

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

VOLUME III

1945 to the Present

The three volumes of *The Cambridge History of Religions in America* trace the historical development of religious traditions in America, following both their transplantation from other parts of the world and the inauguration of new religious movements on the continent of North America. This story involves complex relationships among these religious communities as well as the growth of distinctive theological ideas and religious practices. The net result of this historical development in North America is a rich religious culture that includes representatives of most of the world's religions.

Volume III examines the religious situation in the United States from the end of the Second World War to the second decade of the twenty-first century, contextualized in the larger North American continental framework. Among the forces shaping the national religious situation were suburbanization and secularization. Conflicts over race, gender, sex, and civil rights were widespread among religious communities. During these decades, religious organizations in the United States formulated policies and practices in response to such international issues as the relationship with the state of Israel, the controversy surrounding Islam in the Middle East, and the expanding presence of Asian religious traditions, most notably Buddhism and Hinduism, in North America. Religious controversy also accompanied the rise of diverse new religious movements often dismissed as "cults," the growth of megachurches and their influence via modern technologies, and the emergence of a series of ethical disputes involving gay marriage and abortion. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the national and international religious contexts were often indistinguishable.

Stephen J. Stein received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1970 and subsequently taught in Indiana University's Department of Religious Studies for thirty-five years. He has received numerous grants and fellowships, including two from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1994, he served as the President of the American Society of Church History. In 1995, Stein received the Tracy M. Sonneborn Award for Excellence in Teaching and Research at Indiana University. He edited three volumes in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* and *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*. Stein's volume *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* was awarded the Philip Schaff Prize by the American Society of Church History in 1994. He is a coeditor of the journal *Religion and American Culture*.

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IN AMERICA

Edited by Stephen J. Stein, *Indiana University*

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STEPHEN J. STEIN

Indiana University



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CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICK W. CAREY, Marquette University
DANIEL O. CONKLE, Indiana University Law School
ANGELYN DRIES, St. Louis University
GEORGE EGERTON, University of British Columbia
RICHARD FENN, Princeton Theological Seminary
GERALD P. FOGARTY, S.J., University of Virginia
MARLA F. FREDERICK, Harvard University
MICHAEL B. FRIEDLAND, Seattle Urban Academy
R. MARIE GRIFFITH, Washington University in St. Louis
STEWART M. HOOVER, University of Colorado
JAMES HUDNUT-BEUMLER, Vanderbilt University
JANE IWAMURA, University of Southern California
PAMELA KLASSEN, University of Toronto
GARY LADERMAN, Emory University
ELI LEDERHENDLER, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
LUIS LEON, University of Denver
BILL J. LEONARD, Wake Forest University
LAURA LEVITT, Temple University
SANDY DWAYNE MARTIN, University of Georgia
MARTIN E. MARTY, University of Chicago, Emeritus
J. GORDON MELTON, University of California, Santa Barbara
DEBORAH DASH MOORE, University of Michigan
R. LAURENCE MOORE, Cornell University
EBRAHIM MOOSA, Duke University
VASUDHA NARAYANAN, University of Florida
JAMES M. O'TOOLE, Boston College
ANTHONY B. PINN, Rice University
CHARLES S. PREBISH, Utah State University
MARJORIE PROCTER-SMITH, Southern Methodist University
DANIEL RAMÍREZ, University of Michigan
WADE CLARK ROOF, University of California, Santa Barbara

ANDREA L. SMITH, University of California, Riverside
JANE I. SMITH, Harvard Divinity School
SCOTT L. THUMMA, Hartford Seminary
TISA WENGER, Yale University
CATHERINE WESSINGER, Loyola University
HEATHER RACHELLE WHITE, Vassar College

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

STEPHEN J. STEIN

The end of the Second World War in 1945 marked a transition of sorts in the history of American religions. The conflict itself touched every sector of the globe in direct and indirect ways. The war also affected all aspects of life on the continent of North America with major implications for the development of American religions in the decades following the struggle, years of accelerating growth, diversity, conflict, and change. This Introduction to the third volume of *The Cambridge History of Religions in America* previews select judgments rendered by the authors of the essays that follow in this volume dealing with the period of American religious history extending from 1945 until the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This period has attracted an astonishing amount of historical attention.

The opening of the atomic age and the disclosure of the scope of the Holocaust were two factors evoking dramatic religious responses to the Second World War in the United States, altering forever for some observers simplistic notions of an omnipotent, beneficent, controlling God. Powerful indictments by some, including Richard Rubenstein and Eli Wiesel, held God and Christians accountable for longstanding anti-Semitism. Other commentators regarded the establishment of the state of Israel as a kind of atonement; for still others it was a possible anticipation of the premillennial return of Christ to the earth. After a short period, a new kind of war prevailed – a Cold War dividing the West from the East, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations from the Soviet bloc. Atomic arsenals figured in apocalyptic equations, and some evangelicals, including Billy Graham, spoke of Armageddon. In this context in 1955 Will Herberg crafted the publication that became the near-canonical account of the triple melting pot – *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* – a primary interpretive metaphor for American religion over the next two decades.

Change was present in all three nations across the North American continent. At midcentury, some 78.5 percent of Canadians claimed affiliation

as Roman Catholic, United Church, or Anglican. In the decades after the war, Canada left behind its self-proclaimed designation as a “Christian democracy” and moved to a situation describable as secular pluralism. This was a step away from the tradition of close cooperation that had existed between Canadian religion and politics. As hopes for peace in the world faded, the churches also gave support to anti-Communism and to the anti-Soviet efforts of the West. In 1960 a Canadian Bill of Rights was passed; it affirmed that the “Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God” and that the “religious pluralism” that existed in Canada included Canadian Jews. With the passage of time, an increasing number of immigrants were not members of the three largest Canadian churches and therefore were part of the nation’s expanding ethnic diversity and religious pluralism.

Mexico, in the years after the Second World War, retained many of the religious patterns long dominant south of the United States. Roman Catholicism remained the primary religion in 1950 for 98.2 percent of the population. In the postwar period the Church experienced improved relations with the government. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was well received in Mexico. Five visits by Pope John Paul II to Mexico between 1979 and 2002 demonstrated Rome’s significant concern with the Mexican religious community; the pope’s last trip included the canonization of Juan Diego at the Basilica of Guadalupe. Catholics in Mexico enjoyed a rich devotional life. This same period witnessed the expanding presence of historic Protestant churches in Mexico including the Presbyterians, Nazarenes, and Adventists; stabilization of their situations by the end of the century; and dramatic growth of *evangélicos* including Pentecostal communities. The last of these was influenced by the millions of Mexicans crossing the border to the north, taking part in guest worker programs or crossing into the United States without that authorization. The latter pattern continued into the twenty-first century. Despite the growth of Protestant and evangelical churches, 87.9 percent of the Mexican population still identified as Roman Catholic in the year 2000.

The war, the Holocaust, and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 reshaped the American Jewish community in the United States, some 4,500,000 Jews in the postwar years. All of the diverse traditions within Judaism, from liberal Reform Judaism to the aggressive traditionalism of Hasidism, experienced growth and new energy after the war. This renewal combined religion and ethnicity, Judaism and Jewishness. A majority of American Jews were strong supporters of Zionism. Other strengths were also apparent; for example, in 1948 Brandeis University, the first secular Jewish university, was founded. After the war, powerful interpretations of the American Jewish experience were written by the Jewish scholars

Nathan Glazer and Oscar Handlin. Conservative Judaism became the largest single Jewish religious movement in the postwar period, emphasizing both peoplehood and the ethnic dimensions of Judaism and of the state of Israel. Despite this expanding success, anti-Semitism was still present in the United States, warranting the continued existence of such organizations as the Anti-Defamation League.

Among the social forces shaping American religions in the postwar period of 1945–65 was suburbanization, the development of suburbs outside urban centers. When the increasing demand for housing and the desire to flee crowded conditions in cities drew people to surrounding areas, religious communities followed the exodus. Suburban churches and synagogues were constructed as part of the process of community building. In the earliest years of this development, Protestant and Jewish communities were the principal religious groups involved in the urban exodus. A variety of religious observers seized upon this suburban phenomenon and unleashed a wave of criticism. In more recent decades, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity in the suburbs has grown substantially. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, some observers declared the United States a virtual suburban nation.

One major development in the postwar years was the changing view of Asian religions in America. Gone from many were blanket dismissals of those traditions as negative and hateful, and in their place were rising interest in and involvement with, for example, Buddhism. Some of this change was due to the influence of popular culture such as the Beatles, but Americans in the 1960s were increasingly receptive to new religious movements, including diverse forms of Asian spiritualities. The expansion of American economic interests across the globe in the postwar period was one factor in the change. The Vietnam War placed Americans closer to the cultures of Asia as military personnel experienced Eastern culture firsthand. Subsequently, Asian-based religious traditions, Zen Buddhism and Transcendental Meditation, for example, attracted increasing attention. The immigration law in 1965 opened the nation to Asian immigrants, who introduced various religious traditions, including Hinduism from South Asia. Despite this success, Asian traditions still faced criticism from established religious traditions in the nation. The net result of these changes, however, was a much more complex religious scene in the United States.

During the 1960s and afterward, a great deal of attention was directed to the topic of secularization. Among the issues addressed by theologians and commentators were the definition of secularization and evidence of the loss of a sense of the supernatural and the sacred in modern life. This secular viewpoint underscored the contingent and unpredictable qualities in

life, emphasizing the present as the real, and the only real. A sense of the temporariness of life accompanied the process of secularization. Religious institutions were viewed as no longer able to maintain exclusive control of the sacred through liturgies and devotional practices. The secularization thesis also seemed to be confirmed by the growing threat to Western society from the atheistic Soviet Union.

The Vietnam War sharply divided the nation and its religious leaders in the 1960s and 1970s. President Lyndon Johnson saw the conflict as a struggle against Communist aggression. Mainstream denominations initially supported the military undertaking. Over time, however, the historic peace churches were joined in opposition to the conflict by a large number of religious communities and by a variety of prominent religious leaders including Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Catholic priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and the Baptist pastor Martin Luther King, Jr. Results of the conflict were widespread resistance to the military draft and manifold diverse efforts to secure conscientious objector (CO) status, which proved especially difficult for members of mainstream denominations. By the mid-1960s a variety of organizations, such as Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV), spoke out in opposition to the conflict. But the war did not end. The United States escalated its involvement with additional troops and increased bombing. Clergy led massive demonstrations against the conflict; calls for civil disobedience increased. The election of Richard Nixon as the nation's president in 1968 changed little. The invasion of Cambodia and the bombing of Hanoi, in fact, set off a new wave of antiwar demonstrations across the nation. Peace accords were not signed until 1973.

The civil rights movement sought racial equality for African Americans and an end to racial discrimination. The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 was perhaps the initial public event of the movement. News media played a pivotal role in the spread of the movement. The religious judgment that segregation and attendant attitudes were morally wrong was a powerful motivating force. The leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister in Montgomery, Alabama, was critical to the emergence of the movement. In his publications he stated that racial segregation and racism were inconsistent with Christianity. King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a movement committed to nonviolence in pursuit of its goals, in 1957. Other African Americans committed to civil rights who did not agree with King's approach included Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" defended the strategy of direct action involving "civil disobedience." The civil rights movement had a massive impact and generated an end to legal segregation.

The election of John F. Kennedy as the first Roman Catholic president of the United States in 1960 was seen by many Catholics as evidence of their

full acceptance as Americans after more than two centuries of widespread hostility and prejudice against the Church and its members. During the campaign Kennedy took positions that neutralized anti-Catholic sentiments against him; he opposed governmental aid for parochial schools and the idea of sending an ambassador to the Vatican. But Kennedy's Catholicism still was a major issue in the campaign. Kennedy's most direct statement on the issue was in an address to the Houston Ministerial Association composed of Protestant clergy. "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute," he affirmed. "I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic party's candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic." That statement, however, did not satisfy everyone, and the anti-Catholic campaign continued, organized and supported by groups as diverse as the Southern Baptist Convention and Norman Vincent Peale.

Another religious and cultural conflict in the 1960s focused on "the new morality." Joseph Fletcher, a social ethicist and author of *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (1966), addressed the place of rules in Christian ethics and argued for "situational ethics." Francis Schaeffer on the Christian Right attacked these views and equated the "new morality" with secular humanism. This disagreement sheds light on deep fault lines in American religious life in this era, a period perceived by some to be a time of massive secularization at the same time that a religious resurgence was occurring. These debates had an impact on politics and public life for decades to come; they addressed such issues as divorce, homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, and masturbation. Rarely, if ever, did the parties identified as conservative "legalists" and secular "hedonists" come to agreement.

The 1960s were the decade when the newly elected Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, a gathering of 2,000 bishops from across the globe that met in four sessions surrounded by advisers, observers, and representatives of other Christian communities. John XXIII identified renewal as a primary purpose of the council. During the sessions diverse theological perspectives became evident: progressives from Western Europe favored the reformulation of Christian doctrine; conservatives from Rome were satisfied with existing theological patterns. The council eventually produced major documents dealing with doctrine and practice. Liturgical changes, including the move to the vernacular Mass, were one result of Vatican II that affected all Roman Catholics. On the organizational level, priests' councils and parish councils were organized. Ecumenical relations with other Christians were emphasized, as was conversation with non-Christian religions. Social action, such as antiwar protests, was supported. The reception of the council was mixed throughout the Catholic and non-Catholic religious worlds.

Since its founding in 1948, the state of Israel has figured prominently among both Jews and Christians in the United States. After the Holocaust, American Judaism was the largest Jewish community in the world, and it reflected a strong pro-Zionist view. Despite the death of 5 million to 6 million Jews in Europe, not all American religious parties favored Jewish statehood. The World Council of Churches also debated the plan. Abraham Joshua Heschel, who criticized Christians for having failed the Jews during the Holocaust, saw hope for Judaism in the new Israel. For him and for many American Jews, the formation of this new state of Israel was a religious event. Over time the relationship between the different branches of American Judaism and the state of Israel has been complex and has varied. Nevertheless, for all – Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist – Israel’s existence is very significant.

The American Jewish response to the state of Israel provides an appropriate context for a transition to Will Herberg’s publication on American religion in the postwar period, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (1955). Herberg underscored the biblical basis of this “common faith.” He was also able, by virtue of shared qualities, to situate Judaism at the center of American life. Herberg’s own immigrant experience shaped the way he constructed the American way of life. By means of his “triple melting pot,” he affirmed Jews as equals of Protestants and Catholics in the United States. He underscored the unity of American culture and the fact that religious difference was acceptable. Herberg’s vision of religious pluralism would be challenged in subsequent decades by the expanding religious diversity and by alternative views of the American religious situation.

The dramatic expansion of religious diversity in America had already been under way a century before Herberg when Chinese laborers in California introduced diverse forms of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Later, Japanese Buddhism entered the United States. In the 1950s, for example, temples and centers were established for multiple forms of Zen Buddhism. Chinese Buddhist organizations were also found in most major metropolitan centers during the second half of the twentieth century. Buddhism’s growth in the 1960s and after was a product of diverse factors, including the Vietnam War, Buddhist studies programs in universities, and the expansion of the counterculture movement. But the story of Buddhism in America involves a continuing struggle to acculturate to new circumstances. Continuing adaptation and growth – spectacular growth over the past half-century – are characteristic of Buddhism in the twenty-first century in America.

Hinduism was introduced to America in two different ways – first, in the realm of ideas as nineteenth-century New England Transcendentalists,

including Ralph Waldo Emerson, engaged Hindu concepts and philosophies; and second, when Hindus immigrated to America after 1965 and built temples, and then not only immigrants were part of the growing Hindu community. Numerous philosophies and practices in America have had roots in Hinduism including the Self-Realization Fellowship and Transcendental Meditation; “self-help” programs also frequently borrowed from Hinduism. When Swami Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society and Swami Trigunatita founded the Vedanta Temple, Hinduism imported Indian meditation and yoga forms. *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Swami Yogananda, who founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920, argued for affinities between Hinduism and Christianity. The change in immigration laws in the 1960s resulted in an increase in the number of Hindu immigrants. As a result, Hindu temples, which serve a wide variety of personal, community, and educational functions, have been constructed at an increasing rate. Yoga, a physical discipline linked to Hinduism, is widely practiced outside the tradition.

The first Muslims in North America were slaves imported from West Africa. Few are the records of this group. The first Muslims who immigrated to the United States of their own free choice, including Sunnis and Shiites, emigrated from Greater Syria in the late nineteenth century. More immigrants arrived after World War I, but subsequent laws curtailed immigration. After World War II, Muslim immigrants also came from countries outside the Middle East, often settling in major cities. Others arrived after immigration quotas were repealed in 1965. Recent Muslim immigrants are often well-educated professionals. In the early twentieth century, black nationalist movements, including the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, linked African Americans to the Moors and to Islam. The racial views of the Nation of Islam, however, separated it from orthodox Islam. Muslims have suffered considerable prejudice in the United States, hostility that intensified after the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York City. American Muslims are seeking ways to reduce hostility against Islam and their religious communities.

In the period after World War II, Native Americans experienced unending difficulties as they attempted to exercise traditional religious and spiritual practices, from the use of peyote and the sweat lodge, to the sun dance and cleansing rituals. Native American religious practices and sacred sites have never enjoyed clear application of the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution. Federal courts have repeatedly ruled against Native American religious interests. As a result, many native religious traditions and practices often have been carried out in secret. This modern period also has witnessed rising support among Native Americans for retraditionalization movements, such as the Red Power movement,

which often accompany an explicit rejection of Christianity. By contrast, the Native American Church has attempted to combine Christian and Native American traditions. Nonnative peoples have shown a rising interest in Native American religions in recent decades; the New Age movement is an example.

Borderland religions center geographically in Mesoamerica and reflect a spirituality grounded in many respects on refashioned Catholic ideas and spirituality, but they also accommodate elements of Protestant thought and Pentecostalism. Their employment by political leaders in the region has blurred the lines between the sacred and the profane, raising Chicanismo to an alternative ultimate commitment for many Mexican Americans both north and south of the Mexican/U.S. border. Among the powerful devotions in the region is that directed to Our Lady of Guadalupe, inaugurated in 1531 by the visit of Mary, the Mother of God, to Juan Diego. Cesar Chavez (1927–93), who argued religiously for the rights of Mexican American laborers, organized the Chicano Farm Workers and reached out across denominational lines, combining in his activity the religious and the political. He has been compared to Martin Luther King. The Pentecostal churches in the borderlands, the *evangélicos*, share much with the native and the postcolonial religious traditions in the region.

By the closing decades of the twentieth century, many of the world's religions were present in North America, some in well-established organizations, others in very limited communities. The variety of Christian organizations was immense and included controversial groups variously entitled minority religions, sects, cults, new religions, or new religious movements. Diverse Asian religions also increased dramatically in the years following World War II. Some of these were offshoots of ancient traditions, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and others were newly derived, including the Divine Light Mission of Guru Maharaj Ji. Controversy routinely surrounds new religious movements, whether they are Western or Asian, focusing frequently on the motives of the founders or the alleged exploitation of the members.

A variety of cultural issues has divided religious Americans in the past, and these issues continue to do so in the twenty-first century. No issue has perhaps been more controversial over a longer period than race and racism, a topic addressed by the parties engaged in the struggles for equality that have occupied African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanics for much of their respective histories on the North American continent. African American slavery and segregation may have been the most obvious expressions of racism, but the internment of Asian Americans during the Second World War, the lands taken from Native Americans, and the exploitation of Hispanic laborers are additional evidence of the divisions

between these “outsider” communities and the dominant white power structures in the United States. The quest for justice is a challenge that has occupied select American religious communities. Each of these racial communities has crafted theological responses to racism – liberation theologies that address the specifics of the injustices and the grounds of their oppression and that contain hopeful visions of eventual racial equality.

Another issue that has sharply divided religious communities and even leaders in specific denominations is sexual relations, along with the rules governing the same, whether in marriage or outside marriage. Drawing on historical, sociological, and theological traditions, a variety of views has gained influence in diverse religious communities on issues ranging from celibacy, to monogamy, to polygamy, each arousing responses from critics committed to alternative positions. Debates regarding the rights of each gender have also figured in many of these controversies. In the second half of the twentieth century, religious conversation regarding sexuality featured increased attention to premarital and extramarital sexual activity as well as public discussion regarding homosexuality and abortion. Religious denominations have divided on these issues along progressive and conservative lines.

Gender, or the proper roles of women in the family and in religious communities, was a third controversial issue widely debated across denominations and traditions. From early challenges to male religious authority in the nineteenth century, to the organized efforts of women to enter leadership roles in churches and synagogues in the second half of the twentieth century, the discussion has been spirited. Was it possible or appropriate for a woman to become a pastor, priest, or rabbi? Why were these vocations closed to women? What were the religious implications of such restrictions? When the feminist movement of the second half of the twentieth century took on these issues, gender barriers began to fall as women were ordained as rabbis and as Protestant clergy. This same period also witnessed challenges to the exclusive use of male language for God and a surge in feminist spirituality in multiple traditions.

Religious conflict and tension in the United States often have been manifest in open antagonism among religious groups. Religious Americans frequently are the voices of religious prejudice, expressing hostility against the social and cultural views of other religious Americans. Sometimes that antagonism assumes a political form, moving beyond concerns with theology or worship. Such tensions were striking in the years after 1965, following changes in the laws governing immigration, when the large number of immigrants introduced non-Christian religions to the United States. Many Americans, ignorant of those religions, assumed that members of Asian and Middle Eastern traditions were committed to violence. Even

some American religious communities, for example, Mormonism and Pentecostalism, have been viewed negatively by other Americans. In the United States, frequently the religious commitments of some groups have fueled hostility toward other religious groups.

The terrorist attacks on America by Muslim militants on 11 September 2001 shaped the view of Islam held by many Americans and influenced the involvement of the United States in military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. During the opening decade of the twenty-first century many Americans equated Islam with terrorism. A number of prominent religious leaders, including Franklin Graham and Jerry Falwell, identified Islam as evil, thereby fueling anti-Islamic sentiments. Islamophobia became widespread, often supported by elected officials at the highest levels. Plans to build a mosque in New York City near the site where the Twin Towers were destroyed aroused intense sustained hostility across the nation. President Barack Obama, a Christian, was charged by some opponents with being a Muslim because he had studied as a child at a madrasa while growing up in Indonesia. Muslims around the world often viewed Americans as enemies of their religion.

In the decades surrounding the turn of the twenty-first century, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States confronted multiple major challenges, including staffing problems resulting from declining numbers of men entering the priesthood and of women entering religious orders. Changing demographics in the Church, including the huge influx of Hispanics, resulted in greater use of lay deacons in various roles and the Mass being performed in a variety of languages. The sexual abuse scandals linked to priests shocked the nation and undercut the Church's public image. Over time, contrary to Church policy, the use of birth control by Catholics increased dramatically. Vatican II, however, did have a positive impact on sacramental patterns in the American Church. Suburbanization resulted in the establishment of many new parishes in the suburbs.

Suburbanization has also been a significant factor in the rise of the megachurch within American Protestantism. Megachurches are very large Protestant churches in suburban areas; by definition, they attract 2,000 or more participants per week. Many megachurches, however, are much larger than that definitional minimum and dominate the religious culture of their locations. Powerful charismatic clergy lead these communities, which seek to address the range of the spiritual and other needs of participants. Megachurches consistently employ technology in multiple ways, both in worship settings and in communication with members. The expanding use of changing technologies in the world of religious broadcasting is a development somewhat contemporaneous with the rise of megachurches. The success of Bishop T. D. Jakes, an African American television preacher and

advocate of the prosperity gospel, is parallel in several ways to the megachurch phenomenon, especially in the mastery of technology. This new religious organizational pattern, the megachurch, is closely attuned to the social, cultural, economic, and technological patterns of many Americans in the twenty-first century.

The twentieth century witnessed a series of technological developments with immense implications for religion – film, radio, television, cable television, computers, and the Internet. Despite a measure of suspicion, religious leaders and organizations adopted each of these means of communication as ways to convey their theological judgments and social views. The list of successful religious communicators reads like a “Who’s Who in American Religion” in the second half of the twentieth century, from Fulton Sheen to Billy Graham, from Robert Schuller to Pat Robertson, all of whom reached celebrity status as a result of their mastery of the new means to communicate. Their success and that of other media-savvy religious leaders resulted from a willingness to construct new formats to convey their religious messages and social judgments. The rapidly expanding digital age poses new challenges and expanding opportunities for religion.

In the second half of the twentieth century the U.S. Supreme Court played an increasingly pivotal role in determining the relationship between government and the increasingly diverse religious communities. The changing character of the religious makeup of the nation, evident in the presence of many non-Christian communities, led to judicial judgments regarding the fact that Christianity in the United States is not legally sanctioned. The First Amendment to the Constitution protects a citizen’s right to choose any particular religion or no religion at all. In the 1960s, however, which was a time of considerable religious innovation and controversy, the court began interpreting the religion clauses of the Constitution, the free exercise clause and the establishment clause, in more conservative ways. Nevertheless, radical pluralism remains the religious pattern of the nation.

Religious thought in the immediate postwar era was shaped by circumstances created by the conflict itself and the new East/West tensions identified as the Cold War. Many significant religious thinkers, including Reinhold Niebuhr, Thomas Merton, and Abraham Heschel, crafted theological statements that reflected the engagement of their traditions with the new circumstances the world was confronting. The 1960s were even more challenging for theologians as a host of religious developments, including the Second Vatican Council, the secularization movement, and the growth of feminist theology, challenged time-honored theological formulations. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harvey Cox, and Eli Wiesel were among the theologians speaking to the issues of those years. By the 1980s the contest was

joined by religious thinkers who spoke out against many of the initiatives of the 1960s with the result that postliberal initiatives gained new impetus as conservatives as diverse as Richard John Neuhaus and Jerry Falwell set out to regain the religious initiative in America.

The mission impulse has been continuous in the Americas for more than five hundred years, reflected and refracted in multiple ways. It has embraced notions of chosenness as well as a sense of responsibility to all nations, at times religiously, at other times politically. Missioners hoped to understand the indigenous people in order to fulfill their mission. Late twentieth-century mission theory underscored new areas of concern including rising respect for indigenous religiosity and for gender distinctiveness. Missions created a world Christianity that in the closing decades of the twentieth century, it has been observed, had shifted increasingly to Africa and Latin America.

In the opening decade of the twenty-first century, Canada, Mexico, and the United States were increasingly integrated with one another, including religiously. The movement of peoples across the borders, both legal and illegal, was one way the three nations were tied together. This movement also served to increase religious exchange and a sense of common concerns. The rising number of Asian immigrants, especially in Canada and the United States, contributed to growing religious diversity on the continent. The increasingly integrated economies strengthened relations among the three nations. Multiculturalism was most strikingly evident in Canada as a result of the flow of immigrants from Asia, including Hindus and Muslims, and of the growth of new religious movements. Mexico's mestizo identity was framed historically by Spanish fathers and indigenous mothers; its religious diversity included national Catholicism, indigenous traditions, and the newly arriving evangelical Protestants, including Pentecostals. All three nations on the continent had a strong and growing relationship.

The attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on 11 September 2001 was viewed by Americans as an assault on the nation's values, including freedom and democracy. The debate that followed the attack ranged widely across partisan politics, moral and cultural discourse, and questions of responsibility. It also identified militant Muslims as enemies of the United States and American values. President George W. Bush saw the political world in the United States as sharply divided; he equated the Republican Party with support of traditional American religious values, whereas the Democratic Party, in his view, had moved away from such positions toward liberal and secular positions. Bush saw this contrast as a national weakness. The election of Barack Obama in 2008, the first African American in that office, was a sign of a changing America. President Obama viewed the

expanding religious diversity of the nation as a strength. His was a vision of an open pluralistic society that would embrace every race, language, religion, and culture.

In 2010 the United States was a global religious culture including representatives of historical religions from across the face of the globe – from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and both North and South America – as well as members of new religious movements such as Mormons, Pentecostals, Sufis, and Wiccans, to name but a few. From the earliest moments of recorded history, North America has been a destination for diverse religious groups, and the astonishing religious complexity at the start of the twenty-first century was a product of that fact. Christianity remained the dominant religion at the start of the new century, but the larger American religious context was infinitely more complex than ever before. These diverse religious traditions serve the varied religious needs of Americans.

In the future is a new religious synthesis of East and West likely in America? How will the religious and the spiritual stand up against the secular and the rational? What will be the most persuasive visions of the future in the coming decades? What organizational schemes will be persuasive for people with religious interests? The answers to these and other questions regarding the religious future of America lie in the future. At present, all that can be affirmed is that contemporary America is truly a global religious culture.

Section I

THE POSTWAR RELIGIOUS WORLD,
1945 AND FOLLOWING

DANGEROUS AND PROMISING TIMES: AMERICAN RELIGION IN THE POSTWAR YEARS

BILL J. LEONARD

“We are living in a uniquely dangerous and promising time.” That brief statement, included in a resolution approved by the Federal Council of Churches in 1945, captured the sentiment of many Americans at the end of the Second World War.¹ While much of the world was exhausted from years of warfare unprecedented in its global impact, the United States seemed poised to assume international leadership as never before. Yet the devastation of the war and the realities of a nuclear era created great uncertainty amid the celebrations of victory over Fascism and the hope of a worldwide spiritual and cultural renewal. The beginning of the atomic age, frighteningly evident in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, raised the possibility of mass annihilation, a new type of arms race, and an ongoing Cold War. For many American religionists, these dangers demanded that communities of faith work together to deepen personal and corporate spirituality, developing renewed ecumenical relationships beyond old sectarian divisions. In the two decades after the war ended, Christianity in America experienced phenomenal organizational and numerical success. While internal divisions over doctrine, biblical authority, and church/state issues remained, many religious leaders urged churches and denominations to unite in response to challenges created by the rapid expansion of pluralism, secularism, and materialism throughout the society.

THE WORLD WAR – A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE AND A MORAL DILEMMA

The war itself raised innumerable ethical and moral issues for American religious communions. During the 1930s, as Adolf Hitler and National Socialism gained political power in Germany, American Christians offered

¹ “The Churches and World Order,” reprinted in *Christian Century*, 7 Feb. 1945, 174–7, cited in Mark Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (New York, 1990), 346.

varying assessments. Some looked rather positively on Hitler's early "moral crusades." In 1934 when the Fifth Baptist World Congress met in Berlin, certain Baptists from the United States returned home with praise for the "new" Germany. The Boston pastor John W. Bradbury observed, "It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish and communistic libraries."² While delegates passed a resolution opposing "racialism" directed toward Jews and people of color, they also suggested "that Chancellor Adolf Hitler gives to the temperance movement the prestige of his personal example since he neither uses intoxicants nor smokes."³ Such assessments would not last. By the late 1930s the success of the German war machine set off widespread debates over how best to oppose its efforts at global conquest. For many, armed resistance to Nazi evil was the only just and righteous response.

Nonetheless, prospects for war raised serious ethical questions for many American clergy. In the years between the world wars, pulpits echoed with ministerial affirmations of Christian pacifism. Many preachers repented of what seemed the church's overwhelming support for military action in World War I and pledged never to repeat it. Some later recalled, "We were all pacifists in the 30s."⁴ In 1928, the African American theologian and mystic Howard Thurman published "Peace Tactics and a Racial Minority," identifying himself with the cause of pacifism and nonviolence. He wrote that at "the very center of the Christian faith, even the enemy must be loved."⁵

Many Protestant ministers promised that never again would they support the militarism that undermined the gospel and perpetrated the slaughter of the Great War. Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of Riverside Church, New York, took the pacifist pledge, noting that although pacifists sometimes appeared "wrongheaded," they were "wrongheaded in the right direction."⁶ He and other Protestant preachers joined the Ministers' No-War Committee, opposing armed conflict as too costly to human life and social stability. When the Second World War began, Fosdick insisted he was not "neutral" but had a commitment "to keep the church Christian despite the unchristian nature of war."⁷

² *Watchman-Examiner*, 13 Sept. 1934; cited in William Loyd Allen, "How Baptists Assessed Hitler," *PeaceWork*, May–Aug. 1987, 12.

³ "Official Report of the Fifth Baptist World Congress," cited in *ibid.*

⁴ Paul R. Dekar, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers* (Macon, GA, 1993).

⁵ Howard Thurman, *Mysticism and the Experience of Love* (Wallingford, CT, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 115, 1961), 119, cited in *ibid.*, 179.

⁶ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (New York, 1956), 294.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 303; see also Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, NY, 2003), 397.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, many clergy jettisoned earlier pacifist sentiments and supported the war effort. Many became military chaplains or combatants. During the war years military chaplains included six thousand Protestant ministers, three thousand Catholic priests, and three hundred Jewish rabbis. Their battlefield death rate was second only to that of soldiers in the infantry and air force.⁸

Others retained their pacifism. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, founders of the Catholic Worker movement, maintained their opposition to the war, even after Pearl Harbor, a position that divided members of their own Catholic Worker communities. Leaders of historic “Peace Churches,” including Mennonites and Quakers, encouraged their youth to pursue conscientious objector or “alternative service” approaches to war.⁹

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr soon recognized the need for action against Fascism and chastened those who resisted the necessary military response. He wrote that “modern Christian and secular perfectionism, which places a premium upon nonparticipation in conflict, is a very sentimentalized version of the Christian faith.”¹⁰ The Presbyterian Fundamentalist Clarence E. Macartney insisted that the war had salvific implications for “the emancipation of the enslaved, the redemption of mankind, the overthrow of tyrants and despots, and the vindication of the great truths of our Christian faith.” He denounced pacifists for promoting an unbiblical concept that was outside common sense.¹¹

In 1944 a special commission on the war appointed by the Federal Council of Churches produced a document entitled “The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith.” It acknowledged deep divisions among American clergy, a majority of whom called for military action to save the world from Nazi evil and a minority who supported an uncompromising gospel pacifism.¹²

As an Allied victory seemed more certain, well-known religious leaders contributed to a volume entitled *Peace Is the Victory* (1944). The editor, Harrop A. Freeman, professor at the College of William and Mary, wrote that “the authors believe that they have developed the premises on which any abiding peace must be founded, and that from no other source may the reader obtain a similar cross section of pacifist thought brought to

⁸ E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), 237.

⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. III, *Under God, Indivisible 1941–1960* (Chicago, 1999), 22–3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹ C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, 1976), 205.

¹² H. Sheldon Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity* (New York, 1963), II: 330.

bear upon the problems which beset our generation.”¹³ In the first essay, John Haynes Holmes, pastor of the Community Church of New York, suggested, “The pacifist simply refuses to meet Hitler on the plane where force and violence, whatever their ultimate result, are the only immediate alternatives to slavery and death.” He called pacifism “a force more potent than any violence – namely the power of the spirit,” and concluded, “We either believe in this power or we do not.”¹⁴ Harry Emerson Fosdick called for a global pacifism that would replace isolationism with “a peaceful world order based on justice, on a system of reliable law, and on a co-operative world government, flexible to needed change and supported alike by the good will and the self-interest of all nations.”¹⁵

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE PROBLEM OF THE HOLOCAUST

The end of the war introduced additional theological and ethical problems for Christians and Jews alike. The full extent of Nazi atrocities, agonizingly evident in the Holocaust, expanded the culpability of the German people in a genocidal act that took the lives of at least six million Jews. In spite of the witness of the German “Confessing Church” and the martyrdom of the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other dissenters, the silence of Christians inside and outside Germany regarding Hitler’s “Final Solution” was an inescapable indictment against the church. Accusations leveled at Protestant and Catholic communities extended all the way to the papacy and the actions of Pope Pius XII relative to the Jewish situation. Supporters of the pope pointed to his protection of specific individuals and his concern to avoid actions that would provoke vengeance on Catholics in Nazi-occupied lands, while critics insisted that he intentionally ignored Nazi atrocities against Jews.¹⁶

Jewish responses did not come easily or immediately and reflected significant divisions over the meaning of the Holocaust for interpreting Judaism and its ancient claims. In *After Auschwitz* (1966), Richard Rubenstein declared that post-Holocaust Jews could no longer accept the idea of “an omnipotent, beneficent God.” In *Faith after the Holocaust* (1973), Eliezer Berkovits maintained that the Holocaust reflected God’s desire to remain “hidden” in order to preserve the freedom of human beings to live

¹³ Harrop A. Freeman, ed., *Peace Is the Victory* (New York, 1944), x.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ Harry Emerson Fosdick, “World Cooperation – A Political Must,” in *ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶ David Dalin, *The Myth of Hitler’s Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis* (New York, 2005); and John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pope Pius XII* (New York, 1999).

responsibly, ever nudging history toward a moral end. The Jewish theologian Hans Jonas suggested that God's essential goodness was not predicated on the necessity or possibility of God's omnipotence. Thus while intending goodness and benevolence, God was unable to act in ways that protected the Jews from a history of persecution culminating in the horror of the Holocaust.¹⁷

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and author, offered multiple responses to questions raised by Nazi horrors. In works such as *Night and Dawn*, he detailed his own concentration camp experiences, including the death of his father only days before liberation. For Wiesel, God's response to the Chosen People remains a historic problem exacerbated by the devastation of the Holocaust. God must be held accountable for the Holocaust and for failing to defend Jews from persecution across the centuries. In a play entitled *The Trial of God*, the deity is brought to court charged with heinous crimes, only to be defended in the end by Satan.¹⁸ Wiesel contends that although God failed the Jews, their history and its accompanying rituals sustain them in the struggle to survive and to respond to the question of God's elusive presence. Jewish religious traditions offer historic connections to a brave and enduring people while cheating the Nazis' attempts to silence the Jewish people forever.¹⁹

For many Christians, the Holocaust was the culmination of an unyielding anti-Semitism fostered by Catholics and Protestants for centuries. With the discoveries in the death camps, Christians were forced to confront their own silence in ignoring stories of Nazi atrocities earlier in the conflict. Theologically, the Holocaust raised significant issues about God's power to intervene in the face of horrendous evil.

Many American Christians showed both support and ambiguity for the formation of Israel, the rise of the "Palestinian Question," and the unending disputes over geographic, political, economic, and religious boundaries in the Holy Land. At war's end, *The Christian Century* noted, "The Jews have been so victimized, persecuted, knocked about that it is to be expected that they would wish in every possible way to protect their position in the post-war world."²⁰ Some conservative Protestants, particularly those of "dispensational premillennialist" sentiments, linked the foundation of the nation of Israel directly with the return of Jesus Christ, who would soon

¹⁷ David L. Weaver-Zercher, "Theologies," in Philip Goff and Paul Harvey, eds., *Themes in Religion and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 32.

¹⁸ Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* (New York, 1995); *Night* (New York, 1969); and *Dawn* (London, 1961).

¹⁹ Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *Exploring American Religion* (Mountain View, CA, 1990), 338.

²⁰ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 62.

break into history and establish his kingdom for a thousand years. They insisted that God had a permanent covenant with the Jews that would never be abrogated. Premillennialists occupied the curious position of supporting the chosenness of the Jewish people while urging them to repent of their “apostasy” and receive salvation through Christ.²¹ Many Protestant conservatives were among Israel’s strongest supporters, demanding that the United States defend Israel or risk divine retribution.

RELIGION AND THE COLD WAR

World War II had barely ended when the Cold War began, brought on by divisions over geography and ideology as reflected in the partitioning of East/West Germany, a burgeoning arms race, and the collision of capitalism and Communism throughout the world. In 1948, the United States, France, and Germany led in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an agency charged with protecting Western Europe from the threat of invasion. Russian conquests led to the formation of the Soviet bloc, a group of seven Eastern European countries that retained varying degrees of autonomy but were dominated by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and solidified in the Warsaw Pact signed in 1955. As the world’s two military superpowers, the United States and Russia soon became the primary protagonists in a Cold War through which they avoided direct armed confrontation even as they sought to extend their political influence across the globe.

The Cold War had significant impact on religious communities in the United States. First, the world was changed forever when an atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, Japan, on 6 August 1945 and another on Nagasaki three days later. Religious institutions were forced to deal with the theological and pastoral questions raised by the bomb, an instrument of unimaginable destruction. Public and private fears of a nuclear war permeated American life as bomb shelters multiplied and children practiced “duck and cover” drills at school. This uncertainty was compounded by the invention of ICBMs – intercontinental ballistic missiles – and the Soviet Union’s first successful launch in 1957. Long-range missiles and nuclear weapons now meant that the eradication of the entire race was a real possibility.

In 1950 the Federal Council of Churches named a special commission to respond to the issues raised by the bomb. This group of leading male educators included Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich of Union Seminary,

²¹ Nancy T. Ammerman, “Fundamentalists Proselytizing Jews: Incivility in Preparation for the Rapture,” in Martin E. Marty and Frederick E. Greenspan, eds., *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World* (New York, 1988), 116–21.

New York; Robert Calhoun of Yale; and Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College. Their report, entitled *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, extended the debate over pacifism and addressed new realities created by the presence of nuclear weapons in the world. While acknowledging the incomparable power of armaments, the report anticipated the future of the Cold War by recognizing that “as long as the existing situation holds, for the United States to abandon its atomic weapons, or to give the impression that they would not be used, would leave the non-communist world with totally inadequate defense.” It concluded with the assertion that American military forces should maintain atomic weapons “in the possibility of preventing both world war and tyranny.”²² This was one of the earliest statements on the necessity of nuclear deterrence as a strategy for global survival.

The nuclear threat contributed significantly to millennial speculation, especially among a new generation of American evangelists. Early in his evangelistic career, Billy Graham anticipated a pending nuclear holocaust, predicting in 1950, “Two years and it’s all going to be over.” In 1951 he viewed tensions between the Americans and the Soviets as evidence that “the last tremendous battle predicted in the Bible, called Armageddon” would occur soon in Israel.²³ Graham’s belief that the atheism promoted by Soviet leaders was the ultimate challenge to world Christianity led him to extend his evangelistic campaigns internationally. Throughout the 1950s he insisted that the “signs of the times” indicated that “we are living in the latter days,” and he added, “I sincerely believe that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”²⁴ Graham’s premillennial eschatology contributed to his sense of evangelical urgency throughout his career.

Second, from a political standpoint, religious faith became an important weapon in the confrontation with “atheistic Communism.” Civil religion – the religion of the public square – long present in American life, took on an added dimension when contrasted with the public atheism of the Soviets. Preachers and politicians across the ideological spectrum increasingly spoke of a Christian or Judeo-Christian America as a contrast to the atheistic regimes of the Soviet bloc. In 1954 Congress added the words “under God” to the pledge to the American flag, a direct response to Cold War issues at home and abroad.

²² *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Report of a Special Commission Appointed by the Federal Council of the Church of Christ in America* (New York, 1950), cited in Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity*, II: 535.

²³ William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, 1959), 512, citing *America’s Hour of Decision*, 119.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Modern Revivalism*, 509, citing “Sermons of the Month,” published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (Minneapolis, 1952, 1955).

President Dwight D. Eisenhower articulated such civic faith through continued references to America's inherent religious foundations, declaring, "America is the mightiest power which God has yet seen fit to put upon his footstool," "America is great because she is good," and "Happily our people have always reserved their first allegiance to the kingdom of the spirit."²⁵ Christian America was thought to represent values that the atheistic Soviets did not share.

Third, American religious leaders were divided in their theological and political interpretations of the Cold War. Certain conservatives denounced anyone who hesitated to condemn Communism or demonstrated socialist sympathies. Writing in the *American Mercury* in 1953, the anti-Communist J. B. Matthews asserted, "The largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States today is composed of Protestant clergymen." He predicted that the clergy's flirtations with Communism would be the church's undoing.²⁶

Hysteria regarding the Red Menace reached fever pitch in the early 1950s through investigations conducted by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee aimed at discovering communists or other "fellow travelers" operating in the United States. Clergy were not immune. The Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam was accused of Communist sympathies in certain "unevaluated" documents put forth by the committee around 1954. Oxnam demanded a hearing, affirmed his Christian faith, and repudiated the accusations. He protested "against procedures that are in effect the rule of men and not of law; procedures subject to the prejudices, passions and political ambitions of Committeemen; procedures designed less to elicit information than to entrap; procedures that cease to be investigation and become inquisition and intimidation."²⁷

The former Communist Reinhold Niebuhr helped found the anti-Communist Americans for Democratic Action in 1947 and insisted that "Russia hopes to conquer the whole of Europe strategically or ideologically."²⁸ Niebuhr suggested that his critique of Marxism and liberalism was born of "biblical faith" and the realities of "two world wars and the encounter of a liberal culture with two idolatrous tyrannies, first

²⁵ Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York, 1970), 259.

²⁶ J. B. Matthews, "Reds in Our Churches," *American Mercury* 77 (July 1953): 3–5, 13, cited in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America since 1865*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 488.

²⁷ G. B. Oxnam, *I Protest* (New York, 1954), cited in *ibid.*, 491.

²⁸ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 119.

Nazism and then Communism.”²⁹ Labeled a Christian realist, Niebuhr in his response to the cultural and theological issues in works such as *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941–3) and *The Irony of American History* (1952) was both an analyst and a critic of the era.

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS, LEFT AND RIGHT

The 1950s brought a resurgence of interest in religion and renewed participation in faith communities. Denominations thrived, extending their connections to member congregations. Attendance increased dramatically in Catholic and Protestant churches as some 60 percent of the population attested to weekly participation in worship.³⁰ In 1950 some 55 percent of the population claimed a church affiliation, a number that increased to 62 percent in 1956 and 69 percent by 1960.³¹

The so-called mainline Protestant groups – Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Methodists, for example – experienced substantial growth after the war, expanding their influence throughout the culture before confronting significant numerical declines in the latter twentieth century. Evangelicals, a broad community of conservative Christians in multiple denominations and congregations, benefited from traditional revival crusades and new evangelistic methods. Evangelical leaders such as Harold Ockenga at Park Street Church, Boston, and Carl F. H. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*, joined Billy Graham and others in shaping a Neo-Evangelicalism that moved beyond the diatribes of an earlier fundamentalism while aggressively promoting Christian orthodoxy and biblical authority.³² Roman Catholic communities experienced growth in church attendance and religious vocations, as seminaries and monasteries filled with novices, many entering directly from military service.

Postwar surveys indicated strong respect for American clergy. A 1947 poll sponsored by the Roper organization ranked ministers at the top of those “doing the most good” in society. A third of those questioned indicated that ministers “did more good than any other group.” Numerous polls from this period listed the ministry as among “the most desirable and respected occupations.”³³

²⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, cited in Heinrich-Constantin Rohrbach, “Reinhold Niebuhr,” in *Theologians of Our Time*, ed. Leonhard Reinisch (Notre Dame, IN, 1964), 83.

³⁰ Goff and Harvey, eds., *Themes in Religion and American Culture*, 61.

³¹ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972), 952.

³² Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK, 2001), 18–20.

³³ Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 236.

CHRISTIANS UNITING: ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

By midcentury, numerous denominations joined in forming ecumenical organizations united around collective endeavors. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (NCC) began in 1950 through a merger of some eight Protestant interdenominational groups including the Federal Churches of Christ (1908), the Foreign Missions Conference, and the Home Missions Council. Initial membership included twenty-five Protestant and four Orthodox groups totaling a constituency of some thirty million persons.³⁴ The National Council maintained close connections with the World Council of Churches, an international organization formed in Amsterdam in 1948. The NCC included Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Lutherans, Northern (American) Baptists, Quakers, numerous African American denominations, and certain Orthodox communions.

The council's first public "message," "To the People of the Nation," asserted that the interdenominational organization was bound by "our oneness in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour," but was "not a denomination, not a Church above the Churches." Rather, the council was "an agency of cooperation – not more but magnificently not less."³⁵ The NCC assisted member denominations in the circulation of church school materials, preparation of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, studies and statistics on churches and denominations, and service opportunities in home and foreign missions. The National Council took responsibility for nurturing new generations of Christian leaders, offered certification for military chaplains, and developed media resources in "radio, television and motion pictures."³⁶ The report concluded, "American Churches, of which the Council is one of the visible symbols, are in their true estate the soul of the nation."³⁷ The National Council gave particular attention to the role of Christian churches in America, encouraging shared worship and ministry and offering position papers on spiritual, moral, and political issues in American public life.

Evangelicals also established ecumenical organizations, including the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) formed in 1941 by the Presbyterian Fundamentalist Carl McIntire in response to the views promoted by the Federal Council of Churches, a precursor of the National

³⁴ Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, *American Christianity*, II: 569, 586.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 587.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 588.

Council. The ACCC opposed what it saw as the Federal Council's indulgent approach to socialism, its hegemony over the appointment of military chaplains, its sponsorship of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the liberal orientation of many of its public pronouncements.³⁸

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was formed in 1942 by a group of conservative Christians who sought to distance themselves from the shrillness and public image of Fundamentalists evident in the Scopes trial and other debates of the 1920s and 1930s. Its leaders sometimes used the term "Neo-Evangelical" or "Evangelical" to describe a Christianity centered in the authority of scripture, the need for personal conversion through faith in Jesus Christ, affirmation of the historic Christian creeds, and an imperative to extend the church's worldwide mission.³⁹ The NAE's founding document attacked "modernism" as destructive to the moral and spiritual foundations of the republic, concluding, "Today this same modernism would silence every voice raised in behalf of Christian patriotism, for many modernists have a greater interest in the outworking of some form of Marxism than in the salvation that comes through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."⁴⁰

While ecumenical groups sought to move beyond sectarian divisions, denominations themselves thrived as the primary means for organizing religious groups in America. Denominational mergers were frequent in the middle of the twentieth century. The American Lutheran Church was formed in 1930 by three distinct Lutheran synods. The Methodist Church began in 1939, a reunion of the Methodist Protestant Church (1828), the Methodist Episcopal Church (northern section), and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, divisions created over slavery in 1845. The Evangelical United Brethren Church began in 1946 out of two German-related evangelical bodies. In 1968, it merged with the Methodist Church to become the United Methodist Church. The United Church of Christ was founded in 1957 through a merger of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.⁴¹ The Unitarian Universalist Association began in 1961 as a union of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America.

³⁸ Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (Boston, 1984), 411.

³⁹ Jay P. Dolan and James P. Wind, eds., *New Dimensions in American Religious History* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 265.

⁴⁰ *Evangelicals in Action: A Report of the Organization of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action* (Boston, 1942), cited in *Religion in the American Experience*, ed. Robert T. Handy (New York, 1972), 236.

⁴¹ Winthrop Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1999), 367.

FAITH AND MODERNITY: A NEW SPIRITUALITY

As the stress of modern secular life and the fears fostered by the atomic age descended on postwar Americans, many went searching for spiritual sustenance. Despite increased church attendance, religious leaders sometimes feared that a new generation of Americans, distracted by materialism and success, would insist that the church conform to consumer-oriented programs and agendas.

Hollywood took advantage of the religious revival soon enough. During the 1950s, various “historical novels” became movies as Hollywood sought to capitalize on renewed interest in traditional religion. These “biblically based” productions were taken from novels such as Henryk Sienkiewicz’s *Quo Vadis?* (1905/film 1951), Lloyd C. Douglas’s *The Robe* (1942/film 1953), and Thomas Costain’s *The Silver Chalice* (1943/film 1952). Most featured scenes that were sexually provocative (for the times) or offered sentimental approaches to the life of Jesus and his early disciples, often with fictionalized central characters. *The Silver Chalice* marked the film debut of the actor Paul Newman, who was said to have dubbed it “the worst motion picture of the 1950s.”

Leading clergy published books promoting piety, spirituality, and self-fulfillment as resources for facing the inevitable stresses of modernity. These included the Catholic bishop Fulton Sheen’s *Peace of Soul* (1949), Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman’s *Peace of Mind* (1946), Billy Graham’s *Peace with God* (1953), and Norman Vincent Peale’s overwhelmingly popular book, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952). Each of these publications linked biblical texts and gospel insights with psychospiritual observations that offered comfort and stability amid the rat race of daily life.

Sheen, an exuberant preacher, took the new medium of television by storm. Attired in bishop’s vestments including a cape, Sheen’s pragmatic sermons, media savvy, and rhetorical flair set agendas for future television preachers. He wrote, “Conversion brings the soul out of either chaos or this false peace of mind to true peace of soul.” When this occurred, “All the energy that was previously wasted in conflict – either in trying to find the purpose of life or in trying alone and futilely to conquer his vices – can now be released to serve a single purpose. Regret, remorse, fears, and anxieties that flowed from sin now completely vanish in repentance.”⁴² Judging from his popularity, Sheen became a positive representative of American Catholicism for many Protestants who were ignorant or suspicious of the faith.

⁴² F. J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York, 1949), 286–9, cited in Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America since 1865*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993) 517–18.

In *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale blended Christianity with American self-help philosophy, to great popularity and controversy. Peale's best seller linked scripture, history, and popular psychological jargon to encourage readers to look beyond the old guilt-ridden theories of original sin and human depravity to an ever-improving self-image that ensured success and happiness. He wrote, "There is resident in you an immense reservoir of force; the power of the subconscious mind. Faith releases this power."⁴³ His approach infuriated many academics and preachers, who found it little more than self-help pabulum, but it endeared him to a public ready to jettison the old strictures of Protestant traditionalism. Martin Marty noted, "Peale contributed greatly to what came to be called the 'privatizing' of American religion. Insofar as he represented the popular religion of the Eisenhower era . . . it would be hard to find his match."⁴⁴

Peale was not the only preacher to publish religious works for popular consumption. These books addressed biblical studies and spirituality, often compiled from sermons proclaimed Sunday after Sunday from prominent pulpits. George Buttrick, pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, published *Christ and Man's Dilemma* (1946) and *So We Believe, So We Pray* (1951); George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, circulated his sermons under such titles as *Salt of the Earth* (1949), *On Eagle Wings* (1953), and *After His Likeness* (1954). Religion hit the airwaves as well as the bookstores. Weekly homilies from popular preachers were broadcast on radio on such programs as *The Protestant Hour*, *The Baptist Hour*, *The Radio Revival Hour*, and *Back to the Bible*.

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS AMERICA: THE WORK OF WILL HERBERG

One well-known examination of the American postwar religious ethos was that of the sociologist Will Herberg in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, first published in 1955. He surveyed the three religious traditions and their distinctive roles in the American "triple melting pot," a pluralistic environment created out of a "land of immigrants." For Herberg, these faiths became "the three faces of American religion" as "defined by the American Way of Life," traditions at once "equi-legitimate subdivisions" and "markedly different."⁴⁵

While Herberg's thesis was later challenged for its overemphasis on the "triple melting pot" theory and inadequate attention to inherent ethnic and

⁴³ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 321.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 321–2.

⁴⁵ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY, 1960), 256, 211.

religious differences, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* offered an important critique of the superficial elements of American popular religion. He noted that for many Americans religion was primarily a means for securing “‘peace of mind,’ happiness and success in worldly achievement.”⁴⁶ While acknowledging that religion was deeply embedded in American life, Herberg warned that “much of present-day religiosity” was “found to be so empty and contentless, so conformist, so utilitarian, so sentimental, so individualistic, and so self-righteous.”⁴⁷ American culture therefore left its mark on even the most ancient of faiths.

CHURCHES AND CLERGY IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Herberg and others acknowledged that many religious communities thrived in the postwar period, extending their ministries and expanding denominational connections, often energized by a new generation of ministers. Urban churches continued to flourish, while small town and rural churches remained the ecclesiastical norm. It was in the suburbs, however, that church expansion seemed most evident in the immediate postwar years. This was particularly true for Protestant congregations. A decade-long study of congregations in fourteen different denominations indicated that 19 percent of new church construction during the period was urban, 17.5 percent was in small towns or rural settings, and 63.5 percent occurred in suburban settings.⁴⁸

While denominations sought to maintain a national constituency, most were identified with specific regions. Catholics manifested an increasingly national presence, with particular strength in urban areas from Boston to Chicago to Los Angeles. Congregationalist and Unitarian churches spread across New England, and Lutherans were clustered in the Upper Midwest. Methodists, a national denomination, were especially strong in the Midwest and South. Mormons dominated Utah, extending their presence throughout the nation through aggressive evangelism, much to the chagrin of many traditional denominationalists. Baptists, second in size to the Methodists, divided into various regional subdenominations with American Baptists in the East and West and ethnic Baptist churches – German, Norwegian, Swedish – spread throughout the Midwest. While the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) dominated its region, in the 1950s it began a program to plant SBC churches nationwide. An evangelistic emphasis known as “A Million More in ’54” did not reach its intended goal

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 268–9.

⁴⁸ Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 239.

but helped extend Southern Baptist presence into other “pioneer” regions outside the South. Primitive, Old Regular, and Free Will Baptists maintained small but distinctive congregations in the South, especially in the Appalachian region.

Pentecostals, appearing on the scene in the early twentieth century, formed multiple denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, and the Church of God of Prophecy, each growing in towns and cities among diverse racial and ethnic groups. Episcopalians, lacking numerical strength in any one particular region, were nonetheless a truly national denomination with churches in almost every county of the nation.

Numerical growth led many churches to add additional staff members trained in specialized ministries such as music, youth work, or Christian education. Some were seminary-educated, while others moved up through the ranks, trained through hands-on ministry in specific congregations.

While seminary enrollment increased significantly after the war, many clergy, especially in smaller or more sectarian denominations, had little or no formal theological education. E. Brooks Holifield notes that although data are limited, a 1945 survey of the American Baptist Convention, then at about two million members, showed that merely 22 percent of the ordained clergy reporting had degrees from both a college and a seminary. Thirty-two percent had not even attended college.⁴⁹ During this period, many church-related colleges developed religion majors that were specifically aimed at preparing undergraduates for ministry in the church. Some churches and denominations developed “Bible colleges” that were especially aimed at ministerial preparation. Other groups remained cautious of institutionalized ministerial education, wary that it would intellectualize the spirit out of zealous preachers or substitute corpse-cold rationalism for heart religion. Nonetheless, seminary-trained pastors became the model, if not the norm, for a growing number of Protestant congregations and denominations.

EVANGELISM AND AMERICAN CHURCHES

Amid the numerical success of postwar churches, considerable differences arose over the means and meaning of evangelism itself. Aggressive evangelistic campaigns by many churches and denominations included seasonal revivals, door-to-door “witnessing,” and distribution of “gospel tracts” that offered the simple plan of salvation for all who would receive Christ as Savior. For many churches, traditional revival meetings continued to be a

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 244–5.

major source of outreach, with crowds drawn by boisterous singing, lively musical presentations, and powerful preaching by visiting evangelists. These services invariably concluded with the “invitation” or “altar call,” as those who desired salvation were urged to “come forward” to experience conversion and receive counseling by pastors or trusted lay witnesses. In the 1950s the revival remained an important setting for “drawing in the net” and calling persons to immediate conversion.

The postwar years saw a renewed effort at urban evangelism, aimed at attracting the general public to stadiums and public halls outside traditional church facilities. These “crusades for Christ” were often ecumenical events initiated by congregations of various denominations and enlisting the services of a particular evangelist whose “team” helped organize the programs. Community-based choirs, soloists, ushers, and counselors joined professional organizers in developing a spiritual context for the evangelist’s call for mass conversions.

Such public campaigns put both the Neo-Evangelical Billy Graham and the Pentecostal faith healer Oral Roberts on the national stage by the early 1950s. Both born in 1918, Graham and Roberts set patterns for evangelism, preaching, and public piety that impacted evangelical life for generations. Although theologically conservative, Graham generally sought to avoid doctrinal controversies that divided conservatives and liberals, focusing primarily on the need for all persons to have a “personal experience with Jesus Christ.” Graham’s sermons – simple, direct, and personal – were aimed less at theological nuance than a call for immediate salvation.

The formation of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 was a clear indication of the institutionalization of the professional evangelist in American life. It anticipated the development of innumerable non-profit evangelistic ministries, many with their own radio and television programs. By the 1960s Billy Graham had become America’s most famous evangelist, a position he occupied for more than half a century.

Oral Roberts, born of the largely underclass Holiness-Pentecostal movement, united the call for conversion with the promise of divine healing. Many of his early crusades were conducted in a “big tent” and included invitations to spiritual salvation and physical healing. Participants were encouraged to join the “healing line,” where disease-ridden persons would receive the prayers of Roberts, whose healing touch released God’s power over sickness, a renewal of New Testament Pentecost. Roberts’ theology of “seed faith,” in which believers who invested both faith and funds anticipated significant spiritual and material returns, became the foundation for much of the later “prosperity gospel” and its promises of material success. His rising influence was evident in the founding of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1963.

These approaches to evangelism were not without their critics. Some challenged the methods and motives of the traveling preachers, particularly when scandals involving money or sex became public. Others insisted that the idea of instant conversion undermined the “cost of discipleship” and the rigors of lifelong Christian commitment. Still others warned that the emphasis on individual conversion often obscured the social mandates of the Christian gospel.

In a classic work entitled *The Kingdom of God in America*, H. Richard Niebuhr suggested that by the twentieth century evangelical conversionism had become thoroughly institutionalized in American churches. He wrote, “Regeneration, the dying to the self and the rising to new life – now apparently sudden, now so slow and painful, so confused, so real, so mixed – becomes conversion which takes place on Sunday morning during the singing of the last hymn or twice a year when the revival preacher comes to town.”⁵⁰ While admitting that institutionalization was inevitable, Niebuhr attacked those who succumbed to it even as they claimed that the old spiritual dynamic remained intact.

DENOMINATIONS: SHAPING AND SHAPED BY THE 1950S

By the 1950s, denominational systems, institutions, and programs remained the organizational “shape of Protestantism in America,” as Sidney Mead described it. Unlike earlier territorial or confessional forms of the church, the denomination was a way of organizing the church in an environment where religious liberty was the norm and no government-sanctioned ecclesiastical establishment was allowed. It was “a voluntary association of like-hearted and like-minded individuals, who are united on the basis of common beliefs for the purpose of accomplishing tangible and defined objectives.”⁵¹ Denominations became the primary way of organizing religious communities in America.

In many respects, denominational influence reached its apex in the 1950s and early 1960s. Denominations provided resources for ministry that individual churches were not able to provide on their own. Denominational alliances allowed local churches to fund missionaries at home and abroad, provide instructional literature, and create networks for educating the young, training ministers, and passing on identity. Although considerable “switching” of denominations occurred among religious consumers, American families generally thought of their primary religious identity in terms of a denomination.

⁵⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York, 1959), 179–80.

⁵¹ Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (New York, 1963), 115.

Denominations created systems for nurturing new generations of Christians not only through the sacraments, worship, and rituals of the church, but in Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools, church camps, and religiously based education programs. Young people were encouraged to attend one of the denominationally based colleges that provided basic liberal arts education in the context of required religion courses, mandated weekly chapel services, and an extensive array of religious experiences and service through denominationally funded campus ministry. After graduation, they were expected to continue participation in the churches and denominations in which they started.

Would-be ministers were urged to attend a denominational seminary, perhaps as a prerequisite for ordination within a specific churchly tradition. Denominations often set extensive requirements for ordination and developed processes for evaluating ministers throughout their careers. At mid-century, denominations inculcated a powerful sense of identity in their constituents, offering cross-generational continuity through collective endeavors in education, benevolence, evangelism, and mission.

By the 1950s most of the major denominations in America had developed elaborate bureaucratic systems for implementing extensive programs at home and abroad. Many reorganized around the model of the American corporation with central headquarters, executive secretaries (CEOs), and a variety of income-generating offerings, business enterprises, and product sales. Some persons initially called to church-based ministries found employment opportunities as “denominational servants,” administering programs, editing literature, or participating in denominationally funded educational or missionary service.

These all-encompassing networks were not without critics, however. Denominational obsession with efficiency, bureaucracy, and conformity led to renewed attention to works such as H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Kingdom of God in America*. Just as Niebuhr criticized the institutionalization of conversion in American church life, so he viewed denominationalism as confirmation of the “crystallization or institutionalization of the kingdom of God.”⁵² These bureaucratic institutions were always “on the defensive,” and “content with past achievement and more afraid of loss than . . . hopeful of new insight or strength.”⁵³ He insisted that the American denomination “may be described as a missionary order which has turned to the defensive and lost its consciousness of the invisible catholic church.”⁵⁴

Niebuhr concluded with a warning to all ideological segments of the Protestant family, writing, “In institutional liberalism as in institutional

⁵² Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God in America*, 166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

Evangelicalism and Protestantism the aggressive movement of the kingdom of God in America had apparently come to a stop.”⁵⁵ Although much of Niebuhr’s research and most of his references to institutionalization involved an earlier period in American religious history, his scathing comments were not lost on those who saw denominations as an attempt to thwart the dynamism of the gospel.

Denominational critiques were not limited to those left of center. The Texas Fundamentalist J. Frank Norris derided the Southern Baptist Convention for mandating cooperation at the expense of congregational autonomy. He labeled one convention-wide fund-raising campaign “the excathedra demand ... of ecclesiastical dictators.” He reportedly ripped one denominational fund-raising letter “to pieces,” declaring, “That’s my answer to your papal demands.”⁵⁶ Norris was among those conservatives who rejected denominational “hierarchy” as unbiblical, dictatorial, and detrimental to local congregations.

CATHOLICS IN AMERICA: A CONTROVERSIAL PRESENCE

Roman Catholics, long an immigrant church, came of age in the postwar era, gaining sufficient numerical, geographic, and political strength to challenge Protestant hegemony in America. At war’s end there were some twenty-three million Catholics in the United States, a population expanding throughout the nation. Catholic vocations – priests, monks, and nuns – flourished after the war with many monasteries and seminaries packed with novices. Women outnumbered men in church attendance and religious vocations. Jay Dolan reports that in 1960 there were “164,922 women religious to 52,689 priests.”⁵⁷

Thomas Merton, who entered the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky, in 1942, became Master of the Scholastics in 1951, charged with preparing monks for ordination to the priesthood. He reported on the logistical complexities of life in a monastery overrun by postwar postulants, noting, “Let us suppose that within four or five years several hundred men decide that they want lives of silence, prayer, labor, penance, and constant union with God in solitude.... Although they do not all enter exactly at the same moment, they come in great numbers, continually and the monastery of seventy grows to a hundred seventy and then to two hundred and seventy.”⁵⁸ Merton’s own spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, was published in 1948, and to his great surprise

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁶ Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism*, 37–8.

⁵⁷ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (South Bend, IN, 1992), 388.

⁵⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (Garden City, NY, 1956), 14.

became a runaway best seller. His extensive literary corpus, much of which focused on a variety of spiritual and social issues of the day, made him one of the great bridge figures in articulating Catholic identity to Catholics, Protestants, and many modern secularists as well.

The classic devotional Catholicism of the mid-twentieth-century American Church was informed by papal encyclicals and personalities, religious festivals, indulgences, attendance at Mass, frequent novenas, and daily recitation of the rosary.⁵⁹ These identifiable Catholic traits, clearly evident in the 1950s, were soon impacted by significant new liturgical, theological, and spiritual explorations surrounding the Second Vatican Council (1961–65). Much of the liturgical renewal movement stressed the centrality of Jesus Christ, the ancient traditions of Catholic spirituality, the importance of scripture, and the strength of the community of faith centered in the Mass.⁶⁰ Catholic spirituality, present in both the liturgy and the “classics of Christian devotion,” experienced a renewed popularity among Catholic and Protestant alike.

The quest for an American Catholic identity continued during these years, as the Church experienced numerical growth in a country where Protestantism dominated and secularism was ever-expanding. After the war, bishops were particularly concerned that a rising American divorce rate would inundate Catholic families. The Christian Family Movement (CFM), originating in Catholic Action groups throughout the world, was officially organized in the United States in 1949, soon claiming a membership of more than thirty thousand married couples worldwide. Amid its emphasis on family support and cohesion, the CFM also maintained a strong concern for social justice and communal responsibility.⁶¹

The center of American Catholic family life at midcentury remained the parochial school system, organized initially to protect Catholic identity in a society where public education was implicitly Protestant. Bishops placed great emphasis on the need for each parish to have schools where every Catholic family might send their children. While elementary schools were the backbone of the program, with nuns as the primary teachers and models of Catholic solidarity, high schools were expanded after the war. Dolan reports that by 1959 “there were 2,428 Catholic high schools educating 810,763 students; the corresponding elementary-school population for that year was 4,083,860, or five times as large.”⁶² A largely unpaid teaching staff composed of women and men religious helped make Catholic education economically accessible to working-class families.

⁵⁹ Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 384.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 394–6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 398–9.

One of the best-known spokespersons for the Catholic presence in the United States in the postwar period was Father John Tracy Ellis, a Catholic University historian. In works such as *American Catholicism* and *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore*, Ellis explored Catholic biography and sociocultural history in ways that reflected both the old defensiveness of an immigrant minority and a boldness shaped by the Church's expanding presence in America. Ellis' progressivism was evident in his support for religious freedom and vernacular liturgies, along with greater openness toward non-Catholic religious communions.⁶³

Francis Cardinal Spellman and Father John Courtney Murray were two other formidable representatives of midcentury American Catholicism. While others sought to prove that Catholicism was compatible with American identity, Spellman "virtually made an icon out of the national flag," as demonstrated in his support for U.S. action in World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War itself. Spellman's attack on Eleanor Roosevelt for her criticism of Catholic efforts to secure government funds for parochial schools reinforced Protestant fears over Catholic influence in church-state issues.⁶⁴

If Spellman was aggressive in his approach, John Courtney Murray, Jesuit professor at Woodstock College, was conciliatory. Murray sought to reassure Protestants that the Catholic Church in America was no threat to religious freedom. His overarching concern was with a rising secularism, which he believed to be the real threat to American society. He charged that secularism represented a "fourth faith" alongside that of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.⁶⁵ Writing in 1951, he suggested that the "theological task of the moment" was not simply to respond to secularism, "but to explore, under the guidance of the church, the possibilities of a vital adaptation of Church-State doctrine to the constitutional structure, the political institutions, and the ethos of freedom characteristic of the democratic state."⁶⁶ Murray's insistence that Catholic faith could thrive within the context of American religious pluralism created concern within the Catholic hierarchy at home and abroad.

While theologically suspicious of religious pluralism, Murray, unlike many Catholic traditionalists, understood it as irrevocably rooted in America and the modern world.⁶⁷ He argued that the democratic ideals

⁶³ Jay P. Dolan, "New Directions in American Catholic History," in Dolan and Wind, eds., *New Dimensions in American Religious History*, 154–5.

⁶⁴ Marty, *Pilgrims*, 408–9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 418–19.

⁶⁶ John Courtney Murray, S.J., "The Problem of State Religion," *Theological Studies* XII (1951): 160–7, cited in Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity*, II: 539.

⁶⁷ Marty, *Pilgrims*, 419.

evident in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were beneficial to all Americans and were compatible with Catholic tradition. Nonetheless, the Catholic historian David J. O'Brien concluded, "No more than his Vatican adversaries did Murray abandon the fundamentally anti-democratic heritage which had been the legacy of Catholicism's hostility to liberalism."⁶⁸ Postwar Catholicism continued to struggle with its identity in America.

Catholic attitudes toward religious liberty and requests for public funds for parochial education contributed to growing concern over the rise of "Catholic power" in government and society. Protestant suspicion of the Catholic presence in America, a fear as old as the republic, was heightened as Catholics became the country's largest Christian communion. Many feared that the Church would somehow insinuate itself into culture dominance, seeking a governmental privilege that characterized Catholic majorities elsewhere in the world. Indeed, as their religious and cultural hegemony seemed threatened, many Protestant groups gave renewed attention to issues of religious liberty and separation of church and state.

During the 1950s few offered a more public critique of Catholicism than the attorney Paul Blanshard in works such as *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949) and *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (1951). Blanshard warned that the "Catholic problem" was less a religious concern than an "institutional and political problem." He noted that the "American Catholic hierarchy" was extending its power and influence throughout American life and attempting to dictate public policies. He insisted that the Church "segregates Catholic children from the rest of the community in a separate school system and censors the cultural diet of these children." All this was ultimately to use its political leverage "to bring American foreign policy into line with Vatican temporal interests."⁶⁹ Blanshard's insistence that Catholic citizenship was undermined by the ecclesial and sacramental authority of the bishop of Rome was an argument that many Protestants cited for their opposition to the presidential candidacy of John F. Kennedy less than a decade later.

Other Protestants were perhaps less shrill, but no less troubled by the increasing Catholic influence. A new organization, Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, was founded in 1948 by a coalition of persons seeking to respond to church-state political issues. Members included the Baptist stalwart Edwin McNeill Potratz, president of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School; the Methodist bishop

⁶⁸ David J. O'Brien, "The Catholic Experience and Perspective," in *American Religious Values and the Future of America*, ed. Rodger Van Allen (Philadelphia, 1978), 71.

⁶⁹ Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston, 1949), 4–5.

G. Bromley Oxnam; and Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the left-leaning *Christian Century*. The new organization affirmed its effort to “resist every attempt by law or administration of law further to widen the breach in the wall of separation of church and state.”⁷⁰ Its name was later changed to Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In 1949, several Baptist denominations united to form the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs as a lobbying agency in behalf of religious liberty. In these and other similar organizations, the language of church-state separation gained significant ground, often rehabilitated by Protestants fretful of burgeoning Catholic influence.

THE CHURCHES, RACE, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

In the postwar era, issues related to race and racism continued to galvanize American political and religious life. African American soldiers returned from the war having fought for freedom around the world only to find that their country remained racially segregated by a “color line” enforced through Jim Crow laws in the South and an implicit racism in the North. During the war the black migration from the South increased as factories in the North and Midwest offered expanded employment possibilities. While the armed services were completely segregated during the war, President Harry S. Truman ordered the integration of the military in 1949, an act that anticipated further efforts at changing government policies on race.

Throughout the war years, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, worked with churches and other agencies in the black community to call attention to racial inequities. Clergy such as Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., served religious communities and confronted political establishments, organizing public protests and boycotts before and after the war. Powell, who succeeded his father as pastor of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church in 1937, was elected to Congress in 1944, becoming New York’s first African American representative since Reconstruction. In 1952 the National Council of Churches issued a statement, “The Churches and Segregation,” acknowledging the practice’s divisive impact on schools and churches. The statement called on religious communions to pursue every available avenue for ending racial segregation in the nation.

On May 18, 1954, the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* officially put an end to the “separate but equal” systems of American public school education and signaled the beginning of a new era in government’s response to issues of racial equality. In 1957 President

⁷⁰ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 223–4.

Eisenhower was forced to send troops to Arkansas to enforce compliance with the court's ruling at Little Rock's Central High School. This was only one of multiple occasions on which federal troops were used to protect citizens in actions related to desegregation.

On 1 December 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat in the whites-only section of a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, no one would have supposed that the event would someday represent the end of segregated "separate but equal" facilities in the American South. The action, long contemplated by civil rights organizations, began the Montgomery bus boycott and moved to national prominence Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. That church and others in the community became gathering places for protest rallies and marches that ultimately led to the integration of buses and other facilities in Alabama and across the South. King soon succeeded his father as pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, where in 1957 he and other African American ministers, including Fred Shuttlesworth and Ralph David Abernathy, founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization that would play a major role in the expansion of the civil rights movement. King's commitment to nonviolence as a means for social change became a hallmark of the public protests organized by the SCLC in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These included lunch-counter sit-ins by college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1959; bus caravans of "freedom riders" who challenged segregation in multiple locations; and massive demonstrations in Birmingham over education, housing, and employment. Television broadcasts of police actions in Birmingham, where dogs and fire hoses were turned on kneeling protesters, electrified the nation and forced John Kennedy, the nation's first Catholic president, to send troops to protect the constitutional right of public assembly. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," published in April 1963 and addressed to prominent white clergy of the community, defended nonviolent action for social justice and chastened the American church for becoming the "arch-defender of the status quo." It concluded with King's call for churches and ministers to "meet the challenge of this decisive hour."⁷¹

THE TURBULENT 1960S: A NEW TRANSITION

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 moved the nation toward a more racially integrated society even as protests against a new war, this one in Vietnam,

⁷¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in George C. Bedell, Leo Sandon, Jr., and Charles T. Wellborn, eds., *Religion in America*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1982), 368.

continued to tear the country apart. The nation's shock and grief over the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 were deepened in 1968 with the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. A sense of national mission and destiny, widely touted in the decade after the world war, seemed less certain in a time of increasing political, social, and racial unrest.

Religious communities were not immune. By the mid-1960s many mainline denominations experienced the early stages of numerical declines that would endure into the twenty-first century. Debates over issues such as race, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, simmering below the surface in the immediate postwar years, would divide churches and denominations for years. Religious pluralism, celebrated in Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, was stretched to the limits as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and assorted "new religions" spread from the cities to the far corners of the republic, irrevocably impacting families, neighborhoods, and the American public square.

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Section I

THE POSTWAR RELIGIOUS WORLD,
1945 AND FOLLOWING

DANGEROUS AND PROMISING TIMES: AMERICAN RELIGION IN THE POSTWAR YEARS

BILL J. LEONARD

“We are living in a uniquely dangerous and promising time.” That brief statement, included in a resolution approved by the Federal Council of Churches in 1945, captured the sentiment of many Americans at the end of the Second World War.¹ While much of the world was exhausted from years of warfare unprecedented in its global impact, the United States seemed poised to assume international leadership as never before. Yet the devastation of the war and the realities of a nuclear era created great uncertainty amid the celebrations of victory over Fascism and the hope of a worldwide spiritual and cultural renewal. The beginning of the atomic age, frighteningly evident in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, raised the possibility of mass annihilation, a new type of arms race, and an ongoing Cold War. For many American religionists, these dangers demanded that communities of faith work together to deepen personal and corporate spirituality, developing renewed ecumenical relationships beyond old sectarian divisions. In the two decades after the war ended, Christianity in America experienced phenomenal organizational and numerical success. While internal divisions over doctrine, biblical authority, and church/state issues remained, many religious leaders urged churches and denominations to unite in response to challenges created by the rapid expansion of pluralism, secularism, and materialism throughout the society.

THE WORLD WAR – A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE AND A MORAL DILEMMA

The war itself raised innumerable ethical and moral issues for American religious communions. During the 1930s, as Adolf Hitler and National Socialism gained political power in Germany, American Christians offered

¹ “The Churches and World Order,” reprinted in *Christian Century*, 7 Feb. 1945, 174–7, cited in Mark Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (New York, 1990), 346.

varying assessments. Some looked rather positively on Hitler's early "moral crusades." In 1934 when the Fifth Baptist World Congress met in Berlin, certain Baptists from the United States returned home with praise for the "new" Germany. The Boston pastor John W. Bradbury observed, "It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish and communistic libraries."² While delegates passed a resolution opposing "racialism" directed toward Jews and people of color, they also suggested "that Chancellor Adolf Hitler gives to the temperance movement the prestige of his personal example since he neither uses intoxicants nor smokes."³ Such assessments would not last. By the late 1930s the success of the German war machine set off widespread debates over how best to oppose its efforts at global conquest. For many, armed resistance to Nazi evil was the only just and righteous response.

Nonetheless, prospects for war raised serious ethical questions for many American clergy. In the years between the world wars, pulpits echoed with ministerial affirmations of Christian pacifism. Many preachers repented of what seemed the church's overwhelming support for military action in World War I and pledged never to repeat it. Some later recalled, "We were all pacifists in the 30s."⁴ In 1928, the African American theologian and mystic Howard Thurman published "Peace Tactics and a Racial Minority," identifying himself with the cause of pacifism and nonviolence. He wrote that at "the very center of the Christian faith, even the enemy must be loved."⁵

Many Protestant ministers promised that never again would they support the militarism that undermined the gospel and perpetrated the slaughter of the Great War. Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of Riverside Church, New York, took the pacifist pledge, noting that although pacifists sometimes appeared "wrongheaded," they were "wrongheaded in the right direction."⁶ He and other Protestant preachers joined the Ministers' No-War Committee, opposing armed conflict as too costly to human life and social stability. When the Second World War began, Fosdick insisted he was not "neutral" but had a commitment "to keep the church Christian despite the unchristian nature of war."⁷

² *Watchman-Examiner*, 13 Sept. 1934; cited in William Loyd Allen, "How Baptists Assessed Hitler," *PeaceWork*, May–Aug. 1987, 12.

³ "Official Report of the Fifth Baptist World Congress," cited in *ibid.*

⁴ Paul R. Dekar, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers* (Macon, GA, 1993).

⁵ Howard Thurman, *Mysticism and the Experience of Love* (Wallingford, CT, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 115, 1961), 119, cited in *ibid.*, 179.

⁶ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (New York, 1956), 294.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 303; see also Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, NY, 2003), 397.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, many clergy jettisoned earlier pacifist sentiments and supported the war effort. Many became military chaplains or combatants. During the war years military chaplains included six thousand Protestant ministers, three thousand Catholic priests, and three hundred Jewish rabbis. Their battlefield death rate was second only to that of soldiers in the infantry and air force.⁸

Others retained their pacifism. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, founders of the Catholic Worker movement, maintained their opposition to the war, even after Pearl Harbor, a position that divided members of their own Catholic Worker communities. Leaders of historic “Peace Churches,” including Mennonites and Quakers, encouraged their youth to pursue conscientious objector or “alternative service” approaches to war.⁹

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr soon recognized the need for action against Fascism and chastened those who resisted the necessary military response. He wrote that “modern Christian and secular perfectionism, which places a premium upon nonparticipation in conflict, is a very sentimentalized version of the Christian faith.”¹⁰ The Presbyterian Fundamentalist Clarence E. Macartney insisted that the war had salvific implications for “the emancipation of the enslaved, the redemption of mankind, the overthrow of tyrants and despots, and the vindication of the great truths of our Christian faith.” He denounced pacifists for promoting an unbiblical concept that was outside common sense.¹¹

In 1944 a special commission on the war appointed by the Federal Council of Churches produced a document entitled “The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith.” It acknowledged deep divisions among American clergy, a majority of whom called for military action to save the world from Nazi evil and a minority who supported an uncompromising gospel pacifism.¹²

As an Allied victory seemed more certain, well-known religious leaders contributed to a volume entitled *Peace Is the Victory* (1944). The editor, Harrop A. Freeman, professor at the College of William and Mary, wrote that “the authors believe that they have developed the premises on which any abiding peace must be founded, and that from no other source may the reader obtain a similar cross section of pacifist thought brought to

⁸ E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), 237.

⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. III, *Under God, Indivisible 1941–1960* (Chicago, 1999), 22–3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹ C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, 1976), 205.

¹² H. Sheldon Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity* (New York, 1963), II: 330.

bear upon the problems which beset our generation.”¹³ In the first essay, John Haynes Holmes, pastor of the Community Church of New York, suggested, “The pacifist simply refuses to meet Hitler on the plane where force and violence, whatever their ultimate result, are the only immediate alternatives to slavery and death.” He called pacifism “a force more potent than any violence – namely the power of the spirit,” and concluded, “We either believe in this power or we do not.”¹⁴ Harry Emerson Fosdick called for a global pacifism that would replace isolationism with “a peaceful world order based on justice, on a system of reliable law, and on a co-operative world government, flexible to needed change and supported alike by the good will and the self-interest of all nations.”¹⁵

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE PROBLEM OF THE HOLOCAUST

The end of the war introduced additional theological and ethical problems for Christians and Jews alike. The full extent of Nazi atrocities, agonizingly evident in the Holocaust, expanded the culpability of the German people in a genocidal act that took the lives of at least six million Jews. In spite of the witness of the German “Confessing Church” and the martyrdom of the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other dissenters, the silence of Christians inside and outside Germany regarding Hitler’s “Final Solution” was an inescapable indictment against the church. Accusations leveled at Protestant and Catholic communities extended all the way to the papacy and the actions of Pope Pius XII relative to the Jewish situation. Supporters of the pope pointed to his protection of specific individuals and his concern to avoid actions that would provoke vengeance on Catholics in Nazi-occupied lands, while critics insisted that he intentionally ignored Nazi atrocities against Jews.¹⁶

Jewish responses did not come easily or immediately and reflected significant divisions over the meaning of the Holocaust for interpreting Judaism and its ancient claims. In *After Auschwitz* (1966), Richard Rubenstein declared that post-Holocaust Jews could no longer accept the idea of “an omnipotent, beneficent God.” In *Faith after the Holocaust* (1973), Eliezer Berkovits maintained that the Holocaust reflected God’s desire to remain “hidden” in order to preserve the freedom of human beings to live

¹³ Harrop A. Freeman, ed., *Peace Is the Victory* (New York, 1944), x.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ Harry Emerson Fosdick, “World Cooperation – A Political Must,” in *ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶ David Dalin, *The Myth of Hitler’s Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis* (New York, 2005); and John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pope Pius XII* (New York, 1999).

responsibly, ever nudging history toward a moral end. The Jewish theologian Hans Jonas suggested that God's essential goodness was not predicated on the necessity or possibility of God's omnipotence. Thus while intending goodness and benevolence, God was unable to act in ways that protected the Jews from a history of persecution culminating in the horror of the Holocaust.¹⁷

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and author, offered multiple responses to questions raised by Nazi horrors. In works such as *Night and Dawn*, he detailed his own concentration camp experiences, including the death of his father only days before liberation. For Wiesel, God's response to the Chosen People remains a historic problem exacerbated by the devastation of the Holocaust. God must be held accountable for the Holocaust and for failing to defend Jews from persecution across the centuries. In a play entitled *The Trial of God*, the deity is brought to court charged with heinous crimes, only to be defended in the end by Satan.¹⁸ Wiesel contends that although God failed the Jews, their history and its accompanying rituals sustain them in the struggle to survive and to respond to the question of God's elusive presence. Jewish religious traditions offer historic connections to a brave and enduring people while cheating the Nazis' attempts to silence the Jewish people forever.¹⁹

For many Christians, the Holocaust was the culmination of an unyielding anti-Semitism fostered by Catholics and Protestants for centuries. With the discoveries in the death camps, Christians were forced to confront their own silence in ignoring stories of Nazi atrocities earlier in the conflict. Theologically, the Holocaust raised significant issues about God's power to intervene in the face of horrendous evil.

Many American Christians showed both support and ambiguity for the formation of Israel, the rise of the "Palestinian Question," and the unending disputes over geographic, political, economic, and religious boundaries in the Holy Land. At war's end, *The Christian Century* noted, "The Jews have been so victimized, persecuted, knocked about that it is to be expected that they would wish in every possible way to protect their position in the post-war world."²⁰ Some conservative Protestants, particularly those of "dispensational premillennialist" sentiments, linked the foundation of the nation of Israel directly with the return of Jesus Christ, who would soon

¹⁷ David L. Weaver-Zercher, "Theologies," in Philip Goff and Paul Harvey, eds., *Themes in Religion and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 32.

¹⁸ Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* (New York, 1995); *Night* (New York, 1969); and *Dawn* (London, 1961).

¹⁹ Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *Exploring American Religion* (Mountain View, CA, 1990), 338.

²⁰ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 62.

break into history and establish his kingdom for a thousand years. They insisted that God had a permanent covenant with the Jews that would never be abrogated. Premillennialists occupied the curious position of supporting the chosenness of the Jewish people while urging them to repent of their “apostasy” and receive salvation through Christ.²¹ Many Protestant conservatives were among Israel’s strongest supporters, demanding that the United States defend Israel or risk divine retribution.

RELIGION AND THE COLD WAR

World War II had barely ended when the Cold War began, brought on by divisions over geography and ideology as reflected in the partitioning of East/West Germany, a burgeoning arms race, and the collision of capitalism and Communism throughout the world. In 1948, the United States, France, and Germany led in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an agency charged with protecting Western Europe from the threat of invasion. Russian conquests led to the formation of the Soviet bloc, a group of seven Eastern European countries that retained varying degrees of autonomy but were dominated by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and solidified in the Warsaw Pact signed in 1955. As the world’s two military superpowers, the United States and Russia soon became the primary protagonists in a Cold War through which they avoided direct armed confrontation even as they sought to extend their political influence across the globe.

The Cold War had significant impact on religious communities in the United States. First, the world was changed forever when an atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, Japan, on 6 August 1945 and another on Nagasaki three days later. Religious institutions were forced to deal with the theological and pastoral questions raised by the bomb, an instrument of unimaginable destruction. Public and private fears of a nuclear war permeated American life as bomb shelters multiplied and children practiced “duck and cover” drills at school. This uncertainty was compounded by the invention of ICBMs – intercontinental ballistic missiles – and the Soviet Union’s first successful launch in 1957. Long-range missiles and nuclear weapons now meant that the eradication of the entire race was a real possibility.

In 1950 the Federal Council of Churches named a special commission to respond to the issues raised by the bomb. This group of leading male educators included Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich of Union Seminary,

²¹ Nancy T. Ammerman, “Fundamentalists Proselytizing Jews: Incivility in Preparation for the Rapture,” in Martin E. Marty and Frederick E. Greenspan, eds., *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World* (New York, 1988), 116–21.

New York; Robert Calhoun of Yale; and Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College. Their report, entitled *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, extended the debate over pacifism and addressed new realities created by the presence of nuclear weapons in the world. While acknowledging the incomparable power of armaments, the report anticipated the future of the Cold War by recognizing that “as long as the existing situation holds, for the United States to abandon its atomic weapons, or to give the impression that they would not be used, would leave the non-communist world with totally inadequate defense.” It concluded with the assertion that American military forces should maintain atomic weapons “in the possibility of preventing both world war and tyranny.”²² This was one of the earliest statements on the necessity of nuclear deterrence as a strategy for global survival.

The nuclear threat contributed significantly to millennial speculation, especially among a new generation of American evangelists. Early in his evangelistic career, Billy Graham anticipated a pending nuclear holocaust, predicting in 1950, “Two years and it’s all going to be over.” In 1951 he viewed tensions between the Americans and the Soviets as evidence that “the last tremendous battle predicted in the Bible, called Armageddon” would occur soon in Israel.²³ Graham’s belief that the atheism promoted by Soviet leaders was the ultimate challenge to world Christianity led him to extend his evangelistic campaigns internationally. Throughout the 1950s he insisted that the “signs of the times” indicated that “we are living in the latter days,” and he added, “I sincerely believe that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”²⁴ Graham’s premillennial eschatology contributed to his sense of evangelical urgency throughout his career.

Second, from a political standpoint, religious faith became an important weapon in the confrontation with “atheistic Communism.” Civil religion – the religion of the public square – long present in American life, took on an added dimension when contrasted with the public atheism of the Soviets. Preachers and politicians across the ideological spectrum increasingly spoke of a Christian or Judeo-Christian America as a contrast to the atheistic regimes of the Soviet bloc. In 1954 Congress added the words “under God” to the pledge to the American flag, a direct response to Cold War issues at home and abroad.

²² *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Report of a Special Commission Appointed by the Federal Council of the Church of Christ in America* (New York, 1950), cited in Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity*, II: 535.

²³ William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, 1959), 512, citing *America’s Hour of Decision*, 119.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Modern Revivalism*, 509, citing “Sermons of the Month,” published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (Minneapolis, 1952, 1955).

President Dwight D. Eisenhower articulated such civic faith through continued references to America's inherent religious foundations, declaring, "America is the mightiest power which God has yet seen fit to put upon his footstool," "America is great because she is good," and "Happily our people have always reserved their first allegiance to the kingdom of the spirit."²⁵ Christian America was thought to represent values that the atheistic Soviets did not share.

Third, American religious leaders were divided in their theological and political interpretations of the Cold War. Certain conservatives denounced anyone who hesitated to condemn Communism or demonstrated socialist sympathies. Writing in the *American Mercury* in 1953, the anti-Communist J. B. Matthews asserted, "The largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States today is composed of Protestant clergymen." He predicted that the clergy's flirtations with Communism would be the church's undoing.²⁶

Hysteria regarding the Red Menace reached fever pitch in the early 1950s through investigations conducted by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee aimed at discovering communists or other "fellow travelers" operating in the United States. Clergy were not immune. The Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam was accused of Communist sympathies in certain "unevaluated" documents put forth by the committee around 1954. Oxnam demanded a hearing, affirmed his Christian faith, and repudiated the accusations. He protested "against procedures that are in effect the rule of men and not of law; procedures subject to the prejudices, passions and political ambitions of Committeemen; procedures designed less to elicit information than to entrap; procedures that cease to be investigation and become inquisition and intimidation."²⁷

The former Communist Reinhold Niebuhr helped found the anti-Communist Americans for Democratic Action in 1947 and insisted that "Russia hopes to conquer the whole of Europe strategically or ideologically."²⁸ Niebuhr suggested that his critique of Marxism and liberalism was born of "biblical faith" and the realities of "two world wars and the encounter of a liberal culture with two idolatrous tyrannies, first

²⁵ Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York, 1970), 259.

²⁶ J. B. Matthews, "Reds in Our Churches," *American Mercury* 77 (July 1953): 3–5, 13, cited in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America since 1865*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 488.

²⁷ G. B. Oxnam, *I Protest* (New York, 1954), cited in *ibid.*, 491.

²⁸ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 119.

Nazism and then Communism.”²⁹ Labeled a Christian realist, Niebuhr in his response to the cultural and theological issues in works such as *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941–3) and *The Irony of American History* (1952) was both an analyst and a critic of the era.

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS, LEFT AND RIGHT

The 1950s brought a resurgence of interest in religion and renewed participation in faith communities. Denominations thrived, extending their connections to member congregations. Attendance increased dramatically in Catholic and Protestant churches as some 60 percent of the population attested to weekly participation in worship.³⁰ In 1950 some 55 percent of the population claimed a church affiliation, a number that increased to 62 percent in 1956 and 69 percent by 1960.³¹

The so-called mainline Protestant groups – Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Methodists, for example – experienced substantial growth after the war, expanding their influence throughout the culture before confronting significant numerical declines in the latter twentieth century. Evangelicals, a broad community of conservative Christians in multiple denominations and congregations, benefited from traditional revival crusades and new evangelistic methods. Evangelical leaders such as Harold Ockenga at Park Street Church, Boston, and Carl F. H. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*, joined Billy Graham and others in shaping a Neo-Evangelicalism that moved beyond the diatribes of an earlier fundamentalism while aggressively promoting Christian orthodoxy and biblical authority.³² Roman Catholic communities experienced growth in church attendance and religious vocations, as seminaries and monasteries filled with novices, many entering directly from military service.

Postwar surveys indicated strong respect for American clergy. A 1947 poll sponsored by the Roper organization ranked ministers at the top of those “doing the most good” in society. A third of those questioned indicated that ministers “did more good than any other group.” Numerous polls from this period listed the ministry as among “the most desirable and respected occupations.”³³

²⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, cited in Heinrich-Constantin Rohrbach, “Reinhold Niebuhr,” in *Theologians of Our Time*, ed. Leonhard Reinisch (Notre Dame, IN, 1964), 83.

³⁰ Goff and Harvey, eds., *Themes in Religion and American Culture*, 61.

³¹ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972), 952.

³² Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK, 2001), 18–20.

³³ Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 236.

CHRISTIANS UNITING: ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

By midcentury, numerous denominations joined in forming ecumenical organizations united around collective endeavors. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (NCC) began in 1950 through a merger of some eight Protestant interdenominational groups including the Federal Churches of Christ (1908), the Foreign Missions Conference, and the Home Missions Council. Initial membership included twenty-five Protestant and four Orthodox groups totaling a constituency of some thirty million persons.³⁴ The National Council maintained close connections with the World Council of Churches, an international organization formed in Amsterdam in 1948. The NCC included Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Lutherans, Northern (American) Baptists, Quakers, numerous African American denominations, and certain Orthodox communions.

The council's first public "message," "To the People of the Nation," asserted that the interdenominational organization was bound by "our oneness in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour," but was "not a denomination, not a Church above the Churches." Rather, the council was "an agency of cooperation – not more but magnificently not less."³⁵ The NCC assisted member denominations in the circulation of church school materials, preparation of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, studies and statistics on churches and denominations, and service opportunities in home and foreign missions. The National Council took responsibility for nurturing new generations of Christian leaders, offered certification for military chaplains, and developed media resources in "radio, television and motion pictures."³⁶ The report concluded, "American Churches, of which the Council is one of the visible symbols, are in their true estate the soul of the nation."³⁷ The National Council gave particular attention to the role of Christian churches in America, encouraging shared worship and ministry and offering position papers on spiritual, moral, and political issues in American public life.

Evangelicals also established ecumenical organizations, including the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) formed in 1941 by the Presbyterian Fundamentalist Carl McIntire in response to the views promoted by the Federal Council of Churches, a precursor of the National

³⁴ Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, *American Christianity*, II: 569, 586.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 587.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 588.

Council. The ACCC opposed what it saw as the Federal Council's indulgent approach to socialism, its hegemony over the appointment of military chaplains, its sponsorship of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the liberal orientation of many of its public pronouncements.³⁸

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was formed in 1942 by a group of conservative Christians who sought to distance themselves from the shrillness and public image of Fundamentalists evident in the Scopes trial and other debates of the 1920s and 1930s. Its leaders sometimes used the term "Neo-Evangelical" or "Evangelical" to describe a Christianity centered in the authority of scripture, the need for personal conversion through faith in Jesus Christ, affirmation of the historic Christian creeds, and an imperative to extend the church's worldwide mission.³⁹ The NAE's founding document attacked "modernism" as destructive to the moral and spiritual foundations of the republic, concluding, "Today this same modernism would silence every voice raised in behalf of Christian patriotism, for many modernists have a greater interest in the outworking of some form of Marxism than in the salvation that comes through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."⁴⁰

While ecumenical groups sought to move beyond sectarian divisions, denominations themselves thrived as the primary means for organizing religious groups in America. Denominational mergers were frequent in the middle of the twentieth century. The American Lutheran Church was formed in 1930 by three distinct Lutheran synods. The Methodist Church began in 1939, a reunion of the Methodist Protestant Church (1828), the Methodist Episcopal Church (northern section), and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, divisions created over slavery in 1845. The Evangelical United Brethren Church began in 1946 out of two German-related evangelical bodies. In 1968, it merged with the Methodist Church to become the United Methodist Church. The United Church of Christ was founded in 1957 through a merger of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.⁴¹ The Unitarian Universalist Association began in 1961 as a union of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America.

³⁸ Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (Boston, 1984), 411.

³⁹ Jay P. Dolan and James P. Wind, eds., *New Dimensions in American Religious History* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 265.

⁴⁰ *Evangelicals in Action: A Report of the Organization of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action* (Boston, 1942), cited in *Religion in the American Experience*, ed. Robert T. Handy (New York, 1972), 236.

⁴¹ Winthrop Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1999), 367.

FAITH AND MODERNITY: A NEW SPIRITUALITY

As the stress of modern secular life and the fears fostered by the atomic age descended on postwar Americans, many went searching for spiritual sustenance. Despite increased church attendance, religious leaders sometimes feared that a new generation of Americans, distracted by materialism and success, would insist that the church conform to consumer-oriented programs and agendas.

Hollywood took advantage of the religious revival soon enough. During the 1950s, various “historical novels” became movies as Hollywood sought to capitalize on renewed interest in traditional religion. These “biblically based” productions were taken from novels such as Henryk Sienkiewicz’s *Quo Vadis?* (1905/film 1951), Lloyd C. Douglas’s *The Robe* (1942/film 1953), and Thomas Costain’s *The Silver Chalice* (1943/film 1952). Most featured scenes that were sexually provocative (for the times) or offered sentimental approaches to the life of Jesus and his early disciples, often with fictionalized central characters. *The Silver Chalice* marked the film debut of the actor Paul Newman, who was said to have dubbed it “the worst motion picture of the 1950s.”

Leading clergy published books promoting piety, spirituality, and self-fulfillment as resources for facing the inevitable stresses of modernity. These included the Catholic bishop Fulton Sheen’s *Peace of Soul* (1949), Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman’s *Peace of Mind* (1946), Billy Graham’s *Peace with God* (1953), and Norman Vincent Peale’s overwhelmingly popular book, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952). Each of these publications linked biblical texts and gospel insights with psychospiritual observations that offered comfort and stability amid the rat race of daily life.

Sheen, an exuberant preacher, took the new medium of television by storm. Attired in bishop’s vestments including a cape, Sheen’s pragmatic sermons, media savvy, and rhetorical flair set agendas for future television preachers. He wrote, “Conversion brings the soul out of either chaos or this false peace of mind to true peace of soul.” When this occurred, “All the energy that was previously wasted in conflict – either in trying to find the purpose of life or in trying alone and futilely to conquer his vices – can now be released to serve a single purpose. Regret, remorse, fears, and anxieties that flowed from sin now completely vanish in repentance.”⁴² Judging from his popularity, Sheen became a positive representative of American Catholicism for many Protestants who were ignorant or suspicious of the faith.

⁴² F. J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York, 1949), 286–9, cited in Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America since 1865*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993) 517–18.

In *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale blended Christianity with American self-help philosophy, to great popularity and controversy. Peale's best seller linked scripture, history, and popular psychological jargon to encourage readers to look beyond the old guilt-ridden theories of original sin and human depravity to an ever-improving self-image that ensured success and happiness. He wrote, "There is resident in you an immense reservoir of force; the power of the subconscious mind. Faith releases this power."⁴³ His approach infuriated many academics and preachers, who found it little more than self-help pabulum, but it endeared him to a public ready to jettison the old strictures of Protestant traditionalism. Martin Marty noted, "Peale contributed greatly to what came to be called the 'privatizing' of American religion. Insofar as he represented the popular religion of the Eisenhower era . . . it would be hard to find his match."⁴⁴

Peale was not the only preacher to publish religious works for popular consumption. These books addressed biblical studies and spirituality, often compiled from sermons proclaimed Sunday after Sunday from prominent pulpits. George Buttrick, pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, published *Christ and Man's Dilemma* (1946) and *So We Believe, So We Pray* (1951); George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, circulated his sermons under such titles as *Salt of the Earth* (1949), *On Eagle Wings* (1953), and *After His Likeness* (1954). Religion hit the airwaves as well as the bookstores. Weekly homilies from popular preachers were broadcast on radio on such programs as *The Protestant Hour*, *The Baptist Hour*, *The Radio Revival Hour*, and *Back to the Bible*.

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS AMERICA: THE WORK OF WILL HERBERG

One well-known examination of the American postwar religious ethos was that of the sociologist Will Herberg in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, first published in 1955. He surveyed the three religious traditions and their distinctive roles in the American "triple melting pot," a pluralistic environment created out of a "land of immigrants." For Herberg, these faiths became "the three faces of American religion" as "defined by the American Way of Life," traditions at once "equi-legitimate subdivisions" and "markedly different."⁴⁵

While Herberg's thesis was later challenged for its overemphasis on the "triple melting pot" theory and inadequate attention to inherent ethnic and

⁴³ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 321.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 321–2.

⁴⁵ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY, 1960), 256, 211.

religious differences, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* offered an important critique of the superficial elements of American popular religion. He noted that for many Americans religion was primarily a means for securing “‘peace of mind,’ happiness and success in worldly achievement.”⁴⁶ While acknowledging that religion was deeply embedded in American life, Herberg warned that “much of present-day religiosity” was “found to be so empty and contentless, so conformist, so utilitarian, so sentimental, so individualistic, and so self-righteous.”⁴⁷ American culture therefore left its mark on even the most ancient of faiths.

CHURCHES AND CLERGY IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Herberg and others acknowledged that many religious communities thrived in the postwar period, extending their ministries and expanding denominational connections, often energized by a new generation of ministers. Urban churches continued to flourish, while small town and rural churches remained the ecclesiastical norm. It was in the suburbs, however, that church expansion seemed most evident in the immediate postwar years. This was particularly true for Protestant congregations. A decade-long study of congregations in fourteen different denominations indicated that 19 percent of new church construction during the period was urban, 17.5 percent was in small towns or rural settings, and 63.5 percent occurred in suburban settings.⁴⁸

While denominations sought to maintain a national constituency, most were identified with specific regions. Catholics manifested an increasingly national presence, with particular strength in urban areas from Boston to Chicago to Los Angeles. Congregationalist and Unitarian churches spread across New England, and Lutherans were clustered in the Upper Midwest. Methodists, a national denomination, were especially strong in the Midwest and South. Mormons dominated Utah, extending their presence throughout the nation through aggressive evangelism, much to the chagrin of many traditional denominationalists. Baptists, second in size to the Methodists, divided into various regional subdenominations with American Baptists in the East and West and ethnic Baptist churches – German, Norwegian, Swedish – spread throughout the Midwest. While the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) dominated its region, in the 1950s it began a program to plant SBC churches nationwide. An evangelistic emphasis known as “A Million More in ’54” did not reach its intended goal

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 268–9.

⁴⁸ Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 239.

but helped extend Southern Baptist presence into other “pioneer” regions outside the South. Primitive, Old Regular, and Free Will Baptists maintained small but distinctive congregations in the South, especially in the Appalachian region.

Pentecostals, appearing on the scene in the early twentieth century, formed multiple denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, and the Church of God of Prophecy, each growing in towns and cities among diverse racial and ethnic groups. Episcopalians, lacking numerical strength in any one particular region, were nonetheless a truly national denomination with churches in almost every county of the nation.

Numerical growth led many churches to add additional staff members trained in specialized ministries such as music, youth work, or Christian education. Some were seminary-educated, while others moved up through the ranks, trained through hands-on ministry in specific congregations.

While seminary enrollment increased significantly after the war, many clergy, especially in smaller or more sectarian denominations, had little or no formal theological education. E. Brooks Holifield notes that although data are limited, a 1945 survey of the American Baptist Convention, then at about two million members, showed that merely 22 percent of the ordained clergy reporting had degrees from both a college and a seminary. Thirty-two percent had not even attended college.⁴⁹ During this period, many church-related colleges developed religion majors that were specifically aimed at preparing undergraduates for ministry in the church. Some churches and denominations developed “Bible colleges” that were especially aimed at ministerial preparation. Other groups remained cautious of institutionalized ministerial education, wary that it would intellectualize the spirit out of zealous preachers or substitute corpse-cold rationalism for heart religion. Nonetheless, seminary-trained pastors became the model, if not the norm, for a growing number of Protestant congregations and denominations.

EVANGELISM AND AMERICAN CHURCHES

Amid the numerical success of postwar churches, considerable differences arose over the means and meaning of evangelism itself. Aggressive evangelistic campaigns by many churches and denominations included seasonal revivals, door-to-door “witnessing,” and distribution of “gospel tracts” that offered the simple plan of salvation for all who would receive Christ as Savior. For many churches, traditional revival meetings continued to be a

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 244–5.

major source of outreach, with crowds drawn by boisterous singing, lively musical presentations, and powerful preaching by visiting evangelists. These services invariably concluded with the “invitation” or “altar call,” as those who desired salvation were urged to “come forward” to experience conversion and receive counseling by pastors or trusted lay witnesses. In the 1950s the revival remained an important setting for “drawing in the net” and calling persons to immediate conversion.

The postwar years saw a renewed effort at urban evangelism, aimed at attracting the general public to stadiums and public halls outside traditional church facilities. These “crusades for Christ” were often ecumenical events initiated by congregations of various denominations and enlisting the services of a particular evangelist whose “team” helped organize the programs. Community-based choirs, soloists, ushers, and counselors joined professional organizers in developing a spiritual context for the evangelist’s call for mass conversions.

Such public campaigns put both the Neo-Evangelical Billy Graham and the Pentecostal faith healer Oral Roberts on the national stage by the early 1950s. Both born in 1918, Graham and Roberts set patterns for evangelism, preaching, and public piety that impacted evangelical life for generations. Although theologically conservative, Graham generally sought to avoid doctrinal controversies that divided conservatives and liberals, focusing primarily on the need for all persons to have a “personal experience with Jesus Christ.” Graham’s sermons – simple, direct, and personal – were aimed less at theological nuance than a call for immediate salvation.

The formation of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 was a clear indication of the institutionalization of the professional evangelist in American life. It anticipated the development of innumerable non-profit evangelistic ministries, many with their own radio and television programs. By the 1960s Billy Graham had become America’s most famous evangelist, a position he occupied for more than half a century.

Oral Roberts, born of the largely underclass Holiness-Pentecostal movement, united the call for conversion with the promise of divine healing. Many of his early crusades were conducted in a “big tent” and included invitations to spiritual salvation and physical healing. Participants were encouraged to join the “healing line,” where disease-ridden persons would receive the prayers of Roberts, whose healing touch released God’s power over sickness, a renewal of New Testament Pentecost. Roberts’ theology of “seed faith,” in which believers who invested both faith and funds anticipated significant spiritual and material returns, became the foundation for much of the later “prosperity gospel” and its promises of material success. His rising influence was evident in the founding of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1963.

These approaches to evangelism were not without their critics. Some challenged the methods and motives of the traveling preachers, particularly when scandals involving money or sex became public. Others insisted that the idea of instant conversion undermined the “cost of discipleship” and the rigors of lifelong Christian commitment. Still others warned that the emphasis on individual conversion often obscured the social mandates of the Christian gospel.

In a classic work entitled *The Kingdom of God in America*, H. Richard Niebuhr suggested that by the twentieth century evangelical conversionism had become thoroughly institutionalized in American churches. He wrote, “Regeneration, the dying to the self and the rising to new life – now apparently sudden, now so slow and painful, so confused, so real, so mixed – becomes conversion which takes place on Sunday morning during the singing of the last hymn or twice a year when the revival preacher comes to town.”⁵⁰ While admitting that institutionalization was inevitable, Niebuhr attacked those who succumbed to it even as they claimed that the old spiritual dynamic remained intact.

DENOMINATIONS: SHAPING AND SHAPED BY THE 1950S

By the 1950s, denominational systems, institutions, and programs remained the organizational “shape of Protestantism in America,” as Sidney Mead described it. Unlike earlier territorial or confessional forms of the church, the denomination was a way of organizing the church in an environment where religious liberty was the norm and no government-sanctioned ecclesiastical establishment was allowed. It was “a voluntary association of like-hearted and like-minded individuals, who are united on the basis of common beliefs for the purpose of accomplishing tangible and defined objectives.”⁵¹ Denominations became the primary way of organizing religious communities in America.

In many respects, denominational influence reached its apex in the 1950s and early 1960s. Denominations provided resources for ministry that individual churches were not able to provide on their own. Denominational alliances allowed local churches to fund missionaries at home and abroad, provide instructional literature, and create networks for educating the young, training ministers, and passing on identity. Although considerable “switching” of denominations occurred among religious consumers, American families generally thought of their primary religious identity in terms of a denomination.

⁵⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York, 1959), 179–80.

⁵¹ Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (New York, 1963), 115.

Denominations created systems for nurturing new generations of Christians not only through the sacraments, worship, and rituals of the church, but in Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools, church camps, and religiously based education programs. Young people were encouraged to attend one of the denominationally based colleges that provided basic liberal arts education in the context of required religion courses, mandated weekly chapel services, and an extensive array of religious experiences and service through denominationally funded campus ministry. After graduation, they were expected to continue participation in the churches and denominations in which they started.

Would-be ministers were urged to attend a denominational seminary, perhaps as a prerequisite for ordination within a specific churchly tradition. Denominations often set extensive requirements for ordination and developed processes for evaluating ministers throughout their careers. At mid-century, denominations inculcated a powerful sense of identity in their constituents, offering cross-generational continuity through collective endeavors in education, benevolence, evangelism, and mission.

By the 1950s most of the major denominations in America had developed elaborate bureaucratic systems for implementing extensive programs at home and abroad. Many reorganized around the model of the American corporation with central headquarters, executive secretaries (CEOs), and a variety of income-generating offerings, business enterprises, and product sales. Some persons initially called to church-based ministries found employment opportunities as “denominational servants,” administering programs, editing literature, or participating in denominationally funded educational or missionary service.

These all-encompassing networks were not without critics, however. Denominational obsession with efficiency, bureaucracy, and conformity led to renewed attention to works such as H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Kingdom of God in America*. Just as Niebuhr criticized the institutionalization of conversion in American church life, so he viewed denominationalism as confirmation of the “crystallization or institutionalization of the kingdom of God.”⁵² These bureaucratic institutions were always “on the defensive,” and “content with past achievement and more afraid of loss than . . . hopeful of new insight or strength.”⁵³ He insisted that the American denomination “may be described as a missionary order which has turned to the defensive and lost its consciousness of the invisible catholic church.”⁵⁴

Niebuhr concluded with a warning to all ideological segments of the Protestant family, writing, “In institutional liberalism as in institutional

⁵² Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God in America*, 166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

Evangelicalism and Protestantism the aggressive movement of the kingdom of God in America had apparently come to a stop.”⁵⁵ Although much of Niebuhr’s research and most of his references to institutionalization involved an earlier period in American religious history, his scathing comments were not lost on those who saw denominations as an attempt to thwart the dynamism of the gospel.

Denominational critiques were not limited to those left of center. The Texas Fundamentalist J. Frank Norris derided the Southern Baptist Convention for mandating cooperation at the expense of congregational autonomy. He labeled one convention-wide fund-raising campaign “the excathedra demand ... of ecclesiastical dictators.” He reportedly ripped one denominational fund-raising letter “to pieces,” declaring, “That’s my answer to your papal demands.”⁵⁶ Norris was among those conservatives who rejected denominational “hierarchy” as unbiblical, dictatorial, and detrimental to local congregations.

CATHOLICS IN AMERICA: A CONTROVERSIAL PRESENCE

Roman Catholics, long an immigrant church, came of age in the postwar era, gaining sufficient numerical, geographic, and political strength to challenge Protestant hegemony in America. At war’s end there were some twenty-three million Catholics in the United States, a population expanding throughout the nation. Catholic vocations – priests, monks, and nuns – flourished after the war with many monasteries and seminaries packed with novices. Women outnumbered men in church attendance and religious vocations. Jay Dolan reports that in 1960 there were “164,922 women religious to 52,689 priests.”⁵⁷

Thomas Merton, who entered the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky, in 1942, became Master of the Scholastics in 1951, charged with preparing monks for ordination to the priesthood. He reported on the logistical complexities of life in a monastery overrun by postwar postulants, noting, “Let us suppose that within four or five years several hundred men decide that they want lives of silence, prayer, labor, penance, and constant union with God in solitude.... Although they do not all enter exactly at the same moment, they come in great numbers, continually and the monastery of seventy grows to a hundred seventy and then to two hundred and seventy.”⁵⁸ Merton’s own spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, was published in 1948, and to his great surprise

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁶ Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism*, 37–8.

⁵⁷ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (South Bend, IN, 1992), 388.

⁵⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (Garden City, NY, 1956), 14.

became a runaway best seller. His extensive literary corpus, much of which focused on a variety of spiritual and social issues of the day, made him one of the great bridge figures in articulating Catholic identity to Catholics, Protestants, and many modern secularists as well.

The classic devotional Catholicism of the mid-twentieth-century American Church was informed by papal encyclicals and personalities, religious festivals, indulgences, attendance at Mass, frequent novenas, and daily recitation of the rosary.⁵⁹ These identifiable Catholic traits, clearly evident in the 1950s, were soon impacted by significant new liturgical, theological, and spiritual explorations surrounding the Second Vatican Council (1961–65). Much of the liturgical renewal movement stressed the centrality of Jesus Christ, the ancient traditions of Catholic spirituality, the importance of scripture, and the strength of the community of faith centered in the Mass.⁶⁰ Catholic spirituality, present in both the liturgy and the “classics of Christian devotion,” experienced a renewed popularity among Catholic and Protestant alike.

The quest for an American Catholic identity continued during these years, as the Church experienced numerical growth in a country where Protestantism dominated and secularism was ever-expanding. After the war, bishops were particularly concerned that a rising American divorce rate would inundate Catholic families. The Christian Family Movement (CFM), originating in Catholic Action groups throughout the world, was officially organized in the United States in 1949, soon claiming a membership of more than thirty thousand married couples worldwide. Amid its emphasis on family support and cohesion, the CFM also maintained a strong concern for social justice and communal responsibility.⁶¹

The center of American Catholic family life at midcentury remained the parochial school system, organized initially to protect Catholic identity in a society where public education was implicitly Protestant. Bishops placed great emphasis on the need for each parish to have schools where every Catholic family might send their children. While elementary schools were the backbone of the program, with nuns as the primary teachers and models of Catholic solidarity, high schools were expanded after the war. Dolan reports that by 1959 “there were 2,428 Catholic high schools educating 810,763 students; the corresponding elementary-school population for that year was 4,083,860, or five times as large.”⁶² A largely unpaid teaching staff composed of women and men religious helped make Catholic education economically accessible to working-class families.

⁵⁹ Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 384.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 394–6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 398–9.

One of the best-known spokespersons for the Catholic presence in the United States in the postwar period was Father John Tracy Ellis, a Catholic University historian. In works such as *American Catholicism* and *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore*, Ellis explored Catholic biography and sociocultural history in ways that reflected both the old defensiveness of an immigrant minority and a boldness shaped by the Church's expanding presence in America. Ellis' progressivism was evident in his support for religious freedom and vernacular liturgies, along with greater openness toward non-Catholic religious communions.⁶³

Francis Cardinal Spellman and Father John Courtney Murray were two other formidable representatives of midcentury American Catholicism. While others sought to prove that Catholicism was compatible with American identity, Spellman "virtually made an icon out of the national flag," as demonstrated in his support for U.S. action in World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War itself. Spellman's attack on Eleanor Roosevelt for her criticism of Catholic efforts to secure government funds for parochial schools reinforced Protestant fears over Catholic influence in church-state issues.⁶⁴

If Spellman was aggressive in his approach, John Courtney Murray, Jesuit professor at Woodstock College, was conciliatory. Murray sought to reassure Protestants that the Catholic Church in America was no threat to religious freedom. His overarching concern was with a rising secularism, which he believed to be the real threat to American society. He charged that secularism represented a "fourth faith" alongside that of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.⁶⁵ Writing in 1951, he suggested that the "theological task of the moment" was not simply to respond to secularism, "but to explore, under the guidance of the church, the possibilities of a vital adaptation of Church-State doctrine to the constitutional structure, the political institutions, and the ethos of freedom characteristic of the democratic state."⁶⁶ Murray's insistence that Catholic faith could thrive within the context of American religious pluralism created concern within the Catholic hierarchy at home and abroad.

While theologically suspicious of religious pluralism, Murray, unlike many Catholic traditionalists, understood it as irrevocably rooted in America and the modern world.⁶⁷ He argued that the democratic ideals

⁶³ Jay P. Dolan, "New Directions in American Catholic History," in Dolan and Wind, eds., *New Dimensions in American Religious History*, 154–5.

⁶⁴ Marty, *Pilgrims*, 408–9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 418–19.

⁶⁶ John Courtney Murray, S.J., "The Problem of State Religion," *Theological Studies* XII (1951): 160–7, cited in Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity*, II: 539.

⁶⁷ Marty, *Pilgrims*, 419.

evident in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were beneficial to all Americans and were compatible with Catholic tradition. Nonetheless, the Catholic historian David J. O'Brien concluded, "No more than his Vatican adversaries did Murray abandon the fundamentally anti-democratic heritage which had been the legacy of Catholicism's hostility to liberalism."⁶⁸ Postwar Catholicism continued to struggle with its identity in America.

Catholic attitudes toward religious liberty and requests for public funds for parochial education contributed to growing concern over the rise of "Catholic power" in government and society. Protestant suspicion of the Catholic presence in America, a fear as old as the republic, was heightened as Catholics became the country's largest Christian communion. Many feared that the Church would somehow insinuate itself into culture dominance, seeking a governmental privilege that characterized Catholic majorities elsewhere in the world. Indeed, as their religious and cultural hegemony seemed threatened, many Protestant groups gave renewed attention to issues of religious liberty and separation of church and state.

During the 1950s few offered a more public critique of Catholicism than the attorney Paul Blanshard in works such as *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949) and *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (1951). Blanshard warned that the "Catholic problem" was less a religious concern than an "institutional and political problem." He noted that the "American Catholic hierarchy" was extending its power and influence throughout American life and attempting to dictate public policies. He insisted that the Church "segregates Catholic children from the rest of the community in a separate school system and censors the cultural diet of these children." All this was ultimately to use its political leverage "to bring American foreign policy into line with Vatican temporal interests."⁶⁹ Blanshard's insistence that Catholic citizenship was undermined by the ecclesial and sacramental authority of the bishop of Rome was an argument that many Protestants cited for their opposition to the presidential candidacy of John F. Kennedy less than a decade later.

Other Protestants were perhaps less shrill, but no less troubled by the increasing Catholic influence. A new organization, Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, was founded in 1948 by a coalition of persons seeking to respond to church-state political issues. Members included the Baptist stalwart Edwin McNeill Poteat, president of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School; the Methodist bishop

⁶⁸ David J. O'Brien, "The Catholic Experience and Perspective," in *American Religious Values and the Future of America*, ed. Rodger Van Allen (Philadelphia, 1978), 71.

⁶⁹ Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston, 1949), 4–5.

G. Bromley Oxnam; and Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the left-leaning *Christian Century*. The new organization affirmed its effort to “resist every attempt by law or administration of law further to widen the breach in the wall of separation of church and state.”⁷⁰ Its name was later changed to Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In 1949, several Baptist denominations united to form the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs as a lobbying agency in behalf of religious liberty. In these and other similar organizations, the language of church-state separation gained significant ground, often rehabilitated by Protestants fretful of burgeoning Catholic influence.

THE CHURCHES, RACE, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

In the postwar era, issues related to race and racism continued to galvanize American political and religious life. African American soldiers returned from the war having fought for freedom around the world only to find that their country remained racially segregated by a “color line” enforced through Jim Crow laws in the South and an implicit racism in the North. During the war the black migration from the South increased as factories in the North and Midwest offered expanded employment possibilities. While the armed services were completely segregated during the war, President Harry S. Truman ordered the integration of the military in 1949, an act that anticipated further efforts at changing government policies on race.

Throughout the war years, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, worked with churches and other agencies in the black community to call attention to racial inequities. Clergy such as Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., served religious communities and confronted political establishments, organizing public protests and boycotts before and after the war. Powell, who succeeded his father as pastor of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church in 1937, was elected to Congress in 1944, becoming New York’s first African American representative since Reconstruction. In 1952 the National Council of Churches issued a statement, “The Churches and Segregation,” acknowledging the practice’s divisive impact on schools and churches. The statement called on religious communions to pursue every available avenue for ending racial segregation in the nation.

On May 18, 1954, the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* officially put an end to the “separate but equal” systems of American public school education and signaled the beginning of a new era in government’s response to issues of racial equality. In 1957 President

⁷⁰ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, III: 223–4.

Eisenhower was forced to send troops to Arkansas to enforce compliance with the court's ruling at Little Rock's Central High School. This was only one of multiple occasions on which federal troops were used to protect citizens in actions related to desegregation.

On 1 December 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat in the whites-only section of a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, no one would have supposed that the event would someday represent the end of segregated "separate but equal" facilities in the American South. The action, long contemplated by civil rights organizations, began the Montgomery bus boycott and moved to national prominence Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. That church and others in the community became gathering places for protest rallies and marches that ultimately led to the integration of buses and other facilities in Alabama and across the South. King soon succeeded his father as pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, where in 1957 he and other African American ministers, including Fred Shuttlesworth and Ralph David Abernathy, founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization that would play a major role in the expansion of the civil rights movement. King's commitment to nonviolence as a means for social change became a hallmark of the public protests organized by the SCLC in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These included lunch-counter sit-ins by college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1959; bus caravans of "freedom riders" who challenged segregation in multiple locations; and massive demonstrations in Birmingham over education, housing, and employment. Television broadcasts of police actions in Birmingham, where dogs and fire hoses were turned on kneeling protesters, electrified the nation and forced John Kennedy, the nation's first Catholic president, to send troops to protect the constitutional right of public assembly. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," published in April 1963 and addressed to prominent white clergy of the community, defended nonviolent action for social justice and chastened the American church for becoming the "arch-defender of the status quo." It concluded with King's call for churches and ministers to "meet the challenge of this decisive hour."⁷¹

THE TURBULENT 1960S: A NEW TRANSITION

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 moved the nation toward a more racially integrated society even as protests against a new war, this one in Vietnam,

⁷¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in George C. Bedell, Leo Sandon, Jr., and Charles T. Wellborn, eds., *Religion in America*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1982), 368.

continued to tear the country apart. The nation's shock and grief over the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 were deepened in 1968 with the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. A sense of national mission and destiny, widely touted in the decade after the world war, seemed less certain in a time of increasing political, social, and racial unrest.

Religious communities were not immune. By the mid-1960s many mainline denominations experienced the early stages of numerical declines that would endure into the twenty-first century. Debates over issues such as race, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, simmering below the surface in the immediate postwar years, would divide churches and denominations for years. Religious pluralism, celebrated in Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, was stretched to the limits as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and assorted "new religions" spread from the cities to the far corners of the republic, irrevocably impacting families, neighborhoods, and the American public square.

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PUBLIC RELIGION IN CANADA FROM MACKENZIE KING TO TRUDEAU: ENTERING THE AGE OF PLURALISM, 1945–1982

GEORGE EGERTON

This essay studies the history of public religion in Canada from the period of the Second World War to the patriation of the Canadian Constitution of 1982 with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Through these years, Canada would be transformed from a self-proclaimed “Christian democracy” of denominational pluralism, through an interval of religious pluralism, to a secularist pluralism, based on the ways courts and politicians have applied the charter. Although attention will be given to the spectrum of world religions represented in Canada, the analysis focuses primarily on the predominant Christian churches to which most Canadians, including aboriginal peoples, belonged. Until the 1970s, Christianity, in its national denominations, presented the only religion with public functions beyond the private realm – in culture, social institutions, law, and politics.¹ While surveying the life of the major Canadian churches, therefore, this study focuses on the public functions of religion, most specifically on the dialectic of religion and politics in both formal and informal constitutional discourse, as Canadians attempted to identify and legislate the fundamental principles, values, rights, institutions, and procedures by which they wished to be governed. It is argued that the records generated by constitutional debates and decisions, and especially the centrally important quest to define and constitutionally entrench human rights, illuminate most clearly the historic shifting in the relations of religion and politics, church and state, in Canada’s political culture, where the former public functions of the churches were challenged and displaced with a secularist liberal ideology and jurisprudence. While the analysis centers on the role of Canadian political, legal, and religious elites and lobbies, churches and parachurch coalitions, the story is narrated in the larger context of Canadian cultural and social history and the broader Western cultural history in which Canada participates.

¹ See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), ch. 2, for definitions of public and private religions.

Given the controversies and divisions among sociologists of religion, the following analysis is discrete in deploying secularization theory to explain the transformation of Canadian religion and its public functions. Key elements of classic secularization theory are used for at least descriptive purposes, including “differentiation” of religious from political and legal institutions and functions and “privatization” of religion within individuals, families, and religious communities in civil society – without adopting the secularization metanarrative that modernization invariably generates nonreligious, scientific/rationalist mentalities destructive of religious belief. Indeed, the later sections of the essay indicate how religious groups struggled and reconfigured to regain public functions in the face of the hegemony of secularist liberal ideology, in tandem with the return of public religions globally by the 1980s.²

When Prime Minister Mackenzie King convened the Canadian Parliament for its first session after World War II, the day began with “A Prayer for the King’s Majesty.”

O LORD our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lord, King GEORGE; and so replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that he may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way; endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant him in health and wealth long to live; strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and finally, after this life, he may attain everlasting joy and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.³

This parliamentary prayer, taken from the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, invoked by the Speaker since 1877 at the commencement of each day the House of Commons met, both reflected and expressed the long religious history of the peoples who had joined in the Confederation of 1867 and who had developed diverse forms of the Christian faith in the new land. By the time of the 1867 Confederation, Canada had rejected the British model of Anglican establishment, the American constitutional separation of church and state, and the French republican excision of religion from the public sphere. Nevertheless, despite their differences, the principal Christian denominations of Britain, America, and Canada functioned similarly as public religions exercising, whether formally or informally, important priestly, prophetic, and pastoral functions.

² *Ibid.*, 3–10 and ch. 1, for critical uses of secularization theory.

³ For the parliamentary prayers, see Arthur Beauchesne, *Canada’s Parliament Building: The Senate and House of Commons* (Ottawa, 1947), 61; and Norman Ward, “Prayers in the Commons,” *Dalhousie Review* 32:2 (1952–53): 140–3.

In its relationship with the state, the dominant function of denominational religion in Canada has been to legitimate governmental authority with divine sanction and to serve as chaplain to public institutions. This can be seen most explicitly in the prayers that marked the opening of daily procedures in Parliament and provincial legislatures, and in many local public institutions, including municipal governments and schools. Similarly, the prayers for rulers and those in authority given regularly by the major Canadian denominations, and most specifically in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, also signified the legitimating functions of Canadian religious institutions. The traditional cooperative relations of Canadian politics and religion can be seen as well in many other areas – notably state funding for military chaplaincies; constitutionally entrenched, publicly funded confessional schools; church-run welfare institutions; the care and control of aboriginal peoples; and a jurisprudence that sanctioned distinctly Christian norms of morality, particularly in areas of family relations and sexual behavior.⁴

If the dominant political functions of religion in Canada have been the “priestly” legitimation of government authority and the pastoral provision of social services, a secondary function has been the “prophetic” critique of public values, behavior, and institutions and, at times, campaigns to achieve legal enforcement of perceived Christian values. In Canada this political role for public religion has shown itself in the Protestant moral crusades of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century for temperance, prohibition, Lord’s Day observance, and laws against various vices. Similarly, in Quebec the Catholic hierarchy exercised an increasingly powerful patrimony over the cultural and political life of French Canadian society.⁵

From the more radical sections of the churches, the crusade broadened out from targets of primarily personal immorality to a critique of the basic social and economic institutions that were seen as perpetrating the injustices of a capitalist system. In the powerful Social Gospel movement that emerged in Canadian society, socialist and radical ideological criticism was joined to dissenting prophetic Christianity in a passionate matrix that had major impact on Canadian political and religious life in the early twentieth century.⁶

If the Depression and “dirty thirties” rekindled prophetic criticism in Canadian religious elites of the injustice and inadequacies of the prevailing

⁴ See Marguerite Van Die, ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Toronto, 2001), parts 1–3.

⁵ See Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin, and Jean-Paul Montminy, eds., *Idéologies au Canada Français, 1930–1939* (Quebec, 1978).

⁶ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914–28* (Toronto, 1971).

liberal-capitalist economic system, the outbreak of a Second World War two short decades after the carnage of the Great War once again drew churches and state together, as religion would be mobilized to affirm and legitimate governmental authority and war aims in a struggle against the evils of Nazism, Fascism, and militarism. The national churches, Catholic and Protestant, added their support to the authority and policy of the government. Chastened, however, by their memories of the previous war experience, the churches eschewed the crusading zeal of former times. It was largely a matter of defeating an obviously evil enemy and of ministering to troops and those at home experiencing personal anguish and tragedy. The war effort, nevertheless, drew the churches and government into a closer partnership in that both perceived and portrayed the war as a struggle to defend Christian and democratic civilization against the pagan forces of totalitarian Nazism. As with Canada's partners in wartime, especially Britain and later America, government leaders sought legitimation and guidance in time of national emergency through manifest appeals to the political and religious foundations of Western societies: democratic ideology and Christian religion. Here government leaders took the initiative in invoking special days and weeks of national prayer for victory and peace. Government spokesmen from the prime minister down, with very few exceptions, buttressed their war effort speeches with appeals to divine sanction. The historian of the church's role in Canada's war effort portrays the churches' perception of their mission as "freely-independent partners of the state in this task."⁷

The Protestant churches and the Quebec Catholic hierarchy projected quite distinct visions of the nature of Canadian Christendom. While Protestants emphasized a renewed quest for liberal democracy, social welfare, and a new international organization to replace the League of Nations, French Canadian Catholics were more oriented to a hierarchical-corporatist culture reflecting Canadian experience. Nonetheless, the national churches all remained firm in their consensus that Canadians were engaged in a just war for the defense of Christian civilization, overseas and at home. This remained true despite the major strains on Protestant–Quebec Catholic relations generated by crises over conscription for overseas service. When the war ended, government and church leaders across the towns and cities of the country joined with the public in religious services of thanksgiving that hailed the victory as providentially ordained.

The political rhetoric that portrayed Canada explicitly as a Christian state continued after the war as the problematic nature of the victory

⁷ Charles Thomas Sinclair Faulkner, "For a Christian Civilization: The Churches and Canada's War Effort" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1975).

for Christian civilization in Europe became apparent, and as erstwhile Christian states of Eastern and Central Europe fell under Communist control. Indeed, the genesis of the Cold War saw the Canadian church-state partnership maintained and strengthened. If the war left major divisions between English- and French-speaking Canadians deriving from the conscription crises, Protestants and Catholics agreed in the postwar period on the dangers of atheistic Communism to the liberal and Christian values central to the Canadian state.

A survey of religious affiliations, institutions, and behavior in the postwar years reveals the ubiquity of Christianity in public and privatized sectors of Canadian society. While there were substantial numbers of Jews, mainly in the larger cities, the presence of non-Christian religions was small to nonexistent. Aboriginal peoples had nearly all been converted, at least formally, to one or another of the major Christian denominations, and the Canadian state was happy to place the schooling of aboriginal children largely under church control in residential schools – an assimilationist practice that, despite good intentions, led to major abuses and later attempts at reparation.

Tables 2.1 through 2.5 attempt to chart the changing religious demography of Canada, from 1931 to 1981, using census data, church statistics, and polling results.

The tables serve to indicate changing Canadian religious affiliations, denominational membership figures, and weekly attendance statistics, from the 1940s to the 1980s. The data can be referenced when claims are made in the essay regarding measurable elements of religious identity and behavior. From these tables, it can be seen that Canada in the mid-twentieth century was overwhelmingly Christian in the religious affiliations chosen by respondents to census queries, while the polling of sample populations indicated very high levels of weekly attendance at churches and of belief. The national mainline churches, Protestant and Catholic, dominated the denominational spectrum, with the smaller denominations, mainly of conservative evangelical Christians, having only regional strength – particularly in the western and maritime provinces. No evangelical denomination exercised a national presence comparable to that of the Southern Baptists in the United States. While the Roman Catholic Church was the largest single denomination, its adherents were majoritarian only in Quebec, with English-speaking and European migrant Catholics predominant in most of the other provinces. The United Church as the leading Protestant Church, together with the Anglicans, could claim religious leadership in all provinces except Quebec. Although there were some twenty-eight denominations listed in the 1951 census, 78.5 percent claimed affiliation as Roman Catholic, United Church, or Anglican.

TABLE 2.1. *Denominational Census Affiliation, with Percentage of Canadian Population, Selected Years*

Denomination	1931	%	1941	%	1951	%	1961	%	1971	%	1981	%
Roman Catholic	4,102,960	40	4,806,431	42	6,069,496	43	8,342,826	46	9,974,890	46	11,210,385	47
United Church	2,021,065	20	2,208,658	19	2,867,271	21	3,664,008	20	3,768,805	18	3,758,015	16
Anglican	1,639,075	16	1,754,368	15	2,060,720	15	2,409,068	13	2,543,175	12	2,436,375	10
Presbyterian	872,428	8.4	830,597	7.2	781,747	5.6	818,558	4.5	872,335	4	812,110	3.4
Lutheran	394,920	3.8	401,836	3.5	444,923	3.2	662,744	3.6	715,745	3.3	702,905	2.9
Baptist	443,944	4.3	484,465	4.2	519,585	3.7	593,553	3.3	667,240	3.1	696,850	2.9
Greek Orthodox	102,529	1	139,845	1.2	172,271	1.2	239,766	1.3	316,605	1.5	314,870	1.5
Jewish	155,766	1.5	168,585	1.5	204,836	1.5	254,368	1.4	276,020	1.3	296,425	1.2
Pentecostal	26,349	0.3	57,742	0.5	95,131	0.7	143,877	0.8	220,390	1	338,790	1.4
Ukrainian Catholic	186,879	1.8	185,948	1.6	191,051	1.4	189,653	1	227,730	1.1	190,585	0.8
Other	409,716	1.6	449,019	1.5	542,719	1.4	825,063	1.2	1,055,805	1.2	Disaggregated	
No Religion	21,155	0.2	19,161	0.2	59,679	0.4	94,763	0.5	929,575	4.3	1,752,385	7.3
Total	10,376,786	100	11,506,655	100	14,009,429	100	18,238,247	100	21,568,315	100	24,083,495	100

Source: Canadian census data.

TABLE 2.2. *Census Affiliation of Smaller Denominations, Selected Years*

Denomination	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Adventist	16,058	18,485	21,398	25,999	28,585	41,605
Brethren in Christ					21,290	22,260
Buddhist	15,921	15,676	8,184	11,611	16,175	51,955
Christian and Missionary Alliance	3,560	4,214	6,396	18,006	23,630	33,895
Christian Reformed	Not available	Not available	Not available	62,257	83,390	93,330
Church of the Nazarene					13,490	13,360
Christian Science	18,499	20,261	20,795	19,466	Included with Other	
Churches of Christ, Disciples	15,831	21,260	14,920	19,512	16,400	15,350
Confucian					2,125	2,010
Doukhobor	14,978	16,878	13,175	13,234	9,165	6,700
Eastern Orthodox					314,830	361,565
Free Methodist	7,740	8,805	8,921	14,245	19,125	20,270
Hutterite	Included with Mennonite	Included with Mennonite	Included with Mennonite	Included with Mennonite	13,650	16,530
Jehovah's Witnesses	13,582	7,007	34,596	68,018	174,810	143,485
Mennonite	88,837	111,554	125,938	152,452	168,150	189,370
Mormon	22,041	25,328	32,888	50,016	66,635	89,870
Plymouth Brethren					5,265	8,060
Salvation Army	30,773	33,609	70,275	92,054	119,665	125,085
Unitarian	4,453	5,584	3,517	15,062	21,000	14,500
Other	10,124,513	11,217,994	13,648,426	17,676,315	20,807,925	Disaggregated
Total Population	10,376,786	11,506,655	14,009,429	18,238,247	21,568,315	24,083,495

Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

TABLE 2.3. *Showing Denominational Membership, 1946–1979*

Denomination	1946	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971	1976	1979
United Church	767,998	834,118	933,488	1,036,936	1,062,006	1,016,706	940,251	907,222
Anglican	434,851 (1948)	489,974	584,292	669,291	671,410	627,346	601,737	594,296
Presbyterian	174,225	177,312	188,448	200,640	200,125	182,559	169,445	166,190
Lutheran Council	44,131 (1948)	121,288 (1953)	147,494	172,391	189,228	200,025	209,038	216,416
Baptist Federation	132,110	134,742	136,503	137,951	136,599	132,003	128,489	127,698
Pentecostal	45,000	45,000	50,000	60,000	65,000	150,000	175,000	117,362
Assemblies	(estimated)	(estimated)	(estimated)	(estimated)	(estimated)	(estimated)	(estimated)	
Jehovah's Witnesses	11,218	20,580	28,540	40,230	41,042	49,204	62,880	63,995

Source: Denominational Yearbooks, compiled by H. Macleod, in *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, 1982.

