to the "materializations of religion in manufactured forms" (1). One of the book's main objectives is to dispel the notion that the history of religions across Eurasia during late antiquity was dominated by a text-based theology. By shifting the focus from text-based evidence to material culture, the authors in this collection of essays focus on how "objects, visual culture and archeology" (1) create religious experience and construct religious space, whether it be, for example, the framing elements that decorate the body such as grapes (Platt) or the Buddha's footprints (Elsner).

From October 2017 to February 2018, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, U.K. ran an exhibition titled *Imagining the Divine: Art and the Rise of World Religions.* The idea behind the exhibit was to highlight how religions across Eurasia "defined their religious identities through the creation of new kinds of imagery" (1). The new imagery, whether it be objects or sacred spaces, was not created in isolated environments but emerged as religions competed and contrasted with one another. The success of the exhibition

prompted a series of lectures and a major conference from which the papers in this volume were drawn.

The book has nine chapters, each of which is followed by a two-to-five-page response. The editors, Jaś Elsner and Rachel Wood, begin by providing a brief but comprehensive introduction that orientates the reader to the importance of studying images and objects for the "construction and experience of religion" (4), as well as outlining the specific contributions of each author. Elsner and Wood note that despite the title *Imagining the Divine*, the focus was to remain on the "analysis of things" (3) as opposed to a revelatory or visionary experience. Both authors acknowledge the limitations of this tapered approach, stressing "the enormous range of a field that this volume only begins to touch on" (3).

In chapter one, "The Materiality of the Divine: Aniconism, Iconoclasm and Iconography," Salvatore Settis focuses on the complicated relationship between the level of the written word and images. He outlines how the reception of each, word and image, is often dependent on the antinomy between the word/image, levels of literacy, and how effective words or images can reference the divine prototype. Drawing attention to the complicated aspect of viewing the divine, Settis highlights how even the aniconic nature of writing can visually reference the divine by transforming words into images. This idea of "emphasized absence" (17), whereby the presence of God can be signalled in non-human form such as writing, an empty throne, or footprints, is taken up by Maria Lidova in her response to Settis. Lidova notes the importance of ritual and its role in evoking the presence of the divine, particularly when the god was not visually represented. A shift in ritual activity and viewer participation took place, however, once images of gods began to appear in temples.

In chapter two, "Bodies, Bases and Borders: Framing the Divine in Greco-Roman Antiquity," Verity Platt parses the divine body, examining each of the elements that act as a frame around the

figure – elements in her mind that are all too easily dismissed as being supplemental. In doing so, Platt hopes to show how "'parergonal' elements that adorn the body turn out to be fundamental" (29) to the function of the statue, and when unpacked and read together, elements such as grapes, drapery, or a shield, shed light on the "theology of the sacred in antiquity" (19). In his response to Platt, Dominic Dalglish briefly extends Platt's discussion by looking at the relationship between the "bodies of gods and the place and status of 'idols' for the existence of the divine" (38). Bringing gods to life and providing a space in which to contemplate them, he notes, differs depending on whether a god was depicted in a painting, in a dramatic performance, or gods in iconic form. It was this iconic form that was a central aspect of the exhibition.

Chapter three consists of two parts. The first, by Katherine Ross – "Comparing Material Texts" – serves as an introduction to the second part, "Kufa and Kells: The Illuminated Word as Sign and Presence in the Seventh-Ninth Centuries,'" by U. Bongianino and B.C. Tilghman. While noting the importance of an "art-historical comparison [for] our understanding of 1st millennium religion" (41), Ross raises an interesting question regarding the performative value of the written word in society and how people interacted with it. She suggests that engaging in such questions would further broaden the investigation around the function of the "religious word as an object of study" that is equal to that of images of the divine (42). Applying a comparative art-historical approach, Bongianino and Tilghman investigate the manuscript traditions of Christianity and Islam between the seventh and ninth centuries. Rather than focus specifically on what these two traditions have in common, the authors examine the historical and ideological differences that underline the "superficial similarities of the two traditions" (45). For example, both traditions are similar in the way that they treat and use holy writ, yet they differ in format; the Qur'ān is often positioned horizontally,

while Christian page forms an upright rectangle format. A key aspect that emerged from this discussion was the complicated matter of how each tradition displayed its own notion of the divine in material form and, consequently, each tradition necessitates its own examination.

It has long been held by scholars that the Jewish tradition refrained from depicting God in anthropomorphic form. The fourth chapter, "The Jewish Image of God in Late Antiquity" by Martin Goodman, challenges this notion, suggesting that the image of the Helios figure found on the floor in Palestinian synagogues might represent the Jewish God. His claim is bolstered by the location of the figure in a place of worship, a space which lends itself to reading the image as the Jewish God. Hindy Najman's and Jaś Elsner's response attempts to push back the boundaries that Goodman challenges in his article. Rather than focus solely on the Helios god, the authors are interested in examining the various elements that are incorporated into floor mosaics, noting that none of the imagery is fixed in its meaning. Their examination challenges Goodman's "triumphalist narrative" that it was the Jewish God depicted in these mosaics that viewers gazed upon.

In chapter five, "Empire and Faith: The Heterotopian Space of the Franks Casket," Catherine E. Karkov discusses the elusive Franks casket from eighth century Northumbria. Although little is known of its origin or function, Karkov maintains that the casket discloses the lives of people, cultures, and religion in a way that presents a myriad of readings. Viewing the casket through a heterotopian lens is helpful she maintains, as it allows for multiple narratives to exist simultaneously without privileging one belief system or culture above the other. Katherine Cross responds to Karkov's paper by addressing the perplexing history of the casket. Briefly outlining the deconstructive and reconstructive aspects of its development, she suggests that Karkov's way forward is best suited

as there is no one single definition, no one single reading that sums up the meaning of the casket.

Returning to the idea of "emphasized absence" in chapter six, "Buddhapada: The Enlightened Being and the Limits of Representation at Amarāvatī," Jaś Elsner examines the motif of the Buddha's feet, which evokes the presence of the Buddha himself. Elsner is attentive to the way images reflect religious life "through their uses of the visual discourses they appropriated" (96). A fascinating point made by Elsner involves the direction of the Buddhapada and the implications for the viewer. The feet, he claims, are always depicted downwards at Amarāvatī, in a position which allows the viewer to engage "face-to-face" with the Buddha, presenting them with a visual theophany and defining the feet as a kind of surreal icon. Alice Casalini, in her response to Elsner's paper, addresses the surrounding space in which the Buddhapada are found. She notes that more analysis is needed regarding the positionality of the feet since different viewpoints create different encounters and play an important role in viewer participation.

Chapter seven, "From Serapis to Christ to the Caliph: Faces as Re-Appropriation of the Past," authors Ivan Foletti and Katharina Meinecke investigate the evolution of the bearded face and the standing male figure of the pagans, early Christians, and the Umayyad caliphate. Foletti and Meinecke are primarily interested in exploring how these two image-types were appropriated and reconfigured over time in order to convey ideas of power and authority. Nadia Ali in her response is concerned that the authors have cast their net to narrow in their use of typological borrowings. She extends the authors conversation to include alternative typological scenes such as the iconography of the reclining figure in Coptic Nativity scenes contrasted with that of the Umayyad reclining figure, noting the striking similarities between the two.

In chapter eight, Richard Hobbs continues the idea of cross-cultural comparison in his article "Use of Decorative Silver Plate in Imperial Rome and Sasanian Iran." Covering a period from the third to seventh century, from Rome to Byzantium to the Sasanian empire, he examines decorative silver plates and how these objects depict religious belief. Using domestic, religious/ritual and social/political ways of thinking, this chapter draws attention to the shared iconography and use of these objects between cultures along with the problems associated with a gap in the archaeological record. Rachel Wood, in her response, reinforces the problems raised by Hobbs, and in turn suggests we broaden our scope of enquiry to include the study of other media in conjunction with silver plates.

The final chapter by Christopher Uehlinger, "Material Religion in Comparative Perspective: How Different is BCE from CE?" addresses the artificial categories of BCE and CE. Uehlinger argues that the distinction between these two timelines is best expressed using material and visual culture since the exclusive use of text-based data often "distorts the historian's perception of ancient religion" (155). In order to articulate this distinction, Uehlinger cautiously employs the comparison of Type 1 and Type 2 religions, noting that a complete distinction between these categories does not exist in real-world settings, as religious identities were not static and often blurred the boundaries between one another. Building on Uehlinger's argument, Stefanie Lenk responds with an example of a baptistry at Cuicul in North Africa. By examining the archaeological evidence and the rites of purification, she maintains that this site shows examples of traits found in both T1 and T2 categories, thus reinforcing the fluidity of these two timelines.