TABLE 2.4. *Showing Percentage Weekly Attendance for Protestants and Catholics in Canada for Select Years*

Denomination	1946	1956	1965	1970	1974	1975	1978	1979	1980	1985
Roman Catholics	83	87	83	65	59	61	46	53	50	43
Protestants	60	43	32	28	27	25	27	26	26	29
Totals	67	61	55	44	44	41	35	37	35	32

Source: Canadian Institute of Public Opinion.

TABLE 2.5. *Religious Denominations of Aboriginal Peoples, 1959*

Anglican	Baptist	United Church	Presbyterian	Roman Catholic	Other Christian	Aboriginal	Not Stated	Total
41,543	3,160	24,520	2,318	96,963	2,814	4,026	3,782	179,126

Source: *Canada Yearbook*, 1962, 149.

Church buildings, which had occupied public space in rural and urban centers from an early point in their founding, now were spread across the country. Along with banks and government edifices, churches occupied a central place in public space and in the towns and cities represented an architecture of worship with their spires pointing to the heavens. In an age before the widespread construction of community clubs, church buildings, with their parish halls and basements, served as centers for social and cultural activities of communities, besides their specifically religious activities.

If Canadians' religious identities were strong and transgenerationally enduring, rivalries and competition among denominations were intense, especially from the smaller evangelical churches, while the deep antagonism between Protestants and Catholics remained a principal feature of Canadian culture and politics.⁸ The victory of Maurice Duplessis' Union National Party in the Quebec election of August 1944 guaranteed the continuing close provincial cooperation of church and state during his premiership until his death in 1959. Duplessis ran an encompassing system of patronage to sustain loyalty from the religious elites while not challenging the church in the wide domain of its functions. The conservatism of Catholic leaders, who had been deeply attracted to corporatist aspects of Mussolini and Franco's Fascism in the crisis of the 1930s, now returned to a Neo-Thomist philosophy that permeated the learning of the classical colleges and provided guidance to Quebec's political leaders. Beyond

⁸ See George Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal, 1997).

traditional Catholic authors and texts, philosophers such as Jacques Maritain presented Neo-Thomism in a renewed context, addressing the challenges of rebuilding the international order and advancing the cause of human rights.⁹ Concurrently, the postwar years would see a ferment of “personalist” Catholic discourse, centered in the youth movement, Action Catholique, which would prepare a new generation of leaders to challenge the political and religious establishment in the 1950s and usher in the “Quiet Revolution” after 1960.¹⁰

While the Catholic hierarchy of Quebec could count on a faithful flock, which continued to look to their church for a diffuse array of public social, educational, health, and welfare services, Canadian Protestant leaders anticipated the postwar period with some unease. Facing the renewed crisis of a Second World War, in 1942 the United Church initiated a nationwide study of unprecedented scale, with the intention of identifying the underlying principles that should guide the church and the nation in the postwar era. The result, after extensive regional input, was the publication in 1944 of “A Report of the Commission on Church, Nation and World Order.”¹¹

The report, which engaged the leading regional and national leadership of the church with careful balancing of the church hierarchy – Social Gospellers from the Left and business interests from the Right – fused the principal streams of United Church traditions into a powerful and appealing amalgam, which would chart the immediate future for church policy into its most successful and influential decade. The legacy of the Social Gospel can be seen in the endorsement of neo-liberal and social democratic projects being discussed avidly in Britain, which would be articulated in the Beveridge Report, published as a British Government White Paper in December 1942. The leading themes of the United Church report included full Canadian participation in establishing a new international order of collective security to maintain peace; parliamentary reforms to promote national unity and guard civil liberties, including the rights of minorities; enhanced governmental economic planning with policies to redistribute wealth and to institute countercyclical financing to maintain full employment; government initiatives in social insurance and security, housing, immigration, child and family support, nutrition, and health care – with the goal of establishing the foundations of what would soon be called the welfare state. What made the report religiously distinctive

⁹ *Les Droits de L'Homme et la Loi Naturelle* (New York, 1942).

¹⁰ See Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931–1970* (Montreal, 2005).

¹¹ “A Report of the Commission on Church, Nation and World Order,” Presented to the Eleventh General Council, United Church of Canada, London, Ontario, 1944 (Toronto, 1944).

was its insistence throughout that programs to advance social and economic justice must be premised on “The Religious Principles of Social Order” and acknowledge “The Primacy of the Spiritual.” In integrating liberal themes of social welfare, human rights, and the Social Gospel with underlying premises of Christian realism, the report reflected clearly the pervasive influence of Neo-Orthodox theologians such as Karl Barth, Emil Br  nner, and especially Reinhold Niebuhr, whose most influential works were published through the years the report was being drafted.¹²

The United Church, after the war and the thanksgiving celebrations for victory, launched itself into a “Crusade for Christ and His Kingdom” with an inaugural rally in Toronto, 1 July 1945, where some 20,000 faithful marked both Dominion Day and the twentieth anniversary of the formation of the United Church.¹³ The crusade would last through 1946, mobilizing the faithful and raising funds for major church expansion across the country, especially in the postwar spread of suburban residential developments. The United Church leadership continued to rail against the liquor trade, gambling, and any plans to open diplomatic relations with the Vatican, but its principal endeavor in the decade ahead was to plan and effect an unprecedented era of expansion. As the postwar years unfolded, the United Church, combining Christian orthodoxy and morality with a social-economic mission, could claim a foremost status among the national churches and, together with continuing informal establishment of the churches, speak as the “conscience of the state.”¹⁴

The Liberal Party of Mackenzie King and his successor in 1948, Louis St. Laurent, was both positively attentive to Canada’s religious foundations and supportive of the churches’ public functions. King, a devout if eccentric Presbyterian, combining Calvinism with occult Spiritualism, conceived the Liberal Party’s legislation of family allowances and commitment to full employment in the successful election of 1945 as deriving from his faith as a Christian “regenerator.”¹⁵ Louis St. Laurent, educated in the pervasive Thomism of Quebec’s Catholic colleges, was steeped in Neo-Thomist authors such as Jacques Maritain. King and St. Laurent shared

¹² Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1941, 1943). Niebuhr’s earlier classic, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics* (New York, 1932), would also have been familiar to members of the commission. See Kevin Flatt, “The Survival and Decline of the Evangelical Identity of the United Church of Canada 1930–1971” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 2008), ch. 2.

¹³ *United Church Observer*, vol. 7, no. 9 (1 July 1945): 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (1 Oct. 1945): 1. See also Mutchmor, *The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor* (Toronto, 1965), 142.

¹⁵ Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto, 1985).

a commitment to maintaining Canada's status as a Christian democracy, especially after the Gouzenko affair of 1945 shocked Canadians into a realization of the new danger of espionage and "atheistic Communism." They both realized that the rising question of human rights, both domestically and internationally, presented a question that touched deeply on religious functions, in defining the norms for personal behavior as well as the politics and jurisprudence in a self-proclaimed Christian polity.

The scale of Canada's contribution to the victory of the Grand Alliance stimulated a maturing sense of national status and a desire to play an enhanced role in world politics commensurate with the nation's standing as the fourth largest economic and military power by the war's end. As well, there was growing interest in the question of human rights in light of the revelations of wartime atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, especially in the Jewish Holocaust, and the spreading postwar repressions by Stalinist Communist regimes. At home, there was an increasingly uneasy conscience among Canadian civil libertarians on such matters as the rigors of the War Measures Act, wartime treatment of Japanese Canadians, discrimination against Chinese Canadians and aboriginal peoples, harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Quebec, and mounting efforts to suppress the menace of domestic Communism. Indeed, the international efforts to define and protect human rights as a principal function of the new United Nations organization would attract major interest and controversy in Canada and would soon engage religious and political elites deeply in what would prove to be a long-term and far-reaching constitutional discourse regarding the protection and promotion of human rights in Canadian jurisprudence.

The Liberal governments of King and St. Laurent, respectively, established two successive parliamentary committees through 1947–48 to advise on Canadian policy on the drafting by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and whether Parliament should create a Canadian Bill of Rights.¹⁶ Religious teachings touched directly on human rights campaigns, both supportively and critically, and, from an early point in the project for the Universal Declaration, Canadian churches played a vital national and international role in shaping opinion, articulating political values, and influencing policy, even as Canadian civil libertarian initiatives often arose from the more secularist forces of labor and the political Left.

¹⁶ Detailed argumentation and references for the following paragraphs can be found in the author's "Between War and Peace: Politics, Religion and Human Rights in Early Cold War Canada 1945–1950," in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (London, 2003), 163–87, and "Entering the Age of Human Rights: Politics, Religion, and Canadian Liberalism: 1945–1950," *Canadian Historical Review* 85:3 (Sept. 2004): 451–79.

Canadian religion functioned ambiguously – progressively and prophetically, on the one hand, joining with liberal and secularist proponents of a Canadian bill of rights to reenvision Canadian political culture, and conservatively, on the other, to legitimate governmental authority as part of the churches' traditional priestly role in defining the nation's moral and legal norms and guarding the state against external and internal dangers. While Canadian national churches advocated protection of human rights, as in the United Church's "Report on Church, Nation and World Order," their support was conditioned upon such rights being given an explicit theological foundation that reflected the traditional fusion of Christian and democratic values in Canadian history. This theme was repeatedly voiced by Protestant and Catholic politicians in the parliamentary committees studying the question, culminating in support for an amendment that would have changed the first article of the draft declaration to read, "All men are born free and equal in dignity being vested by the Creator with inalienable rights."

When it proved impossible to premise the Universal Declaration on theological foundations, Canadian political leaders voiced major misgivings. Along with deep Anglo-Canadian attachment to the British doctrine of parliamentary supremacy and an aversion to the American-style system of judicial review, Quebec religious and political leaders opposed any intrusions upon provincial rights and any secularist human rights agenda that refused to privilege religion in public life. The solution identified by religious and political elites and advanced in the reports of the parliamentary committees was to give human rights explicit religious grounding in any future Canadian Bill of Rights. Quebec Roman Catholic members of Parliament (MPs), together with their prairie Protestant evangelical cohorts, discerned that the elevation of human rights, internationally and nationally, represented a distinct danger to religion in its freedoms, public functions, and privileges. Indeed, the Canadian misgivings on the Universal Declaration led the government to instruct their United Nations delegation to abstain during the vote in the General Assembly in December 1948. Only a furtive appeal by Lester Pearson, who headed the Canadian delegation, convinced the Liberal government to vote in support of the Universal Declaration and thereby avoid being grouped with the select group of the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa in abstaining.

Leading Canadian civil libertarians were disappointed and angered at the government's hesitant approach to the Universal Declaration and proceeded to press St. Laurent to take up the question of legislating a Canadian Bill of Rights. The prime minister was opposed to pursuing this project through constitutional innovation touching on provincial prerogatives. But after the Liberals were safely reelected in spring 1949 on a program

that emphasized Canadian support for the establishment of NATO and containment of Communism, St. Laurent allowed Senator Roebuck, the Liberal Party's foremost advocate of human rights, to head up a special Senate committee composed of Liberals to review policy on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the possibility of writing a Canadian Bill of Rights. Roebuck recruited leading Canadian civil libertarian voices to appear before his committee, including J. King Gordon, a former United Church minister who now worked in the United Nations Division of Human Rights serving under its Canadian director John Humphrey, and Frank Scott of the McGill Law faculty, who explicated the urgency for, and means toward, a Canadian Bill of Rights. Protestant churchmen and the Canadian Council of Churches submitted supportive briefs along with leading civil libertarian associations. In writing his committee's report, Roebuck powerfully advocated the case for a Bill of Rights:

This is then the very time for Canada to decide the basis upon which this new Nation is founded. . . . This is the time to nail the emblems of law, liberty and human rights to our masthead. This is the very moment in which to decide our nationhood, to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms to all our citizens, and to proclaim our principles to the world.

Senator Roebuck knew, however, that the Quebec Catholic senators on his committee harbored major misgivings, political and theological, on this project. While this vision appealed deeply to the Canadian social democratic and liberal Left, and to the social conscience of mainline Protestantism, it held much less attraction for Catholicism, especially in Quebec, or for conservative Protestantism. The "human rights revolution" hailed by such civil libertarian leaders as Frank Scott, John Humphrey, King Gordon, and Arthur Roebuck directly challenged both Anglo-Canadian national identity grounded in British jurisprudence, common law, and the supremacy of Parliament and French Canadian political culture, protected by Quebec Catholicism. Early in the Senate committee's deliberations, eager to accommodate religious opinion and the sensibilities of his Quebec Catholic colleagues, Roebuck had recorded the committee's agreement with the suggestion that any preamble to a Canadian Bill of Rights should make explicit recognition of God as the giver of rights. Senators resoundingly endorsed the views of the churchmen in presenting a transcendent status for human rights: "Such rights are not created by men, be they ever so numerous, for the benefit of other men, nor are they the gift of governments. They are above the power of men to create." The report concluded by portraying Canada as "a Christian country" and recommending "that all men give thought to the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," so as to further the rule of law and the rights of individuals.

The deliberations and report of the Roebuck committee illustrated clearly the continued integration of Canadian Christianity and liberalism, each reinforcing core values of the other. However, despite the enthusiasm for human rights evoked by the committee from influential circles of Canadian Protestantism, civil libertarian associations, liberal and social democratic intellectuals, and labor organizations, the timing of the senators' report was inopportune. Within a few days of the conclusion of the committee's work, on 25 June 1950, the Korean War broke out – a war that would see Canadian forces once again in combat, now under the banner of United Nations collective security. These events would help generate extreme forms of anti-Communism in the United States, with civil liberties often being trampled in the investigations to discover treason, disloyalty, and “un-American” activities mounted by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the political Right. In Canada, where the fear of Communism also ran deep, the projections of Roebuck's committee to elevate the cause of human rights were quietly buried by the St. Laurent government.

As the decade of the fifties opened, the hopes for a peaceful world order after such a hard-won victory in the Second World War soon faded in the face of expanding Communism in Eastern Europe and then in Asia with the Chinese Communist triumph of 1949. To compound the alarms, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) successfully tested an atomic bomb in the summer of 1949, ushering in a new and potentially devastating nuclear arms race. The Canadian churches had hoped, after knowledge spread of the horrific consequences following the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that the uranium of which Canada was the principal supplier could be harnessed for peaceful purposes and that the Baruch Plan could provide for United Nations control of atomic energy. By the early 1950s, all these hopes had been dashed as the development of the hydrogen bomb confirmed that humanity faced the proliferation of unprecedented weapons of mass destruction. Concurrently, in charting Canada's policy of containment, St. Laurent repeatedly appealed to the churches for their support in defending Christian civilization. For St. Laurent the Communist challenge to democratic states not only endangered freedom and peace; it jeopardized “the values and virtues of the civilization of western Christendom of which we are heirs and defenders.”¹⁷

This appeal for the churches' support was largely successful. Only small pacifist and leftist factions within the Protestant churches embraced a prophetic mode in denouncing the utter inhumanity of atomic weapons

¹⁷ St. Laurent, speeches of 11 June and 11 Nov. 1948, reprinted in R. A. Mackay, ed., *Canadian Foreign Policy, 1945–1954: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Toronto, 1971), 184–91.

and calling for total prohibition and unilateral disarmament. United Church radicals were susceptible to the series of Moscow-inspired peace movements, such as the Stockholm Appeal of 1950. Several who adopted this line would be denounced by their churches and removed from their positions. The churches sensed that classic “just war” teaching was largely rendered obsolete by the advent of weapons of mass destruction. After extensive studies, the United and Anglican churches adopted policies of seeking disarmament, but in the interim, settling for a strategy of containment and deterrence.¹⁸ This was put forward by the Anglicans in 1951 in “A Positive Program for Peace” and by the United Church in 1953 as “The Christian and Peace.” The St. Laurent government found Quebec Catholicism even more willing to be recruited in a “crusade” against the old enemy of Communism when the Catholic peoples of Eastern Europe were now the victims of Communist repression. Pope Pius XII, while acknowledging the radical new dangers presented to humanity by atomic weapons and condemning their use in “aggressive” war, nevertheless, maintained classic “just war” doctrine and the right to use such weapons in self-defense.¹⁹ The Canadian Catholic hierarchy fully shared the pope’s fervent anti-Communism. Indeed, anti-Communist attitudes presented the most powerful shared theme in the politics of Canadian Protestantism and Catholicism through this period. St. Laurent would express his gratitude for the unity this provided and “that the relations between Church and State are so helpful in our country,” hoping that “future generations should maintain them.”²⁰

The churches’ role in supporting a policy of containment and deterrence, however, was not without controversy and opposition, especially as the costs and dangers of sustaining the nuclear arms race with the Soviets and the health hazards of nuclear fallout from weapons tests became more apparent. Soon there would be increasing numbers of defections to the disarmament camp; articulate voices of dissent from official church positions ensured from an early point in the Cold War arms race that the Christian conscience on nuclear weapons remained divided. Even as Canada chose to forgo development of its own nuclear weapons, it was willing to sell the necessary uranium to allies. By the early 1960s, with American pressures

¹⁸ Details on the churches’ discussions and positions on this topic can be found in Gayle Thrift, “The Bible and the A-Bomb: Canadian Protestant Churches in the Cold War Era, 1945–1968” (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 2005).

¹⁹ Pope Pius XII, “The Threat of ABC Warfare, Address to the Peoples Assembled in St. Peter’s Square, April 18, 1954,” in *Catholic Peacemakers: A Documentary History*, ed. Ronald G. Musto (New York, 1996), 369.

²⁰ St. Laurent to T. L. Church, 14 Mar. 1949, St. Laurent Papers, vol. 70, File, “Religion – General – 1948–49.”

to place nuclear missiles on Canadian soil and participate in the nuclear systems and strategies of NORAD and NATO, both the United Church and the Anglican Church divided deeply on the nuclear issue. While the official leadership of these churches reaffirmed support for government policies, which after the return of the Liberals in 1962 under Lester Pearson meant accepting American nuclear weapons, neither church could achieve unity on the question. The Protestant conscience, and later the Catholic conscience, was uneasy in affirming a deterrent strategy that relied on American nuclear capacity to keep the peace by threatening a retaliatory response that could endanger the whole of the created order.

Canadian church leaders continued to enjoy open access to political leaders at the provincial and national levels. For James Mutchmor, the long-term Secretary of the United Church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service and moderator 1962–64, the premier of Ontario or the prime minister of Canada remained but a telephone call away. Whether lobbying for temperance, social welfare legislation, or protection of labor, Mutchmor saw the church's role "to be the conscience of the State."²¹ If not all interventions yielded success, Mutchmor nevertheless enjoyed major influence and respect in the offices of political leaders. So also in Quebec, the close partnership of church and state continued in the post-war years, as Duplessis and the Union Nationale Party governed the province through the decade until Duplessis' death in 1959, while Roman Catholicism retained its hegemonic religious and cultural status even as progressive forces among the clergy, Catholic intellectuals, and youth movements prepared for a transformation of their church and their province's political culture.

These were years of major institutional and membership expansion for the Canadian churches that exceeded the expectations of all the major church bureaucracies. The United Church could claim in 1954 to be the fastest-growing church in Canada, establishing a new congregation on an average every four days since 1950, while constructing 1,500 new churches between 1945 and 1966.²² The major Protestant churches cooperated with evangelical churches in mounting "crusades," welcoming evangelists such as Billy Graham and the Canadian mass evangelist Charles Templeton, even while distancing themselves from the emotional excesses of "fundamentalism." The Anglican Church officially designated 1956 as a "Year of Intensified Evangelism." Sunday schools across the nation burgeoned, often with

²¹ Mutchmor, *Memoirs*, 137–8, 142–3, 147, 156.

²² Editorial, "Who Is Slipping?" *United Church Observer* 16:5 (1 May 1954): 4. For details of United Church expansion, see John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Vancouver, 1998, 1972), 161.

several sessions needed each Sunday, while the building of thousands of new parish halls drew communities into church facilities on a regular basis. The planning and building of all the new church construction meant that fund-raising would preoccupy the churches for years, as mortgages accumulated. By the end of the decade, with churches being erected in the expanding new suburban communities across the country, and with middle-class families filling these churches and participating in their array of programs, the spiritual market of mainline Protestantism looked promising for the foreseeable future.²³

For Roman Catholics, these were also years of religious resurgence as virtually all indices of institutional affiliation, participation, and spiritual devotion offered encouragement: Catholic census affiliation grew not only in reflection of high birthrates in Quebec, but also immigration patterns from European Catholic populations. Recruitment of religious – nuns, brothers, priests – remained high. Attendance at Mass reached record levels, especially in Quebec, where more than 90 percent reported weekly communion. Leading French Canadian prelates, such as Paul-Émile Cardinal Léger, archbishop of Montreal, enjoyed high status nationally and internationally. Canadian Catholics, especially from Quebec, were heavily engaged in international missions.²⁴ Financial appeals, both for expanding missions and for church construction at home, met with generous response from the faithful. The appointment as governor general in 1959 of General Georges Vanier, a devout Catholic, on the recommendation of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, an equally devout Baptist, signified hope for growing religious and ethnic respect.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker had for many years campaigned for the establishment of a Canadian Bill of Rights and, after the landslide victory of the Conservatives in 1958, proceeded with this project. When the Canadian Bill of Rights was legislated in 1960, leaders from all parties (especially Paul Martin, Sr., for the Liberals and Justice Minister David Fulton for the Conservatives, both devout Catholics) cooperated in rearticulating the integrated religious and democratic values represented in the statute.²⁵ Its Preamble declared this clearly:

The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity and

²³ Grant, *Church in the Canadian Era*, ch. 8.

²⁴ Terrence Murphy, ed., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Toronto, 1996), 240–2.

²⁵ See the author's "Writing the Canadian Bill of Rights: Religion, Politics, and the Challenge of Pluralism, 1957–1960," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 192 (Dec. 2004): 1–22.

worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions;

Affirming also that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law.²⁶

Several themes stand out in the protracted drafting that led to the Canadian Bill of Rights. It was the politicians, more than church leaders who made submissions, who insisted on the reference to the religious foundations of human rights. A statutory Bill of Rights was also viewed by Conservative leaders as more consistent with British and Canadian constitutional theory on the supremacy of Parliament than would be a constitutionally entrenched charter of rights opening Canadian jurisprudence to American-style judicial review. And in the sensitive negotiations over the phrasing of the reference to God, leaders from all parties were eager to consult representatives of the Canadian Jewish community, with which both John Diefenbaker and Paul Martin were well connected. By ensuring that nothing in the religious reference would be offensive to Jewish leaders, the Bill of Rights signaled Canada's shift from a manifest "Christian democracy" or Christian pluralism, to a more inclusive "religious pluralism," which now manifestly included Jewish Canadians. If there was little yet by way of a consciously articulated theory of pluralism, the term was now being used, and the intention of all the drafters of the Bill of Rights was to affirm a positive religious pluralism, even as Christianity remained privileged in Canadian constitutional law and in public rituals. Finally, constitutional experts such as Bora Laskin of the University of Toronto and Frank Scott and Max Cohen of McGill University held no place for religious legitimations in their jurisprudence. The latter two embraced a secularized natural law, to be translated into "natural rights" and "fundamental law" in evolving Anglo-American jurisprudence and in Canadian courts.²⁷ Scott later explained that he found the Preamble's reference to the supremacy of God "offensive."²⁸

The Canadian Bill of Rights did not herald a new age of Canadian jurisprudence under the supremacy of God. To be sure, as the decade of the 1960s opened, it would soon be apparent that the seeming religious resurgence of the postwar period was retrenching, and the traditional fusion of religious and democratic values in Canada's constitutional foundations and

²⁶ *Canadian Bill of Rights: An Act for the Recognition and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (Statutes of Canada 1960, Bill c.44).

²⁷ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Special Committee on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, 24th Parl. (22 July 1960) at 22–50; 360–97 [Minutes].

²⁸ Scott to Michael Pitfield, 6 Aug. 1980, cited in Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F. R. Scott* (Toronto, 1987), 434.

its Protestant-Catholic condominium were about to be challenged radically. For the discerning eye, the seeming Canadian religious resurgence of the postwar years rested on fragile foundations. Even the demographics of religious affiliation and expanding church memberships were somewhat illusory, and nearly all the national churches failed to keep up as a percentage of the expanding Canadian population. The growing population itself created increasing immigrant sectors of the population that were not members of the traditional Canadian churches and were now contributing to the country's growing ethnic and religious diversity and pluralism.²⁹

The first rebellion and challenges to the public functions of religion occurred in the province where its hegemony over liberal values was strongest – the Quebec of Premier Duplessis. In 1948 an explosive anticlerical manifesto, *Refus Global*, was issued in Montreal by a group of sixteen avant-garde artists, utterly condemning the religious, intellectual, and political culture of the cassocks who dominated life in Quebec, while demanding a “resplendent anarchy” and “an untamed need for liberation” from the province's grand *noirceur*. This rebellion was quickly condemned and repressed, but it was a herald of events to come in Québécois culture and politics. The next year saw Duplessis' form of capitalism challenged by a bitter strike of Catholic unions and workers in the mining town of Asbestos. The strike would be supported by progressive Catholics, including the Montreal archbishop Charbonneau, and a rising band of young Catholic intellectuals, including Pierre Trudeau, who would soon coalesce in the group *Cité Libre* and propound a radical agenda of cultural and liberal political reform for Quebec.

Also in Quebec, two lengthy court cases were led by Frank Scott against the Duplessis government with full support from Canadian civil libertarians. Two key legal challenges were decided by the Supreme Court: in 1957 the court ruled the Padlock Act (allowing seizure of properties used by suspected Communists) unconstitutional and in 1959 declared Duplessis' punitive actions against the Jehovah's Witness restaurateur, Roncarelli, in violation of civil law and made the premier pay damages.³⁰

Churches in Canada and internationally through the 1960s would engage in radical rethinking of theology and mission – most thoroughly and systematically in the deliberations of Vatican II (1962–65), but more radically in Protestant immanentist theologies, welcoming the “secular city,” being “honest to God,” “demythologizing” the faith, and finally heralding the “death of God.” The journalist Pierre Berton's 1965 best-seller *The*

²⁹ For an overview of the de-Christianization of Canada since the 1950s, see Mark Noll, “What Happened to Christian Canada?” *Church History* 75:2 (June 2006): 245–73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 251–5; Djwa, *Politics of the Imagination*, ch. 18.

*Comfortable Pew*³¹ broke all Canadian sales records and engaged mainline Canadian Protestantism in a firestorm of self-criticism and an urgent quest for renewed relevance. Indeed, by brilliantly popularizing the main themes of the radical theologians, Berton captured and projected the agenda of Canadian liberal Protestants for the rest of the twentieth century as they abandoned the old theology, the old curricula, and the old morality in the age of the pill, situation ethics, and mass entertainment. It would be the United Church that would update most radically, adopting a new curriculum for its Sunday schools and as a guide for its general teachings, which thoroughly assimilated critical theological liberalism and shed vestiges of its evangelical past.³²

After the disintegration of the Diefenbaker government in 1963, Lester Pearson would lead a series of minority Liberal governments ineffectively addressing a rising tide of bewildering issues, scandals, and national malaise. A child of the manse (Methodist, then United Church), the prime minister was as sincere a Christian believer as his predecessors, respecting deeply the role of Canadian religious communities in the country's national life. Addressing a conference at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in 1953, Pearson had advised his audience, "As individuals it is our duty to stand firm on the Christian principles which have been taught in our churches and which in themselves have the key to the solution of every problem – social, personal and political."³³

After the politically bruising struggle in 1964–5 to agree on a new Canadian flag (devoid of the Christian symbols in the previous Canadian Ensign and Union Jack), the Pearson government had the happier task of arranging for the year-long celebrations to mark the centennial of confederation in 1967, and to host the Montreal World's Fair – Expo 67. Here the government and its officials in the Centennial Commission took the initiative in helping churches across Canada participate eagerly in their local communities' centennial celebrations, with appropriate liturgies and prayers to honor the country. The Canadian Corporation on the 1967 World's Exhibition also took the initiative in planning for religious participation in Expo 67. The government and its officials signaled a religiously positive pluralism in inviting the widening diversity of Canada's ethnic and religious communities in organizing this national

³¹ Toronto, 1965.

³² See Flatt, *Survival and Decline*, chs. 3–5. For an explanatory overview of Canadian religious change see Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?"

³³ "An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson," delivered at the Yorkminster Baptist Church, Toronto, 25 March 1953, Lester B. Pearson Papers, NAC, MG 26/N9/7.

spectacle.³⁴ The Centennial Commission started by setting up, funding, and providing administrative and publicity services for a Canadian Interfaith Conference, which included representation from the national mainline churches and eventually some thirty-three faith communities, including Pentecostals, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Baha'is.

While the various religious communities were eager to join in the celebrations, the form of participation signaled some confusion and controversy in the evolving nature of pluralism in Canada. The Expo planners pressed for a single religious pavilion, housing all faiths under one roof. The leadership of the national churches wanted a single ecumenical pavilion for Christians, and they declined to embrace the interfaith pluralism first suggested by the Centennial planners. The evangelical Protestant churches equally declined ecumenism and were the first to acquire a site for their own pavilion at Expo, where their Sermons from Science, drawn from the Moody Bible Institute, served principally as a forum for evangelization. The Canadian Jewish community also mounted its own pavilion. Whatever distinctiveness the churches and other faith communities wished to sustain at Expo, their pavilions turned out to be popular successes and equally signified the positive religious pluralism of the Pearson Liberals in facilitating religious participation in national life – and on terms favored by the religious communities themselves.

The greatest political challenge faced by the Pearson Liberals took the form of Quebec nationalism. With Quebec Catholicism freely cooperating in its political disestablishment, the Quebec Liberals' quest to be *maîtres chez nous* soon transformed into a nationalist ideology that supplanted the discredited public functions of religion, as previously exploited by Duplessis. Québécois ethnicity, language, and cultural assertion challenged Canada's English hegemony and its federal constitutional structure. The federal Liberals responded with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–69), which initiated a long process of reimagining the Canadian nation on the basis of a fairer Anglophone-Francophone partnership. The work and reports of the "Bi and Bi Commission" attempted to redefine Canadian nationhood in terms of ethnicity and language. The former centrality of religion in Canada's national identity, as underlined repeatedly in the parliamentary committees studying human rights, constitutional issues, and national purpose in the 1940s and 1950s, and in the drafting of the Canadian Bill of Rights, found no place in the recommendations of the commission. Nor did this theme figure in the submissions made by the churches, which generally affirmed the Liberals'

³⁴ See Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal, 2005).

attempt to reimagine Canadian nationality in terms of linguistic and cultural dualism.³⁵

The efforts of the Pearson Liberals to reimagine Canadian nationhood in terms of bilingualism and biculturalism soon proved inadequate, critiqued roundly by aboriginal and other non-Anglophone, non-Francophone ethnic communities, burgeoning as a result of immigration patterns. With the displacement of religion from its former partnership with liberal ideology in defining Canadian national identity, by the late 1960s Canada was on the verge of several decades of radical reimaginings that would witness transformative change in its constitution, jurisprudence, and, not least, the public functions of religion. Indeed, the defining elements of Canadian pluralism would shift from religion to language and ethnicity, as multiculturalism supplanted biculturalism in a new quest for national identity, purpose, and unity. Simultaneously, Canadian legislators embraced the protection of human rights as the fundamental legitimator of renewed governmental authority and purpose, as human rights commissions and tribunals would soon proliferate nationally and provincially. By the time that religious questions would return to the renewed Canadian constitutional discourse directed by Pierre Trudeau as justice minister and then prime minister after 1968, Canadian public life and rhetoric would be in a process of rapid de-Christianization, while jurisprudence and constitutional theory were searching for new, nonreligious foundations.

The decades of the 1960s–80s were transformative in the history of the Canadian state and in the history of Canadian churches and in the relationship of these institutions. The changing relationship saw the churches lose most of their former public functions, priestly and pastoral, as religion was differentiated in political culture and privatized in civil society. Concurrently, census, polling, and church statistics all indicated declining affiliations for mainline churches, retrenching memberships and attendance, and recessing belief in God, while the numbers of those claiming to have “no religion” rose dramatically. Faced with theological and strategic choices of accommodating or resisting the cultural and moral shifting in Canadian society, the United Church led the way with an accommodationist strategy of affirming the liberal agenda of removing religion from its formerly privileged role in politics and jurisprudence, while adopting a prophetic role in pressing for social justice and liberation from religious constraints in the realm of family life and sexual morality. The Anglicans would follow this strategy but more slowly and reluctantly, while Catholics and evangelical Christians would be drawn into unprecedented new forms

³⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Ottawa, 1967–70), book VI.

of cooperation in resisting many of the changes heralded in such fields as sexual ethics, marriage and family law, and abortion legislation.

The Canadian experience forms part of a process of cultural and legal transformation shared with all industrialized societies and, in Canada's case, heavily influenced by Britain and America. From Britain arose the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report (1957) that criminality and morality should be separated in such matters as homosexuality and prostitution, and that the state should confine itself to the proscription and punishment of behavior that is manifestly harmful to society, while protecting the freedom of the individual, even if the choices indulge socially harmless "sinning." These themes found a sympathetic hearing in liberal Canadian quarters and legal elites. Concurrently, from America the traditional cooperation of politics and religion was most clearly challenged by a series of Supreme Court decisions that asserted a strict wall of separation between church and state in matters of public education and other public services. In fact, many American religious coalitions adopted critical prophetic roles in the civil rights movement and then in antiwar protest against American intervention in Vietnam.

In Canada, the legal transitions had the added drama of coinciding with the making of a new constitution – a project that focused in large measure on the protection of human rights. The Canadian constitutional drama, moreover, was driven by a philosopher-king, Pierre Trudeau, who, as prime minister after 1968, made the constitutional entrenchment of a Charter of Rights his own political mission, seeing it through to success in the constitutional settlement of 1982. Trudeau, trained in Quebec's elite Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, had been drawn to the corporatist and separatist extreme of 1930s Catholicism. Liberated from this personal *noirceur* after graduate studies abroad following the war, notably at Harvard, Trudeau absorbed the principal themes of Anglo-American liberalism and fused them with a continuing, but thoroughly privatized and modernized Catholicism.³⁶ It was the genius of Trudeau's politics to project updated themes of classic liberal ideology, brilliantly indigenized for Canadian appeal: federalism and bilingualism to confront the separatist aspirations of Quebec nationalism, multicultural pluralism to accommodate and contain ethnic assertion and ideological conflict, civil libertarianism to enshrine protection for individual rights and counter "tribalism" in a revised constitution, participatory democracy to expand citizenship in shaping a just society, and secularism to disentangle a modernized Canadian legal order from its traditional religious norms and constraints. Each of these themes resonated with Canadian

³⁶ John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, vol. 1, 1919–1968; *Just Watch Me: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, vol. 2, 1968–2000 (Toronto, 2006–09).

mass culture by the latter half of the “sixties” and appealed especially to academic, artistic, legal, and media elites, offering renewed government purpose and legitimation while rejuvenating the Liberal Party.

When the project to modernize Canadian law and liberate it from its religious framework addressed itself first to divorce legislation, Trudeau as justice minister instructed Parliament in 1967 on the cardinal themes of the new jurisprudence and pluralism:

We are now living in a social climate in which people are beginning to realize, perhaps for the first time in the history of this country, that we are not entitled to impose the concepts which belong to a sacred society upon a civil or profane society. The concepts of the civil society in which we live are pluralistic, and I think this parliament realizes that it would be a mistake for us to try to legislate into this society concepts which belong to a theological or sacred order.³⁷

That the rights and freedoms of the individual would provide the animus for a comprehensive modernization and liberalization of Canadian law was evident not only in Trudeau’s approach to the issue of divorce law, but also in the initiatives he undertook in a coterie of other “morality” issues, such as lotteries, birth control, homosexuality, and abortion – all of which contained potentially explosive intersections of religious and legal principles. After legal study of several of these issues within the Justice Department and comprehensive public hearings on the issues of birth control and abortion conducted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Trudeau combined these “morality” issues with a series of other changes in the criminal law code into an Omnibus Bill that was given first reading in the Commons in late 1967.

By the time the Omnibus Bill was passed in 1969, Trudeau had captured the leadership of the Liberal Party and led it to electoral triumph in 1968, assisted by the seductive, if transient, appeal of “Trudeumania.” However, if Trudeau’s charisma and progressive agenda won him the first Liberal majority government since 1953, his trenchant federalism sparked revolutionary violence, kidnapping, and murder from the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). Trudeau’s invocation of the War Measures Act in October 1970 to suppress separatist terrorism in Quebec both demonstrated the perceived fragility of state authority and shocked civil libertarians that one of their own would go so far.

A friend and protégé of Canada’s leading civil libertarian, Frank Scott, Trudeau had advocated a constitutionally entrenched charter of rights from the late 1950s; it would be this “magnificent obsession” that would inspire

³⁷ Canada, *House of Commons, Debates*, 5 Dec. 1967, 5083.

Trudeau and the Liberals through the economic and political crises of the 1970s, as the Parti Québécois under René Lévesque gained provincial power in 1976 and fought an unsuccessful referendum on “sovereignty-association” in 1980. Reelected in 1980 after a brief retirement, Trudeau appealed to Quebec federalists with the promise of patriating the constitution from Britain and including in it a constitutionally entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms – a project Trudeau carried out in 1982 after more than a year of complex and Machiavellian political maneuvering in federal-provincial relations.

As this drama of national reconstruction unfolded with the impassioned debate in committee and Parliament on challenges mobilized by guardians of provincial rights, civil libertarian, aboriginal, and women's groups, to the government's surprise, religious issues emerged powerfully as well. Christian lobbyists joined with Conservative Party leaders to criticize the “godlessness” of the Liberals' proposed charter. What is perhaps most noteworthy for our purposes regarding the religious dimensions of the constitutional debate is that whereas the mainline Protestant submissions and witnesses gave support to the charter project, concentrating on justice issues with little concern for protection of religious freedom or religious grounding for human rights, it was the Catholics and the evangelical Protestants, represented effectively by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, who pressed the government most resolutely on these issues. According to the caucus briefings prepared by David Smith, Liberal deputy house leader, it was the rising demographics of evangelical Protestantism and its convergence with Catholicism in theology and politics that convinced a reluctant Trudeau and his justice minister, Jean Chrétien, to include a religious referent in the preamble to the charter: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.” Previously, Trudeau had criticized the Conservatives as “hypocritical and detestable” for playing politics with God, claiming that they were inspired more by fear of the electorate than fear of God. Although Trudeau thought “it was strange, so long after the Middle Ages that some politicians felt obliged to mention God in a constitution which is, after all, a secular and not a spiritual document,” he also genuflected to the electorate, claiming now it was his personal preference to include the reference. Privately, Trudeau told the Liberal caucus that he did not think “God gives a damn whether he was in the constitution or not.”³⁸ The Liberals were confronted with an unprecedented mass media and letter-writing mobilization of conservative Christians,

³⁸ Author's interview with the Honourable David Smith, Liberal deputy House leader, 22 Feb. 1982.

supported by the Conservative Party. Canadians demonstrated once again that they wanted God in their constitution.

What can be concluded from this? At first glance, the inclusion of the reference to God represented a signal success for the evangelical Christian lobbyists. Catholics also had received assurances during the constitutional debates that the charter would not endanger the guarantees of the British North America Act (1867) to confessional public schools, nor broker the way to more liberalized abortion. The constitutional reference to God, however, did not mean that the deeper cultural and political tides of privatizing religion had been reversed or that the traditional public functions of religion in Canadian political history had been restored. The constitutional reference had been a result of tactical political calculations, not of any conversion by Trudeau or the Liberals to the philosophical or theological convictions expressed by Conservative leaders, let alone by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. If Trudeau's desire to remove theology from politics had suffered a temporary reverse, the charter itself would serve to launch a new era of secularist pluralism in Canadian jurisprudence. Indeed, similarly to the patterns of jurisprudence through the post-1960s decades in Britain and the United States, the Canadian church-state relationship would be transformed as the Christian religion would see the state largely divest itself of religion's traditional priestly functions of legitimating government authority and law, and its pastoral functions in guarding family and sexual morality.

The declining mainline Protestant denominations have for the most part acquiesced in the removal of religion from its formerly privileged standing and functions in public life, while searching unsuccessfully for renewed salience in prophetic support for justice issues and the extension of human rights, even when this meant surrendering classic religious teachings on morality issues. As in America, it has been the evangelical Protestants and Catholics, together with leaders from Judaism and other world religions, who from the 1980s have resisted most determinedly the exclusion of public religion by the courts and legislatures of Canada and have mobilized politically to regain voices in the public square. But social conservatism in Canada achieved much less influence than the American religious right of the 1980s; the Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney (1984–93) and the Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien (1993–2003) remained inattentive or hostile to public religion, as compared with the U.S. president, Ronald Reagan. Meanwhile it has been the courts, interpreting the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that have largely supplanted the churches as “the conscience of the state,” as Canada has evolved from its traditional Christian pluralism, through the religious pluralism of the

1950s and the confederation centenary, to the secularist pluralism that now exercises liberal ideological hegemony in the country's political culture.

Do the historical evidence and data we have for Canada confirm the classic secularization thesis, as in Europe, or the desecularization pattern, as in America and much of rest of the world?³⁹ Certainly the differentiation of public religious functions seems beyond dispute in Canada, viewed from the perspective of both governments and the national churches, along with the privatization of faith, as in Europe. As well, census and polling data show a continuing increase in those claiming to have “no religion,” some 16 percent in the 2001 census. Those attending religious services on a regular basis remain comparatively diminished, in the low 20 percents by the end of the twentieth century. Membership statistics for the liberal Protestant mainline church continue to decline, increasingly approaching unsustainable levels. Most elites in academia, education, professions, unions, media, and the corporate world exhibit secularist values. If these indicators suggest a European pattern of secularization, there are also countertrend data. Belief in God remains high at more than 80 percent, indicating perhaps a privatized “belief without belonging” phenomenon. But conservative Protestant churches continue to exhibit substantial growth compared to liberal denominations and surpass the latter in total regular attendance at religious services. Aside from the decimation of Catholicism in Quebec, in the rest of Canada it remains much healthier than liberal Protestantism, not least because of major infusions of immigrants from global south Catholic countries. Nevertheless, if these indicators suggest an American pattern of religious endurance, the absence in Canada of an American style religious Right suggests that the Canadian pattern of secularization will continue to resemble more the European experience. Certainly this seems to be the perception of the Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which eschews any affinity with religious social conservatism.

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³⁹ This concluding paragraph draws on data from the 2001 Canadian census; the Ipsos-Reid polls of 1993 and 2003; George Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal, 1996); and Reginald Bibby, *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches Can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance* (Toronto, 2004).

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RELIGION IN MEXICO, 1945–2010

DANIEL RAMÍREZ

The religious scene in Mexico at midcentury was characterized by four broad developments, which would also be evident into the next century: gradual rapprochement between the Catholic Church and the government after a century of perennial antagonism, institutional consolidation and ideological flux and retrenchment within the Catholic Church, the maturation of historic Protestant churches and institutions and the strengthening of younger Pentecostal ones, and the intensification of migratory currents (back and forth) between the United States and Mexico. In the ensuing decades, the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) that emerged out of the revolution (1910–17) would see its authority weakened by corruption; student, guerrilla, and protest movements; controversial macroeconomic policies; and natural calamities. Mexico entered the twenty-first century a different country, with the Catholic-inspired Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) heading a competitive multiparty system. The loss of PRI hegemony paralleled a relative but smaller decline in the percentage of Mexicans who identified as Catholic in an increasingly pluralistic society. The following thematic and chronological discussion of these developments will focus largely on the religious tradition with which nearly 80 percent of Mexicans still identified, at least nominally, in the 2000 national census, Roman Catholicism. Many of the twentieth (and nineteenth) century's conflicts over religion, society, and governance were intra-Catholic affairs, pitting liberal, anticlerical Catholics against their conservative coreligionists. This essay also will consider the experience of religious minorities, especially in the light of their growth by century's end and the ability of one of these, Pentecostalism, to impact the majoritarian tradition. Given Mexico's geographic and human ties to the United States, this essay will borrow from transnational and cultural studies to explore their unique religious dimensions.

CHURCH AND STATE: FROM MODUS VIVENDI TO WARY RAPPROCHEMENT

President Manuel Avila Camacho's declaration "Yo soy creyente" (I am a believer), while confessionally ambiguous, signaled the end of a long era of hostility between the PRI and the Catholic Church. A decade and a half after the bloody nadir of the counterrevolutionary Cristero revolt (1926–29), the Avila sexenio (1940–46) saw the easing of many of the harsh anticlerical strictures enshrined in the 1917 Constitution, measures whose long-delayed enforcement by President Plutarco Calles (1924–30) had precipitated the grassroots rebellion in western Mexico. High-level accords between the government and the Church allowed prelates and priests to return and Church activities to resume upon the end of the Calles and the beginning of the Emilio Portes Gil administrations. The "modus vivendi" arrangement withstood the challenge of open conflict with the Lázaro Cardenas administration (1934–40) over its 1934 declaration of socialist education in the nation's public schools, a second but brief Cristero revolt in 1935, and perennial bouts of Cristero-inspired persecution of religious minorities. The historian Roberto Blancarte has characterized the post-Calles period as one of "pragmatic" Catholicism, versus the earlier "intransigent integralist" one in which the Church insisted on an active role in all spheres of life and society.¹ Eight decades after President Benito Juárez's liberal Constitution of 1857 and accompanying Laws of Reform broke the Church's monopoly over religion, birth, marriage, and death, secular modernity's differentiation between religious and civic spheres seemed finally to be taking hold. As elsewhere outside northern Europe, the process was neither linear nor even. In a 1941 pastoral letter, the hierarchy insisted that many of the revolution's advancements had, indeed, vindicated the Church's social doctrine outlined in the 1891 papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, especially its concerns for workers' rights. Tensions continued to abate during the Miguel Alemán administration (1946–52) under the looming threat of a common enemy, Communism.

Among other reconciliatory measures, the Avila administration permitted the return of temples to the Church – albeit as nationalized properties – while stymieing the same process for *evangélicos* (the broad term encompasses historic Protestant and Pentecostal churches). Of greater importance to the Church was the reform of article 3 of the 1917 Constitution to permit parochial schools and rescind public education's guiding tenet of socialism in favor of the historical liberal one of secular laicism. With only 445

¹ Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en México* (México, D.F., 1992), 95–120.

primary schools to the government's 20,000, the Church remained at a strong disadvantage. The vast majority of Catholic families continued to be locked into an educational system whose guiding philosophy, laid down by Benito Juárez and other liberals, continued to be objectionable to the Church. For religious minorities, the Avila sexenio represented a low point in the zero-sum equation of Church-state relations. They felt their fortunes rebound, however, under Avila's successor. With an *evangélica* mother and a Masonic and nonpracticing Catholic father, Miguel Alemán evinced more sympathies in matters of temple and property disputes. For Catholics, the Alemán sexenio, with both its opposition to Communism internationally and its suppression of Communist sympathizers within the governing party, and its tolerance of massive public religious events, represented the high point of the *modus vivendi* period.

The new climate allowed the hierarchy to focus on internal consolidation in line with parallel developments in the hemisphere. In 1955 the Church established the Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM), an organism to mirror and coordinate with the newly established Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM). The conferences allowed for economies of scale and broad, strategic policies carried out by secretariats. Also, unlike the prior Comité Ejecutivo Episcopal Mexicano, the CEM pursued a more collegial approach among its ten archbishops and thirty-two bishops. While neither entity added a new layer between the Vatican and individual dioceses, their creation afforded more coherence vis-à-vis the great pastoral and political questions of the midcentury, questions provoked by socialism, economic development, theological innovation, and Protestant growth.

The new structures did not introduce strangers; many of the Mexican prelates had met each other and their Latin American counterparts while studying at the Gregorian University's residential Colegio Pío Latino América or at the Montezuma Seminary in New Mexico. The political scientist Roderic Ai Camp noted that by 1945 nearly half of Mexico's bishops had studied at the Gregorian, and that graduation from that institution generally guaranteed a faster promotional track into the episcopacy. By the late 1930s, Mexico accounted for nearly half of all Latin American priests attending the university. The other common institutional tie, Montezuma, was established in 1937 in response to continued Church-state tensions in Mexico. With many diocesan seminaries closed or weakened, the Mexican episcopacy secured significant support from the U.S. hierarchy to create a remarkable pandiocesan seminary with Gregorian-trained and Jesuit faculty. Throughout its history until its closure in 1972, Montezuma's attrition rate remained well below that of diocesan seminaries. The seminary's alumni also were highly represented in future episcopal cohorts: 37 percent of the bishops active in 1989 had studied

there. The intimate socialization afforded by shared educational experiences was also reinforced by shared geographical origins. Camp noted that nearly half of the bishops in 1945 had emerged from just three seminaries: Guadalajara and Morelia in the western central states of Jalisco and Michoacán, respectively, and Mexico City. In fact, many students from the last seminary had family origins in the Cristero-dominated western central region. Provincial ties and shared ideologies, steeped in Cristero martyrology, would frame the interaction with political and military elites who tended to be from Mexico City.

The hierarchy's first reentry into electoral politics, "Declaración sobre los deberes cívicos de los católicos" (October 1956), sought to establish guiding principles for the presidential election of 1958. The bishops may have had newly enfranchised (1953) female voters in mind. The final principle's invitation to Catholic voters to seek counsel for their important decisions in the confessional booth revived liberal suspicions over the Church's intromission. Even stronger criticism greeted a follow-up 1957 booklet, *Iniciación a la vida política*, a catechism of Catholic social doctrine, authored by Pedro Velásquez, the director of the CEM's Social Secretariat. While the PAN affirmed the propriety of both interventions (Velásquez had long collaborated with the lay movement, Acción Católica), important elements of the PRI pressed for censure. In spite of a simulated apology, the Church had succeeded in pressing the limits of permissible action. The integralist-pragmatist binary would undergo further nuancing in the ensuing decades, beginning with the sexenio of Adolfo López Mateo (1958–64).

In its steady push back to the center of national life, the hierarchy counted on even more effective agents of change and advocacy, namely, Catholic laity, especially in the middle and elite classes. The roots of Acción Católica Mexicana, its allied women's and youth auxiliaries, Asociación de Damas Católicas and the Asociación Católica de Juventud Mexicana, and the Caballeros de Colón (established through the solidarity of the United States-based Knights of Columbus), stretched back to the revolution and Cristero periods. So did those of the PAN, which gravitated toward a Christian Democrat position. The list of grievances was long and included as its uppermost concern the area of education, especially at the primary level. Many Catholics had heeded some clergy's call to boycott public schools during the Cárdenas administration, owing to the socialist curriculum. The number of parochial schools could not meet the demand, however, and families of more modest means were compelled to rely on the growing public school structure. The Asociación Nacional de Padres de Familia began an incessant campaign, under the banner of religious liberty and in the name of the majority of Mexican parents, to restore a moral and religious dimension to the public school curriculum. The lay voice also

echoed the hierarchy's persistent wish to abolish the harsh anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution. Over the long term, the Church's interests were most effectively championed by a strategically placed political and economic elite, nurtured by ultraconservative religious orders such as Opus Dei (based in Spain) and the Legionarios de Cristo. The latter group, founded in 1941 by the Michoacán native Marcial Maciel, together with its large lay auxiliary, Regnum Christi, built a network of schools, seminaries, and universities that allowed the group to realize great inroads into the country's economic elite. The Legionarios' ascendancy was also propelled by Maciel's relationship with Pope John Paul II, a connection that the Vatican would later rue when details of Maciel's pederasty were confirmed during Benedict XVI's papacy.

CATHOLIC REFORM, RETRENCHMENT, AND REORGANIZATION

Its conflictive, symbiotic relationship with the Mexican state did not shelter the Church from global winds of reform. The events and documents of the Second Vatican Council resonated in Mexico, albeit in a lower register and in a more gradual manner than in other countries. The council's modernizing measures, taken in tandem with CELAM's deliberations on the Church's liberative vocation, provided ample room for theological innovation and sociopolitical engagement, as attested by events in Chile, Brazil, and Central America. Few Mexican clerics, however, endorsed the new options. Indeed, in 1963, with conciliar reforms afoot, the Mexican hierarchy established the Colegio México in the Gregorian University, thereby isolating Mexican priests from theological currents flowing from Latin America to Rome. Also, the relatively lower number of foreign priests in Mexico, compared with other Latin American countries, constricted the transmission of liberation theology. Those prelates and clergy who did embrace liberationist thought too closely found themselves increasingly out of step with the majority of their colleagues, for whom caution became the watchword. Thus, the Cuernavaca bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo's sponsorship of the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC) and its priest-director Ivan Illich soon marked him as an episcopal outlier. Méndez also was one of the few clerics to denounce the 1968 massacre of protesting students in Tlatelolco Plaza. Later, the Church took pains to disavow his participation in the Christians for Socialism conference in Santiago, Chile, in 1972 (he was the only Latin American bishop in attendance), as well as his explicit embrace of "participative" socialism during a 1978 trip to Cuba. Méndez's retirement in 1982 at age seventy-five occurred none too soon for conservative sectors of the Church and society.

Equally problematic for many was the “Red Bishop” of San Cristobal de las Casas (Chiapas), Samuel Ruiz, whose protoliberationist approach included an affirmation of the social and political aspirations of his heavily indigenous flock in the face of a conservative church. Liberation theology’s ecclesial base communities (CEBs) proved ideal vehicles for catechetical reflection on Mayan Indians’ longstanding grievances against mestizo-dominated structures and for theological reflection that wedded biblical and Mayan insights. Toward the end of his service, Ruiz also sought to increase the woefully thin ranks of indigenous clergy by ordaining married men to a special liturgical officiant category just shy of the formal priesthood. By overlaying ancestral Mayan views of religious authority (only married men could offer wise counsel) on Church practice, Ruiz hoped to reverse the perennial marginalization of Indians in its institutional life. Ultimately, both the personnel and theological innovations did not survive beyond his administration. Rather, Ruiz’s greatest impact was felt in the contested civic sphere, in which he emerged as a key interlocutor in a period of great regional and national conflict.

The San Cristobal diocese’s creation of the independent Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, in which Ruiz remained active long after his forced retirement, provided a forum in which to champion Indian concerns and denounce human rights violations. Events in neighboring Guatemala in the early 1980s provided the first impetus for such advocacy. With scores of thousands of indigenous Mayans from that country fleeing genocidal regimes, Ruiz’s diocese, in sometimes uneasy collaboration with the federal government and the United Nations, served as a refuge and crucible for the forging of a broader panethnic vision. In this, Ruiz found support from fellow bishops in the Pacific South Pastoral Region.

The “re-Guatemalization” of Chiapas (the territory had long been disputed between the two countries) also, perhaps unwittingly, introduced a powerful current of Pentecostalism from that country, thereby presenting Ruiz and the diocese with an ecumenical challenge. On the one hand, Ruiz lamented the cultural fragmentation precipitated by sectarian growth. In 1982, together with other southern bishops, he fretted that the “unpatriotic ... division, manipulation and social weakness caused by sects” in Central America would spill over into Chiapas and Oaxaca. On the other hand, the diocese collaborated closely with the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) relief agencies and the WCC’s affiliate, the Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias Cristianas (CLAI), and even with Pentecostal medical personnel from Mexico City. Founded in 1979 by a cross section of theologians and church leaders, CLAI’s protoliberationist praxis gathered Catholic, Pentecostal, and other evangelical members around a common pastoral

solidarity with Central American refugees. In later instances of persecution of religious minorities in Chiapas, Ruiz adopted a more tolerant posture.

Ruiz's greatest notoriety, however, occurred as a result of the 1994 Zapatista uprising. The rebellion, led by an indigenous (and mestizo) vanguard, sought to short-circuit the implementation of the recently signed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other neoliberal economic accords that threatened to obliterate, among other things, local control of corn and other resources in the name of globalized economic efficiency. Many sympathizers from throughout the country and abroad rallied to the Zapatistas' side, effectively checking attempts by the Carlos Salinas de Gortari administration (1988–94) to put down the rebellion by armed force. With NAFTA hanging in the balance, the government accepted the insurgents' choice of Ruiz as a trusted mediator to head up a blue-ribbon reconciliation commission. While the Congress' eventual legislation on the matter fell far short of the commission's recommendations, Ruiz's participation in the episode revealed the dimensions of his stature. The prestige earned over nearly four decades of pastoral labor ensured the support of many of his colleagues in the face of determined opposition from the papal nuncio, Girolamo Prigione, an important interlocutor with the PRI government and military. The curtailment of Ruiz's protoliberationist and proindigenous diocesan policies would have to await his departure. And even then, the auxiliary bishop named to replace him, Raul Vera, displayed so many similar inclinations during the period of overlap – Vera likened it to a conversion process – that the Vatican opted, in the end, to transfer in a more reliably conservative prelate, Felipe Arizmendi of the neighboring Tapachula diocese.

The changing fortunes of liberationists can also be traced by tracking the trajectory of the Secretariado Social Mexicano (SSM). Long the CEM's arm for articulating Catholic social doctrine, the SSM began to run afoul of episcopal tolerance, as its staff echoed Bishop Sergio Méndez's strong critique of episcopal inaction after the Tlatelolco student massacres and participated in several theological congresses that called for greater episcopal accountability and consultation with "the people of God." In late 1973, the CEM's Comisión Episcopal de Pastoral Social declared the SSM a semiautonomous "ecclesial research institution in service to the Church and the people of Mexico."² While respectful of the SSM's historical role as the Church's social conscience, the decision to spin off the agency also effectively denied the SSM important material support.

² Comisión Episcopal de Pastoral Social, "Comunicación del presidente de la CEPS sobre el Secretariado Social Mexicano," *Documentación e Información Católica* (15 Nov. 1973): 614, quoted in Blancarte, *Historia* 292.

The sidelining of Méndez and Ruiz and the SSM did not represent a wholesale repudiation of liberation theology. The outcome of Méndez's case reflected as much a concern for collegiality and consensus as it did concerns over heterodox thought and practice. In the same vein, it was harder to marginalize Ruiz, given his support from CEM colleagues, his long-standing service in the Comisión Episcopal de Pastoral Indígena, and his coauthorship of important documents such as the CEM's own *sui generis* response to the social questions raised in Vatican II, the 1968 "Pastoral Letter by the Mexican Episcopacy Concerning the Development and Integration of the Country." An early attempt to implement the conciliar teachings on collegiality resulted in the formation in 1963 of the Unión de Mutua Ayuda Episcopal, which allowed poorer, principally southern dioceses to pool resources. The UMAE grew to include twenty-five dioceses and a considerable number of clergy and laypersons. Upon his assumption of the CEM presidency in 1968, the Oaxaca archbishop Ernesto Corripio Ahumada expanded the UMAE model into a CEM Comisión Episcopal de Pastoral Social. Other bishops adopted the ecclesial base community pedagogical and organizing structure, often shaping it to conform to diocesan needs and always keeping it close. The intensified lay engagement afforded by the CEBs made these a particularly attractive option for northern border bishops, who encouraged their formation – along with *cursillo* spiritual retreats – as an alternative to the active intimacy of small *evangélico* congregations. Unlike their southern colleagues, however, the northern bishops directed lay attention toward issues of democratic reform and accountability rather than social justice.

Such regional differences underscored the continued internal complexity of Mexican Catholicism in a period of great demographic and uneven economic growth. Industrial development propelled migration to the northern territories and states, especially along the swath running the length of the United States–Mexico border. This, in turn, required a stronger institutional presence. In Baja California, for example, the dioceses of Tijuana and Mexicali were established in 1964 and 1966, respectively, as, among other things, bulwarks against significant *evangélico* cross-border incursion (Baptists and Pentecostals) and migration from the nation's interior (Methodists and Pentecostals). These dioceses were not established as distant outposts. The first bishop (1966–84) of Mexicali, Manuel Pérez Gil, a graduate of Montezuma, arrived with a storied ecclesial, political, and social pedigree from the Morelia diocese. He later served as archbishop of Tlalnepantla in Mexico state and as a key interlocutor with the government in the 1992 constitutional changes (see later discussion). Elsewhere, the strong demographic trends required a constant reconfiguration of diocesan and vicariate territories. The number of prelates rose from forty-two in

1955 to sixty in 1968 to ninety-two in 1990. In that final year the national Church counted fifteen archdioceses, fifty-five dioceses, and seven special territories. In 1977, the CEM instituted an important change in its governance structure, grouping the country's dioceses into fourteen pastoral regions. The shift facilitated the articulation of and attention to regional priorities.

Equally as important as more efficient administration was the adoption of more direct catechetical pedagogy, especially for that large part of the flock not targeted by *Opus Dei* and the *Legionarios de Cristo*. In 1978, Flaviano Amatulli Valente, of the Sacred Heart Missionary Fathers, founded the *Apóstoles de la Palabra*. The order sought to turn the tables on aggressive proselytism by strengthening biblical literacy among grassroots Catholics through intensive evangelization, Bible study, and the copious production and distribution of apologetical pamphlets. Ironically, three years before the order's founding, a renegade *Acción Católica* group had forced Amatulli's ouster from the Ojitlán community of Tuxtepec, Oaxaca, alleging that the Italian priest's Bible distribution amounted to the propagation of Protestant evangelicalism. In fact, the conflict revolved around Amatulli's forceful preaching against traditional hybrid Catholic practices and their imbrication with local shamans, alcohol vendors, and political bosses. The turmoil instigated by the bosses, including the takeover of the temple, continued under Amatulli's replacement, a Mexican Sacred Heart priest, and reached international notoriety when the French dissident (anti-Vatican II) bishop Marcel Lefebvre included Ojitlán in his Mexican itinerary in 1981.

CATHOLIC ASCENDANCY

Perhaps nothing contributed more to the recovery of Catholic ascendancy than the growing decrepitude of the governing party. Beginning with the violent repression of student protests in 1968 in Tlatelolco Square, the PRI saw its authority steadily diminished by rigged elections, corruption, currency devaluations, bank bailouts, and the squandering of national wealth and resources, including the petroleum boom of 1978–80. Still, it was a natural calamity that laid bare official ineptitude. The Mexico City earthquake of October 1985 collapsed not only multiple buildings including apartment high-rises and major hospitals, but also the pretense of official efficiency. In the aftermath of the tremor, residents despaired of any meaningful rescue by the authorities, and they organized a vast network of citizen-led organizations, including Catholic CEBs and Protestant groups.

Most observers date the emergence of civil society in Mexico from this point and place of devastation. Arguably, the political reverberations

radiated into the following years. The first aftershocks registered in the northern border state of Chihuahua in the contested gubernatorial election of 1986. PAN partisans decried the official outcome in favor of the PRI and enlisted overt episcopal support for a vote recount. The threat by the state's bishops to cancel masses carried eerie echoes of catalytic events of the Cristero conflict. Ultimately, the national hierarchy, in tandem with the papal nuncio Prigione, persuaded the bishops of Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez to back away from their ultimatum. The PRI also made its first concession of many to follow. Opposition party victories were recognized in Chihuahua and Baja California states, followed later by Yucatán, Guanajuato, Nuevo León, and Jalisco. While each state captured by opposition parties presented a unique religious and political history, the predominance of former Cristero strongholds stood out. So, too, did the success in Mexico City and Zacatecas, Baja California Sur, and Michoacán states of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), a newer party that resulted from the convergence of leftist parties (including the Communist Party) and dissident currents of the PRI.

The brokering role of the prelates would continue to prove key in the ensuing political realignment and constitutional reforms in religion and land tenure. However, given the old antipathies between the Church and the political Left, this intervention was virtually absent in cases of PRD-led protests over election fraud and irregularities, such as the contested 1988 presidential victory of Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the PRI over Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the Church's old presidential nemesis, Lázaro Cárdenas, of the PRD. Coincidentally or not, the Salinas administration ushered in the final rapprochement between Church and state, beginning with official recognition of the Vatican as a foreign and equal state and the exchange of ambassadors, and ending with the constitutional reforms in matters of religion. Prior to Salinas, much of the communication between the government and the hierarchy and papal nuncio had taken place through private, unofficial channels. Under Salinas, the simulation of official distance was brought to an end.

As the reform project acquired steam, other political and social sectors weighed in, thereby broadening its scope across all religious confessions. (In a famous aside, the nuncio Prigione had suggested that in such a weighty matter as religious reform, "flies" [Protestants] should not expect equal treatment to the "elephant" [Catholic Church].) In 1992 the relevant articles of the Constitution were changed to give all church groups juridical status as religious associations, with power to own, acquire, and transfer real property. The voting rights of clergy were restored, and restrictions against the public display of religious garb, such as collars, removed. Foreign clergy were assigned a special immigrant status. Public religious gatherings were

restricted no longer to exceptional permits. Some paid media religious programming was allowed. Further enabling legislation also regularized the fiscal and accounting status of religious employees, incorporating them in the health and retirement systems. Two longstanding issues remained unresolved, however, much to the consternation of Catholic organizations. The reforms did not dismantle public education's laicism; neither did they allow for electronic media ownership by churches.

JOHN PAUL II: "MEXICO, SIEMPRE FIEL"

The government's reticence to unlock mass media may have reflected a nervousness over the appeal of Pope John Paul II, who in his several trips to the country, beginning in 1979, demonstrated a power of convocation that drastically eclipsed that of the decaying governing party. The pontiff locked in his popularity in his first visit (to attend the third CELAM gathering, in Puebla, Mexico) by comparing his host country to his native Poland in its steadfastness ("Mexico, siempre fiel" [Mexico, always faithful]). His adoption of the Virgin of Guadalupe endeared him to her millions of devotees in Mexico and the United States. The fervor surrounding his visit to several cities – Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla, and Oaxaca – was amplified through generous media coverage. The din drowned out concern over his firm correction of Medellín's (CELAM II) liberationist course in his remarks to the Latin American prelates, especially his warnings about rereadings of scripture that implicated Jesus Christ "in class struggle."

The multivalence of the pope's message and its reception continued throughout his subsequent visits (1990, 1993, 1999, and 2002). On the one hand, for religious and political elites, each visit represented a new challenge or opportunity to jockey for the upper hand or for coveted proximity to a figure of great moral stature. On the other, for the millions who crammed sidewalks for a momentary glimpse of the pope mobile, the very body of the pope or items he touched became precious opportunities for a touch of grace. That many of the same millions continued to believe that the Church should stay out of politics and continued to ignore Church teachings on sexuality and reproduction was not lost on some observers. Neither was the marketing potential of the papal phenomenon. Even sports broadcasters were drawn into the fawning, underwritten with generous corporate sponsorship, especially on the Televisa and TV Azteca duopoly and their U.S. affiliates.

The May 1990 visit occurred in the wake of the first democratic openings in the northern border states. The recent fall of the Berlin Wall also had stoked aspirations for democratic reform worldwide and burnished the pope's credentials in this area. The historical convergence allowed the Vatican to offer itself as the chief interlocutor for the looming constitutional

reforms, all the while assuring the Salinas administration that it could count on a responsible partner for the historic process. The August 1993 visit consisted of a brief visit to Yucatán, where John Paul II delivered a long-overdue apology to the Mayans and other Indians of the Americas for the violence of colonial evangelization. President Salinas joined the pontiff for the occasion. The timing proved exquisite – or ironic, depending on one's point of view – in light of the January 1994 Zapatista uprising.

The January 1999 visit allowed John Paul II to introduce the deliberations of the recent Synod for America, a gathering in Rome of invited prelates from North and South America to consider the Church's position on questions such as neoliberal economics, south-to-north migration, and evangelization and pastoral solidarity within a hemisphere of disparate wealth and poverty. As the buffer nation between the two zones and with one-tenth of its citizens residing in the United States, Mexico, in the view of the pope, had a unique vocation to fulfill as a source of new hemispheric evangelization and as a "vigilant advocate" for the human rights of a mobile humanity. The visit was also notable for the ubiquitous role and direction provided by members of the *Legionarios de Cristo*. Again, as before, the effervescence of the crowds that lined the boulevards and the effusive media coverage suggested that for most viewers the potentially last visit by the ailing and beloved pontiff was as much if not more a spectacle as a meeting of minds.

John Paul II's next large engagement with Mexico took place in Rome during the Jubilee year and resonated loudly at a historic juncture in Mexican political life. In May 2000, the Vatican sealed the Cristero narrative of persecution at the hands of the "tyrant" Plutarco Calles by canonizing twenty-five priests and two catechists as the "Mexican Martyrs." The roster was dominated by slain clerics from the western central states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Colima, and Michoacán. Once more, the Church was able to mobilize an impressive media apparatus to broadcast simultaneously the canonization ceremony in Rome and local overnight pilgrimages in the revered sites of execution. The momentum carried over into the July presidential election. The Guanajuato governor and PAN candidate Vicente Fox rode a crest of broad resentment and, maximizing the electoral reforms and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' strong challenge from the Left, ousted the PRI from the presidency. After a century and a half of perennial exclusion, the Catholic vision of an integral society – especially in terms of freedom of religious expression and media ownership and a public education congruent with Catholic moral values – acquired renewed vigor. The long-term strategy outlined by Pope Pius XI in 1932, when he called on the Mexican Church to eschew violent resistance for a "social reconquest" through *Acción Católica*, seemed finally to have borne fruit.

John Paul II's fifth and final visit to Mexico in 2002 took on the trappings of a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe, especially in light of his obviously failing health. On 31 July he canonized Juan Diego, the reported eyewitness of the 1531 Marian apparition; the following day he beatified two Zapoteco Indian martyrs from Oaxaca, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Angeles. The ceremonies were not without their critics. Indeed, an earlier controversy had caused the Vatican to delay Juan Diego's canonization. In September 1999, the basilica's longtime abbot (1963–96), Guillermo Schulenburg, together with another prelate, Carlos Warnholtz, and the basilica's historian, Esteban Martínez de la Serna, authored a letter to the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints, warning Pope John Paul II against embarrassing the Church by elevating a figure of dubious historicity to its altars. Rather than jeopardize papal credibility in the future should it be proved Juan Diego never existed, it seemed better to leave the story at the level of a pious legend. The leaked confidential letter inflamed passions in Mexico. That the higher critics – two of whom had surnames of German origin – were interrogating the case of an Indian candidate for canonization invited charges of racism; that they had “lived off the offerings” of the faithful for three decades invited charges of hypocrisy. Schulenburg and Warnholtz were absent from the basilica ceremony. By that point, both had been removed, and control of the heretofore relatively autonomous basilica had passed in 1999 to the Mexico City archbishop and cardinal Norberto Rivera, a vigorous promoter of Juan Diego's cause.

The historical circumstances of the Zapoteco martyrs also invited criticism. In September 1700, the two fiscales (religious deputies) had denounced to authorities the persistent “idolatry” of leaders of their mountain town of San Francisco Cajonos. The resultant punitive attempt at extirpation enraged the surrounding communities, who besieged the nearby Dominican convent demanding the transfer of the dilatory fiscales. The initial scourging of Bautista and de los Angeles was carried out within view of the horrified clerics; the duo was executed by quartering on 16 September in nearby San Pedro Cajonos, and their remains cast into a mountain crevice. The episode ended with the arrival of Spanish troops from Antequera (Oaxaca City) and Villa Alta. This time harsh punishment was meted out in tandem with penitential reconciliation. A two-year trial in Villa Alta ended on 11 January 1702, with the execution by quartering of fifteen of the thirty-four suspects. The deaths of two Indian laymen guarding Christian orthodoxy in a remote corner of the colony did not merit special attention for nearly two centuries. The story languished in obscurity until the Oaxaca bishop, Eulogio Gillow, compiled the martyrdom narrative in 1889 and initiated the century-long campaign for beatification and sainthood. Bereft of popular support for most of the

twentieth century, the cause garnered diocesan sponsorship again in 1968 under Archbishop Ernesto Corripio Ahumada (1967–76). Corripio's second successor in Oaxaca, Hector González Martínez (1993–2003), revived the effort after pointed neglect of the cause by the liberationist bishop Bartolomé Carrasco, a vigorous promoter of indigenous and progressive theology. After the beatification, the diocese sponsored a tour of the martyrs' relics throughout the state. At a time of considerable religious shift among indigenous populations and almost a decade after the Zapatistas' revindictory uprising, the Church could point to indigenous exemplars of fidelity to hold on to the faithful. The irony of proposed sainthood for "cultural traitors" in an era of renewed indigenous agency did not escape commentary by activists, who juxtaposed the top-down promotion of piety with the grassroots defection to *evangélico* options.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN INDIGENOUS MEXICO

The long-delayed cultural revindication may have arrived too late to staunch the outward flow. The 2000 census revealed that an increasing percentage of indigenous Mexicans were opting for new religious identities and cultural arrangements. *Evangélicos* and other non-Catholics reportedly composed 22 percent of Chiapas' population, 19 percent of Tabasco's, 18 percent of Campeche's, 16 percent of Quintana Roo's, 11 percent of Yucatan's, and 10 percent of Oaxaca's and Morelos's – rates as high as quadruple the national figure, and matched only by Baja California and Chihuahua states.³ The striking growth in regions of relatively later international migration attracted scholarly attention. Building upon new transnational and translocal analytical frames, some scholars began to study migration – of bodies, networks, ideas, and symbolic goods – in terms of a series of overlapping circuits: a primary, or domestic one, linked to a secondary, or international one. Religious resources and remittances thus flowed through secondary migratory circuits to such places as Guadalajara, Mexico City, Veracruz, and Acapulco, then to travel from there – again, usually borne by migrants – to regions tied to these large urban venues by primary circuits. Once there, the religious remittances catalyzed religious change – and intolerant reaction.

Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Adventists, and fundamentalist faith missions carried out the preponderance of Protestant work among indigenous populations during the first half of the twentieth century. To the first group had fallen the geographic responsibility under the comity accords

³ "Población de 5 años y más por entidad federativa, sexo y religión, y su distribución según grupos quinquenales de edad," Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2000, Instituto Nacional de Información Estadística y Geográfica de México, www.inegi.gob.mx.

of the 1914 Cincinnati Plan drawn up by U.S. missionary agencies. By midcentury, most of the leading Mexican Pentecostal denominations also turned their gaze southward, including the Asambleas de Dios, the Iglesia Cristiana Interdenominacional (ICIRMAR), the Iglesia Apostólica, the Luz del Mundo, the Iglesia de Dios en la República Mexicana, the Iglesia de Dios Evangelio Completo, the Iglesia Evangélica Independiente, and the Movimiento de Iglesias Evangélicas Pentecostés Independiente. From the urban areas of southern Mexico they expanded into the farthest mountain corners, again, along established rural-urban migratory paths. One group in particular, the Iglesia de Jesús en las Américas, based originally in California and Baja California, arrived relatively late, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, along migratory circuits of the expanding Oaxacan labor diaspora known as Oaxacalifornia.

Protestant expansion in indigenous Mexico owed as much to parachurch agencies as it did to denominational efforts. Perhaps the most important contribution was that of the missionary linguists affiliated with Cameron Townsend's Summer Language Institute (Wycliffe Bible Translators). Surprisingly, Townsend had curried favor in the 1930s with President Lázaro Cárdenas and secured permission for the SLI to operate in Mexico under an exclusive arrangement with the national Education Secretariat to rescue and systematize indigenous languages for pedagogical, cultural, and Bible translation purposes. The odd match between Mexico's most leftist president and Townsend led to the fundamentalist leader and his wife's running vigorous interference – with the U.S. Congress and administration and within his vast U.S. network, which included Moody Bible Church – to prevent U.S. intervention against Cardenas' expropriation and nationalization of Mexico's oil resources in 1939.

The SLI's efforts stood in contrast to Mexico's official *indigenismo* policies. While its postrevolutionary discourse celebrated a valiant Mesoamerican past, the government's practice emphasized the urgency of assimilating the country's vast Indian population into the majority mestizo culture; bilingual schooling was the exception, and many Indians were pressured to adopt more mainstream ways and dress. Ancestral and hybrid forms of Catholicism persisted, however. At the same time, the PRI overlaid on the traditional systems of local civic and religious governance its own system of regional political bosses, *caciques*. The imbrication of religious and political authority at the local level often resulted in the exclusion or expulsion of religious dissidents (non-Catholics) from communities seeking ostensibly to defend traditional ways and customs ("*usos y costumbres*"). The return of converted migrants from more religiously diverse urban areas and the United States frequently provoked outbursts of religious intolerance; the problem would persist into the next century. This defense of religious

and cultural identity often mirrored or paralleled the defense of communally held lands and natural resources. Federal and state authorities were hard-pressed to balance constitutional rights of individual conscience with indigenous communities' rights, to quote Oaxaca's 1998 law, "to maintain and develop their own identities." The gray legal zone was rendered grayer still by, on the one hand, traditionalists' appeals to international labor and human rights accords and, on the other, the persistent habit of migrating people picking and choosing from the smorgasbord of expanded religious and cultural options. Legally and politically, it was one thing to proscribe gringo missionary proselytism. In 1979 Mexican anthropologists succeeded in having the Education Secretariat sever its nearly four-decades-long working relationship with the SLI. But it was quite another to keep migrants, especially returning and circulating migrants, and their families in check.

POPULAR *EVANGÉLICO* RELIGIOSITY AND MIGRATION

As wartime allies, the Avila and Franklin D. Roosevelt administrations forged a guest labor arrangement that lasted from 1942 until 1964. Created to fill a labor vacuum caused by World War II's manpower demands, the Bracero Program facilitated the arrival (and circular return) of more than four million guest workers until its demise under the scrutiny of congressional investigation. The program reversed the events and flow of the Great Repatriation of the 1930s when one out of every three Mexicans, including many United States-born children, were pushed out of the United States as scapegoats for the Great Depression. Given workers' social ties – they were more than merely pliable units of labor – the Bracero Program also "pulled" many families northward or set in place resilient cultural templates and circuits of migration that persisted into succeeding generations. Equally important, the program's loopholes – intentional and otherwise – fostered a mixed-status workforce in U.S. agriculture.

The primarily peasant and proletarian makeup of the labor current meant that the two religious traditions most prevalent among braceros were Catholicism and Pentecostalism. Indeed, Pentecostal churches on both sides of the border set themselves up as way stations for migrant respite and evangelism. The missiologist Donald McGavran noted the Pentecostal pattern and drew upon it to develop his strategic church growth theory. For McGavran, the return of converted or sympathetic braceros represented an important leavening element in evangelical growth in Mexico.⁴ This bracero-driven church growth benefited Pentecostal churches in both

⁴ Donald McGavran, John Huegel, and Jack Taylor, *Church Growth in Mexico* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1963), 58.

countries, owing to their class location. To a lesser extent, it also buttressed Baptist and Presbyterian churches, especially, in the case of the latter, in the indigenous South. Baptist growth also occurred, as did Adventist and Latter-day Saints (LDS) growth, through more strategic missionary work.

As U.S. immigration law and enforcement veered erratically throughout the remainder of the century, from draconian measures such as Operation Wetback in 1954 to the major reforms of 1965 and 1986 and myriad smaller ones, the Pentecostal ethos of solidarity with the sojourner remained constant. Though largely uninformed theologically (there is no Pentecostal social doctrine), this more practical approach to migration ensured that U.S. Latino Pentecostal congregations would remain, in the words of the Apostolic Assembly leader Benjamin Cantú, “houses of God and doorways to Heaven.”⁵ It also ensured, against the final decade’s backdrop of heightened border surveillance, the inevitable inspiration of a small corpus of hymnody referencing undocumented migration. Such songs, usually framed in *norteño* musical and lyrical templates, offered prodigal-like sagas of illegal border crossing, wandering, conversion, and purposeful return. When inserted into the decades-old Pentecostal hymnodic repertoire, they underscore the ubiquitous motif of traveling. Roughly one-third of original Spanish-language apostolic hymns, for example, lament, celebrate, or otherwise describe the soul’s journey, often through bleak deserts, harsh mountains and valleys, and, of course, vales of tears.

POPULAR CATHOLIC RELIGIOSITY AND MIGRATION

Upon the onset of the Bracero Program, several Mexican prelates fretted about the inevitable contagion of ideas and habits from the Protestant United States. This echoed a perennial discourse, stretching back into the nineteenth century, of unitary Mexican identity. The separation of families could lead to atomized hedonism, family disintegration, and heresy. Along with greater coordination with U.S. Catholic bishops and the loan of Mexican seminarians to migrant-impacted dioceses in the neighboring country, several dioceses developed pastoral techniques to guide the wandering flock. These included spiritual retreats for returned migrants during holidays and patron saint feast days. Contrary to the reigning sociological paradigm at midcentury, the increased distance from their hometowns often strengthened migrants’ previously wavering or ambivalent religious cultural identities. This was certainly the case with Mexican cults of the saints. Although these represented a longstanding tradition in Mexico, the intensified labor migrations of the second half of the twentieth

⁵ Benjamin Cantú, interview with author, Los Angeles, 19 Sept. 1994.

century extended their reach to the farthest corner of the labor diaspora and reinforced regional devotional circuits within Mexico. While the Virgin of Guadalupe remained central, other Marian, Christ, and saint figures assumed a prominence in line with the relative participation of certain regions' populations in national and international migratory circuits. The Virgin of Zapopan (near Guadalajara), the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos (Jalisco), and the Holy Child of Atocha (Plateros, Zacatecas) reflected western Mexico's predominance in the northward-bound migration stream through the first seven decades of the century. Elsewhere in Mexico, regional devotions such as the Virgin of Juquila (Oaxaca) attracted pilgrims from throughout that state and such urban areas as Acapulco and Mexico City. Once laborers from the southern regions joined the migrant stream, they carried along with them these important intercessory figures. In the case of Oaxacans, their devotions took root in Sinaloa and Baja California states and, finally, California and Oregon. A similar phenomenon can be observed among Puebla migrants in New York City.

Additionally, increasingly more efficient and quicker transportation and financial technologies resulted in a strengthening of migrants' ties with hometown devotions in sync with devotional calendars and festivities. The emergence of migrant hometown associations throughout the United States – they began as provincial hometown associations in Mexico City – also facilitated the transfer of resources in support of patron saint feast days and temple rehabilitation projects. When possible, migrants returned, gifts and appliances in hand and in new vehicles, to buttress local economies during Christmas and patron saint holidays. The return of “successful” migrants reinforced local lore and expectations, thereby stretching a culture of migration across generations and reinforcing the migration of culture to places of new settlement.

In the case of failure and physical danger, the saints and virgins stood at the ready. Increasingly, the longstanding tradition of *ex voto retablos* (crudely painted tin sheets) documented the expanding transnational dimensions of migration and religion. The inherited medieval practice portrayed the difficult circumstances in which modern migrants placed themselves. The painted scenes usually depicted a personal calamity and a saint's or virgin's miraculous intervention against death by drowning, travel, industrial accident, or disease. Textual conventions framed short, succinct declarations of pleas for succor, the claim of a miracle, and thanksgiving, usually with names, dates, and place of origin. More frequently, the material evidence of the cult of the saints consisted of framed photos, diplomas, tin body parts (reflecting the healed limb), and scrawled petitions or notes of thanks. The transnational imbrication of the practice became increasingly evident with the appearance of diplomas from U.S. universities and, after the first Gulf

War, photos of Mexico-born U.S. Marines and soldiers. Since the plea for a saint's or virgin's help implied reciprocity, many migrants or their family advocates pledged mandas, promising to visit the figure's shrine. The resultant consummation of these transactions helped to build a transnational migrant devotional circuit that included, among others, the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City; of the Virgins of Zapopan, of San Juan de los Lagos, and of Pátzcuaro (Michoacán); of the Holy Child of Atocha; and, more recently, the temple of Toribio Romo. In the case of the Holy Child of Atocha, one researcher reported a collection of 30,000 testimonial items left by devotees in the Plateros, Zacatecas, sanctuary.

The rich visual culture was accompanied by a sonic one framed by the musical genres favored by migrants: corridos (ballads), rancheras, polkas, huapangos (from the eastern coast crescent known as the Huasteca), boleros, vales, cumbias, and others. Here, as in the case of black slave spirituals on the eve of Emancipation, traditional religious music directed to, say, the Virgin of Guadalupe acquired a multiple valence imprinted by the cross-border experience. The *mañanitas* (serenade) offered to her on her feast day of 12 December struck a heightened affective register when sung and heard in the far-flung corners of the labor diaspora such as Durham, North Carolina, or New York City, as compared with its customary performance in Mexican hometowns. The vast and ever-growing repertoire of migrant music, easily numbering more than 1,000 recorded songs by century's end, while largely secular and even sometimes picaresque, also contained invocations for and other gestures toward heavenly protection and intercession. In the case of the Tigres del Norte's runaway hit "*Un día a la vez*," divine succor remained the central theme of the vals' lyrics. Arguably the most popular troubadours of the migrant experience, this platinum-selling norteño band based in San Jose, California, employed the Spanish-language version of the country gospel song "One Day at a Time" to proffer a musical litany with trenchant themes of endurance, hope, and humility. The decidedly christocentric thrust of the song, however, suggests a probable provenance from or transmission through borderlands Pentecostal circuits, where the song had long been part of the hymnodic repertoire.

Such ecumenical musical borrowing – between popular Catholics and Pentecostals – would not be surprising in the post-Vatican II era. Where the Catholic Church attempted to draw the line, however, was in the area of heterodox saint devotions. The Church was pressed to mark boundaries, in order to exclude the growing popularity of morally liminal figures such as Juan Soldado, Juan Malverde, and Santa Muerte (Saint Death or Holy Death). The devotion toward the first figure, a wrongly condemned (for rape) common soldier in Tijuana, grew in tandem with that city's own expansion into a major migration node. His gravesite and legend attracted

a following among migrants and smugglers. Given the travesty of his execution, his cult retained a relatively beneficent aura. By contrast, that of Juan Malverde, based in the Pacific coast state of Sinaloa, reflected more of a bandit tradition. It grew exponentially in the shadow of the vigorously expanding drug trade of the late twentieth century. Many *narco corridos* (ballads) attested to the ubiquity of Malverdean devotion throughout the region. The power derived from efficiently supplying the U.S. drug market, in spite of (or thanks to) the much-touted “war on drugs,” propelled the Malverde cult beyond the Church’s control. On the other hand, the crackdown by law enforcement and an increasingly militarized border made for more desperate devotions. The most vulnerable sectors of urban and borderlands Mexican society – prostitutes, transvestites, unsuccessful migrants, disaffected youth, and others – began to pin their hopes on Santa Muerte. Representations of this skeletal death figure became widely available in vendor stalls along the border and in impoverished urban neighborhoods. While clearly derived from Mesoamerican and medieval Christian representations and from clever daguerreotypes of the early twentieth century, the Santa Muerte figure marked the intersection of hybrid religiosity and existential desperation, a near-nihilism wrought by macropolicies of the nation-state.

In its search for more orthodox advocates, the Church fastened upon two figures, one ancestral and one modern, the Virgin of Guadalupe and Toribio Romo, one of the Cristero saints. The first had long served as a unifying symbol of national identity; the second, while initially useful for revindicating the Church’s legacy of martyrdom under the Calles regime, acquired greater valence as a migrant devotional figure. The media giant, Televisa, and its U.S. subsidiary, Univisión, provided a ready means for the diffusion and virtual experience of the annual 12 December pilgrimage that took upward of three million devotees to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Audiences throughout the country and beyond were regaled by the sights and sounds of their favorite soap opera and other stars serenading the cloak/image, accompanied by a crack mariachi orchestra in front of the basilica’s high altar. Thus, nostalgia, spectacle, and devotion radiated out to the length and breadth of the labor diaspora, restitching the fabric of religious cultural identity.

Outside the country, the Virgin of Guadalupe took on more valence as an advocate for migrants’ rights rather than as a symbol of old Church-state conflicts. The icon’s perennial plasticity allowed for a transformation in line with Mexican American activism and the earlier farmworker rights’ advocacy of Cesar Chavez. When the events of 11 September 2001 effectively torpedoed plans to reform the nation’s immigration laws, some activists ratcheted up their advocacy and created the Antorcha Guadalupeana. Led

by the Tepeyac Association, a Jesuit-inspired community organization sponsored by the New York archdiocese, a vast network of organizations and parish groups stretching from New York City to Puebla state coordinated the relay of a torch, blessed at the basilica in Mexico City, up the northeastern corridor of Mexico and through the southeastern corridor of the United States, past the U.S. Congress, to its final destination at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Importantly, the crossing over from a country where she remained a central symbol to one where she was peripheral allowed for a new incarnation of Guadalupe as an undocumented immigrant; nevertheless, the appeal for her miraculous intervention in U.S. immigration policy echoed ancestral belief in her power. Guadalupano devotion, thus, reflected a multidirectional transnationalism – at once top down and bottom up.

The cult of Toribio Romo followed an independent course from the Church's original plan. Originally included among the group of twenty-seven Cristero saints, Romo quickly eclipsed the rest, including the cohort's titular head, Cristobal Magallanes, owing to an unexpected cameo appearance in the migration lore of the Jalisco highlands region. In the apocryphal legend, a fair-skinned stranger assisted a border crosser after the migrant's several failed attempts to cross into the United States. The Good Samaritan invited the migrant to visit him in his hometown after "making it" in el Norte. Years later, when the successful migrant returned to thank his benefactor, he found no one in the sleepy hollow of Santa Ana de Guadalupe in the Jalostitlán municipality of Jalisco state who matched his description, even though most of the village inhabitants shared the Romo surname. He finally identified the individual in question when shown a framed photograph of the locally venerated priest who was killed in 1927. The story sparked an explosion of devotion to Romo, as pilgrims from western and central Mexico added his place of birth to their usual circuit of sanctuaries, including nearby San Juan de los Lagos. Together with their entrepreneurial priest, the villagers and their kin abroad set about an ambitious development program to receive the growing tide of religious tourists, mostly grateful migrants, who then carried Romo's image to the far-flung corners of the labor diaspora, such as Detroit, Michigan.

RELIGIOUS CHANGE AND PLURALISM: MEXICO'S CHALLENGE

Most of the foregoing discussion has centered on intra-Catholic diversity. Most liberals, Masons, revolutionaries, generals, and politicians were, after all, Catholics. The process of rapprochement was, essentially, a family affair. The remaining discussion focuses on the diversity of the expanding slice of non-Catholic Mexico. The Jesuit apologist Roberto Rivera, writing in

1962, used Pentecostal ecstasy among women and indigenous converts as straw men to disparage the entire by then century-old historic Protestant project. For Rivera, Pentecostalism's mystical rapture and sensual rhythms did "not reflect the evangelical purity of which the Protestants boast so much." In the place of social uplift for the masses, Pentecostal churches offered "cultish service and suspicious mystical raptures, with their women jerking in the temple to the penetrating rhythm of tambourines." One of the movement's sole redeeming features lay in its refusal to replicate missionary-native worker dependency, where "the one lives as lord and the other as servant."⁶ Rivera was not alone in his critique.

Writing two decades earlier (1940), J. Merle Davis revealed the depth of missionary exasperation at Pentecostals' poaching of thinly staffed Protestant works. Pentecostals, in Davis' analysis, generally disdained foreign missionary supervision, formal denominational structures, and well-appointed temples. Pentecostal parasitic proselytism was expert in Mexican psychology, providing emotional outlets and greater freedom for lay participation in liturgy, worship, and preaching. It encouraged "loud weeping, groaning, shouting, gesticulating, marching and dancing in the service" in a time frame free of missionaries' "business-like timetable." Small wonder, then, that the upstart movement was "disintegrating not a little of the older evangelical work."⁷ Ironically, Pentecostal apologists would probably have affirmed unabashedly the descriptions.

Given his antagonistic stance, Rivera's mocking of Pentecostal ascendancy over historic Protestantism in 1962 offers a valuable metric for assessing the outcome decades later. He proved partially prescient. As a general rule of thumb, most scholars estimate Pentecostalism and its derivatives to represent two-thirds of Latin American and U.S. Latino Protestants. Rivera did not foresee, however, the great impact that pneumatic Christianity would have within his own tradition by century's end, beginning a decade later when the liturgical windows thrown open by Vatican II allowed in a robust Pentecostal hymnody created by Catholics' *aleluya* cousins decades earlier. In 1972, the first Congress of Christian Renovation in the Holy Spirit was held in Mexico City; throughout the 1970s the movement found ready acceptance in several leading dioceses, including Mexico City and Zamora, Michoacán, and tepid and even hostile receptions in others. As had its Pentecostal precursor, the Catholic charismatic renewal took deep

⁶ Roberto Rivera R., *Instituciones protestantes en México* (México, D.F., 1962), 97–125.

⁷ J. Merle Davis, *The Economic Basis of the Evangelical Church in Mexico: A Study Made by the Department of Social and Economic Research of the International Missionary Council* (London, 1940), 31–2, quoted in Kenneth Gil, *Toward a Contextualized Theology for the Third World: The Emergence and Development of Jesus' Name Pentecostalism in Mexico* (Frankfurt, 1994), 107–8.

root in Mexican and Mexican American soil. In 2003, the historian Gastón Espinosa estimated that one of three Latino and Latin American Christians (Protestant and Catholic) was of one pneumatic variety or another.⁸

Nevertheless, at midcentury, Mexican *evangelicalismo*, much of it now in national hands as a result of the constitutional proscription against foreign clergy, found itself at a juncture. In the judgment of the historian Jean Pierre Bastian, the movement generally “mutated” from representing important democratic spaces for prerevolutionary dissent and democracy to mimicking some of the worst features of the political cultures of Latin America: charismatic caudillismo (strongmanship) and clientelism.⁹ Pentecostals were especially guilty of this. So, too, were historic Protestants; thus, for example, the need in the 1970s for Methodist and Presbyterian communions to reform internal governance structures to prevent leadership gerontocracies from holding on to power. Beyond the Sociedad Bíblica Mexicana, the United Bible Societies affiliate, and the Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa, formed in the Avila sexenio to combat intolerance, few mechanisms or structures existed for concerted actions vis-à-vis the governing party and state. Since Protestants had long weighed in in favor of laicism, the only force against which to adopt an oppositional stance was Catholicism. The pressure of that hegemonic tradition did allow for some measure of common understanding and solidarity across confessional boundaries. The 1958 Billy Graham crusade represented a high moment of broad cooperation. Lacking a social and political elite beyond those few families with revolutionary pedigrees, such as the Pascoes, however, or even an intellectual one to articulate a strategic vision (Gonzalo Báez Camargo, the last prominent *evangélico* “statesman,” died in 1983), Protestants were relegated to observer roles in the large political controversies consuming the political class. The corruption of the PRI left Protestants increasingly bereft of a traditional ally in the newly competitive universe of Mexican national and state politics. With its hints of Cristero revindication, the moralizing rhetoric of the ascendant PAN did not resonate as strongly as such rhetoric might with, say, U.S. evangelical voters. Elements of the leftist PRD found great difficulty in shedding a congenital antireligious bias inherited from earlier Marxist progenitors.

In the end, starting with the 1988 presidential election, Protestants split their votes equally among the partisan options. (The exception was the Guadalajara-based Luz del Mundo church’s special alliance with the

⁸ Gastón Espinosa, “The Impact of Pluralism on Trends in Latin American and U.S. Latinos Religions and Society,” *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* no. 7 (Fall 2003): 9–55.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Bastian, *La mutación religiosa de América Latina, para una sociología del cambio social en la modernidad periférica* (México, D.F., 1997).

PRI in heavily Catholic Jalisco.) In addition to this ambivalence, it was hard to counter the Protestant DNA of perennial division and schism; confessional rivalries stymied the long-term durability of joint theological training and publishing programs. Even Pentecostal denominations, especially the older ones who in their youth poached on vulnerable historic Protestant works, were not immune from this congenital condition, as seen in the rise of neo-Pentecostal alternatives such as Amistad Cristiana, led by the musical impresario Marcos Witt. Ironically, Mexico's *evangélicos* entered the twenty-first century in much greater relative numbers than they had at mid-twentieth century (see later discussion), but the very impulses that drove religious dissent continued to pull centrifugally in the direction of atomized incoherence, except in the matter of religious tolerance.

The renewed Catholic muscularity in the public square can be understood partially by considering the trends of the decennial censuses over the last half-century. While the percentage of Mexicans who identified as Catholic has fallen, the rate has not kept pace with that of the rest of Latin America. Thus, the decline from 98.2 percent Catholic in 1950 to 87.9 percent in 2000, while significant, still pointed to a social and demographic hegemony. The significance is best understood in terms of ethnic and regional differences, as in the case of indigenous Mexico, which registered 80.8 percent Catholic; the southern (heavily indigenous) states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Yucatán, and Oaxaca, which were 63.8, 70.4, 71.3, 73.2, 84.3, and 85 percent Catholic, respectively; and the northern border states of Baja California and Tamaulipas, which registered 81.4 and 83 percent Catholic, respectively. By contrast, the country's three largest cities, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey – the tripod of national political and economic power – remained Catholic bulwarks.

Nationally, all Protestants represented 5.2 percent of the population (5.78 percent when Seventh-Day Adventists – who share significant overlap with *evangélicos* – were included), while Jehovah's Witnesses and Latter-day Saints represented 1.25 and 0.24 percent, respectively. Jews, "Other Religion," and "No Religion" represented 0.05, 0.31, and 3.52, respectively. Presbyterians composed 53 percent of the country's nearly 600,000 historic Protestants, while Baptists were in second at 33 percent, followed by Methodists and Nazarenes at 5 percent each, and Mennonites and "Others" at 2 percent each. The ethnic differences can be further seen in the general Protestant rate for indigenous Mexico: 10 percent, almost double the national average. Here certain confessional groups have predominated: Presbyterians and Adventists, 45 and 73 percent of whom, respectively, are in the heavily indigenous states. Together with Pentecostals (19 percent of Pentecostals speak an indigenous language, triple the national rate), these have not only realized significant inroads among indigenous populations,

but also kept the more heterodox groups such as Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses at bay among these populations.

The regional and ethnic nuances, combined with many other variables (e.g., income, educational level, literacy, level of economic marginalization), demonstrated that Mexico had entered the twenty-first century with a complexity that augured great challenges and opportunities for a nation less and less actively engaged with institutional Catholicism and still sorting out a new accommodation of the traditional Church, state, and society. Whether the future trends align more closely with those for the country's indigenous groups and even the higher non-Catholic rates in "greater Mexico" (the U.S. Mexican-origin population) or with Pope Pius XI's imagined "social reconquest" will remain an important topic of research for scholars and others.

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AMERICAN JUDAISM IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

DEBORAH DASH MOORE

On 12 June 1945 a group of Orthodox rabbis, members of an organization of Yiddish-speaking traditionalists called Agudath Harabbanim (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada), assembled at the McAlpin Hotel in Manhattan.¹ Americans, and especially Jews, had celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany on Victory over Europe Day only a month earlier. But the end was not in sight. World War II still raged against Japan. Yet a decision to pass judgment on Mordecai M. Kaplan, a controversial and influential rabbi, could not wait for peace. Kaplan had published his magnum opus in 1934, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life*, as well as several subsequent volumes of religious thought. Neither these books nor the establishment of the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation to promote his philosophy of Reconstructionism merited a court of judgment despite their radical ideas. However, when Kaplan published a version of the *Sabbath Prayer Book*, he crossed a line. The solidarity the war had produced among Americans of all faiths and no faith – to paraphrase Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn’s famous sermon dedicating the Fifth Marine Division Cemetery on Iwo Jima – inspired Kaplan and his coeditor.² As one of three fighting faiths of democracy, Judaism needed to adapt. “Modern-minded Jews,” they wrote in the prayer book’s introduction, “can no longer believe, as did their fathers, that the Jews constitute a divinely chosen nation.”³ The Agudath Harabbanim violently disagreed. They opposed such accommodations to democratic ideals. Recognizing a challenge to their authority, they felt compelled to

¹ Joshua Trachtenberg, “Review of the Year 5706, Part One: The United States, Religious Activities,” *American Jewish Year Book* 47 (1945–46): 217.

² “Chaplain Gittelsohn on Iwo Jima: Kappa Frater Delivers Memorial Address,” *Deltan of Phi Sigma Delta*, May 1945, 3.

³ “Introduction,” in Mordecai M. Kaplan and Eugene Kohn, eds., *The Sabbath Prayer Book* (New York, 1945), 10. Other rejected beliefs included the following doctrines: revelation, personal Messiah, restoration of the sacrificial cult, retribution, and resurrection.

act. In their eyes, subtle changes in prayers clothed in orthodox garb threatened to mislead unwary Jews.⁴ Kaplan's *Sabbath Prayer Book* was heretical. Kaplan was a heretic. Heretics were to be shunned. Hence they voted to excommunicate Kaplan. Then they burned the prayer book. Shock and outrage greeted their act. But so did assent.⁵

The first formal Jewish excommunication in the United States of the founder of the first indigenous American Jewish religious movement symbolizes interlocking trends of the postwar period. A militant Jewish traditionalism in the United States, including the growth of Hasidism, developed simultaneously with flourishing Americanized forms, especially Conservative and Reform Judaism. In addition, these years prepared the ground for new American Jewish religious movements, not only Reconstructionism, but also humanistic Judaism and Jewish renewal.⁶ Yet this thriving religious pluralism practiced by American Jews did not win adherents among all Jews as a consensual Jewish ideal.⁷ Dissent and criticism, even secular versions of excommunications, divided Jews. In part these bitter recriminations reflected the impact of politics and the need to choose sides on pressing issues facing Jews in the United States and abroad. In part they expressed struggles for power and influence. In part they stemmed from genuine disagreements about fundamentals of Jewish life, including what meaning God, Torah, and the Jewish people could have in the wake of the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. American Jews recast their understanding of Jewish tradition as they interpreted shifting demands of Jewish identity, American citizenship, and current politics. Changes in American Judaism registered not only within explicitly religious institutions, beliefs, and practices, but also within ostensibly secular and nonsectarian Jewish organizations.

In an influential article published in 1992, the American Jewish historian Arthur Goren argued that "two compelling experiences" gave coherence to the postwar "golden decade": establishment of the state of Israel, which "defined the arena of greatest concern" to American Jews, and emergence of an aggressive liberalism, which "directed the political energies of American Jews into the general American domain." This parity

⁴ Zachary James Silver, "The Excommunication of Mordecai Kaplan: How an Act of Intolerance Paved the Way toward Cultural Pluralism in Post-War America" (Honors Thesis, Jewish Studies Program, University of Pennsylvania, 3 May 2005), 39–48, 78–81.

⁵ *New York Times*, 22 June 1945, A15.

⁶ For religious trends in Judaism in subsequent decades, see Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York, 1993), and Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT: 2004).

⁷ Deborah Dash Moore, "Religious Pluralism in American Judaism," forthcoming.

of “interests and commitments” stood at the “heart of the Jewish communal consensus for nearly half a century” and was securely in place by 1955. Rooted in suburbanization that gave visible expression to American Jews’ postwar affluence and security, this synthesis of American and Jewish concerns became a secular faith that animated Jewish communal organizations, both those explicitly devoted to politics and those dedicated to religion. Individually, Jews identified themselves as belonging to a religious group, but collectively they behaved as members of an ethnic group. Such elision of Judaism and Jewishness, religion and ethnicity, became a central feature of American Jewish life after the war.⁸

Sixteen years later, the American Studies scholar and anthropologist Riv-Ellen Prell perceived tension and anxiety underneath the emergent optimism and consensus of the postwar period. Fears plagued American Jews. Despite a rapid decline in anti-Semitism after the war, they remained reluctant to drop their defensive posture. However, these years produced a “remarkable realignment in American Jewish culture” that affected politics, religion, social class, occupations, and family life. Prell contended that the postwar period was “best understood as a dynamic moment when the fundamental definitions of what it meant to be an American Jew were worked out in the new synagogues, living rooms, organizations, and political debates of the time.” Her analysis gave equal weight to private as well as public cultural patterns. Drawing upon insights from the social scientist Charles Liebman’s 1973 book *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Prell highlighted enduring anxiety over incompatible demands of liberalism and Judaism, as Jews tried to balance liberalism’s universal values with Jewish religious parochialism. Despite “shared attitudes, social class and patterns of Jewish life, the postwar period was as much about difference and conflict among Jews as it was about a shared consensus.”⁹

American Jews emerged from World War II acutely aware that while Americans had triumphed in great victories, Jews had suffered ghastly, crushing defeats. The Allies had won the war against Hitler too late to rescue most European Jews. Only when American Jews saw the photographs and newsreels of living human skeletons, mountains of dead bodies, bulldozers pushing corpses into mass graves, enormous piles of human hair, eyeglasses, and baby clothes did they really realize, most for the first time, what had actually happened. The critic Susan Sontag called it a “negative epiphany.” She was a girl when she came across photographs of the death camps by

⁸ Arthur A. Goren, “The ‘Golden Decade’: 1945–1955,” in *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 186–204, quoted on 188.

⁹ Riv-Ellen Prell, “Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish Life from the End of World War II to the Six-Day War,” in *Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York, 2008), 114–41, quoted on 115–16.

chance in July 1945. Later she wrote, "Nothing I have seen – in photographs or in real life – ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously."¹⁰

Jewish journalists struggled to find words to express their anguish and outrage. "Our tiny people has sacrificed twenty-five times more lives in this war than Great Britain on all her battlefields," screamed Trude Weiss-Rosmarin. "This is in absolute figures."¹¹ Born and educated in Germany, Weiss-Rosmarin immigrated to the United States in 1931, hoping to teach Assyriology. She ended up founding *Jewish Spectator* in 1936 initially as a "typical family magazine, with special appeal to the woman," especially educated women.¹² In 1944 Weiss-Rosmarin urged American Jews to take personal responsibility in the face of the Holocaust. "Conscious of the fact that due to the overwhelming losses of the Jewish people in the last ten years," Jews should aver, "I no longer have the right to regard myself as a mere individual." Rather, each Jew "must take the place of at least one other Jew, who died without fulfilling his Jewish tasks and destiny."¹³ Long before the philosopher Emil Fackenheim formulated his 614th commandment not to hand Hitler any posthumous victories, Weiss-Rosmarin was hammering home for American Jews a practical program of Jewish cultural renewal in response to the Holocaust.

Liberation not only occurred too late for European Jews, but it also failed to liberate survivors. They congregated in displaced-persons camps, "behind walls without hope," reported Rabbi Abraham Klausner. "America was their hope and all America has given them is a new camp with guards in khaki," he wrote in exasperation. "Freedom, hell no!" Chaplain Klausner exclaimed. "Liberated but not free, that is the paradox of the Jew."¹⁴ Unwilling to go back to their former homes, where anti-Semitism was still active; unable to immigrate to the Jewish settlement in Palestine because of restrictions imposed by the British; unwanted as refugees by victorious Allies, the survivors looked to America. Four and a half million American Jews, now the largest population of Jews in the world after the murder of six million European Jews, recognized and accepted the demands and burdens of Jewish leadership. But finding solutions to the survivors' predicament would not be easy.¹⁵

¹⁰ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977; reprint, New York, 1990), 19–20.

¹¹ Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "These Are Our Losses," *Jewish Spectator* 10 (May 1945): 5.

¹² Deborah Dash Moore, "Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and *The Jewish Spectator*," in *The "Other" New York Jewish Intellectuals*, ed. Carole S. Kessner (New York, 1994), 101–21.

¹³ Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "The New Year and the Tasks Ahead," *Jewish Spectator* 9 (Sept. 1944): 4.

¹⁴ Quoted in Avinoam Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Detroit, 2009), 19.

¹⁵ Abram L. Sachar, *The Redemption of the Unwanted: From the Liberation of the Death Camps to the Founding of Israel* (New York, 1983).

Victory even exacted a price among Americans: malaise and doubts about life's meaning. Joshua Loth Liebman, rabbi of Reform Temple Israel in Boston, responded with Kaplan, "God is the Power for salvation revealing Himself in nature and in human nature."¹⁶ Part of the postwar religious revival that made celebrities of Norman Vincent Peale, Billy Graham, and Fulton Sheen, Liebman merged a tradition of Jewish ethical literature with Freudian psychology to champion "life-affirming" beliefs. His 1946 book, *Peace of Mind*, quickly vaulted to the best-seller lists and made religious publishing history. Liebman preached a Jewish message of love, "the chief intimation of our immortality." He defined love as "relatedness to some treasured person or group, the feeling of belongingness to a larger whole of being of value to other men." But he also polemicized against aspects of Christianity, charging that it burdened people with excessive guilt. Responding to atheism and despair in the postwar world, to pessimism, defeatism, and existentialism, Liebman offered inner peace not as a spiritual end in itself, but as a means to the transcendent goal of the American pursuit of happiness. He prophesied "that from the democratic experience of our century . . . mankind will first learn its future dignity as independent and necessary partners of God." This was the Jewish way. God, Liebman explained, "always wanted His children to become His creative partners, but it is only in this age, when democracy has at least a chance of triumphing around the globe, that we human beings can grow truly aware of His eternal yearning for our collaboration."¹⁷

Liebman's message reached millions of Americans in the face of a war that had destroyed Jewish spiritual patrimony as well as Jewish lives. In January 1945, speaking at a moment of unbearable pain for Jews, Abraham Joshua Heschel, a rabbi and philosopher who had escaped Europe in 1939, characterized the lost Eastern European era as a "golden period in Jewish history, in the history of the Jewish soul." Heschel explained that among Jews in Eastern Europe "holiness, the highest of all values, became so real and so concrete" that it pervaded all aspects of life. American Jews faced twin challenges of rescuing the remnants of Jewish culture looted by the Nazis and revivifying Jewish spirituality among survivors. "We must retain the Jewishness of our fathers and grandfathers," Heschel urged. The present generation still possessed "keys to the treasure. If we do not uncover the treasures," he warned, "the keys will go down to the grave with us, and the storehouse of the generations will remain locked forever."¹⁸

¹⁶ Joshua Loth Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York, 1946), 171.

¹⁷ Andrew R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 217–39, quoted on 231.

¹⁸ Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Eastern European Era in Jewish History," in *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston,

As did Weiss-Rosmarin, Heschel called for a living Judaism, for American Jews to nourish a Jewish spiritual future. It was no easy task. Still, in the last months of the war, Jews in American uniforms worked assiduously to reclaim Torah scrolls and Jewish religious texts. As soon as the war ended, groups of scholars and philanthropists in partnership organized research teams to sift through enormous storehouses of captured loot. They managed to ship to the United States treasures collected prior to the war by such organizations as the YIVO (Jewish Scientific Institute), previously headquartered in Vilna, Lithuania. At the same time Jewish chaplains successfully convinced the United States Army to print a complete edition of the Babylonian Talmud for displaced persons (DPs) despite a scarcity of Hebrew type in Europe. But rescue and reconstruction neither solved the problem of kindling Jewish life in the United States, nor ended the ordeal of Jewish DPs.¹⁹

Most American Jews turned to Zionism during the postwar period largely in response to the suffering of survivors stranded in DP camps, a political solution with spiritual dimensions to a religious and humanitarian problem. Although Zionism offered a compelling analysis of anti-Semitism, many American Jews did not adopt Zionist ideology. Contending that Jewish national homelessness caused anti-Semitism, Zionists argued that a Jewish state open to all Jews would remove the source of hatred of Jews and normalize Jews' existence as a nation among other nations. Instead, American Jews recognized Jews' need for an independent state, for political power. Fighting in the U.S. armed forces empowered more than half a million American Jews; they had been taught to fight back. Returning veterans agitated, raised funds, purchased weapons, joined Zionist organizations, and spoke out forcefully on behalf of a Jewish state.²⁰ At the United Nations meeting in Lake Success in 1947, the Reform rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, representing the Jewish Agency, eloquently expressed the justice of the Jewish people's cause. (A parallel representation by Dr. W.E. B. DuBois speaking on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], protesting the denial of human rights to African Americans in the United States, was not unnoticed by American Zionists.)²¹ Silver pressed for partition of Palestine into two states: one Arab and one

IL, 1990), 1–21, quoted on 2, 21. Heschel delivered the lecture in Yiddish. It appeared in *Yivo bleter* 25:2 in Yiddish and in English translation in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1 (1946). An expanded version was published as *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1950).

¹⁹ Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame: American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944–1948* (Detroit, 1993).

²⁰ Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 252–4.

²¹ Arthur A. Goren, "Ben Halpern: 'At Home in Exile,'" in *The "Other" New York Jewish Intellectuals*, ed. Carole S. Kessner (New York, 1994), 90.

Jewish. When the United Nations, including both the United States and the Soviet Union, voted for partition on 29 November, Jews all over the world celebrated.

But some Jews dissented. They opposed the establishment of a Jewish state. This small minority was from opposite ends of the religious spectrum, from Reform and Orthodox Judaism. United in their rejection of Zionism, they proffered different justifications. Some Orthodox Jews, including the group that had excommunicated Kaplan, believed that “hastening the end” by establishing a state before the Messiah arrived was forbidden. Reform Jews, especially those identified with such “classic Reform” practices as Sabbath worship services on Sunday, insisted that Jews were exclusively a religious group, not a political or ethnic one. Establishing a Jewish state threatened the civic equality and security of Jews throughout the world, including the United States. The latter group founded the American Council for Judaism in 1942 to spread their message that Judaism was a universal religious faith and to oppose the idea of a Jewish state. After the state of Israel was declared on 15 May 1948, Orthodox opponents gradually accommodated themselves to its existence without recognizing its legitimacy. The council similarly accepted Israel’s reality while continuing to advocate a multireligious democratic state instead of a Jewish one.²²

Most American Jews exulted in the miracle of Israel’s establishment, considering such dissenting voices “unJewish.” In 1945 they raised \$57.3 million to help resettle DPs and to assist Jews throughout the world. In 1948, they contributed \$205 million, 80 percent of which went to Israel for resettlement.²³ However, fund-raising dollars to support Jewish charitable federations and welfare needs in Israel declined steadily after 1948 as American Jews channeled their money into building new suburban synagogues and Jewish community centers. After supporting the establishment of Israel in its war for independence, many American Jews integrated Israel into their consciousness of what it meant to be Jewish. Then they turned to constructing a vibrant Jewish life in the United States, mostly in the suburbs.

Veterans propelled a transformation of American Jews. They took advantage of the GI Bill to attend college or professional school, which helped to thrust them out of the working class and into the middle and upper-middle classes. Many decided to buy a house, breaking with their parents’ preference for renting. They abandoned old urban ethnic enclaves and moved to parts of the country they had glimpsed during the war, such booming

²² Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia, 1990), 56–87.

²³ Prell, “Triumph,” 117.

cities as Los Angeles and Miami. These moves took them into largely Protestant milieus, a dramatic change from the predominantly Catholic urban neighborhoods they had known.²⁴ There and in suburbs surrounding large cities of the Northeast and Midwest, Jews created new forms of religious life and community, modeled in part on Protestant church patterns. Organizations, once complementary to a vibrant neighborhood street culture, now assumed increasing prominence as a means of linking Jews to one another. "A generation ago the majority of the American Jews were to be found outside the Synagogue," observed C. Bezael Sherman in the early 1960s. "Today the situation is reversed."²⁵ Membership rolls swelled: Hadassah (a women's Zionist organization), B'nai B'rith (a fraternal social organization), youth groups, congregations, defense organizations devoted to protecting Jewish rights and combating anti-Semitism (especially the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League), and federations of Jewish philanthropies, all enrolled increasing numbers of Jews.²⁶

The turn to mass membership organizations among American Jews expressed another response to the Holocaust. The war years had revealed the inadequacy of ideologically driven Jewish groups. They had rescued only a handful of European Jews and had failed to organize a broad spectrum of American Jews. After the war, elite organizations of wealthy Jews, such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC 1906), decided to establish branches, opening membership to Jews who would not previously have been recruited.²⁷ Gender-based Jewish organizations also grew. In 1947 when Justine Wise Polier, a distinguished judge, took over the Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress (1937) upon the death of her mother, Louise Waterman Wise, she expanded its reach. It competed aggressively with the older National Council of Jewish Women (1896) to enroll women in its program for civil rights and civil liberties at home and support of Israel abroad. Women's Division members mobilized against "released time" programs for religious instruction in public schools in the 1950s and opposed federal support for parochial education. Secular in their self-definition, many of these Jewish organizations implicitly and explicitly

²⁴ Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* (New York, 1994).

²⁵ C. Bezael Sherman, "Demographic and Social Aspects," in *The American Jew: A Reappraisal*, ed. Oscar I. Janowsky (Philadelphia, 1964), 44.

²⁶ Herbert J. Gans, "The Origin and Growth of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs: A Study of the Jews of Park Forest," in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York, 1958), 205–48.

²⁷ Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: A History of the American Jewish Committee 1906–1966* (Philadelphia, 1972), 333–44.

adopted perspectives on religion and its place in American society. They championed separation of church and state, invoking legal protection for religious minorities from a Christian majority's overbearing dominance.²⁸ Most non-Jewish Americans considered these Jewish organizations to be part of Judaism, despite their nonsectarian self-definition.

Jewish defense organizations' programs changed after the war. Older ideas about the causes of Jew hatred seemed inadequate to explain what had happened in the Holocaust. Seeking alternatives, these organizations adopted a "theory of the unitary character of prejudice," which saw anti-Semitism as inseparable from racism.²⁹ Since any form of discrimination affected Jews even without singling them out, Jews could fight anti-Semitism by opposing racism in any form. After the war, the AJC commissioned two German Jewish Marxist theorists of the Frankfurt School who had escaped Nazi Germany, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, to research causes of anti-Semitism. *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) emphasized psychological forces behind racism rather than socioeconomic ones and confirmed possibilities of combating anti-Semitism through existing political and economic institutions.³⁰

Nonetheless, differences emerged among the AJC, ADL (Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1913), and AJCongress (1920). The AJC sought to protect "the American way of life from the encroachments of totalitarianism of both the right and the left."³¹ Its wary anti-Communism placed it at the forefront of efforts to purge Communists from Jewish society during the Cold War. The AJC defined Communism not only as un-American, but also as "unJewish," attacking what had been a secular faith among many radical Jews during World War II. Also anti-Communist, ADL emphasized "intergroup harmony," "fighting bigotry," and "promoting equal economic, social and educational opportunities for all."³² It championed educational programs and participated actively in Brotherhood Week and interreligious and interracial efforts to change American attitudes toward people who were considered different. ADL opposed discrimination, seeking acceptance of religious and racial differences. Although AJCongress shared such goals, it explicitly favored cultural pluralism and Jewish nationalism. Its program for "full equality in a free society," adopted in 1945 as the mandate of a

²⁸ Stuart Svonkin, "American Jewish Congress," in Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, eds., *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (New York, 1997), 44–5.

²⁹ John Higham, quoted in Stuart Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York, 1997), 18.

³⁰ Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice*, 33–9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

³² Benjamin Epstein quoted in *ibid.*, 20.

newly established Commission on Law and Social Action, did not mean “painless integration of individuals of Jewish faith” into society.³³ Rather, freedom required both individual and collective self-expression; Zionism, recognition of Jews as a people, was central to American Jewish freedom.

If Jewish identity can be understood as a blend of belonging, belief, and behavior, belonging achieved primacy for American Jews in the postwar years. They participated in the postwar expansion of religion in the United States, fueled by their migration out of established neighborhoods in large cities. In new suburbs, Jews adopted middle-class Protestant patterns of religious organization and established congregations as a primary unit of Jewish identification. The United Synagogue of America, representing Conservative Judaism, increased its affiliates from approximately 350 to 800 by the mid-1960s. In the mid-1950s, 131 new congregations joined. Similarly, Reform Judaism’s Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) reached 664 members compared with 334 in 1948. In the mid-1950s, fifty new congregations joined. In 1951 the UAHC moved its headquarters from Cincinnati to New York City, confirming the city’s centrality for American Jewish organizational life. Both Conservative and Orthodox institutions were located in New York, along with all the defense organizations and coordinating bodies of philanthropic federations.³⁴ Reform congregations, called temples, tended to be larger than Conservative ones, called synagogues or centers. Nevertheless, postwar expansion transformed Conservative Judaism into the largest single Jewish religious movement in the United States. Orthodox congregations, numerically strong but waning in religious commitment prior to World War II, also multiplied but failed to keep pace with Reform and Conservative groups. In this period Orthodoxy gradually became a minority movement among American Jews, despite the growth of Young Israel, a modern Orthodox movement, as well as Hasidic sects and pious Orthodox, rejuvenated by the migration of religious refugee leaders fleeing Nazi Europe.³⁵

Battles for allegiances among American Jews occurred largely in the suburbs, a new locale for Jewish life. The Reform UAHC regularly lent a Torah scroll, an ark to house it, and prayer books to new congregations that requested them. It also arranged for student rabbis to conduct services. They did their best to encourage congregants to identify as Reform.³⁶

³³ Alexander H. Pekelis, “Full Equality in a Free Society: A Program for Jewish Action,” in *Law and Social Action: Selected Essays of Alexander H. Pekelis*, ed. Milton R. Konvitz (Ithaca, NY, 1958), 218–19.

³⁴ Wertheimer, *People Divided*, 4–9.

³⁵ Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington, IN, 2009), 208–9.

³⁶ Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco, 1984), 71–3.

Conservative rabbis championed a seven-day-a-week synagogue center program that included Hebrew schools for boys and girls three days a week, a youth movement for the best students, and summers at a Ramah camp with its intensive Hebrew-speaking and religiously observant environment. Worship services remained traditional, resembling those of modern Orthodox Jews. But Conservative Jews could drive to services without violating Sabbath laws against working, according to a 1950 decision by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards. They could also sit together with their families, a measure of egalitarianism rejected by modern Orthodox Jews, who retained separate seating for men and women.³⁷ Modern Orthodox Jews refused to drive on the Sabbath or holy days, adhering at least to the fiction that worshippers would walk to synagogue (though some drove and parked a respectable distance from the building). They rejected Conservative innovations that allowed cantors to face the congregation and use a microphone to amplify their voices. These pragmatic differences sharpened boundaries between Conservative and Orthodox Jews, helping to distinguish Conservative from Orthodox Judaism.³⁸ They also reflected fundamental values often identified with two prominent rabbis associated with modern Orthodox and Conservative Judaism: Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Louis Finkelstein.

Soloveitchik emerged in the postwar years as “American Orthodoxy’s ideological standard-bearer and spiritual guide.”³⁹ Born in Lithuania, he received a traditional Jewish and advanced secular education, taking a degree in philosophy. He immigrated to Boston in 1932. Upon his father’s death, he succeeded him on the faculty of Yeshiva University in 1941 as head of its rabbinical school, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Called “the Rav,” meaning “rabbi par excellence,” Soloveitchik helped to delineate possible changes in Jewish practice within the boundaries of Jewish law. He also wrote works that combined a deep knowledge of Jewish sources with mastery of Western philosophy. *Halachic Man*, published in 1944 in the journal *Talpiot*, blends abstract analysis with poetic outbursts, concise and telegraphic writing with expansive and dramatic style, as it moves from “discussions of laws of mourning of the high priest” to the “methodology of modern science,” from phenomenology of religion to “personal family history.”⁴⁰ Soloveitchik’s pioneering attempt to formulate a philosophy of Jewish law included a stringent critique of mysticism

³⁷ Prell, “Triumph,” 121.

³⁸ Gurock, *Orthodox Jews*, 207.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Lawrence Kaplan, “Translator’s Preface,” Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halachic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia, 1983), ix.

and romantic religion, identified in part with Christianity. Under his leadership, more than two thousand men received ordination, strengthening a modern Orthodox rapprochement between secular learning and devout observance.

Louis Finkelstein ascended to the presidency of the Jewish Theological Seminary in May 1940, and he quickly established his priorities, especially discussion across theological barriers and engagement with non-Jews. Born and raised in the United States, Finkelstein followed his father into the rabbinate. His traditional Jewish and advanced secular education resembled Soloveitchik's. Finkelstein wanted to make religion vital in American society and in the lives of American Jews. Too many young Jews, in his opinion, espoused secularism and saw Judaism as "singular and queer." But Judaism belonged in the modern world. Finkelstein thought that convincing non-Jewish Americans of Judaism's significance in contemporary life would ultimately help Jews feel comfortable in the United States. In fall 1951, *Time* magazine featured him on its cover, paying tribute to his role in the emerging interfaith movement and signifying his achievement in gaining recognition for Judaism as part of the religious fabric of the United States. To bridge differences, Finkelstein used history and institutional innovation. He edited a two-volume collection of essays, *The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion* (1949), and established the Institute for Religious and Social Studies and its Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, which included some of the leading thinkers in the United States. Finkelstein expanded Conservative Judaism, transforming it into the majority Jewish religious tradition in the United States. His message reached regular listeners through a weekly radio program, *The Eternal Light* (which later moved to television), and an educated elite through The Jewish Museum. But he also encouraged the postwar seminary to carry on intellectual traditions associated with destroyed European Jewish centers.⁴¹

Finkelstein's ambitions for Conservative Judaism resonated with experiences of rabbis serving as chaplains during the war. They discovered that their respected status as military officers as well as the armed forces' commitment to equal representation of Judaism together with Protestantism and Catholicism changed perceptions of Judaism. A new appreciation of what the three great religious traditions shared, often called the "Judeo-Christian tradition," animated the military chaplaincy and pointed to a common religious worldview that sustained American democracy. In addition, rabbis from Reform, Conservative, and modern Orthodox

⁴¹ Michael B. Greenbaum, "The Finkelstein Era," in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, 1997), 163–232, quoted from Finkelstein on 166.

backgrounds discovered similarities that united them. Jewish chaplains gained new respect for each other, even adopting a common prayer book. This spirit of cooperation endured after the war ended for those who had served. The Jewish Welfare Board, which guided chaplains during the war, institutionalized a tripartite division of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox representation in order to develop consensus on a wide range of religious matters. Emanuel Rackman, an Orthodox chaplain, credited his years in service for teaching him how to live in harmony with other Jews. Subsequently Rackman served as rabbi of the Fifth Avenue synagogue in Manhattan, as well as professor of political philosophy and law at City University of New York and Yeshiva University, and, finally, as president of Bar Ilan University in Israel. His long career of seven decades reflected his steadfast commitment to both modern Orthodox Judaism and Jewish unity.⁴²

Such Jewish ecumenism received pragmatic expression in rabbinical councils organized in cities throughout the United States and in a coordinating body, the Synagogue Council of America. The council (1926) combined representatives of modern Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism's rabbinical associations and congregational unions. It operated through consensus. In 1949–50, the council issued statements on behalf of “organized American religious Jewry” in favor of international peace and American democracy.⁴³ The council also defended Jews and maintained the momentum of cooperation encouraged by military service.

Nevertheless, in 1956 the Council of Torah Sages of Agudath Israel and eleven heads of rabbinical academies issued a ban prohibiting Orthodox rabbis from participating in groups with rabbis from non-Orthodox movements. Soloveitchik declined to sign their edict. Two years earlier he had stated forcefully, in “the crematoria, the ashes of Hasidim and *Ansbe Maseb* [pious Jews] were mixed with the ashes of radicals and free thinkers and we must fight against the enemy who does not recognize the difference between one who worships and one who does not.” Most modern Orthodox rabbis of the Rabbinical Council of America refused to honor the ban, but they recognized its challenge to Jewish unity and cooperation.⁴⁴

The three major Jewish religious movements in the United States took different paths in the postwar years, responding to the impact of World War II, the Holocaust, and the state of Israel. Reform Judaism welcomed unaffiliated Jews and included more rituals in its worship services, making it accessible to second-generation Jews of Eastern European parents. Both

⁴² Moore, *GI Jews*, 153–5.

⁴³ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 307.

⁴⁴ Gurock, *Orthodox Jews*, 223–4, quoted on 224.

Reform and Conservative seminaries expanded, building branches in Los Angeles and, in the case of Reform, amalgamating with the liberal but unaffiliated Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. Orthodox Judaism diversified; Hasidism took root in America as leaders of various sects established enclaves in Brooklyn. There they wore distinctive garb, spoke Yiddish, and built a network of religious institutions.⁴⁵

Under Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath's leadership in 1943–73, Reform Judaism's congregational organization, the UAHC, championed social action. It established a Commission on Social Justice and a Social Action Committee in Washington, D.C., in 1946 to lobby Congress about civil rights and social welfare. In 1961, it formed the Religious Action Center. Eisendrath encouraged the creation of social action committees in Reform congregations and called on Reform Jews "to apply the precepts and practices of prophetic Jewish faith in combating all forms of injustice and bigotry."⁴⁶ This focus on social justice within Reform congregations made responsibility for its pursuit a priority of laymen, not rabbis. The message took hold. Sociologists studying suburban Jews reported that they ranked leading "an ethical and moral life" first when asked what it meant to be Jewish. They considered other items, such as observing the Sabbath or supporting Israel, less important.⁴⁷ Eisendrath particularly favored integration of African Americans as equal members of American society despite opposition from Reform rabbis in the South. When he received recognition as clergyman of the year in 1959, he affirmed, "The heart of religion concerns itself with man's relation to man."⁴⁸

Conservative Jews emphasized Jewish peoplehood, stressing ethnic dimensions of Judaism and Israel. Elements of modern Israeli culture, including art objects, dance, music, and Hebrew pronunciation, entered Conservative synagogues, supplementary religious schools, and camps. After-school programs emphasized Israel to strengthen Jewish identity. Women's position in Judaism benefited from concern for peoplehood. In 1955 the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards voted in favor of women being called to the reading of the Torah, and it added a clause to the Jewish marriage contract that equalized women and men in marriage and divorce, giving women a means to initiate divorce by invoking this clause.⁴⁹ Conservative Jewish congregations also introduced the bat mitzvah ceremony for girls to mark their entry into religious

⁴⁵ Wertheimer, *People Divided*, 9–13.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Raphael, *Profiles*, 74.

⁴⁷ Marshall Sklare, "The Image of the Good Jew in Lakeville," in *Observing America's Jews* (Hanover, NH, 1993), 206–14, quoted on 208.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Raphael, *Profiles*, 73.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 109–11.

adulthood as bar mitzvah did for boys. Although Kaplan had created the first bat mitzvah for his daughter, Judith, in 1922, not until the postwar years did it become popular. In 1948 approximately one-third of Conservative synagogues observed bat mitzvah, but by the 1960s it had become a regular feature of the movement. However, unlike bar mitzvah ritual, which involved a boy's reading a portion from the Torah and Haftarah during Sabbath morning services, bat mitzvah rituals usually occurred on Friday evening when Torah was not read.⁵⁰

Orthodox Jews turned increasingly to religious education. Parochial yeshiva education on elementary, secondary, and advanced levels expanded within the United States, although most religious day schools were located in cities, especially New York. The *Torah U'Mesorah* movement (1944) aimed to connect all Orthodox day schools and to stimulate their growth. By 1962, 85 percent of all day schools in the United States were under Orthodox auspices. Slowly the character of Orthodoxy changed. Numbers of nominally Orthodox Jews declined steadily, leaving only the more observant and pious. Families rejected supplementary Jewish education accompanying public school. Instead, they placed a high priority on yeshiva education for their sons and, increasingly, for their daughters. By the 1960s girls made up more than 40 percent of the day school population, enrolled in either single-sex schools or coeducational ones, including high schools. In 1956 Yeshiva University opened Stern College for Women, offering both secular and religious studies. These years of transition to a new norm of parochial education through high school also marked acceptance of greater religious stringency as a feature setting Orthodox Jews apart from other American Jews.

High standards of piety set by refugees and survivors of Nazism and the Holocaust stemmed in part from their commitment to reconstruct the religious civilization destroyed before their eyes. Despite their many differences, as refugees they shared an enthusiasm not previously seen in the United States for the Old World that they had been forced to flee. Hence they immediately introduced increased stringency in kosher food products and built a network of schools to keep their children out of the public education system and to restrict the influence of American values. Ninety-five schools in 1946 grew to 330 by 1970. Such religious leaders as Rabbi Aaron Kotler also built advanced yeshivas for adult men to continue their studies even after ordination. These graduates became the vanguard of a more militant separatism within Orthodoxy.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Paula E. Hyman, "Bat Mitzvah" in Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, eds., *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (New York, 1997), 126–8.

⁵¹ Gurock, *Orthodox Jews*, 209–20.

Not only Orthodox Jews built advanced Jewish institutions of learning in the United States. In 1948 a number of American Jews founded Brandeis University, the first secular university under Jewish auspices in the United States. Brandeis University aimed to compete with Ivy League schools that discriminated against Jewish students and professors. It differed from the University of Judaism (1946) established in Los Angeles as a branch of the Jewish Theological Seminary based on Kaplan's vision for a comprehensive institution of Jewish knowledge. Brandeis opened in Waltham, Massachusetts, under the presidency of Abram Leon Sachar. Born and educated as a professor of history in the United States, Sachar had expanded the B'nai B'rith Hillel organization for college youth into a viable national movement in the interwar years. As president of Brandeis University, he liked to compare a university to a library where books with competing ideas tolerated one another and shared the shelves. Sachar succeeded in recruiting both excellent students and faculty members, including displaced Jewish intellectuals from Europe and the United States. At Brandeis left-wing New York intellectuals such as Philip Rahv and Irving Howe crossed paths with European Jewish Marxists such as Herbert Marcuse and Louis Coser. They, in turn, encountered the activist Zionist intellectuals Marie Syrkin (the first female professor at Brandeis), Ben Halpern, and Ludwig Lewisohn, as well as the exemplars of German Jewish learning Alexander Altman, Nahum N. Glazer, and Nahum M. Sarna. This heady contentious intellectual milieu embodied many of the multiple religious and cultural streams that were reshaping American Jewish life. It drew together Jewish intellectuals alienated from Judaism, yet deeply engaged with Jewish culture and politics, to nourish a young generation. In this strenuous intellectual arena, Sachar also encouraged interreligious dialogue. Construction of three chapels on campus for Jews, Catholics, and Protestants around a reflecting pool expressed the fledgling university's democratic American Jewish religious sensibilities.⁵² Neither Brandeis nor the advanced yeshiva organized by Kotler could be said to replace European Jewish institutions of advanced learning destroyed by Nazi Germany. But these new institutions' vigor suggested a willingness among American Jews to grapple with the postwar demands set forth by Weiss-Rosmarin and Heschel.

Brandeis' establishment coincided with rapid postwar expansion of higher education. Increasing numbers of young Jews attended college: by the mid-1950s, 62 percent of college-age Jews, both men and women, were enrolled (compared with 27 percent among all Americans).⁵³ Jews and Protestants in recognized universities cooperated in dismantling

⁵² Abram L. Sachar, *Brandeis University: A Host at Last* (Hanover, NH, 1994).

⁵³ C. Bezalel Sherman, "Demographic and Social Aspects," 42–3.

intellectual and social barriers to Jews, de-Christianizing the American academy, and promoting pluralism. Genteel anti-Semitism's legitimacy gradually declined, as did quotas restricting admission. Legislation prohibiting discrimination in colleges and universities expanded employment opportunities for Jews as professors as well.⁵⁴ Increasingly Jews found not only the social sciences open but also the humanities, including history. American historians such as Oscar Handlin and Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Boorstin and Louis Hartz, promoted a consensus view of American politics, helped to shift scholarly interest to cities and immigrants, and championed a cosmopolitan ideal of American society grounded in pragmatism and cooperation.⁵⁵

New interpretations of American Judaism emerged in the mid-1950s as Jews celebrated their tercentenary and reflected on their history in the United States. Invited by Boorstin to give lectures at the University of Chicago as part of a series on Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, the sociologist Nathan Glazer penned *American Judaism* (1957). Glazer recalled trying to write "from almost a non-Jewish perspective."⁵⁶ Boorstin emphasized the universality of this approach in his preface to the volume: "In telling the story of a people with a vivid tradition who have had to come to terms with the New World, Glazer is retelling the story of all Americans." Boorstin admitted that Glazer's interpretation "will not please all Jews," because "he writes from within the Jewish tradition, where, in the absence of authorized theology, the tasks of interpretation are thrust back upon the individual."⁵⁷ Despite this demurral, the book pleased many people, remaining in print for decades. Glazer's emphasis on Judaism as "a manifestation of American values" demonstrated, as Handlin put it, that Jews were "not that unique."⁵⁸ Glazer and Handlin integrated Jewish history "into a broad theory of American social structure" by positing a widespread "tension between group cohesion and American integration."⁵⁹ Such perspectives complemented Will Herberg's influential volume, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955), which codified, elaborated, and criticized the practice and ideology

⁵⁴ David A. Hollinger, "Jewish Intellectuals and the De-Christianization of American Public Culture in the Twentieth Century," in *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 17–41.

⁵⁵ Andrew R. Heinze, "'Farther Away from New York': Jews in the Humanities after World War II," in Bruce Zuckerman and Jeremy Schoenberg, eds., *The Jewish Role in American Life: An Annual Review* 5 (West Lafayette, IN, 2007), 36–37.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley, CA, 2009), 110.

⁵⁷ Daniel Boorstin, "Editor's Preface," in Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*, in *The Chicago History of American Civilization*, ed. Daniel J. Boorstin (Chicago, 1957), vii–viii.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 110.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

of the Judeo-Christian tradition. These books integrated Jews and Judaism into the historical democratic fabric of American society, portraying both as typically American.

All of the Jewish religious movements achieved institutional completeness characteristic of Protestant denominations in the postwar period. The UAHC operated seven summer camps by the mid-1960s, an extensive program of adult education, and three schools of Jewish studies. A large network of religious schools flourished as more Jewish children received a Jewish education. In 1946 approximately 231,000 children attended Jewish schools; this number doubled to 488,000 by 1956 and then peaked at 590,000 in the early 1960s.⁶⁰ Almost all of the children went to synagogue-based schools, a significant shift from prewar patterns that integrated children into congregational life, previously a male adult domain. Most of these numbers reflected behavior of suburban Jews: in New York City only 28 percent of Jewish children attended Jewish school compared with more than 40 percent in the suburbs.⁶¹ Conservative and Orthodox synagogues sponsored afternoon Hebrew schools; Reform temples usually supported Sunday schools. Separate religious men's and women's organizations flourished, as did youth movements. The Conservative movement published a Sabbath prayer book in 1946. Kaplan's influence appeared in its modern translations of traditional texts and supplementary readings.⁶²

Jewish educators experimented with informal Jewish education beyond congregational schools. They used camping to immerse youngsters in a totally Jewish American world. An innovative educator, Shlomo Bardin, established the Brandeis Camp Institute in the Simi Valley outside Los Angeles as an experiential model of Jewish education. Bardin designed his four-week program to replicate what women had previously learned at home. Drawing upon increasing leisure time available to American Jews, Bardin fashioned a recreational form of Judaism that offered meaning, community, and religious experience. He explicitly used drama and music to reach young people, producing Judaism – staging it – so that those watching were simultaneously participants and observers. Recognizing that Jews who had moved to L.A. were uprooted, their culture disrupted, Bardin's Brandeis Camp Institute invited them to experience a program that made them feel good about feeling Jewish. The Sabbath became the centerpiece of a program that included summer camping, adult education, holiday workshops, creative arts sessions, and even experimental religious rituals. Bardin deliberately aimed to arouse emotions: to awaken interest

⁶⁰ Wertheimer, *Divided People*, 5–6.

⁶¹ Prell, "Triumph," 123.

⁶² Raphael, *Profiles*, 122.

in the Jewish people, to stimulate a desire to pursue Jewish knowledge, and to instill a sense of responsibility for the Jewish future. "Above all," he explained, the institute "attempts to create an atmosphere which enables the young Jew to gain new insight into himself [*sic*]." Bardin enlisted Jews involved in the motion picture industry to create the "atmosphere," to write scripts and stage pageants, to compose music and design rituals, and to inspire the art of Jewish living. He grasped the manifold possibilities of Jewish spiritual recreation, appealing especially to Jewish women.⁶³

While Bardin was enticing Jews to savor Judaism's pleasures, Rabbi Morris Kertzer was speaking of Jews and Judaism to a broad American audience. Born and educated in Canada, Kertzer moved to the United States for rabbinical studies, transferring from an Orthodox seminary in Chicago to the Conservative JTS in New York City. He left a position as Hillel director at the University of Iowa and enlisted as a chaplain during the war, serving in Italy. Kertzer's wartime experiences convinced him that he needed to address non-Jews. In 1952, Leo Rosten, editor of *Look* magazine and author of numerous books including the hilarious satire of immigrant education, *The Education of H*y*m*a*n K*a*p*l*a*n* (1937), invited Kertzer to write the article "What is a Jew?" as part of a series on American religious groups. Kertzer outlined religious, cultural, and "practical" definitions, preferring the latter, which he attributed to his teacher, Mordecai Kaplan. "Judaism is really a way of life," Kertzer explained, a rather straightforward translation of the concept of Judaism as a civilization. The article soon became a book that sold very well. Unlike *Peace of Mind*, however, *What Is a Jew?* did not criticize Christianity. The book led Kertzer to television, where twice he invited audiences to join him for a Passover seder. Kertzer confronted the challenge of communicating that Jews were just like, and different from, other Americans.⁶⁴

Explaining Jews to other Americans and other Jews involved presenting Israel. Where did the Jewish state fit within an understanding of Jews as a religious group? The most compelling answer in the postwar period was that of the novelist Leon Uris and the cinematic translation of his epic novel, *Exodus* (1958), into a movie two years later by Otto Preminger. A runaway best-seller, *Exodus* presented a vision of Israel's creation that influenced an entire generation. Doing research in Israel for the novel during the Sinai campaign of 1956, Uris discovered a "revelation." "We Jews are not what we have been portrayed to be. In truth, we have been

⁶³ Deborah Dash Moore, "Inventing Jewish Identity in California: Shlomo Bardin, Zionism, and the Brandeis Camp Institute," in Steven M. Cohen and Gabriel Horenczyk, eds., *National Variations in Jewish Identity: Implications for Jewish Education* (Albany, NY, 1999), 201–21, quoted on 205.

⁶⁴ Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 129–39, Kertzer quoted on 133.

fighters.”⁶⁵ His story of Jews as fighters captured Americans’ imagination, transforming Jews struggling for a Jewish state into recognizable American heroes far removed from negative stereotypes of Jews as materialistic, weak, and overly intellectual. Preminger cast the blue-eyed, handsome Paul Newman as the hero Ari Ben Canaan. The movie conveyed the sweep of a biblical epic of Jews returning to their homeland and the excitement of a western overcoming frontier danger. *Exodus* linked Israel with the rescue of Holocaust survivors. It showed pitiful victims transformed overnight into brave pioneers. “These were the ancient Hebrews,” the American nurse Kitty realized, “the army of Israel, and no force on earth could stop them for the power of God was within them.” Midway through the movie, a crucial scene connected the biblical narrative of the prophet Deborah on Mt. Tabor with a resurgent demand for recognition of Jews’ right to be different. As the Jewish Ari put it to the Presbyterian Kitty, “People are different. They have a right to be different. They *like* to be different. It’s no use pretending that differences don’t exist. They do. They have to be recognized and respected.” Kitty acceded to his request for respect even as she affirmed that a common humanity enfolded Christian and Jew. Her embrace of the new Jew suggested the possibility of welcoming those American Jews who identified with Israel. The plucky little Jewish state fighting for its freedom became a Hollywood legend, and part of the faith of American Jews.⁶⁶

American Jews sought in diverse ways to memorialize the six million and create “a culture of commemoration” to honor those who had died. Facing an unprecedented tragedy, American Jews experimented with rituals and liturgy, pageants and dramas, art and literature. In their private lives, they boycotted Germany, refusing to purchase German products or visit West Germany. On the public stage, they published testimonies of survivors and used mass media, including radio and television, to reach Americans of all religious backgrounds.⁶⁷ A host of memorial books appeared after the war, compilations of data on destroyed European towns along with stories about men and women who had lived there. These collaborative efforts, often written in Yiddish, addressed survivors and Jews who had emigrated before the war began. Translations of Yiddish literature accelerated in the

⁶⁵ Leon Uris quoted in Philip Roth, “Some New Jewish Stereotypes,” in *Reading Myself and Others* (New York, 1975), 138.

⁶⁶ Deborah Dash Moore, “Israel: Real to Reel to Real,” in J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler, eds., *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting* (Princeton, NJ, 2003), 207–19, quoted on 212, 214.

⁶⁷ Hasia R. Diner, “Before ‘The Holocaust’: American Jews Confront Catastrophe, 1945–62,” in *American Jewish Identity Politics*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Ann Arbor, MI, 2008), 83–116, quoted on 84.

postwar period to provide Eastern European Jews' literary culture for their American Jewish kin.⁶⁸ Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg published *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* in 1954 dedicated to "the six million." The poet, Zionist, and journalist Marie Syrkin drew on the poetry of the martyred Hannah Senesh, who parachuted into Hungary to rescue Jews only to be caught, tortured, and executed by the Nazis. Syrkin's book, *Blessed Is the Match* (1947), chronicled eyewitness accounts of partisans, Jewish fighters, as well as those who parachuted with Senesh. Syrkin translated Senesh's poem, "Blessed is the match that is consumed in kindling flame."⁶⁹ Editors of new prayer books for Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) for both Reconstructionist and Conservative movements integrated a number of contemporary poems, including Senesh, into the Orthodox martyrology recited during worship, thus suggesting that her sacrifice resembled those of inspirational rabbis.⁷⁰

However, in the United States Anne Frank, and not Hannah Senesh, achieved most renown as the female figure identified with the Holocaust. Her death at age fifteen in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in March 1945 and the subsequent discovery, translation, and publication of her diary in 1952 presented her years in hiding to large audiences. A dramatization of the diary premiered on Broadway in 1955; four years later it appeared as a Hollywood film. Representations of her diary presented Anne Frank as a subject of triumphant humanity, universalizing her experiences of suffering rather than dwelling on her Jewish identity. Americans of all backgrounds identified with her adolescent dreams and her endurance, rather than her pitiful death. They almost beatified her. Anne's uplifting affirmation, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart," and her father's reply, "She puts me to shame," brought the play to a close. Such an emphasis Americanized the Holocaust, transforming it into a terrible event, but "ultimately not tragic or depressing; an experience shadowed by the specter of a cruel death but at the same time not without the ability to inspire, console, uplift."⁷¹

Jewish responses to the Holocaust also registered in political and philosophical reflections. The émigré German Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt articulated an influential argument in her volume on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). "Two world wars in one generation," she

⁶⁸ *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, ed. and trans. Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin (New York, 1983).

⁶⁹ Carole S. Kessner, "Marie Syrkin: An Exemplary Life," 51–70, quoted on 62.

⁷⁰ Diner, "Before 'The Holocaust,'" 92–93.

⁷¹ Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 45–81, quoted on 52–4.

wrote, “followed by no peace treaty for the vanquished and no respite for the victor,” have produced a moment of anticipation, “like the calm that settles after all hopes have died.” Arendt composed her book against “a background of both reckless optimism and reckless despair.” She placed the rise of racial anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century and its growth as a political movement at the heart of European nationalism leading to Fascism. Arendt urged her readers “to face and understand the outrageous fact that so small (and, in world politics, so unimportant) a phenomenon as the Jewish question and anti-Semitism could become the catalytic agent for first, the Nazi movement, then a world war, and finally the establishment of death factories.” She called for a new political principle, “a new law on earth.” “The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This,” she emphasized, was “the reality in which we live.”⁷² Other thinkers on nationalism, including Hans Kohn, like Arendt a European Jewish political philosopher and activist, articulated a theory of nationalism that separated American republican democracy from European politics.⁷³

A different perspective was that of Maurice Samuel, a prolific Zionist activist and writer born in Romania, educated in England, who lived in the United States. His assessment of anti-Semitism, *The Gentleman and the Jew: Twenty Five Centuries of Conflict in Manners and Morals* (1950), explored his “conviction that an understanding of the Jewish episode in civilization is the key to the western world’s intellectual and spiritual difficulties.” Samuel deplored a perverse tendency among Americans to associate concern with “the Jewish problem” with narrowness while evasion of it was “equated with breadth of outlook.” He focused on cultural and religious differences, attacking all claims to universalism. Contemplating “the richness of the inner life of my childhood world,” Samuel wondered how any “adult Jew should ever be able to adopt the slogan, ‘Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains.’” Eastern European Jewish workers and peddlers had a lot to lose, beside their chains. Why, Samuel asked, in “an appeal to union and freedom,” should one “deny those treasures which freedom ought to safeguard?” He contrasted Jewish religious values with the coarse code of behavior of “Christian gentlemen,” convinced that the term was an oxymoron and the “center of the pathology of the western world.”⁷⁴ As did the movie *Gentleman’s Agreement*, based on

⁷² Hannah Arendt, “Preface to the First Edition,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951; reprint, New York, 1973), vii–ix.

⁷³ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1944).

⁷⁴ Maurice Samuel, *The Gentleman and the Jew: Twenty Five Centuries of Conflict in Manners and Morals* (New York, 1950), quoted on 4–5, 18, 48–9.

Laura Z. Hobson's novel, Samuel exposed cultural assumptions that nourished and legitimized discrimination.⁷⁵

Rabbis focused on human behavior and belief in their philosophical writings. Heschel published *God in Search of Man* (1955), a comprehensive treatment of Judaism. Discussing reasons for Jewish religious observance, Heschel emphasized the importance of divine meaning. Moral, aesthetic, sociological, or dogmatic reasons failed to explain Jewish behavior. "Judaism is concerned with the happiness of the individual," he wrote, "as well as with the survival of the Jewish people, with the redemption of all men and with the will of one God." However, Heschel noted, happiness depends on "faithfulness to God." Jewish survival mattered because Jews were covenantal partners with God. Heschel urged American Jews to earn a spiritual living, not just a material one.⁷⁶ He tried to bring holiness back to the center of Jewish life, its place, as he had argued, in the world destroyed by the Nazis.

Anthropological efforts to restore that world attempted to reconstruct the shtetl, the small Jewish town of Eastern Europe. *Life Is with People* (1952), an example of salvage ethnography that endured in print for more than four decades, packaged a lost world for American Jews to assimilate into their collective memory. "Created in the wake of World War II," the book encouraged its readers, "demoralized by the annihilation of European Jewry, to take pride in the distinctiveness of their heritage." Responding to the failure of assimilation and eradication of Jewish difference to eliminate anti-Semitism, it argued implicitly for the "sacred duty" to recover "the inner life of East European Jewry," and its distinctive culture.⁷⁷

These varied responses to the Holocaust – political, philosophical, cultural, religious – shaped American Jews coming of age in the postwar period. They grew up in a very different world from one their parents had known: as suburban, middle-class children they attended congregational school, celebrated a bar mitzvah, enjoyed summers at Jewish camp, and anticipated going to college upon graduation from high school. They assimilated the complex idea that Jews were simultaneously just like other Americans and different from them. Jewish differences and similarities could be found in their embrace of Israel, in suffering and martyrdom endured during the Holocaust, in intellectual traditions celebrating American pluralism and consensus, in consciousness of the dangers of racism, in commitments to

⁷⁵ Laura Z. Hobson, *Gentleman's Agreement* (New York, 1947).

⁷⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (1955; reprint, New York and Philadelphia, 1962), 349.

⁷⁷ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Introduction," in Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, eds., *Life Is with People* (New York, 1995), ix–xlviii, quoted on ix.

social justice, in beliefs in the sanctity of separation of church and state, even in the refusal to cross a picket line or purchase German products.

By the end of the postwar period, more than five and half million American Jews had transformed American Judaism, reworking elements of faith into a new symbol system. Anne Frank, Israel, the shtetl, the six million, represented values espoused by American Jews. They integrated the staggering events they symbolized into beliefs about Judaism as a religion expressing universal liberalism, embodying intimate bonds of family, and comprising a distinctive corpus of behaviors. Many American Jews ignored commandments to observe Jewish rituals, quarreled with family members, and occasionally reneged on their liberal commitments, yet they recognized the combination as a Jewish one. Despite bitter struggles over religious authority and authenticity, despite criticism of the shallowness of their culture and banality of their Judaism, they had responded to the challenges facing them at the end of the war and assumed the responsibilities of remaking American Judaism into an enduring tradition.

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SUBURBANIZATION AND RELIGION

JAMES HUDNUT-BEUMLER

Over the course of the twentieth century the social process of suburbanization affected the practice of American religious life in ways both obvious and subtle. The translocation of where Americans worshipped transformed the way they worshipped. As pervasive as suburbs later became in American life, their emergence at the end of the nineteenth century owed to a confluence of factors that made these new communities a unique development in Western history. The word "suburban" literally denotes being "below the city," as in outside the city's walls and its protection. In traditional European civilization the suburbs were a residential location for the poor with inferior services. As a result of rapid late nineteenth-century improvements in communication and transportation, suburbs in the United States emerged as desirable residential enclaves connected to, but set apart from, more crowded and dirty cities. Since then suburbs in American life have been alternately viewed as refuges for the wealthy, signs of what is wrong with the culture at large, and, increasingly, simply the way Americans live.

Suburbanization in the American context has been a social movement of both desire and necessity with far-reaching, often misunderstood ramifications for religion. The history of religion in suburbs is one of small beginnings in which suburban churches were, from the viewpoint of their denominations and sister churches in the cities, insignificant, and synagogues were virtually nonexistent. What began almost as an afterthought on the American religious landscape came to be one of religion's areas of greatest strength by the middle decades of the twentieth century.

SUBURBS AND RELIGION BEFORE 1945

The first suburbs began with the self-consciousness of small towns. At one level this was foreseeable since many of the early so-called streetcar suburbs

that developed near older cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago had existed as small towns before 1900. Early suburban growth was fed by the desire of upper-middle-class people to escape crowded city living in favor of a small-town or more parklike setting while retaining incomes linked to the nearby city. Since these people maintained vital and immediate economic ties to the urban center, their movement to small towns and farming communities began the process of suburbanization but did not reverse the large late nineteenth-century population movement from rural to urban areas. Nevertheless, in rhetoric and outlook, the first residents of suburbs thought in terms of town and village, not in terms of suburb. This proved important for churches and other religious organizations because the major Protestant denominations tended to classify these new suburban churches as “town and country” ministries. The tendency of Protestant denominations to erect a church in every community was only partially countered by the ecumenical spirit of the Social Gospel movement during the Progressive Era, which emphasized “deeds over creeds.” Suburban churches physically resembled small-town or rural churches and paralleled their membership sizes and programmatic breadth, in contradistinction to larger, more complex city churches.

Roman Catholic, fundamentalist Protestant, and Jewish congregational growth in suburbs during the first half of the twentieth century lagged far behind that of mainline Protestant congregations, partly because of restrictive housing covenants that barred Jews and Catholics from some communities. An even greater reason for the lag, however, was that adherents of those religions remained more firmly attached to cities.

Since religious leaders followed their secular counterparts in thinking of suburbs as small towns, they misunderstood and misinterpreted some of the features that distinguished early suburban churches. Compared with people in small-town churches of similar size, members of suburban churches had greater per capita wealth and income. Thus they could pay ministers more than could rural churches. Also, since many suburban churches were new and adjacent to newer houses occupied by relatively young families, a higher proportion of their members was still in the prime years of life and available for lay leadership, as compared to city, small-town, or rural churches. In the long run, the availability of money and leadership gave suburban congregations power in their national denominations and regional church bodies. That these latent possibilities were mostly unnoticed is less surprising when one realizes that this was also the heyday of the “institutional church” – a city church that occupied a large piece of land and offered activities seven days a week for its members and its neighbors, activities that ranged from sewing groups to athletic teams.

POSTWAR SUBURBANIZATION AND THE RETURN TO RELIGION

The crucial years for understanding the shift of religious organizational vigor from cities to suburbs are the early years after World War II, from 1945 to 1965. During that time, and to a lesser extent even to the present, many issues for American religious bodies could be framed in terms of a tension between cities and suburbs, or between the concerns of city dwellers and of suburbanites more generally. The social impact of suburbanization is difficult to overestimate. In 1910, seventy-two of every one hundred Americans lived in rural areas with fewer than 2,500 residents. This small-town culture, of course, was the heartland of nineteenth-century American Protestantism. Even in the 1910s, however, the move to cities was already on, fostered by advancements in transportation, utilities delivery, and building technology. By 1950, 50.1 percent of the American population lived in metropolitan areas, but again change was under way as suburban areas began to grow at the relative expense of both cities and rural areas. In the years from 1940 to 1950 alone, the suburban portion of the U.S. population grew from 15.3 to 23.3 percent, although the first five years of that decade were years of depressed housing construction because of the Second World War. With the close of the war, pent-up demand for suitable housing, combined with provisions of the G.I. Bill that made mortgages available on favorable terms for veterans, created a new mass wave of suburbanization. The single-family homes that sprouted on former farmland on the fringes of American cities were smaller than their counterparts in earlier suburbs, but they were within the reach of more families both financially and, because of widespread automobile ownership, geographically. With the new families and new homes came a new crop of suburban houses of worship.

In nearly all respects, the twenty years after World War II constitute a high point for religion in the United States. Never before had as many Americans belonged to, attended, or associated with religious institutions. Not only in numbers of adherents, but also in status, religion experienced an unparalleled position. Contemporaries used phrases like “religious revival” and “theological renaissance” to describe the phenomenon. The religious resurgence of the 1950s was fueled in no small measure by the contemporaneous suburbanization. All the ways in which suburbanization had changed and strengthened organized religion in earlier years now became major factors in American religious life as the fifties took shape.

The new suburbanites of these years lived a “frontier” experience as they conducted the rituals of marking out and defining their living spaces. Just as earlier pioneers had marked out spaces for laundry, waste disposal,

food production, marketing, government, worship, and social interaction in each new “wilderness,” so too did suburbanites. If the settlers of each new suburb had most of their physical needs for roads and public services planned for them, then they emphasized their social needs even more strongly. Family, motherhood, the Parent-Teacher Association, the block club, the playground and parks committees, and, of course, the church or synagogue were all aspects of the exciting process of community building. The high level of churchgoing was related to the phenomenon of belonging to an institution’s first generation and therefore feeling a higher degree of responsibility for its success.

Many of the same economic realities faced church building as affected domestic construction. It has been calculated that, in 1929, roughly 10 percent of the money donated to religion was spent on building; between 1932 and 1936, the figure dropped to only 2.5 percent. This low number continued through the war years when construction material was diverted to defense; of the more than \$7 billion given to religious organizations during World War II, only \$131 million, or 1.8 percent, was spent on construction despite the significant increase in religious contributions during the war. Religious building, like home construction, failed to keep pace with society’s needs. Quite naturally, when building began again at the end of the war, the greater part of the new religious construction took place in outlying and suburban areas.

Although the most famous suburbs were in the Boston-to-Washington corridor, Southern California, and the industrial Midwest, suburbanization was a national phenomenon, and building churches in new outlying residential areas was part of the process. For example, at the beginning of the 1950s, Omaha had thirty-five major religious building projects under construction, including seven new Protestant churches, but not counting eleven more that had been recently completed. Nearly all of Omaha’s residential growth in this period occurred within the municipal limits of Omaha, meaning that it was not considered “suburban” by the federal government. Yet, although the owners of the new homes and members of the new churches belonged to the same political jurisdiction as the people in the central city, their experience resembled that of residents in the actual suburbs of the nation’s older cities. Just as suburbanites living in newly incorporated towns did back east, the Omahans banded together to lobby for the extension of services – schools, sewers, utilities – to their neighborhoods and engaged in community building on the fringe of established urban areas.

Suburbanization during the 1950s was primarily a Protestant and Jewish phenomenon because of those who moved to the suburbs. Those who bought a station wagon and a house with a picture window were,

initially, overwhelmingly middle to upper-middle class, concentrated in the Northeast, Far West, and industrial Midwest; white; of British or German ancestry; and college educated. These were precisely the same demographic characteristics associated with liberal or mainline Protestantism and Reform Judaism. Early sociological studies of suburbs also revealed the propensity of intellectuals and professionals – academics, doctors, dentists, lawyers – to move to suburbs. A large number of Jews also practiced these occupations, so that while Jews were only a small part of the total number of people moving to suburbs, a sizable proportion of the American Jewish population made the transition from urban to suburban living and did so early on. Therefore, suburbanization was a dominant social reality in the institutional life of mainline Protestantism and American Judaism from the early 1950s on. This fact proved not always palatable for representatives of these groups.

Worries about what suburbanization was doing to religion emerged early in the postwar years. In their 1950 series “Great Churches of America,” the editors of *Christian Century* presented the promises and dilemmas of suburbia as they saw them.

The residents of Suburbia are, by and large, Protestant in tradition and by natural addiction. They want to have Protestant churches in their communities and will support them generously. They send their children to Protestant church schools, and more often than not they maintain a church membership for themselves. But in too many instances Suburbia breeds a sense of self-satisfaction, of complacency, on occasion even of self-congratulation, which tends to look on the church as little more than a social convenience. Suburbia is the home of those who have arrived.¹

Suburbia also concerned Jewish social observers. In 1955 Morris Freedman wrote a feature article for *Commentary* magazine about a new Jewish community being formed in the Hillcrest section of Queens (one of the five boroughs of New York City). Located in the inner ring of new suburbs on Long Island, and the only sizable pocket of wealth between Forest Hills and Great Neck on Long Island, Hillcrest was the site of booming residential construction, with some houses costing as much as \$100,000. The ethos of homeownership immediately impressed Freedman. He quoted the Hillcrest Jewish Center’s rabbi, Dr. Israel Mowshowitz: “It’s very important in understanding our character to realize that this is a congregation of homeowners. But even more important is the fact that these are their first homes – and probably their last. They don’t have the sense of being apartment dwellers who might move away any time. Our members feel

¹ *Christian Century*, 22 March 1950, 362.

that for the first time in their lives they have let roots down here.” In putting down roots in a neighborhood of single-family houses, Freedman discovered, many Jewish families also formally affiliated with a Jewish community institution for the first time, but he believed that the attraction was mostly social and not religious. Freedman hoped that because the Hillcrest Jewish Center was new and its patterns for the future were not yet fixed, “a close and sober look now may offer an opportunity for those deeply concerned to help shape those patterns before the mold hardens.” Freedman’s worries paralleled those of Marshall Sklare, who concluded that while the congregation had become increasingly influential in Jewish life as it broadened its range of activities, the attitudes and life patterns of Jews in all three major branches of Judaism “depart[ed] markedly from ideal norms.”² These criticisms from religious journalists and commentators did not stop suburban residents from founding churches and synagogues; nor did criticism prevent those institutions from being tremendously popular. Suburbanization resulted in homogeneous communities that, far from being the sterile wastelands their worst critics feared, became the locations of enduring vitality.

Suburban churches shared in this vitality, for they too were settings in which nearly all participants ranged in age from newborn to thirty-five. These were times and places when and where everything seemed possible – veritable utopias from which death, cancer, and poverty had been banished. A typical new suburban church or synagogue in the 1950s could go years without a funeral or memorial service. On the other hand, the joyful, life-affirming rituals of baptism, first communion, confirmation, bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, and marriage were frequently celebrated. Moreover, though the suburban family of faith might go to meetings in an elementary school gymnasium and listen to the reading of scripture while sitting on metal folding chairs, their prospects for the future were bright. Ecclesiastical budgets were rising, never going down or being tied to the declining incomes of aging or retiring members; building programs were under way. The family proud of their new split-level house would soon be attending a church equally new and worthy of pride. Finally, the typical suburban church or synagogue had exactly what most prospective members sought in a religious home – people exactly like themselves.

The religious building boom in the suburbs changed the landscape of America and redefined what churches and synagogues looked like. Here

² Morris Freedman, “New Jewish Community in Formation: A Conservative Center Catering to Present-Day Needs,” *Commentary*, Jan. 1955, 36–47; Marshall Sklare, “Church and Laity among Jews,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 332:1 (Nov. 1960): 60.

the churches were popular objects of art and architectural endeavor. *McCall's* magazine's adoring coverage of new churches was typical. Under the title "The Churches Rise Again," *McCall's* proudly proclaimed, "Not since Solomon have people lavished so much on housing for God and those who would worship Him."³ God's new housing displayed all the features of modern design and took advantage of the creative energy of the era's architectural innovators. The number of dollars spent on commissions for church buildings in the 1950s was second only to that for hospitals, and of all the possible kinds of construction, perhaps only art museums offered more symbolic possibilities and freedom from functional concerns. It was estimated that 25 percent of all new Christian houses of worship were of completely contemporary design. For Jewish synagogues, estimates went as high as 85 percent. But one did not need Frank Lloyd Wright or Marcel Breuer to build a church appropriate to the spirit of the age. For those many Americans so inclined, the *Saturday Evening Post* printed an article entitled "How to Build Your Own Church," which neatly allowed them to combine two of the most popular activities of the 1950s in a single experience.⁴ Indeed, the easy functionality of space outside the sanctuary bore striking resemblance to that found in modern suburban tract homes. The Sunday school had moved from a dank basement underneath an urban sanctuary into a wing of its own with lots of light; little fiberglass and plywood laminate tables and chairs – even tiny toilets – made especially for God's smaller children, reinforced the impression that here, too, the prevailing culture was child-centered. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, teen clubs, square dances, B'nai B'rith, meetings of the temple sisterhood, pancake dinners, potluck suppers, hobby clubs, and choirs for all ages filled the calendar and the space of the typical suburban church or synagogue. All this activity seemed to be fueled by refreshments. The coffee hour, the new members' group, the emphasis on children, and the endless round of social activities all indicated that the church or synagogue of the 1950s was serving a great variety of felt needs. A religious congregation's popularity derived from multiple sources, but not to be discounted was the role it played as a de facto community center.

SUBURBAN JEREMIADS

In modern American culture it is customary for what is new and popular to attract first attention and then criticism. Suburbanization and suburban

³ Clarence W. Hall, "The Churches Rise Again," *McCall's*, June 1955, 34–7.

⁴ Booton Herndon, "How to Build Your Own Church," *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 May 1956, 54–6.

religion drew the immediate attention of social critics, who produced a substantial body of criticism that can best be compared in form to the jeremiad – a sermon form that excoriates sinful behavior only to offer the hope of redemption at the very last moment if people will abandon their evil ways. In the 1950s critics who had focused on America's failure to feed and clothe its people in the 1930s now took material goods for granted and began asking the moral question, "Affluence for what?" So social critics worried more about the distorting psychological effects of conformity, the meaninglessness of work, and the trivialization of leisure time than about the absence of political alternatives, the ownership of the means of production, and economic inequity. Not surprisingly, they found more than enough to criticize in suburbanization and suburban religion. The intellectual critics of the 1950s, writers such as William H. Whyte, David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, and Dwight Macdonald, viewed American society as a lonely crowd of white-collar workers and organization men, housed in look-alike suburban homes and dominated by mass culture and a power elite.

For religious elites – including Reinhold Niebuhr, John Courtney Murray, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Will Herberg, Peter Berger, and Gibson Winter – the numerical growth of churches and synagogues, and the popularity of prayer and piety, represented a hollow success. In their eyes it was not real religion that was succeeding, but rather something less than faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the language of the Bible, the critics believed the people had turned to idols and false gods. By the end of the fifties they were calling the nation's true faith "the American Way of Life" and comparing the suburbanization of middle-class churches to the Babylonian captivity of the ancient Israelites. They even suggested that God did not appreciate the sounds rising up to him from America's solemn religious assemblies.

Of all the social critics of religion, Gibson Winter was most trenchant in his critique of the suburban impact on religion. For Winter, suburbia was the ultimate extension of two centuries of industrialization and a very real peril to the soul of the Christian church. Winter first published his indictments of the suburban captivity of churches in *The Christian Century* in 1955 and later extended his argument in a popular book, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*. In terms of church life, Winter maintained, suburbia had introduced its conception of success into every aspect of the church's being. Despite infusing the church and its programs with energy and enthusiasm, and filling the offering plates, pews, and educational facilities to overflowing, suburbia had, Winter believed, taken the churches into captivity – with all the negative connotations that the term implied. Suburbia had imposed its mind-set on the church. Financial prosperity and

numerical growth had crowded out more traditional measures of Christian success – salvation, redemption, care of the poor, and witness to the power of the cross. Indeed, the very success of suburban churches threatened the identity of Christian churches. With church members being added more quickly than clergy and dedicated laypeople could assimilate and train them, it was virtually guaranteed that more of the world would be drawn into the church of Christ than Christ would be taken by the church into the world. Finally, for Winter, suburbia undermined the life of the church insofar as it had “nailed up an impenetrable layer of insulation between the churches and the world of work, community, housing, and daily bread.” Winter recognized that the isolation of the church from daily life was not created by suburbia, but even so he argued that secularization had found its fullest and final expression in suburbs. This, he believed, constituted a national tragedy for it was happening at a time when America’s world leadership necessitated a prophetic church. And the suburban church was anything but prophetic. “Suburban domination may well be God’s word of judgment upon us as his church,” Winter wrote. “For our trespasses and complacency we have been delivered to Babylon.”⁵ When Winter’s article appeared in *The Christian Century*, the reaction was immediate, so much so that *Time* magazine carried news of the article to its readership, together with extracts from it under the title “Last Train to Babylon.”⁶

Gibson Winter was not alone in fixing blame for social ills upon religious institutions and their leaders. The sociologist C. Wright Mills, the journalist William H. Whyte, and another popular writer of the era, Will Herberg, each attacked the religious institutions of their day. Mills, writing in *The Nation* what he called “a pagan sermon to the Christian clergy,” argued that the churches and their clergy were failing to do what their own profession of faith and traditions committed them to do, namely, to resist the power of the military-industrial complex and the statecraft that relied upon threats of nuclear war to accomplish national objectives.⁷ For Whyte, the church of suburbia was especially beholden to the “social ethic” of the organizational way. Wherever young organization people gathered in a community, Whyte noticed, “the urge for a more socially useful church manifests itself.” This was only logical, he thought, since they needed what others had historically taken for granted. “For those who stay put in one place, the church has always been socially useful, and the by-products of

⁵ Gibson Winter, “The Church in Suburban Captivity,” *Christian Century*, 28 Sept. 1955, 1111–14; Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY, 1961).

⁶ “Last Train to Babylon,” *Time*, 10 Oct. 1955, 73.

⁷ C. Wright Mills, “A Pagan Sermon to the Christian Clergy,” *Nation*, March 1958, 199–202.

church affiliation they take as a matter of course. But the transients cannot. Stability, kinship with others – they want these demonstrated, and in the here and now.” The result of this need was that the churches and synagogues were faced with an “irresistible temptation” to make the facilitation of friendship their chief appeal. The quest for friendship was the quest of the suburban transient population of organization people. This quest defined their expectation of religious fellowship, an expectation that the churches were only too happy to adopt as their own.⁸

The content of friendship-oriented religiosity also concerned Will Herberg. His *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955) is a distillation of historical fact, sociological theory, and community studies into a coherent, popularly accessible essay that critiqued contemporary religion as the religion of the “American Way of Life.” A union organizer who had grown to maturity through his experiences in various Communist organizations before World War II, Herberg was trained by his past disillusionments to recognize an ideology masquerading as genuine truth. His work turned on a paradox. Americans in the postwar years were becoming both more religious and more secular. He resolved the paradox by asserting that their dominant religion was a secular faith in the “American Way of Life,” a belief in abundance, fairness, having some (unspecified) faith, education, the benign corporation, the good government, the family, and a home in the suburbs. The residual post-melting pot faith communities of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism had for the most part, he believed, become outlets for this one, common underlying faith in the way things were in America and in faith itself. For Herberg, this kind of faith simply was not worth having because it was rootless and without any referent outside the world of contemporary America. His recommendation that Americans seek out a biblical faith rooted in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a different solution on its surface from those offered in the other jeremiads, yet at its root was strikingly similar in its assertion that meaning in life was not to be found in either corporate devotion or a suburban paradise.⁹

SUBURBANIZATION AND RELIGION SINCE 1965

In the last four decades American suburbs have continued to grow, and organized religion has continued to move its center of gravity into the suburbs. Where elites once worried about the suburbs’ moral and religious significance, suburbs are now increasingly taken for granted. This shift

⁸ William Hollingsworth Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York, 1956), 417–18.

⁹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY, 1955).

was not accomplished without pain, however, and most of the transitional burden has been shouldered by city dwellers and urban congregations. Mainline Protestantism has also been a peculiar victim of its failure to keep pace with suburban expansion.

By the middle of the 1960s, two decades of postwar suburbanization had depleted white urban churches and synagogues of the young and left behind older congregants. In the 1950s, the majority of the remaining urban members had been in their late middle-age or early retirement years. Consequently, they were often still married, had high disposable incomes, and were able to sustain downtown congregations without noticeable strain, despite the fact that they were not adding younger members. But when older, urban congregations of Christians and Jews continued to age and their resident members moved increasingly into periods of widowhood, infirmity, and declining financial resources in the later 1960s, numerous congregations fell on hard times. Endowments allowed some "large steeple" churches to support exciting preaching ministries, but the relocation of younger adults to suburbs virtually assured a dramatic religious decline among whites in cities. The prophets who had wailed about suburbia during the 1950s seemed more prophetic as the years wore on. Gerald Gamm has written compellingly of how the Jews of Dorchester and Roxbury, Massachusetts, numbering more than 70,000 in 1950, were few in number by the time of the Boston busing controversy in the mid-1970s. In describing why Jews left for the suburbs and Catholics stayed longer in the old neighborhoods, Gamm credits institutional factors. Catholic parishes are rooted, territorially defined, and hierarchical, and consequently provided a brake on the exodus of Catholic families. Meanwhile Jewish attachment to neighborhoods was notably weaker in part because Jews' survival was traditionally predicated on portability and autonomy. Being ready to move with one's people rather than remain devoted to a place meant Jewish institutions themselves helped exacerbate the Jewish exodus.¹⁰

African American religion in cities was relatively untouched by suburbanization in the 1950s or by its religious critics. Fleeing the cities and their problems was not a moral issue for black Christians since they were largely excluded from suburbs. Residential segregation meant that moving to suburbs and leaving the poor behind were not available options. Later, when residential opportunities for African Americans improved, they did so first in formerly all-white neighborhoods of cities themselves. Next was a move into suburbs like New Rochelle, New York, with a large African American population and the consequent development of well-established

¹⁰ Gerald H. Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

churches associated with historically black denominations. More recently, black suburbanization has caused a new round of concern about the relation of churches to their communities. Though the suburbs have often been pictured as segregated, whites-only enclaves, the suburbs have transformed since 1980 into more of a class-based phenomenon. Middle-class post-1965 immigrants and their families, and more affluent African Americans, all call the suburbs home. Indeed, black suburban migration to such places as Prince William County, Virginia, has created religious ramifications for older congregations closer into the center city. Initially new black suburbanite families make the trek into the city and its inner ring suburbs to their old church homes. Yet as the families' children grow into adolescents with a set of school and activity peers, there is a marked tendency for people to begin attending suburban churches closer to their homes. Once again, a move from the city has built new suburban churches that have dynamic families at the expense of the urban congregations, but this time the gains and losses are between congregations of the black church. Not coincidentally, the suburban religion trend among African Americans is away from affiliation with congregations associated with the historical black denominations and toward nondenominational independent churches.¹¹

In the film *True Confessions* set in the late 1940s and 1950s, Los Angeles Catholic leaders boast that the archdiocese is opening a new parish each month. Though that pace was perhaps equaled nowhere else, its direction was indicative of the Catholic population shift that would happen over three decades in most cities. What began as pure growth on the edge of metropolitan areas later became a process of Catholic relocation from cities to suburbs. The dominant Catholic move to the suburbs occurred after the mid-1960s, such that by the early 1980s, in cities such as Detroit; Newark, New Jersey; and Gary, Indiana (and later in cities such as Boston and Buffalo), archdioceses found themselves with more urban parishes than they could possibly support and began closing them much to the dismay of rank-and-file Catholics who believed that their Church was ubiquitous, that is, committed to having a parish in every place there were people. One of the significant effects that white suburbanization had for the Roman Catholic Church was that in many of the nation's oldest and largest cities the parochial school systems became, by and large, majority black. Running large school systems for the benefit of many non-Catholics taxed

¹¹ Gerald David Jaynes, Robin Murphy Williams, and National Research Council (U.S.). Committee on the Status of Black Americans, *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, DC, 1989). See also Jacqueline Trussell, *The Changing Face of Religion: The Suburbanization of the Black Church* 2009, www.blackandchristian.com/articles/academy/trussell-11-01.shtml (accessed 22 June 2009).

dioceses' resources and sometimes led to hard choices about church and school closings. Perhaps the most dramatic set of church closings happened in Detroit, after Edmund Cardinal Szoka announced on 29 September 1988 that the archdiocese had slated forty-two churches for closing and recommended that six others be reduced to missions or shrines. The net effect of those closings over time was that in 2007 the Archdiocese of Detroit counted more than 93 percent of all Catholics in suburban parishes, the ethnic composition of which was less than 9.2 percent African American and Hispanic, while the city Catholic parishes were more than 85 percent African American and Hispanic in membership. Though Detroit provides an extreme example, the removal of the Catholic population to the suburbs is an accomplished fact in many metropolitan areas.¹²

In the last thirty years, suburban populations have become more diverse, and ethnic and racial diversity has created greater religious diversity. Meanwhile the suburbs also have largely been home for the houses of worship of Indian and non-Christian East Asian immigrants. Thus, once-all-white and overwhelmingly Christian, Dearborn, Michigan, is now home to a substantial Muslim population from the Near East. Lawrenceville, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta, boasts fast-growing Korean-language churches associated with both the Methodist and Presbyterian denominations. These changes have forced religious groups to adjust to the suburbs in different ways than they had in the past. The seemingly easy equation of suburbs with a privileged life devoid of cultural diversity has evaporated. Compared to the 1950s and 1960s, religious congregations of the 1990s in both cities and suburbs are more likely to be engaged in social ministries that extend beyond their neighborhoods and primary class identifications. Michael Jones-Correa notes that by 1999, 31 percent of blacks, 44 percent of Latinos, and 51 percent of Asian Americans lived in suburbs.¹³

Alongside more diverse suburbs was an expanded view of what they represented. While urban intellectuals in the 1950s were critical of the bland conformity of suburbs and their residents, younger intellectuals, many of whom grew up in suburbs, have advanced revisionist historical accounts of the suburbs. On one hand, they challenge the ideological bias of earlier critics that served to flatten the complexity of suburban life and places. On the other hand, they lay blame for the particular development of the suburbs at the feet of public policies in the areas of transportation,

¹² Demographic Profile, July 2009, Archdiocese of Detroit, Department of Parish Life and Services/Pastoral Resources.

¹³ Michael Jones-Correa, "Reshaping the American Dream: Immigrants, Ethnic Minorities, and the Politics of the New Suburbs," in Kevin Michael Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago, 2006), 184.

taxation, education, busing to achieve racial integration, and relations among federal, state, and municipal governments. The suburbs in the new historiography are simultaneously less uniform, less demand-driven, and less inevitable than was commonly supposed by fifties critics. The actual political-demographic trends turn out, according to the new historiography, to account for the post-1970 resurrection of conservative and family values Republicanism and the rightward drift of American Christianity. The new historiography also calls attention to the continued ethnic and racial diversification of the suburbs, even while the economic classes are more geographically stratified than ever before.¹⁴

Few suburbs after the 1960s were truly in new areas in the sense that the postwar Levittown developments were, that is, multiple square mile planned tracts, which included schools, churches, parks, and retail locations. It was much more common for land developers to develop subdivisions in towns and villages with preexisting identities several hundred acres at a time. At one level, then, communities experienced themselves merely as growing communities, but at another, the class, employment, demographic, and religious patterns and expectations of newcomer residents were transforming them. By the year 2000, people living in metropolitan areas, but outside the municipal boundaries of principal cities, constituted a majority of the population. The United States was a suburban nation, and because suburbs hosted the population with relatively younger, wealthier, higher-income people, suburbs exercised disproportionate cultural influence. From malls to big-box stores, to what suburbanites bought and drove, the rest of the nation learned to accommodate to a suburban norm. The rise of family values Republicans in the 1980s and 1990s was orchestrated in the suburbs. So too was the rise of evangelicalism as the new dominant expression of religiosity and the growth of megachurches, the latter being religion's equivalent of the big-box store phenomenon.

The extent to which suburban development was developer/consumer driven in recent decades could be seen in the failure of the new urbanism to influence much suburban expansion. There were in these years two kinds of suburbanization – expansion by housing development creep and expansion by planned design. Characteristically the former generated entrepreneurial religion on its edge; the latter, planned mode mostly neglected it altogether. For religious life the implications were dramatic. Where once large-scale developers donated land for religious purposes, contemporary fledgling congregations were forced to buy their own land, and those who bought were only rarely associated with mainline Protestant denominations.

¹⁴ Kruse and Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*.

Of course, most exurban areas in America already had some churches in place when the new suburbanites arrived. What happened to such churches and communities was the focus of the work of Nancy Eiesland. Eiesland renamed the suburbanization process “urban decentralization,” and she described it as one in which consumer wants push middle-income Americans toward places where the schools are good, and developers pull those same home buyers to neighborhoods on the periphery of major metropolitan areas with new homes near good (or at least better) school systems.¹⁵ The relocation of significant parts of the population also meant a relocation of institutions. In the religious sphere, the mere fact that a community was already served with a variety of religious congregations was no guarantee that those congregations would benefit from suburban growth. Indeed, a common pattern was for most older congregations to continue to serve preexistent populations while newer congregations, aimed at the newcomer population, grew quickly alongside new residential development. The rare preexistent congregation that experienced dramatic growth along with suburbanization did so by adapting to the expectations and programmatic desires of new residents. Eiesland described this process of adaptation in an exurban setting in terms of organizational competition of religious forms in a changed ecology. She noted that the congregations that best captured the loyalties of new residents were those that were aggressive and enthusiastic about person-to-person evangelism and marketing their programs as fulfilling those residents’ felt needs.

Because people were on the move to the suburbs well into the new century after 2000, the American religious environment was being reshaped in thousands of communities in ways that abetted the rise of megachurches and entrepreneurial religious leadership forms, particularly in the absence of the formerly dominant mainline tradition’s apparent willingness to build new churches in new neighborhoods with the programmatic requirements most new suburbanites sought. Nor did the closest church seem to have a great advantage in attracting new adherents, since surveys showed that nearly half of all congregation members drove more than ten minutes to attend the church of their choice. Indeed, some of the most successful churches, such as Willow Creek Community Church in the Chicago area, were not in residential neighborhoods at all so much as they were on campuses and in suburban areas, much as corporate office parks and malls were in suburban areas. A steady change wrought by suburbanization over the last half-century found more than half of all churchgoing Americans attending large membership churches (more than five hundred members). Meanwhile, more than half of all congregations worshipped with fewer

¹⁵ Nancy L. Eiesland, *A Particular Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2000), 200–6.

than one hundred members. Suburbanization helped create a culture of supersized churches alongside a widespread declining set of mom-and-pop churches.¹⁶

One of the dimensions of the large membership new suburban congregations that made them like familiar malls and big-box stores was the ease with which visitors could enter and shop for the spiritual experiences for which they were looking. This was in stark contrast to the experience of newcomers to small congregations, in which, because they stood out, they were alternately made to feel unwelcome or too welcome. The term of art employed by most megachurches was “seeker friendly.” Large membership churches have also been successful in partially meeting the needs of persons who attend smaller churches through special-focus small membership groups focusing on needs such as grief counseling or divorce care. As of this writing, it remains to be seen what the long-term effects of religious service seeking and double dipping on the suburban frontier might mean for the relationships between kinds of congregations or the meaning of individual religious practice.¹⁷

What is clear after a century of suburbanization is that the process changes institutions and individuals in ways that challenge and exceed their expectations. Many urbanites hope that in moving to exurban areas they will be able to participate in small-town life. Nevertheless, when a large number of new residents move in, they often precipitate a transformation that makes organizational survival nearly impossible for small-town-style institutions. As Eiesland argued, organizational adaptation is sometimes impossible, with the result that organizations best suited to the changed ecology survive. People often think of exurban areas as family-friendly and country areas as conducive to traditional mores. Ironically some of the very institutions that best promote some of the values (such as family life and personal morality) associated with traditional country life turn out to be the new evangelical megachurches that may, in turn, crowd out the original small-town churches in the local ecology. Meanwhile, as the nation became increasingly suburban, religious forms born in rural areas, in small towns, and in large cities, all became adapted to a suburban way of life and constituted, in all but a few cases, the dominant form of congregational life in their respective traditions. It was not unusual in 2011, for example, to see rural congregations with large screen panels for projecting praise music, just as in suburban megachurches.

Suburbia bears the hopes of many Americans and has done so for succeeding generations of people who hoped for a house of their own, on land

¹⁶ Mark Chaves, *Congregations in America* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

¹⁷ Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

of their own, in a community where their children could be safe and educated in good schools. This association of suburbia with the American dream is relatively recent – dating only from the late 1940s – but the hope is in many ways an extension of Thomas Jefferson’s hope for a nation of small landowners, spread out from one another in egalitarian happiness, productively attending to their own welfare and that of their neighbors. Though most people no longer farm their landholdings in America, as Jefferson thought they would, his nation has developed into a people who associate freedom, autonomy, and the good life with a piece of land reachable with modern horsepower in the form of the automobile. These ersatz Jeffersonian dreams often obscure the extent to which Americans do not live with the same sense of place their forebears possessed. The housing bubble of 2007–09 aptly illustrates the frailty of the suburban project. Americans have attempted to “settle” where only sojourns are possible in places where there is a carefully constructed relationship between housing as a credit-supported commodity and the nuclear family. This relationship between dwelling and people does not parallel older types of relationships among land, family, and community. The homestead and the suburban tract house are two very different entities. People desire the convenience of shiny new suburbs and the remembered stability of multigenerational small towns and urban neighborhoods. But the transient status of many suburbs changes the nature of community and raises the stakes for religious congregations to provide instant meaning and belonging, though there are some signs in the 2000 census that Americans are staying put in their suburbs to greater degrees than ever before, perhaps because they are so heavily invested in housing as a form of wealth.

If Americans have illusions as to where they live, they also possess false and romantic ideas about their suburban houses of worship. Mark Chaves found in a national survey of congregations that most congregations engaged in appreciable amounts of neither social service to others nor political activity qua congregations. What they did nearly universally was to engage in practices of worship, education, and the arts. If the greater portion of religious congregations engaging in politics and social service are, for understandable reasons, concentrated in cities, then Chaves’ findings are intensified in the suburbs. In the contemporary suburb, congregations provide worship, religious knowledge, moral guidance, and values through education, and they provide opportunities to sing. They may also provide Christian youth fellowship opportunities. They are emphatically not the public moral forums of their walking-distance neighborhoods, a vision of religious place that is increasingly difficult to find.¹⁸

¹⁸ Chaves, *Congregations in America*.

ASSESSING A CENTURY OF SUBURBANIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON RELIGION

Suburbanization during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century contributed to the growth of religiosity of the American population insofar as people occupying suburbs sought sociality in houses of worship focused on the spiritual and practical needs of families. By most measures, religious adherence reached its peak in the United States around 1965. The suburbs helped fuel the growth of organized religion, and the early beneficiaries of that growth were mainline Protestantism and Reform and Conservative Judaism, soon followed by Catholicism. After 1965, suburbanization continued, but the religious benefits of geographical growth went largely to other faith groups. Over the last forty years, suburbanization has exacted a high cost in terms of membership losses from mainline Protestant churches. Older denominations that were dominant even fifty years ago suffered the greatest losses, it is arguable, simply as a result of not going to where the people are. It is here that the supply-side explanations for which traditions grow and which decline offered by Finke and Stark with respect to an earlier era make sense. It is not merely that people have sought out evangelical churches to attend (though that also may be true), but, more dramatically, evangelical, entrepreneurial, and independent churches have gone to the suburbs where the families who might join any church are.¹⁹

A suburban mind-set has developed key enduring features that help shape the role and function of religion after suburbanization. First among these is a divided view of the center city. In terms of professional sports teams, for instance, suburbanites tend to think of themselves as Clevelanders or Philadelphians. In terms of schools and municipal services, then the suburbanites identify with their own smaller communities. Indeed, cities and their residents are sometimes stigmatized as the unfortunates “who cannot solve their problems and manage their affairs as we (the suburbanites) do.” Religious life, with few exceptions, falls in the localized sphere of activity involving the families, schools, and care for church friends, and personal development. A greater remove from the economic life of the metropolis, suburban religious congregations tend not to engage local economic and political issues at all. Instead, when issues are engaged from the pulpit in these churches, it is often at the national or even global level, over which neither preachers nor congregation members have much control. Thus conservative churches may do symbolic battle with the Hollywood media “who undermine our family values” or with unpopular Supreme Court decisions,

¹⁹ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992).

while liberal pastors decry the “unnecessary war in Iraq” or the “pernicious effects of globalization on the poor.” Rhetorically, suburban (and other) churches rail at, or lament, what they will not organize to change, a practice reminiscent of the status politics applied in the fight over prohibition. Suburbanization did not create this tendency of churches to engage issues in a symbolic as opposed to real fashion, yet like a nationalized medium, suburbanization has intensified the basic tendency. Suburban congregations, like CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, now serve as highly evolved and specialized outlets that confirm and reinforce people in what they already believe and already are. Thus, a black congregation will hear about the “racialized politics of divide and conquer,” and third-generation Indian teenagers will go to a Hindu *mindir* to reinforce what it means to be Hindu in suburban America, and a Catholic parish will be urged to embrace the “culture of life,” but these messages will be narrow-cast to their distinct settings.²⁰ There is little public religion in contemporary America as it is. This is emphatically so in the suburban contexts where most Americans now worship. This is not all for the worse, for one can imagine an American culture without the moral and religious lessons imparted by suburban congregations as a poorer and meaner place. Still, viewed from the perspective of the mid-twentieth-century critics who feared that the suburbanization of religion would lead to its domestication there is much to confirm those fears. If mid-twentieth-century urban religion produced vigorous public religious leadership modeled after Martin Luther King and William Sloan Coffin, contemporary suburban religion provides us with Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and T. D. Jakes as its most visible representatives. Even when suburban religion is publicly on view, its concerns are focused principally on the spiritual needs of individuals and their families. The suburbanization of American religion forces consideration of a massive, yet quiet movement into largely private religious enclaves.

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THE POST-WAR RELIGIOUS WORLD, 1945 AND FOLLOWING: THE CASE OF ASIAN RELIGIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

JANE IWAMURA

The years after the Second World War marked a monumental shift in American religious consciousness and specifically in Americans' attitudes toward Asian religions. Perusing issues of *Life* magazine during and after World War II acutely demonstrates the shift. In its 16 August 1943 cover story, entitled "How Strong Is Japan?" the popular magazine pronounces in a bold caption, "Japanese Are Imitative and Traditional . . . but United by Emperor Worship and Hate." The report's characterization of Japanese spiritual traditions is no less inflammatory. "The asinine tea ceremony was evolved from the Chinese who have long since forgotten it. It derives from Zen Buddhism and represents a contemplative philosophy of relishing small things. The ceremony is fully as elaborate as a college fraternity initiative. Japanese life is full of similar nonsense."¹ By 1951, after Japan's defeat and occupation by the United States, *Life* magazine would return to Japan, but with a different eye. Its 31 December cover is graced by a pretty Japanese girl in traditional dress, smiling amiably for the camera. Here the feature story proclaims, "The Example of Japan: The Medieval Land That Became Asia's Most Modern Nation Is Exerting a New Influence Today on the Ways of the West."² The color spread that accompanies the story features Zen-inspired homes and serene gardens, as well as Japanese traditional artwork, "a great, delicate art." Shintoism is still maligned. However, by 1964, even this tradition – once closely linked with Japan's military aggression during war – is rehabilitated. "The Shinto festival . . . is a community affair, like a saint's day in Europe, with bells, drums and a pleasant amount of drinking. With their gift for synthesizing, the Japanese combine down-to-earth Shintoism with the spirituality of Buddhism, and are enriched by both."³

¹ *Life*, 16 Aug. 1943, 94.

² "The Example of Japan," *Life*, 31 Dec. 1951, 58.

³ "Japan," *Life*, 11 Sept. 1964, 19.

Asian religions, such as Buddhism, did not simply enjoy such revised status in the United States during the postwar period, but actually flourished on American soil. During the 1950s and into the 1960s, Zen Buddhism would take root with popular attention to D. T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, and Jack Kerouac and the Beats. Their writings would be read widely in college classrooms and coffeehouses and would inform the thinking of a new generation. An openness to religious alternatives would be further encouraged by the 1960s counterculture movement, which challenged normative values and traditional authority structures. Asian and Asian-inspired religious movements – new and old – saw great opportunity, and the number of American practitioners within these movements grew (e.g., the International Society of Krishna Consciousness [ISKCON] and Transcendental Meditation).

Out of this emerged a “generation of seekers” whose brand of “seeker spirituality” draws greatly from Asian religious sources and is prevalent today. Not only are temples, Zendos, and meditation retreat centers part of the American scene, but Asian religions also boast a growing number of dedicated practitioners. Americans overall have a more positive sense and impression of Asian spirituality: the American lexicon now includes “Zen” as a general adjective, people try to align their chakras, and children imitate Kung Fu Panda and the Karate Kid. It is now hard to imagine Asian religions as “heathen,” “retrograde,” “superstitious,” or completely inaccessible as they were seen less than a century ago. Astonishingly, they have become the religious “here and now.”

As a way to understand more broadly the postwar religious world and its continuing legacy, this essay explores the reasons behind this incredible shift in Americans’ perceptions and the integration of Asian religious traditions.⁴ Asian religions have had a long history in the United States – from the Transcendentalists’ engagement with Hinduism, to the folk rituals practiced by Chinese immigrants who sought their fortune on “Gold Mountain,” to the embrace of Buddhism by Anglo interpreters such as Paul Carus. Despite this early presence, the religions of Asia were popularly viewed up until the middle of the twentieth century with suspicion, if not disdain. The entry and path for Asian religions were made clear by a whole set of forces. Geopolitical interests, domestic movements and legislation, and new immigration worked together to spur change in attitudes

⁴ One should note that “Asian religions” is an overly general term that includes in Western classificatory terms Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Sikhism, Jainism, Shintoism, and the Bahā’ī faith. It can also include folk religions and new religious movements. And even within these traditions, the variation is staggering. However, Americans’ popular understanding of these distinctive traditions is often blunt and uneven.

toward the religions of Asia and, in turn, a change in the American religious worldview.

THE GEOPOLITICAL TERRAIN

Despite idealistic and often popular views that religion and religious understanding stand outside politics and society, religion and spirituality are inherently shaped by the social, cultural, and political environment. This is no more evident than in the case of increased awareness of Asian religions in the postwar United States. Americans' openness to, indeed, embrace of Asian religious alternatives, is often posited as an inevitable outcome of liberal democracy and religious tolerance. We like to think that our acceptance of or at least respect for these alternatives is a sign of progress and understanding. This judgment is further enhanced by Americans' contemporary view that the world is a much smaller place and the trade of spiritual goods and resources within the "global village" more desirable than ever.

The religious, however, is inherently political. The ingress of Asian religions into American popular consciousness was shaped by the political interests of the United States and the geopolitical terrain of the postwar period. The status of these religions was veritably transformed after the war. Much of the impetus for this change was related to the emergence of the United States as a world power and the escalation of the Cold War. The dualist rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine ("Free World" vs. Communism), coupled with the American government's strategy of "containment," fueled and justified involvement in the Korean War and expansion into Asia. Cold War endeavors, as Christina Klein notes, relied upon "integrating" Asia into the hearts and minds of Americans. Sentimental connections and attachments were forged through popular culture (magazines, theater, and film) and the positive portrayals of Asian peoples and cultures, including their religions.⁵

Such efforts at "global integration" can be readily seen in the *Life* magazine series "The World's Great Religions," which ran in 1955. The six issues spread out over the year covered the major faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, outlining the basic philosophy and practices of each. In typical *Life* form, these primers included spectacular color images and foldouts that featured each tradition's religious practitioners, significant religious sites, and artwork. The rationale for the series succinctly stated, "Today nations which follow

⁵ See Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley, CA, 2003).

ancient religions are resurgent and ambitious and, in today's world, no nations are remote. It is important to understand their behavior. But first we must know what they believe. Religion does not explain everything about a people's behavior, but as the mother of morals and definer of justice, it has ever been a chief arbiter of man's conduct."⁶ While *Life* and other newsweeklies had previously reported on Asian religious life to varying degrees, this instance stood out in its attempt to draw connections between American readers and foreign religious traditions in a fairly positive manner. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism were not simply religions practiced by peoples in far-off lands, but religious realities on which Americans must reflect and of which they must be aware.

To open up an American audience to these faith traditions required a different type of reporting, one that highlighted the universal nature of these traditions without losing their distinctiveness. The focus on "practice" and on attendant images of South Asian, Chinese, and Japanese people – especially the elderly and children – engaged in religious rituals offered the most fundamental strategy of presenting Asian religions as nonthreatening. Words and captions supported this approach and portrayed these religions as "gentle," "quiet," and "peaceful." However, these images also highlighted the spectacle of religious sites and unusual dress, adding a dimension of exoticism that was also enticing to the reader. Stunning visual examples of art and artistic forms further buttressed this approach by emphasizing the legitimacy of the "civilizations from which Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese religions sprang."

"The World's Great Religions" was heralded as such an achievement that *Life* magazine made the series readily available as a book (which included an added section on Christianity) sold in bookstores and available in deluxe and library editions. A Junior Edition for "younger readers" as well as filmstrips were also developed. The series' function as an educational opportunity is evident. Again, the context of the Cold War provided a reason for this form of education and the rehabilitation of Asian religions. For instance, a piece in the issue on Buddhism (7 Mar. 1955) succinctly states, "Troubled Time: Gentle Religion Faces Communist Threat." Here the United States' expansion into Asia is justified in an indirect appeal to "save" these dignified religious traditions from political adversaries.

Cold War politics would not only serve as part of the implicit rationale and guiding force behind *Life* magazine's series "The World's Great Religions," but also inform its general reporting on Asian affairs. This included the magazine's coverage of the exile of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Long before the Dalai Lama would become a religious celebrity in his own

⁶ *Life*, 7 Feb. 1955, 57.

right in the late twentieth century, he would appear on two *Life* magazine covers in the 1950s. A smiling, youthful Tenzin Gyatso, with religious relic in hand and flanked by fellow monks, was featured on the 23 August 1951 cover with the title caption “Flight of the Dalai Lama: Exclusive Photos of Historic Trek over the Himalayas to Escape. . . . Lama Reaches Safety.” The accompanying story documents in images and words the religious figure’s journey from the Tibetan capital of Lhasa to the outpost of Yatung after China’s takeover of the nation. *Life* and other news outlets continued to report on the Dalai Lama as he tried to work with Mao Zedong and the People’s Republic of China in the mid-1950s. However, when relations deteriorated and the Dalai Lama chose to flee to India, the magazine dedicated two features and its 4 May 1959 cover to the revered “God-king” and his “miraculous escape” from the clutches of Communism.

While the subheading of the 6 April 1959 story reads, “Tibet Takes on the Reds,” it is really the American reader who was meant to take up this mission. The exotic and ancient worldview and strange customs of the Dalai Lama and his fellow Tibetans seen through images in *Life* during this time served as a strange foil for Western readers and a reflection of Communism’s imminent threat. Americans, of course, held their own associations and views of the theocratic nation, fostered by their engagement with James Hilton’s best-selling book and Frank Capra’s film adaptation, *Lost Horizon*. “Shangri-la” under siege by Chinese forces played upon Americans’ notions of the fabled spiritual kingdom and proved a palpable drama. Representations of the Dalai Lama, Tibet, and Tibetan Buddhism even in contemporary times are still informed by similar spiritual and political preoccupations.

The inception of Asian religions in the U.S. imaginary would continue through the 1960s. The Vietnam War would provide one of the most startling images of Asian religious faith and commitment. Malcolm Brown’s photo of the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc on the streets of Saigon in 1963 served as a turning point in the war and would remain seared in the collective memory of Americans long after. Quang Duc’s sacrificial act would come to represent Buddhism’s response to the ongoing conflict in Vietnam, and through the image of his burning body Americans were made to confront a level of religious commitment that seemed quite unfathomable to those in the West.

Even after the Vietnam War and United States’ military intervention in Asia had ended in the 1970s, geopolitical concerns would continue to shape Americans’ reception of Asian religions. If one surveys popular representations of Asian religions in American popular culture, a pattern emerges. For instance, in the 1980s with the emergence of Japan as an economic power, American attention turned to Japanese religious traditions

in full force. Essentialized references to the “Japanese mind” – including its spiritual worldview and moral outlook – became prevalent in news reports, editorials, and nonfictional analyses, especially in the earlier part of the decade. Buddhism, now held as the serene and peaceful expression of Japanese religious faith, enjoyed even greater popularity as Zen and other Buddhist retreat centers flourished.

Admiration for the Japanese miracle would be increasingly mixed with envy and resentment, and such ambivalence would become part of the discourse on Japan in the mid to late 1980s. Pundits would revert to explanations of Japan’s economic success and reference Japan’s ability to borrow from outside cultures (and the concomitant lack of originality of its own culture) as well as the influence of Confucianism’s strict hierarchies of authority and obligation and Shintoism. “One secret of Japanese commercial success may have something to do with Shintoism, with the way that the tribe, and everything it does, achieves mythic importance.”⁷ Political analysts and cultural critics, spurred on by Japan’s protectionist practices and frustrated by its seeming insularity, would further contend that although Japan had achieved great economic power, it was ill equipped to serve as a political and cultural leader. Japan bashing would also take on an ominous tone; it was predicted that capitalism and economic success would be gained at the serious cost of the small island nation’s traditions and lifeways.

This response was perhaps more a reflection of Americans’ own lack of spiritual self-confidence. The narrative that soothed over these issues and concerns is concisely captured in the series of popular films, *The Karate Kid*. In the first movie of the series (1984), Ralph Macchio plays Daniel Russo, a dislocated youth, who is terrorized by a gang of bullies at his new school. He is “adopted” by the apartment handyman, Mr. Miyagi, who trains Daniel in the ways of karate and serves as his surrogate parent and spiritual guide. Mr. Miyagi’s character is imbued with the stereotypical features of the Asian master or “Oriental Monk” – calm, peace seeking, and inherently wise. Under his mentorship, Daniel gains victory (within the legitimate space of the karate arena) over his adversaries and gets the girl, too. The sequel to the movie, *The Karate Kid II* (1986), takes the master and pupil to Japan (Okinawa more exactly). Here, the pair confronts Mr. Miyagi’s old foe, Sato, who has become a greedy, overbearing capitalist. In a showdown between Daniel and Sato’s pupil, Daniel emerges victorious. Sato and his followers learn a valuable lesson and turn away from the path of anger, power, and materialism and return to their roots.

The Karate Kid and its sequels were immensely popular and continue to be shown on cable television. Written into the overarching narrative of this

⁷ “Japan: All Hazards and Threats of,” *Time*, 1 Aug. 1983.

set of films are the various spiritual roles that the United States and Asia ideally play according to the American imagination. Asian religions and spirituality are valued resources – ancient wellsprings of wisdom – that Americans like Daniel not only appreciate, but can draw on readily. This appreciation, along with Western initiative, ensures the continuity of the tradition. The Japanese not only lack such initiative, but in the grips of capitalism and economic success abandon their religious values and background, which are left for the Western pupil to save.

With its watered-down spirituality, *The Karate Kid* hardly seems a worthy purveyor of Japanese religiosity. However, such popular renderings, including the film redux, *The Karate Kid* (2010) with Jackie Chan and Jaden Smith, educate young viewers to spiritual alternatives. They also reinforce American attitudes toward Asian religions that go beyond mere appreciation and sanction cultural access and entitlement. The role of the Western pupil as guardian and legitimate heir to these traditions is written seamlessly into the script. Indeed, this script, with its attendant archetypes laid out in film and television narratives such as *The Karate Kid*, has become its own American civil religious myth. So strong is the convention that it is difficult to imagine any story line – real or fictional – that does not somehow invoke the myth in one way or another. Representations of the Dalai Lama that emerged in the early 1990s up to the present day draw their meanings within this narrative frame.⁸

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union, China would become one of the United States' most formidable adversaries abroad. Political tensions would be played out over the nation of Tibet much in the same way they had forty years earlier. This time, however, Americans often laid claim to the Dalai Lama as their own, and many have taken up Tibet as their personal cause. The International Campaign for Tibet, whose official Website, www.savetibet.org, is housed in Washington, D.C., is the largest Tibet-related nongovernmental organization (NGO) and has garnered celebrity support from Richard Gere, Sharon Stone, and Russell Brand. Beyond such institutional efforts, the media's attention to the Dalai Lama and Tibet – from news coverage of President Obama's visit with His Holiness to "Free Tibet" bumper stickers – attests to Americans' popular fascination with, if not commitment to, the iconic Asian leader.

Not all Asian religions enjoy similar attention and reverence, however. One could map these traditions within a "field of positions" that marks

⁸ For an examination of this narrative, see Jane Naomi Iwamura, "The Oriental Monk in American Popular Culture," in Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, eds., *Religion and American Popular Culture* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), 23–43.

their relative visibility and valorization in American discourse.⁹ Buddhism clearly ranks high on both scales. Hinduism also enjoys great attention. However, Sikhism and Asian-based Islamic movements do not and suffer vilification, or at the very least suspicion, especially in the political aftermath of 9/11. Other traditions remain simply “off the chart,” unknown to many Americans. Geopolitical interests greatly inform what counts and does not count as a viable Asian religion in the American mind. And for those Asian religions that do count, their favorable status is laden with dimensions of power and shaped by unstated expectations and conventions.

DOMESTIC MOVEMENTS AND LEGISLATION

American changing attitudes toward Asian religions were heavily influenced by the geopolitical context. However, such changes were not solely determined by news reports and media representations from abroad. More direct experiences of Asian religions, as well as domestic movements and legislation, prepared the soil of their transplantation.

American GIs who fought in the Pacific theater during the Second World War and especially those who served during the occupation of Japan and the Korean War would have had exposure to Asian peoples and culture. They would take home stories of their experiences of cultural discovery and mishap, and this direct contact and “exchange” undoubtedly influenced Americans’ overall views of their former enemy. Popular films, such as *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956) and *Sayonara* (1957), offered entertaining, if not “realist” narratives of this encounter. *Teahouse* is an especially interesting example, as Japanese rituals and customs are again presented in a new and positive (although still exotic) light. In the movie, American occupation forces seek to build a pentagon-shaped school instead of a teahouse that the villagers want; the locals resourcefully win over their American captors and eventually realize their goal. The American GI protagonists are forever changed through their experience, and so, too, is the viewing audience.

The friendly romantic encounters portrayed in such films were not simply the stuff of the movies, however. Servicemen returned from their tours of duty with Japanese and Korean wives in tow. These GI brides would represent a small first, but significant Asian immigrant presence since exclusionary laws were enacted in the 1920s. As they dealt with life in the United

⁹ See Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27:1 (1999): 105–38. While Kim employs a “field of positions” to speak about race and racial representation, her approach is also useful in understanding the differential status of various religious traditions in the American context.

States with their *America-jin* husbands, they adapted Asian spiritual practices and religious faith to their new situation. Demands to acculturate and relative isolation from other Asians often made it difficult to sustain these practices. However, as did the villagers in *Teahouse*, many would find ingenious ways to observe Asian customs and pass these on to their children.

Even if GIs returned home alone or to families already in the United States, many would retain their interest, if not fascination, with Asian culture and traditions. Robert Aitken, interned by the Japanese during the war, returned to the United States and later established one of the first Zen centers in the country – the Honolulu Diamond Sangha – and served as its head abbot and *roshi* (teacher). The interest and appeal of Asian martial arts pursuits, such as aikido and karate, blossomed on American soil in the postwar years as former servicemen continued the training that they had begun in Japan. And for those Americans who did not have direct contact with Asian peoples and cultures, the popularity of things Asian – from household furnishings to informal dress – grew during the 1950s. Although Americans still harbored feelings of suspicion and resentment toward their World War II enemies, Japan and the rest of Asia presented new market opportunities within a transformed global economy.

This move toward greater integration of Asian cultures took place within a changing domestic scene. Settling into life after the war, Americans enjoyed more stable economic and social conditions. An expanding middle class and the growth of suburban communities, as well as a nostalgic embrace of an “American way of life,” placed a redefined emphasis on religious community and faith. This was a time of intense “dwelling,” as Americans sought to reclaim and ultimately redefine what “home” meant in terms of family, church, and country. The midcentury proved an interesting time as Roman Catholics and Jews – once maligned and excluded on the basis of their faith – found greater acceptance as Americans. Will Herberg’s oft-cited *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* marks this ingress, as does the survey of more positive coverage of Catholicism and Judaism in popular newsweeklies.¹⁰ John F. Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic to be elected president in 1960, and his iconic status would do much in terms of Catholics’ belonging within the American religious fold. Asian religions did not yet enjoy similar status in the 1950s. However, the changing definition of American religious identity would serve as an important precursor of future events.

While Catholics and Jews would make significant inroads, black Protestants and African Americans in general would still suffer ongoing

¹⁰ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago, 1983).

discrimination and prejudice. In response, the civil rights movement would take root in the 1950s, move forcefully into the 1960s, and forever change Americans' interpretations of freedom and equality. As Mary Dudziak notes, race, domestic political reform, and international relations were inextricably linked.¹¹ America could not claim to be a global leader, espousing "justice" and "equality" abroad, if it did not address the racial inequalities that were being perpetuated at home. Hence, international perception served as a motivating factor for American leaders and their advocacy of civil rights measures, including the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act outlawed discriminatory practices in schools, the workplace, and other public facilities. While racial segregation was a primary target of the legislation, discrimination along the lines of religion, sex, and national origin was also covered. The Civil Rights Act would provide the basis for a more tolerant environment in terms of race, religion, and other axes of difference, crucial to the status of Asian religions in the United States.

More directly, Asian religiously inspired philosophies, specifically the thought of Mahatma Gandhi, would have a tremendous influence on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence and peaceful mobilization, informed by Hindu and Jain religious principles, would serve as a model for King. While black social reformers, most notably W.E.B. Dubois and Marcus Garvey, had engaged Gandhi's thought long before King, the civil rights leader would be the first to apply the Gandhian repertoire successfully to political struggles in the United States. King first learned of Gandhi through a sermon delivered by Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, during a time when the young Baptist preacher "despaired of the power of love in solving social problems."¹² As he read more on Gandhi and the Indian struggle against British colonial rule, King would reevaluate the Christian ethic of love and the role it could play in the budding civil rights movement. King's longtime mentor, Howard Thurman, and his close adviser, Bayard Rustin, also demonstrated great interest in and allegiance to the Indian leader. Indeed, King and Rustin, along with A. Philip Randolph and James Farmer, would put Gandhian principles and tactics to work in the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the seminal March on Washington in 1963. In between these events, King traveled to India in 1959 to visit the birthplace of his inspiration,

¹¹ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 2002).

¹² Martin Luther King, Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," *Christian Century* 77 (27 April 1960): 510.

reaffirming his commitment: "I left India more convinced than ever before that nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."¹³

Martin Luther King's engagement with Gandhi did not constitute a wholesale adoption of the Indian leader's religious commitments and spiritual practices. Rather, King, guided by the Mahatma's example, would reinterpret the Christian doctrine of love and apply the methods of Gandhian struggle with lasting effect. While the common American may not recognize the Asian religious concept of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) underlying King's approach, he or she is well acquainted with the practice of nonviolence that King espoused and that Gandhi fundamentally engendered. And as nonviolence became a part of the American political tradition, Gandhi's influence has been more widely acknowledged. The Indian leader would also serve to inspire others, such as Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers movement, in the 1970s. Chavez also would adopt the Gandhian practice of fasting, and his hunger strikes would serve as an important political statement and method. American activists, hence, have drawn liberally and productively from Asian political movements and their religious outlooks. Today the religious flow comes full circle. Contemporary human rights discourse emerged from these historical examples. Americans deploy this secularized discourse to engage in struggles in Asia, most notably in Tibet and Burma, while still looking to Asia for spiritual impetus and direction, for example, to the Buddhist dimensions of movements led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama.

Asian religions also made their way to the United States more overtly during the post-World War II period. During this time, Asian religious movements became transnational in scope as religious figures and practitioners tapped into the ease of air travel and blossoming mass media. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement. Founded by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1955, TM spread across Europe and the United States in the 1960s. TM's philosophy emerged from Mahesh's background in Vedantic Hinduism and training under Brahmananda Saraswati, popularly known as Guru Dev. Mahesh's own ascetic practice led him to ultimate insight, as well as realization of the relevance of the technique for people all over the world. He then embarked on a number of "worldwide tours," beginning in Asia in 1958 and expanding to Europe and the United States shortly after. One of the first incarnations of the TM empire, the Spiritual Regeneration movement, was established in 1959 at the Los Angeles home of Roland and Helena Olson with instruction advertised in the *Los Angeles Times*. These early American

¹³ Martin Luther King, Jr., "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," *Ebony* 14 (July 1959): 86.

practitioners were attracted by the Maharishi's holistic approach, which paid attention to mind, body, and spirit. While the movement gained momentum, adding both trained teachers and adherents from around the globe, it was not until the middle of the 1960s that Transcendental Meditation would enter the popular consciousness of many Americans. In 1965, the Students International Meditation Society (SIMS) would tap into the countercultural sensibility of the times and set up groups on university and college campuses. And significantly in 1967, Mahesh would first meet his most famous pupils: Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr, and George Harrison.

The Beatles' foray into Transcendental Meditation and their relationship with the Maharishi became one of the most widely covered religious explorations in the history of American media. Mahesh was the first Asian religious figure to appear on network television (*The Tonight Show*, *The Dick Cavett Show*). And the guru's image would appear on the covers of the *New York Times Magazine*, *Look*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Life* magazine. The *Saturday Evening Post* dedicated a two-part series that focused heavily on Mahesh and his celebrity following, which also included Mia Farrow and Mike Love of the Beach Boys. These reports, often supplemented by spectacular images, offered varying interpretations of the TM phenomenon and ranged from reverential examinations (*Look*) to more cynical treatments (*Saturday Evening Post*). At best, Mahesh was seen as offering a drug-free spiritual alternative for the nation's youth; at worst, he was portrayed as a spiritual shyster and opportunist. The movement would also be enhanced by a growing interest in Indian music and fashion.¹⁴

This "Voguish, Self-Sufficiency" stage of the movement gave way to more enduring engagements in the 1970s. Mahesh and his Transcendental Meditation movement would be recognized as something beyond a spiritual celebrity and a pop culture fad as TM entered a new phase. During this time, the movement took a different tack and increasingly promoted TM as a practical and scientifically driven technique. Otherworldly dimensions would be deemphasized and mindful awareness marketed to the military, businesses, prisons, and schools. While the Maharishi International University was established in Fairfield, Iowa, in 1973, TM's segue into American mainstream culture would be interrupted by a U.S. District Court ruling in 1977 that declared TM's courses and programming as essentially religious and in violation of the First Amendment establishment clause and therefore ineligible for federal funding.

¹⁴ For a close reading of the 1960s American media coverage of Mahesh and the Transcendental Meditation movement, see Jane Naomi Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* (New York, 2010).

In the period that followed, the number of TM followers in the United States dropped, and the practitioners who remained began to focus their attention on the extraordinary dimensions of Transcendental Meditation, such as yogic flying and other intensive mind-body coordination methods. Financially, the movement proved quite lucrative, and Mahesh would use the fortune that his various enterprises amassed to buy properties throughout Europe and Asia, eventually setting up headquarters near Vlodrop, Netherlands. While the Maharishi's celebrity following would not garner the attention it once did, his movement would continue to receive high-profile support, namely, from the American director David Lynch. The filmmaker established the David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and Peace and promoted the Maharishi effect, the goal of enacting world peace through widespread meditation, in a series of well-publicized events and fund-raisers.

With his passing in 2008, Mahesh's legacy has yet to unfold fully. His international empire continues under the leadership of Maharaja Adhiraj Raja Raam (a.k.a. Tony Nader) and several of the Maharishi's nephews. And Deepak Chopra, a former student of Mahesh's, forged his own brand of spirituality and Ayurvedic products, especially popular among American New Agers. Mahesh is probably best remembered for his association with the Beatles and 1960s counterculture. However, his influence on American culture can be widely seen in the embrace of yoga and other meditative techniques. While the guru's form of spirituality is often regarded within the vein of "Neo-Hinduism" or "watered-down Hinduism" stripped of many of the devotions, symbols, and beliefs of its traditional source, Mahesh and his Transcendental Meditation movement have had great impact on the American religious consciousness and especially its awareness of Asian religious forms.

Transcendental Meditation was not the only Hindu-inspired transnational religious movement to make its way to the United States. The Self Realization Fellowship, ISKCON (the Hare Krishna movement), Siddha Yoga, and the Sathya Sai Organization would emerge and gain varying degrees of influence and notoriety. ISKCON's visible and vocal presence on urban street corners, as well as its self-professed communalism, would inform stereotypical notions of Indian religions as strange, cult-centered movements. These notions were held by many Americans who knew little about the organization's outlook or work. Allegations of sexual abuse and financial fraud plagued Sathya Sai's spiritual leader, Sathya Sai Baba, and further placed Indian religions under an umbrella of suspicion.

Buddhist-led movements also made significant inroads during the post-war years. As already mentioned, the work of D. T. Suzuki on Zen Buddhism and Japanese culture was read widely. Institutionally, Zen centers were

established by Japanese- and United States-born *roshis* (venerable teachers) from the Soto and Rinzai sects, who saw the opportunity of transmitting the Dharma to the West. While Buddhism already had notable roots in the United States that predated the Second World War, the expansion of these centers and monasteries to cities such as Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York City, and other locations gave Zen institutions a palpable presence. Similarly, Korean- and Tibetan-based Buddhist movements – Won Buddhism (Wŏnbulgyo) and the Vajrayana school, most notably through the Vajradhatu Organization led by the Tibetan *tulku*, Chögyam Trungpa – also spread throughout the United States. Vipassana, “Insight Meditation,” with roots in the Theravadan Buddhist tradition also established retreat centers on American soil.

The history of Buddhism in the United States is intricate and complex. The preceding movements are characterized by the large number of non-Asian adherents or “convert Buddhists” within their folds. The American centers and institutions of these various Buddhist traditions form a loose network, whose ongoing presence is supported by an active nonsectarian Buddhist press that includes popular periodicals, such as *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* and *Shambhala Sun*. Such magazines provide a growing lay Buddhist audience with relevant coverage of Buddhist issues, techniques, and personal reflection. The advertising included in each issue also serves as a clearinghouse of Buddhist resources: workshops, retreats, books, and other consumer items. Hence, this flexible set of Buddhist institutions has served to give shape and to legitimate a uniquely “American Buddhism” – a Buddhism that sheds or at least eases the authoritarian structures of its Asian predecessors, places renewed emphasis on daily meditative practice, and is engaged with pressing social issues (“engaged Buddhism”). Proponents often view these developments and Buddhism’s entry to the West more generally as a significant stage, or “turn of the wheel,” in the overall historical development of Buddhism.

Such claims have not been unchallenged, and controversies have erupted both within the larger Buddhist movement and without. Esteemed masters, such as Chögyam Trungpa and Hakuyū Taizan Maezumi, also became known for their sexual misconduct (Trungpa) and rampant alcoholism (Trungpa and Maezumi). Within the Vajradhatu and particular Zen communities, contentious debates over leadership emerged. Underneath a seemingly calm veneer, Buddhist sanghas suffered internal struggles that seemed to suggest the uneasy merger of Buddhist and American cultures. Beyond the bounds of these sanghas, charges of racism and white privilege have been lobbied against convert practitioners who fail to recognize the significance of Asian American religious communities in the development of American Buddhism. Popular commentators, such as the former

Tricycle editor Helen Tworikov, dismissed the influence of Asian immigrant Buddhists whose faith and practices are commonly viewed as “cultural baggage” lacking in spiritual innovation. Asian American Buddhists responded in kind.

Issues of power certainly inform the continuing racial divide that haunts Buddhism in the United States. The debate highlights the adaptation of Asian religions to the West and specifically the United States. Buddhism and Hinduism embraced by “converts,” while introducing new concepts and practices that expand the practitioner’s religious awareness, are often focused on individual self-fulfillment. These movements dovetail well with consumer society and conventional notions of wealth and privilege (e.g., Deepak Chopra’s best-seller *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*). They usually do not require an exclusive commitment: that is, they do not necessarily demand that the practitioner abandon former beliefs and traditions. Serious practitioners aside, most who engage in Asian religious practices focus primarily on an adopted technique or form (e.g., yoga), only superficially engaging with the social and cosmological commitments that undergird these forms – if engaging those commitments at all.

Sōka Gakkai International (SGI-USA) is an American Buddhist organization that offers an interesting exception. The organization’s third president, Daisaku Ikeda, set foot in the western United States in 1960, commencing the establishment of Sōka Gakkai centers in the nation. These early groups were composed of Japanese war brides, who immigrated with their American husbands. An offshoot of Nichiren Buddhism and originally associated with Nichiren Shoshu in Japan, Sōka Gakkai (Value-Creation Society) seeks to foster self-confidence and the creation of value in one’s life with the aim of peace and enhancement of the well-being of others. Central to their practice, adherents chant the *daimoku*, or sacred mantra – “Nam-myōhō-rence-kyō” – initially revealed to the Japanese Buddhist monk, Nichiren, in the thirteenth century. In 1992, the Sōka Gakkai lay organization in America split from the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in Japan and formed SGI-USA, which espoused a more nonhierarchical, laity-based structure of leadership and governance.

As do other transnational Buddhist movements, Sōka Gakkai offered an alternative framework of belief and practice for many Americans and has drawn a considerable African American and Latino following including celebrities, such as Tina Turner, whose conversion was documented in the 1993 biopic *What’s Love Got to Do with It?* Unlike other groups, SGI-USA with its main focus on ritual recitation, community activities, and study meetings did not place a strong emphasis on meditative practice. At the same time, SGI-USA seeks to connect its Buddhist practice to American principles and frequently markets its events and publicity under

the symbolic auspices of the American flag. Hence, Sōka-Gakkai functions more as a “church” (vs. sect) in its attempt to ally itself with state-secular powers. Similarly to a church and distinct from other Buddhist movements, SGI-USA seeks exclusive affiliation from its members, although it claims otherwise, and certain periods during the institution’s history, especially the 1990s, were characterized by heavy proselytizing (*shakubuku*) of nonmembers. Because of such efforts, this new religious movement has often been characterized by its critics as a cult.¹⁵

Asian religions, despite increasing acceptance by Americans, must negotiate a fine line within the American context. Buddhism and Hinduism, when viewed in positive light, are commonly taken as rich, peaceful, and exotic alternatives. This orientalist vision allows Americans easily to appropriate the religious dimensions they most see fit. In many cases, Asian religious symbols and concepts serve as an overlay for a deeply rooted Protestantized outlook. When Asian religious movements transgress the orientalist boundary, charges of cultism and controversy emerge. And celebrity interest and endorsement, while offering these movements great exposure, often serve as a double-edged sword that adds to the seemingly faddish nature of such religious pursuits. The continuing racial divide, which also includes Sōka Gakkai, whose Japanese American members still prefer to congregate in Nichiren Shoshu temples, seems to suggest that the acculturation of Asian religions in the United States has been neither transparent nor smooth.

The religious institutions of longstanding Asian American Buddhist communities, most notably of Japanese American Jodo Shin practitioners, changed as well after the Second World War. These early American Buddhists had to contend with overt racism and religious misunderstanding as their homes and temples were desecrated at the onset of the war with Japan. Buddhist ministers of Japanese descent were the first to be rounded up and sent to special facilities, isolated from family and friends. In fear, many Japanese American lay practitioners destroyed Buddhist icons and relics. While Japanese Americans from all Buddhist backgrounds were allowed to congregate in the camps and maintain their faith during the war, the experience left psychic scars that have greatly affected the community and subsequent generations.

After the war, Japanese Americans rebuilt temples and sought to draw connections between their Buddhist and American identities. Temple-sponsored Boy Scout clubs became popular organizations, and Buddhist

¹⁵ For an excellent overview of SGI-USA, see Richard Seager, *Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, and the Globalization of Buddhist Humanism* (Berkeley, 2006).

youth engaged in civic activities that drew upon American and Buddhist civil religious principles. Certain sanghas promoted greater understanding of Buddhism as a universal religion and sought dialogue with non-Japanese Buddhists. Japanese American adherents in Southern California in the 1950s provided accommodations for D. T. Suzuki's initial visit during this period. And the Berkeley Young Buddhist Association invited Alan Watts and others to speak and published works by Watts, Gary Snyder, and Jack Kerouac in its well-known journal, the *Berkeley Bussei*.¹⁶ While ethnic conservatism has characterized many Japanese American Buddhist communities especially in rural areas, the high out-marriage rate in subsequent decades has made the institution's boundaries more racially porous.

Influenced by civil rights and ethnic consciousness movements in the 1960s, Japanese American Buddhism also experienced a regeneration of sorts. Where early migrants and adherents during the war chose to refer to their institutions as "churches," their third-generation children and grandchildren preferred to call them "temples." The architectural style of Buddhist temples built during the postwar period also became more overtly Japanese, and uniquely Nikkei (Japanese American) rituals and events experienced a resurgence in popularity (e.g., Buddhist Obon festivals and bazaars). While the Japanese American Buddhist case fits nicely with the historian Marcus Hansen's observation or "Hansen's Law" – "What the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" – this shift in consciousness relied heavily on Japanese Americans' own reevaluation of their ethnoreligious identity supported by an overall change in Americans' attitudes toward diversity. These changes would be further cemented by a new influx of Asian immigrants, whose Asian religious influence will now be discussed.

NEW IMMIGRATION

Other key events and measures would have a profound effect on the religious milieu of the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or Hart-Celler Act, would abolish the National Origins Formula, which had been in place since 1924. Immigration quotas under this previous formula were determined in line with existing proportions of the population, which thereby served to preserve the ethnic composition of the nation and constituted no less than systematic exclusion. The 1965 act swept aside racial and country-of-origin quotas and opened the floodgates of immigration, especially from non-European countries.

¹⁶ See Michael Masatsugu, "'Beyond This World of Transiency and Impermanence': Japanese Americans, Dharma Bums, and the Making of American Buddhism in the Early Cold War Years," *Pacific Historical Review* 77:3 (2008): 423–51.

Immigration from Asia was especially prominent. Migrants from the Philippines, China (Taiwan and the People's Republic of China), India, Vietnam, Korea, and other parts of Asia arrived in record numbers, introducing with them Asian religious traditions and folk practices, as well as indigenized forms of Christianity and Catholicism. Family reunification measures within the act prompted subsequent waves of migration that allowed Asian ethnic communities to make a strong foothold in the United States. In the early years of their arrival, these new Asian Americans religiously gathered in homes, rented basements, and other improvised spaces. However, as various populations grew and put down roots, temples, churches, gurdwaras, and mosques began to spring up, and Asian religions would have a visible presence on the American religious landscape.

The first wave of immigrants who arrived after the 1965 act differed greatly from migrants from previous waves. The legislation gave preference to certain groups, most notably “professionals, scientists, and artists ‘of exceptional ability,’” as well as “workers in occupations with labor shortages,” such as doctors in underserved areas and nurses. While this new wave of immigrants, as did their predecessors, immigrated to work and were often paid less than their non-Asian peers, their professional status meant that they enjoyed a degree of privilege (educational, economic, social, and cultural) that previous Asian migrants did not. This would have great impact on the establishment and maintenance of Asian religious institutions within these communities as well as on the possibility for migrants to pass on their religious traditions to future generations.

For example, the first Indian immigrants in this new wave met informally in improvised spaces. Living in a society in which Hindu practices and beliefs were neither the norm nor readily recognized, they took it upon themselves to maintain their faith and teach their children Hindu traditions. As Prema Kurien writes, Tamil Nadu parents organized regular *bala vihar* (child development) meetings to educate their children in Hindu philosophy and values, customs and songs, and to discuss frankly the challenges of practicing Hinduism in the United States. Hindu Malayalees engaged in *satsangs* (congregations of truth) in which religious rituals and devotional songs (*bhajans*) were performed (*pooja*). These on-the-ground efforts would be more formally housed as impressive temples were built and as Hindu camps and other institutions developed.

The establishment and maintenance of Hinduism on American soil are often portrayed as a natural result of Indian migration and settlement – viewed as evidence of the nation as a religiously pluralistic society. It is important to note that *Hinduism* is an umbrella term that covers an “extraordinary array of practices, deities, texts, and schools of thought,” both in

India and abroad.¹⁷ While the American context has forged new religious alliances that have smoothed over differences among various practitioners, Hindu communities in the United States still are characterized by regional and class variation. Furthermore, factions among Hindu Americans have developed and resulted in contentious debates. The Hindutva movement in its various institutional forms – Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bajrang Dal, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) – has garnered a strong following and institutional presence among American Hindus. This strand of Hindu nationalism emerged in the early twentieth century in response to British colonialism and against a longer history of Christian and Muslim oppression on the Indian subcontinent. While Hindutva proponents stress religious tolerance in the movement's official stance and literature, they are deeply involved in religious battles, such as the one at Ayodhya.

Hindutva (or Hindu Way of Life) can be best characterized as a form of cultural nationalism. It is not surprising that many Hindu Americans would find the mission and aims of its various branches attractive. Its organizations abroad offer the Hindu diaspora a religious pride and authority, as well as a sense of self-determination in societies such as the United States, in which “Christian privilege” is the norm.¹⁸ Hindu Americans, who take part in these institutions, may not necessarily espouse the same political commitments as their Indian counterparts or even be conscious of those connections. Still, within a national context in which Hinduism is marginalized, these associations serve as significant means of religious and cultural self-preservation.

At odds with Hindutva adherents in the United States are Indian Americans who essentially view the movement as fascist in nature. Anti-Hindutva groups range from secularists (social progressives and Marxists), on one hand, to religious groups (Indian Christian, Muslim, and Dalit), on the other. This divide among South Asian coreligionists was recently played out in the “California textbook” controversy over the presentation of Hindu history in textbooks for the California public school system. Responding to the California Board of Education's open review of a newly revised public school textbook, two Hindu American groups were organized: the Vedic Foundation (VF) and the Hindi Education Foundation (HEF). Both groups were backed by the Hindutva-linked Hindu American Foundation

¹⁷ Prema A. Kurien, *A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2007), 32.

¹⁸ See Khyati Y. Joshi, *New Roots in America's Sacred Ground: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity in Indian America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2006). Joshi's study reveals the challenges that second-generation Indian Americans from various faith backgrounds face (including Indian Hindus) in the face of white “Christian privilege.”

(HAF). Specifically concerned with the representation of Hinduism and India in the textbooks, these foundations submitted 117 edits to the board. Obvious errors and misrepresentation aside, the most controversial revisions sought to portray Hinduism in a particular way, as essentially monotheistic, universal, and egalitarian. References to the caste system in India and to Hinduism's patriarchal features were deleted or modified. A spate of anti-Hindutva groups responded in kind, charging the VF and HEF with a particular agenda that sought to promote "an upper caste, male, North Indian, sanitized view of Indian history" – one in which Hinduism's oppressive features were disavowed. The VF and HEF rallied back and claimed that they only were seeking a fair portrayal of their religious faith, one on par with the positive representations of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism presented in the textbook.¹⁹

The California textbook controversy highlights Hinduism in the United States as a living religion, one whose definition, and, by extension, practices, beliefs, and icons, are constantly in flux. Such debates among Hindu Americans and their South Asian coreligionists will, undoubtedly, continue as Hindus adapt their position and religious views to a new domestic environment and political context. While the demand for change in some cases appears benign (e.g., consolidating deities for practical purposes or reproducing the American institutional form of the summer camp), it must also be viewed within a religious context of marginalization and misrepresentation that works against the healthy establishment of Asian religious faith.

Other Asian religious traditions and their Asian American adherents have faced similar challenges. Temple building provides an especially rich example of blatant racial and religious misunderstanding and exposes some of the underlying attitudes and fears of the dominant culture. The Fo Kuang Shan, a Taiwanese Buddhist movement, sought to establish roots in southern California and erect the Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights in the mid-1980s. The impressive structure and accompanying grounds were finally built in 1988. But this was only after two and half years of struggle or "negotiation" with the larger community. Complaints included the temple's potential "cult-like" influence on the local youth and fear for the neighborhood dogs that would be used in animal sacrifices and otherwise consumed. More "politically correct" reservations cited the size of the temple, the noise factor, and traffic, which still perhaps masked an underlying fear of the temple's presence. In general, objections to the construction of

¹⁹ For an examination of the textbook controversy in great depth see Prema A. Kurien, "Who Speaks for Indian Americans? Religion, Ethnicity, and Political Formation," *American Quarterly* 59:3 (2007): 759–83.

the Hsi Lai Temple were lodged under the rubric that “it just wouldn’t fit into the neighborhood.” Fo Kuang Shan adherents offered conciliatory gestures to allay these fears, ranging from downsizing the height of the temple to changing the robe color of their monks and nuns, brown instead of the conventional black garments worn at lower ranks. The institution also engaged in a public information campaign that sought to explain their religious organization and Buddhism to the local community.²⁰

Hsi Lai is not an isolated case. Sikh and Hindu temples in various locations throughout the nation have had to engage in similar struggles.²¹ Asian American religious communities have provided a vibrant presence on the American religious landscape, and their presence has contributed greatly to Americans’ increased understanding of Asian religions. However, this presence has not been without its challenges as Asian American practitioners seek to realize their goal of religious and cultural expression amid orientalist expectations and negative racial attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The immediate years following the Second World War proved a formative time in Americans’ perceptions of Asia and Asian religions. The emergence of the United States as a world power, the escalation of the Cold War, a changing global economy, and domestic movements at home prompted a major shift in attitudes and dispositions toward the region. More positive representations of Asia would take hold during this period. However, these would lead to stereotypes of a different kind. While certain prejudices seemed to dissolve, others would take their place, and the orientalist lens through which Americans view the Asian continent and its rich and varied religious traditions remains squarely in place. We live out this legacy today in a number of ways. A Cold War sensibility lingers as the United States sees itself as the harbinger of religious freedom and human rights in Asia, especially against Communist China and other nonaligned nation-states. A greater emphasis on religious choice and personal religious expression has transformed the American religious milieu into a “spiritual

²⁰ See Irene Lin, “Journey to the Far West: Chinese Buddhism in America,” *Amerasia Journal* 22:1 (1996): 107–32; and Carolyn E. Chen, *Getting Saved in America: Taiwanese Immigration and Religious Experience* (Princeton, NJ, 2008).

²¹ See Jaideep Singh, “The Racialization of Minoritized Religious Identity: Constructing Sacred Sites at the Intersection of White and Christian Supremacy,” in Jane Naomi Iwamura and Paul Spickard, eds., *Revealing the Sacred in Asian and Pacific America* (New York, 2003), 87–106; and Jay Johnson and Frank J. Costa, “Hindu Temple Development in the United States: Planning and Zoning Issues,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 17:2 (1998): 115–23.

marketplace” in which Asian religions serve as palatable options. These spiritual traditions appear more attractive than ever. However, the particular brand of Asian religions embraced by Americans continues to be greatly informed by geopolitical interests, domestic understandings of race, and longstanding notions of “Eastern spirituality.”

In the second half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium, Asian religions emerged most potently as a part of a symbolic economy. American religious discontent and spiritual wanderlust are played out through this economy. Global capitalism and virtual technologies buttress these ongoing desires; one no longer needs to travel physically to Asia; Asia travels to us through ready-made icons, digestible practices, and virtual form. Often regarding themselves as guardians and innovators of these traditions authorized by the honorary presence of a few gurus, *roshis*, and other “oriental monks,” Americans live out Asian religions without Asians. As for General MacArthur during the occupation of Japan, it has become Americans’ mission to pursue such spiritual preoccupations with similar fervor and privilege.

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Section II

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN TRANSITIONAL TIMES

SECULARIZATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY: A REVIEW OF THE 1960S

RICHARD FENN

Over the last fifty years there have been a few major changes in the ways in which Americans experience their relationship to the nation as a whole, to the sacred, and to the passage of time. Together, these changes reflect aspects of the process of secularization in complex modern societies. In this essay I will argue that secularizing societies and, in particular, American society from the 1960s forward have become permeated with temporality by the increasing differentiation of the sacred from religion and by a sense of chronic crisis.

I will also argue that the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King, Jr., drove the sacred from places closest to the cultural center and into more immediate, accessible, local, and particular contexts. Martin E. Marty noted of the Kennedy brothers and of King that after “their declines and deaths” there was “a change of religious experiences in a new, centrifugal direction.”¹ Marty went on to note that as Catholics became more divided under the reactionary leadership of Pope Paul VI, “presidential religious symbols . . . were seen in an almost wholly negative light,” and African Americans became increasingly polarized between separatists and more conservative and liberal constituencies.² Kennedy had stood between Americans and the abyss of nuclear war. King stood between Americans and the abyss of violent racial conflict. Their deaths opened the doors to terror wider than ever before.

To borrow an insight from Michael Wood, I suggest that in a secular society “the very idea of strangeness seems to belong to a comfortable country we have lost.”³ Strange things may be happening, and they may indeed

¹ Martin E. Marty, “The American Situation in 1969,” in *The Religious Situation 1969*, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston, 1969), 15–43.

² *Ibid.*, 38.

³ Wood, “Dynamite for Cologne,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 27 (2005): no. 14, 13–14.

be a sign of the end, but it is hard to know what is strange. Oddly, in a secular society, apocalypticism is therefore a way of giving strangeness the aura of normality. Enthusiasts for apocalyptic times have long told us that strange things will happen when the decisive moment in the war of good versus evil and of order against chaos is approaching, but you need to know how to read the signs about you. To know what the signs of the times are telling you may be all the more difficult when it is no longer possible to separate the abnormal and the novel from the normal. Similarly, to argue that American society had entered into a new era was an attempt to give novelty the legitimacy of unprecedented normality. What was new, I will argue, was the concurrence of two major changes: the way in which individuals experienced not only their circumstances and ceremonies, but even their fundamental commitments and the larger society itself, as increasingly vulnerable to the passage of time; and, second, the increasing freedom of the sacred from the control of religion. The interaction of these two tendencies made novelty seem normal and created an endemic and virtually unending sense of crisis.

In the 1960s it was still possible to believe that through religion individuals, groups, and local communities could express their solidarity with one another and with the nation as a whole.

Men [*sic*] can fully realize all they are as members of a species and a society at the supernatural level. Here they can love and hate themselves as gods and be loved and hated by the deities they have created. The faith of the group in supernatural symbols, the sense of "integration," of "oneness," and the sacrifice of self for the survival of these sacred symbols now become meaningful. Whenever an individual can identify sacred symbols in which he believes with the integrated socio-species symbols of his ordinary life he can have enough faith to believe in their supernatural efficacy and power.⁴

Observing local celebrations of this national rite, which he called the Memorial Day cult, William Lloyd Warner had reached the conclusion that a cult of the dead sanctified not only the deaths of soldiers in war, but also the lives of ordinary citizens who lived and moved and had their being within the sanctuary provided by the nation itself against the terror of death. Culminating in the local cemetery, the Memorial Day rites placed the lives of fallen soldiers and of individual citizens on the altar of the nation, and the nation itself offered its own guarantees against the passage of time. Time and death were the enemy, and they were vanquished by the self-sacrifice of the citizen and the soldier. President Kennedy's exhortation to the people to ask what they could do for their country had been followed a few years later by chants of "Hell no, we won't go."

⁴ W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality*, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1962).

Paradoxically, Warner's argument first appeared in his book *American Life: Dream and Reality* in the same year in which Catherine L. Albanese reported the editorialist for the *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph* as deploring the atrophy of the Memorial Day rites. Had we better understood what Albanese called "the effects of the passage of time and the pressure of events on religious structures," we would not have been so likely to believe that Americans were united by religious beliefs and rituals that transcended time itself.⁵ Albanese's comment referred to the effects of the passage of time and of significant events on Warner's Memorial Day cult.⁶ By "the pressure of events," she clearly meant the effects of wars in Korea and in Indochina on the public's reserves of patriotism and sacrificial commitment. Furthermore, the pressure of time had also taken its toll, according to Albanese, in the erosion of World War II as a living memory that could evoke gratitude for sacrifice and devotion and that could elicit further sacrifice by the average citizen in the course of the duties of everyday life.

Even in the 1950s, editors across the country had noted "the limp quality of Memorial Day ceremonies" and their "record of non-participation."⁷ Whatever connections there had been among an individual's existential preoccupations, the needs of the local community for integration, and the nation's claim on the citizens' devotion seemed increasingly to have weakened. Speaking of the war in Vietnam, Albanese determined "The rites of Memorial Day could not unify ... [the American civil community] because there was no agreement on the meaning of the war and therefore on the sacrificial quality of the death of American soldiers."⁸ The nation was losing its aura of the supernatural; individuals were finding their way into the inner-worldly mysticism that Max Weber had found to be a form of spiritual life uniquely suited to the complexity and contingency of modern societies. Sources of the sacred would increasingly emerge from within the precincts not of institutions but of personal experience, and the individuals' own grasp on the sacred would authorize them to become increasingly disbelieving and critical of the precepts and credos, traditions and practices, of religion itself.

The decay of socially orchestrated forms of the sacred, including those of institutionalized religion, would be accompanied by an increasingly personal and existential apprehension of the sacred by individuals and small groups themselves. The "sacred world," to use Warner's phrase, was less to be found in the local celebration of national rites of respect and commemoration than

⁵ Catherine L. Albanese, "Requiem for Memorial Day: Dissent in the Redeemer Nation," *American Quarterly* 26:4 (1974): 386–98.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

in the rites and in the midst of everyday life, originating not beyond the individual, as though in some transcendent realm, but with far less indirection and mediation by social institutions. Through complexity, the stage was being set for a widespread awareness that anything could happen anywhere at any time, the sort of awareness that is expressed in the apocalyptic imagination. Because so much is contingent on circumstance, the stage was also being set for an intensified awareness of the accidental, or even miraculous, aspect of being itself. Because national rites were being emptied of living memory and no longer sanctified by sacrificial personal commitment, the way also was being prepared for an evangelical revival of hopes for the return of a national spirit based on biblical faith. The result of these parallel changes, one in the way that the larger society experienced, constructed, and construed the passage of time, the other in the social location of the sacred, was a sense of chronic crisis. As Alexandra Stanley described in a recent review of a television series set in the 1960s, "In the early '60s space was for conquest; the social order was overripe for exploration. And in this age before chat rooms, support groups, confessional talk shows, self-help books and 24-hour hot lines became commonplace, each crisis, from the Cuban missile to the midlife, seems encountered as if for the first time, uncharted and befogged by bewilderment and fear."⁹

The more secular a society becomes, the more likely are the citizens to realize that their lives, and indeed their entire society, could be profoundly altered or even threatened with extinction in a single moment. The combined effects of rapid communication through the mass media and of the power of decision making concentrated at the highest levels of the nation-state make it possible for the public to realize how a threat to the entire social order could be both widespread and instantaneous. In October 1962, the Cuban missile crisis produced what Arthur Schlesinger called "the most terrifying day in the history of the world." Regardless of whether the Kennedy administration responded primarily to the Soviet threat or to domestic political danger, the survival of American society seemed to be hanging in the balance of a very short period indeed. Certainly many Americans were scared that a nuclear war would produce total extinction. Even though the president's careful analysis of options and his preference for thinking through possible consequences stood the nation in good stead, pragmatism alone, in the face of the threat of nuclear annihilation, failed to rise to the level of apprehension required of a nation's leaders. Presidential calculations concerned whether weakness of the administration might allow the Soviet Union to retain or expand its supply of

⁹ Alexandra Stanley, "Still Straining to Remain as Button-Down as Ever," *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 2009, C1.

nuclear-armed missiles aimed at the United States from Cuba, or whether the same weakness might cost the Democratic Party control of the House of Representatives and even expose the Kennedy administration to the threat of impeachment.¹⁰ As George Kennan had characterized it in an earlier context, “There is no presumption more terrifying than that of those who would blow up the world on the basis of their personal judgment of a transient situation. I do not propose to let the future of mankind be settled, or ended, by a group of men operating on the basis of limited perspectives and short-run calculations.”¹¹

Personal accounts and recollections underscore the anxiety and fear, even the terror, that many felt at the prospect of imminent annihilation, and polls of public opinion pointed to a sense of crisis at levels that were close to those reached in the days immediately after Pearl Harbor and not again until many years later, after the events of 11 September 2001. However, the American people were “neither paralyzed nor terrified”; rather, they were resilient in the face of these confrontations and backed their leaders.¹² Tom Smith also notes that “even during the height of the crisis, Cuba did not dominate people’s concerns.” Only about a third of the American people thought that most others were “very worried” about Cuba and the missile crisis; conversely, of all the worries that people reported even when concern was at its height, Cuba accounted for only a third, and of these worries, only a very small proportion (1–2 percent) concerned survival.¹³

Precisely because it is secular, even the ability of a people to sustain faith and trust, admiration or even awe, toward their most important political and cultural leaders and institutions lasts only for the time being. Regardless of whether Americans held to their positive or negative opinions of President Kennedy after his assassination, there is some evidence of “the fragility of myth in the modern world.”¹⁴ In the absence of myth, or in the presence of its loss and failure, the world seems to be just as contingent as it really is: unnecessary, uncalled-for, unanticipated, and potentially otherwise than it might have been. That is what it means to be secular – momentary and contingent entirely on circumstance and the passage of time. Twenty years after his death, nearly two out of every three Americans believed that “the

¹⁰ James A. Nathan, “The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now,” *World Politics* 27:2 (Jan. 1975): 256–81.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 269–70.

¹² Tom Smith, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and U.S. Public Opinion,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67:2 (Summer 2003): 265–93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁴ Patricia K. Felkins and Irvin Goldman, “Political Myth as Subjective Narrative: Some Interpretations and Understandings of John F. Kennedy,” *Political Psychology* 14:3 (Sept. 1993): 447–67.

United States would have been 'much different' if Kennedy had not been killed. If only he had lived, went the argument, the storm would not have come. Vietnam would not have become an American trap, there would not have been fires in the streets, and the presidency would have remained untarnished by scandal and bitterness."¹⁵

Whether or not such a belief is well founded is not the point. What matters is that the majority of Americans believe that the course of their nation's history has depended on unpredictable, traumatic, and uncontrolled contingencies. We did not realize, even in the face of the assassinations of President Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King, that these traumatic events would undermine the basis for enduring or even sacrificial commitments to the nation and its political institutions, even while making such commitments all the more necessary.

This chronic, and yet occasionally acute, experience of temporality is at the core of what it means for a society to be secular. Although the public's immediate reactions to the Cuban missile crisis were relatively intense but short-lived, the effects of that crisis may well have been longer lasting. There has, indeed, been something enduring about the knowledge that the nation lives under the threat of nuclear confrontation, just as there is something very transient about a society whose major decision makers think primarily in terms of political expediency, or within a very limited time frame, even when faced with the clear and present danger of national annihilation. The present, the time being, is all there is, not only for the nation but for the individual.

Although in the 1960s and early 1970s many commentators thought that there had been a significant shift in the United Kingdom and the United States, not to mention Europe, toward a more secular society, few of us really understood the spiritual and moral dilemmas posed by secularization. Fewer still therefore foresaw that in the coming decades there would be a strong evangelical revival seeking to restore the lost virtues and religious sentiments of an earlier America or that a wave of apocalyptic enthusiasm would carry televangelists and popular novels into the living rooms and neighborhoods of much of the United States. Had we foreseen these developments, we might have asked better questions at the time. We might have wondered how, for instance, people would cope with the apprehension that either they or their country was running out of time. As time horizons became shorter and commitments more temporary, how would individuals, and the nation as a whole, continue to make decisions, commitments, and sacrifices or maintain trust in their leaders?

¹⁵ Herbert S. Parmet, "The Kennedy Myth and American Politics," *History Teacher* 24:1 (Nov. 1990): 31–9.

The passage of time also eroded the influence of religion in the body politic. The more that the sacred emerges in a wider range of times and places and under a variety of conditions, the more religion needs to adopt a wider range of options to attract and retain its remaining adherents. However, even in the 1960s, religion in the United States had become more abstract in order to encompass more complexities in the social order. Simple and stereotyped instructions would no longer work very well in a complex world organized and administered by professionals, technicians, and bureaucrats, where religious and ethical abstractions are difficult to apply and have only the vaguest sort of relevance to or meaning in mundane circumstances. Indeed, Martin Marty quotes with some approval the observation of Huston Smith, that “institutionalized religion isn’t all of religion, and the fact that the sacred is withdrawing from certain spheres doesn’t mean it isn’t moving into others.”¹⁶ The home of the sacred was increasingly becoming the so-called secular world, where much of what was sacred was also very transient and ephemeral, mundane and accessible, and very local.

For instance, Marty mentioned “the omen-reading of scientists, the faith in flying saucers, the bewitchments of computer scientists, the sale of crystal balls, the recovery of necromancy (witness the interest in Bishop Pike’s account of his *séances*), the renaissance of witches and ghosts, the popularity of I Ching and Tarot cards, and hippie mysticism and amulet magic – to name but a few developments.”¹⁷ Marty thus echoed Smith, who warned that the sacred “is withdrawing from certain spheres,” but by referring to these developments as “quasi-religious,” Marty does not note explicitly the departure of the sacred from the usual, conventional, and institutionalized forms of religion. The sacred was taking on a life of its own. The country was about to be pulled apart over contests over the sacred, as the sacred was alternatively found to live in the Constitution or in the family, in the ideals of a liberal tradition or in the affections and loyalties of whites for one another, or, for that matter, in the mutual regard of African Americans for one another. It was into these areas that traveled Americans’ doubts and anxieties about their own sacrifices and mortality as they increasingly ignored the rituals that in the past had long expressed both the memory and the prospect of profound loss.

In a national crisis, the past and the future, perhaps even chaos and order or good and evil, may seem to hang in the balance. Such a time opens up the moment both to the past, in the search for precedent and meaning, and to the future, in the attempt to imagine not only what may be the consequences of action in the meantime but also what, in the end,

¹⁶ Marty, “American Situation,” 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

is most to be hoped for or feared. Crises may be filled with ambiguity and terror; they require not only temporizing but decisive action, the willingness to seize a moment as fateful as it is fleeting, even though the meaning and significance of the moment await a revelation that may never appear. It may well be that the funeral rites for President John F. Kennedy; his brother, the attorney general; and Martin Luther King simply confirmed the public's apprehension that the body politic was profoundly sick or wounded, and that in the absence of rites of further commemoration, their deaths left the nation without the symbolic and collective means of national revitalization. In secular societies, a systemic crisis may well be very fleeting in its manifestations; social life may return to normal in a few days or weeks.

However, the effects of such crises are as long lasting as their manifestations are temporary, and these crises affect the most basic commitments that individuals make to the larger society. Thus the trauma of Kennedy's assassination was deeply personal as well as collective, profoundly felt and yet also national. After the assassination of President Kennedy, the nation was in the midst of a unique event that was nearly paralyzing the country as a whole. Sheatsley and Feldman reported, "The majority of the population could not think of any other time in their lives when they had the same sort of feelings as when they heard of President Kennedy's assassination," and those who could think of a comparable event were referring to the death of someone very important to them.¹⁸ On the days after President Kennedy was shot, the average American adult spent at least eight hours a day watching news of the event.¹⁹ This does not count the additional hours spent talking with others about the tragedy or the time spent in solitude, and indeed many Americans reported that they did want to be alone during this time.²⁰ More clearly a sign of shock and grief was the high percentage of respondents who reported that they had been "nervous and tense" or felt "dazed and numb" during the days after the assassination. More than half of the respondents to the survey reported these feelings, as did those who said they had cried.²¹ Sheatsley and Feldman speak of "the cessation of ordinary activities, the almost complete preoccupation with the event, and the actual physical symptoms we have here described. . . . The assassination generally evoked feelings similar to those felt at the death of a close

¹⁸ Paul B. Sheatsley and Jacob J. Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy: A Preliminary Report on Public Reactions and Behavior," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 28:2 (1964): 194.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 189–215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

friend or relative, along with sympathy, sorrow, anger, and shame for the country.”²² Overall, 80 percent of the respondents “felt deeply the loss of someone very close and dear,” and an even higher proportion expressed “deep feelings of ‘shame that such a thing could happen in our country.’”²³ Even among the white southerners who had opposed President Kennedy’s election in 1960, 62 percent reported feeling the loss of “someone very close and dear.”²⁴ In some way that transcended partisan boundaries, President Kennedy seemed even to his opponents to represent them personally, if not politically. Yet there is no collective memorial or reenactment of the event of Kennedy’s assassination.

The assassination and the funeral were not only national but local events, particular but not peculiar to each home and each community. The nation’s awareness, and its shock, were immediate and irreversible in ways we have yet fully to understand. Indeed, there is some evidence that there was a remarkable increase in the levels of political alienation during the 1960s.²⁵ Furthermore, there is also some evidence that it was political alienation that accounted for the way people voted for the president in 1964, a year after Kennedy’s death.²⁶

In the 1960s and 1970s, the sacred was becoming separated from the sanctuary offered by religion. Under these conditions the sacred emerges in critical moments, and yet the sacred itself is episodic in its manifestations and fails to become reenacted and ritualized in ways that mark an event and place it within a continuing, national story. At the same time, as religion increasingly loses control over the sacred, the sacred, in its turn, becomes increasingly accessible to individuals in the circumstances of the local community and of everyday life. Even the Supreme Court had to admit that it could not set a national standard for defining pornography; whatever violated the boundaries of a decent and permissible sexuality would have to be left to the local community. To a lesser extent, the same might be said about the way in which people sought to manage their own health and well-being without the services and beyond the control of the medical profession. Just as healing became differentiated from medicine, for a while during the 1960s some argued that education should be pursued outside schools and colleges.

²² *Ibid.*, 206–7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁵ Anne Statham Macke, “Trends in Aggregate-Level Political Alienation,” *Sociological Quarterly* 20:1 (Winter 1979): 77–87.

²⁶ Joel D. Aberbach “Alienation and Political Behavior,” *American Political Science Review* 63:1 (Mar. 1969): 62–3, 86–99.

THE RULE OF THE TEMPORARY

In the 1960s personal lives, the life of organizations, the conduct of ceremonies, the observance of religious practices, adherence to political loyalties, and trust both in the government and in basic institutions became increasingly provisional, ad hoc, and temporary. Arrangements, both intimate and public, both personal and organizational, were made for the time being. Americans were witnessing what Warren Bennis and Philip Slater called “the introduction of impermanence as a necessary rather than accidental feature of social life.”²⁷ Impermanence, when it reaches the point of possible annihilation, can be terrifying, especially when, in the form of secularization, it calls attention to the temporariness not only of everyday life but of whole societies. At the core of the process of secularization is an increasing sense of the temporariness of all life, including religion and the life of whole societies. Martin Marty remarked on the way in which “the absolute viability of a particular religion was destroyed by the experience of transitoriness.”²⁸ Marty had in mind a comment by Ernest Troeltsch on the inability even of a civilization’s highest values to stand the test of time, but he also was noting more mundane examples of spiritual transitoriness: changes of interest and fashion among theologians; short-lived, experimental liturgies; changes of youthful enthusiasm from spiritual disengagement to radical confrontation; and the changing audiences available to Eastern yogi. Marty was writing about something vaguely called “the religious situation,” and to accompany his comments he therefore chose to speak of changes in “religiousness.” One of these changes was the degree to which religion becomes increasingly optional and embodies a wide range of choices both of style and of substance.

In the 1960s many of the mainstream churches, both Protestant and Catholic, were experimenting with their liturgies in an attempt to make their language more accessible and appealing. The manifestations of the sacred became not only more temporary, but more clearly dependent on its ability to satisfy its audiences and followers. Clifford Geertz argued that “[w]hat sacred symbols do for those to whom they are sacred is to formulate an image of the world’s construction and a program for human conduct that are mere reflexes of one another.”²⁹ Having studied religion in Indonesia, Geertz remarked that religion there, far more than in the United States, gave people “the settled sense of moving with the deepest grain of reality that defines the religious mind.”³⁰ However, Geertz commented

²⁷ Warren Bennis and Philip Slater, *The Temporary Society* (San Francisco, 1998), 99.

²⁸ Marty, “American Situation,” 37.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

that American religion, especially in the churches, was becoming increasingly like a shell devoid of the sacred. Emptied of the sacred, even religious rituals receive more pragmatic interest and observance than devotion.

When religion loses its capacity to mobilize or even monopolize the sacred, religious institutions and practices appear to be more subject to the passage of time. Warren Bennis and Philip Slater envisaged a world in which “all acts become both playful and instrumental, public and private, and no sphere of human expression is altogether uncontaminated by duty.”³¹ Americans, they argued, were learning to cultivate within themselves the sensibilities and disciplines necessary to respond fully to the possibilities, opportunities, and dangers of the moment, without anxiety or presumption, and without recourse to divine reassurance or intervention. They could make decisions, take risks, and still entrust themselves to the judgment of time. That is because each “individual will be more changeable, less predictable from moment to moment and from situation to situation, less able to play the same tune all his life long.”³² Such a temporary society has short-term temporal horizons. Bennis and Slater thought of it as a society in which pragmatism rather than either ideologies or the bureaucratic rules and regulations of a large formal organization would determine what and how decisions were made. There is something very American about a society and about people who live in an indefinitely extended present and who make themselves up as they go along.

For instance, Benedict Anderson, writing about the secularization of traditional societies transplanted onto American shores, described how the Iberian colonial émigrés, who were born in Mexico and would die there, developed an identity quite different from that of administrators who were born in Spain and who, after a period in the New World, would return there to die. The provincial administrators destined to live and die in the New World read newspapers avidly to understand their times; they lived in the time being constituted by the journals’ announcements of the arrival and departures of ships from the Old World.

The notion that societies, and social life itself, were increasingly permeated by the passage of time led Bennis and Slater to suggest, “The growth of temporary systems will tend to limit further the spheres of territoriality and kinship, and the concept of interchangeability will inaugurate what we might call the principle of temporary relevance.”³³ That is, what works and what matters will depend far less on who one is or where one lives than on one’s capacity to engage in several more or less complex roles in

³¹ Bennis and Slater, *Temporary Society*, 101.

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

an increasingly large and varied set of roles, contexts, and relationships, at least for the time being.

It is no accident that in *The Secular City*, Harvey Cox announced that the Kennedy administration had introduced a new “era of pragmatism.” The sort of individuals who might flourish under these conditions would be like David Riesman’s “other-directed” self and thus relatively smooth at managing the interfaces between themselves and others. In a secular society, it is useful to be adept in achieving a constantly shifting set of goals that are revised according to what seems feasible under the present circumstances and for the time being. Like Robert J. Lifton’s “protean self,” such a person is capable of revising the self over a lifetime according to what seems expedient or marketable at the time. In a secular society one might indeed expect denominations to revise their liturgies as a marketing strategy and individuals to attend religious institutions for the time being and for their own reasons, with or without becoming members, without adopting a denominational identity, and without believing in an institutional creed.

Secularization, then, is not a process that is primarily to be understood as some antithesis of religion: an end product of a long process of historical development that culminates in some questionable modernity when individuals think and act for themselves without the delusions and the inhibitions, the aspirations and the intimidations, associated with a religious consciousness. On the contrary, secularization is a process that primarily affects a society as a whole, whether one is interested primarily in its culture or in its politics, its religions or its ways of doing business. Secularization may affect the ways in which an entire society imagines and identifies itself, makes decisions and exercises authority, or the ways it calls for commitment and sacrifice from its members. Secularization may also affect the credence given by individuals to various institutions, including religious ones, just as it may affect the way in which institutions respect the rights and authority of individuals. Above all, secularization changes the way a society experiences, construes, imagines, interprets, and constructs the passage of time.

Perhaps the spate of trial liturgies in Protestant churches is an example of the way that, as societies begin to feel themselves caught up in the passage of time, they encounter or engender novel forms of the sacred. However, such rites are so provisional that they cannot encompass either the ambiguity or the fatefulness of critical moments. To encompass the anxieties and elicit the sacrifices required in times of national crisis, it is necessary not only to evoke powerful sentiments of allegiance and commitment through presidential rhetoric, but to engage in the very sort of rites, such as Memorial Day observances, that were increasingly losing

their capacity to attract citizens, mold their imaginations, and mobilize their commitments.

Secularizing societies become increasingly subject to and aware of the passage of time, temporary in their adjustments, and less able to place pivotal or critical moments in the context of a collective story. Complex, secularizing societies make themselves up as they go along and are more visibly extensions of the temporal than are more traditional societies fortified by claims to transcendence over the passage of time. Therefore, instead of relying on what Habermas calls the “pre-political ethical convictions of religious or national communities,” the modern democratic state legitimates itself “only in a self-referential manner, that is, on the basis of legal procedures born of democratic procedures.”³⁴ The insight here owes much to the work of Niklas Luhmann, who for some time has been arguing that social orders are extensions of time; they give place to time. Modern societies, according to Luhmann, are increasingly marked by the temporal and continuously reconstitute themselves in acts of communication through complex networks, as a cybernetic system does.

In societies where social and economic change is rapid, endemic, and often fateful, a medicine deemed safe and widely available one day may be withdrawn the next. There may not be enough time after the discovery of a virus to develop a vaccine, just as a missile launched in one country can be detected in seconds but still demolish another country in minutes. Communications transmitted instantaneously require rapid response, as do insurgencies and genocidal revolts by local militias. Time pressures on workers, and especially on women, may increase as managers lengthen the workday and disregard the competing and often conflicting schedules of family life. When employment no longer lasts for a lifetime but only for the time being, it is always a good idea to keep one's resume in circulation. Under these conditions, careers are no longer a journey from the beginning of one's adult life to the end, but a series of midcourse corrections in jobs that may be unconnected with one another and not part of a cumulative development of insight and skill in a defined area of expertise. Such a journey leads to no well-defined end, and one therefore has to make up one's life, one's resume or vita, as one goes along. In the same way, there may be no definite temple or state of the soul waiting for one at the end of a religious pilgrimage, but only a constantly revised and updated set of insights and practices replacing those widely available in the flea markets of discarded spirituality.

Whether one lives in a small, nomadic or in a complex, highly mobile society, sheer sequence, the experience of one thing after another, trumps

³⁴ Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco, 2006), 27.

continuity and development. Such a society is secular simply because there is no story to be told and no particular end in sight. Time horizons are short, commitments are provisional and temporary, and selves may invent and reinvent themselves over time. In secular societies, temporariness is pervasive and routine. When a social order loses its usual cultural bearings with regard to time, the mere succession of one day or thing after another supersedes or preempts any cultural prescriptions for understanding or constructing the passage of time. Everyday life becomes more permeated with the unfamiliar and with the novel. Secularization thus makes it more necessary for individuals to make choices on their own, with higher levels of ambiguity, uncertainty, and personal responsibility. Secular societies are therefore more like a cybernetic system or the Internet than a territory with a political center and clear cultural boundaries. They are literally self-generating and may change from moment to moment according to their own procedures and in the light of their most recent communications.

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE SACRED FROM RELIGION

In secularizing societies, religion becomes far too pluralistic, optional, utilitarian, and subject to temporary measures and rites to provide a collective story for the nation as a whole. It is tempting, therefore, for religion to take on the appearance of pragmatism while wearing the mantel of the transcendent. As Harvey Cox described it in *The Secular City*, whether it is “the invisible hand of the laissez-faire market” or “the Marxist dialectic, . . . the ghost of religion still prowls.”³⁵ True, perhaps, but it is still a ghost, a presence without its former vitality. For Cox it was the sign of “a society living on the vanishing capital of a Puritan religious inheritance.” Perhaps the ghost of religion was also prowling in Cox’s and others’ attempts to find Protestant and biblical residues in the humanism and pragmatism of the Kennedy era. Thus Cox states, because “the ghost of religion” still prowls or operates as a secret presence, religion can be recognized primarily in absentia or incognito.³⁶ Indeed, Cox found echoes of the Christian tradition in the rational and pragmatic approach of the Kennedy era, which gave a moral and even existential seriousness to this-worldly prospects and obligations. Had Cox recognized that in the Kennedy era the sacred was taking on a life of its own apart from the auspices of religion, the discussion of secularization might have taken a different and more promising turn.

³⁵ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York, 1965), 186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

Greeley, too, assumed that man cannot “do without myth”; he therefore did not imagine that the sacred was differentiating itself from religion or from some more transcendent cultural system such as myth that alone, he assumed, could give protection, continuity, and meaning to the sacred.³⁷

These are difficult conditions for religion, but they are nearly ideal conditions for the sacred. It is far easier for the sacred than for religion to inhabit the local and personal or to be particular to a specific people, time, and place. Under these conditions religion becomes a shadow of its former self: still present, but relatively empty of the sacred for which it has long claimed to offer sanctuary and from which it has derived, in times past, at least the appearance of substance. Under these conditions, for Americans to locate the sacred in contexts further from the center, and more accessible to the home, the family, and the neighborhood, is therefore hardly surprising.

Various transitions in the life of the individual, whether they are easily ritualized or, like sudden death, are less amenable to the smoothing of symbolic action, are marked by the sacred. Such moments, when the passage of time itself is experienced as final and irreversible, are not readily embodied and reenacted in rituals or scheduled according to the times and occasions authorized by religious professionals. Whether they occur in the midst of the personal and the mundane, in the local community and in the practical conduct of everyday life, or at the level of the nation as a whole, they are profoundly disruptive, critical moments. Such an indefinite, fateful but inconclusive experience of living in the time being creates a profound longing for a more virtuous, enduring, and certain past, as well as impatience and anxiety for the future to resolve all outstanding grievances and demands for satisfaction.

Thus secularization reduces the capacity of religious institutions to contain the sacred within their traditions and practices. More evidently defined by temporality, by new eras, and by rituals that work only for the time being, religion becomes increasingly secular. As it becomes more secular, therefore, religion is less able to provide a sense of transcendence and continuity to the social systems it defines or informs and more obviously contrived for specific occasions. As David Martin himself has argued, the Anglican Church’s distaste for any religious language that suggested ambiguity, antiquity, or mystery has hastened its own secularity. Martin had in mind not only bureaucratic liturgical reformers, but also a diffuse and subjective piety that dispenses with churches and their clergy and “imagines that it has no need for ritual and institutional mediation.”³⁸ In the United

³⁷ Andrew Greeley, *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion* (New York, 1972), 106.

³⁸ David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, UK, 2005), 6.

Kingdom, the church had decided that there was a demand for the modernization of the church's liturgical language and produced liturgical revisions that presumably would resonate with the people living in "the new estates." Times had changed, and in the present saeculum the liturgy itself would have to be full of options for various contingencies. The same could well be said of many of the mainline Protestant churches in the United States, which over the last fifty years have introduced experimental liturgies with fewer claims to mystery and authority. As Martin stated, "Ritual and meditation are all too easily dismissed as mere mumbojumbo and priestcraft; that is the sentiment or sediment deposited by a receding Protestantism." At the same time, a modernizing tendency among ecclesiastical reformers and bureaucrats creates a vacuum abhorred by individualistic forms of piety. Indeed, an increasingly secularized form of religion is in a weak position from which to compete with unauthorized and apolitical forms of sacred enthusiasm, just as deviant and idiosyncratic forms of the sacred no longer need authorization from religious institutions. No wonder that the sacred could be as easily found outside the precincts of religion as within, and what one needed to understand sacred mysteries was not contained solely in the Bible but also in the realm of folklore and popular pieties.

Especially among more liberal denominations, the range of permitted meanings, the possibilities for biblical interpretation, and the sources of inspiration and authority, all had broken out of a narrow and orthodox framework. It is not that the Episcopalians were living in a disenchanted universe freed from spirits and the sacred. On the contrary, 63 percent of Episcopalian ministers said, "I believe in the demonic as a personal power in the world," which was more than the corresponding percentage of clergy among Methodists (38 percent) or Presbyterians (53 percent), although less than the 91 percent of Missouri Synod Lutheran ministers who also believed in the real presence of the devil.³⁹ Nonetheless, some sociologists seemed reluctant explicitly to acknowledge the sacred outside the context of religion, just as they shared a widespread sociological distrust of the individual's own claims to independent sources of inspiration and authority.

Even in the more liberal denominations, the sacred was beginning to take on a life of its own apart from, and often in opposition to, the traditional religion still espoused in the churches. Harvey Cox announced, "We must listen to the deviants of our society before pronouncing them all kooks. Some of them are. Some may be full of god, that is full of feelings, hopes, and insights which still seem insane to our time but just may open a fissure toward the future." However, Cox's interest was in the church's ability to restore its

³⁹ Jeffrey Hadden, "Protestant Paradox – Divided They Merge," in *Religion in Radical Transition*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), 48–66, 53.

relevance by becoming a counterculture to a society in need of a visionary stimulus toward self-transformation. On this view secularization has some beneficial side effects; deviants could be an important resource for a church eager to recover some of its old influence. "Certainly secularization means that Christianity will include a smaller minority of persons in the society. It provides, however, the possibility for a reappropriation of the critical, prophetic, and perhaps catalytic function which Christianity once played"⁴⁰

CHRONIC CRISIS

As Gareth Peirce puts it of the United States after the Second World War, when considerations of national defense were translated into matters of national security: "Effectively, every development the world over came to be perceived as potentially crucial, so that an adverse turn of events anywhere endangered the United States. American foreign policy goals came to be translated into issues of national survival, and the range of threats became limitless."⁴¹ Political decision-making became freighted with concerns about national security.

As concerns for national defense were transformed into more chronic anxieties about national security, a sense of crisis became more salient and continuous. With a pervasive sense of impending or possible crisis, the experience of time itself becomes fragmented and intensified because time becomes a series of potentially dangerous events rather than a series of episodes or chapters in a continuing story. Time itself is of the essence and running out.

To counteract this immersion in the passage of time and the sense that one is approaching a point of no return, the sacred offers at least a temporary way of holding on to the moment, of making it seem lasting enough to permit one to encompass both hope and fear, dread and the expectation of redemption or release. Thus the sacred offers a way of bearing a heightened sense of crisis and of allowing time for imagination to grasp the potential significance of the moment, or of the times, and of their possible consequences.

Secularization is a process in which it is difficult to discern the sacred precisely because the momentary is not easily distinguished from the momentous, or the novel from the routine, or the merely pivotal from the signs of a genuine crisis. Even an actual crisis fails permanently to separate the "before"

⁴⁰ Cox, "Feasibility and Fantasy," in *The Religious Situation*, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston, 1969), 910–20, 917.

⁴¹ Gareth Peirce, "'Make Sure You Say That You Were Treated Properly,'" *London Review of Books* 11:9 (May 2009): 10.

from the “after” unless it becomes embedded in ritual and acquires the capacity for communal or collective recollection and reenactment. Further, secularity prevents even crises from acquiring a place in a collective and continuing story where their meaning and consequence transcend the event itself. Even if sacralized, moreover, a crisis may not be enshrined in myth. Instead, it keeps its uniqueness, immediacy, and particularity, as well as its location in everyday life, rather than becoming a mere episode in a larger and longer story. For instance, despite the assassination of President Kennedy, as I have suggested, his life and death still have not been ritualized. His assassination and funeral are not collectively reenacted, and his assassination, as his presidency, still fails to mark a separation between the “before” and the “after.” John F. Kennedy has not been given a place in the nation’s sacred history or mythology. Rather, even his death remains the subject of speculation and inquiry about the possibility of other assassins. Nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence that the experience of the American people was deeply affected, and perhaps altered, by Kennedy’s assassination and funeral.

A state of chronic crisis is close to what the Italian political theorist Agamben calls the “state of exception” in which there is nothing really normal, and no distinction between the inside of a social order and its outside; there is a chronic and endemic state of chaos. Such a blurring of the boundaries of a society legitimates and evokes the unfettered exercise of sovereignty. Agamben says as much. “Since ‘there is no rule that is applicable to chaos,’ chaos must first be included in the juridical order through the creation of a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, chaos and the normal situation – the state of exception.” The requirement of decisive action in the midst of crisis not only justifies the most dynamic and unfettered acts by the state, but it also legitimates the suspension or dissolution of the very rules that legitimate state sovereignty. Because the crisis remains obscure, its resolution cannot be determined by fact finding, but only by the decisive act of a sovereign.

President Kennedy was a figure with extraordinary charismatic appeal to numbers of people, not all of whom were his followers or who numbered themselves among his constituency, but most of whom, nonetheless, felt that they had a strong, very personal connection with him. The sacred moment, violent and irreversible, was sudden, personal; although national in scope, it was also very particular to each person and home, each neighborhood and community. People stayed as close to the unfolding moments of those days as their television sets would allow them.

In a secular society, neither a critical nor a traumatic event becomes ritualized and reenacted or part of the nation’s sacred history, no matter how novel, or how deeply personal, it is felt to have been, or how profoundly local as well as national in its impact that event may have been. If, as

Albanese so well understood, sacrifice and loss, death and mourning, anxiety and terror, remain free to recur in the individual's and in the nation's collective awareness, without being enacted and contained within a ritual like a Memorial Day observance, these emotions may surface anywhere at any time and agitate the surface of the political or personal waters. The traditionalists may then turn to the past for sources of renewal, and the apocalypticists may fast forward to the future for images of consummation. It is in this context that we might begin to understand the revival in the 1970s of an evangelical and conservative Protestantism that was ambivalent about politics, nostalgic for a return to the religious beliefs they believed once animated the new republic, and eager for a return to an Americanism that was proud to be Protestant Christian rather than secular and humanistic. Clearly the election of a Quaker Republican, Richard M. Nixon, did not help Protestants to recover either their confident participation in American politics or their sense of cultural entitlement. Instead, the loss of national confidence after the Nixon years led to what Bennis and Slater described as a period of "more nostalgia, more revivals, more clinging to real or imagined pasts."⁴²

Secularization is a paradoxical process that can give rise to a series of moments without any clear meaning, transcendental significance, or ritualized commemoration but so critical or traumatic as to become sacred. An act of violence, the death of a living being, an irreversible moment, a point of no return – these are some of the conditions in which anthropologists and historians of religion know the sacred is likely to emerge. Add to these another condition highlighted by sociologists writing in the Durkheimian tradition: a time of "collective effervescence," in which the emotions and attentions of the entire community or society are engaged in an event crucial to its identity, continuity, and perhaps survival. To the notion of collective effervescence I would add that of collective trauma.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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⁴² Bennis and Slater, *Temporary Society*, 108.