"Imagining the Divine" is an impressive volume, covering a wide-ranging development and interpretation of the divine in late antiquity. Although it is relatively easy to read, it is more accessible for those who have had some introduction to visual studies. On a

minor but still important note, the book is printed on high-quality paper, which lends itself well to the colour images and allows readers to engage with the material more fully. It is a delight to see how material and visual culture is coming to the foreground in the academic study of religion. It is this reviewer's hope that more scholars will embrace the role of images in illuminating ancient religious traditions.

The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World. Edited by Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pp. 1141.
Reviewed by Jessica Gauthier, *McGill University*.

The careful reader may learn at least as much about our cultural world, the one from which *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* has sprung, as the historical world it examines. Scholarship has certainly moved away from Edward Gibbon's rather dim view of the Merovingians. This dynasty of the first Frankish kings, founded by Clovis, ruled the people and the land occupied by the cultural ancestors of France, Belgium, Germany, southern Luxembourg, and parts of Switzerland from the late fifth to the mid-eighth centuries. Editors Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira spotlight work that privileges material culture over historical sources, questioning previous assumptions and showing how what was previously understood by many as merely a transitional period of decline from Antiquity, began to be seen as worthy of study in its own right. The political and cultural interactions of the Merovingians are examined in detail, but this is not a history book in the classical sense. The juxtaposition of disciplines provided here may certainly create future opportunities for a closer marriage of evidence and interpretation.

The first of the forty-six essays in this book is an introduction written by Effros and Moreira establishing their methodology. The remaining forty-five essays are grouped into eight thematic sections. Contributions of women are well-represented in both the authorship and subject matter. Issues important to many scholars today, including explorations of gender, identity, and power dynamics, as well as deconstruction and reinterpretation of historical accounts, are omnipresent. Scholarship from both the natural and social sciences stimulate interdisciplinary engagement. Individual chapters can be

appreciated on their own, but they are organized to facilitate a richer experience of the whole when read in order.

The first section, "Merovingian Historiography and the History of Archaeology" consists of three essays written by Fouracre, Graceffa, and Effros, respectively. Fouracre examines how the Franks laid the groundwork for cohesion and stability in a time of struggle over resources. Graceffa shows how Merovingian history has been used ideologically over the centuries. Finally, Effros identifies how historical narrative can be challenged by archaeological excavations.

Expressions of identity are then explored in section two. Coumert contrasts the understanding of a "civilization shock" between Gallo-Romans and "savage barbarians" with a theory of ethnogenesis which calls for a reinterpretation of the historical sources "based on the perpetual remaking of an ethnic group as the product of circumstance" (100). Drews shows how the "cultural diversity and vitality of the Merovingian world" (132) was enriched by Irish, Scottish, Syrian, oriental and Jewish identities. Czermak looks at the conclusions that can be drawn "about social structures and relations within a population" (139) by examining bones and teeth from the period; quantitative methods allow for a more generalized understanding, while micro-historical analyses can teach us about individual life stories. Halsall offers an analysis of gender informed by Judith Butler, attempting to create distance between gender as a social category and biological sex in a reading of the Merovingian world. Finally, Perez examines what we can learn about children of the period from their remains.

The third section deals with power structures. Hen examines polity, preparing the reader for James's chapter on elite women of the period. Sarti outlines the role of the Military, while Halfond provides a sketch of the conflict resolution between bishops. Horden addresses

care of the sick and the poor, and Diem challenges the grand narrative of unified Merovingian monasticism.

The theme of power is continued in the fourth section. Esders focuses on diplomatic, military, and religious relationships between Gaul and Byzantium. Fleming discusses trade at the borders of Britain and France at the time, while Picard returns to Irish monasticism and the use of patronage as a tool to solidify power and identity. Mathisen explores the tension between the Franks and the Visigoths as competing barbarian powers, and with Hardt, we reencounter ethnogenesis as he explores the formation of Bavarian and Slavic identities, Avar attacks, and the Merovingian quest for dominance. Arnold explains how the Lombards consolidated their territory and dealt with Merovingians and Ostrogoths.

Five chapters on Merovingian literary culture follow. Reimitz argues for the absence of a "dominant historical narrative" (479), suggesting that authors of Merovingian historiography had sophisticated views and were more educated than was previously thought. Similarly, Rio argues that the use of multiple legal systems operating simultaneously meant that "law was less a function of government than a form of cultural capital, manipulated and lent meaning by its end users" (503). Kreiner contends that hagiography was a place for conversations about the nature and responsibilities of leadership, while Gillett discusses the epistolary correspondence of the time and provides a useful compilation of all extant Merovingian letters and references to letters. Handley gives a summary of the epigraphy from the period.

Merovingian landscapes form a sixth focal point. Loseby sets the tone by discussing the privileged role of cities "because of their greater concentration of functions and their continuous and multivalent associations with power" (601). Bourgeois examines how "the reciprocal acculturation of elites of Gallo-Roman and Germanic origin" (637) can be seen in changing rural structures, while Arnau

posits reasons for the abandonment of Roman villas in southern Gaul during the sixth to seventh-century. Chevalier discusses the "intense flowering of religious construction" (682) during the period. Peytremann analyzes the relationship between the people in northern Gaul and the land, which is complemented by Squatriti's exploration of their relationship with local plant life. This is in turn followed by Yvinec and Barme's discussion on animal husbandry, which allows them to draw conclusions about the northern diet.

"Economies, Exchange, and Production" are then given in-depth treatment. Tys examines trade via waterways, arguing for the need to gain a clearer understanding of rural environments to better understand these dynamics. Strothmann argues for numismatics as a corrective to the history by Gregory of Tours, taking Merovingian coinage into account to show how Roman political culture lived on in Gaul as a part of the "invisible Roman Empire" (814). Constantin Pion et al. discuss how Indo-Pacific glass beads and garnets made their way into Merovingian Gaul, while Bonifay and Pieri concentrate on ceramics and other objects obtained through Mediterranean trade. Theuws argues that the economy of northern Gaul was unique because it was driven by the rural population rather than elite demand (907). Patrello uses the findings of mortuary archaeology to show how belt buckles were used to create social and economic connections.

The final section deals with the supernatural and the afterlife. Amulets are explored by Kornbluth, who demonstrates how women could be identified by the amulets that were buried with them. Klingshirn looks at how magic and divination were understood, both inside and outside the Church. Moreira discusses how visions and the afterlife protected Western orthodoxy from heresies such as monotheletism, and also strengthened perceptions of papal control over the afterlife. Rose examines how the ritual of reciting names in public worship created a sense of belonging in the community, while

Bailey demonstrates how the laity engaged with and shaped liturgical practices of the period. Uhalde explains how the life of the penitent could bring "clergy, monks, and laity together around common cause" (1052). In the final chapter of the *Handbook*, Coon offers a particularly speculative imagining of how the incorporeal Christ "could be embodied again and again through contemplation and heroic self-denial" (1073) by ascetics like the Frankish Queen Radegund. The word "theology" is used occasionally in these last seven chapters, but there is no expectation that theology itself is within their purview. Any engagement with the metaphysical would need to acknowledge it as a real phenomenon; while that would be very true for the Merovingians, it is not attempted in this volume.

Editors Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira have given us an exceptional reference book with *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*. While knowledge of languages other than English is not necessary, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, and Greek scholarship is brought to the attention of the reader, often for the first time in an English publication. For detailed research, it would be helpful to have some French, German, and Latin, but many of the citations referring to secondary sources are available in English, and most primary sources discussed in depth are available in a modern-language translation.

There are some idiosyncrasies in the presentation of this book; primary sources are occasionally listed with secondary sources, and the titles of untranslated manuscript texts are not always provided in Latin. A compilation of cited works would have been helpful in demonstrating where overlaps in reference to secondary sources may be found. For example, the work of Ian Wood is cited in twenty-eight chapters, but this information is not immediately apparent. The online version is only searchable chapter by chapter, so the problem does not have a digital workaround.

One of the editors' goals is "to make the Merovingian world more accessible" by bringing together "studies and disciplinary voices that do not often share the same publication space" (28). Another is to show that the Franks encountered here will "give the lie to Gibbon's extraordinarily reductive assessment of them" (27). *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* succeeds on both counts. However, I cannot help but ask: is attempting to form an understanding of sixth century European cultures on their own terms desirable, or even possible? Can we immerse ourselves in a past intellectual world to a degree that will allow for a sympathetic understanding of their reality? An implicit message of this volume seems to be that peoples and their cultures can only be understood by examining material evidence. And we can learn about their relationships to certain socio-cultural aspects such as identity and power through the materials they leave behind, rather than relying on the people whose testimonies survive. In this way, the post-modern hermeneutic of suspicion that underlies this book may ultimately prevent some from gaining more generous insights into one of the societies that shaped the Western world.

A Commerce of Knowledge: Trade, Religion, and Scholarship Between England and the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700. Simon Mills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 352.
Reviewed by Mona Abousidou, *McGill University*.

For a variety of religious, financial, and intellectual reasons, a rising number of English chaplains stationed themselves at England's Levant Company in Aleppo during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Simon Mills is interested in exploring the role these chaplains played in disseminating information from the Ottoman Empire back to England, and vice versa. Tracing the antiquarian motivations of key chaplains, Mills shows how a "commerce of knowledge" originated in the seventeenth century and crossed over and spread into the eighteenth. By focusing on England – rather than nations like Italy or France – his book intervenes in the sphere of European-Ottoman relations. Mills also offers interested readers an inter-generational review of how chaplaincy in the East played a vital role in the advancement of English scholarship.

The Hebraist and theologian John Lightfoot's statements serve as the starting point for Mills' discussion of the fascination that English scholars had for the East. Writing in the 1670s, Lightfoot confesses that he longed to gaze upon "those places in the land of Canaan" (1). Referring to Levantine sites such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan, Mills suggests that Lightfoot's words point to a "shifting intellectual landscape" whereby the English wished to understand and experience the sacred sites explicitly and implicitly alluded to in the Bible (2). But this historical interest in "Canaan" did not arrive suddenly – as Mills demonstrates throughout his book, it was built through individual relationships between scholars, merchants, and citizens that were carried over into institutional

relationships. In other words, the efforts of curious chaplains led to certain exchanges of knowledge, exchanges that Mills then attempts to trace by focusing on the chaplains working for the Levant Company.

In part one, "From Oxford to Aleppo," Mills contextualizes the history of the Levant Company in Syria. This history began with the diplomatic relationship forged between Sultan Murad III and Queen Elizabeth I in 1580, which allowed the English to participate in the trade competition between Northern European countries. This allowed the English to gain access to goods from the Mediterranean, freely cross borders, interact with an international community, and bring back resources and information about Ottoman culture. English chaplains sought employment with the newly established Levant Company because they saw it as an opportunity for adventure and a means to supplement their income by participating in trade (20).

With the promise of gaining a positive reputation and the increased opportunity to earn additional income from international trade, more candidates applied for chaplaincy positions overseas. The English government became selective about its candidates after realizing they were sending representatives for their country, and thus selected only those chaplains they felt were qualified to appropriately reflect England's moral and intellectual standard (21). Mills explains that, in addition to their religious duties of preaching to the company's employees and presenting sermons to the general populace, chaplains were encouraged to educate themselves in Arabic and Hebrew and to acquire books in these languages from Aleppo or elsewhere from the Levantine region – Mills notes that Edward Pococke, a chaplain of the late seventeenth century, was able to amass a library of 416 manuscripts (72).

But how did chaplains come to be recognized as scholarly role models in addition to their religious roles? Mills explains

that many English chaplains acquired free time during their appointment, allowing them to pursue other interests (24). Some chaplains collected manuscripts, as Pococke did, while others, such as Robert Huntington (who arrived in Aleppo after Pococke) collected coins (146). Those interested in collecting manuscripts travelled throughout the Mediterranean on manuscript missions, searching both for themselves – i.e., for the creation of their own personal libraries – and for other interested scholars. These antiquarian efforts eventually led to England's notable reputation in trade – it was acknowledged for excelling in local and international markets, and for being a site that provided access to various "orientalist" resources (28). Here, Mills also discusses how the activities of these "travelling and trading" chaplains speak to England's proto-imperialist motivations.

Continuing his focus on emerging libraries in Part II – "Building a Library in Seventeenth-Century Syria" – Mills provides an overview of the role of two chaplains in the Levant Company: Edward Pococke and Robert Huntington. Mills highlights their work in building prominent libraries in Aleppo by dedicating a chapter to each chaplain and investigating how they came to acquire and assemble a variety of manuscripts (68). During the 1630s, chaplains sought intermediaries to help guide, translate, and act as mediators at auctions for special collections. Pococke, for example, would not have been able to acquire manuscripts in Arabic and Hebrew without the help of his intermediary, Ahmed (75).

Mills expertly transitions from Pococke's chapter into Huntington's, who, between 1671 and 1681, had followed in Pococke's footsteps and accumulated an expansive library of oriental manuscripts (97). Huntington also established an important epistolary relationship with Arabic Christians, most notably "the Maronite patriarch Isṭifān al-Duwayhī (c.1630–1704)" (108). The

relationship between Huntington and al-Duwayhī re-established and reignited the longstanding "tradition of intellectual exchange between Europe and Syria" (108). As Mills explains, a network that was built on a foundation of Christianity helped introduce and integrate "the study of Arabic and Syriac into western Europe" (109), thereby producing an incentive to continue collecting manuscripts. Overall, Part II focuses on inter-cultural and inter-religious contacts to stress the significance of Arabic intermediaries in Syria, and in the Levantine more generally.

In Part III, "The Making of an Antiquarian," Mills continues to discuss Huntington's antiquarian endeavours, noting that his interests lay, not only in the written word of the past, but also in objects that could not be easily fabricated, such as medals and coins (146). This chapter also highlights the potential dangers of journeying outside of Aleppo, and analyzes the pilgrimages of various chaplains by providing accounts of their time in Jerusalem. As Mills notes with respect to William Biddulph, his "physical presence in the Holy Land [Jerusalem]—with the concomitant appeals to 'seeing' at first hand, and to experience—served to resolve interpretative problems in the Scriptures" (164). In this way, readers may note Mills circling back to the introduction, in which John Lightfoot wished to witness and to validate the Biblical word in those lands of "Canaan" (1). Conversely, Mill's final chapter in this section looks to Henry Maundrell's *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter, A.D. 1697* (1703); this travelogue demonstrates Maundrell's attempts of reconciling the Biblical understanding of Jerusalem with his "authority of first-hand experience" (179).

Maundrell's travelogue moves into the final part, "Missions," in which Mills expands his analysis of intercultural interactions to focus on chaplains and Arabic-speaking Christian churches. Mills uses examples by Pococke, Huntington, and Robert Frampton to

show how translating texts to Arabic was essential for the chaplains' original purpose of preaching the Bible and Protestant Christianity. Mills then ends his study with an analysis of Thomas Dawes. As Mills explains, Dawes' letters from Aleppo in the 1760s shows a shift in interest from manuscript collection to the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Mills suggests that due to the broken network of Syrian and English scholars, "the commerce of knowledge had come to an end" (249).

Although the web of connections between the various chaplain's ventures back and forth throughout the book is detailed and complex, Mills provides ample information for scholars to pinpoint the significance of each chaplain's respective contribution to England's scholarship about the East. Scholars interested in England-Ottoman relations and/or the intervention of religion in early-modern history will find this book useful as it touches upon a rich archive from the Levant Company.

Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field. Edited by Hans Gustafson. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020. Pp. 279. Reviewed by Elyse MacLeod, *McGill University*.

While the field of Interreligious Studies (IRS) has been "a discernable thing" for at least the past ten years, debates on "how to define, name, and bind the outer limits of this field (or subfield) [and] on what belongs in it (and what does not)," remain active.[1] The edited volume *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from An Emerging Field* (hereafter *Dispatches*), contributes to a growing body of literature which seeks to delve into these issues, offering a diversity of takes – thirty six to be exact – on important questions such as: What is being researched in this field, and by whom? What are its historical precedents, and how does current scholarship imagine it relating to religious studies, theology, and interfaith activism? What are its theoretical, methodological, and normative orientations? What are its limits, challenges, and possibilities?

While these and other questions are explored over the volume's five different sections, editor Hans Gustafson uses the preface and introduction to contextualize the volume in relation to pre-existing scholarship, clarify its organizational structure, and offer some important notes on terminology. In terms of contextualization, Gustafson notes that while previous publications in this vein have tended to thematically skew towards a focus on interreligious pedagogies and curricular development,[2] *Dispatches* was curated to focus "primarily on research and scholarship" (xiv). In terms of

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1. Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace and Noah J. Silverman eds., *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), xiv, xviii.
2. See Patel, Peace, and Silverman, *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies*, and Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies*: *A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

organization, he explains that the volume was arranged to give the feel of a roundtable discussion: each section heading provides a particular prompt or theme, while each response, "crafted with brevity," seeks to provide an "on the ground" sense of contemporary, unfolding developments within the field as related to the theme at hand (2). With respect to terminology, Gustafson takes care to address the longstanding debate over the field's name – should it be "interreligious studies," "interfaith studies," or interreligious/ interfaith studies"? Noting that this debate tends to reproduce the confessional theology (interfaith) versus critical religious studies (interreligious) binary that many interreligious scholars feel is overly simplistic – if not problematic – Gustafson explains that he avoided imposing any terminological standards in this regard. In other words, contributors were free to use, and defend, whatever terminology they felt was most apt for describing their research and vision for the field. As a result, the reader is provided with a good sense of each contributor's understanding of how the field relates to theology versus religious studies, as well as its relationship to "the so-called interfaith movement" (3).