Section II

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN TRANSITIONAL TIMES

SECULARIZATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY: A REVIEW OF THE 1960S

RICHARD FENN

Over the last fifty years there have been a few major changes in the ways in which Americans experience their relationship to the nation as a whole, to the sacred, and to the passage of time. Together, these changes reflect aspects of the process of secularization in complex modern societies. In this essay I will argue that secularizing societies and, in particular, American society from the 1960s forward have become permeated with temporality by the increasing differentiation of the sacred from religion and by a sense of chronic crisis.

I will also argue that the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King, Jr., drove the sacred from places closest to the cultural center and into more immediate, accessible, local, and particular contexts. Martin E. Marty noted of the Kennedy brothers and of King that after “their declines and deaths” there was “a change of religious experiences in a new, centrifugal direction.”¹ Marty went on to note that as Catholics became more divided under the reactionary leadership of Pope Paul VI, “presidential religious symbols . . . were seen in an almost wholly negative light,” and African Americans became increasingly polarized between separatists and more conservative and liberal constituencies.² Kennedy had stood between Americans and the abyss of nuclear war. King stood between Americans and the abyss of violent racial conflict. Their deaths opened the doors to terror wider than ever before.

To borrow an insight from Michael Wood, I suggest that in a secular society “the very idea of strangeness seems to belong to a comfortable country we have lost.”³ Strange things may be happening, and they may indeed

¹ Martin E. Marty, “The American Situation in 1969,” in *The Religious Situation 1969*, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston, 1969), 15–43.

² *Ibid.*, 38.

³ Wood, “Dynamite for Cologne,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 27 (2005): no. 14, 13–14.

be a sign of the end, but it is hard to know what is strange. Oddly, in a secular society, apocalypticism is therefore a way of giving strangeness the aura of normality. Enthusiasts for apocalyptic times have long told us that strange things will happen when the decisive moment in the war of good versus evil and of order against chaos is approaching, but you need to know how to read the signs about you. To know what the signs of the times are telling you may be all the more difficult when it is no longer possible to separate the abnormal and the novel from the normal. Similarly, to argue that American society had entered into a new era was an attempt to give novelty the legitimacy of unprecedented normality. What was new, I will argue, was the concurrence of two major changes: the way in which individuals experienced not only their circumstances and ceremonies, but even their fundamental commitments and the larger society itself, as increasingly vulnerable to the passage of time; and, second, the increasing freedom of the sacred from the control of religion. The interaction of these two tendencies made novelty seem normal and created an endemic and virtually unending sense of crisis.

In the 1960s it was still possible to believe that through religion individuals, groups, and local communities could express their solidarity with one another and with the nation as a whole.

Men [*sic*] can fully realize all they are as members of a species and a society at the supernatural level. Here they can love and hate themselves as gods and be loved and hated by the deities they have created. The faith of the group in supernatural symbols, the sense of "integration," of "oneness," and the sacrifice of self for the survival of these sacred symbols now become meaningful. Whenever an individual can identify sacred symbols in which he believes with the integrated socio-species symbols of his ordinary life he can have enough faith to believe in their supernatural efficacy and power.⁴

Observing local celebrations of this national rite, which he called the Memorial Day cult, William Lloyd Warner had reached the conclusion that a cult of the dead sanctified not only the deaths of soldiers in war, but also the lives of ordinary citizens who lived and moved and had their being within the sanctuary provided by the nation itself against the terror of death. Culminating in the local cemetery, the Memorial Day rites placed the lives of fallen soldiers and of individual citizens on the altar of the nation, and the nation itself offered its own guarantees against the passage of time. Time and death were the enemy, and they were vanquished by the self-sacrifice of the citizen and the soldier. President Kennedy's exhortation to the people to ask what they could do for their country had been followed a few years later by chants of "Hell no, we won't go."

⁴ W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality*, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1962).

Paradoxically, Warner's argument first appeared in his book *American Life: Dream and Reality* in the same year in which Catherine L. Albanese reported the editorialist for the *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph* as deploring the atrophy of the Memorial Day rites. Had we better understood what Albanese called "the effects of the passage of time and the pressure of events on religious structures," we would not have been so likely to believe that Americans were united by religious beliefs and rituals that transcended time itself.⁵ Albanese's comment referred to the effects of the passage of time and of significant events on Warner's Memorial Day cult.⁶ By "the pressure of events," she clearly meant the effects of wars in Korea and in Indochina on the public's reserves of patriotism and sacrificial commitment. Furthermore, the pressure of time had also taken its toll, according to Albanese, in the erosion of World War II as a living memory that could evoke gratitude for sacrifice and devotion and that could elicit further sacrifice by the average citizen in the course of the duties of everyday life.

Even in the 1950s, editors across the country had noted "the limp quality of Memorial Day ceremonies" and their "record of non-participation."⁷ Whatever connections there had been among an individual's existential preoccupations, the needs of the local community for integration, and the nation's claim on the citizens' devotion seemed increasingly to have weakened. Speaking of the war in Vietnam, Albanese determined "The rites of Memorial Day could not unify ... [the American civil community]' because there was no agreement on the meaning of the war and therefore on the sacrificial quality of the death of American soldiers."⁸ The nation was losing its aura of the supernatural; individuals were finding their way into the inner-worldly mysticism that Max Weber had found to be a form of spiritual life uniquely suited to the complexity and contingency of modern societies. Sources of the sacred would increasingly emerge from within the precincts not of institutions but of personal experience, and the individuals' own grasp on the sacred would authorize them to become increasingly disbelieving and critical of the precepts and credos, traditions and practices, of religion itself.

The decay of socially orchestrated forms of the sacred, including those of institutionalized religion, would be accompanied by an increasingly personal and existential apprehension of the sacred by individuals and small groups themselves. The "sacred world," to use Warner's phrase, was less to be found in the local celebration of national rites of respect and commemoration than

⁵ Catherine L. Albanese, "Requiem for Memorial Day: Dissent in the Redeemer Nation," *American Quarterly* 26:4 (1974): 386–98.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

in the rites and in the midst of everyday life, originating not beyond the individual, as though in some transcendent realm, but with far less indirection and mediation by social institutions. Through complexity, the stage was being set for a widespread awareness that anything could happen anywhere at any time, the sort of awareness that is expressed in the apocalyptic imagination. Because so much is contingent on circumstance, the stage was also being set for an intensified awareness of the accidental, or even miraculous, aspect of being itself. Because national rites were being emptied of living memory and no longer sanctified by sacrificial personal commitment, the way also was being prepared for an evangelical revival of hopes for the return of a national spirit based on biblical faith. The result of these parallel changes, one in the way that the larger society experienced, constructed, and construed the passage of time, the other in the social location of the sacred, was a sense of chronic crisis. As Alexandra Stanley described in a recent review of a television series set in the 1960s, "In the early '60s space was for conquest; the social order was overripe for exploration. And in this age before chat rooms, support groups, confessional talk shows, self-help books and 24-hour hot lines became commonplace, each crisis, from the Cuban missile to the midlife, seems encountered as if for the first time, uncharted and befogged by bewilderment and fear."⁹

The more secular a society becomes, the more likely are the citizens to realize that their lives, and indeed their entire society, could be profoundly altered or even threatened with extinction in a single moment. The combined effects of rapid communication through the mass media and of the power of decision making concentrated at the highest levels of the nation-state make it possible for the public to realize how a threat to the entire social order could be both widespread and instantaneous. In October 1962, the Cuban missile crisis produced what Arthur Schlesinger called "the most terrifying day in the history of the world." Regardless of whether the Kennedy administration responded primarily to the Soviet threat or to domestic political danger, the survival of American society seemed to be hanging in the balance of a very short period indeed. Certainly many Americans were scared that a nuclear war would produce total extinction. Even though the president's careful analysis of options and his preference for thinking through possible consequences stood the nation in good stead, pragmatism alone, in the face of the threat of nuclear annihilation, failed to rise to the level of apprehension required of a nation's leaders. Presidential calculations concerned whether weakness of the administration might allow the Soviet Union to retain or expand its supply of

⁹ Alexandra Stanley, "Still Straining to Remain as Button-Down as Ever," *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 2009, C1.

nuclear-armed missiles aimed at the United States from Cuba, or whether the same weakness might cost the Democratic Party control of the House of Representatives and even expose the Kennedy administration to the threat of impeachment.¹⁰ As George Kennan had characterized it in an earlier context, “There is no presumption more terrifying than that of those who would blow up the world on the basis of their personal judgment of a transient situation. I do not propose to let the future of mankind be settled, or ended, by a group of men operating on the basis of limited perspectives and short-run calculations.”¹¹

Personal accounts and recollections underscore the anxiety and fear, even the terror, that many felt at the prospect of imminent annihilation, and polls of public opinion pointed to a sense of crisis at levels that were close to those reached in the days immediately after Pearl Harbor and not again until many years later, after the events of 11 September 2001. However, the American people were “neither paralyzed nor terrified”; rather, they were resilient in the face of these confrontations and backed their leaders.¹² Tom Smith also notes that “even during the height of the crisis, Cuba did not dominate people’s concerns.” Only about a third of the American people thought that most others were “very worried” about Cuba and the missile crisis; conversely, of all the worries that people reported even when concern was at its height, Cuba accounted for only a third, and of these worries, only a very small proportion (1–2 percent) concerned survival.¹³

Precisely because it is secular, even the ability of a people to sustain faith and trust, admiration or even awe, toward their most important political and cultural leaders and institutions lasts only for the time being. Regardless of whether Americans held to their positive or negative opinions of President Kennedy after his assassination, there is some evidence of “the fragility of myth in the modern world.”¹⁴ In the absence of myth, or in the presence of its loss and failure, the world seems to be just as contingent as it really is: unnecessary, uncalled-for, unanticipated, and potentially otherwise than it might have been. That is what it means to be secular – momentary and contingent entirely on circumstance and the passage of time. Twenty years after his death, nearly two out of every three Americans believed that “the

¹⁰ James A. Nathan, “The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now,” *World Politics* 27:2 (Jan. 1975): 256–81.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 269–70.

¹² Tom Smith, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and U.S. Public Opinion,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67:2 (Summer 2003): 265–93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁴ Patricia K. Felkins and Irvin Goldman, “Political Myth as Subjective Narrative: Some Interpretations and Understandings of John F. Kennedy,” *Political Psychology* 14:3 (Sept. 1993): 447–67.

United States would have been 'much different' if Kennedy had not been killed. If only he had lived, went the argument, the storm would not have come. Vietnam would not have become an American trap, there would not have been fires in the streets, and the presidency would have remained untarnished by scandal and bitterness."¹⁵

Whether or not such a belief is well founded is not the point. What matters is that the majority of Americans believe that the course of their nation's history has depended on unpredictable, traumatic, and uncontrolled contingencies. We did not realize, even in the face of the assassinations of President Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King, that these traumatic events would undermine the basis for enduring or even sacrificial commitments to the nation and its political institutions, even while making such commitments all the more necessary.

This chronic, and yet occasionally acute, experience of temporality is at the core of what it means for a society to be secular. Although the public's immediate reactions to the Cuban missile crisis were relatively intense but short-lived, the effects of that crisis may well have been longer lasting. There has, indeed, been something enduring about the knowledge that the nation lives under the threat of nuclear confrontation, just as there is something very transient about a society whose major decision makers think primarily in terms of political expediency, or within a very limited time frame, even when faced with the clear and present danger of national annihilation. The present, the time being, is all there is, not only for the nation but for the individual.

Although in the 1960s and early 1970s many commentators thought that there had been a significant shift in the United Kingdom and the United States, not to mention Europe, toward a more secular society, few of us really understood the spiritual and moral dilemmas posed by secularization. Fewer still therefore foresaw that in the coming decades there would be a strong evangelical revival seeking to restore the lost virtues and religious sentiments of an earlier America or that a wave of apocalyptic enthusiasm would carry televangelists and popular novels into the living rooms and neighborhoods of much of the United States. Had we foreseen these developments, we might have asked better questions at the time. We might have wondered how, for instance, people would cope with the apprehension that either they or their country was running out of time. As time horizons became shorter and commitments more temporary, how would individuals, and the nation as a whole, continue to make decisions, commitments, and sacrifices or maintain trust in their leaders?

¹⁵ Herbert S. Parmet, "The Kennedy Myth and American Politics," *History Teacher* 24:1 (Nov. 1990): 31–9.

The passage of time also eroded the influence of religion in the body politic. The more that the sacred emerges in a wider range of times and places and under a variety of conditions, the more religion needs to adopt a wider range of options to attract and retain its remaining adherents. However, even in the 1960s, religion in the United States had become more abstract in order to encompass more complexities in the social order. Simple and stereotyped instructions would no longer work very well in a complex world organized and administered by professionals, technicians, and bureaucrats, where religious and ethical abstractions are difficult to apply and have only the vaguest sort of relevance to or meaning in mundane circumstances. Indeed, Martin Marty quotes with some approval the observation of Huston Smith, that “institutionalized religion isn’t all of religion, and the fact that the sacred is withdrawing from certain spheres doesn’t mean it isn’t moving into others.”¹⁶ The home of the sacred was increasingly becoming the so-called secular world, where much of what was sacred was also very transient and ephemeral, mundane and accessible, and very local.

For instance, Marty mentioned “the omen-reading of scientists, the faith in flying saucers, the bewitchments of computer scientists, the sale of crystal balls, the recovery of necromancy (witness the interest in Bishop Pike’s account of his séances), the renaissance of witches and ghosts, the popularity of I Ching and Tarot cards, and hippie mysticism and amulet magic – to name but a few developments.”¹⁷ Marty thus echoed Smith, who warned that the sacred “is withdrawing from certain spheres,” but by referring to these developments as “quasi-religious,” Marty does not note explicitly the departure of the sacred from the usual, conventional, and institutionalized forms of religion. The sacred was taking on a life of its own. The country was about to be pulled apart over contests over the sacred, as the sacred was alternatively found to live in the Constitution or in the family, in the ideals of a liberal tradition or in the affections and loyalties of whites for one another, or, for that matter, in the mutual regard of African Americans for one another. It was into these areas that traveled Americans’ doubts and anxieties about their own sacrifices and mortality as they increasingly ignored the rituals that in the past had long expressed both the memory and the prospect of profound loss.

In a national crisis, the past and the future, perhaps even chaos and order or good and evil, may seem to hang in the balance. Such a time opens up the moment both to the past, in the search for precedent and meaning, and to the future, in the attempt to imagine not only what may be the consequences of action in the meantime but also what, in the end,

¹⁶ Marty, “American Situation,” 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

is most to be hoped for or feared. Crises may be filled with ambiguity and terror; they require not only temporizing but decisive action, the willingness to seize a moment as fateful as it is fleeting, even though the meaning and significance of the moment await a revelation that may never appear. It may well be that the funeral rites for President John F. Kennedy; his brother, the attorney general; and Martin Luther King simply confirmed the public's apprehension that the body politic was profoundly sick or wounded, and that in the absence of rites of further commemoration, their deaths left the nation without the symbolic and collective means of national revitalization. In secular societies, a systemic crisis may well be very fleeting in its manifestations; social life may return to normal in a few days or weeks.

However, the effects of such crises are as long lasting as their manifestations are temporary, and these crises affect the most basic commitments that individuals make to the larger society. Thus the trauma of Kennedy's assassination was deeply personal as well as collective, profoundly felt and yet also national. After the assassination of President Kennedy, the nation was in the midst of a unique event that was nearly paralyzing the country as a whole. Sheatsley and Feldman reported, "The majority of the population could not think of any other time in their lives when they had the same sort of feelings as when they heard of President Kennedy's assassination," and those who could think of a comparable event were referring to the death of someone very important to them.¹⁸ On the days after President Kennedy was shot, the average American adult spent at least eight hours a day watching news of the event.¹⁹ This does not count the additional hours spent talking with others about the tragedy or the time spent in solitude, and indeed many Americans reported that they did want to be alone during this time.²⁰ More clearly a sign of shock and grief was the high percentage of respondents who reported that they had been "nervous and tense" or felt "dazed and numb" during the days after the assassination. More than half of the respondents to the survey reported these feelings, as did those who said they had cried.²¹ Sheatsley and Feldman speak of "the cessation of ordinary activities, the almost complete preoccupation with the event, and the actual physical symptoms we have here described. . . . The assassination generally evoked feelings similar to those felt at the death of a close

¹⁸ Paul B. Sheatsley and Jacob J. Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy: A Preliminary Report on Public Reactions and Behavior," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 28:2 (1964): 194.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 189–215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

friend or relative, along with sympathy, sorrow, anger, and shame for the country.”²² Overall, 80 percent of the respondents “felt deeply the loss of someone very close and dear,” and an even higher proportion expressed “deep feelings of ‘shame that such a thing could happen in our country.’”²³ Even among the white southerners who had opposed President Kennedy’s election in 1960, 62 percent reported feeling the loss of “someone very close and dear.”²⁴ In some way that transcended partisan boundaries, President Kennedy seemed even to his opponents to represent them personally, if not politically. Yet there is no collective memorial or reenactment of the event of Kennedy’s assassination.

The assassination and the funeral were not only national but local events, particular but not peculiar to each home and each community. The nation’s awareness, and its shock, were immediate and irreversible in ways we have yet fully to understand. Indeed, there is some evidence that there was a remarkable increase in the levels of political alienation during the 1960s.²⁵ Furthermore, there is also some evidence that it was political alienation that accounted for the way people voted for the president in 1964, a year after Kennedy’s death.²⁶

In the 1960s and 1970s, the sacred was becoming separated from the sanctuary offered by religion. Under these conditions the sacred emerges in critical moments, and yet the sacred itself is episodic in its manifestations and fails to become reenacted and ritualized in ways that mark an event and place it within a continuing, national story. At the same time, as religion increasingly loses control over the sacred, the sacred, in its turn, becomes increasingly accessible to individuals in the circumstances of the local community and of everyday life. Even the Supreme Court had to admit that it could not set a national standard for defining pornography; whatever violated the boundaries of a decent and permissible sexuality would have to be left to the local community. To a lesser extent, the same might be said about the way in which people sought to manage their own health and well-being without the services and beyond the control of the medical profession. Just as healing became differentiated from medicine, for a while during the 1960s some argued that education should be pursued outside schools and colleges.

²² *Ibid.*, 206–7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁵ Anne Statham Macke, “Trends in Aggregate-Level Political Alienation,” *Sociological Quarterly* 20:1 (Winter 1979): 77–87.

²⁶ Joel D. Aberbach “Alienation and Political Behavior,” *American Political Science Review* 63:1 (Mar. 1969): 62–3, 86–99.

THE RULE OF THE TEMPORARY

In the 1960s personal lives, the life of organizations, the conduct of ceremonies, the observance of religious practices, adherence to political loyalties, and trust both in the government and in basic institutions became increasingly provisional, ad hoc, and temporary. Arrangements, both intimate and public, both personal and organizational, were made for the time being. Americans were witnessing what Warren Bennis and Philip Slater called “the introduction of impermanence as a necessary rather than accidental feature of social life.”²⁷ Impermanence, when it reaches the point of possible annihilation, can be terrifying, especially when, in the form of secularization, it calls attention to the temporariness not only of everyday life but of whole societies. At the core of the process of secularization is an increasing sense of the temporariness of all life, including religion and the life of whole societies. Martin Marty remarked on the way in which “the absolute viability of a particular religion was destroyed by the experience of transitoriness.”²⁸ Marty had in mind a comment by Ernest Troeltsch on the inability even of a civilization’s highest values to stand the test of time, but he also was noting more mundane examples of spiritual transitoriness: changes of interest and fashion among theologians; short-lived, experimental liturgies; changes of youthful enthusiasm from spiritual disengagement to radical confrontation; and the changing audiences available to Eastern yogi. Marty was writing about something vaguely called “the religious situation,” and to accompany his comments he therefore chose to speak of changes in “religiousness.” One of these changes was the degree to which religion becomes increasingly optional and embodies a wide range of choices both of style and of substance.

In the 1960s many of the mainstream churches, both Protestant and Catholic, were experimenting with their liturgies in an attempt to make their language more accessible and appealing. The manifestations of the sacred became not only more temporary, but more clearly dependent on its ability to satisfy its audiences and followers. Clifford Geertz argued that “[w]hat sacred symbols do for those to whom they are sacred is to formulate an image of the world’s construction and a program for human conduct that are mere reflexes of one another.”²⁹ Having studied religion in Indonesia, Geertz remarked that religion there, far more than in the United States, gave people “the settled sense of moving with the deepest grain of reality that defines the religious mind.”³⁰ However, Geertz commented

²⁷ Warren Bennis and Philip Slater, *The Temporary Society* (San Francisco, 1998), 99.

²⁸ Marty, “American Situation,” 37.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

that American religion, especially in the churches, was becoming increasingly like a shell devoid of the sacred. Emptied of the sacred, even religious rituals receive more pragmatic interest and observance than devotion.

When religion loses its capacity to mobilize or even monopolize the sacred, religious institutions and practices appear to be more subject to the passage of time. Warren Bennis and Philip Slater envisaged a world in which "all acts become both playful and instrumental, public and private, and no sphere of human expression is altogether uncontaminated by duty."³¹ Americans, they argued, were learning to cultivate within themselves the sensibilities and disciplines necessary to respond fully to the possibilities, opportunities, and dangers of the moment, without anxiety or presumption, and without recourse to divine reassurance or intervention. They could make decisions, take risks, and still entrust themselves to the judgment of time. That is because each "individual will be more changeable, less predictable from moment to moment and from situation to situation, less able to play the same tune all his life long."³² Such a temporary society has short-term temporal horizons. Bennis and Slater thought of it as a society in which pragmatism rather than either ideologies or the bureaucratic rules and regulations of a large formal organization would determine what and how decisions were made. There is something very American about a society and about people who live in an indefinitely extended present and who make themselves up as they go along.

For instance, Benedict Anderson, writing about the secularization of traditional societies transplanted onto American shores, described how the Iberian colonial émigrés, who were born in Mexico and would die there, developed an identity quite different from that of administrators who were born in Spain and who, after a period in the New World, would return there to die. The provincial administrators destined to live and die in the New World read newspapers avidly to understand their times; they lived in the time being constituted by the journals' announcements of the arrival and departures of ships from the Old World.

The notion that societies, and social life itself, were increasingly permeated by the passage of time led Bennis and Slater to suggest, "The growth of temporary systems will tend to limit further the spheres of territoriality and kinship, and the concept of interchangeability will inaugurate what we might call the principle of temporary relevance."³³ That is, what works and what matters will depend far less on who one is or where one lives than on one's capacity to engage in several more or less complex roles in

³¹ Bennis and Slater, *Temporary Society*, 101.

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

an increasingly large and varied set of roles, contexts, and relationships, at least for the time being.

It is no accident that in *The Secular City*, Harvey Cox announced that the Kennedy administration had introduced a new “era of pragmatism.” The sort of individuals who might flourish under these conditions would be like David Riesman’s “other-directed” self and thus relatively smooth at managing the interfaces between themselves and others. In a secular society, it is useful to be adept in achieving a constantly shifting set of goals that are revised according to what seems feasible under the present circumstances and for the time being. Like Robert J. Lifton’s “protean self,” such a person is capable of revising the self over a lifetime according to what seems expedient or marketable at the time. In a secular society one might indeed expect denominations to revise their liturgies as a marketing strategy and individuals to attend religious institutions for the time being and for their own reasons, with or without becoming members, without adopting a denominational identity, and without believing in an institutional creed.

Secularization, then, is not a process that is primarily to be understood as some antithesis of religion: an end product of a long process of historical development that culminates in some questionable modernity when individuals think and act for themselves without the delusions and the inhibitions, the aspirations and the intimidations, associated with a religious consciousness. On the contrary, secularization is a process that primarily affects a society as a whole, whether one is interested primarily in its culture or in its politics, its religions or its ways of doing business. Secularization may affect the ways in which an entire society imagines and identifies itself, makes decisions and exercises authority, or the ways it calls for commitment and sacrifice from its members. Secularization may also affect the credence given by individuals to various institutions, including religious ones, just as it may affect the way in which institutions respect the rights and authority of individuals. Above all, secularization changes the way a society experiences, construes, imagines, interprets, and constructs the passage of time.

Perhaps the spate of trial liturgies in Protestant churches is an example of the way that, as societies begin to feel themselves caught up in the passage of time, they encounter or engender novel forms of the sacred. However, such rites are so provisional that they cannot encompass either the ambiguity or the fatefulness of critical moments. To encompass the anxieties and elicit the sacrifices required in times of national crisis, it is necessary not only to evoke powerful sentiments of allegiance and commitment through presidential rhetoric, but to engage in the very sort of rites, such as Memorial Day observances, that were increasingly losing

their capacity to attract citizens, mold their imaginations, and mobilize their commitments.

Secularizing societies become increasingly subject to and aware of the passage of time, temporary in their adjustments, and less able to place pivotal or critical moments in the context of a collective story. Complex, secularizing societies make themselves up as they go along and are more visibly extensions of the temporal than are more traditional societies fortified by claims to transcendence over the passage of time. Therefore, instead of relying on what Habermas calls the “pre-political ethical convictions of religious or national communities,” the modern democratic state legitimates itself “only in a self-referential manner, that is, on the basis of legal procedures born of democratic procedures.”³⁴ The insight here owes much to the work of Niklas Luhmann, who for some time has been arguing that social orders are extensions of time; they give place to time. Modern societies, according to Luhmann, are increasingly marked by the temporal and continuously reconstitute themselves in acts of communication through complex networks, as a cybernetic system does.

In societies where social and economic change is rapid, endemic, and often fateful, a medicine deemed safe and widely available one day may be withdrawn the next. There may not be enough time after the discovery of a virus to develop a vaccine, just as a missile launched in one country can be detected in seconds but still demolish another country in minutes. Communications transmitted instantaneously require rapid response, as do insurgencies and genocidal revolts by local militias. Time pressures on workers, and especially on women, may increase as managers lengthen the workday and disregard the competing and often conflicting schedules of family life. When employment no longer lasts for a lifetime but only for the time being, it is always a good idea to keep one's resume in circulation. Under these conditions, careers are no longer a journey from the beginning of one's adult life to the end, but a series of midcourse corrections in jobs that may be unconnected with one another and not part of a cumulative development of insight and skill in a defined area of expertise. Such a journey leads to no well-defined end, and one therefore has to make up one's life, one's resume or vita, as one goes along. In the same way, there may be no definite temple or state of the soul waiting for one at the end of a religious pilgrimage, but only a constantly revised and updated set of insights and practices replacing those widely available in the flea markets of discarded spirituality.

Whether one lives in a small, nomadic or in a complex, highly mobile society, sheer sequence, the experience of one thing after another, trumps

³⁴ Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco, 2006), 27.

continuity and development. Such a society is secular simply because there is no story to be told and no particular end in sight. Time horizons are short, commitments are provisional and temporary, and selves may invent and reinvent themselves over time. In secular societies, temporariness is pervasive and routine. When a social order loses its usual cultural bearings with regard to time, the mere succession of one day or thing after another supersedes or preempts any cultural prescriptions for understanding or constructing the passage of time. Everyday life becomes more permeated with the unfamiliar and with the novel. Secularization thus makes it more necessary for individuals to make choices on their own, with higher levels of ambiguity, uncertainty, and personal responsibility. Secular societies are therefore more like a cybernetic system or the Internet than a territory with a political center and clear cultural boundaries. They are literally self-generating and may change from moment to moment according to their own procedures and in the light of their most recent communications.

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE SACRED FROM RELIGION

In secularizing societies, religion becomes far too pluralistic, optional, utilitarian, and subject to temporary measures and rites to provide a collective story for the nation as a whole. It is tempting, therefore, for religion to take on the appearance of pragmatism while wearing the mantel of the transcendent. As Harvey Cox described it in *The Secular City*, whether it is “the invisible hand of the laissez-faire market” or “the Marxist dialectic, . . . the ghost of religion still prowls.”³⁵ True, perhaps, but it is still a ghost, a presence without its former vitality. For Cox it was the sign of “a society living on the vanishing capital of a Puritan religious inheritance.” Perhaps the ghost of religion was also prowling in Cox’s and others’ attempts to find Protestant and biblical residues in the humanism and pragmatism of the Kennedy era. Thus Cox states, because “the ghost of religion” still prowls or operates as a secret presence, religion can be recognized primarily in absentia or incognito.³⁶ Indeed, Cox found echoes of the Christian tradition in the rational and pragmatic approach of the Kennedy era, which gave a moral and even existential seriousness to this-worldly prospects and obligations. Had Cox recognized that in the Kennedy era the sacred was taking on a life of its own apart from the auspices of religion, the discussion of secularization might have taken a different and more promising turn.

³⁵ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York, 1965), 186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

Greeley, too, assumed that man cannot “do without myth”; he therefore did not imagine that the sacred was differentiating itself from religion or from some more transcendent cultural system such as myth that alone, he assumed, could give protection, continuity, and meaning to the sacred.³⁷

These are difficult conditions for religion, but they are nearly ideal conditions for the sacred. It is far easier for the sacred than for religion to inhabit the local and personal or to be particular to a specific people, time, and place. Under these conditions religion becomes a shadow of its former self: still present, but relatively empty of the sacred for which it has long claimed to offer sanctuary and from which it has derived, in times past, at least the appearance of substance. Under these conditions, for Americans to locate the sacred in contexts further from the center, and more accessible to the home, the family, and the neighborhood, is therefore hardly surprising.

Various transitions in the life of the individual, whether they are easily ritualized or, like sudden death, are less amenable to the smoothing of symbolic action, are marked by the sacred. Such moments, when the passage of time itself is experienced as final and irreversible, are not readily embodied and reenacted in rituals or scheduled according to the times and occasions authorized by religious professionals. Whether they occur in the midst of the personal and the mundane, in the local community and in the practical conduct of everyday life, or at the level of the nation as a whole, they are profoundly disruptive, critical moments. Such an indefinite, fateful but inconclusive experience of living in the time being creates a profound longing for a more virtuous, enduring, and certain past, as well as impatience and anxiety for the future to resolve all outstanding grievances and demands for satisfaction.

Thus secularization reduces the capacity of religious institutions to contain the sacred within their traditions and practices. More evidently defined by temporality, by new eras, and by rituals that work only for the time being, religion becomes increasingly secular. As it becomes more secular, therefore, religion is less able to provide a sense of transcendence and continuity to the social systems it defines or informs and more obviously contrived for specific occasions. As David Martin himself has argued, the Anglican Church’s distaste for any religious language that suggested ambiguity, antiquity, or mystery has hastened its own secularity. Martin had in mind not only bureaucratic liturgical reformers, but also a diffuse and subjective piety that dispenses with churches and their clergy and “imagines that it has no need for ritual and institutional mediation.”³⁸ In the United

³⁷ Andrew Greeley, *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion* (New York, 1972), 106.

³⁸ David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, UK, 2005), 6.

Kingdom, the church had decided that there was a demand for the modernization of the church's liturgical language and produced liturgical revisions that presumably would resonate with the people living in "the new estates." Times had changed, and in the present saeculum the liturgy itself would have to be full of options for various contingencies. The same could well be said of many of the mainline Protestant churches in the United States, which over the last fifty years have introduced experimental liturgies with fewer claims to mystery and authority. As Martin stated, "Ritual and meditation are all too easily dismissed as mere mumbojumbo and priestcraft; that is the sentiment or sediment deposited by a receding Protestantism." At the same time, a modernizing tendency among ecclesiastical reformers and bureaucrats creates a vacuum abhorred by individualistic forms of piety. Indeed, an increasingly secularized form of religion is in a weak position from which to compete with unauthorized and apolitical forms of sacred enthusiasm, just as deviant and idiosyncratic forms of the sacred no longer need authorization from religious institutions. No wonder that the sacred could be as easily found outside the precincts of religion as within, and what one needed to understand sacred mysteries was not contained solely in the Bible but also in the realm of folklore and popular pieties.

Especially among more liberal denominations, the range of permitted meanings, the possibilities for biblical interpretation, and the sources of inspiration and authority, all had broken out of a narrow and orthodox framework. It is not that the Episcopalians were living in a disenchanted universe freed from spirits and the sacred. On the contrary, 63 percent of Episcopalian ministers said, "I believe in the demonic as a personal power in the world," which was more than the corresponding percentage of clergy among Methodists (38 percent) or Presbyterians (53 percent), although less than the 91 percent of Missouri Synod Lutheran ministers who also believed in the real presence of the devil.³⁹ Nonetheless, some sociologists seemed reluctant explicitly to acknowledge the sacred outside the context of religion, just as they shared a widespread sociological distrust of the individual's own claims to independent sources of inspiration and authority.

Even in the more liberal denominations, the sacred was beginning to take on a life of its own apart from, and often in opposition to, the traditional religion still espoused in the churches. Harvey Cox announced, "We must listen to the deviants of our society before pronouncing them all kooks. Some of them are. Some may be full of god, that is full of feelings, hopes, and insights which still seem insane to our time but just may open a fissure toward the future." However, Cox's interest was in the church's ability to restore its

³⁹ Jeffrey Hadden, "Protestant Paradox – Divided They Merge," in *Religion in Radical Transition*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), 48–66, 53.

relevance by becoming a counterculture to a society in need of a visionary stimulus toward self-transformation. On this view secularization has some beneficial side effects; deviants could be an important resource for a church eager to recover some of its old influence. "Certainly secularization means that Christianity will include a smaller minority of persons in the society. It provides, however, the possibility for a reappropriation of the critical, prophetic, and perhaps catalytic function which Christianity once played"⁴⁰

CHRONIC CRISIS

As Gareth Peirce puts it of the United States after the Second World War, when considerations of national defense were translated into matters of national security: "Effectively, every development the world over came to be perceived as potentially crucial, so that an adverse turn of events anywhere endangered the United States. American foreign policy goals came to be translated into issues of national survival, and the range of threats became limitless."⁴¹ Political decision-making became freighted with concerns about national security.

As concerns for national defense were transformed into more chronic anxieties about national security, a sense of crisis became more salient and continuous. With a pervasive sense of impending or possible crisis, the experience of time itself becomes fragmented and intensified because time becomes a series of potentially dangerous events rather than a series of episodes or chapters in a continuing story. Time itself is of the essence and running out.

To counteract this immersion in the passage of time and the sense that one is approaching a point of no return, the sacred offers at least a temporary way of holding on to the moment, of making it seem lasting enough to permit one to encompass both hope and fear, dread and the expectation of redemption or release. Thus the sacred offers a way of bearing a heightened sense of crisis and of allowing time for imagination to grasp the potential significance of the moment, or of the times, and of their possible consequences.

Secularization is a process in which it is difficult to discern the sacred precisely because the momentary is not easily distinguished from the momentous, or the novel from the routine, or the merely pivotal from the signs of a genuine crisis. Even an actual crisis fails permanently to separate the "before"

⁴⁰ Cox, "Feasibility and Fantasy," in *The Religious Situation*, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston, 1969), 910–20, 917.

⁴¹ Gareth Peirce, "'Make Sure You Say That You Were Treated Properly,'" *London Review of Books* 11:9 (May 2009): 10.

from the “after” unless it becomes embedded in ritual and acquires the capacity for communal or collective recollection and reenactment. Further, secularity prevents even crises from acquiring a place in a collective and continuing story where their meaning and consequence transcend the event itself. Even if sacralized, moreover, a crisis may not be enshrined in myth. Instead, it keeps its uniqueness, immediacy, and particularity, as well as its location in everyday life, rather than becoming a mere episode in a larger and longer story. For instance, despite the assassination of President Kennedy, as I have suggested, his life and death still have not been ritualized. His assassination and funeral are not collectively reenacted, and his assassination, as his presidency, still fails to mark a separation between the “before” and the “after.” John F. Kennedy has not been given a place in the nation’s sacred history or mythology. Rather, even his death remains the subject of speculation and inquiry about the possibility of other assassins. Nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence that the experience of the American people was deeply affected, and perhaps altered, by Kennedy’s assassination and funeral.

A state of chronic crisis is close to what the Italian political theorist Agamben calls the “state of exception” in which there is nothing really normal, and no distinction between the inside of a social order and its outside; there is a chronic and endemic state of chaos. Such a blurring of the boundaries of a society legitimates and evokes the unfettered exercise of sovereignty. Agamben says as much. “Since ‘there is no rule that is applicable to chaos,’ chaos must first be included in the juridical order through the creation of a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, chaos and the normal situation – the state of exception.” The requirement of decisive action in the midst of crisis not only justifies the most dynamic and unfettered acts by the state, but it also legitimates the suspension or dissolution of the very rules that legitimate state sovereignty. Because the crisis remains obscure, its resolution cannot be determined by fact finding, but only by the decisive act of a sovereign.

President Kennedy was a figure with extraordinary charismatic appeal to numbers of people, not all of whom were his followers or who numbered themselves among his constituency, but most of whom, nonetheless, felt that they had a strong, very personal connection with him. The sacred moment, violent and irreversible, was sudden, personal; although national in scope, it was also very particular to each person and home, each neighborhood and community. People stayed as close to the unfolding moments of those days as their television sets would allow them.

In a secular society, neither a critical nor a traumatic event becomes ritualized and reenacted or part of the nation’s sacred history, no matter how novel, or how deeply personal, it is felt to have been, or how profoundly local as well as national in its impact that event may have been. If, as

Albanese so well understood, sacrifice and loss, death and mourning, anxiety and terror, remain free to recur in the individual's and in the nation's collective awareness, without being enacted and contained within a ritual like a Memorial Day observance, these emotions may surface anywhere at any time and agitate the surface of the political or personal waters. The traditionalists may then turn to the past for sources of renewal, and the apocalypticists may fast forward to the future for images of consummation. It is in this context that we might begin to understand the revival in the 1970s of an evangelical and conservative Protestantism that was ambivalent about politics, nostalgic for a return to the religious beliefs they believed once animated the new republic, and eager for a return to an Americanism that was proud to be Protestant Christian rather than secular and humanistic. Clearly the election of a Quaker Republican, Richard M. Nixon, did not help Protestants to recover either their confident participation in American politics or their sense of cultural entitlement. Instead, the loss of national confidence after the Nixon years led to what Bennis and Slater described as a period of "more nostalgia, more revivals, more clinging to real or imagined pasts."⁴²

Secularization is a paradoxical process that can give rise to a series of moments without any clear meaning, transcendental significance, or ritualized commemoration but so critical or traumatic as to become sacred. An act of violence, the death of a living being, an irreversible moment, a point of no return – these are some of the conditions in which anthropologists and historians of religion know the sacred is likely to emerge. Add to these another condition highlighted by sociologists writing in the Durkheimian tradition: a time of "collective effervescence," in which the emotions and attentions of the entire community or society are engaged in an event crucial to its identity, continuity, and perhaps survival. To the notion of collective effervescence I would add that of collective trauma.

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⁴² Bennis and Slater, *Temporary Society*, 108.

BREAKING SILENCE: CHURCHES AND OPPOSITION TO THE VIETNAM WAR, 1964–1975

MICHAEL B. FRIEDLAND

When Norman Morrison set himself on fire in front of the Pentagon in November 1965, Americans reacted with horror and incomprehension. Morrison, a member of the Society of Friends, was despondent over the American escalation of the Vietnam War. A week later, Roger LaPorte, a member of the pacifist organization Catholic Worker, immolated himself at United Nations headquarters. Unlike Morrison, he lived long enough to explain that this was his religious protest against war.¹

Such actions departed from traditional practices of the historic peace churches (Society of Friends, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren) and religious pacifist organizations such as the Catholic Worker and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), namely, refusal to pay taxes to support the military or accepting conscientious objector (CO) status during wartime. Mainstream Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant denominations, by comparison, had historically supported American entry into wars. What made religious opposition to the Vietnam War different was that the historic peace churches and pacifist organizations were joined by prominent religious leaders such as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel; the Yale chaplain William Sloane Coffin, Jr.; his fellow Presbyterian minister Robert McAfee Brown; the Catholic priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan; and, most famously, Martin Luther King, Jr., Baptist pastor and civil rights leader. Civil rights was their entrance into social protest. After President Lyndon Johnson began sending thousands of troops to aid South Vietnam against what many considered to be Communist aggression from North Vietnam, these individuals moved into antiwar activism, seeing the movements as connected. Race was a significant factor in brutality inflicted on nonwhites; concerns that the force being used was out of all proportion

¹ Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest against the War in Vietnam, 1963–1975* (Garden City, NY, 1984), 1–3; Michael Ferber and Staughton Lynd, *The Resistance* (Boston, 1971), 26; *New York Times*, 10 Nov. 1965, 1, 5.

to what was needed had the same applicability in Hanoi as they did in Birmingham. Both movements held rallies and lobbied Congress, and when local or federal governments appeared unresponsive, tactics shifted to civil disobedience.

What made civil rights different from antiwar protests was that the Justice Department was an ally of the former, but the prosecutor of the latter when challenging the draft. Washington, D.C., not southern cities, became the focal point of protests, befitting a struggle concerning foreign policy. The most salient difference between the movements was that the involvement of black ministers in the antiwar movement began considerably later than that of their white colleagues. This was not because King and others supported the war; rather, they did not want to risk alienating Johnson's support for civil rights. White clergymen did not have the same constraints, and so Coffin, Brown, Heschel, and the Berrigans became early leaders in the religious antiwar movement.²

Religious criticism of the war began in 1963, when twelve clergymen formed the Ministers' Vietnam Committee. In newspaper advertisements, they protested South Vietnam's harsh treatment of dissenters, questioning why the United States would support such a repressive government.³ One member, John Bennett, prophetically warned that escalation would "lead to hopeless involvement in a conflict in which our power would not be relevant."⁴ These and similar newspaper advertisements made little impact. In 1964, only 105 clergy of Washington, D.C.'s 750 signed a petition calling for peace negotiations in Vietnam. Francis Sayre, Episcopal dean of Washington Cathedral, explained that he did not feel "competent to know as well as the President's technical advisers about what should be done."⁵ When the Clergymen's Emergency Committee for Vietnam (CEC) published an advertisement in the *New York Times* calling on Johnson to halt the bombing and convene a peace conference, only a tenth of the clergy to whom it was submitted approved it. Warning that God would judge any

² Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *A Shield and a Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies* (Macon, GA, 1987); Richard M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, DE, 2003); Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933–1983* (Philadelphia, 1984); Michael B. Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954–1973* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

³ "We Too Protest," *New York Times*, 21 June 1963, and 15 Sept. 1963, E5; Charles DeBenedetti with Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY, 1990), 423n21.

⁴ John C. Bennett, "Questions about Vietnam," *Christianity and Crisis* 24 (20 July 1964): 141–2.

⁵ Quoted in "Urge Cease Fire in South Vietnam," *Christian Century* 82 (13 Jan. 1965): 37.

country that returned evil for evil, the strident tone made even the editors of the liberal *Christian Century* uneasy, wondering whether the committee was “too cocksure about ‘who speaks in the name of God.’”⁶

In April 1965, some of the nation’s most respected clergy, including King, Bennett, several Protestant bishops, and all six members of the CEC formed the Interreligious Committee on Vietnam, inviting Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy and laypeople to participate in a silent vigil outside the Pentagon the following month to shame Johnson into fulfilling his promises to seek peace. While Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and others were invariably polite to the leaders, they refused to be swayed. Visits to Congress also accomplished little. Polls showed that 60 percent of Americans supported Johnson’s Vietnam policies. After Congress increased funding for the war, Johnson ordered the intensification of the draft.⁷ Religious figures “cannot accomplish in a few crucial months what Isaiah, Buddha, Jesus, St. Francis, Tolstoy and Gandhi could not do in 2500 years,” warned the journalist I. F. Stone. “If all hope of stopping a wider conflict disappears, they will perform a moral duty by resistance and abstention. But though this will ease their consciences, it will not affect the course of events.”⁸

Much of the government’s clout was based on access to information to support their arguments for the war’s progress. In July 1965 the CEC sent representatives to South Vietnam to hear the opinions of students, soldiers, teachers, government officials, and members of the Communist Viet Cong. The most important source of information, in the opinion of Alfred Hassler, executive secretary of FOR, was that of the peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh of the Unified Buddhist Church. He told them of a “third solution,” in which a government representing all Vietnamese would work with the UN after a negotiated cease-fire and withdrawal of American troops.⁹ Hanh had tried to enlist King’s aid, writing that because of his human rights record, he would understand the “indescribable suffering” of the Vietnamese.¹⁰

⁶ “2,500 Ministers, Priests and Rabbis Say: MR. PRESIDENT, In the Name of God, STOP IT!” *New York Times*, 4 Apr. 1965, E5; “Who Is Adequate, Monsignor?” *Christian Century* 82 (26 May 1965): 668.

⁷ “Call to Vigil on Vietnam,” *Christian Century* 82 (12 May 1965): 605; *New York Times*, 13 May 1965, 1; DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *American Ordeal*, 114; George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975* (New York, 1979), 137–8.

⁸ I. F. Stone, *In a Time of Torment* (New York, 1967), 80–1.

⁹ Alfred Hassler, *Saigon, U.S.A.* (New York, 1970), 6–9; Thich Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (New York, 1967), 83–4; “Churches Speak on Vietnam,” *Christian Century* 82 (17 Mar. 1965): 325–6.

¹⁰ “Letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., from a Buddhist Monk,” *Liberation* 10 (Dec. 1965): 18–19.

Whether this influenced the Baptist minister to speak out is unclear. King privately expressed doubts about the war, and in August 1965 he called for negotiations between the United States and Hanoi, offering himself as mediator. Journalists and politicians chastised him for involving himself in foreign affairs, and after prominent African Americans begged him not to jeopardize Johnson's support of civil rights, King rescinded his offer. As impressed as they were with the "third solution," the committee acknowledged that the war was more complicated than they had thought, and that neither side was entirely in the right. Immediate withdrawal of American troops was not the answer. The real problems facing Vietnam, they concluded, were injustice, poverty, and hatred. Such generalities were easily ignored.¹¹

What merited more attention was assistance given to young men wanting to avoid the draft. Groups affiliated with FOR, such as the Catholic and Jewish Peace Fellowships, began publishing information on how to gain CO status from draft boards. While individuals from the historic peace churches had little problem, those from mainstream denominations faced greater difficulty. The Selective Service did not recognize the validity of objection to one particular war. Even if Catholics believed that the Vietnam War was not "just," their Church did not oppose war in any and all forms. Jews complained that officials asked them what they would have done had they been old enough to fight the Nazis. Any admission that they would have fought ended their chances of being granted CO status. Those refused CO status had few alternatives: going to jail, going abroad, or challenging the draft. On 29 July 1965, as 400 antiwar protesters picketed a recruitment center in New York City, a member of Catholic Worker set fire to his draft card. The next month, Johnson made the destruction of draft cards a federal offense. In October, a former student of Daniel Berrigan, claiming to be influenced by him, burned his draft card, inspiring similar actions nationwide.¹²

To support the right of dissent and protest charges that antiwar demonstrators were Communists, almost a hundred clergymen met at the UN

¹¹ Stephen Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound* (New York, 1982), 365–6; Alfred Hassler, Afterword to Hanh, *Vietnam*, 97–8; "We Have Seen the Anguish in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 1 Aug. 1965, E5.

¹² James H. Forest, *Catholics and Conscientious Objection* (New York, 1966); James H. Forest, "No Longer Alone: The Catholic Peace Movement," and Philip J. Scharper, "The Churches and Conscription," in *American Catholics and Vietnam*, ed. Thomas Quigley (Grand Rapids, MI, 1968), 147, 85–6; Rabbi Isidor B. Hoffman to Murray Polner, 3 Jan. 1966, "Internal Correspondence, 1955–1970," Rabbi Hoffman, Report of May 1971, "Reports of Rabbi Isidor B. Hoffman," Box 2, Jewish Peace Fellowship Papers (JPF) American Jewish Archives (Waltham, MA); Ferber and Lynd, *Resistance*, 21–4; *New York Times*, 2 Nov. 1965, 9; 17 Oct. 1965, 9; 26 Oct. 1965, 4.

Church Center to hear the Lutheran pastor Richard John Neuhaus and Heschel, a theology professor and refugee from Nazi Germany who had marched with King in Selma. Participants organized themselves as Clergy Concerned about Vietnam under the ecumenical leadership of Neuhaus, Heschel, and Daniel Berrigan. By early 1966, more clergy had joined the renamed Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV), including Bennett, Brown, and Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., became acting executive secretary, and Rev. Richard Fernandez of the United Church of Christ was named executive director in charge of routine issues. While several of them had been jailed for civil rights activities, none were radicals. Their goals were moderate: continuation of the bombing halt and the beginning of negotiations to end the war, not immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. Heschel stressed that CALCAV would remain religiously based and not continue after the war. Significantly, members of the executive committee were editors of religious journals, denominational heads, college chaplains, professors, and leaders of religious organizations, giving them a freedom unavailable to parish clergy.¹³

Hanh's descriptions of the destruction during a U.S. visit heightened the urgency among antiwar protesters, as did the increase in bombing and the arrival of 400,000 soldiers in South Vietnam.¹⁴ This escalation, wrote Bennett regretfully, "makes it difficult to be an American."¹⁵ Clergy and religious organizations increased calls for a negotiated peace, including the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the National Council of Churches, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and several

¹³ *New York Times*, 26 Oct. 1965, 4; 26 Jan. 1966, 44; Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York, 1990), 14, 16–18, 21, 24, 27–8; "Battle of Conscience," *Newsweek* 66 (15 Nov. 1965): 78; Daniel Berrigan, "My Friend," in Harold Kasimow and Byron Sherwin, eds., *No Religion Is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY, 1991), 69; William Sloane Coffin, Jr., *Once to Every Man: A Memoir* (New York, 1978), 217–19, 223; "Clergy Concerned about Vietnam," *Christian Century* 83 (26 Jan. 1966): 99–100; John C. Bennett to Malcolm Boyd, 16 July 1968, 2, Malcolm Boyd Papers (MBP), Department of Special Collections, Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University; Robert McAfee Brown, "'Some Are Guilty, All Are Responsible': Heschel's Social Ethics," in *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring His Life and Thought*, ed. John C. Merkle (New York, 1985), 134; *New York Times*, 2 Feb. 1966, 15; 14 Sept. 1966, 1, 4; Robert J. Saks, "Jews, Judaism, and the New Left," *Conservative Judaism* 21 (Summer 1967): 43–4; Warren Goldstein, *William Sloane Coffin, Jr.: A Holy Impatience* (New Haven, CT, 2004), 163; DeBenedetti with Chatfield, *American Ordeal*, 144.

¹⁴ Herring, *Longest War*, 147–8; "They Are Our Brothers Whom We Kill," *New York Times*, 23 Jan. 1966, 6–7E; Hanh, *Vietnam*, 101–3.

¹⁵ John C. Bennett, "It Is Difficult to Be an American," *Christianity and Crisis* 26 (25 July 1966): 165.

Episcopal and Methodist bishops. Although numerous Catholic priests called for negotiations, the assembly of American Roman Catholic Bishops supported fighting aggression in Vietnam.¹⁶

It was clear by early 1967 that the Johnson administration was growing more indifferent to criticism. Even when A. J. Muste, secretary emeritus of FOR; Richard Ambrose Reeves, an Anglican bishop deported from South Africa for criticizing apartheid; and Rabbi Abraham Feinberg returned from visiting the North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh with an invitation to Johnson to discuss peace in Hanoi, the government dismissed it as symbolism. Members of CALCAV, the AFSC, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) hosted an "Education-Action Mobilization" in Washington, D.C. at the end of January. More than 2,000 clergy, nuns, and laity participated in workshops and took part in an interfaith vigil for peace.¹⁷ "There comes a time when silence is betrayal," Robert McAfee explained in his address. Citizens should not silently condone a policy that led to civilian casualties, the use of napalm and defoliants, and torture of prisoners.¹⁸ Visits with legislators were brief. Few made time to talk, except those who already questioned the war: Senators J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, Wayne Morse of Oregon, Ernest Gruening of Alaska, and Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota. A meeting between McNamara and clergy left the latter unconvinced that the government was practicing restraint by not following the Pentagon's draconian plans.¹⁹

¹⁶ "Statement of the Synagogue Council of America, January 1966," "An Appeal to the Churches Concerning Vietnam," issued by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, 9 Dec. 1966, and "Statement of the American Roman Catholic Bishops, November 1966," reprinted in Robert McAfee Brown, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Michael Novak, *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* (New York, 1967), 109–10, 118–22, 113, 115–16; Jacob J. Weinstein, "Freedom of the Pulpit," in *Yearbook, Central Conference of American Rabbis*, ed. Sidney L. Regner vol. 76 (New York, 1967), 19; *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 1966, 5; 2 Dec. 1966, 1; "Getting Out," *Commonweal* 85 (23 Dec. 1966): 335; John B. Sherrin, "The Morality of the Vietnam War," *Catholic World* 202 (Mar. 1966): 326–30; Joseph Gallagher, "The American Bishops on Modern War," *America* 115 (Nov. 1966): 548–9; *New York Times*, 8 Jan. 1967, 20.

¹⁷ A. J. Muste, "Last Words: 1. Report on a Visit to North Vietnam," *Liberation* 11 (Feb. 1967): 8; *New York Times*, 24 Jan. 1967, 2; 3 Feb. 1967, 10; Abraham L. Feinberg, *Hanoi Diary* (Ontario, 1968), 3, 108–33, 202–26, 249–58; Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A. J. Muste* (Philadelphia, 1981), 219; "A Call to Clergymen – Viet-Nam: The Clergyman's Dilemma: An Education-Action Mobilization, January 31–February 1, 1967," *Christian Century* 84 (4 Jan. 1967): 23; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 224; Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), 75–6.

¹⁸ Quoted in Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 34; see also excerpts in "News and Views," *Commonweal* 85 (24 Feb. 1967): 580, and *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1967, 7.

¹⁹ Kyle Haselden, "Concerned and Committed," *Christian Century* 84 (15 Feb. 1967): 197–8; *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1967, 7; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 225–9; Abraham

On 4 April 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., publicly broke with the government in a sermon at New York City's Riverside Church. Leaders of CALCAV had invited him to speak after noticing his criticism of the war in a little-known address in February. King was not the only speaker, but it was his address that captured everyone's attention.²⁰ Paraphrasing Brown, he announced that the time had come for him to "break the betrayal of my own silences," and he condemned the war for sapping funds from the War on Poverty, labeling the United States "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." Churches and synagogues had to assist those wanting to become COs; clergy should give up ministerial exemptions and join them.²¹ King received a standing ovation from the audience, an invitation to serve on CALCAV's executive committee, praise from the editors of *The Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*, and almost universal condemnation from the media and civil rights leaders. Critics insisted he was meddling in affairs in which he had no competence; others worried that he was burning his bridges with the president, a stalwart supporter of civil rights.²²

Four days later, King joined the antiwar activist Benjamin Spock and Daniel Berrigan in leading 400,000 people in a march to the UN as part of the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. Students in Central Park burned almost 200 draft cards in a massive show of resistance, and in San Francisco Brown addressed an antiwar demonstration. Ironically, CALCAV refused to endorse the protests, fearing that the radical nature of some participants would alienate a potential middle-class constituency. It had asked Brown, Heschel, and the Catholic layman Michael Novak to write *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, a collection of essays designed to convince

Joshua Heschel, "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam," in Brown, Heschel, and Novak, *Vietnam*, 51–2; see also Brown, "Some Are Guilty," in Merkle, *Abraham Joshua Heschel*, 138–9; Robert McAfee Brown, *The Pseudonyms of God* (Philadelphia, 1972), 185–7; Robert McAfee Brown, "An Open Letter to the U.S. Bishops," *Commonweal* 85 (17 Feb. 1967): 548; "Challenge for the Churches," *America* 116 (18 Feb. 1967): 234; Robert McAfee Brown, "The Church and Vietnam: A Protestant Viewpoint," *Commonweal* 87 (13 Oct. 1967): 54–5; *New York Times*, 2 Feb. 1967, 3.

²⁰ *New York Times*, 5 Apr. 1967, 1; Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68* (New York, 2006), 586–91.

²¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Time to Break Silence," reprinted in James Melvin Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco, 1986), 231–40.

²² Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 593–7; "King Speaks for Peace," *Christian Century* 84 (19 Apr. 1967): 492–3; John David Maguire, "Martin Luther King and Vietnam," *Christianity and Crisis* 27 (1 May 1967): 89–90; *New York Times*, 6 Apr. 1967, 10; "A Tragedy," *Washington Post*, 6 Apr. 1967, A20; "Dr. King's Error," *New York Times*, 7 Apr. 1967, 36; Raphael Gould to Rabbi Isidor Hoffman, 10 April 1967, Box 2, "Internal Correspondence, 1955–1970," JPF.

elected officials that it was in the national interest to call for a negotiated peace.²³ The religious community had to “*speak and act corporately*,” wrote Brown, for “in the face of evil, corporate silence . . . becomes complicity with evil.” “To speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam,” wrote Heschel, “is blasphemous.”²⁴ The book sold well its first year, but it appealed largely to those who were already opposed to the war.²⁵

Despite CALCAV's emphasis on moderation, several committee members were frustrated by their inability to influence the government through moral suasion, and they began to consider civil disobedience.²⁶ “I do not think any man ever has the right to break the law,” Coffin reflected, “but I do think that upon occasion every man has the duty to do so.”²⁷ Brown admitted that he had hoped that the “voice of the perturbed middle” would have an effect on the nation's policymakers. “But now I fear that whispers or even agonized speeches may be too little and too late.”²⁸ He vowed to assist those opposing the draft as much as possible, no longer willing that they should sacrifice themselves for the “deliberate folly of our national leaders.”²⁹

Calls to resist the draft became widespread. The AFSC counseled draft evaders at colleges, and the Brethren Action Movement organized draft resistance workshops. In October, CALCAV published a paper insisting that CO status should be granted to those who refused to participate in a specific war; the following year, it called for amnesty for draft resisters and sent members to Europe to set up liaison teams between draft evaders and American clergy. On 16 October 1967, Coffin joined clergymen and the Harvard graduate student Michael Ferber in Boston to assist in a massive turn-in of 200 draft cards. Four days later, Coffin, along with Spock, Marcus Raskin, and Mitchell Goodman, went to Washington and delivered the cards to the Justice Department. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed up at Yale, inquiring about Coffin, who was attending an antiwar demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial with 100,000 others. A simultaneous protest at the Pentagon resulted in the

²³ *National Catholic Reporter*, 20 Apr. 1967, 6; Ferber and Lynd, *Resistance*, 72–7; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 111; Brown, *Pseudonyms*, 190; Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 32; Brown, Heschel, and Novak, Introduction, *Vietnam*, 7–9.

²⁴ Robert McAfee Brown, “Appeal to the Churches and Synagogues,” emphasis in original, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Moral Outrage of Vietnam,” *Vietnam*, 63–65, 49.

²⁵ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 47.

²⁶ Robert McAfee Brown, “Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience,” *Catholic World* 206 (Oct. 1967): 9–10.

²⁷ William Sloane Coffin, Jr., “Civil Disobedience, the Draft, and the War,” *Christianity and Crisis* 28 (5 Feb. 1968): 8–11.

²⁸ Brown, *Pseudonyms*, 196–7, 199–200.

²⁹ Robert McAfee Brown, “In Conscience, I Must Break the Law,” *Look* 31 (31 Oct. 1967): 48–52.

arrests of several people, including Daniel Berrigan. He refused to pay his fine, went on a hunger strike, and finally posted bail on 27 October, the same day that his brother Philip was arrested for quite a different kind of protest at the U.S. Customs House in Baltimore.³⁰

Philip Berrigan had tired of the moderation of the local chapter of CALCAV, but picketing the homes of cabinet members did not result in the desired arrest and opportunity to speak out against the war in court. With Thomas Lewis, David Eberhardt, and Rev. James Mengel of the United Church of Christ, Berrigan carried out a more dramatic gesture: pouring blood over draft records stored at the Customs House.³¹ "We shed our blood willingly and gratefully in what we hope is a sacrificial and constructive act," their prepared statement read. "We pour it upon these files to illustrate that with them and with these offices begin the pitiful waste of American and Vietnamese blood ten thousand miles away."³² After their arrest, Eberhardt and Mengel were released on their own recognizance, but Berrigan and Lewis spent seven days in jail. The event received little coverage outside Maryland.³³

By comparison, the January 1968 federal indictments of Coffin, Spock, Ferber, Goodman, and Raskin for conspiracy to "counsel, aid, and abet" violations of the Selective Service law received widespread coverage. The defendants wanted to challenge the legality of both the draft and the war. Brown called for clergymen to join him in an interfaith service in San Francisco to coincide with the arraignment.³⁴ He and several other clergy

³⁰ Wells, *War Within*, 124; Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708–1995* (Elgin, IL, 1997), 538; Arthur Waskow and Marcus Raskin, "A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority," *New Republic* 157 (7 Oct. 1967): 34–5; *New York Times*, 26 Oct. 1967, 10; John C. Bennett to Malcolm Boyd, 16 July 1968, Box 17, Folder 1, MBP; *New York Times*, 18 Aug. 1968, 73; Michael Novak, "Alive and Well in Paris," *Commonweal* 89 (22 Nov. 1968): 276–8; Ferber and Lynd, *Resistance*, 104–8, 186–200; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 241–2, 244, 249–51; Jessica Mitford, *The Trial of Dr. Spock* (New York, 1969), 41–4, 263–7; William Sloane Coffin, Jr., "Statement before the Justice Department on October 20, 1967," reprinted in *Christianity and Crisis* 28 (5 Feb. 1968): 11; "Coffin and Man at Yale," *Newsweek* 70 (13 Nov. 1967): 67; Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement against the Vietnam War* (New York, 1978), 316, 333–9; Daniel Berrigan, *Night Flight to Hanoi: War Diary with 11 Poems* (New York, 1968), 3–14.

³¹ Charles A. Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace: The American Catholic Left, 1961–1975* (New York, 1979), 17–20; Francine du Plessix Gray, *Divine Disobedience: Profiles in Catholic Radicalism* (New York, 1970), 111–22; Philip Berrigan, "Blood, War and Witness," in *American Catholic Exodus*, ed. John O'Connor (Washington, DC, 1968), 13; DeBenedetti with Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 170.

³² P. Berrigan, "Blood, War and Witness," in O'Connor, *American Catholic Exodus*, 5–6.

³³ *New York Times*, 28 Oct. 1967, 5; Gray, *Divine Disobedience*, 112–22.

³⁴ *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1968, 1; Mitford, *Trial of Dr. Spock*, 3–5; Brown, *Pseudonyms*, 218.

also accepted draft cards and mailed them to the Selective Service. Those who shared the beliefs of the Boston Five were “also prepared to share their vulnerability.”³⁵

In January 1968, CALCAV published *In the Name of America*, a compilation of articles on the conduct of the war juxtaposed with selections from the Hague and Geneva Conventions, “Nuremberg Principles,” and army field manuals on international rules governing warfare. The editors wanted to show how many rules Americans had broken during the war in the hope that citizens would no longer remain silent and complicit in these deeds. Signatories to the introduction, including King, Bennett, Heschel, and the Episcopal bishop Paul Moore, Jr., questioned what the war would do to the nation’s soul. Occurring after the previous summer’s urban riots, these were not abstract questions. If the military did not take international law seriously when it was not to its advantage, how could the nation expect minorities to “take domestic law seriously when it works to their civilian disadvantage?”³⁶ While the book sold well enough, there is little evidence that it changed minds.³⁷ Still, opposition to the war convinced Johnson not to run for reelection. Reinvigorated by the news, King was busy planning an antipoverty campaign and becoming involved in a sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis, where he was killed on 4 April. Clergy worldwide led prayers on his behalf.³⁸ Earlier, King had joined other members of CALCAV’s executive committee in calling for a national fast during Holy Week, 8–12 April, to repent for the suffering caused by the war. After his murder, the committee announced that the focus would no longer be peace alone, but “the cleansing of our national domestic life. The sign . . . of our nation’s defilement is the brutal slaying of that American who . . . symbolized all that is hopeful in man’s struggle to retain his humanity.”³⁹

³⁵ Brown, *Pseudonyms*, 219.

³⁶ Robert McAfee Brown, Arthur Lelyveld, and John Sheerin, “Commentary by Religious Leaders on the Erosion of Moral Constraint in Vietnam,” in Seymour Melman, comp., *In the Name of America* (Annandale, NY, 1968), 1–3, 12.

³⁷ *New York Times*, 4 Feb. 1968, 1; John C. Bennett to Malcolm Boyd, 16 July 1968, 2, and Balfour Brickner to Malcolm Boyd, 15 February 1968, Box 17, Folder 1, MBP; Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 62; Malcolm Boyd, *As I Live and Breathe: Stages of an Autobiography* (New York, 1970), 182, 226; William R. MacKaye, “Clergy in the Capital,” *Christianity and Crisis* 28 (4 Mar. 1968): 36–7; *Washington Post*, 6 Feb. 1968, B1; “Silent March,” *Newsweek* 71 (19 Feb. 1968): 58.

³⁸ Herring, *Longest War*, 198–202; *New York Times*, 1 Apr. 1968, 26; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* 162–3; Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, 464; “Conversation with Martin Luther King,” *Conservative Judaism* 22 (Spring 1968): 1; *New York Times*, 5 Apr. 1968, 26; 8 Apr. 1968, 32–4.

³⁹ *New York Times*, 9 Apr. 1968, 31.

When the trial of the Boston Five began in May 1968, the judge refused to allow his courtroom to be used to debate the legality of the war and the draft. With the exception of Raskin, the jury found them guilty of conspiracy (later overturned on appeal). The defendants were regarded as heroes, and they spurred similar acts of resistance. In Philadelphia, the Episcopal priest David Gracie announced his support for COs in a rally outside Independence Hall. When a conservative group of Episcopalians called for Gracie's dismissal, the diocesan bishop Robert DeWitt announced instead that he was proud of his outspokenness.

Philip Berrigan, Thomas Lewis, Daniel Berrigan, and six Catholic missionaries seized almost 400 draft files at Catonsville, Maryland, and set them on fire using homemade napalm, as journalists and FBI agents watched. The Catonsville Nine's actions created copycats and concern. Midwestern Catholics napalmed more than 1,000 draft files, earning themselves the sobriquet "the Milwaukee Fourteen." The Catholic priest Andrew Greeley charged that such actions prolonged the war by giving hope to the enemy; the Jesuit Edward Duff praised them for destroying the myth of conservative Catholicism. Brown commended them for dramatizing the moral priorities of a nation that awarded medals to pilots who napalmed civilians but imprisoned those who napalmed documents. The pacifist Gordon Zahn commended them for following their consciences, but he argued that those who took part in vigils and signed petitions were not necessarily moral cowards, as the Berrigans implied. During their October trial, the judge gave them wide latitude in their testimony, and at trial's end he allowed them to recite the Lord's Prayer. All were found guilty of destruction of federal property and violation of the Selective Service Act and sentenced to two to three and a half years in prison. Released on bond, the Berrigans began discussing the possibility of going underground rather than turning themselves over to authorities by April 1970 as ordered.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Mitford, *Trial of Dr. Spock*, 89–194, 209–10; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 276, 285; *New York Times*, 1 Jan. 1968, 2; Jack Deedy, "Apologies, Good Friends": *An Interim Biography of Daniel Berrigan, S.J.* (Chicago, 1981), 81; James Forest, "Philip Berrigan: Disturber of Sleep," Robert McAfee Brown, "The Berrigans: Signs or Models?" and Gordon Zahn, "The Berrigans: Radical Activism Personified," all in William Van Etten Casey and Philip Nobile, eds., *The Berrigans* (New York, 1971), 177–8, 61–2, 99–104; Gray, *Divine Disobedience*, 125–9, 226–7; Philip Berrigan, *Prison Journals of a Priest Revolutionary* (New York, 1970), 210; D. Berrigan, *Night Flight*, xvi; *Washington Post*, 18 May 1968, 1; Philip Berrigan, "Letter from a Baltimore Jail," *Christianity and Crisis* 28 (22 July 1968): 168–70; Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace*, 35–7; Philip Nobile, "The Priest Who Stayed Out in the Cold," *New York Times Magazine*, 28 June 1978, 39; Wayne Cowan, Editorial, *Christianity and Crisis* 30 (21 Sept. 1970): 178.

Those who had counted on the 1968 presidential elections to provide a viable peace candidate were disappointed with Richard Nixon's election; although some were convinced that the war would continue despite the change of administration, others believed that a clean break with the Johnson administration provided grounds for hope. In February, National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger met with Brown, Neuhaus, Coffin, Heschel, Fernandez, Coretta Scott King, and Gerhard Elston, secretary of the National Council of Churches, assuring them that he and Nixon would do everything possible to end the war quickly. Nothing was resolved, but it was the first time since 1967 that a high-ranking official had met with CALCAV leaders. When it became apparent that the war was not going to end quickly, CALCAV reinstated the old policy of purchasing advertisements criticizing the war. Peace marches took place in New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco.⁴¹ Four draft-age men symbolically hung from crosses in front of the White House on Easter Sunday, explaining that "as long as this war continues, it is always Good Friday."⁴²

The Vietnam moratorium of 15 October 1969, made up of grassroots protests nationwide, was marked by peaceful rallies and prayer services. Demonstrations returned to Washington, D.C., the next month when more than 500,000 people took part in the national mobilization. The single most impressive event was the March Against Death. Coffin and Spock, chairing the event, joined hundreds in a two-day silent march through the capital, each person carrying a lighted candle and a placard bearing the name of someone killed in the war or a destroyed Vietnamese village. It took two days to complete. Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam was permitted to hold an antiwar service at the National Cathedral on 14 November on condition that because of their criminal records, neither Coffin nor Daniel Berrigan speak. The service ended with "We Shall Overcome," and, as Coffin recalled in his memoirs, "the more than five thousand people stood motionless, their fingers raised in the V-sign of the peace movement. The silence was awesome." He was less enthusiastic about the huge rallies at the Washington Monument, as he had begun to question their efficacy. The Fellowship of Reconciliation and CALCAV sponsored a Lenten-Passover fast and picketed the White House in early 1970; while heartfelt, it failed to move those who could end the war. Antiwar

⁴¹ Malcolm Boyd, "Steps," *Yale Daily News*, 4 Nov. 1968, Box 2, Folder 6, and Richard Fernandez to Malcolm Boyd, 1 Nov. 1968, Box 17, Folder 1, MBP; Robert L. Kuttner, "Recharging the Peace Movement," *Commonweal* 89 (28 Feb. 1969): 669–70; Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 79, 81; "How Patient Must We Be, Mr. Nixon?" *New York Times*, 30 Mar. 1969, E7; Halstead, *Out Now!* 451–2.

⁴² *Washington Post*, 7 Apr. 1969, A4.

activists were increasingly frustrated that Nixon was seen as a peacemaker for withdrawing troops yet continuing the bombing.⁴³

When the Berrigans announced they were going to become “fugitives from injustice,” many in the religious antiwar movement agreed with their analysis that extralegal means were necessary to keep attention focused on peace when higher jurisdictions supported the government. Philip did not last long in the underground. The FBI found him two weeks later, hiding in a church rectory in New York City; authorities sent him to the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Daniel surfaced periodically to give sermons and interviews, enjoying every moment of what he termed “guerrilla theater.” Not everyone was so enamored of his actions. Activists cancelled a raid on a draft board when Berrigan visited them unannounced, the FBI in his wake. Nonetheless, his escapades gave the struggling antiwar movement some much-needed cheer in the dark days of April and May. When Nixon announced that U.S. troops had invaded Cambodia, it touched off a wave of campus demonstrations nationwide, resulting in student deaths in Ohio and Mississippi. The FOR, CALCAV, and the Episcopal, Catholic, and Jewish Peace Fellowships sent Nixon telegrams calling for restraint; CALCAV sent Heschel and Neuhaus to the funeral of a Kent State student and joined other religious groups in Washington, D.C. to hear speeches calling for an end to war appropriations. Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston joined Episcopal and Methodist bishops, rabbis, and other clergy to denounce the killings and the invasion of Cambodia.⁴⁴ During his installation as bishop coadjutor of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, Paul Moore sadly noted, “Young people in uniform have killed other young people who could well be their brothers or their sisters. . . . We older people do not fully understand what is happening around us. I am sure our President does not fully understand.”⁴⁵

⁴³ James W. Gibson, *The Perfect War* (Boston, 1986), 400, 408; Sidney Lens, *Unrepentant Radical: An American Activist's Account of Five Turbulent Decades* (Boston, 1980), 348–54; Halstead, *Out Now!* 473, 488–90, 509–12; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* 257–8, 282–3, 288–9, 298; “October 15: A Day to Remember,” *Newsweek* 75 (27 Oct. 1969): 34; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 297–8; John C. Bennett, “End the War Now!” *Christianity and Crisis* 29 (27 Oct. 1969): 261–3; *New York Times*, 12 Feb. 1970, 5.

⁴⁴ Daniel Berrigan, *America Is Hard to Find* (Garden City, NY, 1972), 35–6, 38, 60–6, 82; Harvey Cox, “The Bird in the Hand,” *Christianity and Crisis* 30 (21 Sept. 1970): 178–80; Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace*, 68–9, 73–4; *National Catholic Reporter*, 7 Apr. 1972, 6; P. Berrigan, *Prison Journals*, 210; “Father Dan Berrigan: The Holy Outlaw,” *Christianity and Crisis* 30 (21 Sept. 1970): 184–5, 189–93; “Has the Church Lost Its Soul?” *Newsweek* 78 (4 Oct. 1971): 188–9; *New York Times*, 1 May 1970, 1; 5 May 1970: 1; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* 334; Fellowship of Reconciliation et al. to Richard Nixon, 4 May 1970, Box 17, “Press Releases,” JPF; *Washington Post*, 27 May 1970, A15; “If You Can’t March, At Least Stand Up,” *Fellowship* 6 (Mar.–May 1970): 82.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, 10 May 1970, 57.

When Daniel Berrigan decided to visit friends on Block Island, it took little time for the FBI to catch him. Photographs of a smiling Berrigan in handcuffs flanked by dour agents prompted many to question which of the men were truly free and which were bound. The brothers' saga did not end once they were behind bars. In November 1970, the FBI director J. Edgar Hoover announced that his agency had uncovered a plot by a Catholic Left group to kidnap a highly placed White House official. While the Berrigans were named as conspirators, the trial resulted in a hung jury, and the judge ordered to be freed those who were not serving time for other crimes.⁴⁶

While CALCAV continued its antiwar work, trying to persuade the Dow Chemical Company and Honeywell to stop manufacturing weapons by picketing and confrontations at shareholders' meetings, its campaign for corporate responsibility was only part of an increasingly diverse agenda. By the early 1970s, the organization decided to tackle sexism, racism, and world poverty, and it announced that it would drop the words "About Vietnam" from its name. Coffin, Heschel, and Brown grew concerned that this dissipation of energies would divert attention from the war. With the conflict in its sixth year, Brown decided that counseling draft resisters was no longer enough, and he joined his family and other Stanford University faculty and students in early 1971 to block draft boards in the Bay Area, resulting in his arrest. Other clergy remained hopeful about the "third way" peace process. That summer, students and religious leaders, led by Moore, met with peace activists in Saigon, where they were tear-gassed at a protest march near the U.S. Embassy. When the North Vietnam Peace Committee offered to release three prisoners of war in 1972, Coffin and other activists agreed to meet them in Hanoi. The North Vietnamese turned over the three pilots to them, after which they took the obligatory tour of bomb-damaged villages. The Yale chaplain found himself depressed by both the carnage and the pilots' insistence that they change into full dress uniforms for the trip home. As with a similar episode four years earlier involving Daniel Berrigan, the historian Howard Zinn, and freed Americans, the clergy had hoped that the pilots would speak out against rather than support militarism.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ William Stringfellow, "An Authority over Death," *Christianity and Crisis* 30 (21 Sept. 1970): 178–80, 181–3; Brown, "The Berrigans: Signs or Models?" in Casey and Nobile, *Berrigans*, 62; Meconis, *With Clumsy Grace*, 81–8, 92–6; *New York Times*, 12 May 1971, 1; *Washington Post*, 23 Aug. 1971, 1; *National Catholic Reporter*, 11 Feb. 1972, 1; Philip Berrigan, *Widen the Prison Gates* (New York, 1973).

⁴⁷ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 110–20, 123, 132–52; Wells, *War Within*, 263; Robert McAfee Brown, *Creative Dislocation – The Movement of Grace* (Nashville, 1980), 33–5; Brown, *Pseudonyms*, 225–7; Paul Moore, Jr., "A Woman with a Bamboo Pole" (A Report from Saigon), 1971, unpublished manuscript, Box 40, Folder 1, MBP; Paul Moore,

With the ground war apparently winding down, many Americans preferred not to examine too closely what went on in Vietnam, including the parallels that Richard Fernandez saw in the 1971 conviction of American soldiers for the My Lai massacre. If it was illegal to kill civilians “at a distance of 30 feet,” he reasoned, “it is just as illegal for pilots to kill, injure, and refugee [*sic*] thousands of civilians at a distance of 30,000 feet!” Similar sentiments were heard the following year, when CALC invited 600 members to Kansas City to hold an “Ecumenical Witness for Peace” in which they criticized the war and called for Congress to stop funding it. After Nixon intensified the bombing in March 1972, Bennett, Brown, Novak, and the Harvard Divinity School professor Harvey Cox implied in *Christianity and Crisis* that the administration did not care whether Asians died as long as American casualties were limited. The National Federation of Roman Catholic Priests decried the bombing, and CALC took 500 people to Congress to meet with senators and representatives, and to hold a sit-in at the Capitol Rotunda until the police arrested and jailed them overnight.⁴⁸

By fall 1972, the antiwar movement focused on building support for the Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern and ending the war through the electoral process. An increasingly ill Heschel wrote to the *New York Times*: If the prophets Isaiah and Amos appeared today, “Would they not be standing amidst those who protest against the violence of the war in Vietnam . . . [and] the hypocrisy and falsehood that surround our present Administration . . . ? By word and deed, Senator McGovern is committed to the idea that ‘setting the moral tone of this nation is the most serious responsibility of the President.’ Regrettably, the same cannot be said of Mr. Nixon.”⁴⁹

The majority of Americans disagreed, and they overwhelmingly reelected Nixon.

Heschel had never completely recovered from a heart attack in 1969, and the strains of a busy life contributed to his death on 23 December

Jr., *Take a Bishop like Me* (New York, 1979), 8; Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 310–31; D. Berrigan, *Night Flight*, 22–36, 39–49, 84, 133–40; Howard Zinn, “The Prisoners: A Bit of Contemporary History,” in Stephen Halpert and Tom Murray, eds. *Witness of the Berrigans* (Garden City, NY, 1972), 77.

⁴⁸ Richard Fernandez, “The Air War in Indochina: Some Responses,” *Christian Century* 88 (1 Dec. 1971): 1404–5; “Ecumenical Witness: Withdraw Now!” *Christian Century* 89 (26 Jan. 1972): 81; David Levy, *The Debate over Vietnam* (Baltimore, 1991), 164–5; “The Bombing of America,” *Christianity and Crisis* 32 (15 May 1972): 115; *New York Times*, 17 May 1972, 20; Benjamin Spock, *Spock on Spock: A Memoir of Growing Up with the Century* (New York, 1989), 191; Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 155.

⁴⁹ Abraham Joshua Heschel to the Editors, *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1972, 40.

1972. Mourned by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, he had served as a linchpin to the moderate religious wings of the civil rights and antiwar movements, counting among his close friends King, Coffin, Brown, and Daniel Berrigan.⁵⁰

Heschel lived long enough to see the single most destructive phase of the war. Frustrated with Hanoi's unwillingness to make concessions, Nixon ordered massive bombing campaigns against North Vietnam. At least 2,200 people died. Religious leaders from Catholic, Mennonite, and Methodist churches criticized Nixon in a joint pastoral letter, called for an end to the bombing, and invited other denominations to a protest rally on 3–4 January 1973.⁵¹ Speakers at the National Religious Convocation and Congressional Visitation for Peace in Washington, D.C., included Coffin and Philip Berrigan; thirty-five hundred people visited legislators demanding an end to the war, attended worship services, and prayed for peace. To those who argued that calls to stop funding the war would weaken Nixon's negotiating position, Coffin explained that was "exactly what we have in mind. For if peace was at hand, the President should never have allowed it to slip through our fingers."⁵²

After Hanoi accepted Nixon's terms to stop the bombing if its representatives would resume negotiations, the Paris Peace Accords were signed on 27 January 1973, providing for the withdrawal of American troops, the return of prisoners of war, and the status quo on the battlefield. Peace organizations faced a precipitous drop in membership as a result, with CALC losing about half its membership, and the Brethren Action Movement disbanding altogether. Activists such as Coffin and Brown began exploring other human rights and religious issues. When President Gerald Ford promised assistance to South Vietnam, however, CALC, FOR, FCNL, and AFSC held another antiwar rally in January 1975 – the Assembly to Save the Peace Agreement. No one could have known that this would be the last such rally. North Vietnam's spring offensive resulted in not only the complete collapse of South Vietnam, but the fall of Saigon and the unification of Communist Vietnam at the end of April.⁵³

⁵⁰ D. Berrigan, "My Friend," and Jacob Y. Teshima, "My Teacher," in *No Religion Is an Island*, 74, 66; *New York Times*, 25 Dec. 1972, 20; "Contemporary Judaism and the Christian," *America* 128 (10 Mar. 1973): 202; "Of Many Things," *America* 128 (10 Mar. 1973): 200.

⁵¹ Herring, *Longest War*, 248–9; *New York Times*, 24 Dec. 1972, 1; John M. Swomley, Jr., "Amnesty and Reconciliation," *Christian Century* 89 (27 Dec. 1972): 1322.

⁵² Quoted in Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 159.

⁵³ Herring, *Longest War*, 250–1; DeBenedetti with Chatfield, *American Ordeal*, 350, 373; Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 270–81; Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 539; Wells, *War Within*, 576.

In the end, no single segment of the antiwar movement had more influence than another in ending the war. The significance of religious protest against the conflict was its attempt, through moderate protest, to appeal to the conscience and morality of American citizens by reminding them that cherished beliefs about America's role in the world were being damaged, perhaps irrevocably. Ironically, this religious-based activism, begun during the civil rights movement and continuing through the antiwar movement, ushered in a new involvement by clergy in a broad range of issues, including gay and lesbian rights at home and human rights violations and conflicts abroad. Activism against the Vietnam War may have done more to change the outlook of the churches, synagogues, and clergy than their protests did to end the conflict itself.

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THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE AND LEGACY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, 1950–1970

SANDY DWAYNE MARTIN

This essay examines the civil rights movement and its impact on the quest for human freedom from 1950 to 1970 particularly from the perspective of religion. Few movements in American history have had as profound an impact on the nation and the world. It was a movement of freedom or liberation for African Americans as they, along with white and other nonblack allies, fought against segregation, voter disfranchisement, and poverty, as well as against violent attitudes and behavior. Yet the leaders of this movement defined it as more than simply a domestic quest for equality and empowerment for a specific racial class. It was always abundantly clear to African Americans that their journey to freedom was paving the way for others also to travel along the same road to liberation, though even African Americans were sometimes surprised, even shocked, at how their labors and those of others were embraced as guideposts and paradigms. From the beginning, spokespersons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., saw the international, even universal, meaning and implications of this grand undertaking. Civil rights participants understood the political and economic applications of their struggle. They also comprehended that this quest involved a spiritual warfare contrasting two fundamental ways of understanding Christianity, in particular, and religion, in general.

THE RARITY AND UNIQUENESS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

This struggle for equity and justice, a grand undertaking, took place as a part of the long historical march of African Americans for freedom. The historical struggle for black freedom has captured the attention of the nation and made an impact in ways that the freedom quests of few other peoples have equaled. This last statement does not signify that other movements for freedom have been less important or that African Americans have some special entitlement to freedom over others. But the African American

struggle for freedom has a uniqueness because of a number of factors. First, until recent decades no other racial or ethnic group had the numbers and/or the widespread geographical residence of African Americans. The large number of African Americans in many places in the United States often posed in the minds of whites a greater threat to their power and comfort than did groups with fewer numbers and a more restricted dispersion. Second, no other group had been as consistently, overtly, and unyieldingly excluded from the social, economic, and political body as had African Americans. The prolonged history of racial and chattel slavery reserved for African Americans, and after emancipation continued to stamp upon them, a badge of inferiority that no other American group experienced as intensely, consistently, and universally.¹

To be sure, other groups have faced strong oppression. Native Americans suffered near-extirmination, not to mention loss of land and displacements. Asian immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s confronted their share of exploitation and exclusion. Latinos, too, have faced serious barriers to full participation in the economic and political life of the nation. Yet none of these groups faced such an unrelenting and universal pattern of discrimination, caricature, and sheer violence that it occasioned and required three amendments to the Constitution to secure their physical freedom, affirm their citizenship, and secure their suffrage. The subsequent refusal of the white majority to accept the intentions of those amendments required additional national legislation to solidify in practice those constitutional prescriptions.

Patriarchy and the denial of suffrage historically rendered white women in many ways second-class citizens, a status that had concrete adverse consequences politically, economically, and socially. Yet white women, for example, did not experience organized violence either to prevent or subsequently to restrict the exercise of suffrage or employment once legally and constitutionally extended. Again, these observations are not intended to claim a history of greater suffering or to propose special honor for African Americans. Many people, including the groups enumerated previously, have suffered greatly. Yet the intense, widespread, and systematic discrimination directed at African Americans has had an essential uniqueness, making movements such as the civil rights movement a particular pivotal movement for the freedom of all people, for if those who have occupied the lowest caste in society secure their liberties, then the journey of those less disadvantaged is also made easier.

¹ For an excellent history of African Americans, see the classic text by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York, 2000).

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The civil rights movement generally entails activities during the years 1955–68, or those in a slightly expanded chronological period, when African Americans waged political and economic battles for racial equality and full inclusion in mainstream American society. Yet there has always been a civil rights movement on this continent. The quest for civil rights began when the first African was enslaved for involuntary service in the Americas. Blacks through centuries of enslavement struggled continually to be free, using methods that involved day-to-day resistance as well as overt violence, such as the destruction of weapons, the poisoning of slaveholders, and acts of physical violence. Black abolitionists joined white allies in fighting for the elimination of the system of chattel bondage.

Abolitionists generally were religious people who retained the earlier traditions of their respective religious groupings, arguing as early as the 1600s that the enslavement of humanity, even black humanity, was inconsistent with the love and justice of God. Subsequent American abolitionists asserted that slavery struck against the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution. Whatever subsequent motivations various segments of the white population had, black Christians understood the Civil War and Reconstruction eras as instances in which God was acting in human history to free black people. In that internecine conflict, blacks acted as soldiers, nurses, spies, officeholders, and in other capacities to cooperate with God in that liberating endeavor.

The subsequent demise of Reconstruction, the reign of Jim Crow segregation, and the systematic pattern of racial discrimination from the late nineteenth into the twentieth century did not eliminate the desire of blacks for full equality. Through the instrumentalities of churches, clubs, fraternities and sororities, and civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League, they “kept hope alive.” Even nationalist organizations that called for at least a partial removal of blacks from the United States and/or separation from whites, such as the Marcus Garvey movement with its Universal Negro Improvement Association and the heterodox Nation of Islam, in an ironic way affirmed by their very protests against an American society comfortable with the concept and lifestyle of white supremacy that blacks despised secondary status and racial suppression. Voices calling for and seeking to retain human dignity and respect during the 1880–1955 era emerged from blacks of various backgrounds, convictions, and temperaments: integrationists, separatists, political activists, accommodationists, Christians, non-Christians, agnostics, capitalists, socialists, southerners, northerners, westerners, rural people, urban people, scholars,

semi-educated, the illiterate, writers of poetry and prose, men, women, children, the good, the bad, and the morally indifferent.

Hence, the advent of the modern Civil Rights Movement, generally dated from the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama in 1955, was not an anomaly in terms of the historical aspirations of African Americans. Indeed, there were many features of this movement that replicated elements in previous movements for social change by blacks. The leadership of ministers and active laypersons, the religious foundation and motivation of the movement, the acceptance and even extolling of the principles of American democracy, the bravery and selflessness of leaders and followers, the moral and financial assistance of white allies, and the combination of moral and practical appeals to fellow citizens who were white – all these had been present in earlier movements for change. Even the mass involvement of the populace had appeared previously in the Garvey movement, A. Philip Randolph's intention to lead a march on Washington during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, and the bus boycott in New Orleans in 1953. Martin Luther King, Jr., was eloquent and dynamic, but so were past leaders, such as Booker T. Washington, Henry M. Turner, and Marcus Garvey. King was highly educated, but so were many other racial spokespersons, including W.E.B. DuBois.

Why, therefore, did the activities and impact of the modern crusade for equal rights prove to be more momentous than any earlier movement for social justice since the Civil War? The pervasive presence of the news media, including newspapers, radio, and the fascinating new television, played a major part in exposing the glaring brutalities of segregation and racial discrimination, particularly in its more virulent forms in the South, presenting evidence and images that could not escape the notice of sensitive-minded people throughout the nation and the world. Perhaps the words of the famed Mississippi freedom fighter Fannie Lou Hamer describe what were the feelings, historical aspirations, frustrations, disgust, and even anger of many African Americans at the time. Though the struggle for civil rights had been an ongoing effort throughout American history, Hamer may have captured the mood most succinctly for the entire civil rights period when she said in the 1960s that she was "sick and tired of being sick and tired."² In other words, perhaps there were some things in the historical moment that moved African Americans and their allies to enlist themselves in a much bolder, frontal attack on the

² For the Fannie Lou Hamer quotation, see Manning Marable et al., *Freedom on My Mind: The Columbia Documentary History of the African American Experience* (New York, 2003), 424. For a fine examination of Hamer's life, see Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Champaign, IL, 2000).

system of racial discrimination, even at the risk of their lives and property. Some whites, whether as a result of their religion, ethical standards, or commitment to American ideals of democracy and fairness, recoiled at the harsh contradictions of their values exhibited through the media of harsh suppression of a people striving for justice and equality based on those shared values and principles. Nor did the vicious attempts to maintain segregation and promote racial hatred fit comfortably with many white Americans' conception of their nation as leader of the free world in the Cold War Era.

Another element in the historical moment was a fervent religious faith among civil rights activists that segregation and bigotry were wrong and that the God of the universe sided with them in overcoming injustice and privation. The accumulation of decades of post–Civil War and post-Reconstruction atrocities – segregation, economic deprivation and exploitation, voting disfranchisement, and acts of racial terror – mixed with observations of progress and dreams of it for others including white women's suffrage attained, World War I fought to “make the world safe for democracy,” and the United States cast in the role of defender of freedom during World War II and in the ensuing Cold War, increased their sickness and tiredness with the relatively slow progress toward liberation.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., RELIGION, AND THE MOVEMENT'S CENTRAL THEMES

It is truly momentous and instructive, therefore, that the modern civil rights movement was born in Montgomery, Alabama, the original capital of the Confederacy, and principally through the instrumentalities of church people centered in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and under the leadership of a young Baptist preacher. It took some time for historians, biographers, and other students of the civil rights movement to note that it was substantially, some would say fundamentally, a religious enterprise. Clergy in Montgomery were among the principal players and clearly the prominent spokespersons of the boycott. Martin Luther King, Jr., made it very clear that he saw himself primarily as a Baptist preacher, trained for that profession, and a descendant of ministers from both paternal and maternal sides of his family. His appeals to the grass roots as well as to the societal power centers were generally laced with moral and ethical as well as political and economic analyses and justifications.³

³ There are a number of excellent biographies of King. One of the best for its focus on King's religious and cultural background and thought is Lewis V. Baldwin, *There Is a Balm in Gilead: The Cultural Roots of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Minneapolis, 1991).

One might provide various historical and sociological reasons for the prominence of the church and ministers. It is true that the church, besides the family, which was still quite intact at this time, was the strongest and most pervasive institution owned and operated by African Americans during this era. As has been pointed out numerous times, the church had become the heart of an alternative and self-affirming world for African Americans living in a society that was, legally in some places and de facto in practically every place, segregated. This black church realm afforded opportunities for blacks to participate and develop skills in politics, economics, personal status, and social interaction and to have hope. Given the independence or at least relative autonomy of the black church, it is unsurprising that its ministers would exercise freedom to be spokespersons and leaders in ways persons economically more totally or heavily dependent on white society could not. Yet two observations should be made at this point. First, even the most economically independent black minister in the South was not immune from acts of violence by bigoted forces or the opposition of a church membership wary about what the minister's involvement meant for the religious body. Second, these historical and sociological explanations for the prominence of the churches and ministers do not negate the reality of the influence of religious beliefs and values on the human freedom movement.

It would be simplistic and reductionist to consider King the sole representative of the civil rights movement. There were other significant players, of course. Yet particularly between 1955 and 1968, no other single person or organization better displayed and symbolized for America, black and white, supporters and opponents, the principles and goals of the movement than King. In considering the impact of religion on the movement, an examination of King is inescapable. Two works authored by the Baptist minister express clearly the religious thinking behind Dr. King and the predominant public face of the civil rights movement at least until the late 1960s: the book *Stride toward Freedom*, published in the 1950s, and his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which appeared in 1963.⁴ His first book, *Stride toward Freedom*, is an account of the Montgomery bus boycott, often recognized as the initial stage of the massive, direct protest approach to civil rights. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is a response to a number of white Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders in Birmingham who had called the King-led protest activities in the city inappropriate and counterproductive.

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York, 1958); King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," is reprinted in Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC, 1999), 519–35.

Considering themselves and recognized by others as supporters of racial justice, these moderate white leaders did not disagree with the goals of the movement for black freedom but asserted that the actions of King and others were ill timed. The similarities, consistencies, and complementarities of the basic ideas expressed in these two documents demonstrate the consistency of King's thought over the course of the civil rights era, some modest adjustments and incorporations here and there notwithstanding.

Already in *Stride toward Freedom* we see the major principles of the civil rights movement articulated by King and challenged by his opponents. First, the Baptist minister makes it very clear that segregation, and by extension racial supremacy in all of its manifestations, is a moral evil, a contradiction to Christianity. By the late twentieth century and certainly by the early twenty-first century, there would be a very small percentage of bold advocates of the view that racial segregation was consistent with Christianity. Yet during the 1950s and early 1960s most southern white Christians overtly and unapologetically argued that segregation not only was congruent with the faith, but, many contended, biblically mandated. While northern white Christians did not eagerly advance such views, they did not as a general rule take strong clear stands against racism based on Christian principles. Of course, the preceding is a very general description of white and black Christianity, for even during the days of slavery and segregation there were white individuals and groups who dissented from the stance of white supremacy in varying degrees. Indeed, the civil rights movement's attraction of people of various races and backgrounds to the struggle presents abundant evidence of a white Christian tradition that embraced equality and justice.

In his book, King reports that he was greatly surprised when he encountered a white minister who vigorously argued in favor of segregation on religious principles.⁵ The argument for segregation took King aback because he had apparently reasoned that even southern white ministers of the gospel understood the immorality of racism; timidity only made them reluctant to address the issue, he reasoned. Assuming that King was not exaggerating his surprise, he had apparently allowed the black church's understanding, his graduate studies with whites in northern educational institutions, and his encounters with moderate-minded whites in the Atlanta area to blind him to the religious basis of segregation expounded by most southern white Christians. The theologian James H. Cone is absolutely correct in asserting that since the days of slavery, black and white Christianity differed profoundly over the issue of racial supremacy.⁶ Generally speaking,

⁵ King, *Stride toward Freedom*, 108–31.

⁶ This central claim of Cone, borne out by historical evidence, is found in his first book, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, 1969).

white Christians defended slavery, segregation, and other aspects of white supremacy on the basis of their understanding of the faith. African Americans, however, who had experienced the harsh conditions of slavery and racism, found the teachings of Jesus very clear on the principle of universal love of humanity and, hence, an incompatibility between oppression and true Christianity. One of the most profound impacts of the civil rights movement was that white Christians began to share theoretically and theologically the black and racially progressive white understanding that in Christ there can be no defensible stance in favor of segregation, though practice and application have not always matched conviction.

By the time King wrote his book, Americans and many throughout the world understood that he believed that the Montgomery bus issue constituted a part of the larger goal of dismantling segregation and racial injustice by direct action through nonviolent means based on the principle of universal love. Hence he founded the clergy-dominated Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957 to coordinate this struggle for change.⁷ This King-led movement predicated nonviolence as a technique on the principle of love for all humanity. Unlike many who supported civil rights, King believed that nonviolence should be a way of life, not merely a tactic. Of course, on occasion he expounded on the pragmatic futility of using violence in a country where whites outnumbered blacks and most weapons resided in the hands of the former. Even in *Stride toward Freedom*, King was already making the point that the world faces a stark choice between nonviolence and nonexistence, an observation that caught the attention of many of the most pragmatic-minded living in the Cold War Era when humankind faced the constant fear of annihilation by atomic weapons.

Pragmatism notwithstanding, King adopted the Gandhian approach to combating oppression for obvious spiritual reasons. Mahatma Gandhi in his struggle with British colonialism had demonstrated the practical utility of employing nonviolent methods against one of the greatest military powers of the time, and he triumphed. The success of Gandhi's approach encouraged many African Americans because it proved that Jesus' command of love and nonviolence toward the neighbor could have practical application. In his book, King makes it clear that the method of nonviolence was inspired most immediately by Gandhi, but the principal motivation was as old as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In future years – in Birmingham, Alabama; Selma, Mississippi; and other places – men, women, children, blacks, and whites would pay dearly with their health, lives, and property,

⁷ Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA, 1987).

while upholding the principle of love and nonviolence, as they fought for the eradication of racial injustice.⁸

Onlookers and erstwhile followers of nonviolence would take strong exception to King's dogged insistence on maintaining the nonviolent course of action. The Islamic Malcolm X, who later changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and the secular Stokely Carmichael condemned King's approach as ineffectual, counterproductive to racial dignity, and contradictory to the principal of human self-defense and survival.⁹ Malcolm X was a high-ranking official in the Nation of Islam and the best known spokesperson for it with the exception of its founder, Elijah Muhammad. In the late 1950s until his death in 1965, Malcolm X provided intraracially the most sustained and persuasive argument against King's approach. During these years the Nation of Islam was clearly heterodox in its teachings regarding Islam, but it correctly captured the Islamic viewpoint of self-defense, particularly by the faithful against injustice.

Malcolm X did not see the possibility or even the desirability of whites and blacks living together in interracial harmony, for whites were by nature devilish. Malcolm X's stance, therefore, was close to the white segregationist preacher's in *Stride toward Freedom*, except that his Nation of Islam position called for racial separation, a voluntary state that served the mutual needs of both parties, as opposed to segregation, a legally imposed situation for the intention of maintaining white racial supremacy. To be sure, Malcolm X in 1964 publicly and explicitly moved away from the racist theology of the then Nation of Islam and accepted orthodox Sunni Islam. Nonetheless, he continued to espouse black nationalism, the belief that African Americans must exercise self-determination, develop and control their own institutions, and affirm their dignity, self-respect, culture, and history. Consistently with black nationalism and orthodox Islam, he continued to believe that exercising self-defense is a basic human right, and the surrender of that right runs the risk of engaging in one's own humiliation and destruction. Malcolm X, to illustrate his argument, drew attention to the actions of the "white man" who counseled nonviolence for others in their quest for freedom but did not hesitate to employ violence in protection of "his" interests.

⁸ For accounts of those who experienced the joys and trials of the civil rights movement, see John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York, 1998); and Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York, 1997).

⁹ Good sources on the thought of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael include Alex Haley, ed., *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York, 1965); Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (New York, 1996); and Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York, 1967).

Stokely Carmichael, after his break from the nonviolent tradition and adoption of black nationalism from 1966, revived and reinforced Malcolm X's position without the context of either heterodox or orthodox Islam or any religion. Part of Carmichael's rejection of nonviolence in the absolute sense was that he was determined not to "go to jail anymore." He saw no reason for blacks to continue to suffer passively in their quest for racial justice. In 1966 it was clear that nonviolence had been helpful in the passing of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts, but Carmichael, as did King, understood that the dismantling of racial injustice called for more fundamental changes in American society. Full freedom and opportunity for all people of all racial backgrounds were not simply platitudes in support of black rights; rather, blacks could not hope to enjoy full freedom unless the fundamentals of a capitalist society were changed. Achieving equality and justice transcended eradicating discrimination in public places and employment (1964 Civil Rights Law), or the guarantee of the voting franchise (1965 Voting Rights Law), or a future law against housing discrimination (1968 Fair Housing Law). Poverty must be eliminated. Funds to achieve that end would only be available with the termination of an ill-advised and immoral Vietnam War. Loving and forgiving one's neighbor were not the imperative; challenging structural injustice, a challenge that included but transcended race, was. Other spokespersons for secularist, even atheistic, black nationalism or "Black Power," such as the Black Panthers, would share the analyses of Malcolm X and Carmichael, sometimes conveying the impression that they were not only eschewing the idea of nonviolence, but making preparation for proactive, revolutionary violence in the name of justice.

The opponents' stance against King's advocacy of nonviolence could have been strengthened by the observation that the success of the movement depended ultimately on the power of the federal government to enforce, by violence if necessary, the directives and laws upholding the rights of blacks. One cannot depend on the violent force of the government and yet contend that he or she is consistently upholding the principles of nonviolence. And, once exceptions to the use of force are allowed, another person has the opening to posit additional exceptions worthy of consideration.

King, despite criticisms and some defections, maintained his commitment to nonviolence in the domestic struggle for racial and economic justice for the rest of his life. By 1967, however, the implications of that position, the critiques of his opponents, and the fact that the Vietnam War was draining badly needed resources from the War on Poverty sponsored by President Lyndon Johnson influenced the Baptist leader to the point of publicly condemning the Vietnam War. Of course, King, as others, had begun to see the war itself as an immoral conflict, even by the standards of a

just war. Reactions of dismay from allies in the civil rights movement were swift and harsh. King had arrayed himself against the foreign policy of President Johnson, whom many understandably considered the best president on issues of civil rights since Lincoln. King's actions, critics said, were ill timed and ungrateful. Whatever the wisdom or rightness of his opposition to the war, King's new stance married the quest for social justice with the peace movement. The stature and influence of the most prominent civil rights leader in the country added new vitality to the antiwar crusade, an example of how the quest for black rights positively influenced change beyond the issue of race.

In addition to King's emphasis on the morality of the freedom struggle (i.e., the incompatibility of true Christianity and racism) and on nonviolent, direct action in the struggle for human rights, his first book also highlighted his critique of both capitalism and Communism.¹⁰ King believed that both positions had strengths and weaknesses. Critiquing Marxism, King objected to a materialistic, secularist way of looking at reality that left no room for belief in God. He firmly believed that God was a personal power who could not be apprehended by using materialistic methods. Second, the Baptist leader could not accept what he understood as the ethical relativism of Marxism, which essentially posited that the ends justified the means. There had to be fixed, unalterable moral truths.

King's view of life also had no place for Marxist political totalitarianism, which placed overwhelming power in the hands of the state and vitiated the freedom of the individual person created in God's image. Yet Marxism offered crucial critiques of capitalism that could not be discarded. There was a needless and huge gulf between the wealthy and those who lived in utter poverty. Furthermore, capitalism's focus on profits easily led people to reduce their focus in life to earning money rather than developing qualities that enriched life in moral and spiritual ways. Marxism's emphasis on the class struggle positively encouraged the masses of people to develop a positive consciousness of themselves and their needs. Finally, King believed that Marxism in these critiques had succeeded in motivating the consciences of Christians to go beyond the pursuit of individual acts of charity and embrace the necessity of making collective efforts to change the structure of society to eradicate the foundations of these social ills.

The challenges for people of faith and goodwill, according to King, were the proper balancing of the strengths of both capitalism and Marxism and the rejection of their weaknesses. This strong critique of capitalism, or at least a strong insistence that capitalism without social consciousness was unacceptable, greatly influenced black and white Christians who sought

¹⁰ King, *Stride toward Freedom*, 92–5.

to reinstate a lively Social Gospel ministering to the whole person. Two prominent examples of King's impact were the continued focus of the National Council of Churches on issues of social justice and the rise of Black Theology.

The second King document for examination, his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," repeats many of the basic principles and arguments of his earlier work. Analysis of one aspect of the letter, therefore, will suffice here. Written in response to the criticisms leveled by an interdenominational and ecumenical group of leading moderate clergy in the Birmingham area, King's discussion has an interdenominational and ecumenical pattern to its presentation. The jailed Baptist leader responds to charges that the activities in Birmingham are untimely and counterproductive. Because this ecumenical group of clergymen had taken comparably strong stands in favor of racial justice, their criticisms were particularly painful to King and could not be dismissed as the reactionary attacks of bigoted enemies. King made a classic defense of the need to engage in direct action even when it broke local laws (civil disobedience), he insisted that delaying the protests would in effect assist those who wanted to delay justice permanently, and he laid out in strong terms the weakness of a moderate approach that let injustice continue.

A noteworthy feature of this letter was its defense of King's direct action approach to civil rights, and indeed the quest for civil rights itself, in a manner that was Christian, ecumenical, and humanistic. His appeal to the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible prophets for their ethical emphases and calls for social justice spoke to the Jewish tradition. With references to Paul the Apostle, King utilized a central portion of the Bible for Protestants. Employing the arguments of the Christian theologians and leaders Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, King used two thinkers especially admired in Roman Catholicism. At this point in American history the religious "establishment" consisted of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. The letter writer made no particular appeal to Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, or other religious practitioners who would become more prominent in America in the post-1960s period.

The strategic genius of King's religious defense of and calls for support for social justice is his use of some explicitly Christian language and theology that were shared by and compatible with Judaism and the nonreligious civil libertarians. Robert Bellah and subsequent scholars have discussed how U.S. presidents and others have made use of "civil religion" in public discourse about God and the special divine place of the American people in human history, a way of speaking of God that transcends any one religious tradition and is likely to be inoffensive to all nonreligious persons except the most doctrinaire agnostics, atheists, and secularists. Likewise, we can

speak of King's and other civil rights leaders' "civil social religion," offering a Christian imperative for social change, rooted quite firmly in biblical and theological history, but reflective of principles shared by religious and nonreligious people of goodwill.

JOSEPH HARRISON JACKSON AND RACIAL PLURALISM

One might compare King and Malcolm X by saying that the Baptist leader sought the interracial beloved community and an integrated society that would have justice for everyone, including African Americans. Malcolm X, even after his transition to orthodox Sunni Islam, still emphasized to a considerable degree the need for racial solidarity and some measure of racial separation. Joseph H. Jackson, a Mississippi-born Baptist minister who pastored Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, for decades and served as president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBCI), for about thirty years, argued for racial pluralism, in one sense a combination of elements of both King's integrationism and Malcolm X's separatism.¹¹

At one time Jackson and the family of King were close friends, but a difference of opinion over the methods that African Americans in general and the NBCI should use in the pursuit of civil rights and the attempt of forces allied with King to remove Jackson from the presidency of the convention resulted in a serious and permanent rupture in their relationship. Jackson, as did Malcolm X, became one of the sharpest critics of King's approach to securing civil rights. Harshly criticized in some religious and political circles, Jackson, nevertheless, advanced views shared by many in the African American community.

Jackson's approach to civil rights differed from King's in at least three significant ways. First, he disliked the emphasis on direct action and massive protests, preferring instead the use of the courts and the Congress to secure the rights already guaranteed to blacks under the Constitution as amended by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. As did King, he believed passionately in the ideals of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. More than King, he believed litigation and legislation would be efficacious without direct action in terms of mass protests, particularly when these protests involved acts of civil disobedience,

¹¹ Peter J. Paris, *Black Leaders in Conflict: Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Joseph H. Jackson, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.* (New York, 1978). Paris provides a very insightful and useful analysis of the thought of King, Malcolm X, and Jackson. See also Joseph H. Jackson, *A Story of Christian Activism: The History of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.* (Nashville, 1980); and Jackson's "National Baptist Philosophy of Civil Rights" in Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History*, 511–18.

a deliberate refusal to abide by the law. The NBCI president appeared to believe that civil disobedience would lead to anarchy and disrespect for the law. Second, like Malcolm X, Jackson was much more insistent that blacks build, preserve, and maintain racial institutions. He feared that much of the eagerness to integrate with whites at the expense of black institutions reflected a racial self-hatred in some blacks. He drew a distinction between racial preference and racial prejudice. The Baptist pastor argued that it was natural, understandable, and morally acceptable that people tend to seek out others who share common traits. Racial prejudice, on the other hand, actively excluded others and abrogated their constitutional rights. Morally and legally wrong, it should be eradicated.

As did Malcolm X, Jackson placed greater stress on black solidarity, self-help, and business productivity than King. Convinced that racial discrimination and segregation were on the road to extinction, Jackson had a huge concern for the future of American blacks after the achievement of these civil rights. Historical discrimination and solidarity to overcome that injustice had bound black people in a community of common interests and aspirations. Yet, Jackson queried, what would happen to racial unity and solidarity when the walls of segregation finally fell? For African Americans truly to make progress, they must engage in the enterprise of self-help, become producers of goods rather than mere consumers, and become property and business owners. Protest and litigation would in time knock down the walls of segregation and unequal opportunity. Yet the responsibility would reside with blacks to advance themselves in a society that would become increasingly untrammelled by racial restrictions.

In fairness to King, there is plenty of evidence in his writings that he saw the value of black ownership of property and business production. Nor did King voice a type of color blindness that denied black institutions were useful. Given his focus on tearing down the formidable and oppressive patterns of segregation and racial exclusion, King's public expressions most of the time did not voice the self-help and economic self-determination we witness in the words of Jackson or Malcolm X. Besides, King, as were his successors in the civil rights movement, was keenly aware that racial self-help and racial separation were arguments often employed by the opponents of civil rights to obviate the need for governmental actions to enforce equal opportunity or for white society to recognize the pervasive reality of racial injustice. Nonetheless, many contemporary advocates of black empowerment and social justice voiced the concern that in their quest for integration, black leaders sacrificed or at least did not work assiduously to save black institutions or institutions under some form of black autonomy. Especially in the area of education, some public schools formerly under some form of black control and having some significant degree of autonomy have

been greatly weakened, leaving the mass of black children to the mercy of nonblack teachers, principals, and school boards who are often ill equipped socially, culturally, or ideologically to deal effectively with black children's educational and personal needs.

LEGACIES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The legacies and influences of the civil rights movement on the American and global societies are many. This essay addresses three: the rise of Black Theology and other forms of liberation and progressive religious thought, the involvement of former civil rights leaders and activists in politics, and the emergence of politically conservative Christian movements.

The civil rights movement served as the most immediate historical and theological catalyst for the rise of Black Theology.¹² Black Theology, a form of liberation theology, identifies the God of Jesus as on the side of the oppressed, including blacks. At the heart of the gospel is a call for God's people to align themselves with the poor, the disadvantaged, and the disfranchised. Black Theology places primary emphasis on race and the empowerment of blacks. Yet over the years its proponents have begun to acknowledge vigorously that many nonblacks suffer as well and that all oppressed people should work together to obliterate every form of oppression, whether based on race, gender, class, economics, sexual orientation, religious preference, or any other incidentals of the human condition.

Black theologians would argue that, as with civil rights, Black Theology has always been present in black religious life, for there have always been black Christians who believed that oppression is inconsistent with the Christian faith and that the followers of Christ therefore have a divine command to strive to overthrow it. In the formal sense, Black Theology publicly appeared with the writings of James H. Cone, professor of systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Cone's writings and speeches indicate that this academic form of Black Theology constituted a combination of the thinking and contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. The emphases on racial pride, respect for black history and culture, self-determination, and a criticism and renunciation of an unconditional commitment to nonviolence all characterized the legacy of Malcolm X. Yet criticism of King's approach did not erase Cone's deep admiration for the personal sacrifices and commitment of King and an

¹² For a fine collection of writings by early black theologians, see Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979* (Maryknoll, NY, 1979). See part V, "Black Theology and Black Women," and part VI, "Black Theology and Third World Theologies," for illustration of the comments and analyses on issues of gender and non-North American liberation theologies.

acceptance of King's basic contention that the struggle for freedom from all forms of oppression is inseparable from and mandated by the gospel.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the quests of other groups for freedom and justice in the United States and other parts of the world emerged because of the influence of the civil rights movement and its child, Black Theology. People everywhere yearn for freedom and in covert and overt ways make their dreams apparent. Yet it is clear that the civil rights movement among African Americans during the 1950s and the 1960s captured the attention of people throughout the world. Civil rights leaders during this era spoke about receiving words of encouragement and support from around the world. It is common knowledge that many leaders in the effort to dismantle European colonialism in Asia and Africa were cognizant of, and on occasions in some form of dialogue with, Americans fighting racial discrimination domestically. Black theologians during the post-civil rights movement era had numerous conversations with like-minded theologians insisting that Christianity mandates that the followers of Christ stand for both the spiritual and temporal liberation of the oppressed. Sometimes the discussions were tense when Latin American liberation theologians and North American black theologians believed that the other party in the dialogue showed insufficient attention to either class or race in the formulation of his theology. On occasion, the conversations were mutually informative, as when black theologians' emphasis on race and socioeconomic-political issues as the nature of oppression met some Africans' and Asians' primary concern of seeking liberation and wholeness by means of respect for indigenous customs and the integration of past religious elements into an emerging non-Western conception of Christianity.

In the context of the United States, the civil rights movement's encounter with the women's movement and Black Theology's interaction with feminist theology have produced some painful moments for both sides. The rise of womanist theology occurred because African American women refused to choose between the struggles to overcome gender oppression, championed most prominently by white women, and liberation from racial oppression, led predominantly by black men. Confronting sexism in the formulation of Black Theology and racism in the elaboration of feminist theology, early womanist theologians, such as Jacquelyn Grant and Katie Cannon, offered a theological prescription for the liberation of the entire black community and the freedom of women of all races and classes. This public voice insisting on the inclusion of women was timely and necessary because one of the issues insufficiently addressed by King and other civil rights leaders was the liberation of women. Indeed, male black theologians had a strong legacy of gender exclusion to overcome, given the obstacles by both the integrationist and separatist camps that women had faced in the civil rights era.

Womanists, then, played a key role in reconciling and enriching both Black Theology and feminist theology. Black theologians, womanist theologians, and feminist theologians soon began to speak more forthrightly in solidarity with men and women who insisted that liberation must also include those oppressed and marginalized as a result of sexual orientation.

Without diminishing the creativity and commitment of others, it is understandable that the historical precedent of the success of the civil rights movement, reflected in the emergence of Black Theology, has helped establish paradigms and occasion a measure of receptivity for predominantly nonblack American groups seeking liberation – women, gays and lesbians, as well as other racial-ethnic-cultural groups, such as Latinos/as, Asians, Native Americans, and immigrants of various religions, races, and cultures. Just as the Fourteenth Amendment defining citizenship and guaranteeing due process of law also proved essential for the rights of non-blacks, including immigrants, so the civil rights laws passed in the 1960s secured rights for nonblacks. Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, practitioners of Vodun, and other religious groupings have witnessed a great increase in their numbers, public visibility, and, arguably, toleration and acceptance, because of principles codified and officially reaffirmed in the successes of the civil rights movement. One of those successes was helping to create the political climate for the enactment of the 1965 law eliminating the forty-year bias in immigration policy in favor of Northern and Western Europeans – light-skinned whites – and establishing a new policy that opened the doors of residence more equitably to peoples from cultural homelands populated by nonwhite and non-Christian peoples.

Another legacy of the civil rights era is the attraction of persons, black and nonblack, into public service, including politics. Public service here denotes also education. In terms of people attracted to secondary and postsecondary education, there has been since the 1960s greater openness in academia to the history, culture, and contributions of nonwhite people. The recounting of American history in ways that are more inclusive of race, ethnic, gender, social groupings, and even geography is much more pronounced in current textbooks, research endeavors, and classrooms. Prominent American leaders, including Shirley Chisholm, William Jefferson “Bill” Clinton, and Jesse Jackson, entered the world of politics, triumphing in election and/or effort, because the civil rights era promised ideals of justice and equality, not to mention the possibility that even those born with class and racial disadvantage could succeed in their political quests.

Even the turn toward politically conservative politics and theology is, paradoxically, in some measure a legacy of the civil rights era. In 1979 Jerry Falwell, at that time an Independent Baptist pastor in Virginia, founded the Moral Majority. Years earlier Falwell had insisted that the public activities

of clergy people like King were distractions from their primary task of preaching the gospel. Falwell, as with many Christians, probably envisioned politics as akin to a “necessary evil.” Society would change through the individual labors of faithful men and women, not governmental policies. Yet with the advent of legal and social changes that threatened conservative political and religious traditions, many conservatives utilized religion in attempts to reverse some trends, such as legalized abortion and elimination of mandated group prayer in public schools, and to promote others, such as a renewed emphasis on moral and heterosexual-based family values. Those on the Christian Right began to see wisdom in, and to learn from the examples of, King’s use of Christian theology in advancing political and economic issues. Indeed, the history and successes of the civil rights movement would serve as justification for the conservative argument that religion should not be compartmentalized in separation from public life; society should be remade to conform to religious ideals. Surely it was rather painful for veterans of the movement to witness fellow Christians now appealing to the same faith tradition to combat in some instances the very programs and societal goals of the movement. Yet imitation, to the extent that conservative religious groups’ actions were imitative, reflects the movement’s influence.

In conclusion, the modern civil rights movement, inclusive of King but not restricted to him, created a religious, social, and political environment that vastly influenced American society and had a global impact. Perhaps more than many of them realized, the civil rights activists were advancing religious and political principles that transcended a race of people and the nation and opened vistas of freedom beyond the vision of many.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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THE KENNEDY ELECTION: THE CHURCH-STATE QUESTION AND ITS LEGACY

GERALD P. FOGARTY, S.J.

Early in 1959, when it was becoming more obvious that Senator John F. Kennedy was a probable candidate for president, Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU) demanded that each candidate declare himself in regard to appointing an ambassador to the Holy See and on aid to parochial schools. Kennedy declared his opposition to appointing an ambassador to the Holy See on the grounds that the divisiveness resulting from such a nomination would undermine any ambassador's effectiveness at the Vatican. In regard to aid to parochial schools, he declared that he was bound to uphold the Supreme Court's prohibition of such aid. The senator went on to say, "Whatever one's religion in his private life may be, for the officeholder, nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts – including the First Amendment and the strict separation of church and state."¹ Kennedy's position drew attacks from *America*, the Jesuit weekly magazine, and *Commonweal*, the lay-edited weekly, as well as from other Catholic papers. All these journals noted that only the Catholic candidate had to explain his religious beliefs. *America*, in particular, chastised Kennedy for making "efforts to appease bigots" and for saying "nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution," and it argued that "no religious man, be he Catholic, Protestant or Jew, holds such an opinion. A man's conscience has a bearing on his public as well as his private life."² Kennedy would later nuance his position, as will be seen, when he was actually the Democratic nominee for president. His statement and his subsequent campaign occurred in the midst of a separate, but related discussion among American Catholic theologians about whether Catholics could support the American separation of church and state and advocate religious liberty. This essay will place

¹ *New York Times*, 17 Feb. 1959, 1, 19. See Gerald P. Fogarty, *Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965* (Stuttgart, 1982; Collegeville, PA, 1985), 331.

² *New York Times*, 1 Mar. 1959, 72.

Kennedy's statement within the context of the American Catholic understanding of the separation of church and state, the theological debate then going on and its resolution at Vatican II, and the influence Kennedy's position had on subsequent Catholic politicians.

From its beginning in colonial Maryland, American Catholicism had espoused the American separation of church and state, for that separation protected and guaranteed the rights of the Church. Colonial Maryland under the Catholic Calverts took a pragmatic approach to keeping Church and state separate by rejecting any religious test for holding office and by making the clergy self-supporting. The French Revolution would, however, create a new lens through which European Catholic leaders would view the proper relation between Church and state; religious liberty smacked of religious indifference and was one of the concepts condemned by Gregory XVI in 1832. This, however, did not prevent the American bishops in 1837 from publishing a pastoral letter in which they asserted that

They [our fellow citizens] and we, by our constitutional principles, are free to give this ecclesiastical supremacy to whom we please, or to refuse it to everyone, if we so think proper: but, they and we owe civil and political allegiance to the several States in which we reside, and also, to our general government. When, therefore, using our undoubted right, we acknowledge the spiritual and ecclesiastical supremacy of the chief bishop of our universal church, the Pope or bishop of Rome, we do not thereby forfeit our claim to the civil and political protection of the commonwealth: for, we do not detract from the allegiance to which the temporal governments are plainly entitled, and which we cheerfully give: nor do we acknowledge any civil or political supremacy, or power over us in any foreign potentate or power, though that potentate might be the chief pastor of our church.³

What seemed to challenge the American Catholic understanding of church-state relations, however, was in Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864. One of the condemned propositions was that "The Church should be separated from the State and the State from the Church."⁴ While the Americans were struggling to find a satisfactory way of dealing with the *Syllabus*, Bishop Félix Dupanloup of Orleans published what became the most famous interpretation of the *Syllabus* and the sections of such concern to the United States. In one passage, he drew the distinction between a "thesis," an absolute position from which there could be no deviation, and a "hypothesis," a unique use of this term in this form of reasoning to refer to the concrete

³ Hugh J. Nolan, ed., *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC, 1984), I: 90.

⁴ Denzinger-Schönmetzer, ed., *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 36th ed., no. 55 (Rome, 1976), 582.

historical situation of the relation between church and state. Hence, what the pope condemned was the absolute thesis that church and state should always be separated. What he affirmed, in Dupanloup's analysis, was that there should be harmony between church and state; this was the Catholic thesis. Pius IX thanked Dupanloup, particularly for his castigation of the radicals who had made the *Syllabus* necessary.⁵

Back in the United States, Archbishop Martin John Spalding of Baltimore drew upon Dupanloup's distinction in his own pastoral letter. He asserted that the pope "evidently intended" his words "for the standpoint of European radicals and infidels," who sought to undermine the Church but left untouched the American proposition that "civil government ... pledged itself not to interfere with religious matters, which it rightly viewed as entirely without the bounds of its competency." Spalding distributed his pastoral not only to the American hierarchy and government officials, but also to Roman officials, from whom he requested a clarification. While he never received the clarification he desired, he did receive acknowledgment of his letter, but no rebuke.⁶

More than twenty years later, Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore, just named a cardinal in Rome, felt little inhibition when he took possession of his titular Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere in declaring that the great progress of the American Church was due, "under God and the fostering vigilance of the Holy See, to the civil liberty we enjoy in our enlightened republic." In contrast to those European governments that hindered the Church's divine mission, he continued, in the United States "the civil government holds over us the aegis of its protection, without interfering with us in the legitimate exercise of our sublime mission as ministers of the Gospel of Christ."⁷ Within a few years, however, Gibbons' ideas would appear dangerous, and Dupanloup's distinction between "thesis" and "hypothesis" would be misinterpreted.

In the late nineteenth century, a number of European progressive thinkers, especially in France, looked to the American model as a possibility for the European Church. The difficulty was translating the American experience, based on the British and American common law, into a European legal tradition, based directly or indirectly on Roman law. Simply put,

⁵ Félix Dupanloup, *La convention du 15 Septembre et l'encyclique du 8 Decembre* (Paris, 1865), 126. See also Roger Aubert, "Monseigneur Dupanloup et le Syllabus," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 51 (1956): 117–20; and Marvin R. O'Connell, "Ultramontanism and Dupanloup: The Compromise of 1865," *Church History* 53 (1984): 215.

⁶ Thomas Spalding, *Martin John Spalding: American Churchman* (Washington, DC, 1973), 241–3.

⁷ John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History*, 3 vols. (Wilmington, DE, 1987), II: 462–3.

the difference between the two legal systems is that the common law, as expressed, for example, in the Declaration of Independence, recognizes “unalienable rights,” while the Roman law has the state granting rights. The European conflict over American Catholicism and its praise for the separation of church and state became known as “Americanism.” In 1895, Leo XIII issued *Longinqua Oceani*, in which he wrote that “it would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America dissevered and divorced.” He also thought that the Church would prosper yet more “if ... she enjoyed the favor of the laws.”⁸ Clearly the pope was not keen about the American arrangement, but he did not condemn it. Still the controversy over Americanism continued to rage. At the Fourth International Catholic Scientific Congress, held in Fribourg, Switzerland, Monsignor Denis O’Connell, former rector of the American College in Rome and a close friend of Gibbons’, attempted to give some clarity to the meaning of Americanism by distinguishing between “political Americanism,” the “order of ideas” in the Declaration of Independence, and “ecclesiastical Americanism,” the relationship between church and state. On this issue, he walked into a trap recently laid by theologians who misinterpreted Dupanloup’s thesis-hypothesis understanding of the *Syllabus of Errors*. The Catholic “thesis” now became that the Church should be united to the state wherever Catholics are in the majority. The “hypothesis” became the concrete historical situation tolerable as long as Catholics were attempting to realize the “thesis” of union. O’Connell used the terminology in this way, but he did argue that the American “hypothesis” worked better than the thesis. In 1898, Leo XIII entrusted an investigation of the movement to the Congregation of the Index, abolished in 1917, and the Holy Office, renamed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Although some of the officials involved in the investigation came close to condemning the American separation of church and state, Leo XIII forbade the publication of any decrees and took the question to himself. In his condemnation of Americanism, issued in January 1899, he said nothing about the separation of church and state but condemned the apparent American tendency to stress human action over grace and to water down doctrine to gain converts.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, 502.

⁹ See Fogarty, *Vatican and the American Hierarchy*, 143–89. For an analysis of the documents regarding the investigation of Americanism, see Fogarty and Sabine Schratz, “Americanism: Luther Reborn or Modernism Anticipated,” in Hubert Wolf und Judith Schepers (Hg.), *“In wilder Zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem”: 100 Jahre Modernismus und Antimodernismus in der katholischen Kirche* (Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich, 2009), 213–37.

Despite the pope's silence on the church-state issue, even some progressive theologians thought it was Catholic doctrine that there should be a union of church and state when Catholics were in the majority. In 1921, Father John A. Ryan, professor at the Catholic University of America and director of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, held this position, but he advised his Protestant readers not to worry about what might not occur for several thousand years when Catholics might constitute a majority in the United States.¹⁰ In 1928, he would return to the issue with a far more nuanced position.

The issue in 1928 was the nomination of Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York as the Democratic candidate for president, the first Catholic to run for the nation's highest office. In response to an open challenge for him to explain how his religious beliefs, as expressed in Leo XIII's encyclicals, were compatible with the Constitution, he first acknowledged he did not know what an encyclical was, and then he proceeded to enunciate his religious and civic beliefs.

I recognize no power in the institutions of my Church to interfere with the operations of the Constitution of the United States or the enforcement of the law of the land. I believe in absolute freedom of conscience for all men and in equality of all churches, all sects, and all beliefs before the law as a matter of right and not of favor. I believe in the absolute separation of Church and State and in the strict enforcement of provisions of the Constitution that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. I believe that no tribunal of any church has any power to make any decree of any force in the law of the land other than to establish the status of its own communicants within its own church.¹¹

In the context of this heated campaign, Ryan returned to explain the proper understanding of Catholic teaching of church-state relations. This time he quoted extensively from an article in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, published in 1913, by Anthony Haag, S.J., who gave the original meaning to the "thesis-hypothesis" argumentation, that is, that the Catholic thesis is that "it is not necessary for the Church to be separated from the State and the State from the Church." The "hypothesis," then, was whatever concrete historical situation provided harmony between church and state.¹² Ryan noted to Cardinal Dennis Dougherty of Philadelphia that he had cleared his interpretation with Filippo Bernardini, dean of the School of Canon

¹⁰ Francis L. Broderick, *Right Reverend New Dealer: John A. Ryan* (New York, 1963), 119–20.

¹¹ Quoted in James Hennesey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, 1981), 252.

¹² John A. Ryan, "A Catholic Reply to the Opposition," *Current History* XXVII (Mar. 1928), 782–4.

Law at the Catholic University and nephew of Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the papal secretary of state.¹³ In other words, Ryan's following Haag's article was not aberrant but was the interpretation given by the leading canonists in the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, theologians on both sides of the Atlantic and on both sides of the debate in the 1960s seemed to be ignorant of this argument.

Three decades would pass before another Catholic politician would have to explain his beliefs before the American cultural majority. But the theological issues of church-state relations and of religious liberty arose again during World War II. By 1942, a number of American theologians recognized that the new enemy confronting American Catholicism was not Protestantism, but secularism or freedom from religion. To combat that trend in society, it would be necessary to have cooperation between Catholics and non-Catholics. In September 1942, John LaFarge, S.J., known for his pioneering work in race relations, traced in *Theological Studies* the plea for Catholic cooperation with other denominations in papal documents up to Pius XII. A year later the same journal quoted Pius XII's Christmas address in 1941 calling for the "collaboration of all Christendom in the religious and moral aspects" of rebuilding society after the war and then imparting his blessing on those who were "not members of the visible body of the Catholic Church." Finally, John Courtney Murray, S.J., the editor of *Theological Studies*, reported about the Catholic-Protestant dialogue in prewar Germany on social issues and argued that such "intercredal cooperation" was necessary to counter growing materialism and secularism and to help prevent religious indifferentism.¹⁴ To provide for such cooperation, however, Murray knew that the Catholic doctrine on church-state relations would have to be clarified. Although he had the support of several leading members of the hierarchy in the United States, he also had powerful enemies, notably Monsignor Joseph C. Fenton and Father Francis Connell, C.Ss.R, both at the Catholic University of America. Fenton argued that encyclicals and apostolic letters were infallible. If Murray, therefore, argued in favor of the American separation of church and state, he was condemned by *Longinqua oceani*. If he reasoned that words of that 1895 letter did not strictly apply to the United States, then he was condemned by *Testem benevolentiae*, which ruled out such watering down of doctrine.¹⁵

Despite the opposition of some theologians, Murray did assist the legal and education departments of the Welfare Conference in preparing for the *Everson* and *McCullum* cases decided by the Supreme Court in 1947

¹³ Broderick, *Right Reverend New Dealer*, 176–7.

¹⁴ Fogarty, *Vatican*, 347.

¹⁵ Donald E. Pelotte, S.S.S., *John Courtney Murray, S.J.: Theologian in Conflict* (New York, 1976), 154–60.

and 1948, respectively. By a narrow margin, the court ruled in *Everson* that it was constitutional for local school districts to provide school bus transportation for parochial school students. Early in 1948, the newly formed Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State issued a manifesto charging that the Catholic Church exerted undue influence on the court to allow use of buses or schoolbooks for parochial school students and thus violated the separation of church and state. On 25 January 1948, John T. McNicholas, O.P., archbishop of Cincinnati and chairman of the administrative board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, issued a statement in which he declared, "No group in America is seeking union of church and state and least of all are Catholics." He flatly denied "that the Catholic bishops of the United States are seeking a union of church and state by any endeavours whatsoever, either proximate or remote." He then added, "If tomorrow Catholics constitute a majority in our country, they would not seek a union of church and state. They would then, as now, uphold the Constitution and all its Amendments, recognizing the moral obligations imposed on all Catholics to observe and defend the Constitution and its Amendments." John Tracy Ellis, professor of church history at the Catholic University of America, included McNicholas' statement in an article he published in *Harper's* on Catholic support for separation of church and state late in 1953, when the theological dispute between Murray and Ellis' colleagues at the Catholic University, Fenton and Connell, was heating up.¹⁶

Fenton and Connell, however, had powerful friends in Rome, especially Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, secretary of the Holy Office, which had charge over doctrinal matters. In March 1953, he had already spoken publicly against Murray's position, without explicitly mentioning his name. His address, however, was never published in its entirety – an American rendition left out the references to Murray's position. In addition, even prominent Vatican officials, such as Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Paul VI, said the speech was merely Ottaviani's personal opinion.¹⁷ In the meantime, Murray was subjected to increasing Roman censorship of his articles, even ones he wished merely to reprint. By summer 1955, he voluntarily ceased his investigation of the question of church-state relations.¹⁸ But he would be drawn back to the discussion during the election of 1960.

¹⁶ John Tracy Ellis, "Church and State: An American Catholic Tradition," *Harper's* 207 (Nov. 1953): 67. See also *New York Times*, 26 Jan. 1948, 17.

¹⁷ Fogarty, *Vatican*, 371–6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 380–2. On this phase of the controversy, see Joseph A. Komonchak, "'The Crisis in Church-State Relations in the U.S.A.': A Recently Discovered Text by John Courtney Murray," *Review of Politics* 61 (Fall 1999): 675–714.

In July 1958, two years before Kennedy received the Democratic nomination to the presidency, Murray wrote to Vincent McCormick, S.J., the American assistant to the Jesuit general in Rome. He enclosed the Italian translation of a new article he had written, "*Unica Status Religio*," which he wanted published in *Civiltà cattolica*, and, "since this cannot be done without prior personal approval of the Holy Father, I want that too." In his article, he argued that within the American context, Catholics could defend the First Amendment to the Constitution as "good law." What drew Murray back to discussion of the American proposition was not a theological development, but a political one. Kennedy's office had requested his assistance in the event that the senator was "forced by circumstances" to make a statement. Henry Luce, editor of *Time* and *Life* and the husband of Clare Booth Luce, the U.S. ambassador to Italy, had also sought his "advice about an article that *Life* intends to run sometime in the fall." Finally, he reported, the American bishops were trying to formulate "a united opinion" on the church-state question, and the administrative board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference had rejected a draft drawn up by Connell.¹⁹ Murray's allusion to the plans of the bishops indicates that he had the support of some prominent prelates who had encouraged his research since 1953. But, again Murray received a veto. On August 5, 1958, McCormick advised him "to be content to stay on the sidelines, unless the hierarchy forces you into play: deepen and clarify your own positions, and be ready with your solution approved, when the opportune time comes. That is not coming in the present Roman atmosphere."²⁰

The Roman atmosphere, of course, was rapidly changing. On October 8, 1958, Pius XII died. The conclave to select his successor turned to the seventy-six-year-old patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli, who took the name John XXIII. But the change in the theological atmosphere was not immediately apparent. There was, however, already a change in the political atmosphere. In 1939, President Roosevelt provoked some protests in sending Joseph P. Kennedy, the father of the senator, to represent the United States at the coronation of Pius XII. In 1958, President Eisenhower dispatched representatives to both the funeral of Pius XII and the coronation of John XXIII.²¹ Although Eisenhower, unlike Truman, had made no effort to establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican, his actions may have precipitated the questions put to Kennedy early in 1959.²²

¹⁹ Archives of Woodstock College: Murray to McCormick, Woodstock, 22 July 1958 (copy), given in Fogarty, *Vatican*, 382.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, McCormick to Murray, Rome, 5 Aug. 1958.

²¹ *New York Times*, 14, 31 Oct., 5 Nov. 1958.

²² On Truman's efforts to establish diplomatic relations, see Fogarty, *Vatican*, 321–9.

Late in 1959, Kennedy had to answer the question about the relationship between Catholic teaching and his own political views. On November 19, 1959, during their annual meeting, the American bishops issued a statement in which they said:

United States Catholics believe that the promotion of artificial birth prevention is a morally, humanly, psychologically, and politically disastrous approach to the population problem.... They will not, however, support any public assistance, either at home or abroad, to promote artificial birth prevention, abortion, or sterilization whether through direct aid or by means of international organizations.²³

Kennedy was almost immediately called for comment. He stated that long before the bishops had issued their statement, he thought it would be “the greatest psychological mistake for us to advocate the limitation of the black or brown or yellow peoples whose population is increasing no faster than in the United States.” Other nations, he continued, would have to make decisions based on their own experience. If, however, legislation or a recommendation from inside the executive branch should come before him as president, “he would approve such a law on my personal judgment as President as to what would be in the interest of the United States.” James Pike, a former Catholic and Episcopal bishop of San Francisco, however, argued that the Catholic bishops’ policy would “condemn rapidly increasing millions of people in less fortunate parts of the world to starvation, bondage, misery and despair.”²⁴

James “Scotty” Reston had what may have been one of the most balanced reactions to what would prove to be an acrimonious campaign. “Senator Kennedy,” he wrote, “is caught in a controversy he cannot control, and the Presidential campaign is involved once more in subjective and emotional considerations just at a time when the need is for objective inquiry and debate.” This might not affect the “intelligence of the election” or American policy toward countries receiving aid, “but at least it demonstrates that the Roman Catholic leaders in the United States are following their mission as they see it, regardless of the effect on the Presidential campaign.”²⁵ A short time later, John R. Connery, a prominent Jesuit moral theologian, contributed an essay to *America* that was released to the *New York Times*. He began by noting that “it should be quite obvious to the most casual observer that the Catholic candidate for Presidential nomination has been singled out and continually harassed by representatives of various Protestant sects, suspicious of the political orthodoxy of any Catholic candidate.” As might

²³ Nolan, *Pastoral Letters*, II: 222.