Rather than attempting to engage with each of the volume's thirty-six essays, I will focus on the essays which seem to highlight certain emphases and tension points that arise within each section and communicate different visions for the future direction of IRS. The first section, "Sketching the Field," contains what can be described as a selection of meta-disciplinary reflections on how the field should conceptualize itself. Opening the section is Oddbjørn Leirvik's piece, which presents the idea that IRS might best be conceptualized as a discrete discipline, rather than merely a subfield or area of study in theology or religious studies. He notes that obtaining disciplinary status requires theoretical and methodological innovations that differentiate it from pre-existing disciplines (21), and puts forward

his own thesis, that what differentiates it is a thoroughly *relational* understanding of, and approach to, religion. Anticipating some push back on whether this relational understanding/approach is actually "something exclusive to interreligious studies," he does spend a full section addressing this point (see 19–20). Eboo Patel offers quite a different vision for the field, one that closely aligns it with the "so-called interfaith movement" (3). By Patel's account, IRS – or, as he prefers, interfaith studies – should be conceptualized in more practical terms, as a program of study that seeks to train "civic interfaith leadership," which is to say, leaders who are sensitive to, and have the means to operate within and mobilize the strengths of, religiously pluralistic societies (29–33). Marianne Moyaert's piece offers a useful breakdown of the "three primary fields (and scholarly profiles) that have contributed to the emergence of interreligious/interfaith studies (IIS) in the academy: religious studies (the interreligious scholar), theology (the [comparative] theologian of religions), and the so-called interfaith movement (the scholar-activist)" (34). Moyaert's piece is particularly useful for the way it showcases the subversiveness of this emerging field; how its "complex genealogy," allows it to self-consciously blur some of the overdrawn boundaries between religious studies, theology, and activism, and to generate scholarship and pedagogical strategies that are both critical and constructive (35–36).

The second section, "History and Methods," examines how historical examples of interreligious encounter and dialogue, as well as contemporary field work, highlight the need for thinking interreligiously and for engaging methods which help in this task. Opening the section is Thomas Howard, who argues that there is much to be gained from "attending carefully" to historical examples of interreligious dialogue and encounter. Thinking interreligiously, he asserts, isn't historically unprecedented, and "assuming otherwise

impoverishes historical explanation and burdens present-day interreligious endeavours with amnesia about its own past" (74). In their respective pieces, Frans Wijsen and Nelly van Doorn-Harder offer accounts of how their fieldwork experiences led them to see certain limitations in, as Wijsen puts it, the "traditional paradigms" of religious studies. While Wijsen's experiences led him to advocate for a conscious shift from religious studies to interreligious studies – which, he explains, involves a move from disengaged to engaged research, and from a comparative to a conversational epistemology (80) – van Doorn-Harder, writing from the perspective of an ethnographer, argues that, despite its pitfalls and limitations, "using seemingly safe and familiar academic language appears to be the best approach" (86). Hans Gustafson, for his part, advocates for "the lived religion (LR) method" (91). IRS, he argues, is "primarily interested in understanding religious people and relations, while understanding religious traditions as such remains secondary" (92). Accordingly, LR methods are "indispensable (vital) for IRS precisely because they expose the overwhelming complexity of interreligious encounters by focusing on individual people and communities" (92).

The third section, "Theological and Philosophical Considerations," emphasizes how IRS both nourishes, and is itself nourished by, "theological and philosophical truth-seeking in the context of interreligious encounter" (6). While J. R. Hustwit "makes the case for how interreligious studies has helped support, give rise to, and provide valuable data for four important theological subfields: theology of religions, missiology, comparative theology, and transreligious theology" (129), Perry Schmidt-Leukel argues that given the reality and lived experience of religious plurality, interreligious thinking proves itself indispensable for negotiating "the age-old question of religious truth" (141). This section thus

affirms the sentiment, expressed in preceding sections, that the utility of IRS exceeds the academic study of religion and also services more practical and existential concerns.

The essays contained in the fourth section, "Contemporary Challenges," deal with an important contemporary tension in IRS: its relationship to social justice and activism. The first two essays in this section, by Kevin Minister and Paul Hedges respectively, argue that the shift towards IRS reflects the broad shift in religious studies towards "decolonization," which is to say, the shift away from the Western constructions and ideals that have historically dominated the academic study of religion. For both scholars, then, IRS represents a new opportunity; as Hedges puts it, "as a relatively young academic field, IRS has the possibility to seek to define its terms of study […] and [...] modes of operation," in opposition to the "Western norms, values, experiences, cultural perspectives, and agendas" (164) that must be decentered if we wish to attend to the harm perpetrated by colonial and orientalist discourse and do justice to the multidimensionality of phenomena as weighty as "religion," "interreligion," "culture," etc. Kate McCarthy's piece asserts the IRS "must frame its values and goals in terms appropriate to the secular academy," and, accordingly, must resist the temptation to align itself with "interfaith initiatives" which promote a particular (read: pluralist) notion of the common good (172–175). Likewise, Brian K. Pennington's piece argues that we must be careful not to conflate IRS with the "non-curricular interfaith initiatives" that have been proliferating on U.S. college campuses in recent years, initiatives which tend to support classically neoliberal understandings of society, personhood, and what constitutes the common good. Pennington is not wary of IRS expressing "an interest in social change" (179), but argues that it must remain vigilantly critical of the

type of social change it advocates for, lest it end up simply reproducing and repackaging neoliberal norms.

The final section, "Praxis and Possibility," examines the various fields IRS draws from and contributes to, and highlights the generative potential represented by these connections. While Barbara A. McGraw speaks to the field's potential for "deepening cultural studies, leadership studies, and especially the practice of cross-cultural leadership" (213), Catherine Cornille – an important voice in theorizing interfaith dialogue – offers a discussion on the contribution IRS can make to both cultivating interreligious empathy and understanding the obstacles that impede such empathy. Navras J. Aafreedi and Asfa Widiyanto explore the ways IRS can support peacemaking, while Douglas Pratt and Deanna Womack conclude with a discussion on how IRS' dialogical orientation can contribute to strengthening Christian-Muslim relations.

The value of the highlighted discussions notwithstanding, there are some limitations to the volume. Readers who are keenly attuned to this growing body of discourse will find some articles rather repetitive – the articles by Anne Hedges Grung, Oddbjørn Leirvik, and Kate McCarthy, for example, largely offer summaries of arguments already published elsewhere.[3] However, the volume's most significant shortcoming – as Gustafson himself acknowledges – is its Western bias: "the dispatches come from contemporary scholars

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3. See Anne Hege Grung, "Inter-religious or Trans-religious: Exploring the Term 'Inter-religious' in a Feminist Postcolonial Perspective," *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 13 (2014): 11–14; Oddbjørn Leirvik, "Interreligious Studies: A New Academic Discipline?" in *Contested Spaces, Common Ground,* ed. Ulrich Winkler, Lidia Rodríguez Fernández and Oddbjørn Leirvik (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Kate McCarthy, "(Inter)Religious Studies: Making a Home in the Secular Academy," in *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*, ed. Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace, Noah J. Silverman (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

from around the world, mostly the Western world. As such, the volume lacks a balance of non-western voices, a limitation which continues to plague much of western scholarship" (2). Given the volume's own insistence that IRS represents and furthers the trend towards decoloniality, and, moreover, the fact that there is no shortage of non-western voices publishing in this field – see, for example, the diversity of voices on display in the Indonesian-based *International Journal of Interreligious and Intercultural Studies*[4] – this lacuna seems somewhat surprising, and, to be frank, disappointing. Despite this disappointment, *Dispatches* remains an indispensable resource for scholars interested in gaining a sense of the contemporary self-conceptualization of IRS, its theoretical and methodological orientations, as well as its fault lines and tension points.

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4. See: https://www.neliti.com/journals/ijiis.

Hands of Doom: The Apocalyptic Imagination of Black Sabbath. Jack Holloway. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2022. Pp. 133. Reviewed by Daniel Fishley, *McGill University*.

Jack Holloway's *Hands of Doom: The Apocalyptic Imagination of Black Sabbath* (*HoD*) argues that a host of theological themes and issues marshal the musical output of the influential American rock group Black Sabbath (BS). Holloway, more specifically, interpretates their lyrics via a fundamentally prophetic hermeneutic: their music is a call for justice and social transformation. A central thesis of *HoD* is that BS's music gestures towards what Holloway calls a "negative hope" (8). Here, BS is understood as advancing a "critical idealism, which points to the brokenness of the status quo, and beyond to the heights of justice and love" (8). To that end, Holloway's text aims at unpacking both the theological suppositions of BS's work, as well as the "social, political, and philosophical issues that" heavy metal culture in general raises. In short, *HoD* is a retrospective analysis that looks back at BS and the themes and issues that motivated their music, in order to gain a better understanding of how to move forward theologically, socially, and ethically. Seeing his analysis as largely exploratory in focus, Holloway's principal objective, then, is to "mine Sabbath's music, lyrics, and context and present it as a theological vision in its own right" (10).

     HoD is divided into eight short chapters. In the first chapter, Holloway explores the political and social context that helped give shape to BS's rise. Seeing their music as standing against the pollyannish "flower power" songs of the 1960s, BS forged its own sound in the hope of making obvious the horrors of the real world. Sabbath's music then, Holloway notes, "does not provide escape from a woeful world, but rather takes us deeper into the reality

of evil" (4). This historical context is then contrasted with active tensions in contemporary society. Holloway discusses the influences of the Black Lives Matter protests, what he sees as the sloganeering of the Obama presidency, and the "wild regression" of the Trump presidency (5). What unifies the period that gave rise to BS and today's world, for Holloway, is the sense of desperation concerning the political order's inability to solve the pressing issues of the day. He thus finds in BS's music a distilled frustration of the larger problems which he argues haunt modernity: racism, inequality, unchecked capitalism, and environmental destruction. Finally, and following the work of thinkers like Abraham Joshua Heschel, James Cone, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Holloway believes that we must plumb the depths of social life to make obvious those experiences of inequality which are encoded in popular culture and thus "hear the real-life stories they have to share, pay attention to the pain they experience, and listen for the voice of God" (15). It is in this spirit that Holloway listens "for God in Black Sabbath" (15).

Chapter two begins with an account of the band's first major song, *Black Sabbath*. Holloway discusses how the song's form and content convey themes of utter "loss and hopelessness" (17). This hopelessness arises from the calamitous outcomes of, for example, the then ongoing war in Vietnam. BS, according to Holloway, gave musical shape to this desperation. BS's desperation is then paralleled with the biblical tradition of "the lament" as expressed in the Psalms. "In their pain," Holloway writes, "the psalmist questioned the very heart and nature of God" (18). BS's music, like a biblical lament, seeks to give an honest voice to the human experience of hopelessness.

In chapter three, Holloway continues his discussion of the prophetic and the apocalyptic. Taking as his starting point Sabbath's 1970 *War Pigs*, Holloway further details how the violence inflicted

by the American military on South-East Asia during the 60s and 70s inspired Sabbath's message. The "theology" in *War Pigs*, Holloway writes, "assumes that the evil ones waging war know that what they are doing is evil" (34). Consequently, the generals who orchestrated and organized said violence are not deserving of sympathy: "Relentless evil," Holloway writes, "demands relentless judgment" (33). Adhering to both Nietzsche's critical view of biblical morality, and Heschel's interpretation of the prophetic tradition, Holloway stresses the importance of retribution in Sabbath's thought – what he calls their "act-consequence theology" (37). The sins committed in this world by willfully violent individuals necessitate a rejection of those acts and a condemnation of those people; Holloway calls this the "prophet's burden" (39). The prophet – like Jeremiah and indeed BS – speak forth an apocalyptic vision which stresses the need for radical justice in order to counter the radical injustice of their time.

In chapter four, Holloway unpacks the importance of themes like class in BS by tracing the influence that their working-class context had on their musical output (52). Holloway argues that BS's style and content emerge from the social tensions of blue-collar Britain in which the band arose (58). These ills are to be confronted, not via an appeal to the flower-power rebellion of the 60s which merely resulted in a "withdrawal into [the] self," but by a refusal to accept the status quo "to imagine and create other ways of being, based on love and justice rather than hate and violence" (65).

Holloway's focus on BS's message of social change is given critical analysis in chapter five, where their link with black musical culture is explored. Holloway details the connection between rock music in general and the forgotten or ignored influence of black artists from the gospel, blues, and jazz genres on the development of rock. As Holloway notes, although Sabbath "did not seek to imitate" the musical influence of black blues voices, they did "follow after that blues spirit" to "feel their way toward musical creativity" (69). The

bulk of this chapter unpacks both the productive and the problematic outcomes of this exchange.

In chapter six, entitled "No More Illusions," Holloway wrestles with a key tension that arises from a disillusionment with the status quo. Following Heschel and Walter Brueggemann, Holloway writes, "Indictment of the present order brings unfettered imagination, but also tragic awareness of the fetters" (81). One such "fetter" that anchors modern Christianity, he writes, emerges from the "wholesale rejection of reality" by the "White American" Evangelical church (88). The issue that arises for Holloway, here, is how to name the evils of the modern world, without making the world itself evil. To circumvent this tension, Holloway advances the image of futurity that BS offers; theirs is one that recognizes the problems of the present *and* the possibility of a future promise that, perhaps, can convert the tensions of the present into prospects of "transformation" (94).

Chapter seven turns its attention to the figure of Satan in BS's music. Holloway discusses the link between Satanism as voiced by thinkers like Alister Crowley, and BS's music. Although Satanism was never a focus of BS, the figure of Satan is certainly prevalent (98). Holloway, subversively, wants to reflect on the possibility of giving evil and "Satan a godly role in the apocalyptic theology" of Sabbath's music (96). The specific image of evil that animates their music, Holloway notes, is one that arises from finite actions and social structures (107). Finally, seeing a parallel between the vision of torment that marshalled St. John the Seer's *Revelation* and BS's music, Holloway argues that hope in the triumph of justice over evil is elemental to both (111).

In the final chapter, "God is the Only Way to Love," Holloway turns to what he calls "Sabbath's theology of love." This analysis begins by detailing the problematic nature of "Metal Subculture" and its tendency to reflect misogynistic, racist, and

homophobic views (113–115). Holloway places Sabbath within those tensions and identifies how their music subverts those tendencies. Via lyrics which emphasize the centrality of God as the means by which to participate in love, Holloway argues that BS's music, despite its penchant to fetishize the very real tragedies of modernity, makes love and hope a leitmotif of their project.

Holloway's *HoD* is challenging, well researched, and insightful. His engagement with the social and cultural tensions which animated BS helps to underscore and make evident problems that continue to animate our own time. His analysis provides religious studies scholars and theologians with insight into the ways in which classical Christian themes and issues find divergent, provocative, and unexpected areas of expression in popular culture.

Branding Bhakti: Krishna Consciousness and the Makeover of a Movement. Nicole Karapanagiotis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. Pp. 288.
Reviewed by Katie Khatereh Taher, *McGill University.*

In *Branding Bhakti: Krishna Consciousness and the Makeover of a Movement,* Nicole Karapanagiotis examines the International Society of Krishna Consciousness' (ISKCON) rebranding efforts, which aim to increase the presence of Westerners within the movement. Using qualitative methods – such as participant observation, multi-sited ethnography, interviews, and ethnographic research – Karapanagiotis offers an updated account of ISKCON, focusing on the period between 2014 and 2018. The author highlights the need for literature to consider newly branded ISKCON spaces, beyond the "traditional" ISKCON temples, and attempts to fill this gap by offering glimpses into ISKCON-affiliated centres and programs. Karapanagiotis' multi-sited ethnography covers Philadelphia's Mantra Lounge, New York's Bhakti Centre, and the Govardhan EcoVillage outside of Mumbai. Karapanagiotis shows that the high population of South Asian diasporic community members within ISKCON has led to "rebranding" efforts by non-South Asian members, who want to attract more Western participants. Supposedly, this plan aims to follow the mission of the Indian founder of ISKCON, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. As the most recent major academic study on ISKCON, this book offers a thorough understanding of the organization while raising important questions regarding how transnational movements maintain their success and livelihood through various tactics, including competition, promotion, and – most importantly – rebranding.

ISKCON, colloquially referred to as the Hare Krishna movement, is perhaps best known for their adherents wearing orange

robes, having shaven heads, and for their chanting on the streets. Karapanagiotis gives a thorough analysis of ISKCON's history, describing the movement's beginnings in the 1960s in New York and detailing the "flux of lawsuits and legislation charges with accusations of brainwashing, child abuse, public nuisance, and even murder" (13). In her cohesive overview of the movement's beginnings, Karapanagiotis highlights the Indian founder Prabhupada's entry into the United States, his distinctive religious philosophy based in the Acintyabhedābeda school of Vedānta, and his ultimate agenda of spreading Krishna Consciousness to the West. Interestingly, Karapanagiotis avoids discussing devotees associated with the movement's beginnings and key public figures that contributed to its growth, such as George Harrison and Allen Ginsberg. Instead, she focuses on the succession of leadership following Prabhupada's death, unpacking the long list of lawsuits against ISKCON, as well as the role that "Indian Hindu community members" (41) have played in supporting ISKCON in the public arena both financially and in the form of public petitioning. This support is said to have shifted the public understanding of ISKCON from a cult to a credible religious movement supported by the Hindu diasporic community.