²⁴ *New York Times*, 28 Nov. 1959, I, 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 Nov. 1959, E10.

be expected, Connery supported the Catholic teaching against contraception and cited the abortion rate in Japan as an instance when government involved itself in reducing the birthrate. He then turned to a practical solution to the problem of the conscience of an elected Catholic official. If a Catholic president were presented with "a bill sponsoring a birth control program," the presidential veto was not "his only alternative." The Constitution, he continued, provided for the president basically to "abstain" by not returning the bill within ten days. This, he argued, would be moral. But he was concerned with a greater issue. "The conscience problem" was not peculiar to the Catholic, he wrote, and "as a matter of fact, although one can conjure up countless imaginary conflicts, there is no evidence to show that in reality the Catholic President would be faced with religious problems any more frequently than other candidates."²⁶

In the meantime, John XXIII had captured the imagination of Americans, both Catholic and Protestant, by his down-to-earth qualities and humanity. On January 25, 1959, moreover, he had called an ecumenical council. This provided the backdrop for Kennedy's campaign. But the question of religious liberty and church-state relations would dominate the discussion. Kennedy's quest for the White House drew out Murray's theological foes. In February 1960, Francis Connell at the Catholic University of America wrote to Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, the apostolic delegate to the American hierarchy, to inform him that the Episcopal bishop James Pike, a former Catholic, would soon publish a book, *A Catholic in the White House*. He suspected that it would be an expansion of his earlier article, in which "he tries to prove that most of the Catholics in the United States, and even the Bishops are opposed to the official teaching of the Church on State-Church relations." He also had reason to believe that Pike would present Cardinal Ottaviani and himself "as representatives of the Church's official teaching," so he had already alerted the cardinal. Although he did not think that any bishop would debase himself to answer Pike in a secular magazine, he firmly believed "that a clear explanation of this whole doctrine would be a very appropriate subject for our [the U.S.] Bishops' [annual] November letter, particularly since the elections will then be ended."²⁷

Connell's sending his letter to Vagnozzi rather than to the chairman of the administrative committee of the conference indicated that his theological orientation went beyond the church-state issue; he seemed to regard the apostolic delegate as superior to the bishops. In this case, however, Vagnozzi, who was conservative and sometimes intruded in the affairs of the bishops, sent a copy of the letter to Cardinal Francis Spellman of New

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1959, 33.

²⁷ Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, Connell to Vagnozzi, Washington, 17 Feb. 1960 (photocopy), in Fogarty, *Vatican*, 384.

York, the senior American cardinal. Spellman simply acknowledged the letter and added in a postscript that Pike would no longer receive free time on radio or television. For the second year in a row, the American bishops refused to be dragged into the controversy by Connell.²⁸

In the meantime, Murray had reentered the debate. Late in the spring of 1960, he published *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*. Some of the chapters were reprints of earlier articles, but others were altogether new. His point was to show how the United States could thrive as a pluralistic nation, but without denying differences, for consensus, not total agreement, was formed when “a group of men [was] locked together in argument.”²⁹ With a play on words, he called for a “conspiracy” – a “breathing together” of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and secularists, for “only by conspiring together do the many become one. *E pluribus unum*.”³⁰ He rejected the Protestant notion that the “institutional church is simply a voluntary association of like-minded men” and that “the individual conscience is the ultimate norm of religious belief.” He also repudiated the secularists’ notion that churches were mere “private associations,” not truly societies, for that designation belonged to the state alone. From these positions, Catholics had to be “dissenters,” for they held that the Church was a visible society. Murray elaborated on this theme.

Not being either a Protestant or a secularist, the Catholic rejects the religious position of Protestants with regard to the nature of the church, the meaning of faith, the absolute primacy of conscience, etc.; just as he rejects secularist views with regard to the nature of truth, freedom, and civil society as man’s last end. He rejects these positions as demonstrably erroneous in themselves. What is more to the point here, he rejects the notion that any of these sectarian theses enter into the content or implications of the First Amendment in such wise as to demand the assent of all American citizens. If this were the case the very article that bars any establishment of religion would somehow establish one.³¹

Murray’s book, appearing in the midst of the election, probably contributed to Kennedy’s election, although Murray himself may have voted against him. On December 12, 1960, after the election, Murray was on the cover of *Time* with the corresponding article a summary of his book.

As Kennedy’s campaign for the Democratic nomination picked up speed, he made it clear that, unlike in 1956, when he sought to be Adlai Stevenson’s running mate, this time he would definitively refuse the second

²⁸ Fogarty, *Vatican*, 384.

²⁹ John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York, 1960), 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 53–4.

position. Four years earlier, his chief aide, Theodore Sorensen, made a study that showed that it might be advantageous to have a Catholic on the ticket to appeal to the large Catholic vote. To reject Kennedy merely because of the possibility of his being a liability could drive Catholics to vote Republican.³² But early in January 1960, the issue of how much influence the Church had over a Catholic politician surfaced. In 1947, there had been a dinner in Philadelphia to raise funds for an interfaith chapel that was dedicated at Temple University to four chaplains, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, who gave their life vests to enlisted men when their troopship was torpedoed in 1944. Kennedy was originally scheduled to be present, but because of the sensitivity of the Philadelphia archdiocese, John Wright, then auxiliary bishop of Boston, asked Kennedy to withdraw. In this early stage of the campaign, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Poling, longtime pastor of the Grace Baptist Temple where the chapel was to be located, said that clearly “the Church did claim and exercise authority over him while he was in high office.” Kennedy explained that he withdrew when he discovered he was to be “the spokesman for the Catholic faith,” a designation he could not accept, and that the chapel would be part of a Protestant church, where, according to the Catholic regulations of the time, Catholics could not worship.³³ Two Protestant journals, *The Christian Century* and *The Lutheran*, commented that the chapel episode sounded alarms for them about how free a Catholic politician could be of the influence of his Church. *Commonweal* supported Kennedy and tried to explain that since the chapel was part of a Protestant church, Catholics could not worship in it.³⁴ It was a minor point but showed how careful Kennedy would have to be in explaining the role of the Church in his public life.

Kennedy’s principal opponent in the primaries was Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. The first battlefield was Wisconsin. Kennedy concentrated on the rural sections that previously harbored anti-Catholic sentiment; Catholics were concentrated in the urban areas.³⁵ Anti-Catholic literature first made its appearance during this campaign but made no mention of the candidates or the forthcoming election. The Humphrey campaign first disclosed the news and called for an investigation by the Postal Service to see whether any laws had been violated. Catholics or recent converts to Catholicism seem to have been the targeted recipients. The pamphlets included some perennial anti-Catholic favorites, such as Maria Monk, a supposed escaped nun in the 1830s, and the assertion that

³² *New York Times*, 3 Jan. 1960, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1960, 5. For Wright’s role, see Fogarty, *Vatican*, 356.

³⁴ *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 1960, 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1960, 54.

Catholics assassinated Lincoln.³⁶ Wisconsin also brought to the fore the extensive use of television as the campaign medium with films produced by the candidates' campaigns as well as a debate between the two, Kennedy remaining calm and reasonable and Humphrey, whose voice was failing, more the old-style stump orator, attacking his opponent on his policies – but definitely not on his religion.³⁷ Kennedy's victory in what was only a presidential preference primary on 5 April was not the "walkaway" that some had predicted, but it set the tone for the rest of the campaign – Kennedy's Catholicism would be a central issue.³⁸

If Kennedy won by only 56 percent of the popular vote in Wisconsin, where Catholics were one-third of the population, his next stop was to be even more of a challenge – West Virginia, where Catholics were only 5 percent. But here the Kennedy juggernaut and use of technology would pay off. As early as 1958, Kennedy had Louis Harris conduct a poll of West Virginia. At that time 52 percent said they favored Kennedy, but that number declined dramatically by the eve of the primary as people learned that Kennedy was a Catholic. Kennedy, however, had several advantages: a wealthy father who funded his campaign, including a private airplane, a large family of attractive and intelligent members who fanned out across the state, and an army of volunteers, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., the late president's son. Roosevelt enthusiastically stumped for Kennedy, designating him as a wounded navy hero in a state that had the largest percentage of veterans. But sometimes Roosevelt's enthusiasm went too far as he criticized Humphrey's lack of service in the war – a criticism that Kennedy immediately rejected.³⁹ Still, there was the religious issue. Kennedy decided to address it head-on. He had had his close friend, Ted Sorensen, draw up four or five questions that made Protestants hesitant to vote for a Catholic. Next, he bought television time for Sunday evening on 8 May, and he had Roosevelt become his interviewer. In his general answer to the questions, according to Theodore White's recollection, he stated:

When any man stands on the steps of the Capitol and takes the oath of office of President, he is swearing to support the separation of church and state; he puts one hand on the Bible and raises the other to God as he takes the oath. And if he breaks his oath, he is not only committing a crime against the Constitution, for which the Congress can impeach him – and should impeach him – but he is committing a sin against God.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 Mar. 1960, 20.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 Apr. 1960, 1.

³⁸ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York, 1961), 78–94.

³⁹ *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1960, 22; for Roosevelt's attack on Humphrey, see *ibid.*, 7 May 1960, 11.

⁴⁰ White, *Making of the President*, 107–8.

Kennedy's performance may have been overly dramatic and did not touch on any deep theological issues, but it served his pragmatic political purpose of winning the primary.⁴¹

Kennedy's victory in West Virginia was proof that he could win in a predominantly Protestant state. His nomination was not yet assured, since there were a number of "stop Kennedy" maneuvers, including a public statement from the former president Harry S. Truman that he would not be attending the convention and that the senator lacked the experience and had too influential a background to govern the nation, but he pointedly said nothing about Kennedy's Catholicism. Kennedy demanded and received equal television time to refute the respected former president. On 13 July, in Los Angeles, Kennedy received the nomination of the Democratic Party for the presidency. One of those who engaged in the "stop Kennedy" maneuver, Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas, conceded and offered his total support. Kennedy, in turn, named him as his running mate.⁴² Now the battle for the White House and the religious question on the national level began.

To explain his views on church and state, in fall 1960 Kennedy chose a meeting of the Houston Ministerial Association, an organization of Protestant ministers. Before going to Houston, Kennedy had an aide, Theodore Sorensen, phone John Courtney Murray to read him the speech. As Murray later recalled, "I told Sorensen at the time that it was unfair to ask me for an opinion just on hearing the speech on the phone, but he was standing by the side of a plane just about to take off for Houston."⁴³ In his speech, Kennedy stated,

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute – where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be a Catholic) how to act and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote – where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference – and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion *differs* from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

He reiterated his public stands against appointing an ambassador to the Vatican and giving "unconstitutional aid to parochial schools." He asked to be judged on wartime service and fourteen years in Congress and not "on the basis of these pamphlets and publications that we have all seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic Church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 97–114.

⁴² *New York Times*, 14 July 1960, 1; 15 July 1960, 1.

⁴³ Quoted in Pelotte, *John Courtney Murray*, 76.

centuries, and rarely relevant to any situation here – and always omitting, of course, that statement of the American bishops in 1948 which strongly endorsed church-state separation.”⁴⁴ Kennedy’s citation of what was, in fact, Archbishop McNicholas’s statement was important, for the senator’s critics insisted on declaring that the Catholic Church had never declared itself in favor of the separation of church and state.

Kennedy reminded his listeners that “I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic party’s candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic.” He further pledged that “whatever issue may come before me as President, if I should be elected – on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling, or any other subject – I will make my decision ... in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be in the national interest and without regard to outside religious pressure or dictate.” He further promised that “if the time should ever come – and I do not concede any conflict to be remotely possible – when my office would require me to either violate my conscience, or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office.” Under questioning, he made it explicit that he was referring to a conflict between his office and his conscience, but not his Church. He was convinced that he was within “the tradition of American Catholics way back all the way to Bishop John Carroll,” the first bishop in the United States.⁴⁵ Kennedy’s speech presented the view that Catholicism was a private matter, perhaps having no influence on a politician’s “conscience.” It was antithetic to Murray’s position. For the moment in 1960, however, Kennedy’s distinction held sway. He had addressed primarily political, not moral, issues, except for birth control, which was being debated among Catholics, including some bishops. The issues of diplomatic relations with the Vatican and of public aid to parochial schools elicited Catholic responses on both sides. Some Catholics thought public aid to parochial schools would lead to public control. Some bishops opposed diplomatic relations with the Vatican because it would decrease their roles as the sole contacts between the White House and the Vatican.⁴⁶ No Catholic leader, therefore, challenged his argument.

The campaign, however, drew out bigotry in various forms. A concerted campaign of the POAU, the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Churches of Christ, and the evangelical association organized the distribution of anti-Catholic literature, ranging from charges that Catholics had assassinated Lincoln to the “bogus oath,” supposedly taken by fourth degree Knights of Columbus, of which Kennedy was one. In graphic terms,

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, 13 Sept. 1960, 22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Fogarty, *Vatican*, 326

it described how knights were to wage “relentless war” on “all heretics, Protestants, and Masons,” killing them, if directed to by any agents of the pope or the general of the Jesuits. It first appeared during the election of 1912. In 1960, the oath was cited from *The Congressional Record* in 1913 with the omission of the fact that the government journal published it as an example of libelous material. The leaders of the Knights of Columbus brought suit against those who printed the oath and who refused to cease or apologize.⁴⁷ Altogether Sorensen estimated that more than 300 different anti-Catholic tracts were distributed to more than twenty million homes, not to mention mailings, and radio and television broadcasts.⁴⁸

Funding for the distribution of the literature raised the question of whether Nixon or highly ranking Republicans were behind it. Nixon added to the suspicion by saying that religion should not be an issue and that Kennedy was responsible for keeping it in the limelight. But prominent Protestant ministers were directly involved in the campaign. Billy Graham, the evangelist, openly supported Nixon. Norman Vincent Peale, senior minister at the Collegiate Marble Church in New York and popular for his message of “positive thinking,” helped organize Citizens for Religious Freedom, an anti-Kennedy organization. The group issued a manifesto against having a Catholic in the White House just before Kennedy’s Houston speech. Although Peale was not solely responsible for the manifesto, he was the most famous participant and took the brunt of the blame hurled upon the organization by liberal Protestants, such as Reinhold Niebuhr and John Bennett of Union Theological Seminary in New York. He resigned from the group shortly thereafter.⁴⁹ From inside the Church, there also arose what appeared to be an indirect criticism of Kennedy’s position. The bishops in Puerto Rico issued a pastoral letter calling for citizens not to vote for Governor Luis Munoz Marin, who supported birth control and sterilization. Kennedy decided not to address the issue, and Cardinal Spellman stated that Catholics would not sin if they disregarded the letter.⁵⁰

Despite the anti-Catholic literature and campaign, Kennedy won by 112,881 votes of almost 69 million cast. Although the South had been the locus for much of the anti-Catholicism, he won Arkansas, Alabama,

⁴⁷ *New York Times*, 1 Aug. 1960, 28; 16 Oct. 1960, 1. It had also made an appearance during the West Virginia primary; see *ibid.*, 1 May 1960, A22. For the background to the oath, see Christopher J. Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882–1982* (New York, 1982), 169–73, 392–3.

⁴⁸ Shaun A. Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (New York, 2009), 177–8.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 16 Sept. 1960, 1. See also Casey, *Catholic President*, 96–100, 146–50.

⁵⁰ Casey, *Catholic President*, 194; *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 1960, 1, 12; 24 Oct. 1960, 1.

Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas.⁵¹ The narrowness of his victory, nevertheless, indicated that anti-Catholicism was still a factor in American life.

What was the long-range effect of Kennedy's election? First of all, the presence of a Catholic in the White House may well have influenced the Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious liberty, in which John Courtney Murray would play a major role. American bishops, however, as did so many of their fellow citizens, initially confused the separation of church and state with religious liberty. The purpose of the American separation was religious liberty, but, as bishops from the United Kingdom pointed out, their nation had a union of the Anglican Church with the state but complete religious liberty. The council's declaration went beyond the American approach but did vindicate the American Catholic tradition.⁵²

For many Catholics, the election signaled the acceptance of Catholics as truly American, much as the election of Barack Obama in 2008 seemed to mean the end of the race barrier. Kennedy's place in American history was further guaranteed by his assassination in November 1963. For the next three elections, having a Catholic on the ballot seemed to be an asset. In 1964, Barry Goldwater chose Congressman William Miller, perhaps in an effort to win back the Catholics who had shifted from the Republicans to vote for a Catholic. In 1968, two Catholics, Senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, the brother of the slain president, ran in the primaries for the nomination, but the Catholic question was moot. Kennedy may well have received the nomination had he, too, not been assassinated. Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson's vice president, won the nomination and chose Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine, a Catholic, as his running mate. In 1972, George McGovern first chose Senator Thomas Eagleton, a Catholic, who had to step aside because of previous mental illness and was replaced by Sergeant Shriver, also a Catholic and the brother-in-law of John and Robert Kennedy.

The euphoria that American Catholics, including some bishops, felt at Kennedy's election left unanswered some of the questions raised by Kennedy's position on the relationships among public office, personal conscience, and Catholic teaching. Since the death of John Courtney Murray in 1967, moreover, no Catholic theologian has sought to pursue the question to the same degree. Kennedy's position in the Houston speech was sufficient if one were dealing only with political questions. But was it applicable to a moral question? In 1973, the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* declared a woman's right to abortion to be constitutional. When the

⁵¹ White, *Making of the Catholic President*, 385.

⁵² See Garty, *Vatican*, 390–9.

Democrats placed abortion rights in their party platform in 1976, many Catholics shifted to the Republican Party. In 1984, the Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale named Geraldine Ferraro, a Catholic congresswoman from Queens, as his running mate. Initially, she said that while she personally opposed abortion, she did not think she should impose her belief on others. In an interview during the campaign, she stated that Kennedy “assured the fundamentalists he would not impose his Catholic views, that he was running for President of the United States, not for a church office.” When asked what religion meant to her, she answered that her “religion is very, very private.”⁵³ She thus seemed fully to embrace Kennedy’s making religion strictly a private matter with no influence on his conscience. In her televised debate with Vice President George Bush, however, she stated, “I truly take an oath as a public official to represent all the people in my district, not only the Catholics. If there comes a time where I cannot practice my religion and do my job properly, I will resign my job.”⁵⁴ This put her more in line with Murray’s position. But by this time American Catholics and others had been treated to the spectacle of Archbishop John O’Connor of New York attacking Mario Cuomo, the governor, for his stance on abortion. Cuomo’s position was that as an elected official, he was sworn to uphold the law and was not in a position to work for a change when there was no consensus. He took exception to the archbishop’s implying that he and other bishops might ask Catholics to vote against certain candidates solely because of their position on abortion. Soon after the archbishop stated that he had no intention of telling people to vote for or against any candidate, Cuomo received an invitation to speak at the University of Notre Dame. His position would certainly not satisfy all Catholics, but it demonstrated a marked change from Kennedy’s. He spoke openly of how his Catholic faith influenced his political life. He sprinkled his speech with references to the bishops’ pastoral letters, especially “The Challenge of Peace” (1983), and papal encyclicals. The speech was published in the bishops’ official documentary service, *Origins*.⁵⁵

In retrospect, Kennedy’s position on church and state was a secularist one, perhaps the only one possible at the time, if he, a Catholic, were to be elected president. Fifty years later, however, American society is bitterly divided over the issue of abortion. Kennedy’s approach to this moral issue is inadequate. The Catholic Church still finds itself in the situation that Murray described – its concept of itself as a visible society, exercising

⁵³ *New York Times*, 14 Aug. 1984, A21. See also *ibid.*, 13 July 1984, A1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1984, B4.

⁵⁵ Ellis, *Documents*, III: 927–45.

authority over its members, is antithetical to American society and its individualism. What is still lacking is the “religious conspiracy” for which Murray called.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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“LOVE IS THE ONLY NORM”: THE NEW MORALITY AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

HEATHER RACHELLE WHITE

Richard Nixon, his reputation durably seared by the Watergate scandal, is certainly not remembered today as a paragon of presidential ethics. However, before the 1974 release of recordings that confirmed his complicity in illegal political conspiracies, Nixon had carefully cultivated a very different reputation. His campaigns for the presidency deliberately courted support from religious voters, and the endorsement of evangelist Billy Graham, who publicly commended Nixon as “a man with deep religious commitment,” symbolized and solidified Nixon’s appeal to Christian Evangelicals.¹ Graham’s support also supplied a juicy subplot to the morality play staged in American media in response to the Watergate scandal. Reporters were quick to inquire into Nixon’s apparent betrayal of the personal friendship and political support of the spiritual leader. *Time* magazine reported that Watergate “posed a dilemma for Billy Graham, who is both a stern moralist and a friend of Richard Nixon’s.” Graham, the article stated, had released a “curious apologia” for the president, which read in part, “A nation confused for years by the teaching of situational ethics now finds itself dismayed by those in Government who apparently practiced it.”² The remark avoided assigning direct blame to Nixon and identified instead a larger problem. “Situational ethics,” which Graham saw as a morally corrosive relativism, had so thoroughly permeated American culture that even the nation’s leaders were vulnerable to its influence.

Graham’s comment incensed Joseph Fletcher, the social ethicist and author of *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (1966). The book popularized a longstanding debate in Christian ethics over the place of rules in ethical

¹ Quoted in Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (New York, 2006), 454. For an analysis of Graham’s contributions to Nixon’s campaigns, see Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia, 2009).

² “Watergate Ethics,” *Time*, 10 Jan. 1974, online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,911377,00.html> (accessed 2 June 2011).

decision making, and it offered a rather different view of the “situational ethics” Graham decried.³ “What nonsense, and what hypocrisy!” Fletcher blasted in response to the implication that situation ethics gave free license to illegal conduct. The book did argue against fixed notions of right and wrong, but this was because it focused centrally on a question of method – “how to apply your idea of values to actual situational choices,” as Fletcher explained. This did not mean that those motivating values were completely relative, and Fletcher countered Graham with an alternative moral account of Watergate. The problem was not the flexibility with which Nixon and his aides implemented their values. Rather, Fletcher argued, “It was what *motivated* the Nixonites that was wrong. . . . They lied and broke the law not in order to help the nation but to help themselves.”⁴

The nationally publicized standoff between ethicist and evangelist was only one of many public battles over the meaning and value of situation ethics. The controversies began in the more subdued arena of academic publications and spilled over, through the course of the 1960s, into national newspapers and magazines. By the 1970s, situation ethics and its paired twin, the “new morality,” were household names, less a result of Fletcher’s fame than of his infamy. A decade later, diatribes against situation ethics continued to circulate. The Christian Right architect Francis Schaeffer, author of *A Christian Manifesto* (1981), cited situation ethics as the ideology driving America’s turn away from faith and values. “Law in this country has become situational law,” Schaeffer argued. “A small group of people decide arbitrarily what, from their viewpoint, is for the good of society at that precise moment and they make it law, binding the whole society by their personal arbitrary decisions.”⁵ Situation ethics, in Schaeffer’s work, took on conspiratorial meanings. He feared that an arbitrary secular humanism was being imposed by legal fiat on a majority Christian nation.

Schaeffer’s frightening picture of situational tyranny appears particularly out of place when compared to the intellectual origins of situation ethics, which emerged within postwar theological critiques of European totalitarianism. The jarring dissonance demands explanation: how did a moral framework proposed as a critique of tyranny come to embody, in popular depictions, exactly what it opposed? This essay will address this question by tracing debates over the meaning and value of the “new morality” through various arenas. The first section begins by appraising the origins of situation ethics within a postwar trend that highlighted the place

³ Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, 1966).

⁴ Joseph Fletcher, “Situation Ethics and Watergate,” *Theology Today* 31:4 (Jan. 1975): 344.

⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Wheaton, IL, 1981), 48.

of individual decision making in Christian ethics. This trend, popularized by various authors as a “new morality,” was taken up by academics, church leaders, and public health officials to address another formidable specter in American culture: the sexual revolution. It is no surprise that talk about morality gravitated quickly to talk about sex, and, one ethicist confirmed, “along this line of discourse today, one comes sooner [rather] than later to sexual intercourse.”⁶ The second section of the essay addresses religious liberals’ optimistic endeavors to utilize situation ethics as a pedagogical framework for addressing perceived changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors. Where sexual liberals saw situation ethics as a needed framework to guide youth and young adults to make healthy decisions about their bodies and relationships, critics charged that these liberals were simply leading youth down the path of sexual permissiveness. The third section of the essay examines the protests of sexual conservatives and the way in which the “new morality” came to embody their fears about the sexual revolution.

Across these arenas, debates over the new morality fueled smoldering disagreements. Following the circulation of this contested ethic connects these arenas to each other and opens up important changes in postwar American religious history. These gathered meanings illustrate a history of religious, social, and political fissures that splintered through the course of the postwar decades into more visible cultural rifts. The disagreements over the meaning and value of the new morality illuminate powerful fault lines in American religious life, the significance of which would not be apparent until a decade later, when an evangelical Christian movement began to cohere around a partisan platform of “family values.” The story of the Christian Right’s emergence is often told as a reaction against secular political movements that were at the fore in the late 1960s and early 1970s: gay rights, the feminist movement, proabortion politics, and campaigns to take prayer and other forms of religious expression out of public schools. Against an account of conflict between oppositional fringes, this essay recounts a story of more intimate tensions among competing religious constituencies that claimed space in an American mainstream.

Tracing the new morality across these arenas also highlights the overlapping and perforated boundaries between church-based and public-square discussions about morality. The over-spilling theological debates illuminate the influence of religion during an era largely portrayed as a period of religious decline. By following the traces of the debates over the new morality, this essay builds upon an observation recently made by the historian Michael Kazin. The sixties, he argues, was “a defining era in the

⁶ Paul Ramsey, “The Case of the Curious Exception” in Gene H. Outka and Paul Ramsey, eds., *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics* (New York, 1968), 101.

history of American religion.”⁷ A period perceived by contemporaries to be undergoing massive secularization was simultaneously experiencing a religious resurgence that would have a major impact on politics and public life for decades to follow. Looking at the changing meanings of the new morality illuminates this paradox.

A THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

The “new morality” was a polemical phrase from the moment it was first coined by an adamant critic. Pope Pius XII, in a 1952 encyclical, identified and named an emergent movement in theological ethics that privileged the individual conscience over universal moral laws. He roundly censured “those who are preaching the ‘new morality’” and banned such teachings from Catholic universities and seminaries.⁸ The trend that the pope denounced was hardly a consolidated movement; it was, at best, a loose configuration of thinkers who drew in various ways from existentialist thought. Historically, existentialism emerged through the work of Søren Kierkegaard and influenced a wide spectrum of European thinkers, including the agnostics Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, the Protestant theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich, and the Catholics Karl Rahner and Bernhard Häring. Existentialists – theological and secular alike – disavowed any established system of principles, yet they shared a common critique of disengaged, ostensibly universal, reason. They stressed the experiential nature of truth and highlighted the individual, situated in concrete circumstances, as a meaning-making agent.⁹

Among these thinkers, the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the most widely read by Americans interested in this trend. Bonhoeffer’s personal history as much as his writing gave him unique standing as a theologian who daringly put ethical convictions into action. Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazi government in April 1945 for complicity in a resistance movement that plotted to assassinate Adolph Hitler.

⁷ Michael Kazin, “AHR Forum: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Meanings of the 1960s” *American Historical Review* 114:4 (Oct. 2009): 985.

⁸ His Holiness Pope Pius XII, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 Apr. 1952. Quoted in Mary Faith Marshall, in “Fletcher the Matchmaker or Pragmatism Meets Utilitarianism,” Joseph F. Fletcher and Kenneth L. Vaux, *Joseph Fletcher: Memoirs of an Ex-Radical: Reminiscence and Reappraisal* (Philadelphia, 1993), 30.

⁹ Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., “The History and Literature of the New Morality,” *Pittsburg Perspective* 7:3 (Sept. 1966): 4–17. On the Protestant pedigree of both philosophical and theological existentialism, see Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left* (New York, 1998), 60–1.

Those who read his work in the aftermath of World War II saw Bonhoeffer's involvement in the resistance movement as a courageous commitment to doing what was right, even when it meant defying the law. "Principles are only tools in God's hands, soon to be thrown away as unserviceable" was an often-cited phrase from Bonhoeffer's posthumously published *Ethics* (1949), a project interrupted by his arrest and execution.¹⁰

Theologians and ethicists read and interpreted this work as they simultaneously wrestled with how to make moral sense of the atrocities committed under Hitler's Nazi regime. In this context, legalism seemed dangerously close to totalitarianism. The memory of Nazi routinization of death and torture, carried out, it was presumed, by individuals who slavishly executed orders, informed a radical suspicion of blind obedience to rules.¹¹ To say that individuals, to do right, should simply implement a formal system of right and wrong would dangerously alienate people from their own consciences. Bonhoeffer's vision of ethics offered an alternative. "We are not asking what is good in itself," he admonished. The question of the good could not be asked and answered in the abstract but "in the midst of each definite, yet unconcluded, unique and transient situation of our lives."¹² The critique of alienated standards and the embrace of ethical choices as radically individual, concrete, and experiential – "situational" or "contextual," in the terms of later authors – were guiding insights for liberal theologians and ethicists writing in the post-war decades.

This fertile conversation about contextual ethics began to attract broader attention in the 1960s, thanks first of all to the British bishop John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963).¹³ A slim paperback, written in personable and colloquial prose, *Honest to God* synthesized approaches to contextual ethics and drew attention to the conversation in Christian ethics as an emergent "new morality," a phrase impiously appropriated from Pius XII's rebuke. The book also generated debates that spilled outside the usual academic and theological circles and overflowed into newspapers, national magazines, and radio and television programs. Robinson himself wondered at the popularity. "Why, suddenly, does a particular *match* cause an explosion?" he queried in a retrospective on his book. "What is there about the tinder that accounts for the flash-point?"¹⁴ One answer to that question

¹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York, 1955), 8. Quoted in Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, 28.

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 185.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia, 1963).

¹⁴ John A. T. Robinson, "The Debate Continues," in David Lawrence Edwards, *The Honest to God Debate: Some Reactions to the Book "Honest to God"* (Philadelphia, 1963), 233.

was the press attention, which invariably emphasized the book's most controversial aspects. *Honest to God* was previewed in the London *Observer* the week before its release. Bracingly titled "Our Image of God Must Go," the article presented the book as a soul-searching rejection of basic Christian doctrine by a prominent church official. Newspaper headlines also amplified criticism of the book: "Archbishop Attacks Bishop for His 'Image of God,'" declared one article. The archbishop of Canterbury's response to the book, however, was more even-handed than this article's headline and selected quotations led readers to expect.¹⁵ With this press attention to the book and to the subsequent criticisms, *Honest to God* rocketed onto best-seller charts amid controversy that a venerable bishop had renounced his Christian faith.¹⁶

In actuality, Robinson relocated his faith rather than renounced it. Borrowing from Bonhoeffer, Robinson espoused a "Christianity without religion," which was not an atheistic endeavor by any means, but rather an orientation away from an alienated Christian formalism.¹⁷ Robinson criticized theological language that presented Christianity in distant and "crudely spatial" terms: a heaven "up there," a hell "down there," and a God "out there."¹⁸ Drawing from the German theologian Paul Tillich, Robinson reimaged Christian ideals as imminently real. He spoke of God as "the ground of our being" encountered "in, with *and under* the conditioned relationships of this life."¹⁹ Rather than looking for "religion" in a sphere removed from the world, Robinson pressed his readers to find "the holy in the common."²⁰

As Robinson urged his readers to toss out notions of a distant God and a removed heaven, he also encouraged them to reject an "alien universal norm" of rule-based ethics. His view of Christianity located radically *in* the world demanded a moral calculus located in the "intrinsic realities of the situation itself."²¹ The teachings and actions of Jesus formed the model of an ethic based on loving response to the demands of the situation rather than on imperative legislation. No extrinsic laws were needed, Robinson insisted, for love "has a built-in moral compass, enabling it to

¹⁵ "Archbishop Attacks Bishop for His 'Image of God,'" *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 Apr. 1963, 2; "Church of England in Book Controversy," *Palm Beach Daily News* 13 Apr. 1953, 2; "Bishop's View of God Is 'Misleading'" *Age*, 2 Apr. 1963, 4. The bishop's criticism was directed at Robinson's portrayal of laypersons' views of God, which he accused Robinson of presenting in "caricature."

¹⁶ For responses to Robinson's work, see Edwards, *Honest to God Debate*.

¹⁷ Robinson, *Honest to God*, 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13–18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 112–13.

'home' intuitively upon the deepest need of the other."²² Through various examples, Robinson illustrated how love might naturally "home" upon the good. In one of these, he discussed the dilemma of a young man deciding whether or not to have "relations" with a girl. The worst advice, Robinson insisted, was to give the young man a rule: "It's a sin." One should stress, instead, the "greater demands" of love, which still chastened the young man's desires. "Chastity is the expression of charity – of caring, enough," Robinson admonished.²³ Even as Robinson threw out legalism, he did not entirely do away with the judgments that inhered in rules. Norms of pre-marital chastity, formerly located in extrinsic rules, reappear here *within* – embedded deeply inside love, in the caring self, and in the situation.

The 1966 publication of Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* sparked a second round of debate over the "new morality." A professor at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Fletcher had published and presented papers on contextual ethics since the 1950s, and his work had already generated lively debates among theologians and ethicists over the place of rules in moral decisions. Fletcher's stance on this question was radically antilegalist. Most thinkers, Robinson included, gave more stock to the values inhering within moral guidelines. The Yale University ethicist James Gustafson, for example, criticized Fletcher's stark opposition between context and rules as "misplaced." Gustafson argued that rules could be seen differently – as guiding illumination rather than absolute prescription. Thus, Gustafson argued, "it is possible for persons who appear to be contextualists actually to be very serious students of moral principles."²⁴

The clear hero of Fletcher's work, in contrast, was the brave soul who "has to push his principles aside and do the right thing."²⁵ Rules, he insisted, had no natural or given validity. Even an act that defied conventional moral principles, if committed according to love's demands, was not just morally excusable; it was "positively good."²⁶ Fletcher, in example after example, illustrated the moral courage of those who crossed the law to do the right: a mother who killed her crying baby to prevent a violent search party from detecting her and her comrades, a wife whose affair with a guard allowed her to be released from a prisoner of war (POW) camp to return to her family. These harrowing examples showed how acts often thought immoral – murder and adultery – might actually be loving deeds committed to protect the well-being of others.

²² *Ibid.*, 115.

²³ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁴ James M. Gustafson, "Context versus Principles: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," *Harvard Theological Review* 58:2 (Apr. 1965): 191.

²⁵ Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

Although Fletcher was at the far end of the spectrum of dissenting views about the value of rules in Christian ethics, both he and his interlocutors gave heavy weight to questions of method: how does an individual choose the good in a given situation? The case-based analysis, or what situationists called “casuistry,” was at the center of this theological movement. Certainly, for many thinkers, the idea of an ethic without a given content was a frightening prospect. For advocates, however, this flexibility was precisely what made the new morality useful outside the academic debates over norm and context. The new morality was taken up in a variety of initiatives geared toward providing education and empowerment for practical decision making. None of these was more controversial, or more effectively paired, than the cooperative work by ethicists and advocates of sexuality education. At a time perceived widely to be experiencing marked changes in sexual norms, the new morality was appropriated by a spectrum of educators, church leaders, public health officials, and academics as a method that usefully illuminated a path between the twin perils of licentiousness and legalism.

SEX AND THE NEW MORALITY

Americans were searching for “new standards for a new age,” declared the January 1964 *Time* issue on “Sex in the U.S.” The magazine cover boldly displayed the new frankness about sex that the feature article examined. It depicted a couple caught just after the act: a nude woman primping in a vanity mirror as her lover watched from the tangled sheets of a canopy bed. The author, Ervin Drake, declared, “The Puritan ethic, so long the dominant moral force in the U.S., is widely considered to be dying, if not already dead.”²⁷ He emphasized, however, that it was not sexual behavior that was changing; many Americans had long behaved in ways at odds with their espoused beliefs. However, in what Drake called a “second sexual revolution,” the gap was closing between what people did and how they felt about it. He quoted a Methodist bishop to underscore the key difference. “In my day they did it,” the bishop claimed, “but they knew it was wrong.”²⁸

At the time this article was published, discussions of America’s “sex revolution” were becoming commonplace. Various media outlets proclaimed this trend and presented it as a forceful challenge to conventional strictures that would limit sex to marriage. The staid Puritan, in these

²⁷ Ervin Drake, “The Second Sexual Revolution,” *Time* 83:4 (24 Jan. 1964), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,875692,00.html> (accessed 30 Oct. 2009).

²⁸ Drake, “Second Sexual Revolution.”

discussions, stood in as a symbol of bygone moral rigor.²⁹ Certainly, both Puritanism and the changes in attitudes about sex were more complicated than these accounts suggested. Closer studies have shown that shifts in the early 1960s were simply the outgrowth of earlier and ongoing trends that increasingly picked apart the cultural logic connecting sex to marriage and reproduction. Many of those trends – including access to contraception, an emphasis on sexual pleasure, and acceptance of open and frank discussions of sex – had long been championed by sexual liberals, including many religious liberals, who believed these changes would foster healthy, happy marriages.³⁰ However, by the 1960s, as the historians John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman have argued, it was becoming clear that these earlier reforms also pointed young people and adults to sexual practices outside marriage. Sexual liberals were deeply concerned about this other side to the reforms they had championed – a growing acceptance of casual sex, the commercial exploitation of women’s bodies, and a frank acceptance of sexual gratification.³¹

Situation ethics, for many religious liberals, was a moral framework that gave much-needed ethical nuance and moral responsibility to the perils represented by the sexual revolution. A published interview in *Playboy* magazine exemplified the double-edged critique these liberals drew from situation ethics. *Playboy* invited a handful of prominent liberal religious leaders to discuss their views for the forum “Religion and the New Morality.”³² Their willingness to be interviewed for an article in a pornographic magazine indicated their commitment to nonjudgmental attitudes, but their interviewer seemed eager to ferret out hidden moralism. Midway through the discussion, he pressed his clergy guests, “How do you think about sex for pleasure?” Harvey Cox, an associate professor of church and society at Harvard Divinity School, quickly responded, “Of course, sex should be fun,” but followed with a qualification: “When sex is viewed *only* as play, then the other person becomes merely the plaything.” Herbert Rogers, a Jesuit priest and a faculty member at Fordham University, echoed

²⁹ Howard Whiteman, “Crisis in Morals: ‘Sex Revolt’ Perils U.S. Way of Life,” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 May 1958, F1; Avers Ferris, “‘New Morality’ Spurns Puritanism, Cleric Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 June 1964, D6; Brace Bliven, “By 1955 Half of Us Will Be under 25,” *New York Times Magazine*, 8 Dec. 1963, 313. For further analysis of media reports on the sexual revolution, see Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

³⁰ See also Marie Griffith, “The Religious Encounters of Alfred C. Kinsey,” *Journal of American History* 95:2 (Sept. 2008): 349–77; and Rebecca L. Davis, *More Perfect Unions: The American Search for Marital Bliss* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

³¹ John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York, 1988), 300, 325.

³² “The Playboy Panel: Religion and the New Morality,” *Playboy* 14:6 (June 1967): 54–78, 148–61.

Cox's concerns and situated both legalistic and permissive views of sex as simply two faces of an underlying Puritanism. Rogers argued, "One sort [of Puritanism] would have sex only for the purposes of duty. . . . The other sort of puritanism [*sic*] would limit the sexual to the merely pleasurable."³³ *Playboy's* endorsement of casual sex, in this assessment, was simply the flip side of Puritan prudery. Sex, in both cases, was stripped down to mere object: duty or game.³⁴

Against these reductive notions, the clergy participants in the *Playboy* forum argued that people, not things, should be the focus of sexual decision making. The United Church of Christ minister Howard Moody argued, "The most valid guidelines concerning the sexual expression of love are related to human beings and their worth, their preciousness as people." The focus on individual worth and well-being drew ethical scrutiny to the sexual relationships of married as well as unmarried couples, and one minister cautioned, "There are many people who are married and who have very invalid sexual expressions."³⁵ Selfless caring, rather than formal wedlock, made sex valid. The people-focused framework, for the clergy participants, countered legalistic moral formulas that limited sex to marriage, and it criticized the exploitation they felt was inherent to casual sex.

This path between legalism and licentiousness was precarious, and situationists were often frustrated by the ways in which outsiders presented their careful critique as simply another face to sexual permissiveness. Robert Fitch, in an article published in *Redbook*, argued that new morality advocates were "lost in an orgy of open-mindedness."³⁶ Boundaries against nonmarital sex should be established with a firm "no" and maintained by a prudent distance. Adults, and clergy in particular, were responsible for setting those boundaries. To Fitch, the critique of legalism looked like wholesale abandonment of morality. He charged, "The only thing new about the situation is the attitude of futility among those who should be the guardians of morality."³⁷ Nor was it only sexual conservatives who confused the new morality with permissiveness. The United Church of Christ minister William Genné, in an article about sexual ethics, criticized "secular hedonists" who appropriated the new morality to mean a free love frenzy of "sex is fun, fun, fun!" Genné emphasized that situation ethics "as originally intended" offered "a very rigorous, though not rigid, theological

³³ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁴ See also Mark Hulsether, "'Priestesses,' Playboy, and the Prehistory of Feminist Scholarship in Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1945–1965," *Religion* 28:4 (Oct. 1998): 351–62.

³⁵ "Playboy Panel," 70.

³⁶ Robert E. Fitch, "The New Protestant Debate over Sex," *Redbook*, Oct. 1964, 87.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

position.”³⁸ As religious liberals saw it, situation ethics supplied a complexity and rigor that were missing from the flattened ethical systems of both conservative “legalists” and secular “hedonists.”

These discussions about sex and the new morality had immediate relevance for a spectrum of pastors, educators, and medical professionals concerned with addressing sex and ethical decision making in more concrete ways. These advocates spearheaded two reform initiatives that reconsidered instructional approaches for communicating sexual values. The first was a nonsectarian public health initiative directed at providing more comprehensive resources for sexuality education. The second was a loosely configured effort in mainline Protestant churches to open up denomination-wide reappraisal of conventional Christian teachings about sex, marriage, and family. The reformers galvanizing these initiatives drew formatively from the theological and ethical discussions about situation ethics. Situation ethics, with its emphasis on case-based analysis and individual decision making, seemed to offer a unique resource to address the moral chaos represented by the sexual revolution.

Both reform efforts were sparked by the same event. The North American Conference on Marriage and Family Life was a week-long conference held in spring 1961 in Green Lakes, Wisconsin. Cosponsored by the National Council of Churches in the United States and the Canadian Council of Churches, the conference gathered liberal Christians and leading medical researchers to address “contemporary confusions in sex, love, marriage, and family life.” The conference facilitated collaboration between religious and scientific leaders in hope that “the twin beams of the Christian spirit and the best that science has to offer” might illuminate pressing problems of sex and family life.³⁹

The conference encouraged a clear-eyed “faith faces the facts” approach to issues that unsettled the conventional Christian marriage and family ideals. Conference organizers were chiefly concerned with churches’ inattention to these controversial issues, which included divorce, homosexuality, premartial sex, infertility, and abortion.⁴⁰ Conference presenters, true to organizers’ aspirations to represent “the best that science has to offer,” included cutting-edge researchers. The psychiatrist Evelyn Hooker was one of a handful of scientists whose work challenged the dominant medical assumption that homosexuality was a mental illness; Alan F. Guttmacher, an obstetrician/gynecologist, was at the forefront of abortion rights advocacy; and Wardell

³⁸ William H. Genné, “The Churches and Sexuality,” *SIECUS Newsletter* 2:3 (Fall 1966): 1.

³⁹ Evelyn Mills Duvall, “Facing Facts and Issues,” in Evelyn Mills Duvall and Sylvanus Milne Duvall, eds., *Sex Ways – In Fact and Faith* (New York, 1961), 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

B. Pomeroy, one of the research collaborators for the famous Kinsey studies on male and female sexual behavior, presented research on masturbation.⁴¹ Conference organizers deliberately selected speakers who would address issues that, they felt, received little attention from church leaders. The conference opened with an address by Charles Wynn, an ordained minister and a professor at Colgate Divinity School, who pressed the assembled audience of church leaders to attend to the “hard issues” around sexuality and family life. “Our people,” he argued, “are looking to the church for guidance in such matters. They have every right to expect it.”⁴²

Conference organizers, as this comment indicated, focused on the perceived needs of churches and pastors. Within the next few years, in the mid to late 1960s, liberal denominational leaders did, indeed, take up the challenge to create denominational resources that addressed sexuality in ways that leaders considered more comprehensive and less moralistic. In addition to the growing numbers of books and articles on the topic, a series of denominational publications, drafted by church-appointed committees, took up the charge to address the hard issues. This literature addressed sex within marriage with a new directness and, unlike earlier statements, frankly weighed the ethics of nonmarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, and in vitro fertilization.⁴³

The authors, knowing the controversy that might be stirred if they were to trumpet their use of situation ethics, presented a more moderate case-based ethical framework. Even in this moderated form, however, situation ethics left a distinct imprint. The language of one Lutheran document presented a case-based method for determining “the good.” “The conception of ‘the good’ differs from every other conception at this point; namely, it cannot be defined in terms of principle at all. What is ‘good,’ therefore, can never be abstractly determined in advance of the concrete situation.”⁴⁴

This reappraisal of sexual ethics, acknowledged the Presbyterian authors of another document, frequently challenged the “conventional morality of the church.” They spoke of this rethinking as a purifying method, which challenged unchristian “taboos and prohibitions” and restored a decision-making process founded upon “careful ethical reflection in light of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² John Charles Wynn, “What Churches Say Today,” in *ibid.*, 63–4.

⁴³ For a history of these reports, see Heather R. White, “Revising Sex, Defining Sin: Homosexuality in the Mainline Denominational Statements, 1966–1972,” in “Homosexuality, Gay Communities and American Churches: A History of a Changing Religious Ethic, 1946–1977” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2007), 89–119.

⁴⁴ Cedric W. Tilberg, ed., “Sex, Marriage and Family: A Contemporary Christian Perspective” (Commission on Marriage, Board of Social Ministry, Lutheran Church in America, New York, 1970), 52.

gospel.”⁴⁵ Contextual methods also permitted a tactical coyness on the part of the authors. These documents were not formal statements and did not commit church leaders to particular ethical stances on a spectrum of controversial questions. Rather, they were presented as nonauthoritative catalysts for dialogue and debate among the churches’ broader membership.

The denominational publications on sexuality were not the only fruit of the Green Lakes conference. In addition to motivating church-based initiatives, the conference inspired a nonsectarian project that focused on public health. In May 1964, the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) was formally founded with Mary S. Calderone, a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and former director of Planned Parenthood, as the organization’s leader.⁴⁶ Calderone and most of the organization’s board members had met at the Green Lakes conference, where they had decided “the time was right” to develop an organization devoted to promoting sexuality education. The organization, though officially nonsectarian, emphasized collaboration among religious and scientific leaders in keeping with the spirit of the Green Lakes conference.⁴⁷

SIECUS board members, like the religious liberals involved in church-based reform, were centrally concerned with intervening in Americans’ values and decision making. Isadore Rubin, a sexologist and SIECUS cofounder, underscored the way education and information addressed a broader social unrest around sexuality. “We are experiencing an interregnum in sex,” Rubin argued, and he underscored the need for educational interventions in the midst of the chaotic transition in values. Adults could no longer assume that dominant social norms would guide youth and young adults to make good decisions about sex. Without the exterior guide, it was imperative that youth develop their own moral commitments to guide their choices. To this end, Rubin urged sexuality educators to provide a “value neutral” curriculum that would give students the skills to discover and implement their own values in a pluralistic context.⁴⁸ Frank talk about sex and an open forum for discussion were crucial ways to equip students with decision-making skills.

⁴⁵ “Sexuality and the Human Community,” included in *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, part I (Philadelphia, 1970), 892.

⁴⁶ Lester A. Kirkendall, “Sex Education in the United States: A Historical Perspective,” in *Sex Education in the Eighties: The Challenge of Healthy Sexual Evolution*, ed. Lorna Brown (New York, 1981), 1–17.

⁴⁷ Wallace C. Fulton, “Why the Need for a Sex Information and Education Council of the United States,” *SIECUS Newsletter* 1:1 (Feb. 1965): 1.

⁴⁸ Isadore Rubin, “Transition in Sex Values – Implications for Adolescents,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 27:2 (May 1965), 185.

Both the denominational literature and the SIECUS initiatives took up a moral stance that was deliberately dialogic and nonjudgmental. This did not mean, however, that these reformers had completely done away with sexual norms. Commitments to heterosexual monogamy and, ultimately, to marriage still structured the assumptions of both religious and nonreligious sexuality education advocates. Given free and informed choices, many educators believed, students would be empowered to make sexual decisions free of guilt-inducing dogmatism, bad information, and base gratification. Sexuality education was not intended to press men and women into a rigid mold of right and wrong, but to free them to act upon their sexual natures. That freedom, many sex education advocates assumed, would guide young men and women to a relationship that would follow naturally: heterosexual monogamy and marriage.

Advocates in both arenas were just as optimistic about the possibilities for institutional reform. The initiatives of religious liberals and public health officials, to their surprise, quickly ran up against adamant opposition. A spectrum of conservative groups rallied to oppose the sexual permissiveness they saw as destructive to traditional morality and the fragile institutions of marriage and family that it protected. The new morality, in the appraisal of these opponents, confirmed that religious liberals had betrayed their faith.

MOBILIZING MORAL ABSOLUTES

Janet Brunger's mouth opened in a gasp when she read the headline, "Religious Storm Center: New Sex Code." The article, which was published in a nationally syndicated addition to local Sunday newspapers on 17 May 1970, informed readers that the United Presbyterian Church – Brunger's own denomination – had "proposed a new sex code" and one "so liberal that it practically eliminates sin as a major factor in sexual relations." This "sex code" encouraged (or so the article claimed) radical changes to most Presbyterians' ideas about sexual morality: it urged that birth control be available for both married and unmarried partners, it advocated striking laws outlawing abortion, and it encouraged removing religious stigma against homosexuality. Brunger considered herself a liberal, and she supported many of the progressive social changes her denomination advocated. Nonetheless, she decisively appraised this proposed "sex code" as "a mis-sile of tripe," and quickly dispatched a letter to the Presbyterian General Assembly to protest "the relaxing of the moral fiber of all Christians."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Will Oursler, "Religious Storm Center: New Sex Code," *Parade Magazine*, 17 May 1970; Janet M. Brunger to Presbyterian General Assembly, n.d., Presbyterian Historical

The executive office of the Presbyterian Church received a storm of similar letters responding to the same news article. The article sparked protests that carried into the denomination's General Assembly meeting, where opposing delegates refused to approve the report unless an amendment were added that reaffirmed that the Presbyterian Church adhered to "the moral law of God as revealed in the Old and New Testament, that adultery, prostitution, fornication, and/or the practice of homosexuality is sin."⁵⁰ Other Protestant denominations faced similar battles. The Lutheran study document "Sex, Marriage and Family" (1970) and a proposed section addressing human sexuality in the United Methodist's "Social Principles" (1972) received the same fate: they were revised and amended on the floor of denominational assemblies by opposing delegates concerned that the proposed document undermined moral absolutes.⁵¹

Beyond these legislative battles, the documents continued to be discussed and decried by members of theologically conservative renewal movements across mainline Protestant denominations. In the months following the Presbyterian assembly, the debate over the Sexuality and the Human Community Report was the focus of the recently formed conservative newspaper, *The Presbyterian Layman*. A series of angry editorials castigated the denominational leadership and circulated a call for action.

Laymen are prepared to wait while those who rationalize immorality as an acceptable church-approved "way of life" decide whether to obey the plain word of God or to honorably vacate their offices. The *facts* are available for all to know. Now we may well stand or fall as a church on whether we cater to the vagaries of those who have jettisoned God's moral code, or take appropriate action against them."⁵²

This and similar articles in *The Presbyterian Layman* presented the debate over "Sexuality and the Human Community" as an issue that should (and did) stir up the churches' godly laity against a bankrupt denominational bureaucracy.

As Christians committed to moral absolutes prepared for a theological struggle over the souls of Protestant churches, other conservative Christians galvanized to protect the innocence of schoolchildren. In the late 1960s

Society. Papers of the Office of the General Assembly, Office of the Stated Clerk Records, 1967–73, box 8, file 26–12–1.

⁵⁰ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA*, part I (Philadelphia, Aug. 1970), 469.

⁵¹ Victor Paul Furnish, "The United Methodist Experience," in John J. Carey, *The Sexuality Debate in North American Churches, 1988–1995* (Lewiston, UK, 1995), 171–2; Lutheran Church in America, "Sex, Marriage and the Family" (New York, 1970), 3.

⁵² "Can the Church Rationalize Immorality and Survive?" *Presbyterian Layman* 3:7 (July/Aug. 1970): 8.

and early 1970s, a number of local school boards faced acrimonious disputes over the content of school sexuality education curricula. Many of these programs had no formal link to SEICUS, but the organization was dragged into the local battles by opposing groups that painted Calderone and the organization she led as the unholy mastermind behind all sex education programs. Beginning in 1968, Calderone and other SIECUS coordinators began reporting increasing opposition to local sexuality education programs. Two organizations were largely responsible for stirring up local sex education battles, the nominally secular John Birch Society and the Christian Crusade, an Oklahoma-based right-wing organization spearheaded by the Fundamentalist minister Billy James Hargis. These opponents' prime weapon was an inflammatory book titled *Is the School House the Proper Place to Teach Raw Sex?*, which railed against the "rawness" of sex education and targeted SIECUS as the primary proponent of an amoral "newsex" that corrupted children and undermined parents.⁵³

SIECUS officials moved quickly to defend the organization against the charge that its programs were immoral and anti-Christian. Luther Baker, a SIECUS board member, heatedly responded:

IT IS NOT TRUE [*sic*] that sex education is anti-Christian.... If certain religious attitudes about sex have been detrimental to openness and honesty in human sexual relationships, then non-religious and religious alike have attacked them as basically un-Christian. Those who do not understand the dynamic nature of Christianity regard this as a threat to the fundamentals of the faith.⁵⁴

Opponents' attacks on SIECUS conflated the new morality with a godless "newsex," and Baker countered, "The 'new morality' of 'situation ethics' is misinterpreted to mean a doing-what-is-right-in-one's-own-eyes.... The thrust of the present thinking about morality is not toward anarchy but toward social responsibility." Baker asserted that situation ethics, rather than fostering a willy-nilly permissiveness, upheld rigor and responsibility. Youth and young adults were charged with making "natural and responsible decisions," a task, Baker implied, that demanded more character and maturity than did merely following rules.⁵⁵

The debates over moral values cut across denominational and public square arenas and galvanized constituencies committed to divergent views

⁵³ See also Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); and Gillian Frank, "Save Our Children: The Sexual Politics of Child Protection in the United States, 1965–1990" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2009).

⁵⁴ Luther G. Baker, "The Rising Furor over Sex Education," *Family Coordinator* 18:3 (July 1969): 211.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

of sexual morality. Both sides of this debate over moral values, as Baker's comments illustrate, claimed Christian commitments, and both positioned themselves as interveners in a sexually permissive culture. This shared stance, however, appeared markedly different in their views about what should be taught about sexuality and, perhaps even more importantly, *how* this material should be taught.

Both sides, ironically, were also committed to supporting marriages and families, social structures they both viewed as foundational to a stable and functioning society. Both sides also appealed to theological certainties as evidence for the Christian and moral stature of their claims. The debates in both arenas were hamstrung between partisans who believed that individuals, to choose the good, must be empowered by an atmosphere of moral freedom and those who just as firmly felt that moral freedom gave individuals license to choose badly. More than a debate over whether morality were subjective or objective, opposing sides imagined human agency in vastly different ways. Sex education advocates were confident that a nonlegalistic framework equipped youth and young adults to make healthy sexual decisions. Their opponents were just as sure that it gave them license to sin.

CONCLUSION

Religious liberals defended tricky terrain in the battles over sex and morality, and they were often frustrated by critics or journalists who associated situation ethics – or, more likely, the much-contested “new morality” – with simple permissiveness. At times, these misunderstandings gave advocates reason to reconsider terms. Bishop John A. T. Robinson was ready to cease use of the term “new morality” after it was used to describe the Profumo affair – a political scandal involving a high-ranking British official and a call girl suspected of being a Communist spy. Barely a year after his book unfurled the “new morality,” Robinson complained that it had been “mixed with so much mud, a moratorium is in effect.”⁵⁶

The muddiness of situation ethics, however, is precisely what makes it useful for tracing emerging tensions around moral values in American public life. For advocates, situation ethics provided what they called a new morality – an ethical method that promised genuine moral choice, something they felt was lacking in both the residual commandments of right and wrong and the permissiveness of the sexual revolution. This nuanced attempt to carve a new path between legalism and licentiousness, however, was eclipsed by reactions that flattened the difference between theological and journalistic versions of the new morality. Conservative opponents saw

⁵⁶ Robinson, “Debate Continues,” 232.

the efforts to offer alternative frameworks for morality as no different from encouraging immorality, and the new morality, in the hands of more conservative Christians committed to conventional moral strictures, became a catchphrase for a host of ills: secularism, immorality, humanism, godlessness, and communism.

The sociologist Janice Irving argued that the late 1960s and early 1970s debates over sexuality education “mark an early moment when the nascent Christian Right recognized the mobilizing power of sexuality.”⁵⁷ Reading the Christian Right into these accounts of the new morality, of course, requires a teleological logic. The issues that constituted the “family values” platform of the Christian Right were certainly not historical givens. As the religion scholar Seth Dowland reminds, “The triumvirate of political positions that came to constitute the core of ‘family values’ – opposition to abortion, feminism, and gay rights – did not command much attention from evangelicals before 1975.”⁵⁸ What was in place, as the earlier debates over sexuality education reveal, was a defense of moral absolutes as a powerfully effective rhetoric for an emerging movement.

Just as the “family values” platform of conservatives was still tenuous, so too were the issues driving their liberal opposition. In the early 1970s, feminism and gay rights were movements of the radical Left that had yet to gain influential support from liberals involved in organizations like SIECUS and in the denominational initiatives examined in this essay. Until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association changed the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness, SIECUS distributed literature that advocated methods for preventing and curing homosexuality. The study documents circulated by mainline Protestant denominations also maintained that homosexuality was pathological. Heterosexual monogamy, for both church-based and public health initiatives, exemplified the healthy expression of human sexuality. Before the mid-1970s, few sexual liberals questioned their optimistic assessment of marriage, which marginalized feminists and gay rights activists from their movements. Feminists’ critiques of gender essentialism and masculine privilege within marriage, as well as gay and lesbian liberationists’ challenges to heterosexuality, were both peripheral to sexual liberals’ optimistic efforts to guide young people toward marital monogamy.

In important ways, however, conservatives were right. Situation ethics was an elastic framework, and radical voices pushed the logic of the ethical framework to an extreme. The notion that love was a good in itself could

⁵⁷ Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 35.

⁵⁸ Seth Dowland, “‘Family Values’ and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda,” *Church History* 78:3 (Sept. 2009): 607.

and did rupture the assumptions of sexual liberals that an open ethical framework would direct young people to heterosexual marriage. "It is a fact," wrote William Johnson, an early gay activist in the United Church of Christ, "that persons of the same gender can experience fulfilling, selfless love and that they have an inherent right to the full expression of that love."⁵⁹ Johnson challenged the heterosexual foundations of love, but he retained the optimistic ethos of religious liberals' emphasis on love. To love, for Johnson, was to experience liberation, a sentiment echoed by gay, lesbian, and feminist spokespersons who placed love for the self and the other at the core of movements for political, social, and religious liberation. As stated famously by the lesbian feminist Audre Lorde, to turn away from deeply felt erotic desires was "to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic." On the other hand, Lorde urged, "Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world."⁶⁰ These radical spokespersons, in patterns that echoed Bishop Robinson's picture of love as a force that would "home" intuitively to the good, likewise appealed to love as a powerful compass for ethical action in the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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⁵⁹ William Johnson, "The Good News of Gay Liberation," in William Johnson and Sally Gearhart, eds., *Loving Women, Loving Men: Gay Liberation and the Church* (San Francisco, 1974), 107.

⁶⁰ Audre Lorde, "The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA, 1984), 59.

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

PATRICK W. CAREY

The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was the most important event in the history of the Catholic Church since the Council of Trent (1545–63). Vatican II reconceptualized the understanding of the Church and had a significant transformative effect on internal Catholic life and thought and on the Church's relationship with other Christians, other world religions, and the modern secular world.

At the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Church Unity (25 January 1959), ninety days after he was elected, Pope John XXIII (1881–1963; pope, 1958–63) made the surprising announcement that he intended to convoke a “general Council for the Universal Church.” At the time of the announcement, the pope had not established an agenda for the new council; nor was it entirely clear what he had in mind. He wanted the universal Church, however, to come to grips “with the spiritual needs of the present time” and hoped that such a council, as had councils in the Church's previous history, might strengthen “religious unity” and kindle a “more intense Christian fervor.”¹ The internal renewal of Catholic life and the fostering of Christian unity seem to have been foremost in the pope's mind when he called the council. At the time of this announcement, it was not clear to the cardinals of the Church, to whom the message was communicated, what specifically was intended for the new council, and some of them were not happy with the news.

In the United States, as elsewhere throughout the world, the papal convocation of a council was received with some fascination and wonder, but also with bewilderment. Newspapers across the country reported the event, and in the first six months after the announcement, the *New York Times* published numerous accounts detailing in particular the reactions of many Protestant and Eastern Orthodox leaders. The *Times* reported that the primary purpose of the council appeared to be the restoration of unity in the

¹ The pope's Italian allocution is translated in *The Pope Speaks* 5 (1958–59): 398–401.

Christian churches, but it was unclear precisely what this might mean. Most American Protestant and Orthodox leaders interviewed by the press welcomed the announcement, but some had lingering suspicions about the intent of Catholic movements toward church unity. They were cautious in their reactions because of previous Catholic understandings of church unity as a return to Rome and an acceptance of papal primacy and authority. Most of these leaders, too, acknowledged the huge difficulties in resolving inherited religious disputes.² Some fundamentalist Protestants, considering themselves the “true Protestants,” as the *Times* reported, rejected the ecumenical movement and declared that they would not cooperate in any way with the council.³

As were many others, American Catholics were caught off guard by the announcement; they too had no clear vision of what might transpire at a council or what might be needed for the renewal of their Church. Catholicism in the United States appeared to be confident and flourishing with high church attendance and stable ecclesiastical, educational, and social institutions. A Catholic, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, was a prospective Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1959, and other Catholics were also enjoying an emergence in American public life. What need was there for a council when religion seemed to be in such a favorable state, with signs of growth in most areas of American Catholic life?

In 1959 and throughout the next three years, the direction and procedures of the future council remained relatively uncertain. Nonetheless, between the announcement and the opening of the council in October 1962, the world's bishops and various theological schools were consulted about issues to be discussed, Vatican committees or commissions were set up to examine the suggested issues and plan an agenda, and preliminary documents were prepared for the world's bishops to discuss.

The Second Vatican Council (the first Vatican Council had met from November 1869 to July 1870) gathered together more than 2,000 bishops from around the world who participated in four major conciliar sessions between October 1962 and December 1965. Catholic theological experts were also involved as advisers to the bishops and the council. In attendance as invited observers and indeed as consultants were several Eastern Orthodox and Protestant church leaders and theologians. The international press, too, was present throughout the four sessions and kept their readers, listeners, and viewers informed on the transactions and the controversies involved in the debates over various issues that went before the council.

² Among the numerous accounts, see Paul Hofmann, “Pope to Summon Council to Seek Christian Unity,” *New York Times*, 26 Jan. 1959, 1, 3; “Protestant Leaders Greet Pope’s Call with Caution,” *ibid.*

³ George Dugan, “Protestants Ask Equality,” *ibid.*, 27 Jan. 1959, 17.

Pope John XXIII's opening address asserted that a council was not needed to discuss or define one or another of the fundamental articles of the faith, nor to pronounce new anathemas against heresies, nor to defend the faith. In the circumstances of the modern world, the pope made it clear, the Second Vatican Council was to be a pastoral council for the renewal of Christian life and a deeper penetration of authentic Christian doctrine, "which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another."⁴ Although this council was in continuity with previous ecumenical councils, its purpose and spirit were new. That opening address set the tone for the council, and even though ideological controversies erupted here and there during the council in the following years, that papal speech characterized the spirit of the sixteen documents that the council finally produced to guide the Catholic Church into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

A council means discussion and debate and decisions, and in the midst of such activities, controversies and conflicts arise. The Second Vatican Council demonstrated a considerable amount of tension and conflicting perspectives arising from differing general theological orientations and pastoral concerns. The council reflected two, perhaps three, different parties in the Church. One group of theologians and bishops, primarily from Western Europe (France, Germany, and the Low Countries), was influenced by a historical consciousness that made them open to the reformulation of Christian doctrines and to modern methods of research and post-Kantian philosophies of life. They were sometimes called the "progressives" by the American press. A second group, primarily Roman theologians and Vatican officials, was influenced by the Neo-Scholastic philosophical and theological traditions that had dominated Catholic educational and ecclesiastical institutions since the late 1870s. They were primarily concerned with preserving the status quo ante of Church life and thought. The press periodically tagged this group the "conservatives" or even the intransigents of the council. A third group, the majority of bishops in pastoral situations around the world, was perhaps not fully identified ideologically with either of the first two positions, but in their voting they generally sided with the so-called progressives. The council documents reflect these tensions and, for the most part, are compromise statements, sometimes juxtaposing the two major differing theological orientations.

Once the bishops, most of whom were heads of dioceses and concerned with pastoral problems, arrived at the council, they and their theological

⁴ "Gaudet Mater Ecclesia," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York, 1966), 715.

advisers made a considerable amount of change in the preliminary documents prepared for discussion, modified the prepared agenda, and prepared new documents (e.g., the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) for discussion. Almost from the beginning of the council, moreover, conflicts and controversies were evident as various factions offered differing opinions on the general direction of the council and on specific issues before the council. During the first session (from 22 October to 13 November 1962), for example, 328 oral interventions were made on the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* before the bishops voted overwhelmingly (2,162 to 46) to approve a revised document, which was then promulgated on 4 December 1963. Similar majorities voted for fifteen other Vatican Council documents.

A crucial turning point in the direction of the council took place during the first session when the bishops debated the preliminary document on revelation prepared by the Theological Commission, many of whose members were formed in the Neo-Scholastic theological schools. The document was pivotal to the entire work of the council because revelation was the foundation and source of the Church's understanding of its identity. The document received severe criticism from those progressives who considered it excessively Scholastic, ecumenically insensitive, and theologically inadequate. After much criticism, an initial vote was taken on whether to proceed with the preliminary document or to have it revised. Sixty percent of the bishops (1,368 to 822) voted to return it to the commission to have it revised, but since conciliar procedures required a two-thirds majority, the measure did not pass. Nonetheless, Pope John XXIII at this point intervened and established a new joint commission (with more of the so-called progressive theological leaders on the new commission) to rewrite the document and return it to the council after it had been thoroughly modified. After much debate and many oral and written interventions, the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* was voted on (2,344 to 6) and then promulgated on 18 November 1965. This episode was interpreted as a major victory for the progressive forces at the council, and the victory gave the progressives a leading role in shaping most of the other documents.

The American press followed the debates, as they were described at press conferences during the sessions, and focused on the conciliar controversies, informing American Catholics and others about the diversity of opinion that existed within the Catholic body. One interpreter in the *New Yorker*, Xavier Rynne – a pseudonym for Francis Xavier Murphy (1914–2002), an American Redemptorist priest and patristics scholar at the Alphonsian Academy in Rome from 1959 to 1971 – had an overwhelming influence on how the council was understood in the United States. Rynne's *New Yorker*

articles on the conciliar conflicts, “Letters from Vatican City,” were widely read and eventually published in books.⁵

“Letters from Vatican City” presented an insider’s view of the day-to-day operations and discussions within the council and the machinations that took place outside the council floor to influence the results of the conciliar debates. The “Letters” were closely followed by theological faculties and students and by many bishops at the council. Rynne’s writings were theologically well informed, full of ecclesiastical gossip and church politics, candid, honestly forthright about the personalities and foibles of the conciliar participants, and bold in siding with and favorably interpreting the positions of the progressive wing at the council.

Readers of Rynne’s “Letters” learned firsthand about the diversity that characterized worldwide Catholicism – East and West, North and South. He focused on the conciliar battles between the so-called liberals and conservatives, categorizations that were repeatedly used to interpret conciliar proceedings, and showed very precisely how they split on a host of issues. In Rynne’s view, the progressives were in line with the mind of Pope John XXIII, and the conservatives were the prophets of doom and gloom. The conservatives associated almost all changes, whether in doctrinal formulations or in disciplinary and pastoral policy, with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heresies of modernism.

Rynne frequently asserted that the majority at the council was on the progressive side on almost all the issues that went before the council – even though, as he presented it, a very strong conservative minority, mostly associated with the Roman Curia and in control of most of the initial schemata presented to the council, had an enormous influence beyond their numbers in trying to protect the status quo ante in the Church. The future belonged to the progressives in Rynne’s telling of the story, and all the major turning points in the council were interpreted in terms of the victory of the progressives over the intransigents. This characterization of the debates had a long-lasting popular impact on how the council was understood in American Catholicism, influenced theologians as well as large numbers of people in the pews, and helped to shape the early interpretation of the council.

What in fact did the council accomplish? By December 1965, the council produced sixteen documents – four Constitutions, which had a comparatively higher doctrinal authority than the other documents; nine Decrees,

⁵ “Letters from Vatican City,” *New Yorker* 38 (20 Oct. 1962): 95–123; (29 Dec. 1962): 34–59; and multiple other letters almost each month until the last one in *New Yorker* 44 (2 Nov. 1968): 131–47. Later these texts were published in four volumes and subsequently in a single volume, Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (Maryknoll, NY, 1999).

which had primarily practical significance; and three Declarations, which were statements of principle. The most important documents, indicating some major shifts in theological orientation, were the four Constitutions on the Church, Revelation, Liturgy, and the Church in the Modern World. Among the Decrees, the most transformative were those on ecumenism and the bishops' pastoral office; among the Declarations, those on non-Christian religions and religious liberty reflected significant changes in the Church's orientation to the religious and secular world.

Although the conciliar documents were in basic continuity with previous conciliar dogmatic statements and church teachings, they reflected a new spirit and style and, indeed, elements of theological renewal that had been going on particularly in Western Europe since the 1930s. The new biblical, historical, and existential theology that had been developing in France and Germany and Belgium since the First World War was clearly evident in the conciliar statements. They were also compromise documents, as indicated previously, and therefore incorporated some of the Neo-Scholastic theology of the post-Vatican I era. What was new in spirit and style and substance, however, received the most attention, particularly in the years immediately after the council.

The documents reflected and consequently produced a definite shift in Catholic consciousness. Vatican II was the culmination of a twentieth-century Catholic preoccupation with ecclesiology – a view of the Church that had moved from a primary emphasis on the institutional and juridical, to the sacramental and spiritual aspects of various Mystical Body theologies, to Vatican II's more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the mystery and mission of the Church in the world. The council stressed the primacy of the Church's mission within the entire economy and mystery of salvation, with Christ as the head and center. Within this context the Church was presented as the "People of God," demonstrating the council's desire to emphasize the Church's historical, human, and communal dimension. The Church, moreover, was distinguished from the Kingdom of God, thereby reviving the eschatological dimension of Christian and ecclesial life. The council also acknowledged for the first time in any official Catholic document the ecclesial reality of Orthodox and Protestant churches.

Behind many documents was a renewed sensitivity to the historical and mutable dimensions of human existence and Christian faith. Christian life itself was interpreted existentially as a vocation and a mission. Revelation and salvation were understood historically as a series of events that had a beginning, development, and fulfillment. This historical view of human and Christian existence helped to produce a new consciousness of the Church's presence in the world and a new willingness for dialogue with the

modern mentality. This new spirit was a conscious reaction to the Catholic Church's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century confrontational stance toward the world and modernity.

The council documents fostered a spirit of renewal, reform, and change – an *élan* that Pope John XXIII called *aggiornamento*, an updating of the Church. They also emphasized the need for accommodation and legitimate diversity within the unity of the faith. Accommodation and variety were clearly possible in liturgical practices, theological conceptualizations, national customs, and forms of spirituality. The council's deliberations themselves epitomized the actual diversity within the Church. The council acknowledged, too, the legitimate autonomy of earthly affairs as a requirement not only of the modern world, but of the Creator's will. Created things and societies enjoyed their own laws and values, which required respect. Religious liberty was one of the manifestations of the developing consciousness of human dignity and autonomy in the modern world that the council also affirmed. The council's *Declaration on Religious Liberty* was greatly influenced by the American bishops. With the help of John Courtney Murray, S.J., an American theological expert (*peritus*) at the council, the American bishops were able to persuade the council to see the religious, moral, and political necessity of recognizing religious liberty in the modern world.

The Second Vatican Council initiated a series of internal ecclesiastical reforms and changes at a time in the United States when the Church was in a period of institutional strength and stability and when Catholics were becoming upwardly mobile in American business, professional, and political life. The reception and implementation of the conciliar reforms and the communication of a shifting consciousness that accompanied those reforms, however, took place in an American cultural, social, and political context that was in the midst of a radical and revolutionary upheaval. The assassination of President Kennedy (1963), the civil rights movement, and the rising American involvement in Vietnam, for example, illustrated an era of radical change and violence in American society that the bishops did not or could not fully discern during the council. The postconciliar Church would be different from the preconciliar Church.

By the conclusion of the council (8 December 1965), there were already signs that something really revolutionary had happened at the council. The press reports at the beginning of the council had wondered what might be the results and direction of the council and focused almost exclusively on the ecumenical purpose of the council, that is, the aim of drawing the Christian churches into a fuller union. By the end of the council, the press focused most of its reports on what Pope John XXIII had called *aggiornamento*, the internal renewal and reform of the Church. According to one

press account, Vatican II was called “to review and modernize the structure of the Church or to put its message in the context of the modern world” – such an interpretation was never envisioned by the press at the council’s beginning.⁶ John Cogley, a Catholic observer at the council, reported at the end of the council that the “forces of reform and renewal are markedly stronger” than they were at the beginning. As he interpreted the council – and his view was shared by many progressive Catholics of the era – Pope Paul VI (pope, 1963–78) helped to reconcile the conservative minority at the council to the new directions of renewal and reform and, in effect, induced them to accept their “basically total defeat.”⁷ Such interpretations of victory and defeat and the emergence of a “new Catholicism,” although they were not consistent with the actual compromise and consensus nature of the Vatican II documents, were not unusual in the immediate decade after the council. But, of course, such interpretations of the council were not the only ones, and, in fact, interpreting and evaluating the council became bones of contention within American Catholicism in the postconciliar period.

Just as conflict and debate punctuated the Vatican Council, so also contention and argumentation characterized the reception, implementation, and interpretation of the council in the postconciliar period throughout the world. The first forty-five years after the council were marked by two major overlapping periods of the reception and interpretation of the council in the United States. In the first period, from 1966 to the middle of the 1970s, the battle in the American Catholic Church was among four different parties: a small minority who considered the council a major mistake and rejected its spirit and its documents; a second group who accepted the council but believed that the progressives’ attempts to implement the council violated the actual documents or went well beyond the spirit of the council; a third group who favored the progressive theological and conciliar directions and fostered ecclesiastical and theological reforms within the Church; and a more radical group who believed that the council had been inadequate and inconsistent in its theology and did not go far enough in its reform of the Church in the light of the needs in the modern secular world. The primary battle during this first period, however, was between the second and third groups – those who criticized the progressive reformers and the progressives themselves.

⁶ “Pope Paul Closes Vatican Council amid Pageantry,” *New York Times*, 9 Dec. 1965, 1, 22.

⁷ John Cogley, “The Real Work of the Council Is About to Begin,” *New York Times*, 9 Dec. 1965, 22; see also Cogley’s “The Record on ‘Aggiornamento,’” *New York Times*, 12 Dec. 1965, E7.

The third group, or the progressive wing, was represented by the theologian Richard McBrien. His volume *The Remaking of the Church* (1973) was a major progressive proposal for massive structural reforms. Most of the thirteen structural reforms (e.g., the elections of bishops and popes, married clergy, women's eligibility for priesthood and episcopacy, deliberative vote of laity in diocesan and parish councils) that McBrien supported had been urged here and there throughout the postconciliar period, and although not everyone in the progressive camp agreed with these proposals, they were indicative of the progressive movement for reform because they advanced greater freedom and participation in the Church.

The second group, or more conservative wing, reacted strongly against these kinds of proposals because they believed that the progressives had capitulated to the rising secular mentality in American society. The conservative reaction to the liberalizing and modernizing tendencies of post-Vatican II American Catholicism was based primarily upon the belief that many American Catholics, particularly the clerical leadership and theologians, had forsaken the commitment to the supernatural and had sold out to modernity. James Hitchcock's *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism* (1971), *The Recovery of the Sacred* (1974), and *Catholicism and Modernity: Confrontation or Capitulation* (1979) clearly articulated this perspective. In the popular revival after Vatican II, Hitchcock charged, the word "supernatural . . . has been rendered suspect."⁸ These divisions between the reforming progressives and their conservative opponents continued throughout the period and were exacerbated by Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical prohibiting artificial contraception, which will be discussed later.

In the period between the mid-1970s and 2010, the four different approaches to the council continued to divide American Catholics from one another, but within the progressive party there emerged another split over interpretation of the meaning and direction of the council. All the American postconciliar progressives (theologians and bishops), though, shared the theological orientation of the conciliar progressives and saw the need for reforms in Church life and structures. The central focus of the council was, as many admitted, the Church's self-understanding. That new self-understanding, according to Avery Dulles, S.J., one of the progressives, included what he called ten basic or essential principles or theological orientations. The ten principles, which he articulated in slightly different terminology in various articles, included *aggiornamento*, reformability of the Church, renewed attention to scripture, collegiality, religious freedom, the active role of the laity, regional and local variety, ecumenism, dialogue

⁸ Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity: Confrontation or Capitulation?* (New York, 1979), 4, 9, 93.

with other religions, and the social justice mission of the Church.⁹ These ten principles or basic teachings of the council were points of departure for the life of the Church and for continuous theological reflection. They were not hard and fast conclusions. They left room for many open questions. He contended, though, that they were “unquestionably endorsed by the Council,” and “whoever does not accept all ten of these principles . . . cannot honestly claim to have accepted the results of the council.”¹⁰ Although most progressives agreed on these basic understandings of the Council, they disagreed about the extent of the reforms needed and about how to interpret the conciliar documents.

After the mid to late 1970s, some of the conciliar and postconciliar progressives, constituting what could be called moderate progressives, began to criticize the extent of some postconciliar theological developments and proposals for reform. According to these moderates, some 1960s developments and proposals tended to emphasize the immanence over the transcendence of God and thus departed somewhat from the intentions of the council. This critique was evident in, among other things, the “Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation” (1975), which called for a recovery of a sense of transcendence in the churches and in theology.¹¹ That statement was a joint Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox effort to combat the secular and death-of-God theologies of the 1960s and was not specifically focused on the council, but it was an indicator of an emerging critical theological stance toward the more radical reforms of the 1960s.

The moderate Catholic progressives, including Dulles, although acknowledging the new spirit and developments at the council, stressed the compromise and consensus nature of the Vatican II documents, and they insisted on what they called a “hermeneutics of continuity,” emphasizing the constancy of Church teachings and the continuity of Vatican II with previous conciliar decisions. A second, more liberal group within the progressive wing, while acknowledging continuity, stressed the newer elements at the council and interpreted the older Scholastic emphases in light of the newer dimensions, emphasizing in the process the spirit of the council over its letter. The second group tended to interpret the council, therefore, in light of its discontinuities rather than its continuities, and they emphasized much more than the moderates the reversals at the council and the need for a more comprehensive development beyond the

⁹ Dulles, “Vatican II Reform: The Basic Principles,” *Church* 1 (Summer 1985): 3–10.

¹⁰ Dulles, “The Basic Teaching of Vatican II,” in *Sacred Adventure: Beginning Theological Study*, ed. William C. Graham (New York, 1999), 126.

¹¹ See *Against the World for the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion*, ed. Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus (New York, 1976).

council's teachings. These overarching interpretations affected the specific battles that emerged in the Church after the mid-1970s.

In the midst of competing and conflicting interpretations of what the council meant, various ecclesiastical structures, religious practices, theologies, and attitudes were gradually transformed in the postconciliar period. Among the structural changes, the one that affected all practicing Catholics was liturgical change. The gradual and, in some places, rapid change from the use of Latin to the use of the vernacular in the Mass and in all other liturgical and sacramental celebrations was generally welcomed and well received by the laity and clergy; here and there, though, were pockets of resistance to the use of the vernacular and to the specific translations of the Latin into English. The change in language was accompanied by other changes: altars were turned around, and priests faced the people during Mass; consecrated wine as well as bread was distributed at Communion (previously only the consecrated bread was received during Communion); Scripture was given a new prominence within the liturgy; laity became lectors at Mass, distributors of Communion, and presenters of the gifts at the offertory; and the entire congregation participated in responding to the Church's liturgical prayers and in singing Church music. These alterations dramatically demonstrated that the Church, considered stable and unchanging for so many centuries, was now in the midst of some revolutionary changes.

The polity of the Church also experienced some innovations that were intended to emphasize collegiality (understood broadly), consultation, and participation in the Church's life. National conferences of bishops were organized to provide a sense of joint episcopal responsibility for issues facing the various nations. In the United States, of course, the American bishops had met regularly every year since 1919 to discuss national ecclesiastical issues, but the newly formed national episcopal conference after the council was organized into two departments, one for specifically internal operations and the other for the Church's mission to social justice and peace issues in American life. In 1969, moreover, the bishops created the National Advisory Board of lay, clerical, and religious representatives to provide the nation's bishops with agenda items and with advice on issues that went before the national body of bishops. At the national level, moreover, priests' councils and councils of religious men and women were also organized to address issues that they faced in Church and society. Diocesan bishops, with some exceptions here and there, created pastoral councils of priests and laity to advise the bishop on issues facing the local churches. Parish priests, with numerous exceptions in the period immediately after the council, formed parish councils of elected laity to give advice to pastors on the material and spiritual condition of the parishes.

All of these quasi-democratic new structures were highly visible manifestations of a spirit of collegiality and communal responsibility for the Church. They raised high expectations about participation in decision making, and they provided in some cases grounds of frustration because all of these new institutions were purely consultative and advisory; they had no deliberative voice. Periodically, too, conflicts emerged here and there between bishops and parishes or between pastors and their councils.

The Vatican Council made some substantial changes in the Catholic Church's understanding of its relationship to Orthodox and Protestant churches. It acknowledged, for example, the ecclesial nature of the Orthodox churches and the ecclesial elements in the Protestant churches and, most importantly, ushered in a new era of good feeling among various Christian bodies. In the period immediately after the council, the American bishops, as did other Catholic bishops across the world, created a national office for ecumenical and interreligious affairs and sponsored official bilateral dialogues with various other Christian bodies (e.g., with Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans, Protestant Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and eventually Evangelicals and Pentecostals, among others). These bilateral conversations between Catholics (bishops and theologians) and various Protestant theologians and their respective church leaders produced in the forty-five years after the council a significant number of statements, many of which demonstrated some growing convergences of doctrine amid lingering and substantial differences that continued to divide the churches.

The ecumenical thrust was evident not only at the national level of the bilaterals. Dioceses and parishes became involved in grassroots approaches to the new ecumenism. Catholics and Eastern Orthodox and Protestant parishioners prayed together for church unity in each others' churches, attended conferences sponsored by each others' parishes, and participated in what were called Living Room Dialogues, where the Protestant and Catholic and Orthodox laity gathered in their own homes to discuss issues that were outlined for them in nationally prepared books and booklets. These manifestations of the ecumenical spirit waned after a decade or so, but the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18 to 25 January) continued to be observed at the beginning of the twenty-first century in parishes here and there across the country. Protestant and Catholic and Orthodox students and theologians read each others' works and historic statements, studied in each others' institutions, and learned from each other in the process – a major change from the mutual isolation of the past. The preconciliar cold war, especially between Protestants and Catholics in the United States, had for the most part ended.

The Vatican Council had emphasized dialogue, rather than confrontation or competition, with other world religions for mutual learning and

understanding. In the United States the American bishops established official, national bilateral conversations with other religions of the world, particularly with Jews and Moslems. Those dialogues produced documents in the era of good feeling that emphasized the common agreements and common spiritual traditions and sought out grounds for working together on issues of justice and peace in the world. In 1965, Pope Paul VI created an international papal secretariat for dialogue with nonbelievers, and he established in each nation a representative body to carry out the intentions of the secretariat. In the United States, Bishop John Wright of Pittsburgh, John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Avery Dulles, S.J., were appointed to the secretariat in 1966, but nothing significant was ever achieved.

The council called for a more general dialogue with the modern world and modern forms of thought, which was taken up in earnest by many post-conciliar theologians. *The Church in the Modern World* called for Catholics to become more involved in movements toward justice and peace. In the post-Vatican II period, participation in these movements became one of the chief characteristics of American Catholic life, as clergy, laity, and the bishops became either actively engaged in protests against the war in Vietnam and/or involved in the civil rights and other movements for social justice. Social activism was a significant characteristic of the period. In 1971 the International Synod of Bishops argued that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel."¹² The American bishops followed the directions of the synod by convoking a national convention of clergy and laity called "Call to Action" in 1976 to celebrate the bicentennial. The focus of the convention was significantly on Catholic responsibilities to address issues of justice and peace. "Call to Action" was followed by two major episcopal pastoral letters, *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986). These postconciliar actions toward justice and peace were consistent with the Church's previous social tradition, but what was new in these actions was the public involvement of the Church or Church leaders, either through social activism or through publications of ethical social principles.

Vatican II reflected new theological orientations but also created a shift in theology that became evident in the United States particularly during the postconciliar era. A number of transformations took place in the discipline of theology, but not all of them were results of the council. After 1965 the locus of Catholic theological activity moved gradually from the seminaries, where almost all the major theologians in the preconciliar

¹² "Justice in the World," in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: More Post-conciliar Documents* (New York, 1983), 90.

period were located, to the colleges and universities. Within the colleges and universities, theology was for the most part no longer associated with education for the ministry, but with research and teaching at the college and university levels. Increasingly, too, laymen and women were becoming theologians, and by the 1980s, the majority of Catholic theologians in the country were lay.

Most of the older theologians, educated prior to the council, were trained in the Neo-Scholastic manuals of theology, and, although some of them were creative in developing the theology they had received, most were content to repeat what they had been taught. Continuity was a premium value. During the first decade after the council, the Neo-Scholastic theological tradition came in for some severe criticism. Theologians who were exposed to the new theologies that emerged from France, Belgium, and Germany interpreted Neo-Scholasticism as nonhistorical orthodoxy: abstract, objectivist, universalist, essentialist, and devoid of the sense of development, change, subjectivity, and context that had influenced all of Church life and thought. The new theology, which many of the postconciliar theologians received, was dynamic, contextual, and aware of the subjective conditions of all thought. The council documents, as the progressive or “new” theologians interpreted them, reflected this dynamic and contextual theological orientation, and although the documents contained elements of continuity with the Neo-Scholastic tradition, it was the new elements that attracted the attention, and the older tradition was interpreted in light of the newer views. In addition, the council documents were seen not as definitive statements, but as points of departure for the further development of Church teaching, which was the theologians’ task.

The so-called new theologians moved very much into public view in the controversy surrounding the publication of Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (30 July 1968), which condemned artificial means of contraception. Although marriage and the ends of marriage were discussed in the Vatican Council’s *Church in the Modern World*, the issue of contraception was not open for discussion and was relegated to a special papal commission, the majority of whom recommended a change in the Church’s teaching. Pope Paul VI did not accept that advice, and *Humanae Vitae* rearticulated the traditional prohibition against artificial means of contraception.

The day the encyclical was published, eighty-seven Catholic theologians signed a statement of disagreement with the pope’s teaching and had it published in numerous papers across the country. The statement, revealed at a news conference called by the leading theologians, acknowledged a “distinct role of the hierarchical magisterium” in the Church, but also the responsibility of theologians to evaluate and interpret magisterial pronouncements – in effect, advocating an alternative magisterium in

the Church. The encyclical, the statement argued, was defective in terms of its ecclesiology, methodology, and ethical conclusions. The theologians claimed the right to dissent from Church teachings and appealed to past authoritative Church teachings that had over time proven to be inadequate or erroneous and were then subsequently corrected. The statement concluded with the theologians' own teaching, namely, "that spouses may responsibly decide according to their conscience that artificial contraception in some circumstances is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the values and sacredness of marriage."¹³ All the dynamics of the new theology and the criticisms of Neo-Scholasticism moved to the fore in this statement.

The theological protest was an entirely unprecedented act by the theological community and set the stage for other acts of dissent in subsequent years. Father Charles Curran, a theologian at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., headed up the protest statement, and the fact that he was elected president (1969–70) of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), the premier professional organization for theologians in the United States, indicates something of the widespread dissent among Catholic theologians and a new form of professional activism that characterized much of the 1960s. In 1986, after years of discussion of the issue and Curran's persistence in his right to dissent from noninfallible Church teachings, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) removed Curran from his teaching position in the Theology Department at the Catholic University. More than 750 theologians and some past presidents of the CTSA signed protests against the removal, but to no avail. This dramatic episode was only one of the numerous theological conflicts that erupted during the postconciliar era.

The publication of *Humanae Vitae* became a focal point for more widespread dissent than that of the theologians. Sociological surveys in 1965 had already indicated that 75 percent of Catholic women had at some point in their lives used some means of contraception, and more than two-thirds of these had used a method other than rhythm. Press reports at the time of the encyclical, too, indicated that many Catholics had already made up their minds about the use of contraception, and therefore the encyclical was going to have no effect on their understanding of the morality of the act.

Many press reports emphasized, too, that the pope's positions were at odds with the spirit, if not the letter, of Vatican II's statement on marriage in the *Church in the Modern World*. Unlike that conciliar document, which called upon the Church to contribute to solving the world's problems, the

¹³ "Text of the Statement by Theologians," *New York Times*, 31 July 1968, 16.

new encyclical contributed to the world's overpopulation problems.¹⁴ The encyclical was interpreted as a major papal backlash to and even a reversal of the new directions or spirit of the council. What the encyclical said more generally about love and marriage was sidestepped or completely neglected in most of the secular press accounts in view of the ban on artificial contraception. The press played a significant role in the way the papal letter was received, whether people had read the statement or not. The public protests in response to the pope's declaration had reverberations in other areas of Church life and doctrine in the years after its publication.

Periodically after the council, some theologians either criticized, rejected, or called for reinterpretation or reformulation not only of sexual ethics, but also of traditional Church doctrines (e.g., original sin, Christology, the Resurrection, sacraments, ordination to the priesthood, papal infallibility, salvation through mediators other than Christ). Appealing to the historically, socially, and culturally conditioned nature of traditional doctrines, some theologians advocated either the abrogation of previous doctrines or at least a reformulation of such doctrines. During this period of experimentation and protests, a sense of what constituted the center of Catholic identity waned, and some began to think, as the conservatives in the Church protested, that everything was up for grabs.

In the immediate postconciliar years, many traditional Catholic customs that were prescribed in Church law were either abrogated in law or simply discontinued in practice. Some of these practices, such as the abstinence from meat on Fridays, had distinguished Catholics from others in society and became part of their sense of Catholic identity. The abstinence from meat, a practice that affected all Catholics in their home life and weekly living, fell into disuse when Church leaders suggested that some other form of penance might substitute for meatless Fridays, a substitute that was rarely, if ever, employed by most Catholics. The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and to go to confession at least once a year, too, gradually declined. In the late 1950s, almost 80 percent of Catholics attended Mass regularly on Sundays; by the mid-1970s regular attendance had declined to about 53 percent, and to about 35 percent by 2000.

The loosening of the sense of a specific Catholic identity and the grip of the Catholic tradition was manifested in other areas of Catholic life in the United States. Because of institutional and attitudinal changes fostered by the council and because of the social revolutions in American society in

¹⁴ For some representative accounts, see "Pope Bars Birth Control by Any Artificial Means," *New York Times*, 30 July 1968, 1; John Leo, "Takes Note of Opposition," *ibid.*; "Of Human Life," *ibid.*, 38; "Catholic Experts in Strong Dissent on Edict by Pope," *ibid.*, 31 July 1968, 1, 16.

the 1960s, Catholics in the United States began for the first time in their history to experience statistical declines. The number of children attending Catholic primary and secondary schools decreased by 60 percent, and the number of schools by 32 percent between 1965 and 1988. In the same period, the number of priests declined by 8 percent (10,000 leaving the priesthood), of women religious by 40 percent, and of seminarians by a dramatic 85 percent. These decreases in the numbers of Church personnel affected all the Church's institutions – parishes, schools, and hospitals in particular – and the decline in numbers attending Mass also affected the Church's finances. Those priests and women religious who remained in the Church, moreover, were changing their lifestyles, following what they considered the spirit of the council, which called for a more positive stance toward the secular world. Numerous priests and religious (men and women) donned secular dress so as not to be separated from the world in which they were to be ministers. Some religious order women and men became involved in various issues of justice and peace and saw these issues as more significant than their communities' traditional roles in education and health care. These transformations were responses to the Church's call for involvement in modern problems, but also had the unintended effect of making indistinct their communities' identities or identifying missions. New recruits for the religious orders declined sharply as a result of the various revolutions in American society, but also because of these internal changes within the religious communities.

One of the fundamental purposes of the council, and one rarely mentioned by the secular press, was, as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* articulated it in its opening sentence, “to intensify the daily growth of Catholics in Christian living.”¹⁵ The renewal of Christian life was fostered in the postconciliar era by the reform of the liturgy and the emphasis on active participation in response to the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. Other spiritual renewal movements, not all of which were the direct result of conciliar initiatives, were also fostered in the period immediately after the council, as was evident in the Catholic charismatic or Pentecostal emphasis on the role and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of ordinary Christians. Diocesan programs for spiritual renewal, a flourishing of publications and widespread reading of books on spirituality, new Bible reading and reflection groups in parishes, involvement in ecumenical prayer services, and participation in peace and social justice movements were new ways in which Catholics took part in the renewal of Christian life. These new forms of Christian living, replacing or supplementing some of the more traditional Catholic practices (e.g., the cults of

¹⁵ Abbott, ed., *Documents of Vatican II*, 137.

the saints, Marian devotions, parish missions), demonstrated something of a new vitality in American Catholic life.

Visible and structural reforms, and the new ways of being and acting as Catholic, gave rise to some new Catholic attitudes that differed somewhat from those of the preconciliar period. The council itself had fostered certain attitudinal changes, and the postconciliar visible, structural, and life-style transformations manifested or reinforced them. Preconciliar Catholics grew up in an ecclesiastical atmosphere that fostered stability, continuity, and changelessness. Vatican II and the postconciliar experience manifested signs of change, development, and adaptation. The immediate preconciliar Church embraced unity in doctrine and Church life and had a particular sense of the universal unity of the Church. In the postconciliar period, unity was acknowledged, too, but diversity itself was evident in Catholic life and structures. Accommodation of religious traditions to local circumstances was also valued, with an emphasis on the particular benefits of local cultures. Preconciliar Catholics emphasized the particular identity of the Catholic tradition and its exclusiveness (e.g., the Catholic Church as the only true Church, and prohibitions against praying or worshipping with others outside Catholicism). The council and postconciliar developments emphasized the inclusiveness of the Catholic tradition, the similarities between Catholics and other Christians, and the need for openness and dialogue not only with other Christians but with other religions and even with unbelievers, all of whom shared some similar values.

These and other new attitudes fostered by the council and the postconciliar era affected Catholics in different degrees depending on whether or not they grew to maturity during the preconciliar, conciliar, or postconciliar eras. The older generations during the postconciliar period shared something of the older and newer attitudes, which they either found in conflict with one another or found some way of reconciling. The newer generations, those who matured exclusively after the council, had very little experience of the older attitudes or at least did not have experiences that would have fostered those attitudes. But the main point here is that attitudes, not just structures and practices, were modified or were altered in the wake of the council. Some of the newer Catholic attitudes, moreover, were consistent with some revolutionary ideological and cultural changes that were taking place in American society in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Second Vatican Council had a significant mixed impact upon the immediate postconciliar American Catholic community by revitalizing some segments of Church life and thought, but also by giving rise to conflict and polarization in the reception and interpretation of the council's meaning and directives. The American reception and implementation of the council were affected by the condition of those who received it,

and the condition of American Catholics was being transformed by social mobility and by the cultural revolutions in the larger society. Catholic structures, institutions, values, and attitudes were renewed and reformed not only by the directives of the council, but also by the cultural wars in American society. More than forty-five years after the council, in the midst of continuing American Catholic renewal and polarization, it is difficult to predict what will be the long-lasting consequences of the council's decisions and directives. In this, Vatican II differs little from other major councils in the history of the Church. It took years, and sometimes centuries, before the durable effects of the reception of those councils could be adequately measured.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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THE STATE OF ISRAEL

ELI LEDERHENDLER

Religious issues, properly speaking, are related to two human concerns: ethics (works) and salvation (faith). In this essay I explore the space occupied by Israel in American religious life – a topic that has intermittently engaged the attention of quite a few Americans and been of acute significance to some of them, at both levels of religious thought. This would seem to require some explanation in view of Israel's considerable distance from the United States and its minuscule size: a population of less than eight million (in the same range as Honduras or Bulgaria), in a land area of some 8,500 square miles (similar to Belize or El Salvador). Most Israelis are Jews (about 75 percent); about 20 percent are Muslims. Israel would appear to have very little in common with the mental habits, culture, personal background, and direct concerns of most Americans, yet its place in postwar American affairs has far outweighed that of other small nations. That has little to do with objective considerations and a great deal to do with the symbolic and moral realm, which is the proper sphere of religion.

Several historical trajectories have converged to confer upon Israel this kind of role. Centuries of theological development in Anglo-American Protestantism in which the place of scripture has been prominent have caused Americans' ideas of sacred history to be intertwined with the geography of the Bible. Biblical place-names such as Zion, Salem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Sharon, and Canaan dot almost every state in the Union. By embracing a semantic Palestinocentricity, Anglo-American Protestantism effectively sidelined key centers in the early history of Christianity, such as Rome and Byzantium. This has been appealing for reasons related to the historical Protestant posture vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic and Eastern churches.

Geographic distance as such has not deterred Americans from taking a keen interest in Middle Eastern affairs. On the contrary, from the early years of their national history, Americans have asserted their ability and desire

to project their influence well beyond their hemispheric perimeter. Despite its historically close engagement with European affairs, America's strategic ambitions – backed up by military, business, cultural, and missionary activity – have received their greatest scope in Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific. The eastern Mediterranean and the Holy Land became a focal point of American interest by the mid-nineteenth century, evidenced in geographical and archaeological surveys, tourism, pilgrimage, and missions.

The steady migration of Jews to the United States (mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries) made it possible for Judaism to be assigned the status of a “third religion” in American parlance. Reinforced by such verbal catchphrases as “the Judeo-Christian tradition,” that status bespoke a measure of acceptance of Jews as a religious minority that was hardly approached in any other country. U.S. Jewry became the world's leading Jewish community in the wake of the Holocaust, which saw the destruction of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe. Only now, in the early twenty-first century, is the numerical primacy of American Jewry in world Jewry being challenged by that of Israel.¹

Protestant scripturalism and its focus on the Holy Land and the American embrace of far-flung points on the horizon both have close counterparts in other lands and cultures, especially in Western Europe. Significant numbers of Christians in America and elsewhere have traditions of familiarity with Christian sites in the Holy Land, a developing interest in the Muslim Middle East, and an established religious, educational, and scholarly institutional engagement with Christian Arabs. The third element, however – a prominent, well-accepted Jewish minority – is quite uniquely American and has considerably widened the scope of American religious discourse. The Christian-Muslim axis that underlies the discourse about Israel elsewhere is, in the United States, at least equally balanced by a significant Christian-Jewish axis, which will be the main focus of this essay.

American Jews played a central role in articulating American support for the creation, and later for enhancing the development and security, of the state of Israel. That is not to be taken lightly as a foregone conclusion. Jews had first to be persuaded that the formation of a national society in Israel could embody in modern, practical form what religious Jews had prayed for for centuries – a reconstituted Jewry that would begin to reverse two millennia of exile and dispersion. The “ingathering of the exiles” is deeply embedded in Judaism's traditions of sacred history as both the means and the goal of collective salvation, but the actual implementation of a this-worldly “ingathering” in the form of a modern state possesses

¹ There were 5.5 million Jews in Israel in 2008; estimates of the U.S. Jewish population vary from 5.3 to 6 million.

both numinous and antinomian implications. The gap between prayer and program is one important distinction between Judaism and Zionism.

Alongside its program to “gather the exiles,” Zionism proposed to reorder the relationship between Jews and the family of nations by reentering that family on a basis of full parity – including political sovereignty. Jews living diasporically, Zionists argued, had paid a heavy price for maintaining their religious culture within “host cultures.” The cost to the Jewish people has been both material – the Jews having endured successive eras of persecution – and spiritual, considering the subjective cost of being perpetually cast as socially and religiously inferior. A reconstituted homeland, in consequence, was meant to underwrite for all Jews, even those living in the Diaspora, a new sense of “normalcy.”

“Normalcy” and parity resonated among many Jews in the United States with the egalitarian values that they associated with the American ethos. In their support for a national homeland for Jews in Palestine, Jews in America aimed to remain secure in the blessings of their American identity – perhaps, indeed, to reinforce that security. They therefore invested heavily in creating an emotional and ideological interface among their Judaism, their American patriotism, and their pro-Zionism. To be able to maintain these values in tandem, it was important that their fellow Americans offer empathy and encouragement.

It is crucial, therefore, to note the particular register in which the religious discussion of Israel takes place in the United States, compared to what it might have been had there been relatively few Jews in America. The creation of a small national society by Jews in Palestine reverberated and was amplified in the United States to a degree unmatched elsewhere precisely because in the United States Christians have become sensitized to an unusual degree to their own interactions with Jews and Judaism. Only in the United States has there been a large enough Jewish community to accommodate a discourse that supplements considerations of Christian salvation with an ethical encounter between Jews and Christians.

The religious implications for Judaism of a restored Jewish commonwealth in its ancient setting have been similarly bifocal. Alongside concerns deriving from theology, such as the meaning of “exile” and “redemption,” and questions about the character of Judaism in the land and outside it, American Jews’ engagement with Israel finds expression in the ethical dimension of “good works.” Their embrace of the Zionist cause was altruistic: accomplishing something good for someone else, namely, those Jews requiring a country to call home. Their expectations of gentile Americans were likewise on the ethical plane; what they asked of Christians was that they live up to Christian ethics by applying to Jews the ethical standards of brotherly love.

THEOLOGICAL DILEMMAS OF JEWISH POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

The reconstruction of a postwar order, a strategic priority for the United States, was for America's religious communities an urgent call to reformulate their thinking. The war had cost the lives of about sixty million people, two-thirds of them civilians, including the 5 to 6 million Jews systematically deported and put to death under the Nazi regime and its allies. For some in the churches, it seemed imperative to come to terms with the moral collapse that had taken place in the heart of such eminently Christian societies as Germany, Austria, and Italy. At best, representatives of various churches were able to point to saving graces in small deeds and individual heroisms that could be construed as a basis for hope and a defense of the Christian spirit.

Some tried to argue, as was done at the Vatican, that the world had been led to the edge of the abyss by a fall from Christian virtues: the godless had been responsible for what happened, and the road to salvation led through contrition, fidelity, love, and compassion. Indeed, some voices strongly intimated that Jews had been (justly or unjustly) victimized by the very forces of de-Christianization that they themselves had helped to unleash in modern society.² Others felt strongly, however, that this response was both insufficient and morally evasive: it avoided the distressing possibility that something *within* Christian civilization was amiss, and it elided the horrific sacrifice of the victims, for whom there was no chance of return and no moral lesson to learn.

A. Roy Eckardt (1919–98), for example, a Methodist pastor and scholar of Christian theology, was a staunch advocate of a new, frank, and more positive Christian approach to the Jews and Judaism along lines earlier suggested by James Parkes (1896–1981). Eckardt rejected as simplistic any attempt to portray Jew hatred as a singularly German or exclusively anti-Christian outburst. Although “responsibility [for the Holocaust] largely lies with the Nazis,” he wrote, “their success was possible only through the sin of indifference on the part of the rest of the world.” Quoting Karl Barth’s wartime plea, Eckardt reiterated the question, “Where can Jesus Christ Himself be in sore trial if not just here?” It was clear to him that even with the defeat of Nazi Germany, enmity toward

² Michael R. Marrus, “A Plea Unanswered: Jacques Maritain, Pope Pius XII, and the Holocaust,” in *Jews, Catholics, and the Burden of History: Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 21, ed. Eli Lederhendler (New York, 2005), 7–8; Manuela Consonni, “The Church and the Memory of the Shoah: The Catholic Press in Italy, 1945–1947,” in Lederhendler, ed., *Jews, Catholics*, 23.

the Jews would continue to disfigure Christian societies unless church teachings were reformulated.³

If the questions of theodicy (explaining evil in the presence of God) and of historical responsibility penetrated the churches, they pervaded Jewish thought, if only because the victims' point of view was unavoidable. The traditional Hebrew prayer book rehearses the refrain, "For our sins we were exiled from our country," and Judaism has a highly developed martyrological tradition. Both responses have in past ages offered Jews a partial consolation for suffering and suggested its remedy (repentance). The Holocaust placed into question the spiritual links among sin, suffering, and repentance: could a doctrine of divine judgment apply to the murder of a million children? It undercut the model of individual penitence and martyrdom by eliminating the element of choice and by extending it to millions. This was surely modern Judaism's definitive moment of cultural despair.

Both Christians and Jews were thus challenged to make sense of history's most disastrous war if the truth claims of their respective faiths were to be rendered plausible. Did Christians bear coresponsibility for the fate of the Jews who lived in their domain? Did a viable Jewish people still exist, or had the Jewish journey through history finally ended? Was this last alternative tenable from either the Jewish or the Christian point of view? The advent of Israel, so soon after the end of World War II, became entangled in these basic religious issues.

It should be noted, however, that the postwar Zionist leadership spoke solely in terms of historical claims and their just recognition, not religious or divine restoration. Indeed, religion was deliberately muted in the Israeli declaration of independence issued on 14 May 1948. Modeled in part on the American declaration, it proclaimed the new state's commitment to equal rights for all citizens regardless of creed, as befitted the biblical prophetic tradition of social justice. By the same token, the declaration's opening statement was historical, not theological. It referred to the continuity of Jewish attachment to the land of Israel, beginning in ancient times and thereafter maintained by the bearers of a coherent Jewish culture, no matter where they were dispersed. It indicated the international recognition gained by the Zionist movement since its founding in the late nineteenth century. Specific mention of the Holocaust and the hope for renewal of a corporate Jewish life in its wake is deferred until midway through the document. The repercussions of the Holocaust were not the preconditions for Jewish independence. Those lay elsewhere: Jewish roots in their

³ Arthur Roy Eckardt, *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (New York, 1948), 3, 30–1, 61. Cf. James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London, 1934).

ancestral landscape and the legitimacy of modern democratic government, in the context of the right of national self-determination.⁴

The present discussion, however, primarily concerns the religious issues *as seen from America*, where spiritual questions surrounding Israel's establishment were of pivotal interest. In a future world free of wars of extermination, should religion play a central and more positive role? If a much diminished Jewish people had any hope of bearing a spiritual message into the new postwar world, could it continue to do so without a modicum of temporal power? Would achieving national sovereignty in the biblical land of Israel help or hinder Judaism in its religious aspect? Could an Israeli state – destined to foster a civic identity based on the land and its language, on a parliament representing Jews and non-Jews, on sports teams and universities, armed services and monuments to the fallen – adequately meet the religious needs of a worldwide Jewish people, most of them living outside the land?

Israeli statehood put to the test several propositions that numerous Americans of various faiths held as emphatic beliefs.

1. Religion was the moral and spiritual foundation of a righteous society, but it ought not to serve “tribal” purposes.
2. Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem was at odds with the spirit of Christian teachings about the supersession of the Old Testament by the New, of Judaism by Christianity, and about the Jews’ meriting eternal divine judgment for their rejection of Jesus. If the Jews’ metaphysical displacement was sealed by the destruction of Jerusalem by ancient Rome, could a Jewish Jerusalem arise once more without upsetting Christian beliefs? Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, had been told by Pope Pius X in 1904, “We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem but we could never sanction it. The ground of Jerusalem has been sanctified by the Life of Jesus Christ. . . . The Jews have not recognized our Lord. Therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people.” On the day Israel was established, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, reiterated that “the Holy Land and its sacred sites belong to Christianity, the True Israel.”⁵

⁴ See <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm>.

⁵ Theodor Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher* (Berlin, 1922–23), III: 556, entry for 26 Jan. 1904; *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 May 1948. Regarding Protestant traditions, Charles C. Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, wrote in 1933, “Christian indifference to Jewish suffering has for centuries been rationalized by the tenable belief that [this was] the judgment of God upon the Jewish people for their rejection of Jesus.” *Christian Century* 50:20 (3 May 1933), quoted in Caitlin Carenen Stewart, “Religious Diplomacy: American Protestants and a Jewish State, 1933–1979” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2008), 31–2.

3. Jewish sovereignty challenged the spirit of certain Jewish messianic traditions, which had always deferred to divine acts rather than expect human activity to actualize the hope of eternal redemption. As mentioned earlier, the Zionist project contained ideological elements that merge at some points with Jewish eschatological beliefs but also held heterodox or antinomian implications.
4. Jewish nationality was perceived as a possible obstacle to Jews and Christians in the United States who sought to sublimate internal American creedal divisions and to integrate the Jewish minority within mainstream American culture. They saw the accentuation of Jewish difference as an unwarranted strain upon the peaceful relations and general well-being of the nation.

The dyadic structure of these arguments was not, at that time, complicated by a third, Muslim element, given the near-invisibility of Islam in the United States and given the low profile of Islam as such in the contention over Palestine, which was primarily waged in national-territorial – not religious – terms.

These suppositions were hard to uproot in the brief interval between 1945 and 1948. Jewish sovereignty, though widely debated since the nineteenth century when it was popularly called Jewish “restoration,” was an unprecedented idea for anyone reared in the modern West. Their lives had been shaped in a world geared to define Jews and Judaism as, at most, a spiritual community uniquely equipped to live without the trappings of worldly political devices, and at worst, a defunct remnant damned to live that way.

So unsettling were the theological and political implications of Jewish statehood that even some well-informed and highly influential religious leaders, who publicly affirmed the right of Jews to reestablish a sanctuary and a free community of their own in Palestine, were ambivalent about state sovereignty. Mordecai Kaplan, one of American Judaism’s leading religious critics, a rabbi and a Zionist, straddled the fence on the issue of sovereignty for years while upholding the notion of Israel as a spiritual and cultural center for Judaism. Judah Magnes, a former San Francisco and New York rabbi and Jewish communal leader, and later the first president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was a pacifist and strong advocate of a binational Jewish-Arab state in an undivided Palestine.

Reinhold Niebuhr, one of America’s most outspoken American theologians, who had cofounded the pro-Zionist Christian Council on Palestine, thought that Jewish self-rule in Palestine was politically and morally correct. During World War II he had argued that Zionism, in advocating a political affirmation of Jewish collective survival, “represents the wisdom

of common experience as against ... premature flights into the absolute or the universal from the tragic conflicts and the stubborn particularities of human history." This was a pragmatic-ethical approach that allowed him to avoid unqualified support for connecting statehood, nationalism, and religion while still arguing in favor of Jewish self-rule.⁶

A. Roy Eckardt, writing in 1948, also thought that whereas Christianity was "liable to fall prey" to nationalist "distortions" due to the deeply intertwined character of church power within nation-states, in the Jews' case, the balance of "historical reality must be kept in mind." Admittedly, "the Jews might completely lose the quality of their universal witness [to the universal God] through themselves becoming nationally 'established.'" But, he countered (quoting Niebuhr), "How can the 'particular' be a servant of the universal, if the life of the particular has no security?"⁷

Eckardt argued for the religious justice of what he called "proximate solutions," that is, solutions for living in this world that did not prejudge ultimate, transcendent questions. He then went beyond historical-ethical considerations. The theological question facing postwar Christians, he suggested, was "not whether a particular religion may be [ethically] 'better' than another," but whether "the revelation of God ... in Jesus as the Christ" was "unique (*einmalig* – happening but once)," and in consequence, "whether that revelation applies to all men." The church must therefore ask itself "whether the Jewish people, as a religio-ethnic group, has a place in the divine economy which must not be eradicated."⁸

Those who doubted the moral benefits of Jewish national sovereignty continued to express them in the years after 1948. Henry Sloane Coffin, former president of Union Theological Seminary, feared in 1949 that Israel represented a "resurgence of fanatical Jewish nationalism" that threatened to stimulate anti-Semitism in America. Coffin's article elicited a storm of protest, indicative of how divisive, yet also how compelling these issues were becoming.⁹

Elsewhere, as in certain evangelical Christian circles, it was thought that without the mediating influences of Christians the divine intent behind

⁶ Stewart, "Religious Diplomacy," 57–8; Reinhold Niebuhr, "Jews after the War," *Nation*, 21 and 28 Feb. 1942; quoted in Eckardt, *Christianity and the Children of Israel*, 169. Cf. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. 3, *Under God, Indivisible: 1941–1960* (Chicago, 1996), 186–7.

⁷ Eckardt, *Christianity and the Children of Israel*, 169–70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24–6, 175.

⁹ Henry Sloane Coffin, "Perils to America in the New Jewish State," *Christianity and Crisis* 9 (21 Feb. 1949): 9–10, quoted in Marty, *Modern American Religion*, 196; cf. Stewart, "Religious Diplomacy," 135.

Jewish restoration would remain unfulfilled, hence the need for renewed missionary activity among Jews in Israel.¹⁰

In 1954 the World Council of Churches held its Second Assembly in Evanston, Illinois. A minority faction circulated a memorandum that affirmed the continued, vital religious role to be played by “God’s old Covenant people” in Christian eschatology. A second such document called the new state of Israel a “‘sign’ of the vitality of messianic hope which still persists in the Israel of the flesh.” Both propositions were sharply debated and defeated, because of the opposition of Arab Christian leaders to any mention of Israel, and in part because some liberal figures in the American churches opposed language that implied conversionary plans with regard to the Jews. But the issue of Judaism as a live force in modern religious life – and its connection to Israel – had been placed on the table.¹¹

As seen from afar and painted with the broad brush of easy generalization, Israel was sometimes viewed either as something akin to a “theocratic” state or else as a country run by renegade Jewish atheists. Voices that sought to bridge the conflicting perceptions were likely to make the case for a tempered religious sensibility and for an engaged role for concerned Jews and Christians.¹²

Herbert Weiner, a New Jersey rabbi bent on discovering what religious tidings the restored Jewish commonwealth might hold for people of faith – Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike – found it to be a great riddle: how was it that the land that once had brought forth such powerful religious impulses now gave no evidence of “great religious stirrings”? As a pilgrim in the Holy Land, he found his own impatience with orthodoxies and religious establishments reconfirmed: “The historic religious institutions and traditions which call this land holy seem to lie about sterile and lifeless on the cradle soil of their faith.” Yet Weiner was unwilling to dismiss entirely the sense of the Bible’s immediacy that he felt in Israel, and while he scorned the moribund character of the various church hierarchies and their indigenous flocks in Israel, he was powerfully affected by the Christian spiritual seekers who had traveled to Israel from abroad and whose faith

¹⁰ Yaakov Ariel, “The Ambiguous Missionary: Robert Lindsey in Israel, 1948–1970,” in Eli Lederhendler and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *America and Zion: Essays and Papers in Memory of Moshe Davis* (Detroit, 2002), 185–200.

¹¹ Marty, *Modern American Religion*, 269; Herbert Weiner, *The Wild Goats of Ein Gedi: A Journal of Religious Encounters in the Holy Land* (Cleveland, 1961), 45–6; <http://archives.oikoumene.org/query/Detail.aspx?ID=40914> (accessed 8 Nov. 2009).

¹² Jacob B. Agus, *The Jewish Quest: Essays on Basic Concepts of Jewish Theology* (New York, 1983), 236–7.

seemed to draw new spontaneity and energy from their close contact with Jews and Judaism in their native habitat.¹³

Others were even more inclined to find evidence of the spiritual synapses that Israel's establishment had inspired. The rabbinics scholar Jacob Neusner thus asked:

Who are these Jews, who cannot despite themselves achieve secularization? They are bearers of an unbroken myth, a this-worldly group affirming the world and joining in its activities with religious fervor. . . . They see their history as one history, though they are not everywhere involved in it. They reflect upon the apocalyptic events of the day as intimately and personally important to them. They died at Auschwitz. They arose again in Jerusalem and Galilee. They responded passionately, no matter how remote they are from Judaism, to the appeal of the flesh, of Israel after the flesh, and see themselves in a way that no one can call secular, no matter how secular they themselves would claim to be.¹⁴

Two of the most revered religious thinkers in postwar American Judaism, Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–93) and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–72),¹⁵ outlined positions that were in some ways quite similar, yet in other respects rather distinct, regarding the place of Israel in religious life.

Heschel published his thoughts on the subject just after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In keeping with his philosophy of religious experience, Heschel saw in Israel a vehicle for the sense of wonder and hope (the subjective basis for a life of faith) – perhaps the only such vehicle for which a Jew could muster plausible belief, against the despair and disgust for the world aroused by the Holocaust.

What should have been our answer to Auschwitz? . . . We did not blaspheme, we built. . . . [W]e saw the beginning of a new awakening. . . . The State of Israel is not an atonement. It would be blasphemy to regard it as compensation. However, the existence of Israel . . . enables us to bear the agony of Auschwitz without radical despair. . . . What does Israel say to us? That waiting for wonder is not in vain. . . . Despair is not man's last word. Hiddenness is not God's last act.¹⁶

¹³ Weiner, *Ein Gedi*, 308–9; cf. 83.

¹⁴ Jacob Neusner, "Judaism in a Secular Age," *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 14 July 1966, 5.

¹⁵ Soloveitchik arrived in the interwar years, became a rabbi in Boston, and served for many years as head of the yeshiva at RIETS, the Orthodox seminary at New York's Yeshiva University. Heschel was plucked from Nazi Germany in 1940 to teach at Hebrew Union College, the Reform rabbinical school in Cincinnati. In 1945 he moved to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

¹⁶ Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York, 1967), 112–13, 115, 134–5.

Cautioning that “it is dangerous to regard political affairs as religious events,” he nonetheless affirmed that “hewing stones, paving roads, planting gardens, building homes ... [s]eeking to conquer helplessness,” are religiously faithful acts, “reminders that there are deeds in which God is at home in the world.”¹⁷

In Christian terms, Heschel was describing Israel as a moment of grace – indeed, *the* crucial moment of grace for Judaism, a way forward when no way seemed possible. Heschel’s appeal was directed to a broad audience, Jew as well as non-Jew, and he wanted his Christian readers to understand why a positive reception of Israel was the *sine qua non* for a fruitful interreligious encounter, in which Judaism exists in its own right. Such a response to Israel, he argued, was a necessity for both Christians and Jews authentically interested in theological reconciliation and a restoration of their faith after the knowledge of radical evil in the twentieth century.

Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s main discourse on Israel, in contrast, was delivered orally to a select audience in a sermon delivered at his yeshiva in 1956, on the occasion of Israel’s eighth Independence Day, and subsequently published only in Hebrew.¹⁸ *Kol dodi dofeq*, or “Hark, My Beloved Knocks,” is an exegetical exploration of the meaning of Israel’s existence, embedded within a larger consideration of a life of the spirit in extremis. The homiletic aspect of the piece is based on several verses in Song of Songs (5:2–6): “I sleep, but my heart wakes: hark, my beloved is knocking, saying, Open to me, my sister my love. ... I opened to my beloved but my beloved had turned away and was gone, my soul failed when he spoke. I sought him but could not find him. I called him but he gave me no answer.”

Soloveitchik opens his exposition by considering the problem of evil as a key aspect of post-Holocaust religious belief; in this he is similar to Heschel. Characteristic of his thought system, Soloveitchik then breaks down human consciousness into a binary typology of passive reception/reaction and an activist “doing” approach toward existence, suffering, and faith. He avers that in Judaism the metaphysical issue of the “reasons” for suffering in the world is never resolved. Rather, Judaism resolves the issue at the level of praxis: “How must I act now?” The ideal Jew is one who does not succumb to despair in the throes of crisis and tragedy, whose soul does *not* “fail” when a divine “knock” is heard at the door, and who contends positively with the opportunity to do something in the here and now, lest indeed there might be “no answer.”

Soloveitchik’s reading of Israel’s existence as a wake-up call that orients the Jew to deeds at ground level is very close to Heschel’s argument.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 137, 145.

¹⁸ Yosef B. Soloveitchik, *Kol dodi dofeq* (Jerusalem, 1976).

Unlike Heschel's comments, however, Soloveitchik's discourse had only an internal Jewish audience. The subtext of his homily was directed at repudiating the anti-Zionism demanded by Judaism's ultra-Orthodox strand (honored in the past in his own family), a fundamentalist form of political and theological quietism that referenced a different proof text in Song of Songs.¹⁹ Soloveitchik's response – to seize the day – defied those on his religious Right and defined mainstream Orthodoxy's pro-Zionism as legitimately linked to traditional Judaic discourse.

Whereas Heschel had criticized the Christian world ("save for individual friends") for their failure to respond to the Jews' plight – highlighting the perilous weeks leading up to the outbreak of war in 1967 – and appealed to his non-Jewish reader to embrace a new path of mutual obligation, Soloveitchik was less interested in ecumenical dialogue.²⁰ He touched on the Christian issue solely to point out, to his own flock, that Israel's establishment was a bold rebuke to the theological hubris of Christian supersessionism: "All the claims of the Christian theologians, that God withdrew from the Assembly of Israel its right to the Land of Israel and that all the [scriptural] promises concerning Zion and Jerusalem are intended only as allegorical metaphors for Christianity ... have been publicly exposed by the establishment of the state of Israel as falsifications." This, he argued, was one facet, by no means a minor one, of the "knock" that the divine Beloved had delivered to the gates of the Jews' temporal world.²¹

The religious repercussions of Israel's establishment, Heschel and Soloveitchik concurred, stemmed from the fact that it seemed to breach the untenable realities of recent Jewish history. It was not, of itself, a messianic salvation; neither of these men of faith announced that the end of days was at hand. Rather, Israel lent an uncanny and essential support, literally out of the whirlwind, to those like them who sought to carry forward the beliefs that their ancestors had inscribed in Judaism and bequeathed to the world. Israel's establishment and survival confirmed for them a theological dialectic, embedded in human history, which indicated that all that might be said of Judaism in the world had not yet already been spoken.

This faith – that Israel's existence was not just a political fact, but an event with religious significance – received significant credence in traditional Jewish and certain Christian circles. Yet it was, indeed, a matter of

¹⁹ Known as the "three adjurations," these verses (2:7, 3:5, 8:4) were allegorically interpreted as forbidding Jews to attempt to return en masse to the land, to rebel forcibly against gentile rule, or to "hasten" the end of days, which must occur in its destined time.

²⁰ Heschel, *Israel*, 198; Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations," *Modern Judaism* 24:3 (2004): 251–71.

²¹ Soloveitchik, *Kol dodi dofeq*, 17.

faith and argumentation, as might be judged from the reaction of Arthur A. Cohen (1928–86), an independent lay writer. An atypical Jewish dissenter whose thought ran along Neo-Idealist lines, Cohen insisted on keeping the historical-political (“natural”) and the theosophical, mythic, metahistorical (“supernatural”) planes conceptually distinct. He therefore could not accept that a political event such as the establishment of a Jewish state could be a watershed in sacred or salvational history.²²

To be sure, the lives and fates of Jewish people were profoundly bound up with the culture, politics, and history of the lands where they dwelt. Changes at this historical level were bound to affect the fortunes of the Jews. Cohen might take (tepid) comfort in the success of the Zionist project, but he emphatically denied it any transcendent meaning.²³ “Exile,” he wrote, is a theological category, “the coefficient of being unredeemed,” and therefore “is not remedied by security [in] the Diaspora or national fulfillment in the State of Israel.” The Jews’ vocation in the world was to testify to history’s “incompleteness,” its exilic quality:

[I]t is questionable whether the Zionist solution – to normalize the Jew by integrating Jewish destiny with the dubious destiny of the national state – effects that reunion of nature and supernature which is the historicity of *Jewish* existence.... Zionism is now triumphant and yet millions of Jews are unwilling either to go up to the Land or to be assimilated. The situation of the modern Jew is substantially as it was before ..., nothing appears changed.²⁴ [emphases in the original]

The assertion that “nothing appears changed” contradicted the sensibility espoused by Soloveitchik, Heschel, and others. Cohen’s insistence on a doctrinal, essential Judaism, beyond the lived religion experienced in actual communities, owed much, as noted, to the last prewar generation of German Jewish theologians. It owed something, too, to the encounter between Western Judaism and Christian theology insofar as Cohen construed flesh and spirit as a divided dualism, messianism as the paramount Jewish issue, and doctrine as bearing the essential freight of religion.²⁵

²² Arthur A. Cohen, “The Natural and the Supernatural Jew: Two Views of the Church,” in Philip Scharper, ed., *American Catholics: A Protestant-Jewish View* (New York, 1959), 127–57. Cohen, born in New York City, was primarily influenced by theologians from Germany such as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber. All quotations here are from Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew* (New York, 1962/London, 1967).

²³ *Ibid.*, 4–8, 182–7; cf. Shalom Ratzabi, “Judaism, Exile, and the State of Israel in Postwar American Jewish Theological Discourse,” in Eli Lederbendler, ed., *Who Owns Judaism? Public Religion and Private Faith in America and Israel. Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 17 (New York, 2001), 66–7.

²⁴ Cohen, *Natural and Supernatural Jew*, 6, 59, 66, 291–2.

²⁵ Cohen incorporated his concepts of an unredeemed world in his novel *In the Days of Simon Stern* (New York, 1972).

What is noteworthy about Cohen's point of view is that he did not represent the better-known anti-Zionist factions that were rooted in pre-war Judaism, the aforementioned fundamentalist ultra-Orthodox, including certain Hasidic sects, nor their counterparts in the universalist-ethicist anti-Zionist school of Reform Judaism, which had flourished in the late nineteenth century and had largely run its course by 1939. Indeed, Cohen had rather caustic things to say about both "classical" Reform and "rigid" East European Orthodoxy. He did not deny Israel's appeal to the flesh; he merely deemed the Zionist enterprise irrelevant to metaphysical matters. Cohen, perhaps, may be called the first "post-Zionist" writer in American religious life.

Cohen lacked the institutional connections to congregations and rabbis and the charismatic authority wielded by such figures as Soloveitchik and Heschel, and he claimed that, as a theologian, he was not primarily interested in the lived religion of the mass of Jews.²⁶ He fit fairly well, however, within a select group of younger intellectuals and religious thinkers in postwar American Judaism who eschewed both Reform and traditional Orthodoxy; who rebelled against the "sociological," cultural, or pragmatic theology of the interwar generation; who emphasized the centrality of a transcendent God, spiritual experience, and theodicy; and who, for want of a better name, have been called "Neo-Orthodox." It is possible, moreover, to see further permutations of Cohen's point of view on Israel in a few works by critical Jewish intellectuals and religious thinkers in the years since the 1980s, as American attention to Middle East issues has shifted ground.²⁷

Recent political changes that have affected American perceptions about the Middle East and Israel include the rise of several competing Palestinian Arab leaderships, each with its own political agenda; the tragic human consequences of continued warfare and terrorism; the search for peace that has prompted Israel to withdraw from most of the land it had occupied in 1967,²⁸ along with the impasse in negotiations that has so far barred a final peace settlement in the West Bank and the Golan Heights; the rise of militant Shiite Islamic factions in Iran and Lebanon; and, of course, matters

²⁶ Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York and London, 1967), 214–49; Arnold Eisen, "Jewish Theology in North America: Notes on Two Decades," in *American Jewish Year Book 1991* (New York, 1991), 22. Cf. Eli Lederhendler, "The Ongoing Dialogue: The Seminary and the Challenge of Israel," in *Tradition Renewed: A History of JTS*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, 1997), II: 226–7.

²⁷ E.g., Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew, Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), 245. Cf. Ratzabi, "Judaism, Exile, and the State of Israel," 56–7.

²⁸ The Sinai Peninsula (61,000 square miles) was ceded back to Egypt as part of the negotiated peace treaty of 1979, and the Gaza Strip (139 square miles) was unilaterally ceded by Israel to the Palestinians in 2005. The area of the West Bank is 2,270 square miles. The Golan Heights (former Syrian-held territory) cover 695 square miles.

that go beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but are relevant to the political crisis in the region, such as the Islamic terror attack against the United States in 2001, America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iran's program to develop a nuclear capability.

Political issues per se are beyond the scope of this essay; however, there continues to be a religious dimension in Americans' response to these issues. The range of opinion extends from ethically based positions that focus primarily on human responsibility for events in history to a salvation-oriented point of view. Some schools of thought, evident in liberal American Protestantism in particular, tend to highlight the clashing ethical claims of Jews and Palestinians, whereas others – identified in recent decades with the evangelical churches and with elements in the Orthodox Jewish community – have continued to point toward sacred history as the key issue, making Israel's survival the only relevant religious imperative.

MAKING HISTORY, COPING WITH MYTH

In the months leading up to the founding of Israel, the disclosure that a hoard of preserved ancient parchment scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek had been found in caves overlooking the Dead Sea revolutionized the world of theological and biblical scholarship. Nearly a thousand separate documents were eventually collected from the surrounding area, including the oldest existing copies of biblical and noncanonical texts as well as numerous Jewish sectarian writings of the period. They became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls and have been dated to the last three centuries B.C.E. and the first century C.E.

The semi-clandestine manner in which the parchments and papyri first came to light; the convoluted deals and piecemeal acquisition of parts of the cache by different institutions around the world, including the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR); the sometimes vitriolic controversy over their dating and authenticity; and the limitations on publication imposed by some of the original research teams did much to sensationalize what was surely the twentieth century's greatest documentary discovery.²⁹ The dramatic exposure of these texts less than an hour's drive from Jerusalem underscored the sense that across the modern terrain being fought over by Israeli, Jordanian, and Arab irregular forces, the very history of Western civilization lay literally underfoot.

Scrolls research, as it developed over the years, has continued to be a much contested field, but all agree that it has had significant impact on the way the Bible is read and studied, and particularly on our understanding of

²⁹ Jason Kalman, "Optimistic, Even with the Negatives: HUC-JIR and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1948–1993," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 61:1 (2009): 1–114.

textual canonization as a cultural and historical process. The sectarian scrolls shed unexpected light on the potent religious environment of Judaism in late antiquity, which was previously known only fragmentarily, by implication, and from ancient hearsay accounts. Quite possibly, it seemed, these texts were indicative of ideas that Jesus of Nazareth might have absorbed from Jewish monastic sects living in the area, making it possible to ground the Christian gospels in a broader context.

The spiritual ferment in ancient Judea, now newly appreciated, belied hoary myths that Judaism in the time of Jesus was a sacerdotal cult or “legalistic” doctrine ready for the dustbin of sacred history. The intertestamental period came far more sharply into focus, and its religious culture clearly had to be studied as a single multilingual entity in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Interest was sparked once again in researching “the historical (or Jewish) Jesus” as well as the sequence and the composition of the Gospels. In documenting Judaism as a living, ongoing tradition, the new scholarship began to be taught in an entirely new manner in Christian seminaries and divinity schools across America and Europe, especially after the 1960s, just as expertise in Greek and Latin classical and patristic texts became indispensable in Judaic studies.³⁰

This new way of reading Judaic culture as an independent tradition, neither exhausted in categorizing it as a pre-Christian covenant nor “superseded” by the church, correlated closely and not coincidentally with the parallel religious discussion of postwar Jewry’s survival, collective status, and destiny in the Diaspora and Israel. The discursive possibility of allowing for Jewish spiritual vitality before, during, and beyond the advent of Christianity was subtly interrelated with the need to come to terms with Judaism as a vital and independent culture in the present. The link between the two levels of discussion was the realization that the religiously sanctioned denial of Jewish legitimacy in the world had had horrific long-term consequences, which required rectification.

One of the climactic religious moments of the postwar period, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), gave further impetus to Christian reassessments of Judaism’s role in Western civilization. Impelled by Pope John XXIII’s commitment to such a course and actively encouraged by Catholic bishops in America and a handful of influential Jewish communal and religious figures, a two-page “Declaration on the Jews” was issued in 1965 by John’s successor, Paul VI, in *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4 (“The Relation of the Church to Non-Catholic Religions”). Though somewhat vague in its

³⁰ A partial sample of divinity schools and theology departments in the United States where Jewish studies are offered today includes Harvard, Chicago, Yale, Vanderbilt, Duke, Baylor, Texas Christian, Notre Dame, Boston College, and the Graduate Theological Union.

wording, the statement aimed to strike down certain myths about the spiritual state of the Jews and their supposed relationship to the Crucifixion. Its historical importance lay in the way it set the stage for further elucidation in later years.

A longer document, “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4,” was released by Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, a leading member of the Church curia, in 1974. It urged local churches to conduct their relationship with Jews in a spirit of dialogue; it condemned anti-Semitism in any form; and it declared explicitly, “The history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem but rather went on to develop a religious tradition . . . rich in religious values.”³¹ Numerous political, diplomatic, and legal issues regarding Rome’s stake in sacred sites in Israel remained to be negotiated before the Vatican could recognize the state of Israel, but that step was finally taken in 1993 under John Paul II.

The *Nostra Aetate* principles were given their earliest and clearest expression in the United States. In 1969 the New York Archdiocese published a document recognizing Catholics’ “special responsibility and opportunity to engage in a program of knowledge, respect, and affection with our Jewish brothers.” In 1971, the Cincinnati Archdiocese followed suit, adding, “The Nazi holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel force us to look with compassion and candor on the magnitude of these two events,” and placed the “burden of proving good faith on the Church’s shoulders.” In turn, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued an expanded statement in 1975, noting that *Nostra Aetate* had omitted mention of the religious link of the Jewish people with the land of Israel and urging greater Catholic understanding of its significance. They warned of difficulties in achieving meaningful dialogue between Christians and Jews unless Catholics could appreciate the Jews’ religious and national attachment to the land of Zion.³²

The spirit of these documents of the 1970s was upheld for three decades. In 2002 the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs reiterated that both Judaism and Catholicism “have missions before God to undertake in the world.” In recent developments, however, observers detect a more conservative posture on the Church’s relationship to the Jewish faith.³³

³¹ Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People: New Considerations* (New York, 1992), 217; quoted in Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America* (Urbana, IL, 2001), 111.

³² Feldman, *Catholics and Jews*, 123–4.

³³ On 18 June 2009, the USCCB revised the 2002 statement, faulting certain “ambiguities” and asserting that Judaism’s fulfillment “is found only in Jesus Christ.”

ASSESSING THE IMPACT ON AMERICAN JUDAISM

The American religious community most directly affected by Israel has been the Jewish one. The posture of American Judaism toward Israel is complex, as we have seen. It is on the whole a passive sentiment, generally positive and supportive, activated periodically in times of crisis. Israel's existence as such is a consensus issue for most American Jews, transcending denominational differences among them. Indeed, Israel is such a threshold issue on the Jewish agenda that dissenters within the Jewish fold have consistently used it as a lever to underscore their independence.

The influence of Israel on American Judaism is clear in such institutional matters as the mission statements of large denominations, such as the Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism. It is also evident in the training of Jewish clergy. Since the 1970s, the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist seminaries have either required or strongly recommended a year's study in Jerusalem as part of their ordination program for rabbis and cantors. Jewish denominational networks see Israel as a vital resource and facilitator, offering Jews from the Diaspora an unmediated encounter with Hebrew language and culture.

Beyond these formal matters, the popular culture of synagogue life in America has also acquired a variety of Israeli components and accoutrements: educational and summer programs for youth, liturgies set to popular Israeli music, the display of the Israeli flag alongside the American flag at many synagogue buildings, and imported Israeli decorative arts or ritual paraphernalia (shofars, goblets, menorahs, *tallitot* [prayer shawls], and the like) used in worship. The Israeli landscape and the historical treasures it contains are also graphically integrated at major nonsynagogal sites of Jewish self-representation, such as at the longstanding archaeological exhibit at New York's Jewish Museum.³⁴

For the most part, Jews in America have linked their support of Israel to the ethical plane. They have championed human rights causes, as in the public campaigns they waged from the 1960s to the 1990s to extricate more than a million Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union and nearly 100,000 from Ethiopia and to resettle them in Israel. By the same token, the human rights aspects of the current confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank loom large as a critical issue

See "Catholic-Jewish Document Revised to Emphasize Belief in Christ," *USA Today*, 25 June 2009, www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-06-24-catholic-jewish_N.htm?obref=obinsite; cf. J. J. Goldberg, "A Counter-Revolution in Jewish-Catholic Ties," *Forward*, 26 Aug. 2009 (issue of 4 Sept. 2009).

³⁴ Jack Wertheimer, "American Jews and Israel: A 60-Year Retrospective," in *American Jewish Year Book* 2008 (New York, 2008), 19–21.

of conscience among a significant number of Jews in America. In this way, they view themselves as participating more fully in the rigorous policy debates that characterize Israeli political life.

At the same time, many Jews are disturbed when they believe that Israel is uncritically held responsible for all the problems of the Middle East, or when the media seem disproportionately preoccupied by the Israeli-Arab conflict, given their studied indifference to the fates of millions in Africa. In such cases, Jews are likely to see Israel (and themselves) as vulnerable and invidiously subjected to a separate moral reckoning – suspiciously reminiscent of past modes of setting the Jews apart.

Yet observers over the past twenty years have remarked that Israel's prominence in these public dimensions of Jewish life is not mirrored in the private lives of Jews. Arnold Eisen, today the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, noted a decade ago that for many, "Israel remains by and large a far-off, unknown place; in fact, two-thirds of American Jews have never been there." He found that Israel is "positively regarded" and "emotionally powerful" among Jews but also observed that "Israel is ... profoundly disconcerting to a segment of American Jews," and that to others, "it is apparently without much consequence." The emotional distance that Eisen detected in the late 1990s continues to characterize portions of the non-Orthodox majority. The degree of attachment to Israel among Jews in the United States varies along with sociodemographic indicators such as generation, region of residence, level of religious observance, institutional ties with the Jewish community, and primary relationships with other Jews.³⁵

At the same time, it is striking that certain motifs and metaphors have been consistent over time in positioning Israel as American Jewry's "significant other." One such motif is the use of the phrase "promised land" in reference to the United States. The popularization of this usage in Jewish parlance dates back at least to the mid-nineteenth century. Although it is very rare in contemporary rhetorical contexts, it is constantly referred to as an echo of folk consciousness in the era of mass Jewish migration to America from the 1820s to the 1920s.³⁶

³⁵ Arnold Eisen, "Israel at 50: An American Jewish Perspective," in *American Jewish Year Book* 1998 (New York, 1998), 47; Steven M. Cohen and Ari. Y. Kelman, "Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel," [www.acbp.net/About/PDF/Beyond %20 Distancing.pdf](http://www.acbp.net/About/PDF/Beyond%20Distancing.pdf); Steven T. Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (Hanover, NH, 2001); Ofira Seliktar, *Divided We Stand: American Jews, Israel and the Peace Process* (Westport, CT, 2002); Chaim Waxman, *Jewish Baby Boomers: A Communal Perspective* (Albany, NY, 2001); Wertheimer, "American Jews and Israel," 75–6.

³⁶ The "promised" idiom is commonplace in titles published on Jewish American history and memoir: Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (New York, 1912), Moses Rischin,

The notion that America and the biblical “Promised Land” of Israel share certain characteristics has religious implications. The semantic layering of these “promises” was, in its origin, diachronic: biblical time juxtaposed with contemporary American time. Since the founding of the state of Israel, however, the synchronic existence of *two* “promised lands” has been the source of a new, highly charged dualism in Jewish life. The “promise” of the one is often held up as a measure of the other, thus making Israel an abiding means of reflection on the ambiguities in American Jewish life – faith and secularism, self and society, modernity and tradition.³⁷

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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- Lederhendler, Eli, and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds. *America and Zion: Essays and Papers in Memory of Moshe Davis*. Detroit, 2002.

The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870–1914 (New York; 1970 [1962]), Robert A. Burt, *Two Jewish Justices: Outcasts in the Promised Land* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land: A History of Jews in America* (New York, 2003), and Nora Helen Faires, *Jewish Life in the Industrial Promised Land 1855–2005* (East Lansing, MI, 2005).

³⁷ Allon Gal, ed., *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews* (Jerusalem, 1996).

INTERROGATING THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION: WILL HERBERG'S CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN RELIGION, RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF INCLUSION

LAURA LEVITT

Although the notion of the Judeo-Christian tradition has in many ways become passé in the academic study of religion, it remains very much a part of popular political and legal discourse. It continues to shape an imagined mainstream or dominant culture in the United States. This essay offers a reevaluation of this legacy from within religious studies, in part by considering the range and diversity of contemporary expressions of Judaism and Christianity – the very traditions that were to have been defined by this legacy. By rereading Will Herberg's classic statement of the Jewish-Christian postwar consensus, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, I reconsider the lasting power of this concept.¹ I offer a close reading against the grain of Herberg's text, with special attention to the way Jews figure in his work in order to examine the fault lines in his position. In so doing, I open up discursive space in the present for other ways of imagining social inclusion.

Although many have continued to build on Herberg's vision of liberal inclusion by adding other traditions to his triple melting pot, this strategy is, I argue, quite problematic.² Instead of making room for all kinds of other religious traditions or even the diversity among, between, and within various Jewish and Christian communities and commitments, Herberg's classic statement of the Judeo-Christian consensus was, in fact, an attempt to contain such diversity within a single, unified, normative vision of religion in America.

¹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York, 1960), 1955.

² Examples include the various efforts at interreligious engagement, the Pluralism Project at Harvard, <http://pluralism.org/>; the Dialogue Institute at Temple University, <http://institute.jesdialogue.org/about/>; and the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College, <http://www.bc.edu/centers/boisi/home.html>, among others.

THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN FAITH

Herberg names this single shared Judeo-Christian tradition “the Jewish-Christian faith,” describing it as “the basic theological outlook underlying both Judaism and Christianity as biblical religions.” He goes on to say that “in this view, Judaism and Christianity are understood as two religions sharing a common faith.”³ Herberg’s quintessential statement of religious inclusion is thus very much a theologically unified vision.⁴ This vision has, in fact, a much longer history in the United States and is very much a part of the liberal theological tradition of the American Protestant establishment. Although Herberg offers a version of the Neo-Orthodox critique of the liberal tradition in terms of its optimism, he, as do his Protestant mentors and teachers, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, remains firmly within this tradition. Herberg credits the Niebuhrs with his return to religion; in the discussion of this “Jewish-Christian tradition,” he also cites the work of Paul Tillich.⁵

As the distinguished historian of American religion William Hutchison suggested, “All of the distinguishing liberal positions, but most of all the rationale for religion’s adaptation to culture, relied upon a theoretical distinction between form and substance: according to this understanding, creedal and other forms are temporary and changeable, while the substance of any faith is permanent and immutable.” As Hutchison goes on to argue, the liberal tradition is very much the legacy of “Western Christianity’s encounters with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and then with Romanticism in the nineteenth.”⁶ The interaction produced a Christianity that was both modern and immutable even in its engagement with other religious traditions. This is the liberal tradition that Herberg affirms in the name of the Jewish-Christian tradition.

Liberal Protestant Christianity was produced through its engagements with other religious traditions. Not only did liberal Protestant theological discourse make these distinctions from within, but in a sense, as the philosopher of religion Robert Baird suggests, the Enlightenment itself produced “religion” as a new modern category, more specifically, natural religion.⁷ This

³ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 273.

⁴ See, for example, Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America,” *American Quarterly* 36:1 (Spring 1984): 65–85.

⁵ See note 1 to Herberg’s final theological chapter, “Religion in America in the Perspective of Faith.”

⁶ William Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT, 2003), 117.

⁷ Robert Baird, “Boys of the *Wissenschaft*,” in Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, eds., *Judaism Since Gender* (New York, 1997), 86–93.

new category not only solidified the place of Christianity in Enlightenment culture, but was also used as a way of reasserting the superiority of Christianity to the traditions of the various other peoples the West was encountering through its colonial and imperial adventures. The category of “religion” thus functions to allow Enlightenment thought both to distinguish itself as secular reason and to figure religious diversity as contained within a hierarchy, with liberal Protestantism at its apex.

Robert Baird writes about these issues in relation to the efforts of the “*Wissenschaft des Judentums*” to produce a proper object of Jewish study in the nineteenth-century German context, an effort that mimicked the role of liberal Protestants in Enlightenment discourse more broadly construed. As such, there is a “veiled Christianness” to this form of Jewish renewal. As Baird explains, “The *Wissenschaft*’s deployment of a ‘Jewish essence’ ... has a specific Christian history in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates about natural religion.”⁸ Baird makes clear that these kinds of “essentialized definitions of religion emerge ... in the seventeenth-century ‘inundation of data’ about the diversities of human belief, ancient and modern, uncovered by contemporary linguists, missionaries, and explorers.” For Baird, this veiled Christianness was ironic because it lay at the heart of these Jewish efforts to celebrate and affirm Jewish texts and traditions. I turn to Baird here because he helps explain the ways in which modernization is often already formed through Christian ways of thinking and conceptualizing the world. In this case, he makes clear the veiled Christianness of Enlightened or modern thinking more broadly construed, including, as we will see, Herberg’s mid-twentieth-century efforts to affirm a Jewish-Christian tradition as the American way of life.

Baird goes on to argue:

This notion of a universal or natural form of religion emerges as part of a Christian theological response to the question provoked by pluralism: Which religion is more fundamental than these competing religions? The answer is obviously a natural religion, whose essence is stable, which can be identified across ages, and which defines what constitutes “the religious dimension” of life.⁹

In other words, the very encounter with other traditions helped produce and solidify the centrality and dominance of Christianity, especially forms of Protestant Christianity, in Europe as well as the United States. In the American context, this enabled Herberg to find a place for Jews at the center of the American way of life. Not unlike Baird’s account of the early German Jewish *Wissenschaftlers* who created Jewish studies using the terms

⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

of Enlightenment religion to legitimate their endeavor, American Jews argued for their own inclusion in the American mainstream by refiguring their Judaism into a form of liberal Protestant religion.

As Hutchison explained, already in the nineteenth century liberal Protestants in the United States appealed to Darwin as “a new language and a new set of scientific justifications” to deal with religious diversity on these shores. For a generation, argued Hutchison, these religious thinkers “had been moving toward an inclusionary response to religious diversities.”¹⁰ Although Hutchison was more hopeful than Baird in his assessment of this discourse as a means to inclusion, he also showed how it became a model for others to lay claim to their proper place within the dominant culture of America. By the late nineteenth century, inclusion was a principal goal and expectation for various religious others. Echoing Herberg’s vision, Hutchison explained:

That pattern was clearest among Jews and Catholics. More specifically, the drive for inclusionary pluralism as the American way was central to the liberal movements within each of these major non-Protestant faiths. Through most of the century, especially after 1850, both Jewish and Catholic liberals warned their coreligionists around the Western world that those faiths, if they were to survive at all, must adapt to modern conditions and must look to America as the advance guard of everything good in modernity.¹¹

As we will see, this notion that the future of these other traditions – or that of Protestantism, for that matter – depended on their adaptation to modernity, on their ability to conform to a liberal or modern version of Judaism or Catholicism, is not so clear. The demand for conformity to these norms as a matter of necessity did not pan out. As we now know, various forms of Christianity and Judaism that are decidedly neither modern nor liberal continue and even thrive in the contemporary United States. Despite this, the demand for conformity to the liberal inclusionary discourse of the Judeo-Christian tradition persists and has yet to be thoroughly challenged. In terms of the way we think about religious diversity, as I will argue, such adaptation is neither necessary nor desirable.¹² The very idea that Jews and Jewishness need only be understood in terms of religion only adds to the difficulties involved in this classic American vision of pluralism.¹³ Already

¹⁰ Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism*, 122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² This is all the more the case in the present with regard to Islam. See, for example, Saba Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reform,” *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006): 323–47.

¹³ See Laura Levitt, “Impossible Assimilations, American Liberalism, and Jewish Difference: Revisiting Jewish Secularism,” in R. Marie Griffith and Melani McAllister,

in Herberg's 1955 text, Jews are very much an ethnocultural minority community and not necessarily a religion, despite Herberg's claims to the contrary. Jews remain a community that, in many ways, does not conform to the dominant American way of life he spells out. Therefore, contrary to Herberg's insistence on the centrality of Jews to the American story and his repeated dismissal of nonreligious or ethnic forms of Jewish expression, his text makes clear the fragility of his liberal vision of inclusion.

In what follows, I offer a rereading of Herberg's argument in three parts. First, I read Herberg's grand narrative through the lens of his own immigration story to see how he constructs the American way of life with Jews as exemplary Americans. Second, I revisit Herberg's explicit discussion of religious pluralism to make clear his discomfort, contra Hutchison, with the whole notion of pluralism. Third, concluding my close reading of Herberg, I focus on a crucial passage where he discusses the separation of church and state in relation to Jews. I read this passage through the lens of Aamir Mufti's *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*¹⁴ to suggest how Herberg's triple melting pot cannot overcome the minority status of Jews, as he promised it would over time.

Leaving Herberg's text in the final section of this essay, I return to the problems of natural religion, liberal theology, pluralism, and the Judeo-Christian tradition. I look at the diversity and complexity of contemporary American expressions of Jewishness and Christianity, turning to the feminist theorist Maria Lugones.¹⁵ Building on Lugones' use of the concept of *mestizaje* to critique the logic of purity and separation at the heart of liberal pluralism, I look more fully at the issues of power and domination that inform the legacy of the liberal Judeo-Christian consensus. Through Lugones, I consider how a different notion of tradition and the self that is less unified and uniform could offer us a more supple approach to cultural and religious inclusion. I will argue that this approach might make it possible for us to account better for the breadth, depth, and sheer diversity of contemporary forms of Jewish and Christian expression in the United States. By the same token, it might also permit us to address and engage with the various other religious and cultural communities who are by now very much a part of American culture. As Lugones makes clear, for this to work, we need to take seriously the ongoing power of precisely the liberal Protestant establishment in defining and constraining what constitutes the

guest eds., *American Quarterly* 59:3 (Fall 2007): 817–42, and "Other Moderns, Other Jews: Rereading Jewish Secularism in America" in Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Secularisms* (Durham, NC, 2008), 107–38.

¹⁴ Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, 2007).

¹⁵ Maria Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," *Signs* 19:2 (Winter 1994): 458–79.

American way of life, its culture and religion, and, perhaps most especially, its Judeo-Christian vision of pluralism.

EXEMPLARY AMERICANS

Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* has been termed the classic statement about American religion in the middle of the twentieth century by the noted religious historian Martin Marty.¹⁶ Rereading Herberg's text for the inclusion of Jews in "the American way of life," as he calls it, suggests both his hopes for and his anxieties about this project. Although Herberg offers a deeply optimistic vision of progressive inclusion across religious difference, he makes clear the challenges and limits that mark these engagements.

Will Herberg turned to this project as a former member of the American Communist Party and as a newly religious Jew. He was born in Russia in 1901 to "atheist socialist" Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States in 1904.¹⁷ In many respects, the grand narrative he tells in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* is very much his own story of immigration. It is a story about how the various others who immigrated to America from Europe became Americans, with Jews figuring as paradigmatic in this account.

As Herberg explains, American Jewry "exemplified with exceptional clarity the fundamental restructuring of American society which transformed 'the land of immigrants' into the 'triple melting pot.' Nothing is more characteristically American than the historical evolution of American Jewry, revealing, as it does, the inner pattern of American social development."¹⁸ By setting up the narrative of America in this way, Herberg takes Jews from a minority ethnic community into the very heart of the majority culture, defining them as the quintessential Americans. In making this claim, he follows closely a much longer American Jewish tradition that the historian Jonathan Sarna has called "the cult of synthesis in American Jewish culture."¹⁹ By making America into "the triple melting pot," Herberg puts Jews on an equal footing with Protestants and Catholics, using religious difference to maintain and solidify the place of Jews in this country. To do this, he restricts from the outset the right to define what it means to be an American.

Although this statement of the critical role of Jews in defining the American story appears late in Herberg's text, I suggest that by rereading the book backward, it builds a narrative about America and American

¹⁶ See Joel Schwartz, "Protestant, Catholic, Jew," *Public Interest* 155 (Spring 2004): 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 172.

¹⁹ See Jonathan Sarna, "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 5:1 (Fall 1998/Winter 1999): 52–79.

religion from his own story as a Jewish immigrant, following closely his own evolution from a secular Jewish communist into a decidedly anti-Communist theological Jew. Herberg's self-transformation compresses Marcus Hansen's theory of the third generation – the very theory that represents, for Herberg, the inner pattern of American social development.²⁰ By making his larger argument in this way, Herberg, in effect, secures a permanent place for Jews (and for himself) at the very heart of American life. He also takes full advantage of the closing off of immigration in 1924 to account more fully for the importance of the 1950s in his story about this legacy of immigration.

Herberg's text opens with the postwar resurgence of religious affiliation in America. He wants to explain this resurgence as a natural progression, as communities traverse from immigrant, to ethnic, to religious affiliation, as a way of appreciating both the unity and diversity of the American way of life. He wants to account for the simultaneity in the present of a rampant secularism and religious belief by pointing to a deeper evolving unity. As he explains:

It is the thesis of the present work that both the religiousness and the secularism of the American people derive from very much the same sources, and that both become more intelligible when seen against the background of certain deep-going sociological processes that have transformed the face of American life in the course of the past generation. The distinctive character of American religiosity, so perplexing at first sight in its contradictions and discrepancies, becomes somewhat more intelligible when so interpreted, and the entire religious situation is viewed in its essential relation to the inner development of American society. American religion and American society would seem to be so closely interrelated as to make it virtually impossible to understand either without reference to the other.²¹

For Herberg, the former Communist, the notion of an underlying historical trajectory, the sense that there is indeed an inner logic to the way that history unfolds, continues to shape his newly found religious identification. In this telling, the logic is generational. The inner development of American society that Herberg traces follows closely Hansen's "principle of the third-generation interest" – what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember." As Herberg explains, the third generation "has no reason to feel any inferiority when they look around them." American-born, the third generation has shed

the immigrant foreignness, the hopelessly double alienation of the generation that preceded it; it has become American in a sense that had been, by

²⁰ Marcus Hansen, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, IL, 1938).

²¹ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 3.

and large, impossible for the immigrants and their children. That problem, at least, was solved; but its solution paradoxically rendered more acute the perennial problem of “belonging” and self-identification. They were Americans, but what *kind* of Americans?²²

Herberg does not want Jews or other immigrants simply to become Americans; he argues that the third generation wants to belong to the dominant culture, but without losing something unique from the immigrant inheritance. Unlike the ethnicity of the second generation, which Herberg describes as transitional and ultimately temporary, the abiding and critical legacy that is the inheritance of the third generation is precisely religion.

For Herberg, religion offers the third generation “a way of defining their place in American society in a way that would sustain their Americanness and yet confirm the tie that bound them to their forebears, whom they now no longer had any reason to reject, whom indeed, for the sake of ‘heritage’ they now want to ‘remember.’” He dedicates the book to this generation: “those of the Third Generation upon whose ‘return’ so much of the future of religion in America depends.”²³

This claiming of a religious legacy is not just a Jewish phenomenon for Herberg; it is very much the American story. It shows how immigrants become American and how they do so without relinquishing the legacy of immigration itself. The pattern is shared among immigrants as they emerge in three distinctive religious communities – Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – that together mark the history of primarily European immigration to the United States. Although the specific content of these three religious inheritances differs, what they share is the pattern, the sociological trajectory toward an embrace of one of these three religions in the third generation.

Herberg supplements Hansen’s theory with the empirical evidence of survey data and sociological studies to make his argument that over time, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences are overcome, so that what remains is ultimately religious difference. For this to be the case, the religion of American culture needs to be broadly construed so that its instantiations can be plural. This broader vision of the dominant religion is what Herberg terms “the triple melting pot.” These three faiths remain distinct but are contained within a single frame. Together all the strands strengthen the unity of the whole. Once configured in this way, each of these religions becomes a pillar crucial to a unitary religious vision of American culture. Jews stand on an equal footing with Protestants and Catholics at the heart of this American story.

²² *Ibid.*, 30–1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31.

In contrast to the dilemmas of the second generation, who typically choose between assimilation and a kind of cultural separatism, either becoming American or maintaining their ethnicity, the third generation could be both American and a part of one of these still distinct religious communities. Thus, according to Herberg, as cultural and ethnic differences inevitably fade away over the generations, what returns in the third generation is religion, a deeper and more abiding version of their ancestral immigrant heritage. This familial inheritance is expressed powerfully in the form of one of these three great religious communities.

To make this case, Herberg turns to social science. His challenge is to show that affiliation into these three religious communities is, in fact, what happens over time, to sustain his argument that this is how immigrants become American. He needs to show both that Hansen's theory is correct and that what is reclaimed is indeed religion. Significantly, Herberg uses data on intermarriage to prove that, unlike ethnicity or culture, religious affiliation does not fade away, basing his argument on Ruby Jo Kennedy's investigation of intermarriage trends in New Haven, Connecticut.²⁴ For Herberg, this single study becomes the proof text for his position. Kennedy, who analyzed data from 1870, 1900, 1930, and 1940, argued that the various nationalities represented in the materials she looked at are subsumed under these three religious communities over time. Although national origins become increasingly less of a factor in decisions about whom to marry, the distinctions among Protestant, Catholic, and Jew become much more important. Kennedy's analysis offers a haunting echo of the persistent role of marriage in determining the fortunes of Jewish communities, dating back to the beginnings of the era of Jewish emancipation.²⁵

For Herberg, Kennedy's study signals the future of religious affiliation and a shift away from ethnic, national, or cultural allegiances, again linking Hansen's theory of the third generation to Kennedy's study. The future, for Herberg, is all about America as a religious country built along the lines of these three central faith traditions.

There is something almost organic for Herberg about this trope of three in one. The triple melting pot reinforces both the unity of American culture

²⁴ Ruby Jo Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot?" *American Journal of Sociology* (1944), as cited by Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 42, note 10.

²⁵ See, for example, Susan Shapiro, "The Status of Women and Jews in Moses Mendelssohn's Social Contract Theory an Exceptional Case," *German Quarterly* 82:3 (Summer 2009): 373–94, as well as my discussion of these issues in *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home* (New York, 1997). For a discussion of intermarriage in mid-twentieth-century American Jewish life and the importance of Kennedy's study, among others, see Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley, 2009).

and its support of religious difference as an acceptable form of difference. Part of what is so striking about this structure is the centrality of Jews. In this vision Herberg makes what was, even then, a very small percentage of the population into a vital piece of its center. This is not really about religious pluralism, but a way of defining the American way of life and its “common faith” as Judeo-Christian. As Herberg explains:

When the plurality of denominations comprehended in religious communities is seen from the standpoint of the “common faith” of American society, what emerges is the conception of the three “communions” – Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism – as three diverse, but equally legitimate, equally American expressions of an overall American religion standing for essentially the same “moral ideals” and “spiritual values.” . . . “Democracy” apparently has its religions which fall under it as species fall under the genus of which they are a part. And in this usage “democracy” is obviously a synonym for the American Way of Life.²⁶

Given this three-in-one vision of the American way of life, what happens when we return to the question of inclusion? Jews are here, but on what terms? What is the status of other religious traditions within this structure? Is there room for other religious others? Can we just “add and stir,” as feminist scholars have asked in another context about gender difference? Moreover, given this structure, what are we to make of the differences within any of these three communions?

PLURALISM AS A MENACE TO SOCIETY

In “The Three Religious Communities: Unity and Tension,” the penultimate chapter of *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, Herberg writes of the dangers of pluralism with specific reference to “a much-noted editorial in *The Christian Century*, entitled ‘Pluralism – National Menace.’” As Herberg explains, “‘the threat of a plural society based on religious differences’ confronts the nation, the editorial asserts and the prime promoters of this threat are the Catholics.” Here pluralism is defined as “a society ‘comprising two or more elements which lie side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unity.’” The editorial writer and Herberg both make clear the dangers of this form of religious pluralism. Without an underlying national unity, religious pluralism is dangerous, with the proliferation of parochial schools, Catholic civic clubs, veterans’ organizations, and political lobbies figured as threats to this unity.²⁷

²⁶ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 236ff.

This image of a threatening religious pluralism makes clear the tension at the heart of Herberg's vision. Although he is routinely credited with promoting a normative vision of American religious pluralism, his text indicates the significant limits of this vision of religious inclusion. Herberg does not put forward an idea of many traditions existing side by side. Rather, he advocates an underlying singular vision that contains acceptable differences within very clear boundaries.

As he goes on to explain, "The radical evil of a plural society . . . is that 'it can have no common will; it makes for national instability; it puts an undue emphasis on material things; [and] it nullifies the unifying function of education.'" ²⁸ Having set up this argument, he makes clear that there are real challenges to be overcome on the road to producing that unified vision. He uses this challenge to reinforce his progressive vision of America's religious culture. In this particular case, he focuses on the growing integration of then-contemporary Catholics into his own broader vision of difference within clearly defined limits.

According to Herberg, this desired sociological transformation was already in process and would quell the kinds of dangers *The Christian Century* described. Herberg's approach to dealing with such differences was to contain them. He insisted on seeing them as a part of a passing phase that was resolving itself even as the editorial was published in the 1950s.

This account of the "menace" of religious pluralism helps to denaturalize Herberg's position. As much as Herberg advocates religion as "a normal part of American life," he sets up the boundaries of what counts as normal throughout his book. Although his vision has been deployed, perhaps uncritically, to advocate a contemporary religious pluralism, I want to be clear that, in his own words, the move to include "other others" is not as simple as it might appear. The addition of other religious others, which is often the strategy of contemporary forms of civic religious pluralism in the United States – the interfaith Thanksgiving ceremony or prayer breakfast that now regularly includes Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus alongside various Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – is not what Herberg had in mind. As he explains, "Not to identify oneself and be identified as . . . either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is somehow not to be an American. It may imply being foreign, as is the case when one professes oneself a Buddhist, a Muslim, or anything but a Protestant, Catholic or Jew, even when one's Americanness is otherwise beyond question." ²⁹ Even when Herberg describes the embrace of religion as the abiding legacy of the third generation early on in his text, claiming "[t]hat is, at bottom, why no one is expected to change his

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 257–8.

religion as he becomes an American, since each of the religions is equally and authentically American,” he makes clear in a note that this does not apply to all religions. Instead, he writes:

That does not mean that *every* religion is so regarded. All religions, of course, are entitled to, and receive, equal freedom and protection under the Constitution, but not all are felt to be really American and therefore to be retained with Americanization. The Buddhism of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, for example, is definitely felt to be something foreign in a way that Lutheranism, or even Catholicism, never was; the Americanization of the Chinese and Japanese immigrant is usually felt by the immigrant himself, as well as by the surrounding American community, to involve dropping the non-American faith and becoming a Catholic or a Protestant.³⁰

I cite this note in full to make clear again some of the real points of tension in this depiction of the immigrant story of the embrace of religious continuity. In the case of Buddhists from China and Japan, Herberg shows his hand. At its heart, the Judeo-Christian legacy does not include room for a diversity of religious expression for immigrants who do not already share in this quite specific religious inheritance. Moreover, he strikingly hopes in these cases that as a result of Americanization, these immigrants will become not Jewish, but either Catholic or Protestant. This too suggests the Christianness of his putatively Judeo-Christian vision.

In this same discussion, Herberg also makes clear his discomfort even with other Christian traditions that are neither Protestant nor Catholic. Describing such an instance in the context of reaffirming the importance of being able to name oneself via one of these three, Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, he writes of the army sergeant who demands of his recruits that they in fact identify themselves in precisely one of these three terms.³¹ “Well if you are not Catholic, or Protestant, or Hebrew, what in blazes are you?”³² For Herberg, the naturalization of these three choices is confirmed by the sergeant’s exasperation, which “gave voice to the prevailing view of contemporary America.” In the note that accompanies this account, Herberg offers the example of an “‘American of Russian extraction’ and spokesperson of Eastern Orthodoxy in the United States” who laments, “We [Eastern] Orthodox Catholics are indignant each time we hear about the Three Great Faiths. We know it should be Four, and individually we have tried to convince our fellow-Americans of this. But we have gotten

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

³¹ On the vital importance of the army and its chaplaincy in solidifying the position of Jews in the American way of life, see Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

³² Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 40.

nowhere.”³³ Instead of addressing the lament, Herberg simply uses it here again, as he did in the body of his text, to confirm the consensus. Commenting on this cry, Herberg concludes this note by explaining, “It would be interesting to discover how Mr. Lewis knows ‘it should be four’; obviously he takes the American scheme of the ‘three great faiths’ for granted, and merely wants to add his own fourth.” Herberg never engages the real question here; instead he is satisfied to confirm the inclusion of his own community in the three and leaves it at that.

Beyond the question of other religions, Herberg goes on to argue that these religious affiliations make one an American. National identity is at stake. To reinforce this claim, he goes on to include atheists, agnostics, and even humanists among those he wants explicitly to exclude from belonging, calling this latter group “obscurely un-American.” Here he makes clear his strong desire to define the limits and boundaries of what it means to be an American by defining the three-in-one religion of America in Cold War terms, over and against the godless Soviet Union.

Returning to America and its trouble with the un-Americans within its own borders, it is again important to make clear Herberg’s position. Not to be committed to one of “the three great faith traditions” is to be disloyal to American principles and tradition. This means, potentially, to be disloyal to the nation-state or, at the least, to be a minority whose allegiances could be questioned. Not only this, Herberg is, as he makes quite clear, suspicious of the very notion of the minority in American life. He argues that even in politics, ethnic identities were giving way to Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliations, and he refuses to deal with issues of race at all. For him this move to religious affiliation is extremely positive, a sign of progress, because the notion of discrimination against minorities or the problem of minorities is extremely troubling – and perhaps again, un-American. As he explains, “The term, ‘minorities,’ is singularly inappropriate to American reality. It was borrowed from the vocabulary of European nationalism during World War I, and has virtually no meaning in a country where, on the one hand, everyone belongs to a minority, of some sort, and, on the other, no permanent and self-perpetuating national minorities of any size are known.”³⁴ For a former Jewish Communist, this is an extraordinary claim, which speaks more to his own fears and concerns precisely about Jews being seen as such a minority element in America. He did not want to be considered a part of any Jewish nationalist (that is, Zionist) or internationalist movement that could in any way challenge Jewish loyalties to this country. Here we see most clearly the political context in which Herberg was writing – very much in the midst of McCarthyism. The stakes were high.

³³ *Ibid.*, 45, note 29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43, note 18.

In all of these various moments in his text, Herberg makes clear his fervent commitment to his newfound religious anti-Communism as well as his profound loyalty to a religious vision of the American way of life and its underlying religious unity. Despite its threefold expression, this vision is, and (it seems to me) must be, unitary. Here Herberg follows his teacher H. Richard Niebuhr in this trinitarian notion of the “three communions.” This connection to H. Richard Niebuhr runs throughout the book and is especially important in chapter 5, “The Religion of Americans and American Religion.” In these moments we see some of the traces of his own insecurity, that is, his need to secure his own place in the mainstream.

Read symptomatically, I want to suggest, this insistence on unity marks a kind of excess in his text, signaling some of his own discomfort around his own Jewish otherness. In this case, I am thinking of his renunciation not only of his Communism, but also of his own family’s radical and decidedly secular Jewishness. For this program to work, for his own place in America to be secure, he must insist that all traces of this past be read as inevitably overcome, as merely an earlier stage of Jewish adaptation. Over time, the legacy of earlier generations of immigrant Jews will fade into obscurity, and, as he does, all Jews will then reclaim religion as the proper and abiding form of Jewish difference. In this way, full integration into the American way of life for Jews will be secured. In this telling, secular forms of Jewish expression must and will be superseded.

JEWS AS MINORITY, A POSTCOLONIAL RECONSIDERATION

In a different register, part of the problem I want to put in focus is what it means to write about the apparently “happy story” of Jews in America, raising questions about how we arrived at this mode of inclusion/exclusion, which I see as very much an incomplete and perhaps impossible project of integration or inclusion. For me, Herberg’s text illuminates the limits of liberal inclusion. To get some distance from the familiar logic of Herberg’s text, I find postcolonial theory helpful, not least because it enables us to see the dynamics of exclusion more clearly. It also helps us not take these assumptions for granted as the way things are, but rather to see them as cultural constructs that can be taken apart, examined, and reconsidered.

Aamir Mufti’s work on the relationship between Jewish minority status in Western Europe and its relation to the legacy of colonialism in South Asia is especially helpful, since he looks at Jews as the paradigmatic case of liberal inclusion of the minority in the West. The Jewish case shows most clearly the limits of precisely this minority position. This pattern is, as I

read it, adumbrated in the words of Herberg's text, despite and very much in the language of his own resistance to the notion of Jews as a minority.

Mufti argues that

in the "question" of the Jews' status in modern culture and society as it first came to be formulated in the late eighteenth century, what emerges is a set of paradigmatic narratives, conceptual frameworks, motifs, and formal relationships concerned with the question of minority existence, which are then disseminated globally in the emergence, under colonial and semicolonial conditions, of the forms of modern social, political, and cultural life.³⁵

Mufti goes on to say that, given this, his goal in *Enlightenment in the Colony* is "to delineate central categories and narratives of liberal culture and thought concerning the question of minority existence – assimilation, emancipation, separatism, conversion, the language of state protection and minority rights, uprooting and exile, and homelessness – and the dialectic within which they are produced."

For Mufti it is clear that Jewishness in these negotiations was never a simple matter. What he is most interested in are what he called "the crises that have encircled the attributes of Jewishness in the process of elaboration of the structures, narratives, and forms of bourgeois culture and society in the West."³⁶ In other words, the liberal nation-state has a "Jewish problem" that is not resolvable through either assimilation or emancipation of the Jewish minority. For Mufti, these crises around Jewishness are decidedly not resolved in the claiming of a religious position at the center of Western culture, neither in Europe, nor, as I am suggesting, in the United States. According to Mufti, such crises include

the purported indifference of the liberal state and the troubling difference of the Jews; anxious and impossible claims about the autochthony of the people; the irrationality of bureaucratic rationalism; the uncanny (*unheimlich*) inflections of the mother tongue in "alien" hands; "mature" subjectivity and the force of tradition; patriotism and the terror of divided or ambiguous loyalties; and the recurring specter of Hebraism in modern literature and culture.³⁷

Returning to Herberg's text again, the case of the Jews is paradigmatic for thinking through the status of the minority in the liberal American mainstream that Hutchison has written about. Herberg returns to religion as a form of acceptable Jewish difference, predicated on the notion of a set of underlying shared beliefs that connect Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

³⁵ Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Without this commonality, there is no inclusion. In this schema, secular expressions, important as they may be to Jews, cannot secure the community's future in America. For that, Jews need to return to and recreate their Jewishness in modern religious terms.

In his discussion in chapter 10, the chapter on unity and tension where he also writes about the menace of pluralism, Herberg explains the importance of the separation of church and state for American Jews. "It is not difficult to understand why an extreme secularism and 'separationism' should appeal to so many American Jews as a defensive necessity." This fear has its roots in Jewish emancipation, a legacy that Jews are steadily overcoming, not unlike the Catholics who are shedding their parochialism. "At bottom, the attitude may be traced to the conviction, widely held though rarely articulated, that because the Western Jew achieved emancipation with the secularization of society, he can preserve his free and equal status only so long as culture and society remain secular."³⁸ I cite Herberg here at length precisely because in this instance I am *not* convinced he knows how to resolve this problem, even as he seems ultimately to want to dismiss these fears and concerns. Here Herberg's retelling seems instead only to reinforce their power.

Let but religion gain a significant place in the everyday life of the community, and the Jew, because he is outside the bounds of the dominant religion, will once again be relegated to the margins of society, displaced, disenfranchised culturally if not politically, shorn of rights and opportunities. The intrusion of religion into education and public life, the weakening of the "wall of separation" between religion and the state, is feared as only too likely to result in situations in which Jews would find themselves at a disadvantage – greater isolation, higher "visibility," and accentuation of minority status. The most elementary defense strategy would seem to dictate keeping religion out of education and public life at all costs; hence the passionate attachment of so many American Jews to the secularist-Protestant interpretation of the "separation."³⁹

Having elaborated this very powerful fear, Herberg does not fully resolve the problem. Instead he attempts to contain these same fears as much as possible by coupling them with a series of examples of "extravagant efforts at corporate self-validation." He seems to attempt to belittle and diffuse the power of these concerns by offering a set of rather trivial examples of such corporate self-validation. He cites, for example, the "extensive building programs that are being feverishly pursued by Jewish communities

³⁸ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 239.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

throughout the land,” which he frames as serving a “public relations function,” as well as the greater salaries and status of American rabbis.⁴⁰ Yet these examples of self-validation pale in comparison to the real urgency of the fears he has expressed. It seems instead that Herberg’s own text could itself be read as constituting an extravagant effort at Jewish self-validation, a way of overcoming precisely these strangely persistent fears and concerns. The contrast between his examples and his enactment of such self-validation is telling in itself, demonstrating how unprocessed this fear really is in his argument. To add to this assessment, most tellingly, Herberg concludes this account of the Jewish community by stating that “considerations of minority-group validation and defense thus enter into every phase and aspect of Jewish life in America.” Despite everything he has tried to say, this is the pervasive condition of American Jewish life.

Mufti argues that the crisis of meaning produces “minority cultural practices that critique the dominant culture and its majoritarian affiliations.”⁴¹ The minority exercises an agency that at once transforms its vision of itself, its performance of its identity, and the performance of the dominant. In this case, Herberg not only creates a new Jewish and a new American identity: he creates a new “common faith” within which American Jews are situated. Within the terms of Herberg’s own argument, the incomplete nature of Jewish assimilation is presumably not a problem. Problematic differences – ethnic, cultural, and linguistic – are the remnants of an earlier generation. This is the hopeful tenor of his profoundly teleological vision.

Nonetheless, although these lingering fears and tensions should be merely the remnants of an earlier stage of Jewish social development according to Herberg, his text tells a different story. In these moments he is hardly convincing. When he returns to the promise and hopes of emancipation, those foundational promises of the liberal state, he cannot escape their reliance on secularization; almost despite himself, he expresses his admiration and even gratitude to that legacy. In other words, the optimism and progressivism of his larger argument seem less convincing as he returns to the realities of Jewish minority existence and the persistence of such “remnants” of Jewish difference. These passages speak to contemporary American Jewish concerns about the place of Jews in America even today. They suggest the ways that this vision of religious pluralism cannot fully address the status of many of America’s minorities, not only Jews and Catholics.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴¹ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 3.

THE DIVERSITY OF THE PRESENT

According to the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, in 2004 there were forty-seven different Christian denominations in the United States.⁴² These include a full range of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions. Perhaps most tellingly, the Ontario study documents the breadth of the Protestant communities effaced by the liberal mainstream vision of Protestantism at the heart of Herberg's text: African American congregations, Asian and Latino/Chicano denominations, as well as the full range of religiously conservative Protestants – Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and other Bible-carrying congregations.⁴³ There are also numerous orders of women religious; monastic and other priestly orders; liberal, feminist, and queer Catholics; Catholic Workers; as well as the various regional archdioceses. Likewise there are Greek, Russian, and Ukrainian Orthodox churches as well as a distinctive Armenian Christian community. There are also a range of Syrian and Lebanese Christian communities (Syrian Orthodox and Maronite communities), as well as Coptic Christians from Egypt and communities of Indian Christians. This listing is just a thumb-nail sketch of the complex diversity of Christian positions in the contemporary United States.

The range of Jewish positions is, in some sense, even more complicated because, contrary to Herberg's prediction, not all Jews identify themselves as "religious." Some even go so far as to estimate that a major portion of the American Jewish community self-identifies as secular.⁴⁴ This remains the case despite broader social pressures for Jews to define themselves in religious terms in the United States. Further, although many Americans are aware of only three or four Jewish movements that are equivalent to Jewish denominations, the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist movements, the reality on the ground is more complex. Among Orthodox Jews there is a full range of ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi sects including numerous Hasidic communities. There is also a variety of modern Orthodox communities and movements with their own communal organizations. In addition to all of these groups, there are growing numbers of Jews connected to the neo-Hasidic progressive and

⁴² See www.religioustolerance.org/us_rel2.htm for a full listing. They offer numbers for 2004 and 1996.

⁴³ See David Watt, *Bible-Carrying Christians: Conservative Protestants and Social Power* (New York, 2002).

⁴⁴ For more specific data, especially on the large number of secular Jews in America, see the work of the Institute for the Study of Secularism and Society and Culture, and their American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2001, found at <http://prog.trincoll.edu/ISSSC/DataArchive/index.asp>.

egalitarian Jewish renewal movement, which is, by and large, not congregationally based and includes Jews from all kinds of other congregations, as well as large numbers of unaffiliated Jews.⁴⁵ There are congregations of black Hebrew and Israelite communities who define themselves as Jews but who have not always been acknowledged or embraced by mainstream Jewish organizations. These communities are becoming increasingly visible in twenty-first-century American Jewish life.⁴⁶ There are also messianic Jewish congregations whose theologies include faith in Jesus Christ; these congregations also challenge the boundaries of what it means to be Jewish. There are Karaite, nonrabbinic communities, and humanistic or secular Jewish congregations, as well as a range of Sephardi and Mizrahi communities of Jews in the United States including large Persian and Syrian communities in major urban centers such as Los Angeles and New York. Alongside these congregations are secular Jews, a large percentage of whom are not affiliated with congregations, for whom Jewishness is not about religion or faith or any kind of congregational structure. For these Jews, Jewishness is about culture, politics, languages, foods, family, and larger communities. Among, between, and within these various communities is a range of positions on Israel, on issues of gender and sexuality, and on other key questions of American politics. Although American Jews have been characterized as largely politically liberal or left-leaning, there is again a range of positions, including a growing number of American Jews who have moved to the right politically and are involved in neoconservative politics.⁴⁷ These kinds of political commitments also cut across all of these communities with contradictions within even the mainstream movements.

To account for this breadth and diversity, for the messiness of any one of these Christian or Jewish positions, Maria Lugones' feminist concept of *mestizaje* offers a powerful alternative to the logic of pluralism and its insistence on group representation, or the demand that a singular voice

⁴⁵ For an excellent account of Jewish renewal through the lens of its founder, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, see Shaul Magid, "Rainbow Hasidism in America – The Maturation of Jewish Renewal," *Reconstructionist*, Spring 2004, 34–60.

⁴⁶ For recent work on these communities of Jews and the broader range of Jews of color, see Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz, *The Color of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism* (Bloomington, IN, 2007); Diane Tobin et al., eds., *In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People* (San Francisco, 2007); Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch, eds., *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism* (New York, 2000); and Susan Chevlowe, *The Jewish Identity Project: New American Photography* (New Haven, 2005). See also the work of the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies at Temple University and its director, Lewis Gordon, at <http://www.temple.edu/isrst/affiliates/CAJS.asp>.

⁴⁷ Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York, 2005).

speak for each distinct community. Lugones' approach also challenges us to reconsider our underlying assumptions about heterogeneity and its relationship to homogeneity that bolster most visions of religious and other forms of pluralism. This logic, as Lugones insists, suggests that heterogeneity emerges out of what was once a unified whole. As such, heterogeneity must be understood as a departure from that unity. Thus even when acknowledged, heterogeneity is figured as a problem that must be contained. This assumption is not so different from Herberg's notion of a singular, unified American way of life. His notion that there is an underlying faith that can be expressed in three (but only three) ways also means that deviation from one of these sanctioned modes is considered problematic or unacceptable.

In order to reject the notion of a binary between heterogeneity and homogeneity, which are set in an asymmetrical and developmental relationship, I want to denaturalize this all-too-pervasive way of thinking about religious diversity. Toward this end, I turn to the cultural theorist Ranu Samantrai, who cogently describes this liberal pluralist dynamic in the context of multiculturalism in contemporary Great Britain.⁴⁸ Samantrai, as does Lugones, helps us see what is otherwise invisible. As Samantrai explains, the British form of multiculturalism is built on a series of unexamined premises. These include the idea that "(1) homogeneity precedes heterogeneity; (2) that the latter is recent and problematic; and (3) heterogeneity of the whole does not compromise homogeneity of the parts." As Samantrai goes on to argue, these assumptions "strengthen the line of differentiation between various cultures or religions until it eclipses alignments that might cut across communal boundaries and suppresses contradictions that may complicate the coherence from within."⁴⁹ These are precisely what make it difficult to account for even my extremely brief overview of the range of Jewish and Christian communities in the contemporary United States. It is this logic that Lugones resists as she "investigate[s] the politics of purity and how they bear on the politics of separation."⁵⁰

By addressing the connections between impurity and resistance, Lugones asks us to reconsider the virtues of impurity as a form of resistance. Building on the experience of those who inhabit the borderland between Mexico and the United States, she offers a radical vision of a profoundly mixed culture that cannot be separated into discrete parts. As she explains, her term for this *mestizaje* is "an example of and a metaphor for both impurity and

⁴⁸ Ranu Samantrai, "Continuity or Rupture? An Argument for Secular Britain," in Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 339.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lugones, "Purity, Impurity," 458.

resistance,” which allows her to challenge interlocking and intermeshed forms of oppressions within the United States.⁵¹

In order to act on these insights and extending this vision of *mestizaje* to the United States as a whole, Lugones goes on to describe the dominant logic of purity she finds in this country. Here, as does Samantria, she insists on denaturalizing the notion that there is some underlying coherence to American culture. She focuses on the cluster of concepts, “control, purity, unity, categorizing,”⁵² and uses these concepts to describe how unification and homogeneity order the social world. As she explains, “Unification requires a fragmented and hierarchical ordering. Fragmentation is another guise of unity, both in the collectivity and the individual.”⁵³ Lugones denaturalizes these assumptions by then reminding us of “the ahistoricity of the logic of purity” and how it “hides the construction of unity”⁵⁴ in the first place. In this way she begins to undo these operative assumptions.

Lugones then goes on to advocate a vision of heterogeneity that is not premised on an underlying unity. She does this in order to make conceptual space for precisely the kinds of diversity and complexity that characterize Judaism and Christianity as lived traditions in the contemporary United States. In her account, such social collectivities in a genuinely heterogeneous society are heterogeneous in and of themselves. They cannot fit together neatly as pieces to a whole, whether a Protestant, a Catholic, or an Orthodox Christian whole, or, for that matter, any number of Jewish wholes. By contrast, Lugones lets go of the notion that we need such unities to begin with, suggesting that once an assumption of an underlying unity is established, power is already at play, and the relationships among and between different positions are already figured in hierarchical terms. Such hierarchies cannot account for the kind of internal diversity we see among and between all kinds of American Christians and Jews, which is precisely why I suggest we shift our paradigm toward what Lugones is advocating.

Returning to Hutchison and Baird, what Lugones challenges is the very need for an “essence” in order to define groups in relation to an underlying whole and thus to each other. Instead, she suggests that there need not already be some normative position to represent the group as a whole, as if there is or ever were a single whole.

Moreover, she reminds us that these engagements do not happen in a vacuum, but in a cultural context that is already figured in hierarchical

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 458–9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 463.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 465.

terms. Here even the most well-intended efforts at imagining an American religious pluralism are still, as even Herberg reminds us, very much Protestant-inflected. In other words, even in these well-meaning projects of pluralism, a dominant Protestant norm remains. Although often invisible, as if it simply represented “the way things are,” the dominant Protestant culture bears within itself a cultural norm that defines all others in relation to it.⁵⁵ This is the norm to which other communities need to aspire. In the slippage between the modern or the secular and the Protestant, domination remains. Although invisible, these assumptions still define the whole without ever dismantling the asymmetries of power that are the stuff of the interlocking and overlapping forms of oppression Lugones wants to resist.

In this case, the Judeo-Christian faith is very much a Protestant construct that masks both the persistence of a Protestant norm as well as the desires of Jewish others to be included in that triumphant position.⁵⁶

In the twenty-first century we are still struggling with this legacy, groping for ways not to repeat these mechanisms of oppression as we name and celebrate our diversity. I have turned to Lugones to raise a cautionary note about any easy way out of this dilemma. Simply not using the term “Judeo-Christian” will not solve the underlying problem. Instead, we need to rethink our broader investment in notions of unity as they continue to haunt our engagements with religious and cultural heterogeneity. If we do not assume that there was once or eventually will be an underlying unity and that differences need to be fixed, contained, or neatened, we might better appreciate the messy realities of even Jewish and Christian heterogeneity within the contemporary United States. Such a stance might also enable us to imagine better how other religious, ethnic, and cultural communities are also transforming American ways of life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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⁵⁵ On this issue of the invisibility of the dominant Protestant ethos, see Tracy Fessenden “Disappearances: Race, Religion, and the Progress Narrative of U.S. Feminism,” in Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 139–61.

⁵⁶ Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian,” offers an excellent critique of this legacy. On the issue of Jews’ standing in for the dominant Christians and the relationship between the Judeo-Christian and postcolonial criticism, see Marshall Grossman, “The Violence of the Hyphen in Judeo-Christian,” *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 115–22, and Yerach Cover, “Why Be a Nebbish? A Response to Marshall Grossman,” *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 123–9.

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INTERROGATING THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION: WILL HERBERG'S CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN RELIGION, RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF INCLUSION

LAURA LEVITT

Although the notion of the Judeo-Christian tradition has in many ways become passé in the academic study of religion, it remains very much a part of popular political and legal discourse. It continues to shape an imagined mainstream or dominant culture in the United States. This essay offers a reevaluation of this legacy from within religious studies, in part by considering the range and diversity of contemporary expressions of Judaism and Christianity – the very traditions that were to have been defined by this legacy. By rereading Will Herberg's classic statement of the Jewish-Christian postwar consensus, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, I reconsider the lasting power of this concept.¹ I offer a close reading against the grain of Herberg's text, with special attention to the way Jews figure in his work in order to examine the fault lines in his position. In so doing, I open up discursive space in the present for other ways of imagining social inclusion.

Although many have continued to build on Herberg's vision of liberal inclusion by adding other traditions to his triple melting pot, this strategy is, I argue, quite problematic.² Instead of making room for all kinds of other religious traditions or even the diversity among, between, and within various Jewish and Christian communities and commitments, Herberg's classic statement of the Judeo-Christian consensus was, in fact, an attempt to contain such diversity within a single, unified, normative vision of religion in America.

¹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York, 1960), 1955.

² Examples include the various efforts at interreligious engagement, the Pluralism Project at Harvard, <http://pluralism.org/>; the Dialogue Institute at Temple University, <http://institute.jesdialogue.org/about/>; and the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College, <http://www.bc.edu/centers/boisi/home.html>, among others.

THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN FAITH

Herberg names this single shared Judeo-Christian tradition “the Jewish-Christian faith,” describing it as “the basic theological outlook underlying both Judaism and Christianity as biblical religions.” He goes on to say that “in this view, Judaism and Christianity are understood as two religions sharing a common faith.”³ Herberg’s quintessential statement of religious inclusion is thus very much a theologically unified vision.⁴ This vision has, in fact, a much longer history in the United States and is very much a part of the liberal theological tradition of the American Protestant establishment. Although Herberg offers a version of the Neo-Orthodox critique of the liberal tradition in terms of its optimism, he, as do his Protestant mentors and teachers, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, remains firmly within this tradition. Herberg credits the Niebuhrs with his return to religion; in the discussion of this “Jewish-Christian tradition,” he also cites the work of Paul Tillich.⁵

As the distinguished historian of American religion William Hutchison suggested, “All of the distinguishing liberal positions, but most of all the rationale for religion’s adaptation to culture, relied upon a theoretical distinction between form and substance: according to this understanding, creedal and other forms are temporary and changeable, while the substance of any faith is permanent and immutable.” As Hutchison goes on to argue, the liberal tradition is very much the legacy of “Western Christianity’s encounters with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and then with Romanticism in the nineteenth.”⁶ The interaction produced a Christianity that was both modern and immutable even in its engagement with other religious traditions. This is the liberal tradition that Herberg affirms in the name of the Jewish-Christian tradition.

Liberal Protestant Christianity was produced through its engagements with other religious traditions. Not only did liberal Protestant theological discourse make these distinctions from within, but in a sense, as the philosopher of religion Robert Baird suggests, the Enlightenment itself produced “religion” as a new modern category, more specifically, natural religion.⁷ This

³ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 273.

⁴ See, for example, Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America,” *American Quarterly* 36:1 (Spring 1984): 65–85.

⁵ See note 1 to Herberg’s final theological chapter, “Religion in America in the Perspective of Faith.”

⁶ William Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT, 2003), 117.

⁷ Robert Baird, “Boys of the *Wissenschaft*,” in Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, eds., *Judaism Since Gender* (New York, 1997), 86–93.

new category not only solidified the place of Christianity in Enlightenment culture, but was also used as a way of reasserting the superiority of Christianity to the traditions of the various other peoples the West was encountering through its colonial and imperial adventures. The category of “religion” thus functions to allow Enlightenment thought both to distinguish itself as secular reason and to figure religious diversity as contained within a hierarchy, with liberal Protestantism at its apex.

Robert Baird writes about these issues in relation to the efforts of the “*Wissenschaft des Judentums*” to produce a proper object of Jewish study in the nineteenth-century German context, an effort that mimicked the role of liberal Protestants in Enlightenment discourse more broadly construed. As such, there is a “veiled Christianness” to this form of Jewish renewal. As Baird explains, “The *Wissenschaft*’s deployment of a ‘Jewish essence’ ... has a specific Christian history in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates about natural religion.”⁸ Baird makes clear that these kinds of “essentialized definitions of religion emerge ... in the seventeenth-century ‘inundation of data’ about the diversities of human belief, ancient and modern, uncovered by contemporary linguists, missionaries, and explorers.” For Baird, this veiled Christianness was ironic because it lay at the heart of these Jewish efforts to celebrate and affirm Jewish texts and traditions. I turn to Baird here because he helps explain the ways in which modernization is often already formed through Christian ways of thinking and conceptualizing the world. In this case, he makes clear the veiled Christianness of Enlightened or modern thinking more broadly construed, including, as we will see, Herberg’s mid-twentieth-century efforts to affirm a Jewish-Christian tradition as the American way of life.

Baird goes on to argue:

This notion of a universal or natural form of religion emerges as part of a Christian theological response to the question provoked by pluralism: Which religion is more fundamental than these competing religions? The answer is obviously a natural religion, whose essence is stable, which can be identified across ages, and which defines what constitutes “the religious dimension” of life.⁹

In other words, the very encounter with other traditions helped produce and solidify the centrality and dominance of Christianity, especially forms of Protestant Christianity, in Europe as well as the United States. In the American context, this enabled Herberg to find a place for Jews at the center of the American way of life. Not unlike Baird’s account of the early German Jewish *Wissenschaftlers* who created Jewish studies using the terms

⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

of Enlightenment religion to legitimate their endeavor, American Jews argued for their own inclusion in the American mainstream by refiguring their Judaism into a form of liberal Protestant religion.

As Hutchison explained, already in the nineteenth century liberal Protestants in the United States appealed to Darwin as “a new language and a new set of scientific justifications” to deal with religious diversity on these shores. For a generation, argued Hutchison, these religious thinkers “had been moving toward an inclusionary response to religious diversities.”¹⁰ Although Hutchison was more hopeful than Baird in his assessment of this discourse as a means to inclusion, he also showed how it became a model for others to lay claim to their proper place within the dominant culture of America. By the late nineteenth century, inclusion was a principal goal and expectation for various religious others. Echoing Herberg’s vision, Hutchison explained:

That pattern was clearest among Jews and Catholics. More specifically, the drive for inclusionary pluralism as the American way was central to the liberal movements within each of these major non-Protestant faiths. Through most of the century, especially after 1850, both Jewish and Catholic liberals warned their coreligionists around the Western world that those faiths, if they were to survive at all, must adapt to modern conditions and must look to America as the advance guard of everything good in modernity.¹¹

As we will see, this notion that the future of these other traditions – or that of Protestantism, for that matter – depended on their adaptation to modernity, on their ability to conform to a liberal or modern version of Judaism or Catholicism, is not so clear. The demand for conformity to these norms as a matter of necessity did not pan out. As we now know, various forms of Christianity and Judaism that are decidedly neither modern nor liberal continue and even thrive in the contemporary United States. Despite this, the demand for conformity to the liberal inclusionary discourse of the Judeo-Christian tradition persists and has yet to be thoroughly challenged. In terms of the way we think about religious diversity, as I will argue, such adaptation is neither necessary nor desirable.¹² The very idea that Jews and Jewishness need only be understood in terms of religion only adds to the difficulties involved in this classic American vision of pluralism.¹³ Already

¹⁰ Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism*, 122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² This is all the more the case in the present with regard to Islam. See, for example, Saba Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reform,” *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006): 323–47.

¹³ See Laura Levitt, “Impossible Assimilations, American Liberalism, and Jewish Difference: Revisiting Jewish Secularism,” in R. Marie Griffith and Melani McAllister,

in Herberg's 1955 text, Jews are very much an ethnocultural minority community and not necessarily a religion, despite Herberg's claims to the contrary. Jews remain a community that, in many ways, does not conform to the dominant American way of life he spells out. Therefore, contrary to Herberg's insistence on the centrality of Jews to the American story and his repeated dismissal of nonreligious or ethnic forms of Jewish expression, his text makes clear the fragility of his liberal vision of inclusion.

In what follows, I offer a rereading of Herberg's argument in three parts. First, I read Herberg's grand narrative through the lens of his own immigration story to see how he constructs the American way of life with Jews as exemplary Americans. Second, I revisit Herberg's explicit discussion of religious pluralism to make clear his discomfort, contra Hutchison, with the whole notion of pluralism. Third, concluding my close reading of Herberg, I focus on a crucial passage where he discusses the separation of church and state in relation to Jews. I read this passage through the lens of Aamir Mufti's *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*¹⁴ to suggest how Herberg's triple melting pot cannot overcome the minority status of Jews, as he promised it would over time.

Leaving Herberg's text in the final section of this essay, I return to the problems of natural religion, liberal theology, pluralism, and the Judeo-Christian tradition. I look at the diversity and complexity of contemporary American expressions of Jewishness and Christianity, turning to the feminist theorist Maria Lugones.¹⁵ Building on Lugones' use of the concept of *mestizaje* to critique the logic of purity and separation at the heart of liberal pluralism, I look more fully at the issues of power and domination that inform the legacy of the liberal Judeo-Christian consensus. Through Lugones, I consider how a different notion of tradition and the self that is less unified and uniform could offer us a more supple approach to cultural and religious inclusion. I will argue that this approach might make it possible for us to account better for the breadth, depth, and sheer diversity of contemporary forms of Jewish and Christian expression in the United States. By the same token, it might also permit us to address and engage with the various other religious and cultural communities who are by now very much a part of American culture. As Lugones makes clear, for this to work, we need to take seriously the ongoing power of precisely the liberal Protestant establishment in defining and constraining what constitutes the

guest eds., *American Quarterly* 59:3 (Fall 2007): 817–42, and "Other Moderns, Other Jews: Rereading Jewish Secularism in America" in Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Secularisms* (Durham, NC, 2008), 107–38.

¹⁴ Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, 2007).

¹⁵ Maria Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," *Signs* 19:2 (Winter 1994): 458–79.

American way of life, its culture and religion, and, perhaps most especially, its Judeo-Christian vision of pluralism.

EXEMPLARY AMERICANS

Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* has been termed the classic statement about American religion in the middle of the twentieth century by the noted religious historian Martin Marty.¹⁶ Rereading Herberg's text for the inclusion of Jews in "the American way of life," as he calls it, suggests both his hopes for and his anxieties about this project. Although Herberg offers a deeply optimistic vision of progressive inclusion across religious difference, he makes clear the challenges and limits that mark these engagements.

Will Herberg turned to this project as a former member of the American Communist Party and as a newly religious Jew. He was born in Russia in 1901 to "atheist socialist" Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States in 1904.¹⁷ In many respects, the grand narrative he tells in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* is very much his own story of immigration. It is a story about how the various others who immigrated to America from Europe became Americans, with Jews figuring as paradigmatic in this account.

As Herberg explains, American Jewry "exemplified with exceptional clarity the fundamental restructuring of American society which transformed 'the land of immigrants' into the 'triple melting pot.' Nothing is more characteristically American than the historical evolution of American Jewry, revealing, as it does, the inner pattern of American social development."¹⁸ By setting up the narrative of America in this way, Herberg takes Jews from a minority ethnic community into the very heart of the majority culture, defining them as the quintessential Americans. In making this claim, he follows closely a much longer American Jewish tradition that the historian Jonathan Sarna has called "the cult of synthesis in American Jewish culture."¹⁹ By making America into "the triple melting pot," Herberg puts Jews on an equal footing with Protestants and Catholics, using religious difference to maintain and solidify the place of Jews in this country. To do this, he restricts from the outset the right to define what it means to be an American.

Although this statement of the critical role of Jews in defining the American story appears late in Herberg's text, I suggest that by rereading the book backward, it builds a narrative about America and American

¹⁶ See Joel Schwartz, "Protestant, Catholic, Jew," *Public Interest* 155 (Spring 2004): 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 172.

¹⁹ See Jonathan Sarna, "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 5:1 (Fall 1998/Winter 1999): 52–79.

religion from his own story as a Jewish immigrant, following closely his own evolution from a secular Jewish communist into a decidedly anti-Communist theological Jew. Herberg's self-transformation compresses Marcus Hansen's theory of the third generation – the very theory that represents, for Herberg, the inner pattern of American social development.²⁰ By making his larger argument in this way, Herberg, in effect, secures a permanent place for Jews (and for himself) at the very heart of American life. He also takes full advantage of the closing off of immigration in 1924 to account more fully for the importance of the 1950s in his story about this legacy of immigration.

Herberg's text opens with the postwar resurgence of religious affiliation in America. He wants to explain this resurgence as a natural progression, as communities traverse from immigrant, to ethnic, to religious affiliation, as a way of appreciating both the unity and diversity of the American way of life. He wants to account for the simultaneity in the present of a rampant secularism and religious belief by pointing to a deeper evolving unity. As he explains:

It is the thesis of the present work that both the religiousness and the secularism of the American people derive from very much the same sources, and that both become more intelligible when seen against the background of certain deep-going sociological processes that have transformed the face of American life in the course of the past generation. The distinctive character of American religiosity, so perplexing at first sight in its contradictions and discrepancies, becomes somewhat more intelligible when so interpreted, and the entire religious situation is viewed in its essential relation to the inner development of American society. American religion and American society would seem to be so closely interrelated as to make it virtually impossible to understand either without reference to the other.²¹

For Herberg, the former Communist, the notion of an underlying historical trajectory, the sense that there is indeed an inner logic to the way that history unfolds, continues to shape his newly found religious identification. In this telling, the logic is generational. The inner development of American society that Herberg traces follows closely Hansen's "principle of the third-generation interest" – what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember." As Herberg explains, the third generation "has no reason to feel any inferiority when they look around them." American-born, the third generation has shed

the immigrant foreignness, the hopelessly double alienation of the generation that preceded it; it has become American in a sense that had been, by

²⁰ Marcus Hansen, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, IL, 1938).

²¹ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 3.

and large, impossible for the immigrants and their children. That problem, at least, was solved; but its solution paradoxically rendered more acute the perennial problem of “belonging” and self-identification. They were Americans, but what *kind* of Americans?²²

Herberg does not want Jews or other immigrants simply to become Americans; he argues that the third generation wants to belong to the dominant culture, but without losing something unique from the immigrant inheritance. Unlike the ethnicity of the second generation, which Herberg describes as transitional and ultimately temporary, the abiding and critical legacy that is the inheritance of the third generation is precisely religion.

For Herberg, religion offers the third generation “a way of defining their place in American society in a way that would sustain their Americanness and yet confirm the tie that bound them to their forebears, whom they now no longer had any reason to reject, whom indeed, for the sake of ‘heritage’ they now want to ‘remember.’” He dedicates the book to this generation: “those of the Third Generation upon whose ‘return’ so much of the future of religion in America depends.”²³

This claiming of a religious legacy is not just a Jewish phenomenon for Herberg; it is very much the American story. It shows how immigrants become American and how they do so without relinquishing the legacy of immigration itself. The pattern is shared among immigrants as they emerge in three distinctive religious communities – Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – that together mark the history of primarily European immigration to the United States. Although the specific content of these three religious inheritances differs, what they share is the pattern, the sociological trajectory toward an embrace of one of these three religions in the third generation.

Herberg supplements Hansen’s theory with the empirical evidence of survey data and sociological studies to make his argument that over time, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences are overcome, so that what remains is ultimately religious difference. For this to be the case, the religion of American culture needs to be broadly construed so that its instantiations can be plural. This broader vision of the dominant religion is what Herberg terms “the triple melting pot.” These three faiths remain distinct but are contained within a single frame. Together all the strands strengthen the unity of the whole. Once configured in this way, each of these religions becomes a pillar crucial to a unitary religious vision of American culture. Jews stand on an equal footing with Protestants and Catholics at the heart of this American story.

²² *Ibid.*, 30–1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31.

In contrast to the dilemmas of the second generation, who typically choose between assimilation and a kind of cultural separatism, either becoming American or maintaining their ethnicity, the third generation could be both American and a part of one of these still distinct religious communities. Thus, according to Herberg, as cultural and ethnic differences inevitably fade away over the generations, what returns in the third generation is religion, a deeper and more abiding version of their ancestral immigrant heritage. This familial inheritance is expressed powerfully in the form of one of these three great religious communities.

To make this case, Herberg turns to social science. His challenge is to show that affiliation into these three religious communities is, in fact, what happens over time, to sustain his argument that this is how immigrants become American. He needs to show both that Hansen's theory is correct and that what is reclaimed is indeed religion. Significantly, Herberg uses data on intermarriage to prove that, unlike ethnicity or culture, religious affiliation does not fade away, basing his argument on Ruby Jo Kennedy's investigation of intermarriage trends in New Haven, Connecticut.²⁴ For Herberg, this single study becomes the proof text for his position. Kennedy, who analyzed data from 1870, 1900, 1930, and 1940, argued that the various nationalities represented in the materials she looked at are subsumed under these three religious communities over time. Although national origins become increasingly less of a factor in decisions about whom to marry, the distinctions among Protestant, Catholic, and Jew become much more important. Kennedy's analysis offers a haunting echo of the persistent role of marriage in determining the fortunes of Jewish communities, dating back to the beginnings of the era of Jewish emancipation.²⁵

For Herberg, Kennedy's study signals the future of religious affiliation and a shift away from ethnic, national, or cultural allegiances, again linking Hansen's theory of the third generation to Kennedy's study. The future, for Herberg, is all about America as a religious country built along the lines of these three central faith traditions.

There is something almost organic for Herberg about this trope of three in one. The triple melting pot reinforces both the unity of American culture

²⁴ Ruby Jo Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot?" *American Journal of Sociology* (1944), as cited by Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 42, note 10.

²⁵ See, for example, Susan Shapiro, "The Status of Women and Jews in Moses Mendelssohn's Social Contract Theory an Exceptional Case," *German Quarterly* 82:3 (Summer 2009): 373–94, as well as my discussion of these issues in *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home* (New York, 1997). For a discussion of intermarriage in mid-twentieth-century American Jewish life and the importance of Kennedy's study, among others, see Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley, 2009).

and its support of religious difference as an acceptable form of difference. Part of what is so striking about this structure is the centrality of Jews. In this vision Herberg makes what was, even then, a very small percentage of the population into a vital piece of its center. This is not really about religious pluralism, but a way of defining the American way of life and its “common faith” as Judeo-Christian. As Herberg explains:

When the plurality of denominations comprehended in religious communities is seen from the standpoint of the “common faith” of American society, what emerges is the conception of the three “communions” – Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism – as three diverse, but equally legitimate, equally American expressions of an overall American religion standing for essentially the same “moral ideals” and “spiritual values.” . . . “Democracy” apparently has its religions which fall under it as species fall under the genus of which they are a part. And in this usage “democracy” is obviously a synonym for the American Way of Life.²⁶

Given this three-in-one vision of the American way of life, what happens when we return to the question of inclusion? Jews are here, but on what terms? What is the status of other religious traditions within this structure? Is there room for other religious others? Can we just “add and stir,” as feminist scholars have asked in another context about gender difference? Moreover, given this structure, what are we to make of the differences within any of these three communions?

PLURALISM AS A MENACE TO SOCIETY

In “The Three Religious Communities: Unity and Tension,” the penultimate chapter of *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, Herberg writes of the dangers of pluralism with specific reference to “a much-noted editorial in *The Christian Century*, entitled ‘Pluralism – National Menace.’” As Herberg explains, “‘the threat of a plural society based on religious differences’ confronts the nation, the editorial asserts and the prime promoters of this threat are the Catholics.” Here pluralism is defined as “a society ‘comprising two or more elements which lie side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unity.’” The editorial writer and Herberg both make clear the dangers of this form of religious pluralism. Without an underlying national unity, religious pluralism is dangerous, with the proliferation of parochial schools, Catholic civic clubs, veterans’ organizations, and political lobbies figured as threats to this unity.²⁷

²⁶ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 236ff.

This image of a threatening religious pluralism makes clear the tension at the heart of Herberg's vision. Although he is routinely credited with promoting a normative vision of American religious pluralism, his text indicates the significant limits of this vision of religious inclusion. Herberg does not put forward an idea of many traditions existing side by side. Rather, he advocates an underlying singular vision that contains acceptable differences within very clear boundaries.

As he goes on to explain, "The radical evil of a plural society . . . is that 'it can have no common will; it makes for national instability; it puts an undue emphasis on material things; [and] it nullifies the unifying function of education.'" ²⁸ Having set up this argument, he makes clear that there are real challenges to be overcome on the road to producing that unified vision. He uses this challenge to reinforce his progressive vision of America's religious culture. In this particular case, he focuses on the growing integration of then-contemporary Catholics into his own broader vision of difference within clearly defined limits.

According to Herberg, this desired sociological transformation was already in process and would quell the kinds of dangers *The Christian Century* described. Herberg's approach to dealing with such differences was to contain them. He insisted on seeing them as a part of a passing phase that was resolving itself even as the editorial was published in the 1950s.

This account of the "menace" of religious pluralism helps to denaturalize Herberg's position. As much as Herberg advocates religion as "a normal part of American life," he sets up the boundaries of what counts as normal throughout his book. Although his vision has been deployed, perhaps uncritically, to advocate a contemporary religious pluralism, I want to be clear that, in his own words, the move to include "other others" is not as simple as it might appear. The addition of other religious others, which is often the strategy of contemporary forms of civic religious pluralism in the United States – the interfaith Thanksgiving ceremony or prayer breakfast that now regularly includes Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus alongside various Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – is not what Herberg had in mind. As he explains, "Not to identify oneself and be identified as . . . either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is somehow not to be an American. It may imply being foreign, as is the case when one professes oneself a Buddhist, a Muslim, or anything but a Protestant, Catholic or Jew, even when one's Americanness is otherwise beyond question." ²⁹ Even when Herberg describes the embrace of religion as the abiding legacy of the third generation early on in his text, claiming "[t]hat is, at bottom, why no one is expected to change his

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 257–8.

religion as he becomes an American, since each of the religions is equally and authentically American,” he makes clear in a note that this does not apply to all religions. Instead, he writes:

That does not mean that *every* religion is so regarded. All religions, of course, are entitled to, and receive, equal freedom and protection under the Constitution, but not all are felt to be really American and therefore to be retained with Americanization. The Buddhism of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, for example, is definitely felt to be something foreign in a way that Lutheranism, or even Catholicism, never was; the Americanization of the Chinese and Japanese immigrant is usually felt by the immigrant himself, as well as by the surrounding American community, to involve dropping the non-American faith and becoming a Catholic or a Protestant.³⁰

I cite this note in full to make clear again some of the real points of tension in this depiction of the immigrant story of the embrace of religious continuity. In the case of Buddhists from China and Japan, Herberg shows his hand. At its heart, the Judeo-Christian legacy does not include room for a diversity of religious expression for immigrants who do not already share in this quite specific religious inheritance. Moreover, he strikingly hopes in these cases that as a result of Americanization, these immigrants will become not Jewish, but either Catholic or Protestant. This too suggests the Christianness of his putatively Judeo-Christian vision.

In this same discussion, Herberg also makes clear his discomfort even with other Christian traditions that are neither Protestant nor Catholic. Describing such an instance in the context of reaffirming the importance of being able to name oneself via one of these three, Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, he writes of the army sergeant who demands of his recruits that they in fact identify themselves in precisely one of these three terms.³¹ “Well if you are not Catholic, or Protestant, or Hebrew, what in blazes are you?”³² For Herberg, the naturalization of these three choices is confirmed by the sergeant’s exasperation, which “gave voice to the prevailing view of contemporary America.” In the note that accompanies this account, Herberg offers the example of an “‘American of Russian extraction’ and spokesperson of Eastern Orthodoxy in the United States” who laments, “We [Eastern] Orthodox Catholics are indignant each time we hear about the Three Great Faiths. We know it should be Four, and individually we have tried to convince our fellow-Americans of this. But we have gotten

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

³¹ On the vital importance of the army and its chaplaincy in solidifying the position of Jews in the American way of life, see Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

³² Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 40.

nowhere.”³³ Instead of addressing the lament, Herberg simply uses it here again, as he did in the body of his text, to confirm the consensus. Commenting on this cry, Herberg concludes this note by explaining, “It would be interesting to discover how Mr. Lewis knows ‘it should be four’; obviously he takes the American scheme of the ‘three great faiths’ for granted, and merely wants to add his own fourth.” Herberg never engages the real question here; instead he is satisfied to confirm the inclusion of his own community in the three and leaves it at that.

Beyond the question of other religions, Herberg goes on to argue that these religious affiliations make one an American. National identity is at stake. To reinforce this claim, he goes on to include atheists, agnostics, and even humanists among those he wants explicitly to exclude from belonging, calling this latter group “obscurely un-American.” Here he makes clear his strong desire to define the limits and boundaries of what it means to be an American by defining the three-in-one religion of America in Cold War terms, over and against the godless Soviet Union.

Returning to America and its trouble with the un-Americans within its own borders, it is again important to make clear Herberg’s position. Not to be committed to one of “the three great faith traditions” is to be disloyal to American principles and tradition. This means, potentially, to be disloyal to the nation-state or, at the least, to be a minority whose allegiances could be questioned. Not only this, Herberg is, as he makes quite clear, suspicious of the very notion of the minority in American life. He argues that even in politics, ethnic identities were giving way to Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliations, and he refuses to deal with issues of race at all. For him this move to religious affiliation is extremely positive, a sign of progress, because the notion of discrimination against minorities or the problem of minorities is extremely troubling – and perhaps again, un-American. As he explains, “The term, ‘minorities,’ is singularly inappropriate to American reality. It was borrowed from the vocabulary of European nationalism during World War I, and has virtually no meaning in a country where, on the one hand, everyone belongs to a minority, of some sort, and, on the other, no permanent and self-perpetuating national minorities of any size are known.”³⁴ For a former Jewish Communist, this is an extraordinary claim, which speaks more to his own fears and concerns precisely about Jews being seen as such a minority element in America. He did not want to be considered a part of any Jewish nationalist (that is, Zionist) or internationalist movement that could in any way challenge Jewish loyalties to this country. Here we see most clearly the political context in which Herberg was writing – very much in the midst of McCarthyism. The stakes were high.

³³ *Ibid.*, 45, note 29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43, note 18.

In all of these various moments in his text, Herberg makes clear his fervent commitment to his newfound religious anti-Communism as well as his profound loyalty to a religious vision of the American way of life and its underlying religious unity. Despite its threefold expression, this vision is, and (it seems to me) must be, unitary. Here Herberg follows his teacher H. Richard Niebuhr in this trinitarian notion of the “three communions.” This connection to H. Richard Niebuhr runs throughout the book and is especially important in chapter 5, “The Religion of Americans and American Religion.” In these moments we see some of the traces of his own insecurity, that is, his need to secure his own place in the mainstream.

Read symptomatically, I want to suggest, this insistence on unity marks a kind of excess in his text, signaling some of his own discomfort around his own Jewish otherness. In this case, I am thinking of his renunciation not only of his Communism, but also of his own family’s radical and decidedly secular Jewishness. For this program to work, for his own place in America to be secure, he must insist that all traces of this past be read as inevitably overcome, as merely an earlier stage of Jewish adaptation. Over time, the legacy of earlier generations of immigrant Jews will fade into obscurity, and, as he does, all Jews will then reclaim religion as the proper and abiding form of Jewish difference. In this way, full integration into the American way of life for Jews will be secured. In this telling, secular forms of Jewish expression must and will be superseded.

JEWS AS MINORITY, A POSTCOLONIAL RECONSIDERATION

In a different register, part of the problem I want to put in focus is what it means to write about the apparently “happy story” of Jews in America, raising questions about how we arrived at this mode of inclusion/exclusion, which I see as very much an incomplete and perhaps impossible project of integration or inclusion. For me, Herberg’s text illuminates the limits of liberal inclusion. To get some distance from the familiar logic of Herberg’s text, I find postcolonial theory helpful, not least because it enables us to see the dynamics of exclusion more clearly. It also helps us not take these assumptions for granted as the way things are, but rather to see them as cultural constructs that can be taken apart, examined, and reconsidered.

Aamir Mufti’s work on the relationship between Jewish minority status in Western Europe and its relation to the legacy of colonialism in South Asia is especially helpful, since he looks at Jews as the paradigmatic case of liberal inclusion of the minority in the West. The Jewish case shows most clearly the limits of precisely this minority position. This pattern is, as I

read it, adumbrated in the words of Herberg's text, despite and very much in the language of his own resistance to the notion of Jews as a minority.

Mufti argues that

in the "question" of the Jews' status in modern culture and society as it first came to be formulated in the late eighteenth century, what emerges is a set of paradigmatic narratives, conceptual frameworks, motifs, and formal relationships concerned with the question of minority existence, which are then disseminated globally in the emergence, under colonial and semicolonial conditions, of the forms of modern social, political, and cultural life.³⁵

Mufti goes on to say that, given this, his goal in *Enlightenment in the Colony* is "to delineate central categories and narratives of liberal culture and thought concerning the question of minority existence – assimilation, emancipation, separatism, conversion, the language of state protection and minority rights, uprooting and exile, and homelessness – and the dialectic within which they are produced."

For Mufti it is clear that Jewishness in these negotiations was never a simple matter. What he is most interested in are what he called "the crises that have encircled the attributes of Jewishness in the process of elaboration of the structures, narratives, and forms of bourgeois culture and society in the West."³⁶ In other words, the liberal nation-state has a "Jewish problem" that is not resolvable through either assimilation or emancipation of the Jewish minority. For Mufti, these crises around Jewishness are decidedly not resolved in the claiming of a religious position at the center of Western culture, neither in Europe, nor, as I am suggesting, in the United States. According to Mufti, such crises include

the purported indifference of the liberal state and the troubling difference of the Jews; anxious and impossible claims about the autochthony of the people; the irrationality of bureaucratic rationalism; the uncanny (*unheimlich*) inflections of the mother tongue in "alien" hands; "mature" subjectivity and the force of tradition; patriotism and the terror of divided or ambiguous loyalties; and the recurring specter of Hebraism in modern literature and culture.³⁷

Returning to Herberg's text again, the case of the Jews is paradigmatic for thinking through the status of the minority in the liberal American mainstream that Hutchison has written about. Herberg returns to religion as a form of acceptable Jewish difference, predicated on the notion of a set of underlying shared beliefs that connect Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

³⁵ Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Without this commonality, there is no inclusion. In this schema, secular expressions, important as they may be to Jews, cannot secure the community's future in America. For that, Jews need to return to and recreate their Jewishness in modern religious terms.

In his discussion in chapter 10, the chapter on unity and tension where he also writes about the menace of pluralism, Herberg explains the importance of the separation of church and state for American Jews. "It is not difficult to understand why an extreme secularism and 'separationism' should appeal to so many American Jews as a defensive necessity." This fear has its roots in Jewish emancipation, a legacy that Jews are steadily overcoming, not unlike the Catholics who are shedding their parochialism. "At bottom, the attitude may be traced to the conviction, widely held though rarely articulated, that because the Western Jew achieved emancipation with the secularization of society, he can preserve his free and equal status only so long as culture and society remain secular."³⁸ I cite Herberg here at length precisely because in this instance I am *not* convinced he knows how to resolve this problem, even as he seems ultimately to want to dismiss these fears and concerns. Here Herberg's retelling seems instead only to reinforce their power.

Let but religion gain a significant place in the everyday life of the community, and the Jew, because he is outside the bounds of the dominant religion, will once again be relegated to the margins of society, displaced, disenfranchised culturally if not politically, shorn of rights and opportunities. The intrusion of religion into education and public life, the weakening of the "wall of separation" between religion and the state, is feared as only too likely to result in situations in which Jews would find themselves at a disadvantage – greater isolation, higher "visibility," and accentuation of minority status. The most elementary defense strategy would seem to dictate keeping religion out of education and public life at all costs; hence the passionate attachment of so many American Jews to the secularist-Protestant interpretation of the "separation."³⁹

Having elaborated this very powerful fear, Herberg does not fully resolve the problem. Instead he attempts to contain these same fears as much as possible by coupling them with a series of examples of "extravagant efforts at corporate self-validation." He seems to attempt to belittle and diffuse the power of these concerns by offering a set of rather trivial examples of such corporate self-validation. He cites, for example, the "extensive building programs that are being feverishly pursued by Jewish communities

³⁸ Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 239.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

throughout the land,” which he frames as serving a “public relations function,” as well as the greater salaries and status of American rabbis.⁴⁰ Yet these examples of self-validation pale in comparison to the real urgency of the fears he has expressed. It seems instead that Herberg’s own text could itself be read as constituting an extravagant effort at Jewish self-validation, a way of overcoming precisely these strangely persistent fears and concerns. The contrast between his examples and his enactment of such self-validation is telling in itself, demonstrating how unprocessed this fear really is in his argument. To add to this assessment, most tellingly, Herberg concludes this account of the Jewish community by stating that “considerations of minority-group validation and defense thus enter into every phase and aspect of Jewish life in America.” Despite everything he has tried to say, this is the pervasive condition of American Jewish life.

Mufti argues that the crisis of meaning produces “minority cultural practices that critique the dominant culture and its majoritarian affiliations.”⁴¹ The minority exercises an agency that at once transforms its vision of itself, its performance of its identity, and the performance of the dominant. In this case, Herberg not only creates a new Jewish and a new American identity: he creates a new “common faith” within which American Jews are situated. Within the terms of Herberg’s own argument, the incomplete nature of Jewish assimilation is presumably not a problem. Problematic differences – ethnic, cultural, and linguistic – are the remnants of an earlier generation. This is the hopeful tenor of his profoundly teleological vision.

Nonetheless, although these lingering fears and tensions should be merely the remnants of an earlier stage of Jewish social development according to Herberg, his text tells a different story. In these moments he is hardly convincing. When he returns to the promise and hopes of emancipation, those foundational promises of the liberal state, he cannot escape their reliance on secularization; almost despite himself, he expresses his admiration and even gratitude to that legacy. In other words, the optimism and progressivism of his larger argument seem less convincing as he returns to the realities of Jewish minority existence and the persistence of such “remnants” of Jewish difference. These passages speak to contemporary American Jewish concerns about the place of Jews in America even today. They suggest the ways that this vision of religious pluralism cannot fully address the status of many of America’s minorities, not only Jews and Catholics.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴¹ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 3.

THE DIVERSITY OF THE PRESENT

According to the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, in 2004 there were forty-seven different Christian denominations in the United States.⁴² These include a full range of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions. Perhaps most tellingly, the Ontario study documents the breadth of the Protestant communities effaced by the liberal mainstream vision of Protestantism at the heart of Herberg's text: African American congregations, Asian and Latino/Chicano denominations, as well as the full range of religiously conservative Protestants – Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and other Bible-carrying congregations.⁴³ There are also numerous orders of women religious; monastic and other priestly orders; liberal, feminist, and queer Catholics; Catholic Workers; as well as the various regional archdioceses. Likewise there are Greek, Russian, and Ukrainian Orthodox churches as well as a distinctive Armenian Christian community. There are also a range of Syrian and Lebanese Christian communities (Syrian Orthodox and Maronite communities), as well as Coptic Christians from Egypt and communities of Indian Christians. This listing is just a thumb-nail sketch of the complex diversity of Christian positions in the contemporary United States.

The range of Jewish positions is, in some sense, even more complicated because, contrary to Herberg's prediction, not all Jews identify themselves as "religious." Some even go so far as to estimate that a major portion of the American Jewish community self-identifies as secular.⁴⁴ This remains the case despite broader social pressures for Jews to define themselves in religious terms in the United States. Further, although many Americans are aware of only three or four Jewish movements that are equivalent to Jewish denominations, the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist movements, the reality on the ground is more complex. Among Orthodox Jews there is a full range of ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi sects including numerous Hasidic communities. There is also a variety of modern Orthodox communities and movements with their own communal organizations. In addition to all of these groups, there are growing numbers of Jews connected to the neo-Hasidic progressive and

⁴² See www.religioustolerance.org/us_rel2.htm for a full listing. They offer numbers for 2004 and 1996.

⁴³ See David Watt, *Bible-Carrying Christians: Conservative Protestants and Social Power* (New York, 2002).

⁴⁴ For more specific data, especially on the large number of secular Jews in America, see the work of the Institute for the Study of Secularism and Society and Culture, and their American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2001, found at <http://prog.trincoll.edu/ISSSC/DataArchive/index.asp>.

egalitarian Jewish renewal movement, which is, by and large, not congregationally based and includes Jews from all kinds of other congregations, as well as large numbers of unaffiliated Jews.⁴⁵ There are congregations of black Hebrew and Israelite communities who define themselves as Jews but who have not always been acknowledged or embraced by mainstream Jewish organizations. These communities are becoming increasingly visible in twenty-first-century American Jewish life.⁴⁶ There are also messianic Jewish congregations whose theologies include faith in Jesus Christ; these congregations also challenge the boundaries of what it means to be Jewish. There are Karaite, nonrabbinic communities, and humanistic or secular Jewish congregations, as well as a range of Sephardi and Mizrahi communities of Jews in the United States including large Persian and Syrian communities in major urban centers such as Los Angeles and New York. Alongside these congregations are secular Jews, a large percentage of whom are not affiliated with congregations, for whom Jewishness is not about religion or faith or any kind of congregational structure. For these Jews, Jewishness is about culture, politics, languages, foods, family, and larger communities. Among, between, and within these various communities is a range of positions on Israel, on issues of gender and sexuality, and on other key questions of American politics. Although American Jews have been characterized as largely politically liberal or left-leaning, there is again a range of positions, including a growing number of American Jews who have moved to the right politically and are involved in neoconservative politics.⁴⁷ These kinds of political commitments also cut across all of these communities with contradictions within even the mainstream movements.

To account for this breadth and diversity, for the messiness of any one of these Christian or Jewish positions, Maria Lugones' feminist concept of *mestizaje* offers a powerful alternative to the logic of pluralism and its insistence on group representation, or the demand that a singular voice

⁴⁵ For an excellent account of Jewish renewal through the lens of its founder, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, see Shaul Magid, "Rainbow Hasidism in America – The Maturation of Jewish Renewal," *Reconstructionist*, Spring 2004, 34–60.

⁴⁶ For recent work on these communities of Jews and the broader range of Jews of color, see Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz, *The Color of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism* (Bloomington, IN, 2007); Diane Tobin et al., eds., *In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People* (San Francisco, 2007); Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch, eds., *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism* (New York, 2000); and Susan Chevlowe, *The Jewish Identity Project: New American Photography* (New Haven, 2005). See also the work of the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies at Temple University and its director, Lewis Gordon, at <http://www.temple.edu/isrst/affiliates/CAJS.asp>.

⁴⁷ Murray Friedman, *The Neoconservative Revolution: Jewish Intellectuals and the Shaping of Public Policy* (New York, 2005).

speak for each distinct community. Lugones' approach also challenges us to reconsider our underlying assumptions about heterogeneity and its relationship to homogeneity that bolster most visions of religious and other forms of pluralism. This logic, as Lugones insists, suggests that heterogeneity emerges out of what was once a unified whole. As such, heterogeneity must be understood as a departure from that unity. Thus even when acknowledged, heterogeneity is figured as a problem that must be contained. This assumption is not so different from Herberg's notion of a singular, unified American way of life. His notion that there is an underlying faith that can be expressed in three (but only three) ways also means that deviation from one of these sanctioned modes is considered problematic or unacceptable.

In order to reject the notion of a binary between heterogeneity and homogeneity, which are set in an asymmetrical and developmental relationship, I want to denaturalize this all-too-pervasive way of thinking about religious diversity. Toward this end, I turn to the cultural theorist Ranu Samantrai, who cogently describes this liberal pluralist dynamic in the context of multiculturalism in contemporary Great Britain.⁴⁸ Samantrai, as does Lugones, helps us see what is otherwise invisible. As Samantrai explains, the British form of multiculturalism is built on a series of unexamined premises. These include the idea that "(1) homogeneity precedes heterogeneity; (2) that the latter is recent and problematic; and (3) heterogeneity of the whole does not compromise homogeneity of the parts." As Samantrai goes on to argue, these assumptions "strengthen the line of differentiation between various cultures or religions until it eclipses alignments that might cut across communal boundaries and suppresses contradictions that may complicate the coherence from within."⁴⁹ These are precisely what make it difficult to account for even my extremely brief overview of the range of Jewish and Christian communities in the contemporary United States. It is this logic that Lugones resists as she "investigate[s] the politics of purity and how they bear on the politics of separation."⁵⁰

By addressing the connections between impurity and resistance, Lugones asks us to reconsider the virtues of impurity as a form of resistance. Building on the experience of those who inhabit the borderland between Mexico and the United States, she offers a radical vision of a profoundly mixed culture that cannot be separated into discrete parts. As she explains, her term for this *mestizaje* is "an example of and a metaphor for both impurity and

⁴⁸ Ranu Samantrai, "Continuity or Rupture? An Argument for Secular Britain," in Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 339.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lugones, "Purity, Impurity," 458.

resistance,” which allows her to challenge interlocking and intermeshed forms of oppressions within the United States.⁵¹

In order to act on these insights and extending this vision of *mestizaje* to the United States as a whole, Lugones goes on to describe the dominant logic of purity she finds in this country. Here, as does Samantria, she insists on denaturalizing the notion that there is some underlying coherence to American culture. She focuses on the cluster of concepts, “control, purity, unity, categorizing,”⁵² and uses these concepts to describe how unification and homogeneity order the social world. As she explains, “Unification requires a fragmented and hierarchical ordering. Fragmentation is another guise of unity, both in the collectivity and the individual.”⁵³ Lugones denaturalizes these assumptions by then reminding us of “the ahistoricity of the logic of purity” and how it “hides the construction of unity”⁵⁴ in the first place. In this way she begins to undo these operative assumptions.

Lugones then goes on to advocate a vision of heterogeneity that is not premised on an underlying unity. She does this in order to make conceptual space for precisely the kinds of diversity and complexity that characterize Judaism and Christianity as lived traditions in the contemporary United States. In her account, such social collectivities in a genuinely heterogeneous society are heterogeneous in and of themselves. They cannot fit together neatly as pieces to a whole, whether a Protestant, a Catholic, or an Orthodox Christian whole, or, for that matter, any number of Jewish wholes. By contrast, Lugones lets go of the notion that we need such unities to begin with, suggesting that once an assumption of an underlying unity is established, power is already at play, and the relationships among and between different positions are already figured in hierarchical terms. Such hierarchies cannot account for the kind of internal diversity we see among and between all kinds of American Christians and Jews, which is precisely why I suggest we shift our paradigm toward what Lugones is advocating.

Returning to Hutchison and Baird, what Lugones challenges is the very need for an “essence” in order to define groups in relation to an underlying whole and thus to each other. Instead, she suggests that there need not already be some normative position to represent the group as a whole, as if there is or ever were a single whole.

Moreover, she reminds us that these engagements do not happen in a vacuum, but in a cultural context that is already figured in hierarchical

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 458–9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 463.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 465.

terms. Here even the most well-intended efforts at imagining an American religious pluralism are still, as even Herberg reminds us, very much Protestant-inflected. In other words, even in these well-meaning projects of pluralism, a dominant Protestant norm remains. Although often invisible, as if it simply represented “the way things are,” the dominant Protestant culture bears within itself a cultural norm that defines all others in relation to it.⁵⁵ This is the norm to which other communities need to aspire. In the slippage between the modern or the secular and the Protestant, domination remains. Although invisible, these assumptions still define the whole without ever dismantling the asymmetries of power that are the stuff of the interlocking and overlapping forms of oppression Lugones wants to resist.

In this case, the Judeo-Christian faith is very much a Protestant construct that masks both the persistence of a Protestant norm as well as the desires of Jewish others to be included in that triumphant position.⁵⁶

In the twenty-first century we are still struggling with this legacy, groping for ways not to repeat these mechanisms of oppression as we name and celebrate our diversity. I have turned to Lugones to raise a cautionary note about any easy way out of this dilemma. Simply not using the term “Judeo-Christian” will not solve the underlying problem. Instead, we need to rethink our broader investment in notions of unity as they continue to haunt our engagements with religious and cultural heterogeneity. If we do not assume that there was once or eventually will be an underlying unity and that differences need to be fixed, contained, or neatened, we might better appreciate the messy realities of even Jewish and Christian heterogeneity within the contemporary United States. Such a stance might also enable us to imagine better how other religious, ethnic, and cultural communities are also transforming American ways of life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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⁵⁵ On this issue of the invisibility of the dominant Protestant ethos, see Tracy Fessenden “Disappearances: Race, Religion, and the Progress Narrative of U.S. Feminism,” in Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 139–61.

⁵⁶ Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian,” offers an excellent critique of this legacy. On the issue of Jews’ standing in for the dominant Christians and the relationship between the Judeo-Christian and postcolonial criticism, see Marshall Grossman, “The Violence of the Hyphen in Judeo-Christian,” *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 115–22, and Yerach Cover, “Why Be a Nebbish? A Response to Marshall Grossman,” *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 123–9.

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AMERICAN BUDDHISM SINCE 1965

CHARLES S. PREBISH

INTRODUCTION: PRE-1965 BUDDHIST
HISTORY IN AMERICA

Although it is rather common to refer to Oriental influences in the writings of such prominent American literary figures as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman, the more specifically Buddhist beginnings in America can be traced to the Chinese immigrants who began to appear on the West Coast in the 1840s. Prior to the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, the number of Chinese immigrants was small, but with the news of the golden wealth in the land, the figure increased exponentially. Rick Fields has suggested that by 1852, twenty thousand Chinese were present in California, and within a decade nearly one-tenth of the California population was Chinese.¹ In the Chinese temples that dotted that California coastline, the religious practice was an eclectic blend of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and although there were a number of Buddhist priests in residence, a distinctly Chinese Buddhism on the North American continent did not develop until much later.

The Japanese presence in America developed more slowly than the Chinese but had much greater impact. By 1890, the Japanese population was barely two thousand. The World's Parliament of Religion, however, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, radically changed the entire landscape for Japanese Buddhism in America. Among the participants at the parliament was Shaku Sōen. Sōen returned to America in 1905, lecturing in several cities and establishing a basic ground for the entry of Zen. Upon his return to Japan in 1906, three of his students were selected to promote the Rinzai lineage in America.

¹ Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1992), 70–1.

The first of Sōen's students, Nyōgen Senzaki, immigrated to California in the first decade of the twentieth century but delayed his teaching mission until 1922. Sōen's second disciple, Shaku Sōkatsu, lived in America in 1906–08, and again in 1909–10, but eventually returned to Japan without having made much impact. By far Sōen's most noted disciple, and the man who made the most impact on the early growth of Buddhism in America, was Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Suzuki worked for Open Court Publishing Company in LaSalle, Illinois, in 1897–1909 but returned to Japan to pursue a career in Buddhist studies. He visited America again from 1936 until the beginning of World War II, and eventually he returned for a final time from 1950 to 1958, lecturing frequently in American universities and cities.

Nonetheless, the Rinzai lineage was not the only one to develop in America. The Sōtō tradition (the other major branch of Japanese Zen) began to appear in America in the 1950s. By the mid-1950s, Soyu Matsuoka Rōshi had established the Chicago Buddhist Temple, and Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi arrived in San Francisco in 1959, founding the San Francisco Zen Center shortly thereafter. The Dharma successors to Suzuki Rōshi have maintained the Sōtō lineage, while other teachers in this lineage, including female *rōshis*, have also appeared.

In addition to the traditional forms of Rinzai and Sōtō Zen, still another form of Zen appeared in America, one that attempts to harmonize the major doctrines and practices of each school into a unified whole. Proponents of this approach included Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, who arrived in 1956; Hakuun Yasutani Rōshi, who visited the United States first in 1962 and who visited regularly until his death in 1973; and Philip Kapleau, an American by birth who first learned about Japanese religion and culture while serving as a court reporter in 1946 during the War Crimes Trials held in Tokyo. Maezumi Rōshi and Kapleau Rōshi have been enormously successful. Maezumi Rōshi established the Zen Center of Los Angeles, where he resided until his death in 1995. He left a dozen Dharma heirs, many of whom have developed their own vital, creative communities. Kapleau Rōshi too was quite successful, having built a stable Zen community in Rochester, New York, that was notable for its attempt to develop an American style for Zen practice. Also significant are Robert Aitken Rōshi, who founded the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii in 1959; Eidō Shimano Rōshi, who first entered the United States as a translator for Yasutani Rōshi; and Joshu Sasaki Rōshi, who founded the Cimarron Zen Center in Los Angeles in 1966 and the Mt. Baldy Zen Center five years later.

Zen was surely not the only Japanese Buddhist tradition to make an appearance in America before the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898 two Japanese missionaries, Shuei Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima, were sent to San Francisco to establish the Buddhist Mission of North America,

an organization associated with a Pure Land school of Japanese Buddhism. Although seriously hampered by the Japanese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924, by 1931 thirty-three main temples were active. With the outbreak of World War II, more than 100,000 Japanese Americans – more than half of whom were Buddhist and two-thirds American-born – were relocated to internment camps. In 1944, the name of the Buddhist Mission of North America was changed to Buddhist Churches of America.

In the 1960s, another form of Japanese Buddhism appeared on the American landscape. It was known as Nichiren Shōshū of America, and by 1974 it reported 258 chapters and more than 200,000 members (although these figures were highly suspect). This group grew out of the Sōka Gakkai movement in Japan, a nonmeditative form of Buddhism that based its teachings on the thirteenth-century figure Nichiren (1222–82) and his emphasis on the doctrines and practices focusing on or deriving from the famous Lotus sūtra. Introduced to this country by Masayasa Sadanaga, who changed his name to George Williams, the organization set up headquarters in Santa Monica, where it began an active program of proselytizing. Although the group has splintered, it remains a formidable Buddhist presence in America, having become extremely attractive among Euro-American and African American Buddhists.

Although not nearly so visible as the Japanese Buddhist groups, several Chinese Buddhist organizations have appeared in the last half-century. Perhaps the most notable of these is a largely monastic group originally known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, which was under the direction of a venerable monk named Hsüan-Hua until his death. Established in 1959, this organization developed a huge monastery in Talmadge, California, known as the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, which serves as the headquarters of what is now identified as the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. Of even larger size is the Hsi-Lai Temple outside Los Angeles, founded in 1978 and now offering a wide variety of Buddhist teachings and services. Other Chinese Buddhist groups can be found in virtually every major metropolitan area. The religious practice of the Chinese Buddhist groups in America is largely an eclectic combination of various Buddhist schools, combining Chan, Vinaya, Tiantai, Tantra, and Pure Land practices. Most of these practices are Mahāyāna-based, and a similar kind of approach is followed by the Vietnamese Buddhist groups that have begun to appear in urban areas, largely as a result of a large influx of Vietnamese immigrants that followed the termination of the United States' involvement in Vietnam.

The Buddhist culture to enter America most recently is the Tibetan. Although a few Buddhist groups appeared in the West prior to 1960, the majority entered after the Tibetan holocaust, during which the Communist

Chinese made every effort to extinguish religion in Tibet. After an immediate exile in India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, the diaspora has widened, with many Tibetans seeking to reestablish their sacred lineages on American soil. Communities from each of the four major Tibetan sects can now be found in America, with those founded by Tarthang Tulku and Chögyam Trungpa being especially popular and visible. The Tibetan groups are the most colorful of all the Buddhist groups now prospering in America, possessing a rich tradition of Buddhist art and a powerful psychological approach to mental health. They continue to grow rapidly, being very attractive to Euro-American Buddhists. It is no wonder, therefore, that they quote the thousand-year-old saying attributed to the sage Padmasambhava to explain their rapid growth: “When the iron bird flies, and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the World, and the Dharma will come to the land of the Red Man.”

The final sectarian tradition to be considered is that of the Theravāda. Until quite recently, most Theravāda groups in the United States were similar to the Buddhist Vihāra Society in Washington, D.C., an organization founded in 1965 under the direction of the Venerable Bope Vinita from Sri Lanka and appealing to the large diplomatic community in the nation’s capital. Now, however, as many Buddhists from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma have migrated to the United States to escape the economic and political uncertainty of their native homes, there is a vigorous new infusion of Theravāda Buddhism in America.

INFLUENCES ON BUDDHISM’S POST-1965 GROWTH IN AMERICA

After the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the population of immigrants from Asia grew dramatically, as did the number of Buddhists flowing into America. As Wendy Cadge has pointed out, the 1965 Immigration Act ended country-of-origin quotas, which led to both ethnic and religious diversification throughout America.² In the decade of the 1960s, Buddhism was to experience the largest, fastest, and most dynamic growth spurt in its short history on the American scene. Its rapid rise presented Buddhism with as many potential liabilities as it did opportunities.

In the first place, the undeclared war in Vietnam again focused continued awareness on Asia. As reports of pacifist Buddhist monks engaging in acts of self-immolation began to filter back to America in the media, a

² Wendy Cadge, *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America* (Chicago, 2005), 6.

proliferation of books appeared, prepared by journalists, practitioners, and scholars alike. In academia, Buddhist studies began to emerge as an independent discipline, usually embodied as an aspect of the many developing area studies programs in American universities. The most notable of these was the Buddhist studies program at the University of Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, other programs, initially at Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley, began to offer comprehensive training in Buddhist studies.

In the social domain, the most significant development for Buddhism in America was the emergence of a considerable counterculture, from which Buddhism was to recruit some of its most ardent supporters. Theodore Roszak, in his influential book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, suggested that the counterculture was an exploration of the “politics of consciousness.”³ By the end of the decade of the 1960s, many Americans were associating consciousness awareness and expansion with the varieties of Buddhist meditation that were becoming prevalent on the American scene. The most immediate predecessors of the hippies were the “Beats” of the 1950s, and even Jack Kerouac himself conceded that the hippies were the descendants of the Beats. Thus the Beats had an enormous influence on the Buddhism that was developing on the American scene, and “Beat Zen,” as it was called, became popular and contrary to the “Square Zen” of other popularizers such as Alan Watts.

On the religious front, the entire religious situation in America was in turmoil. There was a continuous drop in church attendance, possibly indicative of a declining faith in the value of religion or its importance in an increasingly secular society. When Peter Berger argued that secularization created a demonopolization of religious traditions eventually leading to a pluralistic situation, he was describing a religious “market situation” in which Buddhism was certain to thrive. Buddhism took advantage of the mitigation of its somewhat alien appearance by the religious fellowship inherent in the important ecumenical movement to gain new footholds in the American domain.⁴ Thus by the end of the 1960s, there were more Buddhist groups, and including greater diversity, than ever existed before in America.

In spite of the trends discussed, Buddhism was still searching for a life-style consonant with its pursuits in America. There was virtually no monastic community or *sangha* present, and there were almost no Buddhist monks or nuns in residence. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community,

³ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, NY, 1969), 156.

⁴ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY, 1966), 134.

and, to a large extent, *city* community. New American Buddhist communities of the 1960s and 1970s, however, faced other problems that proved difficult. Because Buddhist communities tended to define themselves more in terms of what they rejected than what they affirmed, a severe sense of ambiguity persisted, making it quite easy for new converts to withdraw from the *sangha* altogether or jump from one Buddhist community to another as “Dharma hoppers.”

Up to this point, the Buddhist movement in America, and specifically Buddhist community life, had been a city movement. Nevertheless, in the 1970s a large number of Buddhists deserted the city and sought to practice their religion in a wilderness setting. Some of these practitioners simply rejected the evils and complexity of city life; others seemed to be motivated by a concern for the preservation of a sane ecological environment; and a goodly number were naïvely pursuing a “back to nature” way of life. Within a short period and in future decades, most of these practitioners returned to urban life, having learned that Buddhism has always maintained that the best place to practice Buddhism is precisely *where you are*, and that the environment that needs tending is the *interior* environment.

CONTINUING HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

By 1970, virtually the full extent of Asian Buddhist sects was represented in America, and there was a plethora of Asian Buddhist teachers in permanent residence in the growing number of American Buddhist centers. Dozens of *rōshis*, along with their Dharma heirs, many Tibetan *tulkus*, Chinese monks and nuns, and an increasing number of Theravāda monks from various South and Southeast Asian cultures are now visibly active on American soil. The presence of a growing number of Asian Buddhist teachers in America has been complemented and augmented by regular visits from global Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Further, these Asian Buddhist teachers and the gradually increasing number of American Buddhist masters have been able to establish an institutional foundation that is stable, solid, and even ecumenical in nature. In 1987 the conference “World Buddhism in North America” was held at the University of Michigan, during which the “Statement of Consensus”⁵ was promulgated (a) to create the conditions necessary for tolerance and understanding among Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike; (b) to initiate a dialogue among Buddhists in North America in order to further mutual

⁵ Cited in Eleanor Rosch, “World Buddhism in North America Today,” *Vajradhatu Sun* 9:1 (Oct.–Nov. 1987): 28.

understanding, growth in understanding, and cooperation; (c) to increase the sense of community by recognizing and understanding differences as well as common beliefs and practices; and (d) to cultivate thoughts and actions of friendliness toward others, whether they accept one's beliefs or not, and in so doing to approach the world as the proper field of Dharma, not as a sphere of conduct irreconcilable with the practice of Dharma. Geographically organized organizations, such as the Sangha Council of Southern California, and associations of the students of famous Buddhist masters, such as the White Plum Asanga, linking the Dharma heirs of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, are now becoming commonplace in the American Buddhist movement.

The availability of accurate primary and secondary literature on Buddhism expanded almost exponentially in the latter half of the twentieth century. Many of these publications now focus on the Western Buddhist tradition. Many pages of scholarly bibliographic sources on American Buddhism can be found in various sources.⁶ The trade market publication of popular books on aspects of American Buddhism is even larger. As of 1994, nearly two dozen North American universities had at least two full-time faculty members devoted to the academic discipline of Buddhist studies, and nearly 150 academic scholars of Buddhism were located on the North American continent, many of whom can best be identified as "scholar-practitioners." A decade later, each of these statistics had grown substantially. Moreover, the American Buddhist movement is aided by the presence of a growing number of individuals who have traveled to Asia for extensive training and then returned to the United States to share their approach with Americans. One of the most successful enterprises of this kind is the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts, initially guided by Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, and Christina Feldman, each of whom received extensive *vipassanā* training in Asia.

It is now very common for university courses on Buddhism in North American universities to be taught by professors who, in addition to having sophisticated academic credentials in Buddhist studies, happen to be practicing Buddhists in one of the many rich and varied Buddhist traditions that have proliferated in the West as part of Buddhism's profound globalization, that is, the "scholar-practitioners" referred to previously.

Not surprisingly, stories reflecting the study/practice dichotomy in Buddhism are abundant in both the primary and secondary literature on the subject. During the first century B.C.E., in response to a concern over

⁶ See Charles S. Prebish, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 301–10; and Martin Bauman and Charles Prebish, eds., *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), 383–99.

the possible loss of the *Tripitaka* during a severe famine, a question arose: What is the basis of the “Teaching” (that is, *Sāsana*) – learning or practice? A clear difference of opinion resulted in the development of two groups: the Dhammakathikas, who claimed that learning was the basis of the *Sāsana*, and the Pamsukūlikas, who argued for practice as the basis. The Dhammakathikas apparently prevailed. The two vocations described came to be known as *gantha-dhura*, or the “vocation of books,” and *vipassanā-dhura*, or the “vocation of meditation,” with the *former* regarded as the superior training (because surely meditation would not be possible if the teachings were lost). Moreover, not the least characteristic of these two divisions was that the *vipassanā-dhura* monks began to live in the forest, where they could best pursue their vocation undisturbed, while the *gantha-dhura* monks began to dwell in villages and towns. As such, the *gantha-dhura* monks began to play a significant role in Buddhist education. It would probably not be going too far to refer to the *gantha-dhura* monks as “scholar-monks.” Why is this distinction so important? It is significant because the scholar-monks were responsible for educating the laity, for cultivating a “Buddhist literacy” among the ordinary practitioners of the tradition. While this was a normative practice in the ancient Buddhist tradition, Buddhism in the Western world has not favored a monastic lifestyle. As such, the education of the laity has been left to teachers who are no longer trained as scholar-monks. In fact, while many of the leaders and authorized teachers in the various Western Buddhist groups have had formal monastic and scholarly training at some point, many – if not most – have abandoned the monastic and scholarly lifestyle altogether. This fosters a “scholarship gap” in the global Buddhist community. To a large extent, this scholarship gap is rapidly being filled by the academic scholar-practitioners who, although not living as full-fledged monastics, have solid scholarly and academic training grounded in rigorous personal practice.

Prior to 1975, there were not very many places in North America where one could pursue graduate-level academic training in Buddhist studies and gain the solid grounding necessary to become an authentic scholar-practitioner. By 1995, when I conducted the second of two statistical surveys of Buddhist studies scholars in North America, I was able to verify that one could do advanced work in Buddhist studies at no fewer than sixteen universities or colleges, and the anecdotal data supplied by my informants supported my suspicion that between one-quarter and one-half of the people whose teaching focused on Buddhist studies were scholar-practitioners. Two years later, when Duncan Ryūken Williams published an article called “Where to Study?” in the spring 1997 issue of *Tricycle*, he listed twenty-two universities with extensive resources in Buddhist studies, including a special category of universities he called “Practitioner-Friendly

Institutions.”⁷ Clearly, an “American school of Buddhist studies” was fermenting in the years after 1970, and it now rivals and perhaps even surpasses the earlier “Anglo-German,” “Franco-Belgian,” and “Leningrad” schools of Buddhology. Most obviously, this rapid development was fueled by the twin spires of the fast growing interest in Buddhism generally among North Americans, and the establishment of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion as the chief academic venue for Buddhist studies in North America.

At the very heart of this exciting development of North American Buddhist studies was the role that scholar-practitioners were actively playing. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, some estimates placed the number of Buddhists in the United States as high as six million. There are currently more academic courses in the study of Buddhism than ever before, and with the huge explosion of well-written and informative trade volumes published on virtually all aspects of Buddhism, a genuine “Buddhist literacy” has developed in North America, one that has made it increasingly easier for scholar-practitioners finally to appear publicly and vocally.

Despite the preceding data, it still seems fair to suggest that the scholarship versus practice dichotomy persists to some degree. In North America, in the absence of the traditional scholar-monks so prevalent in Asia, it really does appear that the scholar-practitioners of today’s North American universities are indeed *beginning* to fulfill the role of quasi-monastics, or serve at least as treasure troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one’s understanding of the Dharma may be sharpened, irrespective of whether it occurs in the university or practice center.

Quite apart from issues relating to the specificity with which American Buddhist life is manifested (lay versus monastic ideals; urban versus rural lifestyle), a distinct and unique application of Buddhist ethics, creatively called “socially engaged Buddhism,” has emerged that demonstrates in dramatic fashion both the *active* and *optimistic* approach of today’s American Buddhism. Organizations such as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, founded in 1978, aggressively demonstrate how to strike a careful balance between meditational training and political activism. Their task in introducing this activism and optimism to the American Buddhist public is aided by a strong new Buddhist journalism in America that has fostered exciting publications such as *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly*, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, the *Shambhala Sun*, *Turning Wheel: Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, and many publications of individual Buddhist centers. Additionally, the useful and productive development of the Internet has

⁷ Duncan Williams, “Where to Study,” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 6:3 (Spring 1997): 115–17.

allowed American Buddhism to expand its sphere of influence to a *sangha* not necessarily limited to a given geographic space. The electronic *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, for example, in its “Global Resources for Buddhist Studies” component, has created links to literally hundreds of American Buddhist *sanghas* across the totality of North America, as has the resource of the Australian-based Buddha Dharma Education Association: www.buddhanet.net.

Equally, one cannot dismiss the role that the media have played in the development of the growing American Buddhist tradition. Most of this new public attention began with the decade of the 1990s. Between the months of June and November 1994, features on American Buddhism appeared in such popular print media as the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *New York Magazine*, and *Christianity Today*. The *Newsweek* article, titled “800,000 Hands Clapping,” focused on a varied group of American Buddhists who included John Daido Looi, the abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in Upstate New York; the well-known actor Richard Gere; Mitchell Kapor of Lotus Development Corporation; Phil Jackson, coach of the world champion Chicago Bulls professional basketball team; and even the Beastie Boys rock group, who recorded “The Bodhisattva Vow,” a rap tribute to the Buddhist path.⁸ *New York Magazine* went even further, categorizing American Buddhists into “Beat Buddhists” (such as Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti), “Celluloid Buddhists” (including Willem Dafoe, Oliver Stone, and Ellen Burstyn, along with Gere), “Art Buddhists” (Milton Glaser, Robert Moscovitz, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others), “Power Buddhists” (Jerry Brown), and “Benefit Buddhists” (such as Porter McCray and Bokara Legendre)⁹.

Also in 1994, American Buddhism was presented as a major feature on the *ABC Nightly News with Peter Jennings*, with the scholar-practitioners Robert Thurman and Charles Prebish serving as scholarly consultants, as well as on *Talk of the Nation* on National Public Radio, with Helen Tworikov and Kenneth Tanaka fielding questions from a national audience. Peter Jennings’ researchers estimated the American Buddhist population at that time to be between four and six million individuals, composed of both Asian American and Euro-American ethnic groups, making American Buddhism a religious movement significantly larger than many Protestant denominations.

The flurry of national media attention devoted to American Buddhism has continued almost nonstop since. And it is expanding. As a result,

⁸ Jerry Adler, “800,000 Hands Clapping: Religion – America May Be on the Verge of Buddhahdharma,” *Newsweek*, 13 June 1994.

⁹ Sallie Dinkel, “In with the Om Crowd,” *New York Magazine*, 6 June 1994.

this virtually constant appearance of media stories related to the growth and development of the American Buddhist community begs for a careful delineation and discussion of the major issues that have shaped that very tradition.

DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Outlining the historical details of the Buddhist movement in America tells but a small part of the story, for the growth of American Buddhism is far more than its history. Rather, the story presents a struggle to acculturate and accommodate by a religious tradition that initially appeared to be wholly foreign to the American mind-set. It is important to realize that two different groups were primarily responsible for Buddhism's earliest growth in America. On the one hand, Buddhism is the native religion of a significant number of Asian immigrants. On the other hand, it became the religion, or at least the subject of serious personal interest, for an ever-increasing group of mostly Euro-Americans who embraced Buddhism primarily out of intellectual attraction and interest in spiritual practice. This latter circumstance has created its own Buddhist subculture, which is literate, urban, upwardly mobile, perhaps even elite in its life orientation. The preceding bifurcation makes even the issue of Buddhist identity and membership a very murky problem, further exacerbated with confusion about various Buddhist positions on ethical issues, sexuality, gender roles, and the like. This developmental pattern and the issues associated with it need to be explored.

In her 1976 volume *Buddhism in America*, Emma Layman devoted an entire chapter to the question "Who are the American Buddhists?"¹⁰ She considered how many Buddhists there are in America, the geographic diffusion of Buddhism in America, the personal characteristics of Buddhists in America, their educational and occupational status, their "personality factors," American versus Asian Buddhists, and, in the case of converts, their previous religious affiliation. What she did not consider was precisely how one determines who is an American Buddhist. Three years later, in *American Buddhism*, I suggested that one of the traditional ways of identifying Buddhists in Asian countries – taking refuge – was perhaps an insufficient and even misleading approach when applied to the American scene. My solution in 1979 was regarded as highly controversial at best, and obviously incorrect at worst.¹¹ I suggested that if we define a Buddhist as someone who says "I am a Buddhist" when questioned about "his most

¹⁰ Emma McCloy Layman, *Buddhism in America* (Chicago, 1976), 251–63.

¹¹ Charles S. Prebish, *American Buddhism* (North Scituate, MA, 1979), 187–8.

important pursuit,” we not only abandon our attachment to a ritual formulary (i.e., the three refuges) that is neither workable nor widely followed, but also provide more than a modicum of freedom for the American Buddhist groups – a freedom in which they can develop a procedure that is consistent with their own self-image and mission. In other words, what appears initially as an outrageous definition of Buddhist affiliation serves the double purpose of providing a new standard and a simple method of professing Buddhist commitment while imposing a renewed sense of seriousness on all Buddhist groups. Over the past thirty years, this notion of “self-identification,” as it has come to be known, has become the standard mode of verifying Buddhist identity in America. With the issue of “Who is a Buddhist?” clarified, five additional developmental issues frame American Buddhism since 1965: ethnicity, Buddhist practice, democratization, social engagement, and adaptation or acculturation.

The most recent debate about ethnicity in American Buddhism was precipitated by an editorial in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* in which Helen Tworok wrote that most of the spokespeople for Buddhism in America have been almost exclusively well-educated Caucasians, while also suggesting that Asian American Buddhists, despite numbering more than a million members, had not contributed significantly to the development of American Buddhism.¹² Her editorial provoked an angry letter of response from Ryo Imamura, an eighteenth-generation Jōdo Shinshū priest, but the letter never appeared in *Tricycle*, although it was later printed in its entirety elsewhere.¹³

In the aftermath of the incident, many articles appeared in the popular and scholarly literature addressing the issues of how to speak of the different kinds of Buddhism mentioned. These articles seem to fall into two camps. The first of these camps emerged in response to and support of my article “Two Buddhisms Reconsidered.”¹⁴ I had originally coined the phrase “two Buddhisms” in 1979 to delineate one form of Buddhism that places primary emphasis on sound basic doctrines, shared by all Buddhists, and on solid religious practice, from another, which seemed to emerge shortly after radical social movements. At that time, I considered the former group conservative and stable, while I characterized the latter as flashy, opaquely exotic, and hip. In “Two Buddhisms Reconsidered,” I redefined the former group as representing the Buddhism practiced by essentially Asian American communities. My intention was to find a way for Asian

¹² Helen Tworok, “Many Is More,” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 1:2 (Winter 1991): 4.

¹³ See *Sangha Newsletter* 7 (Summer 1994): 2–10.

¹⁴ Charles S. Prebish, “Two Buddhisms Reconsidered,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 10 (1993): 187–206.

American immigrant Buddhists and American Buddhist converts (mostly, but not exclusively of European American descent) to find a respectful and mutually enhancing way of relating, and to find a way for scholars interested in studying these communities to refer to the communities properly and accurately. I went on to suggest that while generalizations about American Buddhism are probably either impossible or foolish, we might reconsider these “two Buddhisms” in a way that not only added other critical issues to the mix, but also moved beyond the limits of a perhaps restrictive two-fold typology. To do that, I utilized Peter Williams’ 1990 book *American Religions: Traditions and Cultures*. Williams identified three categories to describe the way Asian religions impact on America: (1) “ethnic religions” practiced by Asian immigrants and, to an extent, by their descendants; (2) “export religions,” popular among well-educated, generally intellectual Americans; and (3) “new religions,” developing in consonance with the process outlined by Jacob Needleman and others, often as revolutionary outgrowths of religions cited in the first two categories.¹⁵

Shortly thereafter, Jan Nattier published an article in *Tricycle* that was very explicit and sophisticated in its approach to the varieties of Buddhism in America, and she developed the argument more thoroughly in “Who Is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America.”¹⁶ Nattier postulated a threefold typology explaining how religions move into new locations and cultures, consisting of (in her characterization):

1. Import religion – a “demand-driven transmission” in which a religion is sought out in an active fashion by the recipient. With specific relation to Buddhism, this is labeled “Elite Buddhism.”
2. Export religion – a missionary-driven transmission, in which individuals encounter Buddhism through the proselytizing effort of a particular Buddhist group. With specific relation to Buddhism, this is labeled “Evangelical Buddhism.”
3. Baggage religion – the religion of immigrants to North America, but whose motivation for travel was not evangelical. With specific relation to Buddhism, this is labeled “Ethnic Buddhism.”

The typology conflict between “two Buddhisms” or “three Buddhisms” persisted until Paul Numrich offered a reasonable alternative. His labels identify “Asian immigrants” and “American converts” as the basic two

¹⁵ Peter W. Williams, *American Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (New York, 1990), especially 417.

¹⁶ See Jan Nattier, “Visible and Invisible,” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 5:1 (1995): 42–9; and “Who Is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America,” in Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds., *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 183–95.

groups in American Buddhism.¹⁷ Further research by other scholars has offered additional subdivisions within these two groups, but this distinction has continued to be useful. Additionally, we will see at the end of this essay that more emphasis has now been placed on “hybridity” as perhaps the newest typology for understanding groups within American Buddhism.

There is no disagreement among researchers that Asian immigrant Buddhist communities and American convert communities engage in significantly different expressions of Buddhist practice. The general consensus is that American converts gravitate toward the various meditation traditions, while Asian immigrants maintain practices coincident with ritual activity or Pure Land observance, depending on the nature of the parent tradition of their community. With the exception of those American converts who have taken up the practices of Sōka Gakkai, there is an almost completely exclusive focus upon meditative practices. More than a few observers of the American Buddhist tradition have remarked that American converts treat Buddhism as if it were a “onefold path,” focusing only on meditation and little, if anything, else. In a very real sense, the meditation tradition in America continues to be seen as an all-pervasive activity, offering a complete solution to the entire spectrum of life’s ills, from getting high without the risks of drugs to finding a way to cultivate peace. It would not be going too far, I think, to suggest that Buddhist meditation, and the tradition associated with it, has become its own subculture, and it is a subculture that has spawned an enormous popular literature.

Yet Buddha spoke of a threefold training that includes not simply spiritual practice, but also the ethical training that supports it and the wisdom that emerges from it. Most often the ethical training is described in terms of the practice of precepts or *śīkṣā*. This is significant because precepts are not practiced in a specific, temporally defined portion of one’s day. Properly observed, precepts apply to the totality of one’s experience. They infuse our lives in every moment. Thus, in the broadest sense, precepts *are* practice in a far more comprehensive fashion than any single spiritual endeavor. Stephen Batchelor is one of the few scholar-practitioners who have identified the application of ethics and spiritual practice as interpenetrating, complementary factors. He argues that ethics include values and precepts that impact one’s practice significantly.¹⁸ The problem, in general terms, is how Buddhist ethical guidelines can be applied to daily life and, in specific

¹⁷ Paul Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples* (Knoxville, TN, 1996), 64.

¹⁸ Stephen Batchelor, “The Future Is in Our Hands,” in Arnold Kotler, ed., *Engaged Buddhist Reader* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 243.

terms, what adaptations must be made to accommodate the experience of Buddhist life in the West.

To sum up: if the American Buddhist tradition is to affirm the suggestion of Batchelor and others that precepts are an integral aspect of Buddhist practice and of a Buddhist lifestyle that fosters awareness of and respect for all living beings, then a new and modern ethical literature must necessarily be created. However, if that literature is to address meaningfully the conflicts and ambiguities that result from colliding with a modern world that the earliest tradition never imagined and to engage that confrontation in a fashion that is truly transcultural and transnational, then it is essential for that new literature to reflect an American Buddhist ethics that is both current and textually supported.

While Asian Buddhism was, for the most part, primarily hierarchical and highly authoritarian, the forms of American Buddhism that are currently developing are clearly undergoing a process of democratization. Unfortunately, and perhaps ironically, this democratization was hastened by a series of scandals that rocked many American Buddhist communities. In an interesting *Time* magazine article about the collective American Buddhist community, David Van Biema noted that many American Buddhist teachers, both Asian and American, had abused their positions by having sexual relations with their disciples.¹⁹ He argued that this circumstance led to an aggressive democratization in many Buddhist communities in which leadership was administratively adjusted so as to prevent further abuse. This radical democratization is being manifested in three essential aspects of American Buddhist communities. First, it can be observed in changing patterns of authority in the various Buddhist *sanghas*, highlighted by a reevaluation of the nature of the relationship between the monastic and lay communities. Second, democratization can be witnessed in changing gender roles in American Buddhism, and especially in the prominence of women. Finally, it can be seen in the manner in which individuals pursuing a nontraditional lifestyle, particularly with regard to sexual preferences, are finding a meaningful role in American Buddhist communities. As a result of this process of democratization, American Buddhism has been able to move away from the hierarchical pattern of Asian Buddhism to the pursuit of an egalitarian approach that is more consistent with American democratic trends.

Studies of the Buddhist monastic tradition in various Asian countries are too plentiful to mention; nearly all of the books and articles reveal the importance of the monastic unit for the surrounding community and the degree to which its monks and nuns were venerated for their effort and

¹⁹ David Van Biema, "Buddhism in America," *Time*, 13 Oct. 1997, 80.

often for their erudition. In other words, the ideal lifestyle for Buddhist practitioners was that of the monastic. In the United States, however, the monastic lifestyle has never been the ideal. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community, and, to a large extent, *city* community. One of the most popular and successful attempts to find a workable alternative to the traditional lay/monastic bifurcation was put into practice at the Zen Center of Los Angeles, in which many serious students of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi lived in an intermediate lifestyle, marrying and holding outside jobs while negotiating the full course of training incumbent on a Zen monk. As the Dharma heirs of Maezumi Rōshi moved on to begin forming their own Zen communities, many of them have utilized this pattern with much success. In the Theravādin tradition, a similar approach has been identified, noting that a number of lay disciples have taken ordination as an *anagārika*, a celibate path about midway between the traditional lay and monastic *sanghas*. Until quite recently, the problem of Buddhist lifestyle and changing patterns of authority was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike its Asian counterpart, American Buddhism was a city movement. The early pattern for American Buddhist communities was first to establish a city center, and then as the center grew and became stable, to develop satellite country centers. To some extent, the members of many infant American Buddhist city centers communicated more effectively with city-centered members of *other Buddhist sectarian groups* than with country-centered members of *their own community*. Now this is no longer true. The general explosion of information exchange technology and the widespread accessibility of the Internet have changed the shape of how and where American Buddhist communities define themselves and engage in Buddhist practice.

Stories about the Buddha's reluctance to begin an order of nuns are legion in the scholarly literature devoted to the development of the early *sangha*. Although it was pointed out earlier that the monastic tradition represents only a tiny portion of American Buddhist communities, many American Buddhist women see the role of nuns as instrumental in cultivating gender equality in American Buddhism. The degree to which male Buddhist practitioners and teachers welcome such women remains the challenge of changing gender roles in American Buddhism. The growing community of female teachers is significant in that it bridges the gap between the small *sanghas* of monastic members and the overwhelmingly larger number of female lay practitioners in American Buddhism.

Amid the huge variety of lifestyle choices available in modern America, none are more visible than the nontraditional, alternative sexual preferences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Not long ago, Roger Corless' "Coming Out in the *Sangha*: Queer Community in American Buddhism" creatively explored the existing material, finding scriptural

references where he could. He pointed out that since the *Vinaya* precepts largely assumed heterosexuality, both homosexuality and homoeroticism were basically ignored. Corless pointed out that now a number of Buddhist groups have emerged that support gay, lesbian, and bisexual Buddhists. In trying to isolate the motives and characteristics of queer Buddhist groups, Corless extracted points from the mission statement of one of these groups, concluding that the main issues include (1) creating a safe environment in which to practice; (2) creating an environment in which practitioners of various Buddhist paths can meet, share viewpoints, and be mutually supportive; (3) providing a community that is socially and psychologically supportive; (4) offering compassion through social action; and (5) offering a place to explore the degree to which Buddhism does, or does not, meet their spiritual needs.²⁰

Perhaps the one issue that dominated the early comprehensive books on American Buddhism was *adaptation*, or as it is sometimes referred to, acculturation or Americanization. The underlying issue is questioning whether we were witnessing Asian Buddhism transplanted onto (but not necessarily into) American soil, or whether we have a new cultural amalgam that we should properly identify as “American Buddhism.” During fall 1994, the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley sponsored the ongoing lecture series “Buddhisms in America: An Expanding Frontier.” Most of the papers from this series were collected into the book that was eventually called *The Faces of Buddhism in America*. Why was there a switch in title on the path from conference to book? Presumably, it was more effective to present American Buddhism as one whole with many faces than as many American Buddhisms celebrating their diversity together. In his treatment of adaptation in the epilogue to *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, Kenneth Tanaka acknowledged that in some cases the qualities of American individualism and secularism can give rise to a sense of impatience with, and possibly even arrogance toward, ancient forms of Buddhism. Nonetheless, he tried to interpret this inclination in a positive way. In so doing, he suggested that the urgency for aggressive adaptation has fostered what he calls “diffuse affiliation” and “eclectic tendencies” in American Buddhism. Diffuse affiliation suggests that individuals may have association with a variety of Buddhist forms in their religious quest. As such, not only may the current affiliation of an individual not necessarily be the final affiliation, but an individual may also maintain concurrent affiliation with more than one Buddhist organization. Diffuse affiliation is also witnessed among American Dharma teachers who have received training authorization in

²⁰ Roger Corless, “Coming Out in the *Sangha*: Queer Community in American Buddhism,” in Prebish and Tanaka, eds., *Faces of Buddhism*, 253–65.

more than one tradition. The most publicized expression of diffuse affiliation, as Tanaka pointed out, is Rodger Kamenetz's book *The Jew in the Lotus*, in which he coined the term JUBU for referring to individuals holding a Jewish-Buddhist dual affiliation. Eclectic tendencies refer to such accommodations as Seung Sahn's blending of Zen with Korean folk Buddhism, or in a more extreme example, the practice of some *vipassanā* teachers to claim no association with the Theravāda tradition or even with Buddhism.²¹

We have seen that American Buddhism has grown within a developmental framework in which the serious issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation have necessitated a careful self-examination by individual Buddhist communities. Resulting from that self-reflection is the generally accepted notion that an internal American Buddhist ecumenicity is now required for the continued harmonious growth of the tradition on American soil. Thus, as noted, the "Conference on World Buddhism in North America" was sponsored by the Zen Lotus Society in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on 10–17 July 1987. Conceived by Ven. Samu Sunim, and with ample assistance from Professor Luis Gómez, who served as cocordinator, a wide variety of talks, panel discussions, and meetings were held in an effort to collect together representatives of the Buddhist traditions in America to work toward common goals. As also noted previously, the conference developed a carefully conceived "Statement of Consensus" for implementation. More than twenty years later, Lama Surya Das, who was closing speaker at the "Buddhism in America Conference" held in Boston on 17–19 January 1997, emphasized that American Buddhism must be ecumenical in the future. The underlying assumption seems to be the hope that an ecumenical attitude, implemented in the proper way, will function as a protective umbrella under which the issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation may be addressed in a constructive and productive fashion.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE CYBERSANGHA

In the earliest general, comprehensive books on Buddhism in America, not a single word was written about the role of computer technology in the development of American Buddhism. The earliest formal interest in the application of computer technology to Buddhism seems to have occurred when the International Association of Buddhist Studies formed the Committee on Buddhist Studies and Computers at its 1983 meeting in Tokyo.

²¹ Kenneth K. Tanaka, "Epilogue: The Colors and Contours of American Buddhism," in Prebish and Tanaka, eds., *Faces of Buddhism*, 287–98.

Early in the 1990s, a profusion of online discussion forums (or e-mail discussion lists) began to proliferate and thrive on the Internet. Although these forums were global in scope, the vast majority of subscribers and participants were in North America. Now these discussion forums are too numerous to list, and many are sponsored by individual American Buddhist *sanghas* as a means to maintain continuous, ongoing communication among community members irrespective of where they may reside. New terminology developed to capture the essence and function of these computer-based means of communication. One of the pioneers of Buddhist online communication, Gary Ray, coined the catchy expression *cybersangha* in 1991 to depict the bevy of online communities that were appearing. With the creation and expansion of the World Wide Web (or WWW) and the increasingly sophisticated technology that has accompanied it, there seems no limit to the expansive means of communication available to American Buddhists. Many, if not most, American Buddhist communities now have individual Web sites on the World Wide Web, informing members of various aspects of the community's functions, but also serving as clever advertising occasions for new potential members.

At the far extreme of the technological revolution are an increasing number of Buddhist communities that exist *only* in cyberspace, with no geographic component in real space. Some of these *cybersanghas* have had real impact for individuals who are geographically isolated from communities that exist in real space. On the one hand, it is possible to see technology and the *cybersangha* as the completion of the traditional Buddhist "*sangha* of the four quarters." On the other hand, it is possible to see this new development in American Buddhist communication as a true sign of the cold, rational, contemporary world in which communication is faceless and even impersonal.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN BUDDHISM

On 17–19 January 1997, the "Buddhism in America Conference" was held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. The promotional brochure distributed by the conference's producer, Al Rapaport, subtitled the event "A Landmark Conference on the Future of Buddhist Meditative Practices in the West." In addition to the various keynote addresses, preconference workshops, and panels, there was a cornucopia of American Buddhist activities available for all to experience. Throughout the weekend, the Drepung Loseling Tibetan monks were creating a Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala, and on Saturday evening, nine lamas from the Drepung Loseling monastery performed their world-famous multiphonic singing. There were almost two dozen commercial exhibitors, consisting of booksellers, and distributors of Dharma-ware

and other Buddhist items. On the last night of the conference, Lama Surya Das, an American convert Buddhist (originally born as Jeffrey Miller) and founder of the Dzogchen Foundation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, gave the final presentation. He offered ten points that he believed would characterize the American Buddhism of the future:

1. Dharma without dogma. As did other speakers before him, most notably Stephen Batchelor, he argued for a "Buddhism without belief."
2. A lay-oriented *sangha*. He acknowledged and supported the notion of *three* communities in American Buddhism: the traditional monastic *sangha*, the lay *sangha*, and what he referred to as "the in-between *sangha*," with the latter reflecting the attempts by many men and women to maintain a monastic-oriented lifestyle while living a traditional family life.
3. A meditation-based and experiential tradition. He contrasted this feature with a study-based or academic Buddhism. There was no mention of nonmeditational practices, such as those utilized by the Pure Land tradition or by Sōka Gakkai.
4. Gender equality. Surya Das noted that half of the Buddhist teachers in the West are women, and that the American Dharma needed to be an equal-opportunity enterprise.
5. A nonsectarian tradition. Surya Das stressed that the developing American Buddhism of the next century must be eclectic, ecumenical, and utterly equal.
6. An essentialized and simplified tradition. Here he maintained that American Buddhism needed to be "demystified" and bypass technical jargon and foreign terminology. In reshaping the Dharma for the West, however, he also underscored the avoidance of New Age and pop psychology.
7. An egalitarian, democratic, and nonhierarchical tradition. The chief emphasis in this point was Surya Das' insistence that American Buddhism not be class-oriented or theocratic. He argued for supporting noninstitutionalized forms of American Buddhism.
8. A psychologically astute and rational tradition. Perhaps in an attempt to expand and clarify point 3, he restated his insistence on a practice-based American Buddhism but here included faith and devotional practices as well. But he also argued for the tradition to be skeptical, practical, and acquiring. Nonetheless, he concluded this point by advocating self-help as a primary aspect of American Buddhism.
9. An experimental, innovating, inquiry-based tradition. Surya Das wants American Buddhism to be forward-looking rather than

preservationist. He argued aggressively against preserving old wine in new bottles. Of special interest was his observation that we are now experiencing the “third wave” of teachers: Western teachers trained by *Western teachers*.

10. A socially informed and engaged tradition. As his final point, he accentuated an integrative rather than reclusive American Buddhism, in which family life was included as part of the spiritual path. He further indicated the importance of hospice work, ethics and right livelihood, deep ecology, the performing arts, sports, social service, and interfaith dialogue as critical features of the socially engaged Buddhism of the future.

Surya Das closed the conference by inviting the entire audience to chant with him, perhaps a fitting way to draw everyone together in a practice that reflected the points he emphasized in his presentation.

In reviewing the forward-looking suggestions of Surya Das and other researchers, it is possible to isolate a number of common, internal variables in the American Buddhist movement, and there is virtually unanimous agreement among these researchers that the development of American Buddhism in the current century will depend on the unfolding of these internal variables. Broadly defined, they include the nature and definition of the *sangha*, democratization within the entire tradition, ethnicity, gender equality, practice orientation, social engagement, and sectarian issues as the challenges of the future. Although there seems little doubt that American Buddhism will continue to be a mainly lay-oriented movement, more and more successful monastic communities are beginning to appear on the landscape that provide various kinds of monastic living experiences for members of the American Buddhist *sangha*. Contextually, it is within the expanding inclusiveness of the American *sangha* that new and evolving experiments in self-governance are emerging that provide exciting possibilities for American Buddhists living in both urban and rural settings. Further, these attempts at a rationally conceived democratization of the *sangha* include thoughtful considerations of how to implement successfully gender equality, respect for the full spectrum of Buddhist practices and practitioners within both the Asian immigrant and American convert communities, and a keen awareness that social engagement is the most profound expression of Buddhism's life-affirming attitude possible. Nurtured in an environment of concern for a proper application of Buddhist ethics, implemented in a modern and global Buddhist community, and with a renewed sense of inquiry into the nature, quality, and requirements of spiritual authority, the preceding factors provide the American Buddhism of the next millennium with an active and positive agenda.

Nonetheless, in each of the topics, there is a host of variables that will act and react in an interdependent fashion, yielding an almost endless set of possible permutations for the future of American Buddhism. In addition to these internal variables, there are many external ones as well, relating to the changing face of American religious life. Further, there has been the development of a growing ecumenical Buddhism, and with it, a new sense of global identity. The importance of the development of an ecumenical American Buddhism cannot be stressed strongly enough, for it provides perhaps the best potential for American Buddhist unity in the current century. In other words, in looking for innovative and creative methodologies for successfully negotiating the future, American Buddhism and American Buddhists might well look beyond the North American borders and learn from the experiences of other Western Buddhists.