One wonders how Karapanagiotis decided on her ethnic terminology when referring to the South Asian diaspora involved in ISKCON – is it perhaps a reflection of previous scholarship's tendency to use terms such as "Indianness" (Vandeberg and Kniss 2008, 92) and "Hinduization" (Rochford 2007), or is it a conscious effort to emphasize the presence of attendees specifically from India rather than other areas of South Asia with prominent Hindu communities, such as Nepal or Sri Lanka? Karapanagiotis does not offer a clear justification for the terms used, nor does she explicitly discuss what is meant by a "Western audience," making the reader

question where, for example, people of colour from the "West," or even third or fourth generation South Asian immigrants fit into her discussion.

Disregarding such distinctions, Karapanagiotis emphasizes and re-emphasizes Prabhupada's focus on "reaching the Western audience" (Karapanagiotis 2021, 83), which is mirrored in ISKCON's marketing techniques implemented by what she refers to as the "Krishna Branders" of the movement. Karapanagiotis shows how non-traditional temple spaces associated with ISKCON – such as Devamrita Swami's Mantra Lounge, which aims to attract modern-day hipster city-dwellers, or Radhanath Swami's destination retreats, aimed at certain socio-economic subgroups – ultimately work concurrently as ISKCON-run bridge centres attempting to expand the presence of Western devotees. Thus, two images are portrayed: the traditional temples that act as sites of Sunday worship, attracting a high number of South Asian attendees, and other locations such as lounges, resort spots, and even yoga studios, which aim to draw in so-called Western devotees. Karapanagiotis further introduces Krishna West, a sub-movement started by ISKCON guru Hridayananda Das Goswami with the aim of creating a "western" Hare Krishna movement, one which encourages jeans instead of sarees, pizza instead of *kicharī*, and guitars instead of harmoniums. Finally, Karapanagiotis raises important questions regarding ISKCON's future. In particular, she considers how the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON will garner support for the Krishna Branders' programs, and whether a single institution can continue to support the multiple forms of ISKCON.

This book, which highlights the heterogeneous diversity of ISKCON, marks a notable contribution to scholarly literature investigating the movement's development. Karapanagiotis adds her voice to scholarship dealing with the marketing strategies associated

with religious movements, while also presenting the importance of "reenvisioning, reconceiving, and redesigning the spaces in which the movement is promoted" (231). Karapanagiotis' multi-sited ethnography provides a thorough account of ISKCON's current landscape, while her detailed descriptions make for a memorable ethnography. Yet, her account also omits key components of good ethnography – it lacks self-reflexivity, as well as an account her own relationship to the movement. The latter omission raises questions about Karapanagiotis' status as a devotee, her relationship with the people she interviews, and her ethnic positionality within ISKCON's sub-movements and traditional temple spaces (and how that positionality might have affected her research). Consideration of the experience of South Asian devotees involved with ISKCON is also missing; a gap that future scholarship can hopefully address, though Karapanagiotis does stress the need for scholars to represent ISKCON beyond the temple. The lack of explicit definition and theorization regarding key terms used throughout the book, such as "Western" and "Indian," also raises questions regarding the complex identities and histories of those involved. Nevertheless, Karapanagiotis does demonstrate how multi-sited ethnography can offer a holistic account of the movement, and also adds to the scholarly literature concerning ISKCON, which has been generally dormant over the last decade. Overall, *Branding Bhakti: Krishna Consciousness and the Makeover of a Movement* is an important book for scholars of South Asian religions, especially for those interested in transnational religious movements, for cultural anthropologists curious about digital ethnography, and even for ISKCON devotees as they configure the future of their movement.

Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration. Cheryl L. Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, and Nicholas S. Literski. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2022. Pp. 546.
Reviewed by William Perez, *Florida State University*.

In *America's God* (2002), Mark Noll reasoned that "Explaining changes of theological conviction by reference to political and intellectual events does not necessarily entail a reduction of religion to more basic secular realities. Rather, attempting to comprehend religion and society in the same narrative allows for a story with flesh and blood instead of a bloodless ballet of abstract dogmas" (6). In this spirit, Cheryl Bruno, Joe Swick, and Nicholas Literski have brought to life a "flesh and blood" story on the pages of *Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration.* Carefully toeing the line between reducing Mormonism to its cultural contexts and highlighting the secular realities in which it developed, the authors have produced the most comprehensive work to date on the interconnections between Joseph Smith's Mormonism and the prolific culture of Masonry that existed in nineteenth century America. It is the culmination of two decades of academic research and a lifetime of lived experience (all three authors have personal ties to Mormonism, and two are also Masons).

The book's enigmatic title is inspired by Eliza R. Snow, an influential early Mormon leader and a plural wife of Joseph Smith, who said: "There is method in Mormonism – method infinite. Mormonism is Masonic." Snow's clear articulation of Mormonism's Masonic roots encapsulates Bruno, Swick, and Literski's argument: "Joseph Smith's firsthand knowledge of and experience with both Masonry and anti-Masonic currents contributed to the theology, structure, culture, tradition, history, literature, and ritual of the church he founded. There is a Masonic thread in Mormonism from

its earliest days" (ix). The book demonstrates this argument by analyzing Masonry's influence on Mormonism during Smith's lifetime as well as on the various splinter groups that emerged after his death. According to the authors, not only were Smith and his followers influenced by Masonry, but they were also seeking to rescue it from corruption.

Method Infinite commences by introducing readers to the philosophic system of Freemasonry and detailing its entrenchment within American society, especially during the years 1790 to 1826. This timeframe incidentally coincides with Joseph Smith's adolescent years and with his "First Vision" experience. Joseph Smith's father became a Freemason as did his older brother Hyrum. There is also evidence indicating that his eldest brother Alvin – whom Smith looked up to as a hero and who passed away in 1823 – was also initiated. The Smiths lived in a time and area where folk magic was commonplace, and treasure lay buried in the earth awaiting discovery. This "enchantment of the imagination" (48) meshed well with Masonic folklore. Indeed, "With so many Masonic connections, and with relatively ample access to libraries, bookstores, and newspapers, the Smith family was surrounded by opportunities to be exposed to Masonic ritual, literature, and thought" (36).

However, the Smith family's relationship with Masonry was not always a positive one. On the contrary, the authors argue that the Smith family viewed Masonry as apostate in the wake of the so-called Morgan affair. The Morgan affair was an anti-Masonic outroar that gripped the country after William Morgan's disappearance in 1826. Morgan was a disaffected Mason who upon threatening to write an exposé on Masonry was apparently kidnapped and murdered by members of the fraternity. The incident foregrounded internal Masonic disputes between true Masonry and spurious, or corrupted Masonry. Although several of Joseph Smith's family members and a

substantial number of early Mormon converts had wholeheartedly embraced Freemasonry in the past, Bruno, Swick, and Literski contend that the sympathy that they expressed for William Morgan (alongside their literal interpretation of Masonic lore) is evidence of their belief that the ancient fraternity had become degenerate and murderous.

This conviction set the stage for an anticipated restoration of Masonry and "It was within this charged atmosphere that Joseph Smith Jr. matured from diviner to prophet" (60). In this sense, "Smith's Mormonism was one of the last great flowerings inspired by pre-Morgan style American Freemasonry" (353). Encouraged by his own family as well as a community that was sympathetic to the need for a new dispensation of the "universal brotherhood" (251), Smith embraced the Masonic "model that something vital had been lost, and he stepped in to restore the missing knowledge" (252). Such a rapprochement between Masonry and Mormonism had surprising consequences on the people most intimately involved in the Morgan affair. The authors further trace how William Morgan's widow, Lucinda, would remarry and embrace Mormonism, eventually receiving a blessing at the hands of Joseph Smith Sr. declaring that her deceased husband had been saved in the paradise of God. In fact, when Smith revealed the practice of baptism for the dead, Morgan was among the first to receive the salvific ordinance vicariously.

The lengthy *Method Infinite*, with copious footnotes helpfully included on every page, walks readers through Smith's restoration process as framed within a Masonic worldview. Throughout the narrative, the authors emphasize that "Joseph Smith's prophetic charisma and magnetic personality allowed him to use many different avenues to animate Mormonism. Freemasonry was not the only ingredient that went into the mix, but it was a vital one" (318). Notwithstanding this disclaimer, Bruno, Swick, and Literski manage

to highlight Masonic themes in just about every aspect of Smith's ventures. These themes, at times more overt than others, dot the Mormon landscape. They include myths about restoring lost knowledge that had been preserved by ancient prophets on plates, the use of specific clothing, code names, and knocks during ritual ceremonies, and the swearing of oaths whose violation could necessitate retributive violence. *Method Infinite* explores Masonic influences on Joseph Smith's visionary accounts in New York, his emphasis on temple building in Ohio, his endorsement of military might in Missouri, and his development of ritual worship in Illinois. In a twist on traditional narratives, they even explain how Joseph and Hyrum Smith's assassinations may have been part of a Masonic conspiracy.