The importance of the American Buddhist movement can easily be seen in its rapidly growing numbers. From no more than 100,000 Buddhists in the 1960s, the tradition has grown to probably six million Buddhists in North America today. As a testament to its importance on the American religious scene, the American Academy of Religion recently authorized the creation of a new unit in its organization called the "Buddhism in the West" consultation. This will allow for yearly papers to be presented at the organization's annual meeting. Headed by an adventurous young scholar named Jeff Wilson, this unit and the scholars who support it will bring forth the next generation of scholarship on American Buddhism. Most likely new typologies will deconstruct or even replace the old, focusing not on the "Two Buddhisms" or "Three Lines of Transmission" outlined previously, but rather on an American Buddhism of hybridity, a mixing of traditions, and an interreligious dialogue that will move the entire tradition forward. In so doing, the coming years in the development of American Buddhism may exhibit a genuine interest in the American Buddhist ecumenicism mentioned, one in which Buddhists from all of the "vehicles" and cultures will communicate openly and meaningfully.

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HINDUISM IN AMERICA

VASUDHA NARAYANAN

Hinduism in the United States can be studied in two ways: the history of ideas and practices that are derived from Hindu traditions but may not explicitly use the term “Hindu,” and the history of Hindus in this country. One can further divide these histories, which have fuzzy boundaries, into two large periods, with 1965 the watershed year when the immigration laws were changed, making it easy for technically qualified workers to enter the country. Ideas and practices originating in Hinduism came at a time when Hindus were not allowed into the country. The period up to 1965 can be characterized as one when the history of Hindu ideas dominates. While this certainly does not stop after 1965 (the boom in yoga, meditation, and gurus starts in the 1960s), the post-1965 period is also one when we can tell the story of large numbers of Hindus entering America, building temples, and transmitting traditions through domestic rituals and expressive arts.

In the nineteenth century, starting approximately with the time of the New England Transcendentalists and all the way into the first half of the twentieth century, we see American engagement with ideas, philosophies, and practices connected with the many Hindu traditions in the Indian subcontinent. While philosophies, texts, and practices such as Vedanta, Bhagavad Gita, forms of meditation, and yoga are embedded in the diverse cultural and ritual practices in India, during this period in America they are pried loose from the Hindu traditions, presented and interpreted as part of a timeless and universal vision of human spiritual evolution. This acceptance of what is to become known as spiritual praxis forms the foundation for the overwhelming popularity of yoga and other traditions in the late twentieth century.

In the years following 1965, the building of temples and the proliferation of performing arts have characterized the religious lives of Hindus in this country. Indeed, temple building is quite striking in terms of numbers; no other country outside India has been host to such a boom in

temple building as the United States in such a short period in more than a millennium. The closest approximation to the investment of such extensive human and financial resources in temples outside India occurred almost a thousand years ago, when there was a steady program of building temples in Southeast Asia, especially in Cambodia. Certainly, the sociocultural, political, and economic conditions in the United States; the economic class and educational qualifications of the first wave of Hindu immigrants; as well as the reasons for which they migrated have all merged in creating this unique temple culture in the United States. It is not the case that temple culture dominates only the lives of the immigrant population; we see its preeminence in both the religion of the Hindu immigrants as well as several new religious movements in America, most notably the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) or the Hare Krishnas.

Hindus – as practitioners of all religions – are continually in the process of selectively choosing from received traditions – discarding some, retaining some, transforming some, and incorporating new ideas and practices in the process of transmitting their faith. While retaining certain aspects of temple culture such as sacralizing the ground on which the structures are built, as well as traditional architecture, auspicious times to conduct rituals, and ritual feast days, the temples also differ in several ways. Notably, Hindus in America choose auspicious moments for rituals during long weekends such as Memorial Day or Labor Day, making certain celebrations coincide with the American civic calendar when they have the flexibility. Hindu temples also become community centers with educational and cultural programs; the hierarchical relationships between the ritual specialists (the priests) and the community are changed; and finally, unlike temples in India, they are notably interactive with the community, using numerous tech-savvy ways to reach out and stay in touch with the devotees.

HISTORY OF HINDU IDEAS AND PRACTICES

Is yoga Hindu? Is the teaching of Vedanta or forms of meditation part of a universal knowledge that leads one to spiritual enlightenment, or are they part of the Hindu traditions? Can we consider meditation and yoga to be beneficial to one's health and nothing more? These are some of the intellectual questions and the basis of turf wars that one encounters in the study of the Hindu traditions in America. Manifestations of philosophies and practices that have roots in Hinduism but are presented without any reference to Hindu culture or ethos, or even to religion, are very popular in America and globally.

There are two ways by which these ideas and practices with Hindu roots have become popular in America without being considered “Hindu.” The

first is seen in movements such as the Self-Realization Fellowship started by Swami Yogananda, the Art of Living, Siddha Yoga, or Transcendental Meditation, or in organizations started by the followers of dozens of religious teachers, including Amritandandamayi or Karunamayi. The teachings in these movements cluster around a Hindu charismatic leader who in most (though not all) cases is from India and focus on self-transformation or the transformation of society. To a large extent, these “universal” or “spiritual” movements *underplay, ignore, or distance* their connections with Hinduism. The second way in which ideas and practices with Hindu origins have become pervasive in American culture is through the large-scale co-opting or the secularization of Hinduism-based practices such as yoga as part of “self-help” programs. Some of these are popular because of the physical exercise with which they are associated and are taught in gyms and exercise centers; some are advertised as stress reduction techniques, and others as leading to spiritual enlightenment.

The history of America’s encounter with India begins not with New England Transcendentalism, but with the curiosities taken home by merchants during the age of sail. American sailors encountered Hindu traditions and culture when they traveled to India in the eighteenth century and kept detailed logs of what they witnessed. Statues, icons, and other material culture from India framed the first encounters with Hinduism in the late eighteenth century.¹ It is, however, in the early to middle part of the nineteenth century that there was a direct engagement with Hindu texts and ideas on American soil. The works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Walt Whitman, and others bear testimony to their acquaintance with texts from many parts of the world, including many Hindu works, and led many of these ideas to seep into American thought. The most influential works included the Upanishads, which are the last part of the Vedas, composed possibly around the sixth century B.C.E.; the Bhagavad Gita, which is part of the epic Mahabharata; the epic Ramayana; the Puranas; and many plays of the most famous Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa (c. fourth to fifth century C.E.). The Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita are both foundational texts of the Vedanta philosophy; Emerson, Thoreau, and others procured these books from the Harvard College library. Emerson’s “Brahma” bears striking resemblance to passages from the Bhagavad Gita. The impermanence of life as well as the futility of holding on to earthly possessions, land, wealth, or fame, are addressed in several passages, and Emerson poignantly expresses these themes in his poem “Hamatreya.” This poem seems to be directly modeled on Vishnu Purana (c. first to fourth century C.E.).²

¹ Susan S. Bean, *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail, 1784–1860* (Salem, MA, 2001).

² Vishnu Purana, book IV, chap. 24.

Perhaps the most influential of all the books in the Transcendentalist movement is the Bhagavad Gita. Under the direction of Warren Hastings, the then governor-general of India, Charles Wilkins had translated it into English in 1785. Emerson acquired a copy of *The Bhagvat Geeta*, or *Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon*, in September 1845.³ He calls this a “trans-national book,” and in a conversation with Moncure Conway, he is reported to have said, “Ah! There is a book to be read on one’s knees.”⁴ The Transcendentalists’ adulation of the Bhagavad Gita as well as Emerson’s paraphrasing of some verses in his poem “Brahma” assured a place for this book in most large libraries in the United States, and its popularity has remained stable.

At the end of a winter spent with the Bhagavad Gita, Thoreau saw workers cutting the ice on Walden Pond into large pieces, which were then to be exported to cities in India. In an interesting passage, Thoreau speaks about the reciprocal exchange he idealizes: his material goods (here, the ice from Walden) being sent to the “Brahman” in India who drinks of his water while Thoreau drinks from the intellectual/spiritual fountain of the Indian. Thoreau meditated on the ice cutters’ exercise and the scene he witnessed at Walden thus:

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial. . . . I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahman . . . come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. *The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.*⁵

This trope of America being the home of scientific progress and material goods while India is the seat of a “timeless” spiritual wisdom becomes the lens, the stereotype, accepted by and repeated by many gurus in later decades. On a different register, Thoreau could have hardly imagined that within 150 years of his meditations the waters of the Ganges would be conveyed very close to Walden to consecrate the temple of the goddess Lakshmi in Ashland, Massachusetts, and dozens of temples around America. Waters from the Ganges and other sacred rivers of India are assembled and mingled with the waters of the local rivers of America and used for the consecration rituals of newly built Hindu temples.

³ William H. Gilman et al., eds., *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 9: 185.

⁴ Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott* (New York, 1932), 7.

⁵ Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden or Life in the Woods* (Boston, 1910), 328–9.

In Emerson, we see an issue that becomes a leitmotif for the history of Hinduism in America – a difference between ideas and practices of a religious culture and people who are born into and practice that religion. Emerson's fascination with the "East" is moderated by his distinction between the thought and the people. He praises the stories, the legends, the wisdom of the writings several times and exoticizes and idealizes a golden age. "Yes," he says, "the Zoroastrian, the Indian, the Persian scriptures are majestic, and more to our daily purpose than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper."⁶ But he also writes, "Indian mythology is a lace veil; clouds of legends but the old forms seen through. We should infer a country of sages and devotees; but there seems no relation between the book and the actual population."⁷

Although Emerson copiously copied out several passages from the Hindu texts in his *Journals* and reflected on them, it is not clear how well the other Transcendentalists knew the materials.⁸ Nevertheless, through their attitudes and writings, they laid a good foundation for the American reception and interpretation of the ideas and practices that were presented by Vivekananda and other Hindu leaders who followed a few decades later.

VIVEKANANDA AND THE VEDANTA SOCIETY

Swami (an honorific title meaning "master") Vivekananda (1863–1902), a young disciple of the Indian spiritual teacher Ramakrishna (c. 1835–86), traveled to the United States to attend the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. On the afternoon of 11 September 1893, he addressed the delegates in the parliament, and by all accounts it was one of the most successful and moving speeches he ever gave. Most people trace the history of Hinduism in America to this famous address. Sister Gargi (born Marie Louise Burke, 1911–2004), one of the best-known biographers of Swami Vivekananda, writes, "On that day, at that hour, the Vedanta movement started in the West."⁹ Vivekananda's primary teaching was a form of Hindu philosophy called Vedanta, which is based on the Hindu sacred texts such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads.

An eloquent speaker, Vivekananda was invited to several forums in the United States and spoke at universities and clubs. Local newspapers reported his speeches in considerable detail and called him the "cyclonic

⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Waldo Emerson, Waldo Emerson Forbes, and Bruce Rogers, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson: With Annotations* (Boston, 1909), 9: 241–3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸ Claude Gayet, *The Intellectual Development of Henry David Thoreau* (Uppsala, 1981), 60.

⁹ Gargi, *Swami Trigunatita: His Life and Work* (San Francisco, 1997), 3.

Hindu” and “militant monk.” When Vivekananda returned to America in 1899, he lectured in many forums on topics like “Christ, the Messenger” and “The Way to the Realization of a Universal Religion.” The invitations were from American institutions that tended to welcome people of all faiths for nondenominational meditation and encouraged understanding of different traditions.

Vivekananda and his disciples started a number of Vedanta Societies around America. In April 1900, Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society of Northern California, known earlier as the Vedanta Class and the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. The purposes of the organization were to help him in his work in India and to enable Americans to study Vedanta philosophy.¹⁰ At the behest of Vivekananda, Swami Trigunatita (1865–1914) arrived in San Francisco in early 1903. An initial official pamphlet outlining the philosophy, object, scope, methods, and membership for the society was printed and distributed. The object of the Vedanta Society was “to propagate Hindu philosophy ... [and] some idea of the renowned Swami Vivekananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, for the welfare of humanity; and to have its effect in our own practical lives in all probable ways.”¹¹ The activities for the first year included regular meditation and Gita classes, personal interviews, and free public lectures.

Swami Trigunatita gave regular public lectures on Sundays in San Francisco and less frequently in Los Angeles. The early lectures focused both on nondualist philosophy based on the teachings of the eighth-ninth-century theologian Shankara as well as on Indian customs. For instance, in March 1903, Trigunatita’s lectures included “Indian Homes,” “Indian Manners and Customs,” “Child Marriage in India,” and “Duties of Indian Women.” The *San Francisco Chronicle*, reporting on the dedication ceremony of the Vedanta temple on 6 April 1908, said of his talk, “*The main and primary principle of Hindooism, according to the speaker is to follow any path of faith suitable to one’s own self very sincerely, and with an ardent view of mental, moral and spiritual development.*”¹² This emphasis that one can follow one’s faith – and yet be a believer of Vedanta or a practitioner of meditation – has survived in the teachings of many gurus and organizations well into the twenty-first century.

THE VEDANTA TEMPLE

Swami Trigunatita spent a considerable amount of energy building what he called “the first Hindu Temple in the whole Western world.” Since this was

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 364.

¹² *Ibid.*, 205.

his intent, the temple was considered to be “a vital piece of India planted on American soil. The Temple *represented the influx of India's great spiritual wisdom into the culture of the West* – there to grow and flourish, as Swami Vivekananda had wanted.”¹³ The temple was built in 1905 and dedicated in 1906. But although Trigunatita called this structure, which would house the Vedanta Society, the Hindu temple and said it was for Americans, Gargi notes, “In actual fact, the Temple was not in any sense Hindu – not in organization, activities, membership, architecture, or décor.”¹⁴

The temple was replete with symbolism, and the five towers of the building showcased the syncretic thrust of Vedanta. The pamphlet that explains all this says, “The Temple may be considered as a combination of a Hindu Temple, a Christian church, a Mahommedan [*sic*] mosque, a Hindu math or monastery and an American shrine.”¹⁵ One of the towers looked like the bell tower of a church and resembled the Taj Mahal, and another was an exact miniature of a temple in Benares. A third one was like the Shiva shrine in the Kali temple in Dakshineswar in Bengal, India. The northeast corner – traditionally the most important in any Hindu building – had a tower that was supposed to resemble the symbol of the Hindu god Shiva. The fourth tower on the southeast corner was supposed to resemble the castle towers of Europe and stood for “the great strength of character and spiritual culture.”¹⁶

The symbolic notions did not stop there. There were elements from Indian yogic practice and terminology. The canopy, over the mosaic and marble entrance, represented the thousand-petaled lotus in the brain. In yogic anatomy, a subtle passage called the *sushumna* went up the spinal cord to this lotus. On either side were two auxiliary passages, in yogic physiology known as the *ida* and *pingala*. The two tubular sidelights on both sides of the canopy represented these two passages. Moving from the yogic to the patriotic, at the head of the canopy, the one that represented the thousand-petaled lotus on the crest of the *sushumna* tube was an eagle. Since this was the first Hindu temple erected in America, the honor and appreciation were shown in the architectural art of the temple; the main channel of spiritual illumination rose up to the national bird of America.¹⁷ Under the wings of the eagle were painted American flags. Even the colors of the American flag were said to echo sentiments sacred to the Hindu – red was the color of Brahma the creator god, white of Shiva, and blue of Lord Vishnu. Further, red was the color of the quality of *rajas*, or passion; white

¹³ *Ibid.*, 169–70, italics added.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 169 footnote.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98, 368.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 369.

of *sattva*, or purity; and blue of inertia, or *tamas*.¹⁸ But Swami Trigunatita's reference to the *sushumna nadi* is also significant; this is a nerve, a kind of spiritual blood vessel, which, according to the Hindu texts and practices, is the main channel for spiritual energy, connecting the chakras, or centers of spiritual energy, within the subtle body of the human being. Therefore, the first "Vedanta" temple in America, in the best of Hindu temple traditions, had multiple layers of meaning. It contained allusions to the human body; had the national colors of America, which happened to be the colors of three deities and the three primordial "qualities" inherent in creation; and linked the American eagle with Vishnu's Garuda.

What is going on here is an important trend seen in many of the Hindu traditions that make their home here, namely, the ability of the creative Hindu thinker to harmonize diverse thought and material forms, variant cultures, and disparate philosophic and patriotic traditions. One seldom sees a better example than the one exemplified by the first Hindu temple in America.

The Vedanta Society does not use the word "Hindu" very often. Vivekananda's teachings allow for meditation and forms of yoga, and although the teachings articulate a kind of neo-Vedanta, belief is not the cornerstone of membership. This trend is continued by Yogananda (1893–1952), whose book *Autobiography of a Yogi* has remained one of the most powerful and popular books in American spirituality. As did Vivekananda, Yogananda preached a nondualist neo-Vedanta but also introduced facile affinities between his form of Hinduism and Christianity. One of the "Aims and Ideals" of this society, said Yogananda, is "*To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions.*"¹⁹ Unlike Vivekananda, Yogananda settled in America.

Yogananda initially attended the International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston, a meeting sponsored by the Unitarian Church in 1920. He started the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920, and in 1925 he established the headquarters for this organization in Los Angeles on the site of a former hotel atop Mount Washington. There are about five hundred Self-Realization Fellowship temples and meditation centers, located in fifty-four countries, where members are invited for "prayer services, meditation, and spiritual fellowship." Services include an Americanization and group activities of what would be individual exercises in the Hindu context. Yoga and meditation are generally individual activities, to be done away from

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ http://www.yogananda-srf.org/tmp/about_notitle.aspx?id=61.

the multitudes. However, because of the need for a support system, a new kind of ritual emerged in the neo-Vedantic movements – a group meditation or yoga, chanting or singing of hymns, and a sermon. This model of group yoga is now popular all over the world.

The spiritual message and meditational practices also conformed to certain post-Enlightenment notions of religion. Religion was private; it had nothing to do with one's clothes, food, or public behavior. Interestingly enough, adapting yoga to the American and European environments and making it compatible with one's lifestyle seem to be a continuation of what Lahiri Mahasaya, Yogananda's teacher's teacher, initiated. Lahiri Mahasaya practiced a special form of yoga known as *kriya* and was revered as a saintly figure, but unlike many other yogis and religious men, he was married, had children, and held a regular job as an accountant in the Military Engineering Department of the British government for thirty-five years.²⁰ His being married and holding a "secular" job are explained at length by Yogananda in a footnote; it is worth quoting because it gives insight into how and why yoga is adapted in the West.

As a householder-yogi, Lahiri Mahasaya brought a practical message suited to the needs of the modern world. The excellent economic and religious conditions of ancient India no longer obtain. The great guru therefore did not encourage the old ideal of a yogi as a wandering ascetic with a begging bowl. He stressed, rather, the advantages to a modern yogi of earning his own living, of not being dependent on a hard-pressed society for support, and of *practicing yoga in the privacy of his home*.

To this counsel Lahiri Mahasaya added the heartening force of his own example. He was the latest-styled, "streamlined" model of a yogi. His way of life . . . was intended to be a guide for aspiring yogis not only in the East but also in the West.²¹

The adaptation of yoga by Yogananda for his American disciples, therefore, is a continuation of the adjustments made by this teacher. These forms of spiritual practices – yoga by any name, meditation – are not merely an "add-on"; rather, any one of them can be considered a private practice that transforms one's *inner* being profoundly and affects one's relationship with the environment. On the other hand, it does not transform one's *outer* appearance; one's name, clothes, and other markers of personality are left untouched.

Rather, it is the *inner* transformation that is emphasized, a transformation that is variously articulated as the realization of higher consciousness, or the divinity within oneself. This focus on an inner change, the enlightenment experience, rather than on outward rituals or identifying markers

²⁰ Paramahansa Yogananda. *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Los Angeles, 1956), 303–4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 335, italics added.

of the larger Hindu religiocultural traditions, is seen in movements such as the Siddha Yoga or even Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's teachings, seen in the practice of Transcendental Meditation, have been extraordinarily influential in Europe and America. His movement is said to have about five million meditators worldwide.²² While the meditational practice is derived from the generic Hindu traditions, and the philosophical context of Transcendental Meditation is the non-dualist tradition of the eighth-ninth-century religious leader Shankara, the practice of TM is distinctive and not connected with any religious ideology. Indeed, it is described more as a way of reaching one's full potential and as a stress-reduction technique. The movement is variegated, and some branches of Maharishi's movement advertise other aspects of Hindu practices. These include Ayurveda, a traditional school of medicine in India, as well as Vastu, the art and science of aligning a building structure and arranging the interior such that it is in harmony with the forces of nature. The Ayurvedic medications and teas are described with terminology borrowed from the many texts and practices of Hindus and packaged in a way similar to that of complementary medicine products and appropriate for the United States. As did yoga in the late twentieth century, many products derived from the larger Hindu religiocultural matrix have entered the secular life of America.

EARLY IMMIGRATION

While teachers like Vivekananda and Yogananda shaped the intellectual encounters, contemporary immigration in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries included a few thousand Indian Sikh and Hindu men who emigrated primarily from the Punjab area to work on the West Coast of the United States and Canada. Since there was no sizable migration of Hindu women at that time, many men married Mexican American women. A large number of these early immigrants were unskilled workers.

One important exception to this pattern was the arrival of Jhamandas Watumull, a well-educated Indian businessman, in Hawaii in 1915, and of his brother, Gobindram, a year later. The Watumull family and their creation of the vast network of exemplary philanthropic funds for arts, education, and research, as well as collaborative and cooperative enterprises between Indians and Americans, represent the earliest example of Hindu immigrant success stories. This early wave of immigration, however, was not sustained, under pressure from the Asian Exclusion League. In 1917

²² Jeremy Page in Delhi and Ben Hoyle, "Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Dies a Recluse," *Sunday Times*, London, 7 Feb. 2008, http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/celebrity/article3322232.ece.

Congress passed a law placing a “barred zone” on immigration from Asia. The Watumull family and others like them, who moved to America in the first half of the twentieth century, had to rely on their inner resources and domestic structures to retain their sense of Hindu identity.

Since minor changes in the law in 1946, which allowed a quota of 100 émigrés from India, and eventually, major reforms in 1965, there has been a steady increase in the Hindu immigrant population in the United States. Unlike the unskilled workers and religious men of the early twentieth century, the new immigrants were largely professionals. Many of the women who arrived in the mid-1960s were those whose husbands had migrated to Canada and the United States. Since the mid-1970s, there has also been a steady flow of students and professional women from South Asia. It was the arrival of these professional families that led to the building of the large Indian-Hindu temples, institutions that are now the hub for cultural dissemination among Hindus from the subcontinent. The first two temples that claimed to be “authentic” were built in Flushing, New York, and in Penn Hills, Pennsylvania, and consecrated in 1976. These early temples grew out of the many classes in performing arts that were being conducted for the new immigrants and the young second-generation Indo-Americans. In later decades, with the information technology (IT) revolution, Indian software specialists migrated to many parts of the world, and more than 60 percent of them are said to have immigrated to the United States. When President Bush signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1990 (generally considered to be the date when the H-1B visa came into existence), about sixty-five thousand new employment-based visa permits were added to the quota. This led to a surge of temporary Indian IT specialists who arrived as temporary workers in the United States in the 1990s. Many of them were Hindu and added to the strength of the temples.

STATISTICS AND TAXONOMY OF INSTITUTIONS

Since the numbers that describe religious or ethnic groups can be translated into political and financial clout, several communities have erred in projecting the highest possible number for themselves in the population. What we can say with assurance is that until 1965 the number of Hindus in America was very low. The count in the early twenty-first century ranges from 1.6 to 3 million adherents in America. According to a count by the Pew Foundation, about 0.4 percent of the American population say they are Hindu – about as many as those who identify themselves as adherents of New Age movements.²³ This number, of course, reflects only those who

²³ <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.

self-identify as Hindus and does not include the thousands who incorporate practices associated with the Hindu traditions but who do not use the word “Hindu” to describe themselves. It is not clear whether the number of people who identify as Hindus includes members of new religious movements such as ISKCON, but it does seem to include immigrants from countries all over the world, and those who are in the “second diaspora.” Although all are minorities, Hindu people of different regions and national origins tend to cluster together and even build their own temples.

One of the reasons why it is difficult to get exact numbers is because Hindu traditions are centered in both temples and homes, and Hinduism is not a congregational religion. Thus there are no official temple lists of regular or affiliate members. E-mail Listservs and records through donations are the closest approximations to counting, but there is considerable discrepancy in the numbers. Many Hindus go to temples only occasionally; they may, instead, join as a group to have devotional singing once a week in a neighborhood home. Many smaller towns do not have temples; some Hindus may practice forms of meditation or express their devotion through performing arts. Many performance groups that focus on expressive arts, such as the *garbha* dance troupes, straddle the fuzzy boundaries between religion and culture.

In trying to analyze categories of Hindu communities in the United States, a general rule of thumb is that the smaller the geographic area under consideration, the more inclusive the community. A large city may have temples that are patronized by either one language group or one community from a particular region of India; smaller towns, like Allentown, Pennsylvania, on the other hand, started with one large shared worship facility for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains.

The Hindu communities are broadly divided on issues of caste, sectarian lines, or veneration of a particular religious leader. Most easily identifiable are those Hindu communities based on caste. In some areas of India, community is conflated with caste; thus, there are pan-American groups that have members of just one community: the Bhants, the Patels/Patedhars, and so on. These communities and groups are originally from particular parts of India and speak a common language. Some groups are organized on sectarian lines. The Kannada-speaking Vira Shaiva community from the state of Karnataka, whose members are exclusive followers of Lord Shiva, has pancontinental gatherings every other year. Another example is one of the best organized Hindu communities in India and in the diaspora, the Swaminarayan tradition, which was started by Swaminarayan (1781–1830) in 1801 in Gujarat.

Some Hindu groups are based on political philosophies and, social and cultural activism connected with India. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad

(World Hindu Council) seeks to raise Hindu self-consciousness through a number of cultural, educational, and religious activities, including sponsoring conferences and symposia. The Hindu Student Council is active on many college campuses. While many sponsor celebration of festivals and mount projects such as Hindu Awareness Week, a few are active in the discussion of sociopolitical ideologies such as Hindutva.

Although religion forms a useful way of identifying groups, there are other social factors perceptible in the organization of immigrant communities. Broad divisions are seen among Hindus from different geographic areas; thus Hindus from north India, south India, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, and so on, tend to form separate communities if there is a large enough population in the place of residence. A further subdivision for the Indian communities is by way of language group; such groups include the Tamil Sangam (society of Tamil people), Kannada Koota (Kannada [People's] Group), and the Gujarati Samaj (Gujarati Society). Two of the larger language-based organizations are TANA (Telugu Association of North America), with membership greater than thirty thousand, and ATA (American Telugu Association). These communities meet regularly and have biennial conferences that, in some cases such as TANA and ATA, involve a turnover in the millions of dollars and are attended by several thousand people. The celebrations include programs with classical dances; popular cinema; talks by religious leaders, movie stars, and political officials; clothing and jewelry exhibits and sales; and continuing medical education courses to attract physicians. These groups cut across religious boundaries and castes and are found in all major metropolitan areas.

Apart from these groups, there are other Indian associations that have members who are predominantly Hindu in America but do not have a religious mission. Many of these are based on professional ties, as is the American Physicians of Indian Origin, which wields considerable economic and, now, political clout. Many first-generation Hindus/Indians work in health-related professions, the hospitality industry, or educational institutions.

A more detailed taxonomy of the many religion-based organizations would include the following categories.

1. *Domestic/Informal groups*

- a. Informal groups that meet regularly to sing *bhajans* (generic devotional songs); others meet to recite some familiar prayers and then learn new songs. This is probably the first, simplest, and most commonly found group among Hindus in the diaspora.

- b. Groups whose focus is devotion to a particular teacher in India, or one who has passed away. These groups meet, usually weekly, in someone's house in the neighborhood or local area to sing devotional songs in honor of their teacher – Sathya Sai Baba, Ammachi, and others. These informal gatherings of devotees, in time, register their “center” and, in time, become part of a global organization like the ones discussed in the following.

2. *Global Organizations*

“Franchise” organizations with a *global* presence, focusing on either devotional or meditational practices, with branches in the United States. Examples include Vedanta centers, Chinmaya missions, the Brahma Kumaris, ISKCON, Svadhyaya, and the Gayatri Parivar. These organizations can be further subdivided in many ways: some of them identify with the label “Hindu” and others avoid it; some encourage congregational meetings; and others, including the Self-Realization Fellowship and Sahaj Marg, promote individual meditation in the privacy of one's home. While similar to the domestic/informal groups, they are marked by a high degree of organization and institutionalization.

3. *Temples*

- a. Hindu temples with consecrated deities set up by the local community; these are identified with Hindus from a particular region of the world and cater to the local population.
- b. Temples with resident gurus, set up on their initiative. Examples include the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, and Barsana Dham, near Austin, Texas.

4. *Virtual Groups*

While most temples in the United States, especially those that are not in the large metropolitan areas, are centripetal in nature and try to bind diverse groups from various regions into one structure, virtual groups are centrifugal in texture. Virtual groups are probably the fastest growing and least mapped groups among Hindus. They increase globalized traditions and regularly stay in touch through e-mail Listservs. Some of them connect by telephone regularly to hear the discourses of their teacher from India through conference calls.

While local temples draw diverse Indian sectarian communities and people from various regions together under one roof, virtual groups cater

to a global family and celebrate their difference from other Hindu communities. Thus, there are e-mail Listservs for particular subcommunities of Sri Vaishnavas or those based on language, community, and region, as in Tamil-speaking Iyers (Tamil Brahmins who follow the eighth-ninth-century theologian Shankara) from Palghat, a small town in Kerala near the Tamilnadu border.

5. *Cultural Groups*

In addition to these, there are quasi-religious-cultural groups. These have some trappings of religion or some religion content, but the value of performance dominates. Examples include music groups that sing for *garbha* dances and practice through the year – people who gather together once a year for song or dance, such as the celebration of the Tyagaraja Aradhana, a music fest in honor of the composer-lyricist Tyagaraja, 1767–1849, one of the most celebrated musicians in south Indian classical music. Tyagaraja Aradhanas are conducted all over the United States, and the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana is labeled the largest Indian classical music festival outside India. It was first celebrated in 1978 and has now grown to be a ten-day festival with more than eight thousand who attend.

TEMPLE HINDUISM

Temple spaces have become the main area for religious activities in America. In India, religious activities are spread to many spaces: home, temple, and public spaces such as roads where processions take place. In America, there is no extended family or immediate neighbor to give support, and there are few trained ritual specialists who can go to one's home to conduct rites such as the worship of Vishnu in the form of Satyanarayana on full moon nights. Thus rituals that are ordinarily celebrated at home are now celebrated in the temples.

While a few places of worship had been built in the New York area, the first really ambitious south Indian temple that sought to reproduce the traditional architecture and recapture the flavor of a Hindu-Vaishnava sacred place was the Sri Venkateswara temple built in Penn Hills, Pennsylvania, in 1976. Along with the Ganesha temple in Flushing, New York, the Penn Hills vies to be the first “real” post-1965 Hindu temple in America. The local community took pride in its being an authentic temple and emphasized that aspect frequently in its bulletins and pamphlets. This temple has been successful in attracting devotees from all over the United States and Canada. For more than twenty years, it was seen as the trend-setting south Indian temple in its celebration of expensive, time-consuming, and

intricate rituals; many other younger temples want to be like the one in Penn Hills when they grow up. Its success story is overwhelming; in an annual report, the chairman of the board of trustees at the Penn Hills temple reported that “as all established religious organizations ... the temple has extended modest interest-free loans to temple’s [*sic*] that are in embryonic stages.”²⁴

The Penn Hills temple enshrines a manifestation of Vishnu in which he is called Venkateswara, or lord (*Isvara*) of the hill known as Venkata in south India. The American temple was built with the help and blessing of one of the most popular, richest, and oldest temples in India, the Venkateswara Temple at Tiru Venkatam (Tirumala/Tirupati); and an early Penn Hills temple bulletin specifically states that the parent temple (i.e., “Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam ... of India) will be the main consulting institution on religious matters.”²⁵ The deities here – and in all later temples – are carved in India. The temple at Penn Hills, like the one in India, can be called Hindu in that it is particular and sectarian; the mode of worship is according to the sectarian Sri Vaishnava tradition, which crystallized after the eleventh century C.E. in India.

Many temples in large cities in America are “prestige” institutions through which an emerging Hindu community displays its piety, pomp, and power. The case of the Hindu Temple of Atlanta is a striking illustration. In spring 2000, the Hindu Temple of Atlanta in Riverdale, Georgia, was able to erect the *dhvaja sthamba*, the sacred flag that establishes the dominion of the deity over the land. Muthiah Schapathi, the traditional architect, who has “Indianized” several dozen temples in America, had drawn the plans for this sacred flag about a year earlier. It is only after this sacred flag is erected that a temple can celebrate the largest and most important annual festival – the Brahmotsava. But eighteen months later, after 9/11, it was the U.S. flag hoisted outside the temple that was most visible. The temple was Hindu, but it was important to affirm its American identity. The Hindu Temple of Atlanta is dedicated to Vishnu in the form of Venkatesvara, but there are also a Shiva linga (a symbol of the deity depicting his creative energy) and Durga (one of the best-known Hindu goddesses) in this temple, and now, a new Shiva temple by its side. The temple is Hindu in that it is Shaivaite and Vaishnavaite, and it is American. Even the very first temple that one can fit under the umbrella of the term “Hindu” in America was explicit in proclaiming its American identity.

Hindu temples have several functions and identities. They have a cosmological identity, and devotees may understand the tower to represent Mount

²⁴ “Annual Progress Report,” *Saptagiri Vani* (Penn Hills, PA, 1990): 2.

²⁵ *Sri Venkateswara Temple*, vol. 6:3 (Third quarter 1981): 14.

Meru or a cosmic mountain. But temples also have multiple national identities; for example, some think of themselves as Indo-Guyanese-American institutions. Some temples are explicit in their ethnic identities and cater to Telugu, Tamil, or Gujarati people; yet others have pronounced sectarian identities in that they are Vaishnava or Shaiva. These identities change over time.

Prestige temples outside India display their identities simply through their consecration of space and through their architecture. They rally to draw various internal communities together, seeking at times the lowest common denominator and, at others, the highest common factors and mask and reveal ruptures and hierarchies. There are many kinds of temples in America, ranging from neighborhood shrines to the large prestige temples. The prestige temples of America are similar to earlier state temples in Southeast Asia in that they are both relatively small elite groups whose intent is to make sociopolitical statements with their sponsorship of independent but collectively massive construction programs. And both look to the subcontinent for their vision and depiction of authenticity while trying to adapt and present the new land itself as somehow holy.

Large American prestige temples are sites of piety and sites of power. There are many such temples in the United States, for instance, in Malibu and Livermore, California; Riverdale, Georgia; Penn Hills, Pennsylvania; and Orlando, Florida. These temples derive their power and their clientele in not just being neighborhood temples with community involvement – that is a given everywhere – but having multiple identities and functions. Most significant are their claims of authenticity in connecting with timeless tradition through space, architecture, and ritual. But also important are the ability to be a cultural center, as were Hindu temples in precolonial India; their dynamism in having new rituals, which are, of course, connected with traditional Hindu values; and their having associations with civic and political power bases, from the local mayor's office to the U.S. Congress.

The authenticity issue is paramount: the temple gains its clout because it is authentic and traditional, and because of this, it does more than unite the community. The temple here frequently carries out new rituals and represents the immigrant community to the host country. Because it represents itself as participating in rituals that are timeless, it is able to introduce new rituals relevant for the new place and times, like graduation *pujas* or Mother's Day celebrations. The claim to authenticity in these temples results from the continued attempt to place themselves in line with the traditions perceived to be practiced in temples in India. These traditions include the location of the temple in sacralized land, temple architecture, priests well-versed in worship discipline, the conducting of rituals as they were and ever will be, and so on.

As in India, American temples serve the local population – with few exceptions such as the Swaminarayan community – and are decentralized without being part of an overarching organization or denomination. Prior to the building of temples, most groups begin to meet informally in someone's house, a gym in a local school, or a community hall; after an initial period of fund-raising, they move to their own separate space. These spaces may be old churches, health clubs, or school buildings; or, if the funding prospects look reasonable, they may be new buildings.

With the decision to build a temple, a community chooses the sectarian affiliation or predominant mode of worship on the basis of geographic location in India and then imports a priest to manage the consecration and worship rituals. For major events such as consecration of a temple or the annual rituals to celebrate the temple's dedication, larger institutions in metropolitan areas such as Atlanta may import several priests from other temples. These priests are ritual specialists and not trained in theology or pastoral care; they have learned, in training schools in India (*veda pathashalas*) or through apprenticeship, to recite the Vedas or to recite prayers in Sanskrit (and sometimes in vernacular languages such as Tamil) specific to a sectarian tradition, and the art of decorating the images of the deities, ritual scripts, and so on. While these rituals are conducted regularly in India without interpretation, in America the priests are called upon to give exact programs, briefly to explain the meaning to a *puja* (worship) committee of the temple so they can describe it in the souvenir or temple brochure, and then to conduct the rituals.

The priests in temples are, like those in India, male, and for the most part drawn from the Brahmin caste. There are priests from other castes in India, and a few temples even have women priests, but temples in America tend to be more conservative, and most have male Brahmin ritual specialists. The hierarchical status of the priests is ambivalent. In India, it is not necessarily a vocation that people aspire to have, and women are not particularly interested in taking on this role, though there are some movements in Maharashtra to encourage and train them. In larger temples in India, these ritual specialists wield power in certain domains since they control access to the icons of the deities, the length of time a devotee can stand in the inner shrines, or the proximity to the special ceremonies and rites. However, in the diaspora, the priests are interviewed, are brought in from India, and are hired by the temple board. The hierarchical balances are frequently renegotiated, depending on the ritual and social contexts, social stature (which depends on the service one renders to the temple), economic class, or piety; and in general, they do not have much connection with caste or gender issues in the United States. There are a few temples, like those connected with the Swaminarayan tradition, which maintain

traditional gender segregation and a highly respected stature for priests in ritual spaces.

There were more than seven hundred temples and meditation centers in the United States in 2010 and dozens more in Canada, Western Europe, and other parts of the world. A few temples try to emulate the architecture found in India, and usually they follow one or two architectural patterns. Most temples built on a south Indian model have towers that imitate those seen all over South India, while those built by north Indians have superstructures, which are popularly known as “Birla temple” towers. The Birla temple is a famous house of worship in New Delhi, India, and is named after a wealthy patron who built it. The Birla temple towers are smooth, not tiered as the South Indian ones are, and are frequently cream or light pink in color. These kinds of towers are in Cape Town, South Africa, and Augusta, Georgia; very elegant versions are in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, and in Barsana Dham, near Austin, Texas. South Indian temples have different towers and, more substantially, different kinds of rituals.

While many temples in South India are sectarian in nature – that is, they are devoted to Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha, or another of the many deities – in America the South Indian temples in Lanham, Maryland; Livermore, California; Aurora, Illinois; Riverdale, Georgia; and hundreds of other places include shrines to multiple pan-Hindu deities such as Ganesha and Durga, as well as regional manifestations of the various deities and the nine planets, which are personified and worshipped.

Temples built by ISKCON, on the other hand, are sectarian in nature, as are many of the temples dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva in India. They are sectarian in that the worship is only for Krishna and Radha, and the temples house icons of their founder-leaders, who are themselves considered divine. ISKCON was started in New York in 1966 by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977). Following the Gaudiya tradition in India, this movement venerates the religious leader Chaitanya (c. 1486–1534), who is considered an incarnation of the Divine. Devotees consider Krishna and Radha to be the ultimate deities, and they believe that devotion to Krishna and honoring of the lineage of teachers in their tradition, along with recitation of the “great mantra” (*maha mantra*, or the mantra beginning with “Hare Rama, Hare Rama”) and a disciplined lifestyle, as advocated by their religious gurus, are the only way to be saved from the cycle of life and death. The discipline includes very strict rules on diet and certain sensual pursuits, and it encourages a lifestyle in which devotees eat and dress as people who belong to this sectarian movement and who live in Bengal or Vrindavan in India do. There are approximately 55 temples in the United States

and Canada, about 10 of those in Canada. In addition, there are dozens of gatherings of ISKCON devotees in cities and communities that do not have temples. Congregational strengths are hard to measure; Anuttama Das, an ISKCON leader, estimates that there are about 5,000 devotees who are living under formal vows in the United States, but that the largest membership is that of congregational members who have not taken any formal vows. The estimate is that there are between 75,000 and 100,000 members of ISKCON in the United States. From being a very visible and audible counterculture group in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this congregational religion has become part of the mainstream American landscape, reserving ritual names, forehead marks, beads, and ethnic clothing to the devotional milieu.

In both the daily and seasonal routines of prayers and services, the temples in America built by immigrants from India try to remain faithful to those in the home country. The morning wake-up prayers (*suprabhatam*), the offering of food to the deity, the daily round of worship (*archana*), and the recitation of prayers at specific points of the day are all followed correctly; however, unlike in the Indian temple, here community participation is seen primarily on the weekends. While the temples celebrate a few seasonal festivals, they try as far as is astrologically possible to plan big events around the holidays of the American secular calendar. Thus the main festivals in America are celebrated during the long weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day and stretch out until Thanksgiving in southern states. The sacred-time orientation of the temple is made to coincide, as far as the ritual almanac will allow, with the secular calendar of the land in which it is located. While the reasons for this time orientation are obvious – unlike in the Indian temple, the festivals are organized by people working in other places, and long weekends are the time many families do long-distance traveling – it is important to note the framework of the American secular calendar. These are the times when the weather and holidays cooperate to attract full participation by the devotees.²⁶

Thus, in addition to being centers for individual piety, temples set up by Hindus from India serve as large community halls for the local population. These temples function as institutions that have self-consciously undertaken the role of educating the younger generation of Hindus born in America. This is done through weekly language and religion classes, frequent religious discourses, study circles for adults, teaching of classical music and dances (which have a broad religious base in India), and summer

²⁶ Vasudha Narayanan, "Creating the South Indian 'Hindu' Experience in the United States," in *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmissions of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad*, ed. Raymond Williams (Chambersburg, PA, 1992), 147–76.

camps. In addition to these classes, many Hindu temples also have college preparatory SAT and other courses both to encourage families to go to the temple and to invest in the success of the younger generation. Since many of the founding trustees of Hindu temples are physicians, temples frequently organize blood drives and health fairs with health screenings. In all these matters, the temples in the diaspora are different from those in India and have assumed the functions that occur in the community at large in the home country.

While there are many differences in architecture and modes of worship, there are at least two common elements in the temples set up by many of these Hindu communities of Indian origin. In most instances, the temples focus primarily on *devotional* practices as opposed to meditational or yogic exercises. Second, many of them – whether they are in Fiji, Mauritius, or the United States – sponsor either regular classes or programs involving various forms of classical Indian dance such as Bharata Natyam. This dance form has become one of the main ways of transmitting Hindu culture to the younger-generation girls in the diaspora. The performing arts are, of course, central to many Hindu traditions, and both the form and the content have religious significance. Learning the dance forms and performing them in public events during festival days, therefore, become one main avenue for young girls to participate in the larger Hindu community.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

An important feature of temples in the diaspora is that there is a blurring of lines among domestic, community, and temple rituals. Domestic rituals, such as the prenatal rites, are conducted in the temple; family festivals, such as Deepavali, are conducted by the whole community gathering together in a school gym, church auditorium, or, if there is one nearby, a temple. The celebration of rituals and festivals in suburban America is similar in many ways to their celebration in village India, where both domestic and temple rituals become community-based celebrations. There are very few really private domestic functions in villages; they are invariably community-based celebrations, where one or two families are responsible for food and hospitality. Similarly, even temple festivals in small Indian villages, especially where the temples have no fixed endowment, become the responsibility of a few “sponsoring” families and are again community-based.

Thus in addition to being centers for individual piety, temples set up by Hindus from India serve as large community halls for the local population. In all these matters, the temples in the diaspora are different from those in India and have assumed the functions found in the community at large in the home country. Regular newsletters and updated Web pages provide

an “outreach” function. New temples are rising up all over the American landscape, and in many cases the community hall is being built even before the shrine. This is understandable in a situation in which Hindus are trying to assert their identity in the midst of a larger society in which they feel marginalized and sometimes disenfranchised culturally and linguistically. The community hall is a place where different Hindu groups can meet and have language, music, and dance classes and celebrate the many festivals of the religious calendar. The halls are also rented out for weddings, graduations, and other events. Annual “variety entertainments,” usually consisting of dance performances by local children and dinners, mark big festivals like Deepavali.

In addition to activities of worship and performing arts, many Hindu temple communities have “service” or humanitarian programs through which they connect with the Judeo-Christian community in America. Many of the communities organize blood drives through the temples, an act that is unusual, given the polluting quality of blood in the Hindu Brahmanical tradition. The Atlanta Swaminarayan temple and the Hindu temple of Atlanta, for example, participate in food drives in the city and have, in successive years, been the institutions to donate the largest amount of food. Other outreach activities may involve working with Christian organizations. For example, members from the Hindu Temple of Atlanta worked in the soup kitchens of the Atlanta Union Mission, an evangelical institution. Devotees worked with the Atlantic Union Mission on weekends close to Hindu festivals like Sankranti, which usually falls on January 14, and linked these activities to Martin Luther King Day. Another instance of collaboration between church and temple is seen in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where devotees from the Kalamazoo temple work with “Gospel Kitchens” providing food for the homeless during Thanksgiving.

Most temples in America are very active in staying in touch with the community, and here too they are different from the temples in India. While temples in India do contact devotees during fund-raising activities, in America the temples (like the family *purohit* or priest on the subcontinent) also alert the community about festivals, ritual days, and astrological calendars; encourage them to attend and sponsor special worship ceremonies or contribute to projects; and participate in special service drives. As do some of the large temples in India, the temples in America have active Web pages, but unlike the Indian temples, American temples send out e-mails very regularly and mail monthly printed newsletters, which go to hundreds of people, not just in the community, but all over the country. Many of them have links in their Websites through which devotees can have special worship services performed on their behalf, donate funds, sponsor rituals, or even “book a priest” to conduct domestic rituals. The

mechanics of creating a community – here, a virtual one – has kept up with the technological advances.

YOGA

While a majority of the immigrant Hindu population and some of the new religious movements such as ISKCON are temple-centered, yoga, which has been known in America since the late nineteenth century, has become one of the most popular imported activities among the middle-class population, especially among women. Shreena Gandhi argues that the importation of yoga from India to the United States was never a whole transplantation; rather, it has always been and continues to be a translation.²⁷ One can say that the translation has happened over the centuries, and the commodification has been part of the globalization process. Today approximately sixteen to eighteen million people in the United States say they practice or will practice yoga, and Americans spend close to \$6 billion on yoga-related products.²⁸

Is yoga Hindu? While some people answer in the affirmative because its roots are in practice and texts from traditions eventually called Hindu, others consider it as outside a religious institutional framework and speak of it as a praxis that is good for one's health and/or increases one's spirituality in a generic way. Certainly, most people would say that practicing it outside the religio-spiritual context does not make one Hindu.

Over the centuries, the word “yoga” has been used in a very loose manner in India, referring to a variety of disciplines including devotion, knowledge, and action leading to emancipation from the cycle of life and death. Yoga includes physical, mental, and emotional disciplines that one should adopt to achieve an array of goals. It is one of the six orthodox schools of “philosophy” in India – a term that in the Hindu contexts includes, but is not limited to, psychology, logic, epistemology, spiritual praxis, and theology. Its origins are obscure; some scholars point out that seals from the Harappan culture portray a man sitting in a yogic position.

Many Hindus associate yoga with Patanjali and consider his Yoga sutras, composed of short, fragmentary, and aphoristic sentences, to be the classical text of yoga. It is not known when Patanjali lived, but the material in the book may have originated before the first century B.C.E. even if his own life was as late as the third century C.E. Yoga was possibly an important feature of religious life in India – at least in some strata of society – several

²⁷ Shreena Niekla Divyakant Gandhi, *Translating, Practicing and Commodifying Yoga in the U.S.* (Gainesville, FL, 2009), 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

centuries before the text was written. Patanjali acknowledges that he is only codifying and presenting an accurate version of what has already been known, not presenting a new philosophy.

One can see how different American yoga practices are from the varieties considered as part of religious culture in India if one considers the normative forms said to go back to Patanjali. Patanjali's yoga involves moral discipline and meditation concentrating on a physical or mental object as the "single point" of focus. This form of yoga is described as having eight "limbs" or disciplines, of which the first two are *yama*, consisting of restraints, and *niyama*, consisting of positive practices. *Yama* is the avoidance of violence, falsehood, stealing, sexual activity, and avarice; obviously, these ethical injunctions are not part of the yoga activities taught locally in the United States. In addition to *yama* and *niyama*, Patanjali recommends bodily postures and correct techniques of breathing; however, proper bodily posture as the focus of American yoga practices is just *one* of the characteristics in the discipline of yoga, at least in many Hindu traditions.

Perfection in concentration (*dharana*) and meditation (*dhyana*) lead one to *samadhi*, the final state of absorption into and union with the Supreme Being or higher consciousness. When one reaches this stage of *Samadhi*, one is well on the way to emancipation from the cycle of life and death. This, obviously, is not the goal of the yoga classes in America; as taught here in church basements or in fitness centers, its scope is therefore limited. The kinds of yoga that have been made popular since the 1970s by BKS Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois, two prominent disciples of Sri Krishnamacharya, have largely focused on physical and mental well-being as well as stress reduction. This, too, has been the focus of many Hindu teachers who teach practices not associated with Hinduism or even the word "religion" – Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM, Sri la Sri Ravi Shankar and the Art of Living, Deepak Chopra; the list is long. The practice of these kinds of meditation and yoga, according to the teachers, is not incompatible with one's beliefs whatever they may be. Nor are there any trappings of the Hindu religious traditions such as names, clothing, or rituals.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, one sees first-through third-generation Hindu Americans in the United States. The Hindu immigrant presence, which began to grow only after 1965, is now entering mainstream America. If the measure of one's acceptance is to be part of TV shows that feel comfortable enough to poke fun of one's culture, then Hinduism "arrived" when characters and beliefs were introduced through *The Simpsons*. A new generation of Hindu Americans who have only

known America as home is now giving way to third-generation Hindus whose grandparents were born in India. Temple-building is still the work of first-generation immigrants who seek to replicate the Indian milieu in this country and who want the temple to represent Hindu piety, culture, and power. Second-generation Hindus are making their presence known in political life and in spheres where public policy is being framed, and they are taking their case to Capitol Hill – a different kind of representation.

The trope of America being the home of scientific progress and a producer of material goods while India is the seat of a “timeless” spiritual wisdom was the rhetoric from the early nineteenth century and a stereotype accepted by and repeated by many gurus in later decades. As India advances in technology and its purchasing power and consumer-goods potential increase, this trope is beginning to fade and is seen only in some yoga classes.

While building Hindu prestige temples flourishes, simultaneously there has also been a continuation of new manifestations of Hinduism-related philosophies and practices, the “universal” or “spiritual” truths without any reference to temple or ethnic Hindu culture. Those who preach these “universal” truths keep their distance from the name “Hinduism.” The kinds of spiritual movements and practices introduced by Vivekananda and Yogananda continue now in movements such as the Art of Living, Siddha Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, and the teachings of new gurus. “Invisible” Hinduism also flourishes through the large-scale co-opting and transformation of Hinduism-related practices by the American public and their eventual commodification and secularization. Even as first-generation Hindus emphasize temple Hinduism with outward ethnic markers like attire and ornamentations, new generations of Hindus are, in addition to clothing and performing arts, discovering their roots in yoga and experimenting with *asanas* (yogic positions) and meditation. The next step, if one can learn from the experiences of other immigrant religions, is to build a stronger public and media presence, with greater engagement in the political and educational spheres.

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ISLAM IN AMERICA

JANE I. SMITH

Muslims who reside in America today, whether on a permanent or a temporary basis, find themselves in a unique situation. While they form a small minority of the American population, they represent a wide spectrum of humanity both geographically and by race and ethnicity. Never at any other time or place in the history of the world have Muslims from so many different countries and cultures and races inhabited one land, with more than two hundred countries represented.

Although Muslims have been present in various areas of the country for nearly a century and a half, it is only recently that most Americans have become aware of their presence. A blend of Asians, Middle Easterners, Africans, African Americans, and Europeans, the Muslim community is taking its place as one of the major ethnoreligious groupings in the American cultural milieu. Muslims in America are doctors, engineers and scientists, intellectuals, teachers, and service workers. Some are also poor, uneducated, and homeless refugees fleeing from war-stricken parts of the world. Muslims are concerned with issues of leadership, education, identity, and appropriate roles for men and women in today's society, as well as basic needs in the areas of health, human services, and language training. In recent years they have seen their youth emerge as models of faith and practice, young men and women serving as leaders and interpreters of the faith.

Estimating the size of the Muslim population in the United States is very difficult. The answer can only be approximate since the national census does not ask for religious affiliation. The events of 11 September 2001 have made some Muslims reluctant to reveal their Muslim identity, while others respond by fully affirming their Muslim status and publicly testifying to their pride in the religion of Islam. Many Americans of Muslim heritage never practice the faith and consider themselves completely secular. Those who have a stake in affirming that Islam in America is a strong and growing force estimate the Muslim population at more than eight million,

while those hopeful of proving the opposite sometimes say that the number is more like two or three million. Most scholars assume a figure midway between those extremes.

In any case, Islam is present and increasingly visible on the American scene. African Americans make up slightly more than a quarter of the Muslim community. Among those who either were born in another country themselves or whose families immigrated from overseas, the largest groups are South Asians, Arabs, and Iranians, with growing numbers from sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eastern Europe, countries of the former Soviet Union, and others.

Shi'ites, who constitute 10 to 15 percent of the world's population of Muslims, make up some 20 percent in the United States. The largest group is the Ithna Ash'ari, representing Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, East Africa, and the Indian subcontinent. This group is commonly called the Twelvers, designating descent of the leader from the Prophet Muhammad. They are followed in number by the Isma'ilis, or Seveners, primarily from the subcontinent and West Africa and led by the Aga Khan; the Zaidis, or Fivers, from Yemen and Algeria; and the 'Alawis and Druze from Syria and Lebanon.

American Muslims are generally grateful for the freedom of religious thought and practice allowed in America. Because the United States is founded on principles of secularism, some are building a case for a new kind of American Islam that can flourish in such an environment. The Constitution's First Amendment guarantee of both the freedom *of* religion (to believe and practice as one chooses) and the freedom *from* religion (as an exercise of state control) has worked well for American Muslims. Yet the fact that the underlying ideology of the amendment is basically secular is also a source of deep concern for some more conservative Muslims, who observe that religious neutrality is the antithesis of all that Islam represents.

Since the 11 September 2001 attacks, public rhetoric has tended to assume that the only two alternatives for being Muslim in America are extremism or moderation. In fact, Muslims are to be found at all places along the spectrum, from not at all religious (secular) to very religious (observant of the obligations of Islam). Secular Muslims who have played prominent roles in America in fields such as education, business, politics, medicine, science, social and philanthropic organizations, and many other aspects of public life may never be recognized by other Americans as being associated in any way with Islam. Muslims are insistent, however, that nowhere in the range from secular to observant is there a place for the kind of extremism that elicits the fears of the general public.

The easy classification of American Muslims into immigrants, on the one hand, and African Americans, on the other, is no longer valid. Families

who have lived in the United States for generations are unwilling to be called immigrants, and African Americans believe that the distinction implies that they are somehow “less Muslim” than immigrants. Many observers now distinguish between Muslims who are American-born, including African Americans and other converts, as well as third- and fourth-generation immigrants, and those born somewhere else in the world and now living in America. A third component in the current Muslim mix is that group who are sojourning in the country for some specified period, including students, diplomats, temporary workers, and other visitors.

MUSLIM IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA

The first Muslim immigrants to America arrived in the latter part of the nineteenth century from Greater Syria, then under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and now divided into Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Sunnis, Shi‘ites, ‘Alawis, and Druze, they were part of a larger group composed mainly of Christian Arabs who came west hoping to make a substantial living and to send financial support to their families at home. Some were fleeing conscription in the Turkish army. Many intended to stay only as long as necessary to secure a strong financial footing. They signed on to a variety of manual jobs, working as peddlers and small grocers, miners, laborers in the construction of railways, and factory and mill workers, and in a variety of small service occupations. Later they moved into food provision as they began ethnic groceries, bakeries, and small restaurants. Often with very limited knowledge of English, many of the early arrivals were lonely and poor and lacked the benefits of extended family or coreligionists.

Most immigrant Muslims never did return to their homelands but gradually settled in urban and rural areas across America. Young men looked for brides wherever possible, sometimes importing them from overseas and sometimes marrying non-Muslim American women. From petty labor, they began to move into more permanent forms of livelihood. As they became more financially secure and better acquainted with English, they sometimes met together as Muslims to consider how to provide for their religious needs and especially how to provide Islamic education to their children. They sometimes met for worship in each other’s homes, beginning to think about how they might find other accommodations to serve as mosques. The first Muslim communities who organized for religious purposes were in the Middle West. Records show Muslims gathered for prayer in North Dakota in the very early 1900s, and they built a kind of Islamic center in Indiana as early as 1914. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is known for construction of the oldest mosque still in use.

Immigration of Muslims is often said to have occurred in “waves,” increments facilitated by international political, economic, social, and religious realities and by changing policies of the U.S. government as to who is allowed to enter the country. The demise and breakup of the Ottoman Empire generated a major wave of immigrants from the Middle East after the First World War. Many escaped the devastation of the war itself, while others fled Western colonial rule instituted by the mandate system of governing Arab lands. Still others immigrated, as did their forebears, primarily for economic reasons, often joining families already established in America. Passage of immigration laws in 1921 and 1924, however, curtailed the numbers of Arabs allowed to enter the country. During the 1930s immigration was limited specifically to relatives of persons already living in America. It was in this period that significant numbers of Arabs – Sunnis and Shi‘ites as well as Christians – arrived in Dearborn, Michigan, to work in the Ford Motor Plant.

The next period of notable immigration from Muslim lands occurred after the Second World War, lasting from 1947 to around 1960. Increasing numbers of Muslims arrived from countries well beyond the Middle East. Quotas assigned in the 1953 U.S. Nationality Act limited arrivals primarily to Muslims from Western Europe, though some also immigrated from Eastern Europe (primarily Yugoslavia and Albania) and the Soviet Union. A few entered from India and Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, even though the Asia Exclusion Act was still in effect. Earlier immigrants had tended to move into rural areas across America, often reflecting their low educational and economic status. Immigrant Muslims in this later period tended to be urban in background, and they moved to major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Some had been members of ruling elites in their home countries. Better educated and generally more Westernized than their predecessors, they arrived with the hope of gaining higher education and technical training in America.

Another identifiable wave of Muslim immigrants arrived in the United States after President Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 immigration bill repealing the longstanding quota system that had been based on a static notion of national American diversity. For the first time since the early twentieth century, a person could enter the country regardless of his or her national identity or ethnic origin. At this point immigration from Western Europe tailed off, and the numbers of people from the Middle East and Asia grew rapidly. Since 1965 more than half of these immigrants have been Muslim. Most have chosen to go to the West for education or economic advantage, while some escaped difficult political circumstances.

MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICA TODAY

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen rising numbers of refugee Muslims seeking asylum from unbearable circumstances in their home countries. Notable among these have been Palestinians looking for escape from Israeli domination; Lebanese after the civil war and continued unrest in their country; Iraqi Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds, as well as Afghans, fleeing the wars resulting from American invasions. Civil war, political strife, and ethnic cleansing have sent Muslims to the United States from the former Yugoslavia as well as from African nations such as the Sudan and Somalia.

The United States and England have been the destination of many Muslims from the subcontinent of India/Pakistan. The breakaway of East Pakistan to form Bangladesh, anti-Muslim pogroms in India, and continuing strife in Kashmir have encouraged many to leave their homeland and make a new life in the West. Pakistanis, Indians, and Bangladeshis started immigrating to America in strength after the 1970s, and South Asians now constitute nearly a third of the American Muslim population. Many of them are well-educated and successful professionals in fields such as medicine and engineering. Joining the ranks of upper middle-class Americans, they have played leadership roles in local mosques and in the development of Muslim political groups. Also among the highly trained Muslim immigrants arriving more recently are Indonesians and Malaysians, who are sharing leadership in the American Muslim community.

Arab Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'ite, continue to constitute a significant proportion of the Islamic community in America. They are generally well-educated and successful professionals and are also leaders in the development of a transnational, transethnic American Islam. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the long and debilitating war between Iran and Iraq saw many Iranians leaving their homeland for a new life in America, and many continue to immigrate. Southern California has been a particularly popular destination for Iranians, who total nearly a million. Turks, Eastern Europeans, and members of numerous African nations including Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, Cameroon, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Tanzania, and many others, are highly visible members of the complex American Muslim community. Immigrant Muslims have the responsibility for working out not only how most effectively to relate to each other, but also how to coalesce with members of various African American Muslim movements. African immigrants may find this particularly complicated as non-Muslim American citizens often fail to distinguish between black Africans and black Americans who identify themselves as Muslim.

There are few places in the United States today in which one does not find Muslims of immigrant background living, working, and sending their children to public schools, and where some kind of recognizable facility for worship (mosque, renovated house, storefront) is not available. Dearborn, Michigan, has long been home to both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims from many parts of the Middle East. Together with Middle Eastern Christians, they form the largest Arab settlement in the country. Mosques representing different allegiances within the Sunni and Shi'ite communities serve the large Muslim constituency of the area.

Other major cities have figured prominently as favorable locations for Muslims immigrating to America. The shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts, have provided jobs since the late 1800s. The Islamic Center of New England was the dream of a small group of families who settled there in the early part of the twentieth century and now has a major mosque complex serving businesspeople, teachers, and other professionals as well as merchants and blue-collar workers. In Roxbury Crossing, part of urban Boston, a large new mosque was opened in spring 2009 after a long period of dispute in which some observers expressed their fear that because much of the funding was Saudi, the new edifice would serve as a conduit for ultraconservative Muslim ideology. Along with Massachusetts, the states of New Jersey, Maryland, and Connecticut have significant Muslim populations.

Throughout most of its history New York City has been home to a rich variety of racial-ethnic groups, and its Muslim population has included merchant seamen, tradesmen, entertainers, white-collar professionals, and owners of major businesses. Muslims in New York represent a broad spectrum of nationalities from virtually every country in the world. Mosque building activity has flourished in New York and has been the subject of several journalistic photo-essays. A large number of elementary and upper-level Islamic schools, as well as Muslim stores and businesses, are springing up all over the city.

An early home to immigrant Muslims was Chicago, Illinois, which some claim had more Muslims in residence in the early 1900s than any other American city. Today they represent the Middle East, Asia, India, Central Asia, and many other parts of the world, along with numbers of African American groups. Muslims in Chicago are active in promoting their faith, providing a range of services to the Islamic community and to others in the urban sector.¹ Chicago Muslims are very active in interfaith dialogue.

Muslims in both Los Angeles and San Francisco have found an agreeable climate in which to flourish. They too represent most geographical and

¹ See Garbi Schmidt, *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago* (Philadelphia, 2004).

cultural areas of the Muslim world, most recently Afghanis, Somalis, and citizens of other African countries alongside Iranians. The Islamic Center of Southern California is one of the largest Muslim entities in the United States, its well-trained staff widely known for their writings and community leadership, and an imposing physical plant that provides virtually every service that the immigrant Muslim community might possibly need.

AFRICAN AMERICAN ISLAM

The first Muslim immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found few coreligionists in America. They were unaware, as were most Americans, that Muslims had touched the shore of the continent generations earlier when slave ships unloaded their human cargo to work in the plantations of the South in the slave trade of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Records are scanty, but scholars argue that a significant portion of the slaves, perhaps more than 10 percent, were Muslim. Most were from West Africa. Little remains of that identity, as most slaves were forced to convert to Christianity.² A few artifacts are said to remain, including what appears to be a copy of the Holy Qur'an, and personal narratives and even autobiographies have been passed on about the lives of Muslim slaves in the South. One of the best known of these narratives is that of Kunta Kinte of Senegambia, documented in Alex Haley's novel *Roots*.³ That Muslims were present on the American scene at such an early date is of great interest to African American scholars today and plays an important role in contemporary conversations about the identity of American Muslims.

By the early years of the twentieth century, the hope that emancipated slaves might actually be integrated into white society faded quickly as American racism ensured that former slaves and their descendants for the most part would remain victims of segregation. As a result, various movements of black nationalism began to evolve such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of Marcus Garvey in the early 1920s. Part of the appeal of such movements was their association with countries in which darker-complexioned people predominated, generally in some part of the Middle East. While Garvey himself did not play on the theme that these Arabs were Muslim, other groups did. Most evident among them in the early days of the twentieth century was one Noble Drew Ali, born Timothy Drew in 1886. Drew Ali preached to any who would listen

² See Allen Austin, *African American Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York, 1997), for a detailed analysis of African slaves in America.

³ Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, NY, 1976).

that the true home of American Negroes was in the land of the Moors, and therefore that their natural religion was Islam. Thus the community he founded began to be called the Moorish National and Divine Movement, later changed to the Moorish Science Temple of America.

Certain that he was a prophet of Allah, Drew Ali preached that salvation was possible only if Negroes ignored the identity forced on them by white Americans and found their true belonging with Asiatic Muslims. He advocated dropping slave names and adopting new appellations reflecting pride in their Moorish heritage. Moorish temples were established in Newark, Hartford, Chicago, and elsewhere, and the movement continued to grow until the late 1920s, when it was fractured by issues of leadership. It continues today in small pockets, still claiming to be Muslim but still far from the strictures of orthodox Islam. With the failure of the Moorish American movement to capture the imagination of many American Negroes, and with the exile of Marcus Garvey in 1927 and the dissipation of his following, the scene was set for the emergence of the powerful Nation of Islam (NOI).

The NOI was the most significant sociocultural and religious movement of the twentieth century claiming to be associated with Islam. Prominent personalities have contributed to the formation and continuation of the nation, including the fiery leader Malcolm X (formerly Malcolm Little) and the contemporary NOI spokesperson Louis Farrakhan. The story of the NOI is well known, not least through Malcolm's autobiography⁴ and the corresponding film by the director Spike Lee.

The beginnings of the NOI are murky, but according to the common narrative, Wallace D. Fard, of uncertain but probably mixed-blood Arab heritage, sometime around 1930 taught the black Detroit preacher Elijah Poole to envision a community in which blacks would see themselves members of the ancient Arabian tribe of Shabazz. Poole believed Fard was the Mahdi, who Islamic tradition believes will lead the Muslim community on the day of resurrection. Although Fard disappeared mysteriously around 1934, his message continued in the teachings of Poole, who became known as Elijah Muhammad.

Some of what Elijah taught his followers does indeed reflect the beliefs and practices of orthodox Islam, although much is irreconcilable and has caused mainstream Muslims today to dissociate themselves completely from the Nation of Islam. At the time that Elijah structured his community, however, it clearly met many of the needs of disaffected blacks for identity, for a clear ethical structure, and for assistance in establishing a strong financial base. Two doctrines in Elijah Muhammad's teachings have

⁴ Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1964, 1992).

been identified by mainline Muslims as heretical and unacceptable: (1) that Fard was in some way divine, denying the basic Islamic doctrine that only God is God; and (2) that Elijah was by some definition a messenger of God, contradicting the Muslim belief that there will be no more prophets or messengers after Muhammad. Also deeply troublesome for orthodox Islam has been Elijah's preaching that blacks are the superior race, and that whites are not only inferior but even descended from the devil. Such racist doctrines are antithetical to the basic Islamic understanding of the equality of all men and women, whatever their racial-ethnic identification.

The two figures who had the greatest influence on the Nation of Islam, apart from Elijah himself, were Elijah's son Wallace (later known as Warith Deen Mohammed) and the former prison convert Malcolm X. Both were well instructed in the basics of orthodox Islam, and both recognized that Elijah was not only preaching doctrines untrue to Islam but was personally guilty of ethical misconduct. Warith Deen's response was to effect gradual change through education, while Malcolm's was to challenge Elijah on both counts, especially after Malcolm's life-changing pilgrimage to Mecca, in which he experienced "true Islam." After many years of preaching the message of the Nation, in 1964 Malcolm broke with his beloved organization and began the Organization of Afro-American Unity. On 21 February 1965 Malcolm was shot and killed by an unidentified assailant, and America lost one of the most exciting and challenging religious leaders of the twentieth century.

When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, Warith Deen took over the leadership of the NOI. Initially pledging allegiance to Warith Deen, Louis Farrakhan defected in 1981 with a group of followers whom he renamed the Nation of Islam, continuing to support the original teachings of Elijah. While numerically quite small, the NOI continues today to have high name recognition. The movement has long aroused the ire of orthodox Muslims because of its continuing racist and leadership ideologies. Nonetheless, the NOI has achieved respect and recognition for its work assisting the black community to achieve economic independence, self-respect, and ethical integrity and is active today in fighting drug-related urban crime and in providing ministry to black prison inmates.⁵

Warith Deen Mohammad chose to work for gradual change from within, moving his community away from the teachings of the NOI and toward the orthodox Islam that he had studied and knew well. The succeeding years saw numerous changes in the name of his community, many followers

⁵ The much-studied Nation of Islam is presented clearly and concisely by Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

preferring simply to be part of the Ministry of Warith Deen Mohammed. He led his followers into Sunni Islam, helped provide a sound financial structure for members of the community, and was a charismatic teacher and preacher, although his style was less flamboyant than that of Farrakhan. Recognized as one of the most important African American leaders of the late twentieth century, Warith Deen was a frequent participant in inter-faith dialogue, especially after 2001, and became deeply involved with the Roman Catholic Focolare movement. In September 2008 Warith Deen Mohammad died. As of July 2011, no one had been recognized as his successor.

A number of other African Americans are unaffiliated with either the NOI or the Ministry of Warith Deen Mohammed, considering themselves simply Sunni Muslims. Others are members of sectarian movements claiming some affiliation with Islam but generally not recognized by mainstream Muslims. In recent years a small but growing number of African Americans have adopted Shi'ite Islam.

African American Muslim leaders over the past decade have been making their voices heard in the call for clear recognition of their identity as part of the body of American Islam. Affirming the fact that Islam has always been racially and ethnically inclusive, they are challenging the assumption that leadership of the American community must be provided by Muslims of immigrant background. No longer willing to be thought of as second-class citizens, they are speaking out for their rights and in return are being included more in local and national conversations about the future of American Islam. The 2000 presidential election, for which members of the immigrant community backed a candidate as the Muslim choice without consulting African American Muslims, was a precipitating factor in a now ongoing conversation about inclusiveness and racial equality in American Islam.

OTHER CONVERTS TO ISLAM

African Americans, of course, are not the only converts to Islam in the United States. Often the way that the American public knows anything at all about Islam is through journalistic reports of conversion. One of the most popular topics is the acceptance of Islam by Latinos/Latinas, who sometimes claim to see similarities between traditional Muslim cultures and their own heritage and values. Small numbers from other groups such as European Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, are also converts to Islam. The actual act of conversion involves the public testimony in front of a body of Muslims that one accepts the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad.

A high proportion of converts, perhaps as much as 80 percent, are women. Some have married Muslim men and adopted the faith because of its emphasis on family and communal values. A main reason given by Anglos for conversion to Islam is the relative ease with which they can understand Muslim doctrines and duties over the complex theology of Christianity. The phenomenon of conversion can cause considerable stress both for the new Muslim family and for the family (often Christian) of the convert.⁶ Sometimes existing Muslim communities warmly welcome new converts; other converts report difficulty in being accepted into groups representing immigrant communities. Converts may find it particularly hard to find marriage partners, as culturally oriented groups tend to want their children to marry within the given culture.

Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, has served to attract some Americans to Islam over the course of the last century. Sometimes they are drawn to more popular expressions of Sufism including music and dance. Sufi groups were established in America by the middle of the twentieth century, following the resurgence of interest among young Americans in religions of the East. Often these groups were not considered legitimate by other Muslims. Today Sufi orders with direct links to centuries-old orders have become well established and acknowledged as a legitimate part of the heritage of Islam. Interest in Sufism is increasing among young Muslims who are looking for a moderate version of Islam in light of rising American fears of radicalism. White Sufi converts, such as Hamza Yusuf of the Zaytuna Institute in California, attract young men and women who want to immerse themselves in an Islamic atmosphere of study and piety.⁷

CAN AMERICA TRULY BE “HOME” TO MUSLIMS?

The promises of missionaries and others that America is a melting pot, welcoming all newly arrived immigrants, were soon discovered to be untrue. Most of the Muslims in the early part of the twentieth century found that other Americans viewed them with suspicion and often hostility, both because of their often darker skin and because of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice. Some found that they were associated with American blacks, and they suffered from the racial prejudice that was still strong after emancipation. Many Arab Muslims tried to hide their Muslim

⁶ See, for example, the study of women converts to Islam by Carol Anway, *Daughters of Another Path* (Lee's Summit, MO, 1996).

⁷ Nadia Inji Khan, “Nascent Institutions Take on the Challenge of Educating Muslim Youth in America,” in Yvonne Haddad, Farid Sensei and Jane Smith, eds., *Muslim Education in America* (New York, 2009), 123–54.

identity, avoiding dress that identified them as foreign and Americanizing their Muslim names, such as Muhammad or Khadija, to Moe or Katy.

Over the years and with passing generations, those who have immigrant origins have responded in different ways to being in America. Prejudice against Muslims has waxed and waned, spiking as international events have reinforced the prejudice that sees violence to be inherent in the religion of Islam. Some immigrants have tried to isolate and insulate themselves, keeping as much apart from American society as possible and attempting to maintain their own particular cultural version of Islamic belief and practice. For the most part, however, immigrants have found a balance between over-assimilation, on the one hand, and isolation, on the other. Today most acknowledge and own their Muslim heritage at the same time that they honor and appreciate the opportunity to be citizens of a nominally free American society. As the Muslim immigrant community has grown and has become widely diversified, better educated, and economically self-sufficient, how to live in America without necessarily absorbing all of its current values has become part of the common discourse of Muslims.

Since 11 September 2001, there have been major changes within the Muslim community itself as well as in its response to fellow Americans. American Muslims have tried in every way they know to dissociate Islam from terror and violence and to claim their religion as a way to peace. While Muslims struggle to model good citizenship, they are also conscious of their own visibility in light of government efforts to monitor their activities. Freedom of religion and of speech are treasured by Muslims, especially those whose families left repressive societies. Yet they know that if they are too loud in their criticisms of American policies, especially relating to the Middle East, they may face serious consequences for themselves and their families.

Today, several things are happening simultaneously. On the one hand, Muslims are challenged to consider what it means to live in a country in which Islam is not the dominant force as it has been for most of them in their homelands. Classical Islam divided the world into the realm of Islam, in which non-Muslims either occupied a privileged but second-class status or were considered heretics or unbelievers, and the realm beyond Islam, which was actually referred to as the “abode of war.” Muslims were expected to live in territories under Islamic rule of law, and to the extent that they ventured beyond those territories it was assumed that they would return home to live. Most contemporary American Muslims feel that this kind of distinction no longer makes sense in a world in which Muslims often live as minorities themselves. American Muslims still must come to terms with whether life in America is Islamically acceptable, and whether they can comfortably take up residence rather than simply be sojourners in

the West. The question of how to live Islamically in a non-Islamic society, however, fosters a wide range of responses.

The destruction of the Trade Towers in 2001 was a defining moment in American history, and most especially so for American Muslims. Attitudes toward Islam in both America and Europe began to change dramatically, as ancient fears were revived in Europe, and Americans felt for the first time the horror of their own country being invaded. Non-Muslim Americans reacted with a combination of sympathy and support, on the one hand, and criticism and fear mongering on the other. Words of hate have sometimes led to acts of violence, and a number of American Muslim mosques and public buildings have been the targets of crime and destruction. Many Americans continue to be suspicious of Islam and concerned about the spread of terror-sponsoring cells in American mosques. Further bombings by Muslim factions in various places around the world have fueled the fires of concern. While many Americans today are trying to understand more about the faith of their new neighbors, relieved that potential new attacks from Muslim terrorists have been intercepted, others continue to express rising anxiety and suspicion about Islam and about the increasing presence of Muslims in public life.

The term "Islamophobia," coined by British researchers in 2004, is only recently entering parlance in America. In its broadest scope it identifies the rising concerns of many Americans about the violence they believe to be associated with Islam and the increase of Muslims in their homeland. They watch appalled as Muslims around the world react violently when they think that the Prophet or the religion of Islam has been criticized, as happened with the "cartoon controversy" in Denmark in 2005. For their part, Muslims are alarmed at the increased vigilance shown by the American government since 9/11 in identifying potential terrorists. They see it leading to invasion of their constitutional privacy with profiling and targeting, illegal search and seizure procedures, deportation of key Islamic leaders, closing of charitable Islamic organizations suspected of affiliation with terrorist groups, and other activities that have made them fear for themselves, their families, and their communities. Yet another dimension of this difficult situation is that modern Western Muslims themselves are suffering from the pain of seeing other Muslims act in extremist ways that they strongly disavow, some even saying that they feel true Islam has been hijacked by those who do violence in the name of the faith.

For law-abiding Muslims in America who want to live quiet lives as good citizens and good Muslims, realization of the rising levels of anti-Muslim feelings is extremely painful. Children may experience prejudice and discrimination from classmates. Efforts to build mosques may be thwarted as neighbors object to Muslim buildings in their neighborhoods. Women

who don headscarves may not be hired for new jobs or promoted in jobs they have held for years. It is also true, however, that since 9/11 increased efforts are being made by many non-Muslims to reach out to their Muslim colleagues, to offer assistance in times of need, and to engage them in the kind of conversation that will help foster and spread a better and more accurate understanding of the faith of Islam.

One way in which to understand Islam in America is to consider the issues generally thought to be most important by Muslims themselves as they gather locally and nationally to think about their unity and their diversity, and how they can best live in the context of a country that is only beginning to recognize their presence. Following are some of the issues most often addressed by Muslims.

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the number of Muslims in America – immigrant and convert, foreign born and indigenous – grew so as to outpace groups such as Jews, Episcopalians, and other mainline Protestant denominations. Recognition on the national level became increasingly important for Muslim leaders, and many began to vie for the position of spokesperson of different factions of American Islam. The American public, now increasingly aware of the presence of Islam in America, has questioned who speaks for Islam. The response has been given by Muslims who serve as religious leaders, academics, and professionals who have assumed responsibility for mosques and in local and national organizations. In recent years they have paid special attention to the effort to distance Islam from terrorism as part of the message of an Islam that is peaceful in intent and deserving to be an accepted part of the religious pluralism of America. Both the U.S. government and the media have helped identify Muslims to serve as spokespersons for Islam; the White House has been increasingly vigilant in inviting Muslim leaders to participate in state occasions and in the observance of Muslim holy days.

To date African Americans have tended to look to different leadership than have those who are of immigrant descent. Many continue to mourn the death of Warith Deen Mohammad. It remains to be seen whether his community will choose to identify themselves as followers of another leader or will simply be absorbed into Sunni Islam in the United States. Louis Farrakhan, for many years prominent on the national scene as the leader of the reconstituted Nation of Islam and champion of African Americans in general, has retired for reasons of health. Warith Deen and Farrakhan had tussled together as friends and rivals for many years. Their loss is significant

for American Muslims as well as for African Americans, and the potentially contentious question of leadership is yet to be determined.

Muslims of every ethnic and sectarian affiliation understand that the question of well-qualified leadership is paramount for Muslims who want to have a voice in the American public forum. Primary among the needs are trained imams and other religious leaders to guide the faithful in mosques and Islamic centers as well as to be representatives of Islam to the press and in interfaith forums. Immigrant imams educated overseas may have appropriate Islamic training but not sufficient knowledge of American culture and expectations, while the few American trained imams may suffer from the opposite problem. Institutions such as colleges and prisons are eager for qualified chaplains to lead prayers and provide religious education to their constituencies. During the 1970s and 1980s, considerable funding from Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia was invested both in building mosques in America and in training imams to serve them. That funding has lessened considerably, and, at the same time, American Muslims are struggling to decide whether or not they want it anyway insofar as it may entail expectations of certain ideological commitments such as to conservative Wahhabi ideology.

Muslim organizations have proliferated in America. They are religious, professional, cultural, political, and social and have provided a structure for Muslim life in America. One of the most visible is the Council for Islamic American Relations (CAIR), which serves as a watchdog group monitoring the civil rights of American Muslims. Among the earliest of the Muslim organizations was the Muslim Student Association in the United States and Canada (MSA), founded in 1963 with the aim of helping the many Muslim students from countries around the world studying on American campuses. MSA is now widespread with chapters on the campuses of most colleges and universities. Muslim students traditionally have been served by Protestant and sometimes Roman Catholic chaplains. With the increased attention to Islam nationally and the rise in the number of Muslim students attending college, administrators are now recognizing that it is important to provide Muslim chaplains and other trained leaders to meet the needs of this population. Traditionally the MSA has been led by immigrant students, often with a fairly narrow interpretation of Islam. It has now become more international in perspective, generally advocating an Islam that transcends racial, ethnic, and linguistic, and sometimes even gender distinctions.

The largest Muslim religious organization, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), grew out of the MSA. It now coordinates a large number of mosque communities. While suspected by some of having ties with terrorist organizations, ISNA is generally moderate in orientation and serves

as a kind of overseeing body for many other emerging groups. In 2006 the organization elected its first female president. Somewhat smaller and more conservative in orientation is the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), known for its adherence to the spirit and law of Islam. The leadership of both organizations occasionally speaks out on issues of national importance. ISNA tends to be involved more in educational, social, and political concerns, while ICNA focuses on what it calls spiritual regeneration. Both are dealing with issues important to the American Muslim community, such as training imams in both the traditional sciences of Islam and the specifics of American culture. High on the agenda for both is providing appropriate education and activities for their young people.

American Shi'ites still turn to countries like Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon for religious and organizational leadership. For some Shi'ites, it is questionable whether they should maintain such international allegiance or move to develop forms of distinctly indigenous American Shi'ite Islam. Especially since 2001, Shi'ite leaders have been active in participating in interfaith organizations and in being role models in cooperative efforts to present a unified and moderate Islam. Attempts to provide an umbrella structure to coordinate the various Shi'ite groups represented in America, however, have not been very successful.

For many years professional and cultural organizations have served to provide structure and socialization for American Muslims. Increasingly groups have arisen that are interested in advocating Muslim civil rights in a variety of areas. The American Muslim Council, for example, serves as a nonprofit sociopolitical organization working to develop increased political power for Muslims. Women have organized in a variety of ways. The Muslim Women Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights, known as KARAMA, has worked for many years for the rights of women in the American context. A growing area of interest for women is in providing personal services ranging from advocacy, to education, to religious rights, to personal care in the context of the local neighborhood.⁸ Advancements in technology allow members of all of these organizations to communicate rapidly with colleagues around the world and to form networks for mutual understanding and progress.

AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN

As Muslims face questions from their fellow Americans about Islam, among the frequently asked questions are some to do with the roles and practices of

⁸ See Gisela Webb, *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (Syracuse, NY, 2000).

women, and particularly how women are treated by men. These and other topics are being addressed publicly by Muslim women and men, especially as women become more visible as active participants in virtually all aspects of social and professional life. Once uneducated and often missing from public view, women have now reached high levels of achievement in such fields as medicine, science and technology, education, engineering, the arts, and community organization. As women were active participants in the community of the Prophet, say public defenders of Islam, so they have a right and a duty to be part of the public face of Islam today. Wives of the Prophet and other women of distinction in the history of Islam are cited as examples of what the religion both permits and expects of its women. As American women convert to Islam, they often adopt the names of these historical figures in honor of their contributions.

Women are taking the opportunity to become better educated in the religious sciences, traditions, and policies of Islam so that they can actively participate in the task of educating the American public both about the faith itself and about their own role as its public defenders. While some more traditional Muslim men and women think that employment outside the home is not appropriate, financial pressures along with changing mores support the contribution of women both to the family income and to the societies and communities in which they live. Most Muslim women drive or use other forms of public transport, some thinking that wearing Islamic dress gives them confidence for such public appearances. Women are increasingly encouraged both to vote and to run for public office. Services such as access to adequate health care are often provided by Muslim women's organizations.

Most Muslim women today are able to pursue their education, both in secular subjects and in the area of religion. Some are assuming religious roles formerly open only to men, such as training in the Islamic sciences of interpreting and reciting the Qur'an, Islamic law, and study of the traditions relating to the life of the Prophet.⁹ In rare cases they even preach or perform marriages. Almost all Muslims agree that it is not appropriate for a woman to be the leader of a worshipping community, although women do serve as prayer leaders to other women. Women continue to sit apart from men in prayer services, either in the back of the prayer hall or in a separate room or balcony overlooking the imam and the men. Muslim women are clear that the demands of gender equality set by American feminism may be appropriate for them in some regards but that they must be filtered through their own sense of what is and is not appropriate.

⁹ Yvonne Y. Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and Kathleen M. Moore, *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today* (New York, 2006), 121–42.

Among the many issues that American Muslim women must consider is the question of whether or not to wear some form of Islamic dress. Some men, but far fewer than women, also choose to wear a cap or tunic that signifies that they are Muslim. Before 9/11 the majority of Muslim women in America did not wear identifying dress, and many still do not. Since that time, however, increasing numbers of women have decided to wear some clothing that identifies them publicly as members of the Islamic faith, whether it is a simple headscarf or full Islamic dress. Islamic fashion is a burgeoning business, from shops and stores to catalogs featuring a wide range of styles. Islamic clothing is designed for everything from daily wear, to evening attire, to sporting outfits. The only criterion is conformity to Islamic standards of modesty, which refer primarily to the hair being covered. The American public, in general, is becoming accustomed to seeing women and men dressed Islamically. On occasion, women have experienced discrimination for reasons of dress, including refusal of employers to allow head coverings, problems in schools and other public places, and trouble passing through airport surveillance. Women who do choose to display their public affiliation with Islam face possible discrimination in hiring, promotion, and retention in many kinds of businesses.

On the matter of appropriate clothing, the Qur'an says relatively little, and what it does say has been subject to various interpretations. Muslims who insist on covering for women find more specific instruction in the Sunnah, or way of the Prophet, detailed in the traditional literature. Girls normally do not wear any such covering until puberty. On the whole, Muslims themselves are tolerant on this issue, allowing for individual choice and insisting that final judgment on dress, as on other forms of Muslim behavior, should be left to the determination of God.

THE MUSLIM AMERICAN FAMILY

The family has traditionally been a crucial element in Muslim society, and it is no less so in America today. It serves as the foundation of their existence in a society that many still consider uncertain and even unsafe for Muslims to navigate. In traditional societies family has always meant the extended unit, while in America the nuclear family is often the only unit available. This raises problems such as the lack of a support group for both parents and children, loneliness for a wife who does not work outside the home, child care issues, and new forms of stress on the husband-wife relationship in isolation from other family members.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sharon McIrvin Abu-Laban offers a comprehensive, though now somewhat dated, "typology of Muslim immigrant families" in "Family and Religion among Muslim Immigrants

Muslim men, according to Islamic law, are allowed to marry Christian, Jewish, or Muslim women on the understanding that children will be raised Muslim. This opportunity is not available to Muslim women, however, who must marry only Muslim men. Such a restriction causes difficulties in America, as it means that the potential pool of marriage partners for women is quite small. The result is that intermarriage with Christians and Jews is fairly common, particularly among Muslims who do not consider themselves practicing or bound strictly to the law. Families for whom adherence to the law is binding put strong pressures on their young women to marry within the faith. Local and national organizations assist by providing the equivalent of dating services, putting matrimonial advertisements in journals and on a variety of Internet sites, and offering Islamically appropriate social occasions at which young Muslim men and women can meet. Muslims looking for a partner (or their parents in their stead) can post their own credentials and their hopes for qualities that they would like to see exhibited in their mates. Only in fairly rare instances are marriages in the United States arranged by parents.

Muslim women's legal organizations are working to make sure that a woman knows and takes advantage of her legal right to formulate her own marriage contract, in which she is able to make a number of specific stipulations according to her own wishes. A bride is entitled to receive a dowry from her husband, which will continue to be her property even should the couple divorce. Islamic counselors and advisers in America are talking and writing about the importance of teaching young women about their legal rights. The contract may contain such details as the amount and nature of the dowry, prohibition of the husband's taking a second wife, or specifics about when and what kinds of divorce may be legally acceptable.¹¹ Islamic law allows men to take up to four wives, but since polygyny is illegal in the United States, Muslim counselors do not recommend that alternative. Women are also being advised as to their rights in circumstances of family violence or abuse, some for the first time understanding that there is recourse in difficult personal circumstances.

PRACTICING THE FAITH

A significant number of Muslims, some estimates would say the majority, do not observe the major Islamic responsibilities of religious life, which

and Their Descendants," in Earle H. Waugh, Baba Abu-Laban, and Regula B. Qureshi, eds., *Muslim Families in North America* (Edmonton, Alberta, 1991), 1–31. See also Jane I. Smith, "Islam and the Family in North America," in Don S. Browning and David A. Clairmont, eds., *American Religions and the Family* (New York, 2007), 211–24.

¹¹ Haddad, Smith, and Moore, *Muslim Women in America*, 113–18.

include daily prayer, paying the alms tax, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making the pilgrimage to Arabia once in a lifetime. While they may attend a mosque or Islamic center for one or more of the major religious holidays or festivals, they are not formally associated with any religious institution. A growing number, however, attempt to practice the faith in whatever ways are possible in the American context. Such practice is not always easy. While many Americans claim to be tolerant of other faiths, the very public nature of Islamic practice can cause difficulties.

Mosque building continues to progress in the United States as more communities find the resources to construct places of worship to their own specifications. There are now purpose-built mosques, or existing buildings used for communal worship, in virtually all of the country's major cities. Still, many Americans have concerns about such activity. Some worry that mosques will serve as clandestine cells for terrorist plots against America. Others worry about having a mosque erected in their neighborhood, particularly if it means an "unusual" structure in their midst, or problems with parking, or crowds of people coming and going at congregational times and holidays. When a community of Muslims does receive zoning rights to construct a new structure, they must determine how to balance their wish that it resemble a traditional mosque with the requests of the neighborhood that it blend in as much as possible with the surrounding architecture.¹²

It is sometimes difficult for Muslims to practice the particular obligations of their faith in the workplace or in schools. Prayer, for example, requires some ten to fifteen minutes off school or work at the appropriate prayer time, a place with running water to do ablutions, and sufficient space as to be able to perform the full prostrations required in prayer. Even more time is needed to observe religious holidays or to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims who eat in public cafeterias are increasingly vocal about the need to be assured that food is not associated with any pork product or with alcohol. Muslims are more and more vocal about the importance that meat be slaughtered in the Islamically appropriate way, a request that not all institutions or employers are willing to grant.

On the whole Muslims are discovering that with proper presentation of their needs, and sometimes with recourse to legal precedents, conditions are changing such that it is easier to practice Islam in public and in accordance with Islamic strictures. Some businesses make allowances for Muslims who are fasting, especially when Ramadan falls in a summer

¹² For an interesting discussion of the mosque in America as public space, see Akel Ismail Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender and Aesthetics* (Austin, TX, 2002), especially chap. 3.

month and the days of abstinence are long. Islamic dress is increasingly tolerated. Muslims in many of America's prisons are being granted special space for worship, special dress allowances, and Islamically acceptable food in the cafeteria. Organizations such as CAIR are vigilant in identifying violation of Muslim civil rights, and for those institutions that are guilty of offenses, mandatory training in interfaith relations may be offered.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Following the injunction of the Prophet Muhammad to seek knowledge wherever it may be found, Muslims have always valued the process of education. In the United States Muslims are now attending to the education of all of the members of the community, from children to youth to adults. They are concerned that their children are educated both in the secular subjects necessary for their future vocations and in the basics of the Islamic faith. Education of adults, even the elderly, is a primary concern, particularly in large Islamic centers. At virtually all local and national meetings of Muslim groups and organizations, concerns about education are discussed.

Some parents decide that despite the potential dangers of sending their children to public schools, exposing them to the youth culture of America with its range of temptations, they choose public schooling because it seems to offer a better education overall. Those who can afford it may opt for private schooling. A small but growing number of families are opting to school their children at home as an alternative to public education. Islamic schools, mostly kindergarten through eighth grade, have been established across the country. While a few are well-funded and have excellent resources for the children, most are faced with worries about inadequate financing, teacher training, and quality of education. Too few teachers are appropriately prepared to be able to teach Islamic education.

Currently there are more than two hundred Islamic schools in America, ranging widely in quality. It is difficult to find teachers who have sufficient training in education, particularly if finances are tight and the pay is insufficient.¹³ It is clear that investment in Islamic parochial education is high in the American Muslim community, and more resources are being channeled into the building and maintenance of good Islamic schools. External problems also arise, however, as when in 2009 public debate erupted over a proposal to build a new classroom building in Fairfax County, Virginia. Because the funding is offered from Saudi Arabia, critics

¹³ Karen Keyworth, "Islamic Schools of America," in Haddad, Sensei, and Smith, *Muslim Education*, 21–37.

have expressed fears that the academy may perpetuate a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Some Muslim homes are the venue for afternoon or weekend Islamic studies. Mosques and Islamic centers often offer religious instruction to children after school or on weekends. When such education is not available for the instruction of children, parents sometimes sponsor various forms of religious education in their homes.

Those Muslims children who do attend public schools – and they are the vast majority – occasionally experience faith-related difficulties. If girls wear any form of Islamic dress, they may find themselves isolated by their classmates. Some parents are concerned that schools force their girls to take part in physical education, wearing gym clothes that they consider revealing and inappropriate. Sex education offered in schools can cause problems, especially if it appears to condone homosexuality or sex before marriage by handing out condoms. American teachers and administrators are becoming aware of the need to become better educated about this growing minority of Muslim children. In the process they are developing ways both to help them feel more comfortable in the classroom and to use their presence as a learning opportunity for the other students.

Education of all segments of society is high on the American Muslim agenda. MSA chapters on college and university campuses are working to provide training in the Qur'an, traditions, and the Islamic sciences. Women's circles, in which participants learn to read and recite the Qur'an and discuss its meaning, are growing in number across the country.

CONCLUSION

Immigrant Muslims face enormous challenges as residents of America, which they are addressing in a variety of ways. They must consider questions of identity, occupation, dress, acculturation, relationships between different racial and ethnic Muslim groups as well as with other American Muslims, how and where to school their children, appropriate roles and opportunities for women, and a range of other concerns. Many are moving from a phase of dissociation from American life to more active participation in political and social arenas. Members of the immigrant community are providing important leadership to all American Muslims as they search for individual and communal answers to what it means to live in diaspora. American Muslims appear to be moving into the next stage of identity, in which such issues are being resolved in new and creative ways. The result may well be that a truly American Islam, woven from the fabric of many national, racial, and ethnic identities, is in the process of emerging. Key in this process is finding a way in which Muslims from immigrant and

African American backgrounds and identities, as well as other converts, can see themselves as part of an overall emerging community. Considerable progress is being made toward this end.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: POST—WORLD WAR II TO THE PRESENT

ANDREA L. SMITH

From the point of contact, European colonizers theologically rationalized the conquest of Indian lands by the fact that Indian peoples were not Christian. Throughout United States history, American Indian religions have never benefited from the First Amendment's protections of free exercise of religion. Particularly during the period 1880–1930, the U.S. government pursued policies intended to destroy native spiritual practices. In the 1800s, the government placed entire Indian reservations under the administrative control of church denominations in an effort to Christianize and civilize them through Grant's Peace Policy. Interior Secretary Henry M. Teller ordered an end to all "heathenish dances" in 1882. Two years later, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) mandated thirty days imprisonment for Indians who participated in traditional rituals. In 1890, Sioux Ghost Dance participants were slaughtered at Wounded Knee. In 1892, the BIA outlawed the Sun Dance and banned other ceremonies. Indians were made citizens in 1927, but the outright ban on the right to worship was in effect until 1934, when John Collier's reforms in BIA policies were instituted during Roosevelt's presidency.

In the wake of Collier's reforms, pantribal native organizing grew in prominence and effectiveness. Native religious freedom became a key issue of concern. Legal policy debates included concerns about sacred sites, the use of peyote, and the repatriation of native remains. As struggles for sovereignty became more prominent in the public eye during the 1960s and 1970s, native peoples began to wrestle with the legacy of Christian colonialism. Many native peoples began to reject Christianity and to participate in retraditionalization movements, whereas others sought to reform Christianity and its relationship to native peoples. Still others supported movements that merged the two, such as the Native American Church. Native spirituality also became central to the wellness movement within native communities, which stressed the importance of healing from the "historic trauma" that is the result of colonization. This movement developed

an internal critique of some of the abuses that happened within native protest movements in the 1970s and called on native communities to address the colonial legacies of violence – including child abuse, domestic and sexual violence, and substance abuse – within native communities. Native spirituality became a cornerstone of this movement. As native religions gained in popularity, not just among native peoples but also among nonnative people who began to view native traditions as a cure for civilizational woes, many native peoples began to organize against spiritual appropriation. Native feminists also began to organize against sexual abuse committed by people who claim to be spiritual leaders. The distinct status of native traditions within the United States has also impacted their academic study. Debates continue on whether native religious traditions should even be properly understood as “religions” and which methodologies are appropriate for studying native traditions.

NATIVE RELIGIONS AND CHANGING LEGAL POLICIES

During the 1970s, Indian spiritual leaders began to testify in meetings in a variety of locations about the urgent need to protect Indian spiritual practices. Indian people using sacred eagle feathers or peyote often faced arrest, and governmental agencies often prevented tribal members from accessing sacred lands. These testimonies culminated in the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) in 1978. It proclaimed, “It shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise traditional religions.” Specific attention was given to the right of access to sacred sites. However, when Indian nations have attempted to sue under this act, the courts have ruled that Indians have no cause of action under AIRFA because it has no enforceable power. In addition, President Jimmy Carter appointed a task force that comprised nine federal agencies to identify administrative and legislative changes in federal agencies and regulations. It submitted a report that contained thirty-seven pages of recommendations for administrative and legislative changes. However, only a small number of federal agencies have changed a few isolated procedures to accommodate Indian religious practices.¹

In 1988 the Supreme Court ruled in *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*, 485 U.S. 439, that a federal land use decision that will destroy a sacred site – as well as destroy an entire Indian religion itself – does not trigger the protections of the First Amendment because the land

¹ Christopher Vecsey, ed., *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom* (New York, 1991).

use decision was not specifically intended to destroy that religion. The First Amendment bars only outright prohibitions on the free exercise of religion. "All other incidental effects of government programs which may make it more difficult to practice certain religions, but which have no tendency to coerce individuals into acting contrary to their religious beliefs do not require the government to bring forward a compelling justification for its otherwise lawful actions."² In other words, policies that make it impossible for native peoples to practice their spiritual traditions are acceptable as long as their traditions are destroyed as an unintentional result of those policies.

The Supreme Court decision in *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), eliminated the "compelling government interest" test for deciding religious freedom cases. This test requires that before the government can restrict the free exercise of religion, it must demonstrate that its actions are the least restrictive means for furthering a compelling state interest. This decision revolved around the rights of native peoples to use peyote in religious ceremonies. The elimination of the compelling interest test negatively impacted not only participants in native religious traditions, but all religious believers. Consequently, a coalition of religious groups organized to restore this test. In 1993, President Clinton signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which reversed the Supreme Court ruling that reinstates the "compelling government interest" test applicable to free exercise cases. However, the Supreme Court, in turn, ruled in 1997 that the RFRA was unconstitutional.³

Although the RFRA was intended to reverse the *Smith* decision, which revolved around the Native American use of peyote, this act would have done little to protect free exercise of traditional Native American religions. Thus, in 1993–94 the Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act (S. 1021) was proposed to institute protections that would have enforceable power under the law. Eventually the section on use of peyote was passed separately in HR 4230; however, the act in general became tied up over the issue of sacred sites and was not enacted.⁴

Thus, to summarize, there are six critical issues that have been resolved against the interests of Indian nations in these Supreme Court decisions regarding Indian religious freedom.

1. The protection of Indian religions is not covered under the First Amendment.

² Steven Moore, "Sacred Sites and Public Lands," in Christopher Vecsey, ed. *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom* (New York, 1991), 90.

³ Carolyn Long, *Religious Freedom and Indian Rights: The Case of Oregon v. Smith* (Topeka, KS, 2000).

⁴ *Ibid.*

2. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act has no enforceable power.
3. The “effects” test for adjudicating religious freedom claims was rejected. That is, it is not relevant what effect a government policy will have on Indian religious practice; what matters is the intent of the policy. As long as the stated intent of a government policy is not specifically to eradicate or infringe upon Indian religious freedom, then it does not matter whether the effect of that policy is to destroy tribal spiritual traditions.
4. Indian tribes must prove that there is a unanimity of tribal opinion that a site is sacred. It must also pass a test of complete *certainty* that a site is sacred.
5. The courts have eliminated the “compelling interest” test for religious freedom cases (not just including Indian religious freedom). The state no longer has to prove that it has taken the path that is least destructive toward religious practice and that it has a compelling interest to do so.
6. Not only are Indian religions not covered in the First Amendment, but the courts have sometimes ruled that protecting Indian religious freedom is a *violation* of the First Amendment because it is in violation of the establishment clause by privileging Indian religious freedom claims, particularly concerning sacred sites, over those of other religions.⁵

The native legal scholar Jace Weaver traces this lack of protection to the fundamental differences between native traditions and Christianity. He argues that the First Amendment protects religious belief, but not religious practice. Consequently, the First Amendment will necessarily provide less protection for native traditions because they are practice centered. Both Weaver and Vine Deloria, Jr., note that Christianity is generally defined by belief in a certain set of doctrinal principles about Jesus, the Bible, and other points. Evangelical Christianity, for instance, holds that one is “saved” when one professes belief in Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Savior. Native traditions, by contrast, are practice centered. That is, what is of primary importance is not so much the ability to articulate belief in a certain set of doctrines, but participation in the spiritual practice of one’s

⁵ This issue has arisen over disputes around Devil’s Tower. Some attempts by the National Park Service to restrict recreational and commercial climbing on Devil’s Tower, which is sacred to many Indian tribes, have been ruled violations of the establishment clause of the First Amendment. See Allison Dusias, “Cultural Conflicts regarding Land Use: The Conflict between Recreational Users at Devil’s Tower and Native American Ceremonial Users,” *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law* 2 (2001): 13–40.

community. Thus, for instance, it may be more important that a ceremony be done correctly than it is for everyone in that ceremony to know exactly *why* everything must be done in a certain way.⁶ As Vine Deloria, Jr., notes, in a native context, religion is “a way of life” rather than “a matter of the proper exposition of doctrines.”⁷ Even if Christians do not have access to church, they continue to be Christians as long as they believe in Jesus. Native spiritualities, by contrast, die if the people do not practice the ceremonies, even if the people continue to believe in their power.

Most of the court rulings on sacred sites do not recognize this difference between belief- and practice-centered traditions. For instance, in *Fools Crow v. Gullet*, the Supreme Court ruled against the Lakota who were trying to halt the development of additional tourist facilities. It argued that this tourism was not an infringement on Indian religious freedom because, although it would hinder the ability of Lakota to *practice* their beliefs, it did not force them to relinquish their beliefs. For the Lakota, however, stopping the *practice* of traditional beliefs destroys the belief systems themselves. Weaver notes that the First Amendment does not target native traditions per se; Christian *practices* are not covered under the First Amendment either. However, any legal principle that only protects religious belief and does not protect religious practice is going to impact disproportionately and negatively traditions that are more practice- than belief centered.⁸

In addition, native traditions are generally land based. Native spiritualities depend upon the land base that gave rise to them; they cannot easily be transplanted to another geographical area. Many ceremonies must be performed at specific locations. One example is Mount Graham, which is sacred to the San Carlos Apache. The University of Arizona and the Vatican began a project to construct an observatory on the mountain. In response, the Apache unsuccessfully tried to stop the project. Because Mount Graham is located near the center of what was formerly San Carlos Apache territory, it is considered to be the “chief of all mountains.” Mount Graham is associated with sacred powers embodied in the forms of life that live there, especially the powers related to deer, horses, bears, owls, and eagles. Mount Graham is also the home of a group of supernatural beings called *gaab*. Sometimes referred to in English as “crown dancers” or “mountain spirit dancers,” these beings appear in different religious ceremonies and are critical agents for spiritual healing. They reside at a place

⁶ Jace Weaver, “Losing My Religion,” in Jace Weaver, ed., *Unforgotten Gods: Native American Religious Identity* (Maryknoll, NY, 1998).

⁷ Vine Deloria, Jr., “A Native American Perspective on Liberation,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 1 (July 1977): 16.

⁸ Weaver, “Losing My Religion.”

inside Mount Graham and have done so since they first became involved with human beings. Mount Graham is also the home of several natural springs and several kinds of plants, animals, stones, and minerals that are used in healing ceremonies. It is both the place where spiritual leaders go to pray and dream and the object of prayer for the Apache who call on its power in the course of prayer.⁹

The fight over sacred sites is also a fight over land and resources. About 60 percent of the energy resources (i.e., coal, oil, uranium) in this country is on Indian land. Virtually 100 percent of uranium production takes place on or near Indian land.¹⁰ In addition to energy resources, pharmaceutical companies are vying for control over indigenous medicines and plants by attempting to patent them and destroy indigenous people's access to them. Protecting sacred sites hinders the ability of corporate interests to exploit resources near or on Indian lands. In order to contest the theft of sacred sites, native peoples have to frame their struggle in terms of landownership. However, as Patricia Monture-Angus and Glen Coulthard note, traditionally native communities do not necessarily articulate land as a commodity that can be owned.¹¹

Unfortunately, this understanding of one's relationship to the land as entailing responsibility for caring for the land, rather than signifying rights to control it, is itself a spiritual value that cannot be recognized by the U.S. court system.

Deloria and Weaver argue that because Christianity is a proselytizing religion, its adherents generally attempt to "spread the Word" to as many potential followers as possible. Because Christianity often emphasizes the individual believer's relationship to God, it is important that every individual understand the doctrines and practices of the faith. Native traditions, by contrast, often stress communal rather than individual practice. Consequently, it is not always necessary or even desirable for every member of a nation to engage in every ceremony or to have the same level of knowledge of the spiritual ways of a tribe. The reason is that all the members know that the spiritual leaders are praying for the well-being of the whole tribe. Consequently, not all members of a community will have equal knowledge about sacred sites, for instance. Yet when some tribal members profess not to know that a particular site is sacred, this lack of

⁹ Information collected through Sammy Toineeta, Racial Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches, Sept.–Dec. 1996.

¹⁰ Winona LaDuke, "A Society Based on Conquest Cannot Be Sustained," in Richard Hofrichter, ed., *Toxic Struggles* (Philadelphia, 1993), 98–106.

¹¹ Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6:4 (2007); Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward* (Halifax, NS, 1999).

uniform agreement within a community is used to oppose native claims for sacred site protection. In addition, because it is not necessary for all members of a tribe to be equally knowledgeable about all ceremonies, and because, as mentioned previously, the ceremonies only apply to the people of that specific land base, in many cases ceremonial knowledge must be kept secret. Unfortunately, however, in order to obtain proof that a site is sacred, the courts will attempt to force tribes to reveal secret information about their practices. The Havasupai sued the Forest Service to prevent a uranium mine that would desecrate their sacred site, Red Butte. The Havasupai were reluctant to reveal secrets that would “prove” the sacredness of the Red Butte region. However, the U.S. district court judge Roger Strand of Phoenix refused to stop the mine unless the Havasupai did reveal this information. The elders then did relent and reveal the secret name of the deity considered the guardian of the canyon, and yet Strand still ruled against them.¹²

While native communities continue to face tremendous barriers securing legal protection for their spiritual practices, particularly those rooted in sacred sites, they were able to secure the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. In the 1980s, museums, agencies, and universities held between 300,000 and 2.5 million bodies taken from Indian graves. These bodies had been stolen for a variety of purposes: commercialization, anthropological collections, race biology, and others. Some bodies were taken from graves; other bodies were secured by mutilating Indian bodies during massacres. In 1868, more than five thousand heads were taken from battlefields and sent to the Army Medical Museum. Between 1875 and 1925, one collector, George Heye, collected more than one million native artifacts – more than one for every native person alive at that time. While criminal statutes prohibit grave desecration, grave robbing, and mutilation, these statutes have not been applied to Indian people in various court cases. Native remains are not seen as bodies of formerly living people, but as archaeological and anthropological resources. Therefore, even the National Park Service has issued permits to dig up thousands of Indian bodies.¹³

NAGPRA prohibits the trade, transport, or sale of Native American human remains. It prohibits remains and funeral objects from being considered archaeological resources, prohibits the disturbing of sites without tribal consent, and imposes penalties for unauthorized excavation, removal,

¹² Dan Baum, “Sacred Places,” *Mother Jones Magazine*, Mar.–Apr. 1992, 32–8.

¹³ Walter Echohawk and Roger Echohawk, “Repatriation, Reburial, and Religious Rights,” in Christopher Vecsey, ed., *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom* (New York, 1991).

damage, or destruction. It further mandates the return of remains and funeral objects.

There are some loopholes in NAGPRA. NAGPRA does not apply to hair. It also only applies to remains that have been excavated but cannot be used to stop activities that might disturb grave sites. In addition, institutions often refuse to return remains to tribes that request them by claiming there is no evidence that the remains are culturally affiliated with that tribe. What stands for evidence for cultural affiliation is then often determined by scientists with a vested interest in the outcome. Native oral histories are often also not considered proper evidence to prove cultural affiliation.

Native communities have diverse teachings about how native remains should be addressed. Some do not want them returned because they lack proper ceremonies for reburial. Other nations teach that if ancestors are not treated with respect, the community will continue to face hardship. The well-being of native peoples alive today, they contend, is directly tied to the treatment of native peoples' remains. NAGPRA continues to spark controversy with many scholars. Some archaeologists and anthropologists call for its repeal, while advocates for native communities call for a closing of its loopholes that prevent tribes from regaining their remains.¹⁴

NATIVE RETRADITIONALISM AND LEGACIES OF CHRISTIAN COLONIALISM

Because native traditions were effectively banned as a matter of U.S. policy historically, practitioners of native spiritual practices often had to perform ceremonies secretly. In addition, during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, American Indian children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend Christian and U.S. government-run boarding schools. They were forced to worship as Christians and speak English; native traditions and languages were prohibited. In addition, children were often forcibly separated from their siblings who were in the same school in order to disrupt familial bonds that might help preserve traditional practices and beliefs. Consequently, many native peoples became Christian and actively rejected their indigenous spiritual systems. Others became disconnected from their traditions through loss of language and family breakdown resulting from boarding school policies.¹⁵

¹⁴ Devon A. Mihesuah, *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?* (Lincoln, NE, 2000); Kathleen Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA* (Lincoln, NE, 2002).

¹⁵ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding-School Experience, 1875–1928* (Topeka, KS, 1995); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

However, the Red Power movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s sparked interest in revitalizing native traditions and languages. Red Power eventually took shape under the disparate influences of Indian students and urban Indians. One of the first invocations of the term “Red Power” in a public context occurred at the 1966 convention of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).¹⁶ Addressing the congress, Vine Deloria, Jr., director of the NCAI, announced: “Red Power means we want power over our own lives. . . . It frightens people I know to talk of Red Power, but we don’t want to frighten them. We want to shock them into realizing how powerless the Indians have been. We feel that if we don’t get Red Power – now – we may not be around much longer.”¹⁷ In 1964, Clyde Warrior and other young Indian college graduates, calling themselves the Red Muslims, formed the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), based upon the principle of Red Power. At that time, natives from the smaller tribes in Washington faced harassment, brutality, and arrest from state officials while exercising their treaty-protected rights to fish. Under the auspices of the NIYC, Warrior, who had spent a summer working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi, helped organize “fish-ins” (modeled after “sit-ins”). NIYC’s efforts drew hundreds of Indians and non-Indians to stand in solidarity with the fishers.¹⁸

Unlike the NIYC, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed in 1968 in the Twin Cities of Minnesota by urban Indians from less affluent class backgrounds, many of whom had been in correctional facilities.¹⁹ AIM patterned itself upon the self-defense model of Huey Newton and Bobbie Seale’s Black Panther Party: AIM patrols monitored the streets of St. Paul and Minneapolis, documenting and confronting police brutality against native people. Chapters soon sprang up throughout the country.²⁰ The native people of the Bay Area also took cues from the Black Panthers, especially the nineteen Indian students who became the Indians of All Tribes who took over Alcatraz in an effort to turn it into an Indian cultural center. Three hundred Indians later joined them, and many non-Indian groups including the Black Panthers lent their support.²¹ The

¹⁶ Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner, eds., *The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature* (New York, 1972), 225.

¹⁷ Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (New York, 1968), 269.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39–64; James Olson and Raymond Wilson, *Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL, 1984), 160.

¹⁹ Vernon Bellecourt, “Birth of AIM,” in Peter Nabokov, ed., *Native American Testimony* (New York, 1990).

²⁰ Rex Weyler, *Blood of the Land: The Government and Corporate War against First Nations* (Philadelphia, 1992), 36.

²¹ Wilma Mankiller, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (New York, 1993), 154, 186–93.

events at Alcatraz inspired subsequent takeovers of federal property and even more militant direct action. When one of the leaders of Alcatraz, Richard Oakes, was killed in 1972, native groups spearheaded by AIM organized a caravan to Washington, where they attempted a twenty-point treaty renegotiation program with the U.S. government. The logistics for this caravan did not go smoothly, and its participants, through various mishaps, ended up taking over the BIA building.²² In 1973, the Pine Ridge Reservation erupted into civil war when AIM, in conjunction with the traditionalists of Pine Ridge, took over Wounded Knee in protest of the tribal chair Dick Wilson's repression of the AIM supporters on the reservation. The civil war continued after the siege at Wounded Knee, resulting in the shooting deaths of two FBI agents for which AIM activist Leonard Peltier was convicted. He is still serving two life sentences for this controversial conviction.

Indian activism, and Red Power in particular, often positioned itself in opposition to Christianity. In 1989, Swift Turtle (Miwok) nailed himself to a cross for several hours in San Leandro, California, to protest the construction of a condominium on Indian land.²³ Matthew King, spiritual leader of the Lakota, declared that

God gave the white people a Savior and a Bible because they were so wicked and forgot the way. The Savior told them: "My God and I are one," but they crucified him. Where does that leave them? They are without God; I'm sorry about that, they are already condemned. . . . [White] people don't even understand their own Bible. They didn't follow it. They have all those commandments, but they broke every one. The Bible said, "By the sweat of your brow shall you earn your bread," but they never did that; they always try to make it the easy way, stealing gold, making other people work. Indians learn the difference between right and wrong; then we don't need a Bible.²⁴

According to Deloria, the bumper sticker "Custer Died for Your Sins," was created as a swipe at the National Council of Churches.²⁵ At Alcatraz, the Indians of All Tribes mocked the hegemonic equation of civility with Christianity when they declared in their "Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People," "We will give to the inhabitants of this island a portion of the land for their own to be held in trust by the American Indian Affairs and by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs to hold in perpetuity. . . . We will offer them our religion, our education, our life-ways, in order to

²² Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin, TX, 1985), 46.

²³ Olson and Wilson, *Native Americans*, 174–5.

²⁴ Weyler, *Blood of the Land*, 35, 30–1.

²⁵ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Norman, OK, 1988), 148.

help them achieve our level of civilization and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state.”²⁶

These movements contended that native spiritualities are the natural religions of Indian peoples. In fact, since Indian cultures cannot be separated from their spiritualities, conscientious Indians cannot reclaim their heritage without reclaiming their religious practices as well. For this reason, early AIM leaders visited Leonard Crow Dog, a spiritual leader from the Rosebud reservation, to find a spiritual compass for the movement. Thereafter, AIM considered itself “the spiritual rebirth of our nation.”²⁷ As Deloria notes, alienated urban Indians reconnected with traditionals through activism, becoming militant advocates of cultural and spiritual renewal. He also observes with irony that “the more educated Indians become, the more militant they are about preserving traditions and customs.”²⁸

Deloria became a key theorist who articulated what he perceived to be the radical incommensurability between native religions and Christianity. During protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, some theologians began to espouse Christian liberation theologies that could support liberation struggles. For instance, James Cone developed a black liberation theology to support black power. Deloria, by contrast, argued that liberation theology was as colonial as mainstream Christian theology. Deloria had been active in struggling for reform within Christian denominations. Frustrated with his lack of success, Deloria articulated a radical critique of Christianity in *God Is Red* and other works. While the premise of liberation theology is that Christianity can be redeemed if articulated from a liberation paradigm, Deloria argues that Christianity is inextricably linked to imperialism. His contention is that liberation theology is grounded on a Western European epistemological framework that is no less oppressive to native communities than is mainstream theology. “Liberation theology,” Deloria cynically argues, “was an absolute necessity if the establishment was going to continue to control the minds of minorities. If a person of a minority group had not invented it, the liberal establishment most certainly would have created it.”²⁹ According to Deloria, native liberation must be grounded in indigenous epistemologies – epistemologies that are inconsistent with Western epistemologies, of which liberation theology is a part. “If we are then to talk seriously about the necessity of liberation, we are talking about the destruction of the whole complex of Western theories of knowledge and the construction of a new and more comprehensive

²⁶ Indians of All Tribes, *Alcatraz Is Not an Island* (Berkeley, CA, 1972), 40.

²⁷ Akwesasne Notes, *Voices from Wounded Knee* (Roosevelt, NY, 1974), 60.

²⁸ Vine Deloria, Jr., *The Indian Affair* (New York, 1974), 47.

²⁹ Vine Deloria, Jr., *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York, 1999), 100.

synthesis of human knowledge and experience.”³⁰ According to Deloria, because Christianity is a temporally rather than a spatially based tradition (that is, it is not tied to a particular land base but can seek converts from any land base), it is necessarily a religion tied to imperialism because it will never be content to remain within a particular place or community. Adherents of temporally based religions will try to convince other peoples of the veracity of their religious truth claims. “Once religion becomes specific to a group, its nature also appears to change, being directed to the internal mechanics of the group, not to grandiose schemes of world conquest.”³¹ Hence, all Christian theology, even liberation theology, remains complicit in the missionization and genocide of native peoples in the Americas.

Deloria’s analysis was further developed by Robert Warrior’s “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” a germinal critique of the underpinnings of liberation theology. In this essay, Warrior argues that the Bible is not a liberatory text for native peoples, especially considering the fact that the liberation motif commonly adopted by liberation theologians – the Exodus – is premised on the genocide of the indigenous people occupying the Promised Land – the Canaanites. Warrior does not argue for the historical veracity of the conquest of the Canaanites. Rather, the Exodus operates as a *narrative* of conquest, a narrative that was foundational to the European conquest of the Americas. Warrior’s essay points not only to problems with the Exodus motif, but to liberation theology’s conceptualization of a God of deliverance. He contends that “as long as people believe in the Yahweh of deliverance, the world will not be safe from the Yahweh the conqueror.”³² That is, by conceptualizing ourselves as oppressed peoples who are to be delivered at all costs, we necessarily become complicit in oppressing those who stand in the way of our deliverance. Instead, Warrior argues, we need to reconceptualize ourselves as “a society of people delivered from oppression who are not so afraid of becoming victims again that they become oppressors themselves.”³³ These critiques issued by Deloria and Warrior became widely influential even among native peoples who chose to remain Christian.

Some native peoples took part in retraditionalization movements within Christianity. James Treat’s *Around the Sacred Fire* traces the work of the Indian Ecumenical Conference of the 1970s.³⁴ Founded in 1969 and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

³¹ Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO, 1992), 296–7.

³² Robert Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” in *Natives and Christians: Indigenous Voices on Religions Identity in the United States and Canada*, James Treat, ed. (Oxford, 1996), 99.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: A Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era – A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York, 2003).

continuing until 1988, this conference drew together spiritual leaders to address the conflict between tribal and Christian traditions in native communities. It promoted spiritual revitalization in native communities while addressing conflicts between Christians and traditionals. While this organization died in 1988, many mainline Christian denominations continue to hold dialogues between native Christians and traditional practitioners. George “Tink” Tinker, James Treat, Steve Charleston, Jace Weaver, and many others have also synthesized native traditionalism with liberation theologies, arguing that native spirituality can coexist in a liberating way with Christianity.³⁵

Indigenous revitalization within Christianity has become important even among evangelical Christians. In the early 1990s, a race reconciliation movement developed within Christian evangelicalism that sought to establish racial harmony and unity within evangelical churches. While this movement initially targeted African American communities, the Promise Keepers, a prominent evangelical men’s ministry, began an outreach to native peoples in particular. Promise Keepers’ rallies have consistently featured native speakers, and a contingent of native men opened the Promise Keepers’ 1997 national gathering, the Stand in the Gap rally, with a blessing. At its peak, more than eighteen thousand native men were formally associated with Promise Keepers in 2000. The work of Promise Keepers, in turn, sparked growing visibility of native peoples and organizations, particularly – but not exclusively – within charismatic movements in which the Promise Keepers are rooted. These groups coalesced around contextual ministries, which strive to preach the gospel message within the context of native traditions and cultures. Examples include Red Sea Ministries, Wiconi International (Richard Twiss), Warriors for Christ (Art Begay), Wesleyan Native American Ministries, Inuit Ministries International (Dr. Suuqiina), Eagles’ Wings Ministry, the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous Peoples, *Native Wind*, Two Rivers Native American Training Center, and many others. It is important, however, not to overestimate the influence of Promise Keepers.

An intellectual arm of the indigenous contextual movement developed with the founding of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAITS). It was launched to provide master’s and

³⁵ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native Community* (Oxford, 1997); Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY, 2001); George Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis, 1993); Steve Charleston, “The Old Testament of North America,” in Treat, ed., *Native and Christian*; Jace Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods* (Maryknoll, NY, 1998); Treat, ed., *Native and Christian*.

doctoral graduate degrees for native leaders in the area of contextualized evangelical missions. In addition, NAIITS creates forums for dialogue and engagement with other emerging indigenous theological streams. NAIITS has developed partnerships with Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, as well as with several denominational and nondenominational organizations, colleges, and seminaries.³⁶

One reason these contextual ministries may be prominent within new charismatic traditions is that a defining feature of these movements is the adaptation of Christianity to the surrounding culture. Music at church services tends to feature popular rock music rather than old-time hymns. Congregants and even pastors wear casual clothing rather than their “Sunday best.” These movements attempt to distinguish between what they see as the central message of Christianity and the outward forms Christianity might take.³⁷

This strategy has provoked much criticism from other evangelical/fundamentalist denominations, which charge that new charismatics have sold out the gospel message to secular culture. Many native Evangelicals, however, see an opportunity for intervention in these new charismatic movements. If it is legitimate to incorporate the secular “white” culture into worship, then it must also be acceptable to incorporate native culture as well. Leaders attempt such incorporation in a variety of ways: by holding Christian powwows, adapting ceremonial songs with Christian words, using the drum in services, wearing regalia during services, and others.³⁸ Working in collaboration, many of these ministries developed “Culture, Christ, and Kingdom” seminars throughout the United States and Canada during the 1990s to promote the synthesis of native cultural practices and Christianity. Their argument is that these native “forms” do not alter the basic “message” of Christianity.³⁹

³⁶ Jim Uttley, “Partnership Encourages Theological Training for First Nations Leaders,” *Charisma* 30 (June 2005): 23–4.

³⁷ Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

³⁸ Herti Dixon, “Indigenous Christians Embrace Tradition,” *Charisma* 31 (Apr. 2006): 32–3; Vic Francis, “Christians from 32 Countries Reclaim Native Customs,” *Charisma* 22 (Apr. 1997): 47–8; Lee Grady, “Heretics among Us,” *Charisma* 29 (Apr. 2004): 6; Randy Woodley, “Putting It to the Test,” *Mission Frontiers* 22 (Sept. 2000): 18–19; Dennis Gruszka, “God’s Holy Fire,” *Native Reflections* 10 (Winter 1997): 2–3, 5; Kyle Huckins, “Potlatch Gospel,” *Christianity Today* 44 (12 June 2000): 66–9; Suuqiina, “Cultural Restoration – It’s Time – It’s Here,” *Inuit Ministries International Newsletter*, Feb. 2000, 1, 3; Ken Steinken, “Native Christians Reclaim Worship,” *Christianity Today* 42 (26 Oct. 1998): 13; Jimmy Stewart, “Native Praise,” *Charisma* 26 (Nov. 2000): 91; Richard Twiss, “Can I Call You Gringo?,” *Charisma* 26 (Dec. 2000): 44; Richard Twiss, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind,” *Mission Frontiers* 22 (Sept. 2000): 12–13.

³⁹ Richard Twiss, *Culture, Christ and the Kingdom Seminar* (Vancouver, 1996).

This movement, in turn, is critiqued not only by some mainstream Evangelicals, but by native Evangelicals as well. Some native traditionals *and* Evangelicals argue that traditionalism and Christianity should not be intermixed. Of those who think they should not be mixed, some reject one form of spiritual expression over the other, while others may engage both but argue that they should be engaged separately. Interestingly, while native Evangelicals involved in contextual ministries obviously disagree with Vine Deloria's argument that native traditions are radically dissimilar to Christianity, the influence of Deloria can be clearly traced in their work.⁴⁰

Many native peoples follow another spiritual alternative to both Christianity and traditional spirituality, the Native American Church, which blends traditional beliefs with Christianity. In the early 1900s, religious practices centering on the use of peyote spread throughout the United States. Originating from Mexico, peyote traditions began to develop into two traditions propagated by two prophets: Quanah Parker (Comanche) and John Wilson (Caddo-Delaware). Both traditions were a mix of peyotism, Plains Indian traditions, and Christianity. Quanah Parker emphasized Indian legends in prayers, the use of tobacco, and a ceremony in which participants sit in a circle around a crescent-shaped altar. Wilson's followers worshipped around a horseshoe-shaped altar and more strongly emphasized Christianity through the presence of the crucifix and the Bible. Wilson also developed the ethics for the Peyote Road, which includes abstinence from liquor, sexual modesty, marriage fidelity, and prohibitions against anger, lies, vindictiveness, vengeance, and fighting. By 1910, a very large percentage of native peoples were practicing peyotists, with the exception of native members of the "Five Civilized Tribes" who tended to be more strongly Christian. Peyote practitioners were under constant attack by Christian native peoples as well as by state policies designed to curb the use of peyote. Consequently, in 1918 a number of peyote practitioners based in Oklahoma decided to organize the Native American Church. In 1934, the Native American Church began to include church branches outside Oklahoma, and in 1944 it became a national organization. Then in 1949 the church split into two groups, and the Oklahoma state group became the Native American Church and retained the original 1918 charter. In 1950 the national group was incorporated as the Native American Church of the United States. In 1954 it became international by incorporating the Native American Church of Canada, and it was renamed the Native American Church of North America in 1955. Separate organizations were also formed in the Navajo Nation and in South Dakota. Today the Native American Church is a confederation of the NAC of North America, which has forty-six chapters in twenty-four

⁴⁰ Craig Stephen Smith, *Whiteman's Gospel* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1997).

states, Canada, and Mexico; the NAC of Navajoland, which has ninety-two chapters in the Navajo Nation; the NAC of Oklahoma, which has seventeen chapters in Oklahoma; and the NAC of South Dakota. Each has its own bylaws, but all belong to the Native American Church. As discussed previously, the Native American Church underwent a number of legal challenges to their freedom to practice peyote until HR 4230, which amended AIRFA to protect the use of peyote, was signed into law in 1994.⁴¹

SPIRITUALITY AND HEALING

As the Red Power movement became increasingly fragmented as the result of both state repression and internal contradictions, many activists began to focus on the need to address internalized colonization within native communities. The legacy of boarding school abuses and of other forms of colonization has resulted in epidemic rates of sexual and domestic violence, suicides, substance abuse, and other forms of dysfunctional behaviors in native communities. In response, the “wellness” movement developed, largely spearheaded by women, which stresses healing from abuse, both on the individual and on the community level. The University of Oklahoma sponsors national wellness and women conferences each year attended by thousands of native peoples. These conferences help women begin their healing journeys from various forms of abuse and teach them to become enablers for community healing. The Indigenous Women’s Network also sponsors gatherings that tie together the healing of individuals and communities from the trauma of this nation’s history. The White Bison Society also organized to promote sobriety and healing within native communities with a particular focus on native men. These wellness movements began to coalesce around the paradigm of “historic trauma.” This paradigm holds that when native peoples suffer from colonization, the behaviors that develop in response to colonization are intergenerationally transmitted. Healing, therefore, entails addressing interpersonal behavior within the context of historical colonization. Spirituality is an integral part of this movement because Christianity is articulated as a manifestation of this colonization. Consequently, organizations often stress revitalizing native spiritual practices as a process of decolonization.⁴²

At the same time, some native scholars have begun to critique this movement, arguing that it psychologizes colonialism and hence depoliticizes it.

⁴¹ Carolyn Nestor Long, *Religious Freedom and Indian Rights: The Case of Oregon v. Smith* (Lawrence, KS, 2000).

⁴² Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond, eds., *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2009).

Dian Million and Audra Simpson contend that the healing industry that has developed around residential and boarding school abuse has articulated native peoples as a national wound in need of healing rather than as peoples subjected to genocide who require decolonization.⁴³ Some have critiqued the pantribal approaches adopted by some of these movements as lacking tribal specificity. Others have noted that some movements are overly prescriptive in their articulation of native spirituality as the only route to decolonization. Many native peoples today who want healing *are* Christian, but they can become positioned as inauthentic or “assimilated” by these movements.⁴⁴ These debates speak to the tensions of developing political movements for decolonization that simultaneously attend to the social, psychological, and emotional impacts of colonization within native communities.

SPIRITUAL APPROPRIATION

The revitalization of native traditions has sparked interest in native traditions among nonnative peoples. The appropriation of Native American spiritual and cultural traditions by white society has a long history in the United States, from colonists dressing as Indians during the Boston Tea Party, to the YMCA sponsoring “Indian Guide” programs for youths.⁴⁵ In contemporary society, this practice of “playing Indian” is particularly notable in the New Age movement, in which American Indian spirituality, with its respect for nature and the interconnectedness of all things, is often presented as the panacea for all individual and global problems. An industry has developed around the selling of sweat lodges or sacred pipe ceremonies that promise to yield individual and global healing. Consequently, it has become economically profitable for people to market themselves as spiritual leaders. These people have been termed “plastic medicine men,” a term that refers to individuals who falsely claim to be indigenous spiritual leaders. Some plastic medicine (wo)men make no claims to be indigenous but do make false claims about being mentored by a spiritual leader. Some plastic medicine (wo)men claim to be indigenous, but the tribes in which they claim membership do not recognize them. And finally, some plastic medicine (wo)men actually are recognized members of a native nation, but they do not have the authority within their tribe to act as spiritual

⁴³ Much of their analysis has generally appeared in nonpublished form at a variety of conferences.

⁴⁴ Justine Smith, “Indigenous Performance and Aporetic Texts,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 59:1–2 (2005): 114–24; Treat, ed., *Native and Christian*; Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire*; Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC, 2008).

⁴⁵ Rayan Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabee,” *Folklore* 99:1 (1988): 30–55.

leaders. One of the most famous such figures was Sun Bear, who became famous on the New Age lecture circuit, but whose teachings were generally denounced by native communities.

While there is not necessarily a monolithic opinion on this practice or on particular plastic medicine (wo)men, many native nations and organizations, such as the Traditional Circle of Elders, have publicly denounced this phenomenon. Hopi, Cheyenne, and Lakota elders have also issued statements against it. One Oakland-based group named SPIRIT exists only to oppose spiritual appropriation. Indian nations are even using the legal apparatus of intellectual property rights to file lawsuits against those who make a profit by stealing Indian culture. This controversy has become news as several people have died in sweat lodge ceremonies that were conducted by plastic medicine men. As one example, Kirsten Dana Babcock, thirty-four, of Redding, California, and David Thomas Hawker, thirty-six, of Union City, California, were participating in a ritual resembling a sweat lodge when they died of asphyxiation. They completely sealed the “sweat lodge” in plastic for a four-hour cleansing ritual, chanting amid the vapors of herbs and water poured over the hot rocks. The sweat lodge where the deaths occurred was made of a wooden frame shaped in a near-circle about 10 feet in diameter and covered with plastic sheeting, which was buried in the ground around the lower edge to make it airtight. The plastic was covered with sleeping bags and blankets to hold in the heat. The participants told officers that they were seeking spiritual enlightenment by sitting in the steam in the sealed environment.⁴⁶ In 2009, three people died in a Sedona-based sweat lodge–like ceremony conducted by the New Age guru James Arthur Ray. This ceremony was part of a retreat in which participants were charged thousands of dollars. Between fifty-five and sixty-five people were crowded into the sweat lodge, which had restricted airflow. The goal of this retreat was to help participants achieve spiritual and financial wealth.

Alarmingly, a number of plastic medicine men have been accused of sexual abuse in their ceremonies. Jeffrey Wall was sentenced for sexually abusing three girls while claiming this abuse was part of American Indian spiritual rituals that he was conducting as a supposed Indian medicine man. David “Two Wolves” Smith and Alan “Spotted Wolfe” Camphey were also charged for sexually abusing girls during supposed “cleansing” ceremonies. In 1998, an Omaha priest, Daniel Herek of the St. Richard Catholic Church, was convicted of using Catholic and “Native American ceremonies” as a pretext for sexually abusing a boy for five years. Daniel

⁴⁶ Walt Wiley, “Two Die in Solstice Sweat Lodge Ceremony,” *Sacramento Bee*, 22 June 2002, B1.

Herek and this boy formed their own “tribe” called the “Pondering People.” The boy called himself “Pondering Raven,” and the priest called himself “Wolf Hawk.” Herek then repeatedly asked him to take part in “Native American” rituals in which the boy removed his clothing so that Herek could fondle him.⁴⁷ Bonnie Clairmont, who is a Ho-Chunk sexual assault survivor based in St. Paul, Minnesota, began organizing against sexual exploitation by those claiming to be spiritual leaders. Her work has focused not only on New Age practitioners, but also on native peoples who are respected as spiritual leaders in their community.

ACADEMIC STUDY OF NATIVE RELIGIONS

Just as New Age interest in native spirituality sparked controversy, so too has academic interest in native traditions. As mentioned previously, the practice of keeping native ceremonial information secret often directly conflicts with academic scholars’ desires to study and learn about native traditions. This conflict was manifested in the debate between Sam Gill and Chris Jocks in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* over the proper study of religion.⁴⁸ Gill charged that the basis of native academics’ critiques of academic work on their spiritual traditions was the racially essentialist presupposition that only native peoples should be able to study native traditions. He further argued that the study of religion is a Western enterprise and hence should follow traditional academic practices. Jocks contended that native people’s critiques of nonnative academic work on native traditions is not that the work is done by nonnative peoples, but that it is not done well. He argued that this work does not, in fact, meet Western standards for academic scholarship because nonnative scholars routinely write on native traditions without facility in native languages or any lengthy engagement with native communities. Jocks further argued that native traditions do not exist independently of communities, and hence one would not gain accurate information if one were not integrated into the community in some way.

Winona Wheeler further explains that the assumption that academics have a right to knowledge about native peoples undergirds the academic treatment of native religious traditions. She argues that Western-based academics places a high value on procuring “knowledge” or the “truth”

⁴⁷ Smith, *Conquest*.

⁴⁸ Sam Gill, “The Academic Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (Winter 1994): 965–975; Christopher Jocks, “American Indian Religious Traditions and the Academic Study of Religion: A Response to Sam Gill,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (Spring 1997): 169–76.

as a goal in and of itself. By contrast, she argues, within native communities, knowledge does not confer the right to communicate that knowledge to outsiders.

One of the major tenets of Western erudition is the belief that all knowledge is knowable. In the Cree world all knowledge is not knowable because knowledge is property in the sense that it is owned and can only be transmitted by the legitimate owner... You can't just go and take it, or even go and ask for it. Access to knowledge requires long-term commitment, apprenticeship, and payment. As a student of oral history, in the traditional sense, there is so much I have heard and learned yet so little I can speak or write about, because I have not earned the right to do so. I cannot tell anyone or write about most things because it has not been given to me. If I did it would be theft. So I'll probably be an Old Lady before I am allowed to pass it on. By then, I'll have learned all those rules of transmission and will probably feel impelled to keep it in the oral tradition and not write it down.⁴⁹

Sometimes, even tribal members are criticized for revealing too much information in their scholarship. In response, many tribal communities now place restrictions on the types of research that can be done in their communities. Some have set up their own tribal review boards for those seeking to do academic research.⁵⁰

Case Study

The changing spiritual practices of native peoples can be seen in the example of peoples from the Northern Plains tribes, particularly the Lakota and Dakota. Prior to World War II, the 1884 *Rules and Regulations of the Secretary of the Interior* outlawed most native ceremonies, including the Sun Dance, which is central to traditional native spiritual life in this region. The participation of the Lakota peoples in the Ghost Dance precipitated the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890.⁵¹ Children were routinely forced to attend Christian boarding schools, where they suffered sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. At the same time, many native peoples who became Christianized also became involved in advocacy for native people's rights. For instance, Charles Eastman, a Lakota physician and writer, was

⁴⁹ Winona Stevenson, "'Every Word Is a Bundle': Cree Intellectual Traditions and History," (1998), unpublished paper, 11–12.

⁵⁰ Devon Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln, NE, 1998).