Bruno, Swick, and Literski offer several interventions in Mormon historical scholarship. Primarily, they rebut mainstream notions that downplay Joseph Smith's theological and physical involvement with Masonry. They challenge notions that Smith's participation in Masonry served only to further political and social networks, stating that such assumptions are defamatory. Instead of, as some have proposed, explaining Smith's key scriptural production, *The Book of Mormon*, as an anti-Masonic work, they position it as a story that dives into tensions between true and spurious Masonry. Lastly, they counter Mormon apologists who have "pointed to similarities between the LDS temple endowment and ancient rituals in order to reject the Masonic context of many crucial elements," by asserting that "when disconnected from traditional Masonic interpretations, many features of the endowment could not stand on their own and were eliminated from the ceremony, sometimes at the expense of what their Masonic origins might reveal to the thoughtful Latter-day Saint" (447).

Method Infinite did leave me with some lingering questions. While the authors were clear to note when their connections were speculative, at times the presentation of some Mormon tenets as Masonically-derived felt more imposed or coincidental than directly related. Some examples include the Mormon reasoning behind communitarian living, or the framing of Joseph Smith's theophany as a "literal manifestation of the Masonic initiation ritual" (86). Were all such linkages imitations of Masonry, or did Masonic and Mormon ideas overlap as part of larger trends in the antebellum United States? Further, while the scope of *Method Infinite* is one of its assets, at times its strongest arguments are diluted within its many details. One is left wondering why, if Joseph Smith was so heavily impacted by Freemasonry throughout his life, did he not formally join a lodge until 1842 at 37 years-old? Lastly, were there deeper Masonic undercurrents behind the institution of plural marriage or as factors in Smith's fateful destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor?* Such major issues were briefly touched upon but might have been more fully developed.

Despite these queries, *Method Infinite* provides a foundational text for research into the relationship between Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration. Hearkening back to Noll's observation, the authors' ability to explain Mormon theological convictions and practices by reference to political, intellectual, and Masonic cultural events allows for a "flesh and blood" narrative. It makes a valuable contribution not only to Mormon studies, but also to United States' social and religious history. Illustrating how "Believing himself to be a Masonic restorer, Smith called upon God to inspire him to create ritual in Masonic mold" (xx), *Method Infinite* is a work to be grappled with for years to come.

Talking Back to Purity Culture: Rediscovering Faithful Christian Sexuality. Rachel Joy Welcher. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020. Pp. 204.
Reviewed by Briana Grenert, *Duke University*.

In *Talking Back to Purity Culture: Rediscovering Faithful Christian Sexuality,* Rachel Joy Welcher crafts a sympathetic but firm critique of the messages encoded within the evangelical purity movement, a movement which defines purity as abstinence before heterosexual marriage. The book, a result of her graduate research on purity literature from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, addresses the lack of alternative resources to help evangelicals discuss sexuality. Welcher's professed goal is to provide a resource for anyone "trying to sort out what sexual purity means and how to talk about it" by analyzing purity literature and its unintended consequences (9). Her hope is to spark conversation about purity and sexuality within the evangelical world, and, to that end, every chapter includes discussion questions and suggested activities. "People *want* to talk about this subject," she says, "but it's difficult to start the conversation" (17).

While Welcher does include quotes from conversations or seminars and personal experiences (including her own divorce), the greatest strength in her work is her thorough analysis of purity literature from within the evangelical movement. This makes her response to purity culture unique among recent books which have either been academic studies about the spread and ideology of purity culture (e.g., Sarah Moslener's *Virgin Nation* or Christine Gardner's *Making Chastity Sexy*) or ex-evangelical critiques that focus on people's experiences of purity culture (e.g., *Pure* by Linda Kay Klein

or *#Churchtoo* by Emily Joy Allison).[1] The combination of this unique perspective and method makes her work an invaluable contribution to the contentious and significant conversation currently surrounding the modern evangelical purity movement.

Welcher's book can be divided into two parts: chapters two to seven analyze the messaging of the purity movement, while chapters eight to ten explore how to apply Welcher's interventions. After her introductory chapters, her first substantive chapter is on the idolization of virginity in chapter two. There she argues that virginity is not well defined, that it is conflated with worth and identity, and that it eclipses the source of all purity (Jesus).

Chapters three and four concern themselves with gendered expectations, with chapter three focusing on "Female Responsibilities" and chapter four considering "Male Purity and the Rhetoric of Lust." In chapter three, Welcher considers how female sexuality has been downplayed. She also considers the damage that was wrought by the movement placing so much responsibility on women for guarding everyone's hearts, minds, and bodies. She also considers modesty and its link with how women must prepare to satisfy their spouses. Chapter four looks at the myths about male sexuality in the purity movement – specifically, the way men are taught that they are brave knights, and constantly at war with their raging sex drive. They are also taught that "women are often depicted as damsels in distress but also damsels causing distress" (60).

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1. Sara Moslener, *Virgin Nation: Sexual Purity and American Adolescence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Christine J. Gardner, *Making Chastity Sexy: The Rhetoric of Evangelical Abstinence Campaigns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Linda Kay Klein, *Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free*, First Touchstone hardcover edition (New York ; London: Touchstone, 2018); Emily Joy Allison, *#ChurchToo: How Purity Culture Upholds Abuse and How to Find Healing* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021).

Chapters five and six are a pair, both analyzing the promises of the purity movement and elaborating on the claim that "in purity culture, there are three main promises for those who practice abstinence: marriage, sex, and children" (67). In chapter five, "First Comes Live, then Comes Marriage," Welcher examines the neglected realities of singleness, infertility, "same sex attraction," and the ways that many Christians must live with longing (79). Chapter six turns its attention to the problems with the promise of sex. Sex, she argues with some bitterness, was presented as an award in purity culture for abstinence that frequently does not pan out. Many women end up single, childless, or settling. Further, quoting Lauren Winner, she argues that just because sex outside of marriage is a sin, this does not mean it has negative (earthly) consequences – sex becomes here an idol and a right in a way that distorts the gospel.

Chapter seven was, in my opinion, Welcher's strongest chapter. Many other books have tried with varying levels of success to articulate how purity culture interacts with abuse. Welcher, however, is less interested in trying to prove a causative relationship between purity culture and abuse, and more interested in purity messaging around abuse – a focus which leads to quite a few astute and eye-opening conclusions. First, she notes that purity authors lump "the sexually immoral and the sexually abused together," and that, "likewise, the call for women to guard themselves – mind, body, and soul, is communicated as a way to guard against sexual sin *and* sexual abuse" (50). All this, she argues, leads to the victim-blaming that other scholars in this field have also noticed: "In all of this advice about sexual boundaries, modest dress, and making men feel respected, Christian women are told that it is within their control to be treated with dignity and attract a quality mate, which also means that if a man mistreats them or if they are unable to find a suitable

mate, they share part of the blame" (51).[2] Welcher's attention to purity literature's presentation of these issues is thus invaluable, as not all purity authors approach this issue in the same manner.

Finally, in what I am labeling the second part of her book, Welcher addresses what modern evangelicals should teach about sexual purity. Her theology is summarized in chapter eight, entitled "Submitting to God's Sexual Ethic as Embodied Souls." This chapter, similar to Lauren Winner's *Real Sex,* centers on her reading of the Genesis story.[3] I think this chapter is Welcher's weakest, in part because she engages with non-evangelical Christian ideas about sexuality in a cursory manner and therefore leaves the rebuttals of those ideas feeling thin. It would have been stronger to either leave progressive Christian claims out or to engage them more thoroughly. Chapter nine addresses the question, "What Will We Tell our Children?" She says that parents should emphasize and highlight the full character of God, including God's grace and mercy. She also tries to encourage people to remove taboos around discussing subjects like sex, pornography, and masturbation. Her bottom line is "somehow – and the balance is difficult to strike – we need to help adolescents understand that their sexuality is good but also that expressing it in a God-honoring, neighbor-loving way will be difficult" (170). In this way, once again, she is reminiscent of Winner and sets herself firmly within the evangelical world. She continues this conversation in chapter ten, "Purity Culture Moving Forward."

Welcher does not make many original arguments, nor is that her goal. Instead, she marshals in a clear and approachable manner many already existing critiques of purity culture. She also

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2. For more on this, see Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, 1st ed. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020), 277–278; Klein, *Pure*, 92.
3. Lauren F. Winner, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, Paperback edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006), 29–42.

summarizes an alternative yet still evangelical approach to sexuality. This comes together to create a resource that is useful both to academics studying purity ideology, and pastors/parents in a confessional context. As such, her work is a gem that should not be overlooked, especially as a tool for those wishing to either converse within an evangelical context or understand evangelical purity ideology.

Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium.
Joel Blecher. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. Pp. 272.
Reviewed by Scott Bursey, *Florida State University*.

Hādīth commentaries are a trans-historical tool of exegetical actors,
a tool which has allowed them to commentate on, nuance – and
therefore influence – the reading of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* across a
millennia of Islamic history. Each iterative commentary is influenced
by the era in which it was created, and therefore carries the marks of
its diverse contextual time period. The express goal of Joel Blecher's
work *Said the Prophet of God, Ḥādīth Commentary*, is to offer a high-
level view of centuries of successive interpretation, iteration, and
commentary on *Bukhārī's ḥādīth* collection. Blecher's project is
guided by a range of questions, specifically: "How did Muslims
interpret and reinterpret the meanings of *ḥādīth* and *ḥādīth*
collections," and "what were the complex social forces, technologies,
times, spaces, and audiences that shaped and were shaped by the
practice of commentary on *ḥādīth*?" (2–3). The expressed argument
of the text can be summarized as follows: "the meanings of *ḥādīth*
were shaped as much by commentators' political, cultural, and
regional contexts as by the fine-grained interpretive debates that
developed over long periods of time" (3). From the perspective of the
believer this is a contentious assertion, as the goal of *ḥādīth*
commentaries is to provide clarity to the challenging and often
unclear prose of the Prophet as collected by *Bukhārī*. However, from
the perspective of a literary scholar, charting the progressive change
of interpretive texts over the *longue durée* of history is important, as
it highlights the impact of social influence, contextual pressure, and
the bias of the commentator. Blecher is thus careful to note that,
although "[a] written commentary […] is supposed to be a timeless
encounter with a *ḥādīth*, insulated from mundane local events, […]

commentaries are structured by those events in fundamental ways" (92). The production of these ḥādīth commentaries, which often took a lifetime to complete, is not directly reducible to fully trans-historical influences, as the desire remains to honour tradition at the expense of wordily gain with the promise of spiritual merit (15).

The structure of Blecher's work is broken into "three key historical periods and locales in which [the] commentary on *sahīh al-Bukhārī* flourished: classical Andalusia, late medieval Egypt, and modern India." The work also closes with an "epilogue on contemporary appropriations of ḥādīth commentary by Islamist groups," specifically ISIS (3). Borrowing heavily from the discursive literary method of analysis, Blecher positions each jurist within the contextual frame in which their work was created, and elucidates the challenges and competing influences they were forced to reconcile while creating their commentaries. It can be a perilous exercise for a jurist to fashion a commentary which is out of step with a canonically foundational assertion, something Blecher demonstrates by charting the blowback from a ruling by the Andalusian scholar Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081) (24). Commenting on a ḥādīth pertaining to Muhammad's return to Mecca in 628, where he is negotiating a contract with the Quraish, al-Bājī pointed out clear terminological evidence that Muhammad could write, which is a contentious assertion (25).[1] Given that all scholars were funded by patronages from the state, al-Bājī was jeopardizing his position and his livelihood, and even his life by making an assertion like this. The result from al-Bājī's assertion is what Blecher refers to as a double movement, in that both interpretations were preserved in successive

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1. The specific *hadith* version identified by Blecher can be found in the Mishkat al-Masabih collection, specifically: Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh, active 1337, fl. 1704 Salıh bin Ömer bin Selman bin Mehmet Efendi, صالح بن عمر بن سلمان بن محمد افندى and خطيب التبريزي، محمد بن عبد الله. Mishkāt Al-Maṣābīḥ: Book 19, Hadith 259 (4049), https://sunnah.com/mishkat:4049.

commentaries and it fell to the commentator or the reader (if the commentator elected to include al-Bājī's assertion), to determine the viability of the claim (27).

A reoccurring case study that Blecher leverages as a means of illustrating interpretive change in regard to *ḥādīth* interpretation is demonstrated in the conflict surrounding the application of discretionary punishment (*taʾzir*). Following three *ḥādīth* collected in *sahīh al-Bukhārī* pertaining to the number of lashings a criminal would be forced to endure, questions were raised as to what degree a judge could change the punishment via their own discretion (except in situations of *hudūd* [boundary, limits], where the punishment for the crime is clearly outlined in the Qur'an, such as for murder, adultery and so on) (34). Blecher outlines a range of classical stances on this *ḥādīth*. Baṭṭāl of Córdoba (d. 449/1057) provided a clear ruling to adhere to the rule of not exceeding ten lashes (36). Representing the *Hanafi* opinion, Abū Hanīfa (d. 150/767) suggested a limit of forty, while two other scholars suggested seventy-five (36). The variance only continues with Abū Jaʿfar al-Tahāwī (d. 321/935), who, on the basis of his personal *ijtihad* (reasoning), asserted that 100 lashes was the limit (39). British colonial officials in India were not keen on how such variances in punishment were left to a magistrate's discretion (156). These variances thus resulted in a hybrid legal code being created, largely due to the influence of Deobandi religious authorities, specifically Kashmīrī (d. 1933), who ruled on the side of taking the *Hanafi* line of ten lashes, maximum (154–155).[2] The

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2. It is interesting that Blecher focuses so much on the hybridized legal code in India and does not mention the separate *shari'a* court system in Egypt, which would have better illustrated his point. There is a wealth of material that shows defendants frequently choose not to have their case heard in the secular system because the *shari'a* court system offered a degree of situational variance. See Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 163.

progressive change and iteration in how this *ḥadīth* has been interpreted across space and time is just one example Blecher employs as a means of charting the shifting landscape of commentary and the jurists who engage in its study.

He also explores how commentaries were delivered, tracing the shift from spoken performances in Andalusian and Mamluk settings to private settings for the elite in Ottoman times, to a preference for the written word in our contemporary moment (82). Further discussed is the changing taste of commentators and their readers as the cost of reproducing works decreased drastically over time. Moreover, a greater increase in literacy rates among the general civil society resulted in a call for slimmer and more concise commentaries, and for commentaries in a range of languages other than Arabic (132,168).

It is the epilogue which offers what I feel is the most interesting aspect of the work. Here, Blecher reviews some deeply problematic interpretations offered by a number of ISIS *ḥadīth* scholars, all of whom attempt to justify the revival of slavery by engaging in "novel" (186) interpretations of various hadith commentaries on slavery. While acknowledging that "there is an understandable resistance in the academy to understanding ISIS's propagandists as participating in the rich tradition of hadith commentary in any way other than to bring about its ruin," he ultimately asserts that "if scholarly inquiry is to differ from the work of counter-propagandists, we must seek to analyze the strategies of ISIS's interpretive approach in the context of the cumulative tradition rather than to caricature them" (193).

Blecher's book reveals the study of *ḥadīth* and its commentary to be as relevant today as it was a millennia ago. Whether the reader be well-versed in Islam and the history of *ḥadīth*, or a novice interested in the vicissitudes of Islam, this work offers a

compelling breadth and summary which both audiences will find deeply rewarding – a must read for scholars interested in the history of *ḥādīth* studies.

Guidelines for Contributors

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Arc is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal published annually by the School of Religious Studies (formerly Faculty of Religious Studies), McGill University. Founded in 1973, the journal was restructured into a formal scholarly journal in 1990. In 2022, *Arc* shifted to a fully open-access format with the support of the McGill library.

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1. *Arc* accepts electronic manuscripts submitted in the following document format: Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx). Authors are welcome to submit via email, to arc.relgstud@mcgill.ca, or through our website https://arcjournal.library.mcgill.ca/submission/wizard.

2. Submissions should use Canadian spelling (e.g., "favour," "colour," "radicalization," rather than "favor," "color," "radicalisation").

3. Submissions should use gender-inclusive language, with the exception of direct quotations and translations of ancient texts, which should conform to the standards of the original language. 4. All notes should appear as footnotes (not endnotes), numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals.

For first-time citations, a full bibliographic reference should be given in a note: Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority*

of Interpretive Communities (London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 123.

- M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jaqueline S. Palmer, "Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming,*" in ed. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown, *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 21–45.

- Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis,* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 18.

If a complete bibliographic reference has already been given in a previous footnote, use the following short form: author's last name, abbreviated title, page number.

- Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?,* 124.
- Killingsworth and Palmer, "Millennial Ecology," 34.
- Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, 25.

**Please avoid the use of "ibid"* (See: Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed., 14.34).

4. Commas and periods should fall within quoted material, while colons and semicolons follow closing quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points follow closing quotation marks, unless they belong within the quoted matter (See: Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed. 6.9–6.11). 5. When using dashes to replace commas, parentheses or colons, use spaced "en" dashes rather than "em" dashes (See: Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed. 6.83 & 6.85).

6. When citing legal or archival documents, manuscript collections, scripture and other types of classical works, foreign language texts, multimedia mediums, etc. please carefully review the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines, particularly sections 14.221–14.305.

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