⁵¹ C. Adrian Heidenreich, "Missionization, Northern Plains," in Suzanne J. Crawford and Dennis F. Kelley, eds., *American Indian Religious Traditions*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, CA, 1995), 537.

part of the Society of American Indians. These native Christian advocates often supported policies that could be seen as assimilationist (for instance, many opposed peyote practices), but they certainly organized to support the well-being of native peoples in other ways.⁵²

After John Collier entered office in the 1930s and began to end restrictions on native traditional spiritual practices, the Sun Dance was revived in 1938. Lakota and Dakota peoples also practice peyote traditions that were introduced into the region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵³ In addition, many Lakota and Dakota peoples became involved in reform within Christian denominations. As mentioned previously, the Dakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., was one of the most prominent activists who tried to build an all-native Christian denomination before he became disenchanted with Christianity. Many from Plains tribes were also active in developing the previously described Indian Ecumenical Conference. As the Red Power movement gained in prominence in the 1970s and began to call for a rejection of Christianity and a return to native traditions, much of this movement's work centered in the Dakotas. The siege at Wounded Knee took place on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and much of the work of Women of All Red Nations, the sister organization to the American Indian Movement, around environmental racism and sterilization abuse, was centered in the Dakotas. In addition, much of the organizing work addressing the legacy of boarding school abuses is centered in the Dakotas, for example, the Boarding School Healing Project, founded in South Dakota. Several of the most prominent native antiviolence programs (Cangleska, White Buffalo Calf Women's Shelter, and Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center) are based in South Dakota. One of the most prominent activists who sparked the movement for recovery from historic trauma, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, is also Lakota. The Lakota and Dakota have also been involved in one of the longest-standing sacred sites battles in U.S. history over the Black Hills. In 1851, the U.S. government signed the Treaty of Fort Laramie, which protected the Black Hills, a region central to the spiritual beliefs of many Plains-based tribes. However, when gold was discovered in the Black Hills, colonizers began to encroach illegally on the land until 1876, when the U.S. government formally seized it in violation of the 1851 treaty. The Lakota sued the United States, and the Supreme Court ruled in 1980 that while the seizure of the Black Hills was illegal, the land could not be returned. Instead, the Lakota were awarded approximately \$106 million. However, the Lakota

⁵² David Martinez, *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (St. Paul, MN, 2009).

⁵³ C. Adrian Heidenreich, "Missionization."

have refused this money because they do not wish to validate the theft of their lands.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

Because native spiritual traditions are generally specific to the lands from which they emerge, they are as diverse as native communities are themselves. Consequently, to summarize the plethora of spiritual traditions is virtually impossible. Native spiritual practices are also not separated from all other aspects of life. Consequently, the struggles to practice native spiritualities fundamentally impact all aspects of native life. Thus, as long as native nations continue to live under conditions of colonization, struggles around native religious and spiritual practice will continue as well.

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⁵⁴ Edward Lazarus, *Black Hills/White Justice: The Sioux Nation versus the United States: 1775 to the Present* (Lincoln, NE, 1999).

LATINA/O BORDERLAND RELIGIONS

LUIS LEON

On Easter Sunday 1966, César Chávez and a cadre of renegade priests, nuns, rabbis, and Protestant ministers celebrated ecumenical “mass” on the steps of California’s state capitol building in Sacramento for a crowd of ten thousand revolutionaries. When Chávez entered the capitol, he was leading several hundred “pilgrims” who had embarked on what they deemed a “peregrination,” or pilgrimage, both in the spirit of “penance” and as a “revolution.” In effect, his entrance set the path for Chicana/o civil rights: the movement to liberate Mexican Americans from the persistent effects of colonialism would have a spiritual grounding that was based largely – though not exclusively – in reimagined Catholic ideals, symbols, and doctrine. But, in addition, a reimagined Mesoamerican fantasy and both Protestant liberalism and Pentecostalism informed and shaped Chicano power. Yet by far it was Catholicism that loaded the cultural grab bag for Latinas/os who waged postcolonial liberation struggles across the Americas.

The annals of American history record a conflicted relationship between Chicanas/os and the Catholic Church, characterized by the dual impulses toward resistance and affirmation whereby, ironically, even the discourses of opposition are indelibly stamped by a Catholic moral imagination and worldview uncontainable within the boundaries of the catechism alone.¹ Chávez and other Latino political leaders deployed Christian – especially Catholic – narratives and symbols as a sometimes ironic strategy to gain moral terrain, begging the question of the extent to which Chicanismo was then and now a religious movement itself. Insofar as catechistic excess spills over hierarchical boundaries to create secular schisms – especially the Mexican American civil rights struggles – the borders between sacred and profane are blurred, and contests over material matters assume spiritual import, while the spiritual is materialized.

¹ See Mario T. Garcia, *Católicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History* (Austin, TX, 2008).

The Chicano historian Mario T. Garcia describes his own Catholic formation and how that has shaped his work, coining the term “political Catholic.” His professions are revelatory; he, like countless others, no doubt, was a “convert” to the movement, or perhaps a “revert”: “*Chicanismo* replaced Catholicism as my faith.”² Garcia has interpreted Mexican Americans’ using two primary designations instructive for what follows: the “Mexican American Generation” (1930–60) and the “Chicano generation” (1960–80). My focus is on Mexican American or Chicano religiosities, now counted as 70 percent of the more than forty million counted as the U.S. Latino population; to a lesser degree I consider also Latina/o religious experiences post 1965. These brief religious histories must be understood within a broader historical context and theoretical frame. My thesis is that from at least 1965 until the present, religiosity in the Chicana/o and Latina/o Americas has been marked by the intersection of religion and politics, the sacred and the profane, the material and the spiritual realms.

MESOAMERICA: PRELUDE TO THE BORDERLANDS

Mesoamerica is a fantasy first imagined as such by European colonialists and reimagined by scholars to designate a geographical space, but also to map a peculiar process of inventing and reimagining myths, symbols, and rituals. Geographically, Mesoamerica covers the southern two-thirds of mainland Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and parts of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.³ The term “Mesoamerica” also generates a conversation about the genealogies of hybrid religious narratives and practices emergent from the contact of Europe and indigenous worlds. In that sense, it signifies not only Mayan and Aztec origins, but also the Taino of the Caribbean and the Inca of South America, mainly in Peru. Though each tradition was fragmented by space, time, and language, when aggregated, they demonstrate remarkable similarities in their worldviews, myths, and rituals, suggesting contact among them. Similarly, contemporary religious formations extant throughout what is now Latin America demonstrate uncanny but undeniable overlap in practice with those that were developed and thrived in Mesoamerica prior to the arrival of Christianity and Christians. Take, for example, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico and the Americas. Of her historical significance, the historian of religions David

² *Ibid.*, 7.

³ See David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovision and Ceremonial Centers* (San Francisco, 1990; Boulder, CO, 1998); and Miguel Leon-Portilla, ed. and trans., *Native Mesoamerican Spirituality: Ancient Myths, Discourses, Stories, Doctrines, Hymns, Poems from the Aztec, Yucatec, and Quiche-Maya and Other Sacred Traditions* (New York, 1980).

Carrasco argues as follows: “The point is that the cult of Guadalupe, while strongly Catholic in meaning, also expresses an Indian sense of sacred space and worship of a goddess and her cults.”⁴

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the primary symbol of Mexican Catholic identity. According to this foundational myth of the mestizo Mexican people, on Saturday morning, 9 December 1531, a humble Aztec Indian, Cuauhtlatoatzin, known by his Christian name, Juan Diego, was visited by Mary, the Mother of God, at the hill called Tepeyac on the outskirts of Mexico City. Central to this myth is that the Virgin Mary spoke to Juan Diego in his native tongue, Nahuatl, and manifested herself in the form of a brown-skinned Indian. In this encounter between the Virgin, ostensibly of Spanish/European origin, and the Mexican Indian, two competing conceptualizations of time, space, and corporeality interfaced with each other and coalesced: a primordial sacred-human mix, or *mestizaje*. Henceforth, this meeting and its place have become central to the imagined communities of Mexico and Mexican Americans, and indeed to the greater Latin American borderlands.

Tepeyac is three miles north of the center of Mexico City; originally it was not within city limits but on the borders, although today the capital has swelled to envelop the hilly ritual complex. There a shrine existed to the Aztec mother goddess of sex and fertility, Tonantzin. It was during the winter solstice in December when Indian pilgrims traveled to venerate her shrine, offering gifts at her altar. By suspicious historical chance, Guadalupe’s official apparition falls near the time of the original pilgrimage. Skeptics argue that this temporal coincidence is far too great, and that the event was probably a Spanish plot to dupe the Indians into unwittingly performing Christian practices. The Guadalupe prototype continues to exist and is said to have been painted by the angel Gabriel upon the cape of Juan Diego. The image bears many native symbols. It hangs in the Guadalupe Basilica at Tepeyac, where millions of pilgrims visit each year. Indians continue to venerate her as Tonantzin. Guadalupe devotion is a borderland religious tradition, crossing, straddling, and blurring lines of religious demarcation. As such, it lends itself to the tactics and strategies of religious poetics in political struggles: fragments of her myth and image were deployed in many political struggles on both sides of the border.

Like Mesoamerica, the “borderlands” is a scholarly construction mapped both as a geography and as a discourse. The “Spanish borderlands” was coined by Herbert E. Bolton in a small book entitled *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (1921).⁵ Today the

⁴ Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 137.

⁵ Professor Herbert E. Bolton called his small book *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven, CT, 1921).

“borderlands” as a scholarly project rejects many of the premises of the original usage, particularly the myth of a master Spanish patriarchal heritage. “Borderlands” academic projects recover precolonial narratives, realities, and myths, in light of the combination and hybrid cultural matrix produced by contact and synthesis. Mesoamerica is central and formative to the borderlands.⁶

The establishment of the United States as sovereign nation and its expansion into and colonization of Mexico and the Caribbean have added a new cultural patina, further complicating the already dense, racially blended palimpsest. As a result, contemporary religious expression among people of Latin American origin, Latinas and Latinos on both sides of the United States–Latin America border – the *borderlands* – is a product of many historical collisions and social collusions – originally described in Mexico as *mestizaje*, or racial miscegenation, particularly Indian and Spanish. Mexican national mythology holds Mexicans are “mestizos,” or products of the European–American synthesis, insofar as Spanish colonialism interfaced and merged tensely with the indigenous Mesoamericas. In the Caribbean and on the eastern coast of South America, this religious matrix combined with the myths and realities of indigenous African traditions taken to Latin American shores by slavery to produce the radically innovative hybrid religions existing today. Borderland religion owes its origins to at least three main sources of religious tradition and innovation: the indigenous Mesoamericans, chiefly Maya, Inca, and Aztec; a primitive form of Spanish Catholicism, which ironically resembled the beliefs and expressions it sought to eradicate; and West African Yoruba rites and practices.

CATÓLICOS

Mexican American attitudes toward Catholicism were inflected by several historical processes, resulting mostly from a colonialism that shaped Latin America. These processes isolated people from urban centers of dogma. Moreover, linguistic differences demarcated distinct regions within Mexico, and many locales were outside each other’s spoken language; this condition added to the trauma of colonialism and rendered translating the idioms and idiosyncrasies of Renaissance Catholicism for a newly conquered population a lofty task indeed. Colonizers relied on performance, the tableau vivant – *living* images – to animate Christian mythologies. Natives, long accustomed to the human performance of cosmic drama, found the images compelling, even if they did not clearly understand them. Church and state

⁶ See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, [1987] 2007).

power were nearly inseparable during the colonial period, and as a result the poor developed animosities toward the Church, culminating eventually in the Mexican Revolution, a process indelibly stamping Mexican relations with Catholicism. In the United States, barriers of racialization and direct religious competition have added to the difficulties. As a result, in the words of Lawrence Mosqueda, "Given the contradictory signals that Mexicans have received from their church both in Mexico and the United States, it should not be surprising that many Mexicans have developed a strong attachment to the symbols and rituals of Catholicism, while developing a weak commitment to its institutional obligations."⁷

The patrimony of borderlands Catholicism is a dialectic between the laity as theologians and the clergy, between the institutional site, mostly the site of patriarchy (at least officially), and the home altar, site of matriarchy. At the home altar devotion to Guadalupe, women especially become their own religious specialists, creating formal political organizations and resisting and struggling against power in multiple ways.

CATHOLICISM, CÉSAR CHÁVEZ, AND CHICANA/O CIVIL RIGHTS

The postwar years witnessed a great deal of change for Chicanos in Los Angeles and across the country as Mexicans became predominantly urbanized and concomitantly suburbanized. Moreover, the ethnic Mexican community was increasingly United States-born. By 1950, ethnic Mexicans numbered some two hundred eighty thousand in Los Angeles County alone, which amounted to 7 percent of the total population, the largest minority group in the county. These people were overwhelmingly young, 62 percent of them less than thirty years old. Demographic changes profoundly impacted the religious and cultural expressions of Chicanos and changed their collective expectations. Prosperity defined American life, and increasingly Americans of Mexican descent wanted their share – especially those who had risked their lives overseas, fighting a war inspired by the lofty rhetoric of democracy and equality for all. Hence, the mutual-aid societies, radical labor organizations, and social and legal clubs prevalent in *mexicano* Los Angeles prior to the war gave way to a more militant brand of activism. Ethnic Mexicans no longer looked to Mexico exclusively for signs to direct cultural identity formation but adapted Mexican culture to the American context, and vice versa. A century had passed since the U.S. border crossed illegally into Mexico, and the new generation of

⁷ Lawrence J. Mosqueda, "Twentieth-Century Arizona, Hispanics, and the Catholic Church," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 9:1–1 (Winter–Spring 1990): 87–103, 90.

Mexican Americans fostered a consciousness that was distinctively Mexican American qua American.

If the older generation, including recently arrived immigrants, was caught up in their home devotional practices to Guadalupe, especially the home altar, and if mass attendance was low, what was the religious expression of young Chicanos? By 1965 Mexican Americans took their religious cues from the Mexican anticlerical tradition and the Mexican devotion to La Virgen especially as a sign and symbol of political struggle. They also revived ancient Mexican traditions. Chicanos were influenced by the general social unrest of the times, and especially by changes within the Catholic Church itself after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65).

The 1960s mark the beginning of what Garcia calls the “Chicano Generation.” Chicanismo was a cultural phenomenon unwittingly animated by César Chávez (1927–93), who crystallized the sentiments of Chicanos. In his advocacy of labor rights for Mexican Americans based on moral values, he became, in the words of Gary Soto, “a spiritual leader for all Chicanos.”⁸ He catalyzed the Chicano movement and unionized the Chicano Farm Workers.

The life and work of César Chávez illustrate the spirit and method of borderlands religions, emphasizing the political dimension – or the religious politics. Chávez, baptized and confirmed Catholic, deployed ancient Mexican images and narratives; prayed and organized with Pentecostals; followed Gandhi; regularly consulted a traditional Mexican spiritual healer, or *curandera*; and incorporated American religious elements in his political practice, especially the prophetic tradition of critiquing the hypocrisy of American Christians. His vision was based on European and Latin American models of “Catholic Action” that recognized Christian justice as total societal transformation that begins with the popular masses.

In 1993, at César Chávez’ funeral, Art Torres, chairman of the California state Democratic Party, spoke for millions of Latinas and Latinos when he declared that “[César Chávez] is our Gandhi, our Martin Luther King.” Many have publicly compared Chavez to King and Gandhi, from President Clinton to the Mexican norteno band Los Tigres del Norte, claiming the folk hero has a special place in heaven. Even while he is far less known than Gandhi and King, this comparison rings true when considering King’s influence on Chávez, and the influence of Gandhi on both King and Chávez. King and Chávez overlapped historically, and they shared a commitment to a strategy of nonviolent direct action. Both worked within their respective racial and religious milieu to articulate a theological response to racism and the postcolonial condition.

⁸ Gary Soto, in Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval, eds., *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (New York, 1997), xvi.

King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on Valentine's Day 1957; its expressed goal was to "redeem the soul of America." Chávez began organizing the Latino community in San Jose in 1952; he founded the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) on his birthday in 1962. In May 1969, Chávez met with a group of Chicano leaders in El Paso. One eyewitness account to that event recorded it as follows: "They were constructing a new spiritual reality around a man who, for the most part, just listened. Nobody said so, but many perceived Chávez as a spiritual rather than a political leader – a savior in their midst."⁹

A few years later, the poet Luis A. Solis-Garza published an essay in which the title asked rhetorically, "César Chávez: The Chicano Messiah?" He concluded, "To be sure, he has a certain messianic quality about him which draws people to him, and yet Chávez firmly denies being a great leader. Still, his following grows larger, and César Chávez's denial grows almost futile. In an age where the world offers little hope to people of all races, Chávez and his movement stand out."¹⁰

King's and Chávez' movements both unfolded against the backdrop of a rapidly decolonizing world. The practices and writings of Franz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Fidel Castro exhorted black and Latino men to seek spiritual fortification through a violent anticolonial revolution. Yet King and Chávez eschewed these admonitions and turned instead to Gandhi's religious philosophy of nonviolent resistance, Satyagraha. Chávez often recalled his debts to both King and Gandhi. In 1973 he wrote:

I had followed King's actions from the beginning of the bus boycott in Montgomery, when I was organizing the Community Service Organization, and he gave me hope and ideas. When the bus boycott was victorious, I thought then of applying boycotts to organizing the Union. Then every time something came out in the newspapers, his civil rights struggle would just jump out of the pages at me.

Although I met some of the people that were working with King and saw him on television, I never talked with him except on the phone. But Martin Luther King definitely influenced me, and much more after his death. The spirit doesn't die, the ideas remain. I read them, and they're alive.¹¹

In 1968, during Chávez' self-titled "spiritual love fast," King was in Los Angeles and had hoped to travel north 145 miles to visit Chávez. Reports claim that King was unable to make the trip because of scheduling

⁹ Richard Griswold del Castillo, *Cesar Chavez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman, OK, 1995), 140.

¹⁰ In Edward Simmen, ed., *Pain and Promise: The Chicano Today* (New York, 1972).

¹¹ Chávez quoted in Jacques Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York, 1975), 237.

conflicts. However, he planned to do so in the very near future. The two jointly announced plans for a national unity meeting in Washington on 22 April, where African Americans, Mexican Americans, and poor whites would gather. At the conclusion of Chávez' twenty-five-day love fast begun on 14 February of that same year, he received a telegram from Martin Luther King. It read:

As brothers in the fight for equality, I extend the hand of fellowship and good will and wish continuing success to you and your members. The fight for equality must be fought on many fronts – in the urban slums, in the sweat shops of the factories and fields. Our separate struggles are really one – a struggle for freedom, for dignity, and for humanity. You and your valiant fellow workers have demonstrated your commitment to righting grievous wrongs forced upon exploited people. We are together with you in spirit and in determination that our dreams for a better tomorrow will be realized.¹²

King understood that Chávez and he were kindred spirits whose simultaneous struggles were tied in a postcolonial web of racial exploitation.

The response to Chávez' fast was immediate and powerful, leading the *New York Times* to describe the UFW's struggle in November of that same year as "a civil rights issue" and "a quasi-religious cause." According to the *Times*, these events transformed the union into the cause, or "La Causa."¹³ Both Chávez' La Causa, and King's SCLC were transformed into quasi-religious movements, ecumenical Christian congregations open to people of all races, religions, and sexual identities deploying nonviolent strategies for political change. Both preached a religious poetics, but Chávez' was from the Latina/o borderlands. In fact, he measured his own redemption in terms of political change. He once confessed, "I said to myself, if I'm going to save my soul, it's going to be through the struggle for social justice."¹⁴

When César Chávez ended the first of his three public fasts in 1968, a message was read aloud – a revelation Chávez said he had received during his abstinence from food. It is illustrative of the politics of religious poetics:

Our struggle is not easy. Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful, and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something the rich do not own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as weapons. . . . We must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So it is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of [humanity] is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a

¹² Martin Luther King, Jr., Mar. 1968, reprinted in full in Levy, *Cesar Chavez*, 246.

¹³ Dick Meister, "La Huelga' Becomes 'La Causa,'" *New York Times*, 17 Nov. 1968.

¹⁴ César Chávez, in Levy, *Cesar Chavez*, 276.

totally non-violent struggle for justice. To be [human] is to suffer for others. God help us to be [human]!¹⁵

In 1968, Chávez elaborated on the vision he claimed to have received during this spiritual fast, published under the title “The Mexican-American and the Church.” The Church, he wrote, “is a powerful moral and spiritual force which cannot be ignored by any movement. Furthermore, it is an organization with tremendous wealth. Since the church is to be servant of the poor, it is our fault if that wealth is not channeled to help the poor in the world.” He summarized his position with regard to the Church in the conclusion of his essay.

The Catholic Charities agencies of the Catholic Church [have] millions of dollars earmarked for the poor. But often the money is spent for food baskets for the needy instead of for effective action to eradicate the causes of poverty. The men and women who administer this money sincerely want to help their brothers. It should be our duty to help direct their attention to the basic needs of the Mexican-Americans in our society ... which cannot be satisfied with baskets of food, but rather with effective organizing at the grass roots level. Therefore, I am calling for Mexican-American groups to stop ignoring this source of power. It is not just our right to appeal to the Church to use its power effectively for the poor, it is our duty to do so. ... Finally, in a nutshell, what do we want the Church to do? We don't ask for more cathedrals. We don't ask for bigger churches or fine gifts. We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us.¹⁶

Chávez' words bore directly on the Chicano activist and philosopher Ricardo Cruz (1943–93). Cruz founded a Mexican American group, who called themselves *Católicos por la Raza* (Catholics for the Race, hereafter CPLR). Cruz visited Chávez at Delano during the mystical leader's first spiritual fast. Sitting in a full lotus pose and weak from starvation, Chávez met with Cruz and instructed him to enlist the Church's support in Chicano struggles. As a result, Chávez' young devotee returned to begin organizing Chicanos in Los Angeles, focusing on gaining the support of the Church for Chicano struggles.

Católicos por la Raza (Catholics for the Race)

In November 1969 Cruz' newly established CPLR published and circulated a newspaper with Chávez' words appearing on its front page. “We do not want more Cathedrals but ask the Catholic Church to sacrifice with

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁶ César Chávez, “The Mexican-American and the Church,” *El Grito* 4 (Summer 1968): 215–18.

the people for social change.” The newspaper *La Raza* was distributed throughout Los Angeles. The statement was reissued by CPLR.

Cruz and CPLR tried persistently to meet with Cardinal James McIntyre of the Los Angeles Archdiocese to discuss ways the Church could involve itself in the life of the people. When their efforts were unavailing, CPLR organized a protest. The legendary story of the Christmas Eve protest at St. Basil’s Catholic Church in 1969 staged by the Chicano Catholic group that erupted into a violent melee is well known in Chicano letters and folklore. On Christmas Eve 1969, a group of three hundred Chicanos congregated under the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe for a prayer vigil/protest during midnight Mass at St. Basil’s Catholic Church on fashionable Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. The protesters marched with signs and bullhorns in front of the cathedral demanding that the Church fulfill Christ’s commitment to the poor. When they tried to enter the church, police dressed as ushers blocked their path. The crowd began shouting, “Let the poor people in,” while banging on the church doors. Ultimately, some of the more radical members made their way into the sanctuary to disrupt the Mass.

The pioneering work of CPLR, although unfolding within less than six months, drew national attention to the plight of Chicanos in Los Angeles and inspired and intersected with other Chicano Catholic movements for social justice. Meanwhile, in the borderlands spanning the tiny island of Puerto Rico and New York City, Latino Catholics were engaging in struggles to maintain their cultural dignity.

PUERTO RICAN CULTURE AS SACRAMENT

When Monsignor Robert Fox assumed the leadership of the office of Spanish American Catholic Action in 1963, he took special concern for the Puerto Rican population of New York City. In fact, in the words of Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, he transformed Puerto Rican culture into a kind of sacrament: “It was to be venerated as a sign of something sacred.” Fox argued that Puerto Ricans “did not need evangelization from the official church, because their own rich religious culture had kept them close to the church in spite of antiquated hierarchical traditions.” And if nurtured, “these values would blossom into the full practice of the faith.”¹⁷ This recognition and validation of Puerto Rican culture represented a significant shift in the Church’s attitudes toward not only Puerto Ricans in New York City, but also Latinos across the borderlands. However, these changes were

¹⁷ Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue: The Impact of the Puerto Rican Migration upon the Archdiocese of New York* (Notre Dame, IN, 1993), 151.

particularly acute for the high concentrations of Puerto Ricans throughout densely populated New York, or Nuyoricans.

Throughout the 1960s, parish structures around the five New York boroughs began remodeling their aims and structures. The ethnic national parish model inherited from the nineteenth century relegated twentieth-century Puerto Rican migrants to basement churches and second-class Catholic citizenship. Puerto Ricans began migrating to the mainland in 1898, following the Spanish American War, in which Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory. At the time, Puerto Rico was officially Spanish Catholic; however, as Anthony Stevens-Arroyo argues, the native Taíno traditions survived: "Colonization of the Caribbean produced a unique set of adaptations that permitted survival of native religion and culture through forms of syncretism." Stevens-Arroyo points to the ways the Catholic ritual calendar is formatted to follow the agricultural cycle that demarcated Taíno ceremonies, especially the 2 February ceremony commemorating Our Lady of Candelaria, celebrating the Feast of Purification. Taínos, too, celebrated at this time under the guiding spirit Bailrama, who watched over the clearing of the fields and the planting of yucca. Today the two ceremonies not only coincide in terms of calendar days, but also have the same motivation, harvesting and planting, and both have incorporated the ritual observances of the indigenous feast, including the ceremonial burning of small needles from the native maguay plant.¹⁸

In Puerto Rico, Catholic churches were first located in the colonial center, San Juan, which left the inner mountainous regions of the island a laboratory for religious experimentation as the difficult journey up into the island's interior bordered it from church orthodoxy. The region became a safe haven for fleeing African slaves. There, isolated from institutional eyes, at the crossroads of many worlds, nominal Catholicism mixed with Taíno and Yoruba traditions to produce the religious innovations characterizing the Caribbean borderlands – what Jaime Vidal calls "cultural Catholicism." This is a Catholic identity more characterized by circumspect observance of certain festivals than regular church attendance. It places emphasis on making godparents, or *compdrazago*, which extends the boundaries of kinship. As Vidal sees it, the Puerto Ricans who moved to New York, especially during the 1940s and 1950s, were keenly in touch with two traits of Catholicism: ritual and the miraculous.¹⁹

¹⁸ Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, "The Persistence of Religious Cosmvision in an Alien World," in Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Andres I. Perez y Mena, eds., *Enigmatic Powers: Syncretism with African and Indigenous Peoples' Religions among Latinos* (New York, 1995), 115–16.

¹⁹ Jamie Vidal, "Citizens yet Strangers: The Puerto Rican Experience," in Jay P. Dolan and Jaime R. Vidal, eds., *Puerto Rican and Cuban Catholics in the U.S., 1900–1965* (Notre Dame, IN, 1994), 67.

However, by the 1960s, as Diaz-Stevens reports, ministry to Puerto Ricans in New York had shifted its emphasis from “Americanization” and assimilation. Instead, it now had five central components. Three of the new mandates were key. The parishes themselves were no longer seen as national or territorial parishes, but as integrated communities with separate societies for the Spanish-speaking. The Institute of Intercultural Communication was to acculturate and integrate New York clergy in the Puerto Rican and Hispano community. Semiautonomous movements, such as the *Cursillo* and *La Riesta Patronal de San Juan Bautista*, offered Puerto Ricans a means to identify themselves and to celebrate their uniqueness as both Catholics and a *pueblo* (people).²⁰

Cursillos de Cristiandad began in the 1950s as a movement intended to draw Spanish men especially more firmly within the Catholic communion, changing men’s attitudes of disrespect toward or disinterest in the Church, which they viewed as simply a pastime for older women. In the United States, Hispanic *Cursillistas* were taken on a weekend retreat where the men were expected to have a personal encounter with Christ and an emotional experience with other Latino Catholic men, thereby making Catholicism personal and meaningful. César Chávez was also a *Cursillista*. By 1960, *Cursillos* were developed for Latinas. Puerto Ricans became involved more emotionally with the church as an institution through these fiestas.

Also, celebration of traditional Puerto Rican ceremonies drew Nuyoricans closer to the church. *La Fiesta de San Juan Bautista* marks the national Puerto Rican feast day in honor of St. John the Baptist. Celebrated on 24 June, during the 1960s in New York the festival was transformed to become the *Fiesta de la Comunidad Hispana*, intending to broaden the ceremony into an ecumenical pan-Latino celebration. Some complained that the medieval pageantry and ritual were purged from the devotion in favor of a manufactured interethnic Latino identity that had politics as its central message, especially the issue of Puerto Rican independence.

While Puerto Ricans remain sharply divided over the issue of independence for the island, Puerto Ricans of many faiths coalesced into one moral crusade to stop the bombing of the tiny coastal Puerto Rican island of Vieques. Central to the populist efforts to end U.S. naval operations there was the formation of the Ecumenical Coalition of Churches for Vieques in 1999, uniting Catholic and Protestant churches. On 19 April of that same year, David Sanes, a local resident, was killed after a jet mistakenly dropped two 500-pound bombs. This incident became a cause célèbre, drawing together not only religious groups across the island, but also across the U.S. Latino borderlands. The result was, on 1 May, “after sixty

²⁰ Diaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism*, 147.

years of military control, land expropriations, and bombing practices, the Republican administration of George W. Bush ordered the United States navy to cease operations on the island of Vieques.”²¹

LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN THE BORDERLANDS: POLITICAL CATHOLICS AND COMMUNITY PRIESTS

In 1968 Latin American bishops met in Medellín, Colombia, to articulate a theology that would respond to the mass suffering of the vast majority of Latin Americans. They emerged with a series of teachings that have become the heart and soul of the theology of liberation, resulting first in the publication of Gustavo Gutierrez' *A Theology of Liberation* in 1970. Since then many texts and practices have emerged that follow the teaching that the Bible must be read in light of the poor and the oppressed because the gospel represents Christ incarnate as a colonial peasant. The historical Jesus, who was crucified for sedition against the Roman imperial state, exemplifies the Christian mandate for a revolutionary response to the continuing evil of colonialism. The Latin American bishops articulated and condemned what they called “institutional sin” whereby not only individuals but institutions also sin inasmuch as they are culpable for massive deprivation and suffering across Latin America. Liberation theologians developed a prophetic discourse that read gospel revelation in light of social inequities, particularly the inequitable distributions of wealth and misery. As a result, during the 1990s, Pope John Paul II shut down seminaries in Latin America for fear that liberation theology was promoting Marxism and Communism.

Nonetheless, the theology of liberation continues to inspire revolutionary practices across the borderlands; yet it is not unique in its conflation of religion and politics. Borderlands religions each employ a prophetic voice and political practice. Medellínian and Los Angeles are now two nodal points mapping the impact of liberation theology. In Los Angeles, the impact of liberation theology was felt as early as 1970. That year witnessed the founding of PADRES, an acronym for Padres Asociados para los Derechos Religiosos, Educativos, y Sociales (Fathers associated for religious, educational, and social rights). This is an organization of Chicano priests. In 1971 Las Hermanas (The sisters), an organization of Chicana and Latina nuns, was founded. Both of these groups were national but made significant and lasting contributions to Chicano Catholicism in Los Angeles.

²¹ Lester McGrath-Andino, “Intifada: Church-State Conflict in Vieques, Puerto Rico,” in Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, eds., *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States* (New York, 2005), 272.

PADRES was officially started at its first national conference in Tucson, with delegates from twelve states. Foremost on PADRES' agenda was the call for the first Chicano bishop and other issues concerning grassroots political and social activism. Las Hermanas, in the words of Lara Medina, "brought the Chicano political movement into the Catholic church."²² In August 1973, Las Hermanas met in Los Angeles, and the meeting broke up when most of the sisters drove to Delano to attend a mass for César Chávez and the striking farm workers. Through their individual work, Las Hermanas wrought changes in parishes in East Los Angeles, most notably through the work of Rosa Marta Zárate, Lucy Barron, and Teresita Basso. Today, Las Hermanas continues their activism.

Father Juan Romero, an East Los Angeles parish priest and formerly an active member of the now-defunct PADRES, explains that in addition to their social and political work, PADRES promoted a liberation theology and its scriptural hermeneutic that made central the mandate to be involved with the poor and oppressed who have great need. The PADRES organization challenged people to "free themselves from one's own selfishness," while raising what they deemed Christ's preference for the poor.²³ Romero and other Los Angeles Catholics preached and practiced liberation theology in their Chicano parishes and thus laid the groundwork for the spiritual discourse that defined Chicano Catholic activism in the city during the 1980s and can still be found in some parishes today.

The 1970s was a pivotal time for Latino Catholicism in Los Angeles and beyond. The Church responded with special programs for them, including the Cursillo movement and the national and international *encuentros*, which were large-scale stadium meetings and often charismatic masses by and for Latino laity and clerics. The charismatic renewal movement in the Catholic Church was introduced directly into Los Angeles in 1972 with the founding of Carisma en Misiones by Marilyn Kramar. Also in 1972, Sister Karen Boccadero of the Franciscan order founded Self-Help Graphics, a Chicano art collective in East Los Angeles. The center institutionalized the relation between Mexican Catholic aesthetics and Chicano art.

Additionally, the founding of PADRES and Las Hermanas directly preceded the formation of a parish-based East Los Angeles populist group called the United Neighborhood Organization, referred to as UNO. It coalesced in 1977, patterning itself after the San Antonio group Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS). UNO's first victory was a dramatic

²² See Laura Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, 2005).

²³ See Edward Martinez, *PADRES: The National Chicano Priest Movement* (Austin, TX, 2005).

public spectacle at the expense of the California automobile insurance industry, which was charging East Los Angeles residents inflated rates based on discriminatory practices. Today, Catholicism in East Los Angeles with women at the center is delimited by a series of movements and exchanges, an uneven matrix of dialectics formed among home devotional practices, the Catholic institution, and a populist politics of social justice.

Another community of organic intellectuals and poets, the Latina Catholic activists, base themselves in the Pico-Aliso housing projects just east of downtown Los Angeles – reportedly the largest projects in the United States and among the most dangerous. These women call themselves the *Comité pro Paz* (Committee in favor of peace) and are involved in numerous grassroots projects, including feeding the homeless and engaging in educational efforts and job training for youth, but above all aiming to stop gang violence. They have wrenched the gospel out of its rarified centers of interpretation and meet regularly to reflect on it, to make it meaningful to their lives and to the lives of their children and their neighbors. They operate on the Latin American model of liberation theology, *comunidades de base*, or base communities, which entrusts the people to reflect constructively on Christ's message, and to take ritual action in light of their conversations.

Liberation theology was also the inspiration for the sanctuary movement across the American borderlands during the 1980s and into the late 1990s. Beginning in Arizona and California, churches began announcing themselves to be official sanctuaries for the refugees fleeing the interne-cine revolutions and political persecutions in Central America. Religious houses of worship opened their doors for the asylum seekers, offering them food, shelter, and legal protection. The Reagan administration refused to grant political asylum to Salvadorans or Guatemalans, as they were from dictatorships friendly to the United States. One by one Christian churches and synagogues declared themselves official sanctuaries, offering safe haven to beleaguered Central American migrants. By 1990 nearly one million Central Americans had crossed the northern international border, finding approximately four hundred and fifty religious houses, two states, and twenty-eight cities declared official sanctuaries. This movement is credited for effecting changes in the immigration laws favoring Central Americans by 1997. The sanctuary movement also catalyzed an ecumenical and pan-Latino religious revival.

Father Luis Olivares declared his downtown Los Angeles La Placita Church an official sanctuary on 12 December 1985, the feast day for the Virgin of Guadalupe, for refugees from all parts of Latin America, catalyzing a movement that proved essential for the emergence of a pan-Latino identity. At Olivares' funeral in 1992, César Chávez spoke of "Father Louie"

with great affection. Chávez had inspired Olivares, and vice versa. Olivares was a Chicano priest, liberation theologian, leader in the immigrant sanctuary movement, and pastor of La Placita Church for ten years, beginning in 1981. Before taking La Placita, Olivares advanced to the presidency of PADRES in 1979. From his downtown pulpit, Olivares' homilies resonated across the borderlands. "Father Louie," as he was known, articulated an ethics of sanctuary based in classical understandings of God's kingdom, interpreted through liberation theology, in which "fidelity" to God's laws and kingdom eclipsed commitment to unjust earthly laws. His was a movement of peaceful civil disobedience.

Liberation theologians have been torn between the ideals of active non-resistance, preached by César Chávez, and the mandate for a spiritual rejuvenation through armed anticolonial revolutionary struggle advanced by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara – all of whom became Chicano icons. The revolutionary symbols, rhythms, and discourses of Cuba became central to the spiritual imaginary of the borderlands.²⁴

THE CARIBBEAN BORDERLANDS

When Fidel Castro advanced to power on the heels of the Cuban revolution in 1959, his ascension speech was marked by what many understood as a Santería miracle. As Fidel addressed the cheering throngs of supporters from a microphoned platform, doves landed on his shoulders. Even while the Castro revolutionary guard declared itself Marxist and atheist, the revolution itself was fraught with the symbolism of Santería. Revolutionaries made their base camp in the town of Oriente – a haven for former slaves and a nucleus of indigenous religion on the island. Castro and his army took La Habana on 1 January, which, on the Catholic calendar, signifies el Santo Nino de Athocha; for Santeros, it is the celebration for the Orisha avatar, Ellegua, the messenger and trickster. Rebels adorned themselves with Santería beads in warrior colors – red and black.

Santería is perhaps the most identifiable discrete religious system to emerge from colonialism. Colonial Cuban elites cared little for the spiritual condition of their African slaves, as the Catholic institution on the island commanded only cursory attention from the modernist-leaning capitalists bent on earning earthly fortunes rather than eternal salvation. Yet the Church was paid symbolic mind, and African "idols" were banned from public Cuban space in the nineteenth century in favor of Christian idols. As a result, African deities were assigned Christian images and narratives

²⁴ See especially, George Mariscal, "Tu Querida Presencia," in *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement*, 1965–1975 (Albuquerque, NM, 2005), 97–139.

in a grand counterhegemonic sleight of hand to bring into being what is now a postcolonial religious masquerade.

Cubans, considered the first wave of immigrants, began carrying Santería to U.S. shores en masse immediately after the revolution. Today Cuban Americans number more than one and a quarter million. The clash between Santería and American religions emerged fully in 1987 in the city of Hialeah, Florida, when Ernesto Pichardo announced plans to open the first Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, a Santería temple. Soon more than five thousand people signed a petition demanding that the city of Hialeah prevent the church from opening, citing the sacrifice of animals as the main objection. City officials responded by passing an ordinance prohibiting cruelty to animals aimed at derailing the church's opening. Pichardo opened the temple, nonetheless, and litigated the ordinance up to the Supreme Court, which decided favorably for Santería in a 1993 unanimous decision.

In 1999, on Thanksgiving Day, the arrival of five-year-old Elian Gonzalez seemed to mark a new era for diaspora Cubans, who formed what the Cuban-born ethicist Miguel de la Torre dubs a "political religion" based on the hatred of Fidel Castro. The story of Elian's miraculous survival after he fell from a capsized boat fleeing Cuba, an overturning that killed his mother, produced a belief in the child as a Messiah figure who would lead an anti-Castro revolt. Cubans of all faiths congealed around their belief that Castro was the devil, and Elian the savior. In the words of de la Torre, Elian's "story illustrates how religion, politics, and power merge within the Miami Exilic community," and indeed across the Latino borderlands.²⁵

When Pope John Paul II visited Cuba in January 1998, Santeros voiced their desire for him to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Santería religion. The pope did not mention Santería by name. Instead, he made a general statement acknowledging "people of all good faiths." Still, it was during that visit that Pope John Paul II crowned Cuba's most venerated Madonna from the southeastern coastal mining town of Santiago del Prado, now Cobre. There in 1608, two Taíno brothers, Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyas, and a ten-year-old African slave, Juan Moreno (John Black), were gathering salt off the coast when stormy weather struck, causing them to camp overnight. Come daybreak, they sailed into calm seas, where they saw a white bundle floating in the water. It was a small statue of the Virgin Mary, carrying the Christ Child in her right hand, and a gold cross in the other. She floated on a board bearing the inscription "Yo soy la Virgen de la

²⁵ Miguel de la Torre, *La Lucha for Cuba: Religion and Politics on the Streets of Miami* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 1.

Caridad" [I am the Virgin of Charity]. Key to this poetic narrative is that the statue was entirely dry, despite having emerged from the ocean (the Orisha, Oshun).

During colonial times, the church in El Cobre was dedicated to Santiago, St. James, the powerful patron of the Spanish conquest. So the statue of the Virgin was placed in a thatched hut instead of in the church. But on three successive nights, according to the myth, the statue disappeared from the hut and was found on top of the hill above El Cobre. *Nuestro Senora de la Caridad* resided in several small shrines until 1630, when the copper mine was closed and the slaves were released. It was in that revolutionary moment when she deposed Santiago and assumed her place above the high altar in the church, a triumphant emblem of the agency of the oppressed people over the Spanish conquerors.

Spanish slavery on Cuba did not cease officially until 1886, and Caridad is credited for her political prowess, especially inasmuch as she aided the slaves in their struggle for liberty. Her shrine quickly became a thriving pilgrimage site for devotees of the goddess Ochun. Pilgrims cross many borders in their devotion to her as she represents, if only in the mind of believers, the *mestizaje* of African and Catholic faith now discretely Cuban, but nonetheless a borderlands religion in practice.

In 1916, the pope visited the shrine of the Virgin of Charity and declared her the patron saint of Cuba. El Cobre Basilica was built to house her in 1927. *Nuestro Senora de la Caridad* continues to represent border crossing. Consider the common objects left at the shrine in more recent times, including replicas of rafts representing safe journeys to America and photos of activists who have been imprisoned by Castro's government. Perhaps most impressive in this regard is the Marxist-atheist wall separating church from state as many members of the Communist Party regularly present gifts or offerings to her.

Devotees also gift her in Miami at her shrine on the shores of Biscayne Bay, on the border between the exilic Cuban community and their imagined spiritual homeland. In 1973 a conical shrine was erected there, *Ermita de la Caridad*, where she connects and divides Catholicism from Santería, the diaspora from the homeland, and Cuban exilic religious practitioners from their Euroamerican counterparts, who barely know the hermitage exists. Santería devotees venerate *La Caridad de Cobre* as the Christian face of Oshun, the orisha who is the goddess of the sea.

When John Paul visited Mexico in 2002 to canonize the native Mexican Indian Juan Diego, together with the Mexican president Vicente Fox he submitted to a "spiritual cleansing" by a traditional Mexican healer, a *curandera*, and thereby acknowledged the ritual and spiritual impact that indigenous traditions have on Latino Catholicism.

Santeria is remarkably similar to *curanderismo* inasmuch as it combines ancient indigenous spiritual healing traditions with colonial style Catholicism. The term *curanderismo* is from the Spanish verb *curar*, “to heal” or “to cure.” Across the borderlands, *curanderismo* signifies a wide variety of community-based curing traditions organized around charismatic and prophetic healers. In contemporary Latina/o communities, Santeria and *curanderismo* are often practiced in tandem and become nearly indistinguishable. On the eastern coasts of Brazil and Venezuela, African-origin Santeria is known as *candomble* and has adapted many elements of the more Aztec, Maya, and Inca artifacts found in *curanderismo*. (In the French Caribbean and its diaspora, the Africanized Catholicism is vodun.) *Espiritistas* (Mexican spiritists) share beliefs with *espiritualistas* regarding communication with spirits, clairvoyance, and divine healing. The president of Mexico Francisco I Madero (1873–1913) was an avowed *Espiritista*. The pantheon of religions found throughout the borderlands blends Indian and Christian practices; this inclination for mixing is especially apparent during the Days of the Dead.

DAYS OF THE DEAD

Days of the Dead coincides with the Catholic All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days – an occurrence forged from out of the bonds of colonialism. During the ceremony for *Días de Los Muertos*, special altars are constructed in the home, and food is taken to the dead at the cemetery, where families commune with their loved ones, in spirit or materialized, in all-night vigils. According to David Carrasco, “The central idea is that during this period of public and private (family) rituals the living and dead family members and friends are joined together in an atmosphere of communion and spiritual regeneration.”²⁶

During the Chicano movement, artists revived the Days of the Dead, taking the belief across the border to celebrate and affirm Chicano identity. The ceremony continues to cross borders and is today celebrated widely by diverse groups within the United States, including practitioners of Santeria. According to one recent interpreter of the tradition within the United States, Days of the Dead exemplifies “‘politics by other means,’ in which longstanding forms of cultural devaluation and exclusion are challenged by utilizing traditional forms of social solidarity to create alternative public spheres.”²⁷ Lara Medina and Gilbert Cadena have documented

²⁶ Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 142.

²⁷ Regina M. Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the U.S.A.: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2009), 137.

the Days of the Dead ceremonies in Los Angeles, citing them as a way in which Chicanos and Chicanas empower themselves by reclaiming indigenous traditions.²⁸

Similarly, Lara Medina has argued that many Chicanas find fresh stores of energy by rejecting patriarchal forms of Christianity; these women

(re)turn to an *indigena-inspired* spirituality, learn to trust their own senses and bodies, recreate traditional cultural practices, and look to non-Western philosophies – all of which offers us a (re)connection to our selves, our spirits, and to the ongoing process of creating *nuestra familia*. . . . Chicanas venturing into often undefined spiritual arenas continue a tradition of religious agency as lived by many of our *antepasados* . . . *consejeras*, *curanderas*, *rezadores*, *espiritualistas*, and even *comadres*, still practicing their healing ways in spite of, in lieu of, or in conjunction with the sacraments and teachings offered by the Christian churches.²⁹

Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions in particular have offered millions of Chicanos and Latinos spiritual healing through a discourse of Christianity.

PROTESTANTISM IN THE BORDERLANDS

Protestant missionaries began arriving in Latin America during the nineteenth century, while ministering to lapsed and otherwise nominal Catholic Latina and Latino communities across the U.S. Southwest. Today, all of the main denominational churches have Latina and Latino Spanish-speaking branches, the most successful of them the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists.³⁰ In the United States, Protestantism in general accounts for about 25 percent of the millions of Latinas and Latinos counted. Of this proportion, *evangélico* and Pentecostal churches account for the most growth in recent years, and for the majority Latina and Latino Protestant population.

While the findings of the most recent demographic profiles of Latino religions vary, Catholics still represent the largest religious identity at about 68 percent generally. As opposed to Latino Catholics, Latino Protestants tend to speak English as their first language, tend to vote Republican, and are

²⁸ Lara Medina and Gilbert R. Cadena, “Días de los Muertos: Public Ritual, Community Renewal, and Popular Religion in Los Angeles,” in Timothy Matovina and Gary Riebe-Estrella, eds., *Horizons of the Sacred: Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism* (Ithaca, 2002).

²⁹ See Lara Medina, “Los Espíritus Siguen Hablando: Chicana Spiritualities,” in Carla Trujillo, ed., *Living Chicana Theory* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 189–213.

³⁰ See Paul Barton, *Hispanic Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in Texas* (Austin, 2006).

more frequently American born. Independent evangelical and Pentecostal churches speak directly to the needs of the American-born Latinos.³¹

Exemplary in this regard is Victory Outreach, founded in East Los Angeles in 1967 as an outreach ministry to Chicano gang members. It now describes itself as an “inner-city” ministry and is known informally as the “junkie church” because of its special mission to drug addicts, undocumented immigrants, and other societies. Each church supports at least one drug-rehabilitation home for males, and most also support a home for women. The organization has its twenty-acre headquarters east of Los Angeles, in La Puente.

Of all Protestant churches, the *evangélicos*, somewhat ironically, are closest to the native and postcolonial traditions of the Americas. Pentecostal churches especially share spiritual logics and religious practices with traditional postcolonial religions, especially direct spiritual engagement and religious healing. Additionally, the narrative of dejection and the drama of becoming “born again,” so central to *los evangélicos*, is strikingly akin to the discourses of Guadalupe devotion and pilgrimage, or to healing testimonials from devotees to *curanderismo* or *espiritualismo*.

In Latin America, *evangélicos* have been accused of colluding with oppressive regimes, as in Guatemala, and of having an other-worldly focus that obviates the need to work for social justice in the here and now. The 1976 Guatemalan earthquake shook open the flood gates so that a tsunami of evangelical missionaries drowned the tiny unindustrialized republic. From 1980 to 1982, Guatemala hosted the first self-professed *evangélico* president, Efraín Ríos Montt (b. 1926), who was installed by the military by way of a violent coup. Other Central American republics followed Guatemala and began promoting evangelical campaigns. *Evangélico*/Pentecostal theology and its attendant rituals of intense spiritual ecstasy palliate social dissatisfaction and blunt the revolutionary force of economic privation by their ability to render injustice a normal part of God’s order.

Even while the *evangélico* religious experience mystifies vast economic and political disparities with promises of rewards either in this life or in the next, some argue that Pentecostal practice is liberating, especially insofar as the narrative of redemption and the drama of becoming “born again” lead believers to the miracle of their own divine election. When a Latino converts from Catholicism to Pentecostalism, he is instantiated

³¹ For the most recent religious demography on Latinos, see Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, “American Religious Identity Survey 2008,” Trinity College (Web publication) (available at www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_briefs/aris/aris_index.htm); and Robert Suro et al., “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion,” Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (Web publication) (available at <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=75>).

into a script with cosmic significance. He is therefore less inclined to suffer mistreatment and injustice. Moreover, advocates plead, *evangélicos* teach total sobriety and prohibit vices that are detrimental to the economy of the nuclear family. Thus, household finances improve, and redemption occurs by way of the Protestant ethic.

Still more, promoters of the *evangélico* gospel critique the ongoing presence of a colonial Christian church oceans removed from the barrios. Small, family-owned and operated *evangélico* churches enable lay leadership and entrepreneurial opportunity while providing a community forum. These churches are often based in people's homes or in buildings long abandoned that have been restored by a congregation to add renewed life to a community, responding to the needs of the community in fresh and organic ways. Academics have also documented the ways that Latina and Latino Pentecostal churches have organized to fight injustice using traditional civic venues.³²

Critics charge that the *evangélico*/Pentecostal tradition is a contemporary form of an ancient colonialism. And yet, despite its potential to mystify and nullify revolution, it has become thoroughly indigenized, and as such the elements of it that are consistent with a Latin American religious sensibility have been emphasized, including its power to galvanize masses of the oppressed in prophetic and political movements, spiritual healing, gifting, sacralizing space and time, and respecting the religious leadership of women. In short, it lends itself to the practices of borderlands religious poetics.³³

CONCLUSION: BEYOND MESTIZAJE – REMAPPING THE BORDERLANDS

Drawing from a pool of interviews conducted by students in Chicano studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Mario Garcia's student ethnographic interviews describe in graphic imagery the religious practices and beliefs of their Latino relatives, bringing fully to bear the historical connections across generations. The student narratives reveal that "religion, in this case Catholicism, has been and still is a way for Chicanos

³² See Daniel Ramirez, "Public Lives in America Hispanic Churches: Expanding the Paradigm," and Elizabeth D. Rios, "The Ladies Are Warriors": Latina Pentecostalism and Faith-Based Activism in New York City," in Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, eds., *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States* (New York, 2005), 177–219.

³³ See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, 2005), and Luis Leon, *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the United States–Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

and other Latinos to defend their integrity and honor as a people and as a way to defend their very being.”³⁴ But contemporary Chicana/o and Latina/o religion is moving well beyond the traditional *mestizaje* paradigm into fresh forms of religious synthesis. Latina/o traditions are finding new expressions within the larger American society.

Take, for example, the 1987 Harmonic Convergence. One of the principal organizers of the Harmonic Convergence event was José Argüelles. According to Argüelles’ interpretation of Mayan cosmology, the selected date marked the end of twenty-two cycles of fifty-two years each, or 1,144 years in all. The twenty-two cycles were divided into thirteen “heaven” cycles, which began in C.E. 843 and ended in 1519, when the nine “hell” cycles began, ending 468 years later in 1987. Thousands of seekers from all cultures and faiths gathered atop mountains to celebrate the event in spiritual expectation generated by a Latin American prophecy.

Religious exchanges between Latinos and the larger American society are more commonplace today than in previous eras. Latinas and Latinos are now counted among practitioners of Asian religious traditions, and enumerated also among the “no religion” group in figures that parallel those of the majority United States society. Perhaps of great import in today’s political climate is the conversion of U.S. Latinos to the Islamic faith. In 1997 the Latino American Dawah Organization published the first edition of the longest-running online newsletter for Latino Muslims, the *Latino Muslim Voice*. Though circulation information is not available, the paper continues to grow even today. In 2009 the film *New Muslim Cool*, directed by Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, depicted the life of Hamza Perez (formerly Jason Perez), a young man who converted to Islam from Catholicism while abandoning his addiction to and selling of illegal drugs. A Puerto Rican who was raised in Catholic churches and schools, he produces hip hop records extolling the virtues of his new faith.

Latinos are exposed to an American form of Islam while in jail. Take, for example, Jose Padilla, born in 1970 in Brooklyn and raised in Chicago. During his teen years he joined the Maniac Latin Disciples street gang. During a rumble he killed a man and was convicted of aggravated assault and manslaughter while still a juvenile. In prison he converted to Islam, eventually changing his name simply to “Ibrahim.” In 2002 he was arrested upon his return from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. He was detained for involvement with the 9/11 attacks in New York, under the title “material witness,” but no formal charges were brought. Instead, he was held in military custody under the title “enemy combatant.”

³⁴ Garcia, *Católicos*, 281.

In 2005, Padilla was indicted in federal court for “conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim people overseas.” The following year he was transferred to a civilian jail in Miami where the case was held. Padilla claimed he was tortured in prison, and that set off a series of investigations on his mental competency to stand trial. After conflicting expert opinions were rendered, he was deemed fit for trial. He was convicted of all charges on 22 January 2008 and given a sentence of seventeen years. He is serving his time in the supermax federal prison in Florence, Colorado.

The phenomenon of Latino conversion to Islam demonstrates the newly minted generation of borderlands seekers who resist being defined by traditional *mestizaje* categories but continue the process of religious invention at the intersections of religions, cultures, and political practice. Today Latino religious classifications are increasingly meaningless; the new borderlands are without limits.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN AMERICA

J. GORDON MELTON

Through the last decades of the twentieth century, Americans became aware of a bewildering array of new and unfamiliar religious groups that had taken up residency in the country. The heightened level of diversity and the country's tolerance of minority, unusual, and even questionable forms of religiosity were accompanied by a public controversy concerning the legitimacy of some of these religious groups, which were charged with recruiting members using psychological techniques that subverted free will. Amid the controversy, following several incidents of violence, the new religions tested the limits of what the public would countenance under the guarantees of religious freedom and what legal authorities would countenance under their broad definitions of "religion."

By the end of the century, as the dust settled on the public controversy over brainwashing and mind control in questionable religious groups, the scholarly community had become aware that North America had become the home to some two thousand different religious communities that represented the broad spectrum of the world's religions. Even as words of alarm spread over the new American pluralism, however, the dominant Christian community grew spectacularly, almost doubling in size through the last half of the twentieth century. About half of the two thousand religious groups in America were simply variants of familiar Christian denominations.¹

In spite of the continued Christian hegemony in North America, American religion changed dramatically in the decades following World War II. Century-long trends culminated in a reorganization of the religious power structures, and integral to that reorganization was the establishment

¹ The development of this new pluralism was tracked in the various editions of the *Encyclopedia of American Religions* authored by J. Gordon Melton between 1979 and the present. For a survey of all two thousand groups currently active in North America, see the latest edition, released as Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit, 2009).

of significant, vocal minority religious communities and a new organized and aggressive community of unbelievers that demanded to be heard.

CHRISTIAN DIVERSITY

To understand the rise of so many new religions in America, it is necessary to develop some perspective on America's religious mainstream, which provided the context in which they emerged. The United States was formed in large part from Europe's castoffs. People facing the least chances of economic betterment at home braved the Atlantic voyage to find possible opportunities. Those least connected to the social order immigrated to the colonies looking for a new home.

The American Revolution pulled the rug from under the religious community and largely put it on its own to manage its life, to gather members from the continuous flow of immigrants, and to locate financial resources. Some groups were better prepared to deal with life separated from state regulations and financial support. Religious leaders also saw how little public support they really had. Of the ten million citizens in the new United States, fewer than 10 percent were church members. The history of nineteenth-century American religion is essentially the story of the Christian denominations setting out to build a new Christian culture and their "churching" the ever-expanding country. Membership recruitment consistently stayed ahead of population growth, and the percentage of church members in the population steadily increased. By the end of the nineteenth century it was above 30 percent, and by World War II it finally hit 50 percent.

As American Christianity grew, however, lacking government restraints on schism, the church community splintered. The fifteen denominations at the nation's beginning became one hundred, and then more than three hundred (1900), and then more than five hundred (1945). Methodists and Baptists were the early winners, but when they split in the 1840s, the Roman Catholic Church emerged as the largest single denomination, a position it has never relinquished. Throughout the twentieth century, the number of new Christian denominations grew steadily decade by decade with whole new forms of church life emerging to prominence as a result of the Calvinist-based evangelical fundamentalist movement and the Methodist-based Pentecostal movement.

But there were limits to what Americans would tolerate. Even as the splintering continued, the majority of American Christians responded to the entreaties to put aside sectarian differences and merge duplicated resources. At least within closely related denominational families, large-scale mergers produced a new religious establishment. By the end of the

twentieth century, with two thousand options to choose among, more than half of the American public had joined a mere twenty-three Christian denominations. These churches represented the spectrum of the Christian community from its most conservative to its most liberal.²

These twenty-three denominations now largely dictate the religious culture of America, and their role is bolstered by an additional seventy-five Christian churches with 100,000+ members who identify with them. Together, these churches form the mainstream of American religion, set the debate on religious issues in the public square, and provide the image to which Americans refer when they discuss religion.

ENLARGING THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

During its first two centuries, America's religious mainstream contended with only one non-Christian community, the small Jewish community originally consisting of a few thousand adherents and a mere six synagogues. These synagogues defined the very limits of religious tolerance in the colonies.³ Over the next centuries, as it grew and diversified, the Jewish community fought for a broadened tolerance of its role in American life and then demanded a place at the religious establishment's table, a place it would finally attain in the last half of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile two other nineteenth-century groups would battle for a wider vision of religious life in America. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pushed out of the country in the 1840s, reestablished itself in the West, only to have the country overwhelm it. Latter-day Saint behavior patterns would exceed the boundaries of American religious tolerance. While accepting differences of religious belief that would be almost absolute, Americans agreed that offensive behavior would be subject to sanctions. The Latter-day Saints made the required adjustments and returned in force. In the post-World War II era, they would become one of the largest religious groups in the country and while still knocking on the door of the religious establishment, find broad acceptance in the public square, especially the political sphere, where Latter-day Saint politicians could become viable candidates for the highest office in the land.

Taking another course were the Jehovah's Witnesses, a separatist group that while awaiting the end of the world merely asked to be left alone to

² See J. Gordon Melton, *Nelson's Handbook of Denominations* (Nashville, TN, 2007).

³ The religions of the several hundred Native American peoples were almost totally neglected in the story of the development of American religion. The Christian community saw them as headed for annihilation and as primary targets for evangelism. Today, Native Americans are overwhelmingly Christians.

share their message with whoever chose to listen and respond to it. Their separatist policies (refusing to recognize the government by saluting its flag or serving in its armed forces) and their aggressive proselytizing would land them in the courts, where they consistently won and in the process raised the level of what Americans would tolerate and then accept as a new norm for religious community.

Thus while the American Christian community was reaching its goal of mobilizing a majority, and even a supermajority, of the American public, its position as the mainstream was being challenged as millions of Jewish believers and Latter-day Saints asked not just for toleration but for mutual respect and open participation in the public square. Simultaneously, the efforts that the Witnesses expended to secure a peaceful position on the margins opened space in the religious landscape that few anticipated, but into which a host of new religions would now move.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW RELIGIONS

While the rise of Christianity from a small minority position to claiming the allegiance of a supermajority of the American public is the primary story of American religious history, it is far from the only story. Almost immediately after the revolution, new religious impulses began to emerge. Possibly the first of these was the small Church of the New Jerusalem, members of which arrived from England in the 1790s. It would become the first movement to manifest any success in the new nation, its leading missionary becoming a celebrated figure in American folklore. As Johnny Appleseed, John Chapman (1774–1845) would plant pages from the writings of the church founder Emanuel Swedenborg in the hands of frontier settlers even as he scattered apple seeds on their recently cleared land.⁴

The Church of the New Jerusalem heralded the development of a new minority tradition in American religion. There had certainly been a number of individual practitioners of Western esotericism in the colonies, but the Swedenborgians would be the first community built around the revelations from what would more recently be called “channeled” material. Esotericism takes believers into a very different religious life and experience from that in the Christian churches. Quakers and Shakers, for example, offered distinct variations on Christianity, but most of their beliefs and practices resonated with their neighbors. At the same time, Swedenborgians used Christian language and symbols, but they poured such different content

⁴ On the American Swedenborgian movement, see William Ellery Jones, *Johnny Appleseed: A Voice in the Wilderness* (West Chester, PA, 2000); and Alfred J. Gabay, *The Covert Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Counterculture and Its Aftermath* (West Chester, PA, 2004).

into their words that any who understood what they were saying recognized its truly radical departure.

The Swedenborgians would set the stage for (and usually be there in the founding of) a host of additional new esoteric movements that would be established throughout the nineteenth century – the mesmerist movement, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought. Each of the new movements was so distinct that their rootedness in a single religious history and intellectual milieu was often lost. Esoteric groups often contributed to the lack of understanding by their own ahistorical character, each group insisting that its own history began when its founder received her/his new revelation.

As the new esoteric metaphysical movements founded in the nineteenth century spread, they gave birth to multiple children in the form of dozens of new esoteric religions, several of which would assume center stage in the public consciousness for a few years, not infrequently when it became the focus of a scandal, or simply because the media found its leader's activities flamboyant or decidedly unusual.⁵ The esoteric community would be greatly affected by the revelations of trickery by the Theosophical founder Helena Blavatsky and a host of Spiritualist mediums, but enough people worked their way through the problems to keep it a growing concern, even as the religious establishment denounced it as the demonic world of the occult, black magic, and spiritism,⁶ and the academic community wrote it off as pseudoscience.

While Western esotericism was growing, Asian religions were also making their initial impact. The first Buddhists arrived in California in response to the Gold Rush of 1849, and their numbers grew decade by decade as Chinese and then Japanese Buddhists arrived. The latter first settled in Hawaii but moved on to the mainland after the passing of restrictive legislation against the Chinese in the 1880s. They would be joined by Sikhs seeking asylum from suppressive activities in the Punjab. The first Hindu teacher would also arrive in the 1880s. The slowly developing Asian religious community would be bolstered by the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, which proved to be the launching pad for the growth of Asian religions in North America. Over the next decades several

⁵ Esoteric leaders beginning with the Spiritualist medium Andrew Jackson Davis in the 1850s became public figures. The media would later focus on such individuals as the healer Mary Baker Eddy, the communalist Father Divine, the magician Aleister Crowley, and more recently the channeler J. Z. Knight.

⁶ On esotericism in American history, see Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT, 2008), and Stillson Judah, *The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America* (Philadelphia, 1967).

dozen Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh teachers would arrive and begin to build permanent communities in America, spearheaded by the Vedanta Society, the Self-Realization Fellowship, and what would become the Buddhist Churches of America.

More than most religious communities, Asian religions would be significantly affected by American racism. Through the last half of the nineteenth century, anti-Chinese sentiments broadened into much more generalized anti-Asian sentiments manifested in a series of legislative actions aimed at stopping and if possible reversing the growing Asian immigration on the West Coast. Legislative initiatives culminated in the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act, which would block further immigration for almost half a century and stymie the growth of both Buddhism and Hinduism. The few groups that had established themselves, such as the First Zen Institute of America and the Self-Realization Fellowship, would prosper, but new groups were few. Almost a footnote to the larger development of the esoteric, Buddhist, and Hindu communities was the quiet arrival of representatives of the many minority Asian religions – Zoroastrianism (Mazdaznan), Sant Mat (Radha Soami Satsang), Jainism, Taoism, Traditional Chinese religion, and Shinto.

Meanwhile, Islam had arrived with the African slaves and first became known when a few outstanding individuals were recognized and given their freedom (and some degree of celebrity). The first Islamic movements would not arise, however, until the beginning of the twentieth century, when African Americans found both Islam and Judaism as tools to express their aspirations in the larger culture. Denied access by antiblack sentiments, African Americans formed a spectrum of new religions inspired by traditional forms of Judaism and Islam. Some in both communities would move toward a more orthodox expression of their faith, especially the many African Americans who joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim movement, but most would flock to the new variant movements such as the Church of God and Saints of Christ, the Moorish Science Temple, and the Nation of Islam.

WORLD WAR II

World War II proved a watershed in American religion. The divisions that had developed after World War I between fundamentalists and Modernists and then between fundamentalists and Evangelicals were by the time America entered the war seen as divisions that would not be ending soon. With the Modernists in control of most of the larger Protestant denominations, the disenfranchised Evangelicals and fundamentalists accepted their new status and began the rebuilding process, signaled by organizing the

National Association of Evangelicals and the American Council of Christian Churches. The postwar Christian community would find itself orienting itself around five major camps – Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, liberal Protestantism, evangelical Protestantism, and fundamentalism.

The war also directly affected armed forces personnel, especially those stationed in unfamiliar lands as occupation forces or affected by a wanderlust that resulted in postwar travels. A few of the soldiers who stayed for any length of time in non-Western lands immediately after the war found themselves attracted to the religious life they discovered and found teachers who were willing to train them. They returned from their duties abroad ready to continue their practice and share it with their friends and neighbors. The initial manifestation of the postwar encounter with Asian religions was the Zen Buddhist fad, the so-called Beat Zen movement of the 1950s.

World War II led directly to dramatic changes in the two most populous countries in the world. India gained its independence, and China underwent a revolution. The very different nature of the changes would in very diverse ways turn both countries into massive religion-exporting nations. Indian teachers (gurus) would begin to flow into Europe, where they would find a welcome in the major urban centers – London, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Stockholm, and even Bucharest and Budapest. After the revolution, many Chinese would find the repressive policies toward religion reason enough to leave, and they would flow into Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the countries of Southeast Asia all the way to Sydney and Auckland. They would not only take a variety of Chinese movements with them; they would create even more once settled in their new homes.

Japan, the loser in the war, would also undergo significant changes. Underscoring the often overlooked role of legislation in shaping religious community, a host of unintended consequences flowed from the imposition of an American-style religious freedom and the separation of religion and government on postwar Japan. Dozens of religious groups that had been suppressed during the previous century suddenly found new life, and several hundred new religious groups (including variant Christian denominations) quickly occupied the new space in the culture that had been inadvertently opened. By the 1960s a small group of scholars had observed the changes, and they gave a name to the participants in this phenomenal movement – the new religions.⁷

Meanwhile, even as the religious scene in Japan was rapidly changing, the United States remained engaged in the region, primarily to block the

⁷ See Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan* (Rutland, VT, 1963), and H. Neill McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (New York, 1967).

expansion of Communism. In the 1950s, it fought to a standstill in Korea and then in the 1960s picked up new duties in Vietnam. Again, unintended consequences emerged. To establish legitimacy in Vietnam, the United States turned to its allies in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and asked for support. They were initially rebuffed. SEATO's price for cooperation was an end to the insulting immigration legislation of 1924. President Kennedy asked Congress to revise the law, and after his death President Johnson would see the new immigration law of 1965, a law that placed all of the Asian countries on the same immigration quotas as Western Europe, pushed through. These same laws abandoned all restrictions on Asian Americans owning property, acquiring citizenship, and gaining access to the voting booth. The new law would draw tens of thousands into the United States annually. It would be bolstered by special provisions for Vietnamese after the war ended, and by the significant increase in immigration quotas again in the early 1990s.

NEW RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

A variety of factors converged in the late 1960s to produce a radical jump in religious pluralism in which what we have come to call "new religions" or "new religious movements" (NRMs) assumed the leading role. First and foremost was the change in the immigration law in 1965. Amid the tens of thousands of immigrants, a growing number of Asian religious teachers (some of whom had already begun work in Europe) settled in the United States (and Canada) and began to gather a following. Simultaneously, the thousands of lay adherents of Asian religions founded the centers to continue the familiar worship life they had known prior to their migration.

The Asian teachers discovered an unusually welcoming environment. Coincidental to their arrival, the baby boomers were just coming of age only to find that there was not enough room in the larger community to absorb them as adults. The baby boomers took to the streets and created a counterculture that was a perfect host to "different" religions. While the many religious teachers may have eventually found their place on America's religious landscape, the existence of the counterculture of the early 1970s provided an immediate pool of visible recruits.

Also, in considering the welcoming environment, one cannot underestimate the role played by the new set of psychoactive mood-altering drugs that were introduced to the baby boomers. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), marijuana, peyote, and other drugs competed with new forms of meditation as means of opening people to their inner world and to a range of personal psychic experiences that traditionally has been the domain of the religious life. The widespread use of drugs served as a catalyst initiating

religious quests both in making people aware of new aspects of their inner being and in sending those who became burned out and had bad experiences to religious groups for help.

While the new Asian religions presented themselves to the counter-culture, the 1960s also saw the continuance of those long-term trends in American religion that began with the arrival of the Swedenborgians. Baby boomers who found themselves on a religious quest were as likely to find answers in a new esoteric community as in an Asian one. And throughout the twentieth century, not only were new esoteric groups being created in North America, but they were finding their way across the Atlantic. Also arriving just in time for the baby boomers was the Neo-Pagan witchcraft movement.⁸

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The new religious movements that became so prominent in the decade after the changing of the immigration law in 1965 were in many ways not altogether new. Most were variations on older, more familiar movements. Some, such as The Way International and the Children of God, were simply new Christian groups that, as the Jehovah's Witnesses, had departed from the Christian theological center on a few key issues. The Way, for example, had adopted a nontrinitarian theology, and the Children of God had designated their founder as the end-time prophet of Revelation. The new gurus from India were immediately familiar to students of Eastern religions, as were the new Buddhist and Taoist masters. A few defied classification – Rev. Sun Myung Moon from Korea presented a complex synthesis of Christianity and Korean folk religion, while the teenage guru Maraj Ji represented the Punjabi Sant Mat tradition, a smaller Indian faith community that only a few Hindu scholars had ever considered. A lot of people had looked at esoteric groups, though few had given them any serious consideration or had any appreciation for the tradition they represented.

And we had a name for all of these groups; we called them “cults.” “Cult” was a new term introduced in the 1890s for the whole range of new marginalized groups.⁹ It gained currency early in the twentieth century in

⁸ On the rise of contemporary Neo Paganism and Wicca, see Helen A. Berger, *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* (Columbia, SC, 1999); Graham Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (New York, 1997); Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford, UK, 2000); and Sarah M. Pike, ed., *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

⁹ See, for example, A. H. Barrington, *Anti-Christian Cults* (Milwaukee, 1898).

the writings of a set of conservative Christian writers, most notably Jan Karel Van Baalan and Walter Martin.¹⁰ The term was used by conservative Protestant Christian writers to identify and stigmatize the many religious groups operating in America that denied what they considered the essentials of Christian belief – the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Conservative Protestants considered cults a very real threat. They took people away from the true church and led them into spiritual darkness. They even argued among themselves whether Roman Catholicism should be included on the list of cults.

The pioneers of the sociology of religion also picked up and used the term for studies of the small religious groups on the margin. Sociologists attempted to describe them apart from their intellectual heritage, concentrating on the unique ways they organized themselves and the structures they created to deal with their fringe status. Some groups appeared marginalized by their odd beliefs and behavior patterns, some because they operated among marginalized people, especially African Americans.

While sociologists avoided the religious polemics of the Christian writers, they rarely saw the “cults” as offering a serious religious option. Academic commentators tended to treat them as personality-oriented groups, with more or less severe psychological or sociological flaws. Cults were ephemeral religious phenomena destined to pass from the scene as soon as their entertaining charismatic leader departed. They were also viewed as focusing on the questionable world of occult experience.¹¹

In the 1970s, with the sudden blossoming of so many unfamiliar religions, a problem was created. A number of young adults were joining (that is, throwing their lives away by associating with) the new religions, with many of the brightest choosing to be trained to become full-time leaders while others settled into a life in a communal setting. In conforming to a religious lifestyle, they often followed a new diet, wore uniform clothing, and even adopted a religious name. Choices often entailed relinquishing plans for a career in business or the professions. Many parents were upset that their son or daughter would throw away a potentially lucrative high-status career for a life within an unfamiliar, weird, or, still worse, sinister group. The first group to raise concern was the Children of God, whose members showed up in public places wearing sackcloth and ashes and pronouncing words of doom on a sinful society, only to disappear to

¹⁰ Karel Jan Van Baalan, *The Chaos of Cults: A Study in Present-day Isms* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1938); Walter Martin, *The Rise of the Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1955).

¹¹ For a sampling of opinion on the new religions of the era between the two world wars, see Gaius G. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements* (New York, 1923); Louis R. Binder, *Modern Religious Cults and Society* (Boston, 1933); and Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia, 1944).

remote locations for months at a time. Early in the 1970s, concerned parents formed a support group, Free Our Children from the Children of God (FREECOG), and began to search for support from authorities to extract their offspring from the group. Soon other groups that lived communally and sought the full-time commitment of members in growing the groups came under attack – the Unification Church of Rev. Moon, the Way International, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (the Hare Krishna movement), and the Divine Light Mission of Guru Maharaj Ji, among the most prominent.¹²

The original family support group multiplied in numerous groups across the country now dedicated to rescuing their children from the whole array of new cults. Initially they were frustrated by the lack of response from authorities, who told them that their kids were adults and had the right to follow any religion and/or lifestyle they chose. Slowly the families found allies among psychologists who saw the groups as deviant and harmful. In 1976, the family groups were able to convince the Kansas senator Robert Dole to hold a hearing in Washington focused on the Unification Church, but it produced little helpful support.

Meanwhile, one man, Theodore “Ted” Patrick, who had become concerned about the cults, concluded that they had found a way to “program” their recruits so that they had lost their free will. He suggested a new technique to “deprogram” the members of the groups. It involved confining the member and barraging him/her with negative information about the groups, pleas from their parents, and the threat not to release them until they agreed to leave the group in question. If the individuals to be deprogrammed were not available, Patrick could arrange to kidnap them.¹³ The practice immediately raised the concerns of civil right advocates.

Even as deprogramming was being offered as a solution to parents, substantiation for it came from an unusual source, a trial involving the newspaper heiress Patty Hearst in San Francisco in 1977. Two years earlier, a radical political group had kidnapped Hearst, and she had undergone an intensive indoctrination program that included considerable personal abuse. However, eventually Hearst converted to the group and participated in a bank robbery in which she was photographed carrying a weapon.

¹² On the history of the emerging cult awareness movement, see Anson D. Shupe, Jr., and David G. Bromley, *A Documentary History of the Anti-Cult Movement* (Arlington, VA, 1985); Anson D. Shupe, Jr., and David G. Bromley, *The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers, Anti-Cultists and the New Religions* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1980); and Anson D. Shupe, Jr., David G. Bromley, and Donna L. Oliver, *The Anti Cult Movement in America: A Bibliography and Historical Survey* (New York, 1984).

¹³ Ted Patrick and Tom Dulack, *Let Our Children Go!* (New York, 1976).

When finally captured, she stood trial for armed robbery. During the trial, the defense suggested that Hearst had been brainwashed and hence was not responsible for her actions. The jury rejected that argument and convicted her.¹⁴

Margaret Singer, one of the psychologists at Hearst's trial, picked up on the brainwashing issue and a year later testified as an expert in a case in which a conservatorship was sought over five members of the Unification Church. She testified that the members, all young adults, had been victimized by artful and designing people who had subjected them to a process of "coercive persuasion." As a result, the five should, she recommended, be sent for a period of reality therapy (deprogramming) at the Freedom of Thought Foundation in Tucson.

In the years after the Unification Church case, events in the small country of Guyana increased the impact of testimony offered by Singer and her colleagues. In November 1978, some nine hundred members of the People's Temple died in Jonestown, Guyana. The People's Temple was a predominately African American congregation, led by a white minister, Jim Jones. It was affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a large mainstream Protestant denomination, affiliated with the National Council of Churches. Members of the church in California were ecumenically active, and Jones had been politically active in San Francisco, where the church was based. Jones had also emerged as a charismatic leader who advocated a socially active version of Marxist liberation theology that bordered on atheism. The church had become increasingly controversial, and charges of wrongdoing plagued it. To distance themselves from any scandal, the leadership and many of the members moved to land previously purchased for an agricultural colony in Guyana.

Controversy followed the group, however, and a congressman who represented many of the church members from San Francisco, Leo Ryan, decided to visit Jonestown. The visit seemed to go well, but the congressman invited any who would like to leave to return to the United States with him. His departure became the occasion for one of the more horrendous incidents in American religious history. A small cadre of members followed the Ryan entourage to the airport at Georgetown and killed Ryan and some who were with him. Most of those who remained at Jonestown died by drinking a solution of poison and Kool-Aid; others who did not drink the poison were killed. Only a few people were able to escape into the

¹⁴ The Hearst case is discussed in Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow, *Every Secret Thing* (Garden City, NY, 1982), and Marlin Baker with Sally Brompton, *Exclusive! The Inside Story of Patricia Hearst and the SLA* (New York, 1974). The full story of the Hearst case and its role in the cult controversy has yet to be written.

jungle and survive.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the incident, the complexities of what had occurred were lost, and Jonestown was turned into the epitome of a “destructive cult.” The image would be associated with all the unfamiliar marginalized groups. The cult controversy was no longer about a few young adults wasting a few years in an odd ephemeral religious group. It was about preventing more Jonestowns.

Singer went on to found a counseling service for former members of the new religions, most of whom had been severed from the group through deprogramming. In her hands, the concept of “brainwashing” evolved into the keystone of the anticult polemic against cults. Through the early 1980s, Singer and several colleagues offered key testimony in a series of multimillion-dollar civil lawsuits against a string of the more controversial new religions.

Also in the aftermath of Jonestown, the many small parental support groups, all of which had tended to operate independently, merged into a national organization. In November 1979, representatives from thirty-one cult awareness groups met in Chicago and decided to reorganize around the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF), which by 1984 evolved into the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) with central headquarters in Chicago, an executive director, and an aggressive public relations program.

Simultaneously with the reorganization of CFF, the American Family Foundation (AFF) was founded under the leadership of John Clark. Clark was a psychiatrist who had been a leading spokesperson for the cult awareness movement but whose leadership had been significantly inhibited after a reprimand he received from the Massachusetts Psychiatric Association that grew out of his work. In contrast to the activist approach taken by CAN, AFF was conceived as an organization for professionals. It would provide academics, psychological professionals, and social scientists a means of relating to the cult awareness cause without becoming involved in deprogramming. AFF also launched the *Cult Studies Journal*, modeled on standard academic journals.

FROM CULTS TO NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

While parents were searching for a way to extract their adult children from the cults and finding support for their brainwashing ideas within the psychological community, a very different set of scholars, some sociologists,

¹⁵ There is a vast literature on Jonestown – popular, polemic, and academic. Among the better scholarly works on Jonestown are Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse, NY, 1998), and Rebecca Moore, *Understanding Jonestown and Peoples Temple* (Westport, CT, 2009).

some from the field of religious studies, had been studying the marginalized religions. Scholars in England had been influenced by the work of Bryan Wilson, while American scholars began with the writings of Elmer Clark and Marcus Bach.¹⁶ By the 1970s a growing number of scholars were focusing research on the “cults”; and a spectrum of case studies, theoretical monographs, and overviews began to flow into print. As the cult controversy heated up, these scholars recognized the pejorative connotations that were being attached to the term “cult” and began to search for an alternative. While several terms were offered, in the end the Japanese term, “new religions,” was accepted in spite of the obvious problems it presented. Many of the so-called “new religions” were not new (being either old religions in a new context or new organizations that represented an old religious tradition).

At the same time, the great majority of those who studied new religions saw significant problems in the popular use of the term “brainwashing” to imply that the indoctrination process of the new religions was substantively different from that in the old religions. Their direct observations of the new religions revealed no evidence of “brainwashing” or mind control.

By the early 1980s, a gulf had developed between the large number of scholars who studied new religions and the small group who continued to use the term “cult.” New religions scholars did not use the term “brainwashing” and believed that the recruitment and indoctrination process of the new religions did not differ substantively from those of more accepted religious groups. In fact, they held that what was being termed brainwashing did not exist.¹⁷

The idea of brainwashing had been developed from popular misunderstandings of the Chinese indoctrination program directed at American armed forces prisoners during the Korean War. Many citizens were offended that some American prisoners had made anti-American statements and that a few had even chosen to stay in North Korea when liberated at the end of hostilities. In this context, a journalist, Edward Hunter (later revealed to have been an undercover Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] agent), exposed what he believed to be a new process of indoctrination developed

¹⁶ Bryan Wilson, *Sects and Society* (Berkeley, CA, 1961); Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* (London, 1970); Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (New York, 1949); Marcus Bach, *Strange Sects and Curious Cults* (New York, 1961).

¹⁷ Early studies utilizing the term “new religions” rather than “cults” include Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (New York, 1970); Eileen Barker, ed., *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society* (Lewiston, NY, 1982); Robert Wuthnow, *The Consciousness Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 1976); and Charles G. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, eds., *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley, CA, 1976).

by the Chinese Communists. They had, he asserted, discovered an intense manipulative process that had the power actually to alter the mental outlook of those upon whom it was used.¹⁸

As soon as the armistice was signed, the American government sent out a team of psychological professionals, most notably Robert J. Lifton and Edgar Schein, to Korea to interview the returning prisoners. In the end, the experience of the prisoners, they concluded, did not really speak to Hunter's accusations. The prisoners had not been subjected to any kind of systematic reeducation program; rather they had been subjected to intense pressure to cooperate with the camp officials. There were few appeals to convert to Communism. Lifton and Schein noted that the thought control process occurred in the context of the prisoners' physical confinement under the harshest of conditions with necessities such as food and warm clothing in scarce supply. Anti-American statements were pulled out of prisoners who had faced severe deprivation and had been enticed with offers of such things as more comfortable sleeping quarters, better food, and warm clothing. They also noted that the process was largely ineffective in changing any basic attitudes. In spite of these observations, the term "brainwashing" entered the popular consciousness.¹⁹

Shortly thereafter, the Chinese government began to release a number of prisoners, including Americans and other foreigners (missionaries, students, doctors, businessmen) in China when the Korean War began, as well as a few Chinese who had not been arrested but had been encouraged to attend "voluntarily" one of the thought reform institutions set up throughout this period. When they emerged in Hong Kong, several suggested that they had been American spies and that their imprisonment was justly deserved. Given the seeming falsity of the statements they were making, possibly they were true victims of what Hunter had called brainwashing. If not the Koreans, then the Chinese, with their sophisticated Pavlovian process of thought reform had brainwashed people into becoming little more than puppets or robots. Thus Schein, Lifton, and their colleagues began a new round of research, and again Lifton²⁰ and Schein²¹ rejected Hunter's view.

Research suggested that coercive persuasion, in which a mixture of social, psychological, and physical pressures is applied to produce changes in an

¹⁸ Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China* (New York, 1951).

¹⁹ See, for example, Robert J. Lifton, "Home by Ship: Reaction Patterns of American Prisoners of War Repatriated from North Korea," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 110 (1954): 732–9; or, Edgar Schein, "The Chinese Indoctrination Program for Prisoners of War," *Psychiatry* 19 (1956): 149–72.

²⁰ Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (New York, 1961).

²¹ Edgar H. Schein, *Coercive Persuasion* (New York, 1961).

individual's self-perception, beliefs, and attitudes, does occur. However, a necessary condition was the physical confinement of the subject or its equivalent. They also found that it was successful only on a very small minority of those subjected to it, and its end result was very unpredictable, as the majority of subjects reverted to their previous condition as soon as coercive pressure was removed.

A generation after Schein's and Lifton's work, Margaret Singer, who credentialed herself in part with the fact that she had worked with Schein, would develop her new approach to coercive persuasion or brainwashing in the new religions in ways that directly contradicted the finding that her mentor had made. In 1980, in an article coauthored with her colleague Louis J. West, she noted that cults use drastic techniques of control:

techniques that in some respects resemble the political indoctrination methods prescribed by Mao Tse-tung during the communist revolution and its aftermath from 1945 to 1955 in China. These techniques, described by the Chinese as "thought reform" or ideological remolding were labeled "brainwashing" by the American journalist Edward Hunter (1951, 1958). Such methods were studied in depth after the Korean War by a number of Western scientists.²²

Further, Singer added that the use of these techniques led "cult" members to become incapable of complex, rational thought. Much that was asserted in the writings of Singer and others resonated with the finding of new religions scholars in general who studied what they called "high demand" religions, which used various tactics to encourage and hold group members. However, critics noticed that Singer consistently employed the language of brainwashing and Pavlovian conditioning. While quoting her mentor Edgar Schein, she largely avoided discussions of two key issues: the necessary element of physical confinement involved in the process of coercive persuasion and the issue of the overriding of the free will of people upon whom the persuasive techniques are used.

The writings on brainwashing that issued from the psychological community became the subject of intense debate in social science circles. The result of that debate through the mid-1980s was the overwhelming rejection of Singer's approach to the new religions.²³

Even as her colleagues rejected her perspective, Singer's views found acceptance in the courtroom, where her perspective resonated with juries.

²² Louis J. West and Margaret Thaler Singer, "Cults, Quack, and Nonprofessional Psychotherapies," in Harold I. Kaplan, Alfred M. Freedman, and Benjamin J. Sadock, eds., *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 1980), 23–48.

²³ The details of the anticult position was best presented in the collection of papers in David A. Halperin, ed., *Psychodynamic Perspective in Religion, Sect, and Cult* (Boston, 1983).

Watching this phenomenon, an increasing number of new religions scholars thought that a major injustice was being perpetrated. As Singer continued to appear in court and her testimonies led to large judgments against religious groups, new religions scholars authored papers pointing out the many weaknesses in her argument, which they followed with appearances in trials as witnesses. The intense conflict over Singer's work finally led to the complete collapse of brainwashing theory.

In 1983 a proposal was made to the American Psychological Association (APA) that a task force be established to examine and report on the techniques of coercive persuasion reputedly being used by various psychological and religious groups. The following year, the Task Force on Deceptive and Indirect Methods of Persuasion and Control with Singer as chairperson was established. After three years' work, in 1987 the task force report was submitted for review. All of the reviewers agreed on the inadequacies of the report, and it was unanimously rejected.²⁴

The opinion of the APA of its own committee's work was finally introduced into a court case in 1989–90, *U.S. v. Fishman*. The defendant had called upon Singer and another colleague, the sociologist Richard Ofshe, to testify to the negative effects of membership in the Church of Scientology on him. A lengthy restatement of the position of the APA with an analysis of the writings of Singer was written by the psychologist Dick Anthony. Anthony argued persuasively that Singer's theory of brainwashing lacked scientific support.²⁵ The court accepted Anthony's argument and denied Singer and Ofshe the stand. As a result of the *Fishman* ruling, both Singer and Ofshe were subsequently denied the stand in several additional cases. It became evident that the *Fishman* case had become the precedent through which the court accepted the position held by the majority of scholars relative to the new religions and brainwashing.

The ruling in the *Fishman* case largely stopped future attempts to introduce a discussion of brainwashing in court cases as a defense of the practice of coercive deprogramming and almost stopped the practice. Those who continued to confine people they attempted to sever from the groups they had joined now faced sanctions from the law. This fact would have some significant consequences a few years later.

²⁴ J. Gordon Melton, "Brainwashing and the Cults: The Rise and Fall of a Theory," English translation of the "Introduction," in Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Gehirnwäsche und Setzen: Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen* (Marburg, Germany, 2000). Posted at <http://www.cesnur.org>.

²⁵ See Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Law, Social Science and the 'Brainwashing' Exception to the First Amendment," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 10 (1992): 5–29, for a discussion of this phase of the controversy.

LATER STAGES OF THE CULT CONTROVERSY

The ruling in the *Fishman* case ended the main phase of the controversy on new religions. A few tried to introduce brainwashing in court cases involving new religions on other matters as a means of influencing juries against the group. This tactic rarely worked, however, and was soon abandoned.

Then in 1993, an event occurred that was to lead to the last major court battle over cults. The Church of Scientology settled its long-term dispute with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). With its IRS problem removed, the church targeted the Cult Awareness Network, which it blamed for many of its problems. First, Scientologists were encouraged to join CAN and attend its annual meeting. They then discovered that when identified as Scientologists, they were denied entrance. Since attendance at the annual meeting was specifically cited as a benefit of membership, the Scientologists sued for breach of contract. As each case was filed, attorneys for the church deposed key people in CAN. Though all of the cases were dismissed with a summary judgment, each case produced several new depositions. Collectively the depositions provided evidence of an internal contradiction. In the wake of the *Fishman* case, CAN had publically disavowed deprogramming, but the depositions revealed that they were still supporting it and actively referring people to deprogrammers.

Then in 1995, Scientology became aware of a situation in which Pricilla Caotes, a longtime CAN operative on the West Coast, referred a situation request to Rick Ross. He subsequently attempted unsuccessfully to deprogram one Jason Scott, a member of a Pentecostal church in Seattle. Scott sued Ross, and the Church of Scientology lent Rick Moxin, one of its lawyers, to Scott; Moxin was able to involve the Cult Awareness Network in the case. Using all the previous depositions, Scott won a \$5 million judgment, \$1 million of which went against CAN. The Scott case bankrupted the organization, and exhausting its appeals, CAN went under. A coalition of the “cult” groups it had attacked purchased its assets, took over the Cult Awareness Network, and transformed it into an advocate of religious freedom.

The demise of CAN left the American Family Foundation as the major remnant of the cult controversy of the 1980s. Now known as the International Cultic Studies Association, it continues to meet and to publish a journal, but it has been left behind as the cult controversy has slowly died out.

NEW RELIGIONS IN THE NEW CENTURY

New religions studies has always been at best a vaguely defined field, in part, because “new religion” is a vaguely defined term. Some scholars emphasized the newness of new religions. They focused on newly formed

religious groups and the distinctive features of their organization and life, and the manner in which those distinctions, unique elements, would be lost as the second-generation members came of age. Others looked at the places where new religions tended to arise and the conditions that seemed to nurture their development.

A second group of scholars has tended to focus more on the marginal nature of new religions, those religions that either operated among marginal people or defined themselves as marginal, or were pushed into marginality by their behavior. Marginalization could result from religious dissent, the adoption of a separatist worldview, or behavior that was disapproved. Still others focused on controversy. New religions were defined by the controversy they generated and moved out of that status by making adaptations that allowed them to reduce the level of social tension. Controversy was aroused by abrasive interaction with one's neighbors by, for example, instigating violence, disobeying and ignoring laws, engaging in high-pressure evangelism, or promoting an atmosphere of secrecy.²⁶

The definitional ambiguity also affects the writing about new religions in that one always faces problems of whom to include and whom to omit. This tension on definition has contributed to the vitality of the field of new religions studies but has significant consequences in writing the history, and different scholars have defined the field more narrowly or more broadly. Most would include under the rubric of new religions those several dozen groups founded since the end of World War II that became the focus of the cult controversy of the 1980s and 1990s – the Unification Church, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the Church of Scientology, the Divine Light Mission, the Church Universal and Triumphant, the Children of God (now the Family International), to name but a few. They would also include several hundred additional groups that had a lower profile and were not targeted by the cult awareness movement but looked very much like those at the center of the controversy. These included new Asian groups whose membership was made up primarily of Westerners, Christian groups marginalized by their doctrinal deviation, various communal groups, and most of the newer esoteric groups.

The broader view would raise the number of new religions to around eight hundred (and twice that number if Europe was included), who represent groups, other than the mainstream Christian and Jewish groups, that have been formed over the last century and continue to exist on the margins

²⁶ In the differing definitional approaches see Eileen Barker, "What Are We Studying? A Sociological Case for Keeping the 'Nova,'" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religion* 8:1 (July 2004): 88–102; and J. Gordon Melton, "Toward a Definition of 'New Religion,'" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8:1 (July 2004): 73–87.

of society. This broader approach suggests that new religions begin as new groups (or old groups in a new environment), but their status may change over time. They begin on the edge of the larger religious community and may enter that community and end their marginalized status. They may also remain on the edge for multiple generations. This approach also suggests that even non-Christian groups in the West, while retaining their own distinctive religious life, may significantly reduce their marginalization over time, and in fact the Asian religions have done just that.

The cult controversy really began with a Christian revival movement, the Jesus People movement, which challenged churches to accept new Christians from the hippie movement and drug culture of the 1960s. Amid the attempt of the Jesus People movement to negotiate its position relative to the larger church, several groups, such as the Children of God, the Way International, and the Tony and Susan Alamo Christina Ministries, were denounced by Jesus People leaders for their doctrinal and behavioral deviation. Even as the larger Jesus People movement integrated into and largely lost its identity within the evangelical churches, the Children of God, the Way, and the Alamo group remained separate and continued on their unique trajectories. Each espoused ideas that caused most Christians groups to refuse communion with them, as continued to be the case with older groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Worldwide Church of God.

While a variety of futures was available to these groups, overwhelmingly they have chosen to live a life on the edge of the Christian community and hope that over time, while remaining marginalized, they will be seen as essentially harmless. As had the Latter-day Saints in the 1890s, the Children of God renounced the more extreme form of its doctrine of the law of love, which proclaimed sexual freedom a primary belief and allowed intergenerational sex to find a home within the group. While allowing a certain amount of sexual freedom, it had moved to remove any hint that minors might participate. One group, the Worldwide Church of God, renounced all of its peculiar ideas and integrated into the larger evangelical movement, though the change cost them the majority of their members, who in turn founded a spectrum of new new religions.

American Christianity continues to spawn new churches. While most are quite orthodox sectarian groups, a measurable number adopt the larger Christian framework while differing enough from the mainstream to be immediately banished to the margins. Overwhelmingly, such groups deny what most consider Christian essentials and/or develop behavior patterns that offend the majority culture. The process of generating new Christian religions has been a constant process throughout the two centuries plus of American history.

ASIAN RELIGIONS

As Asian religions arrived and recruited Westerners as members, they were seen as the epitome of what were being called “cults.” They were relatively small. They were led by charismatic leaders who made extraordinary claims to enlightenment, unusual abilities, or revelation. By definition, they operated outside the religious consensus. Prior to 1965, the main Hindu groups that recruited Western members, the Vedanta Society and the Self-Realization Fellowship, were considered cults, while the various Buddhist groups, such as the Buddhist Churches of America, which confined themselves to an ethnic community, escaped such labels.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness became the first of dozens of new Asian groups to appear after the new immigration law of 1965 and to seek members from the larger host population. While the Hare Krishna movement was the major focus of anticult sentiment, and rare indeed was there a cult article in the popular press without a picture of Krishnas doing *kirtan*, most of the guru-led Indian-based religions sooner or later appeared on the radar screen.

New Buddhist groups were originally included on lists of cults, but in contrast to the Hindu groups, by the end of the 1970s they were rarely to be counted among the disapproved religions. The distinction between the two communities appears to be related to the different patterns of growth and organization, and Buddhism’s early alignment with a group of Western scholars who had quietly converted. Unlike the Hindus, who organized themselves around numerous separate, independent temples, Buddhists saw themselves as part of a larger international movement. By the end of the 1980s, they had formed the American Buddhist Congress, a Buddhist equivalent of the National Council of Churches; and many of the Buddhist groups, both those that were ethnically based and those with a majority of Western converts, began to align themselves with the World Fellowship of Buddhists, the Buddhist equivalent of the World Council of Churches. The larger ethnic Buddhist groups quickly accepted the convert groups as equals.

The development of a cadre of Buddhist scholars began with the Chinese takeover of Tibet, the formation of numerous support groups for the refugees, and the arrival of a handful of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the country. A group of religious studies graduate students responded to the calls to preserve the Tibetan culture by assisting in the translation and publication of the texts taken out of Tibet by the refugees who followed the Dalai Lama into exile. To accomplish their task, they had to learn both Tibetan and Tibetan Buddhism. In the process many converted. They joined those scholars who had been attracted to Zen Buddhism and created a high-status Buddhist intelligentsia, who both provided the religion with

Western academic credentials and were ready to defend it against critics from a cult-brainwashing perspective.

Hinduism slowly developed some national structures, the most prominent being the Hindu American Foundation, based in suburban Washington, D.C. Also, over time, Indian members of the groups originally set up by visiting gurus migrated to the United States and began to join the Western converts in the American centers. Their presence tended to legitimize the convert groups. No group benefited more from Indian adherents than the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. It moved from a small organization of the several thousand initiates of the founder, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), to a large international organization with a viable presence in more than fifty countries. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of American members are now Indian Americans.

The movement of the Hindu convert groups into their second generation has seen their growing recognition as legitimate religious societies. Their legitimization has been accelerated by the growth of the immigrant community from India and its acceptance of the convert guru-oriented groups. Criticism of any Hindus now results in a community response.

The emergence of Hinduism and Buddhism in America (and in the West in general) has meant the reassignment of groups formerly considered cults into the fellowship of the much larger community of Asian American religions. Any given center following a guru or a Buddhist teacher can now immediately picture itself as part of the larger American Hindu or Buddhist community and of the worldwide fellowship of Hindus and Buddhists. This transformation of the 1970s Asian “cults” has been accepted by religious scholars and has manifested in a dramatic drop in the number of papers and books in new religions studies that give space to Asian religions.

WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Prior to 1965, the great majority of groups that were termed cults were representative of the Western esoteric tradition – the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, Christian Science, the Theosophical Society, Spiritualism. These groups were seen as somehow related, but there had been little attempt to understand them or become aware of their historical linkage, not to mention their lineage back through Western history to the ancient Gnostics. It can be argued that the similarity of two derogatory terms, “occult” and “cult,” was more than mere happenstance.²⁷

²⁷ The noteworthy example of the identification of the cult phenomenon with the “occult” community is found in Colin Campbell’s essay on the “cultic milieu,” which reflects

The esoteric community had grown steadily through the twentieth century but remained relatively small and entirely marginalized. Then in the 1970s, a British movement that originated among some of the theosophical groups called attention to the prediction of a coming “new age” that was predicted to arrive in the next generation and initiate a society of peace and love. What became the New Age movement, a revitalization movement that swept through the older Western esoteric community, drew literally millions of people into the esoteric tradition and spawned literally hundreds of new religious groups. As the millennial expectations declined at the end of the 1980s, the movement itself had transformed the esoteric community. No longer just the realm of the occult, it had become the New Age movement based on transformative experiences of healing and enlightenment. For the first time, its constituency showed up on national surveys.

Along with the millions swept into the New Age, scholars appeared who both studied the esoteric world and were unashamed to identify with it. The French scholar Antoine Favre assumed the first chair in Esoteric studies at the Sorbonne and proceeded to expound on the intellectual history of modern Western esotericism from the seventeenth century to the present. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars were willing to talk about a third religious tradition in the West, a tradition hinted at in Robert Ellwood’s early survey of *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*.²⁸

Esoteric groups have tended to limit the exploration of history beyond the life of their own founder(s), but a new generation of esoteric leadership has begun to assemble the story and is dealing with the broken history of Western esotericism due to persecution by the dominant Christian community and developing the picture of it as a Western religious tradition that has existed both independently of and in a symbiotic relationship to the more pervasive Christian tradition.

As the twenty-first century begins, the large esoteric community exists as the primary focus of new religions studies. This situation portends much for the future of the new religions. If the scholars are able to build a historical consciousness into the esoteric community, there is every reason to believe that it will, as have the Buddhist and Hindu communities, leave its existence as a new religion and transform into another minority religious tradition making its way in America.

on the occult community of 1950s Britain. See Colin Campbell, “The Cult, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization,” in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, ed. M. Hill (London, 1972), 119–36.

²⁸ Robert Ellwood, *Religions and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973).

A FOOTNOTE ON UNBELIEF

The same context that nurtured the development of an Asian and an esoteric community as a component of the larger pluralistic culture in the United States provided space for the development of a vigorous and assertive community of unbelief. The unbelief community includes atheists who are opposed to the idea of God and of religion and humanists who have no belief in God but who are quite happy to function as a religious community with religious leaders not unlike ordained ministers, called celebrants.

The unbelief community traces its beginning to the Reformation and those who like Michael Servetus and the Socinians challenged the pervasive Christian belief in the Trinity. Unitarianism led to deism and deism to nineteenth-century Freethought. Freethought gave way to atheism under a wide variety of names such as secularism, rationalism, and humanism, each with a slightly different emphasis.

No one has chosen to treat various segments of unbelief and the different groups they have spawned as “new religions.” Those willing to admit to being unbelievers tended to be the more educated, and while they were on occasion covered with some unsavory labels, they were rarely associated with the heresies of popular religious movements. At the same time, it is hard to discuss the development of modern religious diversity without somehow accounting for the role of the religiously irreligious. Beginning in the 1960s, simultaneously with the new wave of Asian religious teachers arriving in the West, with the emergence of Madalyn Murray O’Hair (1919–95), a new era of organized atheism was launched. It has resulted in a spectrum of new atheist groups and an intense engagement with those elements of the religious community that will respond. The various national organizations (American Atheists, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, the Council for Secular Humanism, the American Humanist Association) now exist as sectarian factions of a movement that has many of the features of new religious movements, from their allegiance to minority beliefs and organization around charismatic leaders to the development of new rituals and holidays.

CONCLUSION

Those movements known in the late twentieth century as “new religious movements” have, as the new century has begun, moved steadily to take their place in the culture under a very different label, as bearers of one of several vital if minority religious traditions that have matured to the point of being ready to sit at the table of the more established religious communities

in what has become an intensely pluralistic culture. Recognition as equals will not suddenly be given, but it appears as a possible goal and one desirable enough that the leadership of the various communities is willing to expend a large amount of effort to reach.

At the same time, on the fringes of all the traditional religious communities new religious movements are emerging that articulate new ideas and behave in controversial ways. Even as older new religions move to a position more accommodating to the larger culture, new new religions are arising to assume their slot in the culture. Now the situation has changed, at least in the United States. The process of testing and acceptance through which the older new religions passed should mean that the process for the new generation of new religions should be considerably easier.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Section IV

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONFLICT IN AMERICA

RACE, RELIGION, AND THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

ANTHONY B. PINN

Whether one thinks in terms of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, or Hispanics, the sociopolitical movements of the twentieth century suggest a common theme revolving around the emergence of new peoples determined to enjoy a full range of rights and opportunities – economic advancement, preservation of cultural realities, political determination, and recognition within the intellectual life of the nation. “Black Power,” “Brown Power,” “Yellow Power,” “Red Power,” and so on, echoed through various communities and became conceptual and ideological tools for framing new aesthetics as well as sociopolitical and economic change. Such varied strands of sociopolitical and cultural struggle in the United States brought into question the dominant logic of sociopolitical struggle as a “black and white” issue.¹ However, while the framing of “the” race issue shifted, what remained somewhat consistent was the manner in which religion and theological thinking were forced to reflect this race-based struggle.²

Race and racism become deeply theological issues, ones that must be addressed within the context of religious community if they are to be addressed in ways that cut through to both their existential and their ontological articulations. Through a vocabulary of transformation and a grammar of justice, white supremacy was stripped from its religious garb, and the shortcomings of Christianity as support of both subtle and aggressive manifest destiny-styled arguments were noted and vigorously critiqued.

¹ See, for example, Nicholas De Genova, ed., *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* (Durham, NC, 2006).

² For information on the challenges of “naming” racial groups that inform this essay, see, for example, Nami Kim, “The ‘Indigestible’ Asian: The Unifying Term ‘Asian’ in Theological Discourse,” in Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology* (Louisville, KY, 2007), 23–43.

RACE AND SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUGGLE

The discussion of race within the United States has been framed often in terms of the civil rights activities of African Americans. And the ways in which religion in America changed in response to issues of race and racism are also framed typically in terms of black churches. Liberal religion's concern with the quality and texture of healthy existential life gave way to preoccupation with personal salvation and the church as the locale for evangelical energy and preoccupations.³ It was becoming evident quickly that African American Christianity in the United States faced a profound dilemma of relevance, and the dynamics of race shifted away from the more explicit framings of segregation during an early period of the twentieth century. This challenge to the relevance of African American Christian churches would continue during the 1970s and 1980s as U.S. citizens tapped into secular organizations for support and took advantage of opportunities for advancement made available through the civil rights movement. These newly minted members of the middle class moved away from "old" neighborhoods and sought status within developing suburban communities. This change continued until the 1990s, when more creative agendas and a desire for cultural connection led African Americans back to the churches of their youth.⁴ In these African American churches, whether or not they agreed with all the doctrine and ritual patterns, they found ways to ground themselves in communities of memory and ways to forge connections to comforting cultural patterns and understandings. The manner in which religious organizations are dimensions of culture, storehouses of certain cultural practices and frameworks, moved to the fore as middle-class African Americans made their way out of the suburbs and into black churches. Religion within African American communities as represented by churches and their theological discourses would face a shifting sociopolitical terrain and would be forced to discuss and respond to race differently.⁵

A similar synergy between issues of race and the structures of religiosity is mirrored in the twentieth-century framing of other communities as

³ Gayraud Wilmore offers an important discussion of this tension between radical religion and "secular" politics in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, 3rd ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1998).

⁴ Beverly Lawrence offers interesting insights into this process as it relates to a large Methodist church in Baltimore. See *Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African Americans Goes Home to Church* (New York, 1996).

⁵ For an interesting study of more contemporary political and economic activism of faith-based organizations, see Richard L. Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago, 2002).

well. For example, with respect to large numbers of Hispanics, the tensions of the civil rights movement and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 served to highlight and charge as a “brown” issue existing patterns of discrimination. Initial efforts to gain better treatment for Hispanics through the channels of the law proved somewhat frustrating. The land grant movement in the Southwest – the Federal Land Grant Alliance – made use of large-scale demonstrations and occupation of land as a way to force changes concerning U.S. takeover of land by questionable means.⁶ And the Crusade for Justice marked an effort to gather the energy of disillusioned youth and direct it toward forging a politically charged sense of identity – Chicano! It was no longer a negative term but now served as a marker of cultural place and political value. Following on this tying of political transformation to preservation of culture, organizations such as La Raza Unida sought to instill pride and transform economic and political opportunities for Hispanics.

Furthermore, modeled after the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets, growing out of the Young Citizens for Communication Action organization, were organized in Los Angeles with an initial aim of safeguarding the community from status quo violence and intimidation. Such activities were not limited to Chicanos in California; Puerto Ricans in New York in the 1960s began organizing for educational opportunities and economic advancement. And while this work took place within existing structures, organizations such as “Free Puerto Rico Now” maintained a rhetoric endorsing violence as a legitimate means of protesting injustice.⁷ It is interesting that within these various contexts the struggle for opportunity was often connected to a more visible racial identity.⁸

The mid-twentieth century entailed changes in the U.S. response to American Indians as the “Indian New Deal” and the political power for tribal governments were eroded.⁹ In response, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) championed struggle against racial oppression framed in terms of land, money, and culture during the 1960s. However, as certain members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee began to challenge the biblically based tactics of the civil rights movement, a group of young American Indian activists began to question the utility of the approach offered by NCAI. Organizing themselves as the National Indian Youth Council, they issued their own vision of transformation

⁶ Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 158.

⁷ James S. Olson, *Equality Deferred: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration in America since 1945* (Belmont, CA, 2003), 64–69.

⁸ López, *Racism on Trial*, vii.

⁹ Olson, *Equality Deferred*, 39.

based on a clear and aggressive pointing out of a central problem. "The Indian problem," they proclaimed in their organizing document, "is the white man."¹⁰ In 1968, the American Indian Movement was initiated in Minnesota and from that location spread to other states as a way to combat the racism resulting in cultural destruction and the theft of American Indian land and rights. A major moment in this development involved the takeover of Alcatraz, spearheaded by a group called Indians of All Tribes. While their demands, including the deeding of Alcatraz to Native Americans, were not met, the roughly two-year takeover, extending from 9 November 1969 to 22 June 1971, did suggest new strategies and a new sense of power against the status quo.¹¹ These various modalities of protest were all meant to illustrate and enhance "Red Power" – the means by which American Indians determine their own lives and future.¹²

While, for example, African Americans pointed to a legacy of slavery and formal segregation and American Indians critiqued a history of socio-political colonialism, Japanese Americans critiqued the sociopolitical and cultural ramifications of World War II internment camps.¹³ Notions that Asian Americans posed little political threat to the workings of the United States were altered as Asian Americans forged "political identity" against stereotypical depictions as apolitical.¹⁴ The term "Asian American" grew in use and marked a growing radicalism and communal identity that would undergird a shared political activism meant to undercut oppression.¹⁵ Modeled in some ways on African American activism, particularly the Black Power ideology, the Asian American struggle for advancement during the late twentieth century employed the activities of organizations such as Filipino farm unions and the Asian-American Political Alliance, which fought for the establishment of Asian studies programs as a way to interrogate and reformulate the nature and content of knowledge.¹⁶ Continuing

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ Steve Talbot, "The Meaning of Wounded Knee," in *Roots of Oppression: The American Indian Question* (New York, 1981), 51–77.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴ Gordon H. Chang, "Asian Americans and Politics: Some Perspectives from History," in G. Chang, ed., *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects* (Stanford, CA, 2001), 21–32.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, "Introduction," 1–10, and "Asian Americans and Politics," 28–32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119; Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," in *ibid.*, 39–78; Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham, NC, 2008), ch. 8; Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai, eds., *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism* (Lanham, MD, 2008), chs. 2–6; Ronald R. Sundstrom, *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (Albany, NY, 2008). William Wei gives priority to the civil

signs of oppression would mean the continued need for activism. Unlike many African American radical organizations, some Asian American community-based efforts were able to survive the repression of the 1960s and 1970s and remain active, although the intended audience and those benefiting from the efforts would shift and change over the decades and would include both better-known action on the West Coast as well as activities on the East Coast and in the Midwest.¹⁷ The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which involved the payment of damages resulting from internment during World War II, entailed economic advancement to some degree; yet it did not stifle the need for political involvement on issues such as racial violence and immigration.

Religious organizations and their supporting theological discourses, try as they might, were not allowed to remain silent in the face of race-based oppression. Those involved in antiracism work critiqued what they perceived as the duplicity of Christianity, and they called for either the transformation of Christianity into a praxis-based aid in the struggle for justice or its demise as an accomplice in the destruction of oppressed communities. How would religious communities respond to this ongoing and race-based sociopolitical challenge? And could they develop a vocabulary and grammar – modalities of thought – and geographies of practice in ways that were both reflexive and reflective?

RELIGION/RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND RACISM

According to Vine Deloria, as did African Americans, American Indians challenged religious assumptions and worked to align their religious commitments with their sociopolitical and economic needs.¹⁸ Furthermore, interest in traditional ritual structures, beliefs, and practices gained momentum as a way by which to rethink cultural identity and to frame political struggle within a framework of “organic” religious sensibilities. In this way, concerns for land and peoplehood took on ontologically significant meaning

rights movement as a major influence on the Asian American movement: Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia, 1993), ch. 1.

¹⁷ Glenn Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s,” in Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, eds., *Asian American Politics: Law, Participation, and Poverty* (Lanham, MD, 2003), 142–47.

¹⁸ Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, updated ed. (Golden, CO, 1994), 39; Ward Churchill, “Contours of Enlightenment: Reflections on Science, Theology, Law, and the Alternative Vision of Vine Deloria, Jr.,” in Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins, eds., *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance* (Lawrence, KS, 2003), 245–72; Inés Talamantez, “Transforming American Conceptions about Native America: Vine Deloria, Jr., Critic and Coyote,” in *ibid.*, 273–89.

as traditional practices and thought centered the earth and humanity in ways that gave the political struggle for land and resources a type of meta-physical importance. For example, the proclamation “God Is Red” served to foster not only a doctrine of God that critiqued colonialism, but also an alternate theological anthropology, a revised “American history.”

For George Tinker the basic premise behind such developments is the promise of harmony and balance – an effort to rethink life for American Indians beyond the categories of existence and the norms of personhood promoted through the post-1492 colonial process. Harmony and balance in this respect entail proper relationships between humans and between humans and the rest of the natural environment.¹⁹ Rather than assuming the correctness of Christianity, Tinker and other scholars like him argue for a turn to organic categories of meaning – for example, ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, vision quest, practices of generosity, and traditional stories – as a way by which to reframe life within geographies of communal and individual relationships prevalent before Europeans arrived in the Americas.²⁰ Time and space take on new connotations. Space as a type of connective tissue takes priority, and time is secondary. The ability to occupy space and time in ways that are respectful and marked by dignity is paramount.²¹ This is both an explicit and an implicit critique of the structural arrangements of life in the United States that privilege bureaucracy over against the person/community.²² Tinker suggests a “uniquely indigenous context” through which sovereignty is demanded as a matter of praxis concerned with both the sociopolitical and the religious dimensions of existence. Connecting to this is a reformulation of theological language, for example, replacing the traditional notion of God with its hierarchical and gender dilemmas and using instead notions of a sacred connection, a duality, a complex arrangement of balance that cannot be captured through a personification of human gender and structures of dominance.²³ The Bible is read using a hermeneutic framed by commitment to the cultural realities of American Indians and experienced as “true” to the extent its lessons are consistent with their experience; their demands for justice,

¹⁹ George Tinker, “American Indian Religious Traditions,” in *The Hope of Liberation in World Religions*, ed. Miguel De La Torre (Waco, TX, 2008), 257.

²⁰ See Carolyn Long, *Significations* (Philadelphia, 1986).

²¹ For example, see Henrietta Mann, “Earth Mother and Prayerful Children: Sacred Sites and Religious Freedom,” in Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkins, *Native Voices*, 194–208.

²² Tinker, “American Indian Religious Traditions,” 260–70; George E. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis, 2004), 2–6; George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008), 1–3.

²³ Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 27–8, 107–9.

including the return of land; and their acknowledgment of the vitality of traditional religiosity.²⁴

In relation to the importance of American Indian experience as a source for religious reflection, Inés Talamantez argues that any usable religious theory must be organic, arising out of the experience and epistemologies lodged within the life activities of American Indians, including the particular experiences of women.²⁵ Connected to this perspective is a renewed valuation of the history of American Indians as a critique of colonization and as positive source material for the construction of a religiously charged strategy of transformation. It is within this overall story of commonality that human violence and appreciation are assessed and critiqued, and this includes growing attention to the unique struggles of women within their communities, struggles resulting from external (outside the community) and internal (inside the community) discrimination.²⁶

Hispanics faced similar difficulties. For example, as Moises Sandoval notes, during the 1960s the Mexican Americans who organized to secure civil rights (*Movimiento*) experienced conflict with the Roman Catholic Church to the extent they insisted that the Church recognize and incorporate Hispanic culture in its thinking and practice. And in response to this conflict, religious practice and thought changed. For example, it was during the period of civil rights activism that César Chávez and the United Farm Workers' national boycott critiqued the failures of the Roman Catholic Church to safeguard the welfare of Hispanics but also connected to religious praxis through the support of organizations such as the California Migrant Ministry.

Some priests and other Church leaders recognized the need for greater connection to the experience and history – the culture – of Hispanics as part of their religious commitment. What resulted, some have argued, was the development of the Hispanic church, the Roman Catholic Church oriented toward the history, cultural reality, and concerns of Hispanics.²⁷ This

²⁴ Jace Weaver, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post-Colonial," in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY, 1998), 17–19.

²⁵ See, for example, Inés Talamantez, "Teaching Native American Religious Traditions and Healing," in *Teaching Religion and Healing*, ed. Linda Barnes (New York, 2006), 113–26.

²⁶ See, for example, Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC, 2008); and Andrea Smith, "Walking in Balance: The Spirituality-Liberation Praxis of Native Women," in Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity*, 178–98.

²⁷ Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY, 1990), 64.

took a variety of forms, including organizations such as Priests Associated for Religious, Educational, and Social Rights (1969). As a group of African American preachers and scholars formed the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) during the late 1960s as a vehicle for articulating a new religious vision, Priests Associated for Religious, Educational, and Social Rights (PADRES) was formed to spark church participation in the liberation struggle of Hispanics. Along these lines, PADRES pushed for more Hispanic representation in the ranks of Church leaders, for greater financial assistance from the national Church, and for greater systematic involvement of the connectional Church in the daily struggles of the oppressed. PADRES was not alone in this socially conscious rearticulation of church purpose and function; women such as Victory Noll Sister Gregoria Ortega pushed for systemic change in the Church. This type of work by women within the Hispanic Church took organizational form through groups such as *Las Hermanas* whereby nuns worked to better the life options of the oppressed.

Systematic efforts to make religion relevant to the needs of Hispanics, marking much of the midtwentieth century, took on theological importance through the formulation of Hispanic theologies of liberation. Typically dated back to the mid-1970s, modalities of Hispanic liberation theology, both Catholic and Protestant, combined early articulations of liberal theology and liberation theologies (black and Latin American), framing them within the cultural and historical realities of Hispanics. During its initial phase, with the work of figures such as Virgil Elizondo, Hispanic theology entailed a clear and directed response to the demands for an involved Church.²⁸ In this regard it took the shape of a practical theology by which the work of Christian communities might be framed and articulated more in line with the contemporary needs of a suffering population. Elizondo does this through a reenvisioning of the Christ Event in ways that highlight the ministry of Jesus Christ as existing between cultural realities – between social worlds. In relationship to the experience of Hispanics, Elizondo presents this in-betweenness as connoting the *mestizo/a*, or marginal.

This turn to “cultural hybridity” the theologian Benjamin Valentin labels a significant innovation for Hispanic thought and praxis, particularly when combined with the utilization of “cultural memory” as source material for the doing of contextual theology.²⁹ Contextual theology in

²⁸ Allen Figueroa Deck, S.J., “Introduction,” in *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. A. Deck (Maryknoll, NY, 1992), xii–xvii; Benjamin Valentin, “Strangers No More: An Introduction to, and Interpretation of, U.S. Hispanic/Latino Theology,” in Anthony Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, eds., *The Ties That Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino(a) Theology in Dialogue* (New York, 2001), 38–53.

²⁹ Eduardo C. Fernández, *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology* [1972–1998] (Collegeville, PA, 2000), 37–40; Benjamin Valentin, “Say, Now What?

relationship to the struggle against racism entails a commitment to the vitality of “popular religion” – thinkers such as Orlando Espín³⁰ and Ada María Isasi-Díaz offer major treatments of this – as a marker of organic engagement with the Divine and with the cultural reality and concerns of Hispanics. Race, hence, becomes not a marker of inferiority, but rather a sign of God’s presence and commitments. Furthermore, Justo González, perhaps the most prolific Hispanic theologian, has argued in numerous contexts that the perspective given to the reading of scripture as a primary source material for theology and to the very doing of theology itself must be grounded in and aligned with the historical context and life experiences of the marginalized – those who Elizondo would agree suffer injustice – and thereby it is communal in nature and focus.³¹ This is not to dismiss the larger Christian tradition; nor is it to denounce standard Western methodologies and theological frameworks. Instead, Hispanic theologians argue for the experience/history of their communities as the final word.

This turn toward organic sources, as several Hispanic theologians have argued, must extend beyond the valorization of cultural materials to their actual application. Along these lines, what theologians such as Valentin call for is a theology that is public in orientation and comprehensive (i.e., connecting the particularities of a group to the aims of a more general common good) and concrete in its framing of social justice.³² However, this is not enough in that the turn to the public nature of theology does not of necessity safeguard against modalities of intragroup oppression. On this score, theologians such as Isasi-Díaz, the first Latina to earn the Ph.D. at Union Theological Seminary, and María Pilar Aquino have promoted theologizing informed by the current gender dynamics in the United States in general and Hispanic communities in particular.³³ While there is some

Perspective Lines of Development for U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology,” in *New Horizons in Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology*, ed. B. Valentin (Cleveland, 2003), 101–2.

³⁰ For example, Orlando O. Espín, ed., *Building Bridges, Doing Justice: Constructing a Latin/a Ecumenical Theology* (Maryknoll, NY, 2009).

³¹ Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN, 1990).

³² Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg, PA, 2002), chs. 2–3.

³³ Examples include Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco, 1988); Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY, 1996); *En La Lucha – In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis, 1993); María Pilar Aquino, “Perspectives on a Latina/o Feminist Liberation Theology,” in Allan Figueroa Deck, ed., *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, 23–40; “Doing Theology from the Perspective of Latin American Women,” in *We Are a People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto Goizueta (Minneapolis, 1992), 79–105.

disagreement concerning the naming of this theologizing, with some arguing for a model of Latina feminist theology over against Isasi-Díaz's model of Mujerista Theology as the framing of what Hispanic women are doing, there seems to be general agreement on the need to work with a complex arrangement of source materials and in light of the contributions of Hispanic women to the social survival and cultural creativity of Hispanics.

As with the other communities discussed, Asian Americans made Christianity their own, infusing it with a sense of their cultural vision and practices. Some scholars argue that early Asian American theologians, working within the framework of contextual thought, were influenced by the writings of African Americans theologians such as James Cone.³⁴ They developed churches meant to short-circuit the racial animosity and aggression encountered elsewhere in their lives.³⁵ And again, at their best these churches serve more than one purpose – offering spiritual renewal, cultural connection, communal relationships, and sensitivity to political matters. The “secular” and the “sacred,” to the extent this terminology might be used, are intertwined within the workings of these churches, as is the case for the other communities discussed in this essay.³⁶ The manner in which churches buttress cultural life is not limited to Asian American Protestant churches. As the theologian Peter Phan suggests, Catholic churches also serve the socioreligious needs of Asian Americans. Both Asian American Protestants and Catholics have blended their history and experiences with the frameworks and structures of Christianity, promoting along the way popular forms of religiosity. This process of religious recovery is given voice through theological rearticulation of Asian American experiences. Stories of individual and collective life inform the doing of theology from Asian American perspectives, as was also the case for the theological responses to racism found within the other communities of concern in this essay.³⁷

Roy Isao Sano sought to bridge the church and the academy through the founding of the Pacific Center for Theology and Strategies, initially named the Asian American Center for Theology and Strategies.³⁸ This 1970s religio-theological center served as an organizational base for theological

³⁴ Peter Phan provides a short discussion of intersections between liberation theologies in *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY, 2003), ch. 2.

³⁵ Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY, 1996), ix.

³⁶ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women's Christology* (Cleveland, 2002), 70–73.

³⁷ Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008), 102–5; Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN, 1993), 7–8.

³⁸ Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies*, 93–4.

reflection on the challenges faced by Asian Americans and the religious resources available to them for the restructuring of their lives over against racism. While such efforts have helped address issues such as racial discrimination, these churches also promoted other modalities of oppression such as sexism.³⁹ To counter such problems, the Pacific Asian North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry organization was founded in 1984 to provide opportunity for theological engagement, networking, and support for those in ministry.⁴⁰

The radical edge of this religious thought would be sharpened by a new wave of theologians who engaged feminist studies and postcolonial thought. Representative of this shift are scholars such as Rita Nakashima Brock, Kwok Pui Lan, and Chung Hyun Kyung, who have called for radical change to the nature of religious community and have sought to intensify the sting of the theological critique of oppression and racism. Asian American feminist theologians call for attention to the experiences and voices of Asian American women as a necessary dimension of theological discourse that speaks to and for those most deeply affected and damaged by the workings of discrimination. As Grace Kim remarks, using personal narrative, "My Christian upbringing made me question why I was experiencing racism from the wider society and oppression from the patriarchal Korean society."⁴¹ Hence, to exclude Asian American women from the content and focus of theological work is to deny the full impact of Asian American history and culture. It is to endorse the further marginalization of the marginalized.

Asian American theology, if it is true to its community of concern, must read scripture from the perspective of the *minjung*, those who suffer in part as a result of racism.⁴² While initially related to the suffering people of Korea, Asian American theologians in the United States have at times utilized the term *minjung* to express the historical plight and liberative needs of those in the North American context. For example, Grace Ji-Sun Kim argues this concept fits the condition of those outside Korea as well, and it is particularly telling with respect to women.⁴³ Kim connects this naming of the people to the reality of *han*, resentment as a marker of the life of the oppressed and, as a consequence, a major concern for theological engagement of oppression. Andrew Park adds to this definition: "Social injustice,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 58–67; Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 71–7.

⁴⁰ <http://www.panaawtm.org/aboutus.html>.

⁴¹ Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, viii.

⁴² Andrew Sung Park, "The Bible and Han," in Andrew Sung Park and Susan L. Nelson, eds., *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against* (Albany, NY, 2001), 45–59.

⁴³ Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 139.

political repression, economic exploitation, cultural contempt, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, raise the collective *han*. When the oppressed undergo suffering over several generations without release, they develop collective unconscious *han* and transmit it to their posterity.” In part, within the United States, Asian Americans suffer the *han* associated with racial discrimination. Park argues that sin is the theological counterpart of the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural reality of *han*. They are interrelated in that “sin is of the oppressor; *han* is of the oppressed.”⁴⁴

A significant symbol within Asian American theology is the reenvisioned Christ, one with “an Asian Face.”⁴⁵ Through this figure, *han* is not accepted as inevitable, but rather it is addressed and overcome.⁴⁶ It is replaced by *dan*. According to Peter Phan, the concept of *dan* when applied theologically involves a radical shift in life circumstances of the individual and the collective in which “the transformation of the world by raising humans to a higher level of existence” is the property.⁴⁷ In some cases, this push for transformation of Asian American theologians can involve a strong turn whereby the experience and history of the oppressed take priority over a general reading of scripture. In this way the issues analyzed by theologians concerned with race and racism match the experiential concerns of the communities of interest. Through this process, Asian Americans foster theological reflection by which they understand themselves as subjects of significance and importance.

A similar existential and ontological posture early informed developments in African American communities. While some churches and church leaders emphasized personal salvation, others of the 1960s began to shift toward a theological agenda that sought to combine the best of the Christian tradition, the social sensibilities of liberal religion, and the cultural realities of African Americans. These ministers and church-based scholars attempted to combine a radical take on the Christ Event with the black consciousness movement by connecting the best of the Christian tradition as represented by figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and the social critique offered by figures such as Malcolm X. What resulted became known as “Black Theology of liberation.”⁴⁸ This development was akin to theological developments taking place in Latin America related to

⁴⁴ Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing*, 9, 28. See Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 69.

⁴⁵ Peter Phan provides a short discussion of intersections of liberation theologies in *Christianity with an Asian Face*, 98–124.

⁴⁶ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 59–60, 77–80, 131–61.

⁴⁷ Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face*, 84.

⁴⁸ For a wide-ranging documentary presentation on Black Theology, see James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, 2 vols. (Maryknoll, NY, 1979, 1993).

a growing concern with situations of political oppression and the inactivity of the Catholic Church regarding the suffering of the Latin American poor.⁴⁹ However, while Latin American theologians of liberation concerned themselves with the Christ Event as a response to issues of poverty and class, in the United States theologians of black liberation gave primary attention to the Christ Event as a response to racial oppression. It was argued by James Cone, the first of a long line of black theologians of liberation, that theology within the United States had for too long supported white supremacy and ideologically advocated racial discrimination as a part of God's plan. In place of this position, Black Theology argued God actually sided with the oppressed and would bring about their deliverance. This connection to suffering black humanity was so ontologically significant and epistemologically firm that God is best understood as being ontologically black.⁵⁰

Asian Americans, Latinos/as, and American Indians have found the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness to be too restrictive and to require dismissal of their geographies of origin and current life. While maintaining a sense of the ways in which the religious status quo deforms life and religious meaning, they have responded to the need for new religious identity and new ways of articulating this theologically by their own existential and ontological formulations. What is held in common, however, involves an appreciation for the aesthetic value of these communities and the ways in which the aesthetic dimensions of their lives and struggle for meaning should inform any effort toward theologizing. All four communities seem somewhat framed by a troubled relationship to history, a relationship reluctant to view history as messy, uncertain, and without clear and consistent indications of progress and purpose. That is to say, over against the teleological (manifest destiny–influenced) assumptions of the dominant society that controls the mechanisms of racial discourse, these four communities through their religio-theological response to racism offer an alternate, yet still teleological, take on history.⁵¹

Theology had to be developed within particular cultural contexts and could not be universalized without becoming oppressive in nature and

⁴⁹ The most widely discussed text in Latin American liberation theology is Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 15th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1988).

⁵⁰ See James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY, 1997), *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY, 1990), and *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1997). See also J. Deotis Roberts, *A Black Political Theology* (Louisville, KY, 1974), and *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY, 2005). Critiques of ontological blackness as well as the use of history within Black Theology include Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness* (New York, 1995).

⁵¹ Eddie Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America* (Chicago, 2007).

function. But theology, within any context, must express the liberative tone of the gospel in order to be authentic and to be true to the meaning of the Christ Event. After all, for Black Theology, Christ was not the passive figure advocated by status quo churches, pastors, and thinkers; rather, Christ was more authentically understood as a black revolutionary who championed the welfare of those who suffer at the hands of unjust political systems and social arrangements. For some, such as Albert Cleage, Christ was physically and historically black; others, such as James Cone, preferred an ontological interpretation of Christ's blackness.⁵² In the latter case, blackness is a symbol of Christ's commitments, a trope related to the focus and intent of God's intervention in human history. Black Theology was formed in significant ways as an extended Christology. But in this it is not alone. Hispanic theology, for example, has also interrogated Christology by framing Jesus Christ as family – for example, as “Uncle.” The key for Black Theology and Hispanic theology in this case is to highlight a framework of familiarity with the Christ, a relationship based on shared epistemology and ethics. In this regard, to be Christ-like is to care for those who suffer most, those who have been historically marginalized for the advancement of the racially dominant group.⁵³

What has been noted concerning Native American, Hispanic, and Asian American modalities of religious thought is just as true concerning Black Theology. While theologians called for advancement on issues of race, they often left intact oppressive thinking and structures related to gender and sexual orientation. In some cases, they assumed addressing race would have a sociopolitical trickle-down effect whereby other modalities of injustice would weaken. Others assumed these issues were of less importance and, therefore, less pressing than race. Still others gave it no thought whatsoever. Womanists within Black Theology and feminists within other modalities of liberation theology, however, did not allow this situation to remain unchallenged. As of the 1980s, womanists such as Delores Williams critiqued the sexism of their male colleagues and began to rethink and envision theology in ways that privileged the experiences of women, arguing that women within oppressed groups suffer multiple and overlapping arrangements of destruction: they are racialized, gendered, and classed in ways that limit life options and expose them to particular strategies of domination.⁵⁴ This

⁵² Albert Cleage, *The Black Messiah* (Trenton, NJ, 1989).

⁵³ Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., and Christopher Tirres, “Latino Popular Religion and the Struggle for Justice,” in Gary Orfield and Holly J. Lebowitz, eds., *Religion, Race, and Justice in a Changing America* (New York 1999), 142–3.

⁵⁴ In terms of womanist thought, see Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, 1989); Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta, 1998); Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The*

is the nature of life when dealing with the “dominant” population and when dealing with men from within their own communities. Marginalized women have used theologies of liberation as a means by which to construct a two-pronged attack against discriminatory practices within their communities and discriminatory logics from without. However, in the way not all Latinas embrace the use of *mujerista* to describe their work, not all African American women make use of the womanist label. Some, such as the ethicist Traci West, prefer to refer to themselves as feminists.

The history of liberation theologies in the United States draws attention to the tangled nature of oppression. That is to say, the preoccupation with race within liberation theologies points out the manner in which the oppressed can also be oppressors. And, what is more, religious organization also plays into the maintenance of these oppressive structures to the extent, for example, that key ministerial positions are typically considered best filled by men, and heterosexism is the typical posture on sexual orientation. Religious communities often reinforce the social status quo through what in general amounts to rather conservative creedal formulations tied to questionable appropriations of scriptural stories, such as the Exodus, without critical attention to the cultural context and the social implications. One cannot assume religious institutions are necessarily positioned for liberation or can be easily reconfigured in order to work on pressing issues; theologians must interrogate this possibility. Liberation must theologically involve critique of all modalities of oppression as well as all structural locations of oppressive activities and behaviors. If the needs and experiences of the oppressed are a fundamental hermeneutic device, no institutions or patterns of thought should be allowed to call into question the “real” nature of the experiences of the oppressed. Simply to concentrate on race is to participate in injustice, or at least to endorse injustice passively.

The first phase of these liberation theologies involved almost strict attention to issues of race and, to a lesser extent, class. However, subsequent generations of theologians have pushed the boundaries, recognizing the manner in which early efforts were tainted by oppressive assumptions. For instance, attention to race and class did not for some time generate a concern with gender/sexism as a dimension of oppression. While highlighting issues of race, race-based discrimination, and class, and doing so with some impact, liberation theologies have addressed with less success issues such as sexuality and heterosexism. These issues are tackled when liberation theologies recognize oppression as weblike in nature: race is tied to gender,

Challenge of Womanist God-Talk (Maryknoll, NY, 1995); Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis, 2007); and Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY, 1999).

and gender is tied to sexuality. In more recent years these connections have become a source of theological concern for liberation theologians within these various communities.

While much of what has developed within the context of Black Theology assumes the utility of the nation-state model as the proper framing of notions of discrimination and social justice, representatives from the other three communities of concern have pushed their thinking and epistemology beyond this framework by urging attention to the hemispheric nature of economics, politics, and culture. For example, some Hispanic theologians of liberation draw links among various peoples within the American hemisphere suggesting a new perspective on the weblike nature of oppression: it is geographically linked within and between nation-states.⁵⁵ Hence, oppressive ideological and political arrangements in the Americas involve overlapping and mutually dependent structures and strategies involving Spain, England, France, and others. In this way some theologians of liberation in the United States concerned with race were able to talk across restrictions of the nation-state and forge theological solidarity with other groups through recognition of overlapping histories of subjugation and struggle. And identity, as a result, began to involve overlapping sensibilities and realities, or what some Hispanic thinkers refer to as life “‘on the hyphen’ between U.S. and Latin American identity.”⁵⁶ At times, hemispheric sensibilities also entailed a challenge to the dominance of English as the language of theological discourse within the United States. Such a challenge was intended to represent more fully the cultural diversity that marks the United States. Proper interrogation of race-based discrimination must involve, these theologians suggest, a full range of critiques leaving no modalities of dominance unexposed and a full accompaniment of tools with which to undertake this process.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Unfortunately, the sense of urgency expressed within these theologies has often meant insufficient attention to matters of theory and method. For example, few of these theologians have given explicit attention to the nature and meaning of religion. What is religion? What distinguishes religion from other cultural realities and frameworks? In addition, what are

⁵⁵ See Virgil Elizondo's *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY, 1983).

⁵⁶ Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., and Christopher Tirres, “Latino Popular Religion and the Struggle for Justice,” in Gary Orfield and Holly J. Lebowitz, eds., *Religion, Race, and Justice in a Changing America* (New York, 1999), 143.

the proper approaches or methods for doing theological work? If one digs, one discovers that sources are viewed by using a particular methodological approach. Borrowing terminology, the approach is typically called “the hermeneutic of suspicion,” whereby the motivation and actions of white Americans are read not at face value, but in light of the workings of white supremacy and the efforts of white America to maintain privileges long held by white Americans. Certain questions frame this hermeneutic as present in these four contexts: What is the purpose? What is the underlying intent? Which structures of interaction and relationship are supported, and which are called into question? Who is in charge of the structures and language of interaction found within this particular discourse?

In essence, liberation theologies such as Black theologies, Hispanic theology, Asian American theologies, and Native American theologies seek to reconstruct what have been despised bodies. Stereotypical depictions of these “colored” bodies seek to dwarf their significance. Bodies that were discursively formed as inferior, lacking refinement and aesthetic value, are rethought through these theologies in ways that connect them to what is best about the universe. And as a result, these bodies receive renewed aesthetic value. The social theory of scholars from these communities seeks to place physical bodies within new spaces of life and relationships in which they are valued and exposed to healthy life options. “Black Is Beautiful” and “Brown Power,” for example, took theological form as these liberation theologies argued for the *imago dei* lodged within suffering bodies in ways that required new conversation concerning their value and importance as well as the correctness of their demands for improved life options within a transformed society.

Through these various theologies of liberation, an effort has been made to remove the religious supports for injustice and to reclaim religious institutions for political activism, arguing that such institutions had the financial and numerical resources, and the ethical disposition when at their best, as well as a history – although spotty – of justice work. Transformation of the United States with respect to issues of race and racism will require, they argued, the effort of these religious organizations at their best, and liberation theologies will call them to account and will offer them both the strategies and language of transformation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Section IV

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONFLICT IN AMERICA

RACE, RELIGION, AND THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

ANTHONY B. PINN

Whether one thinks in terms of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, or Hispanics, the sociopolitical movements of the twentieth century suggest a common theme revolving around the emergence of new peoples determined to enjoy a full range of rights and opportunities – economic advancement, preservation of cultural realities, political determination, and recognition within the intellectual life of the nation. “Black Power,” “Brown Power,” “Yellow Power,” “Red Power,” and so on, echoed through various communities and became conceptual and ideological tools for framing new aesthetics as well as sociopolitical and economic change. Such varied strands of sociopolitical and cultural struggle in the United States brought into question the dominant logic of sociopolitical struggle as a “black and white” issue.¹ However, while the framing of “the” race issue shifted, what remained somewhat consistent was the manner in which religion and theological thinking were forced to reflect this race-based struggle.²

Race and racism become deeply theological issues, ones that must be addressed within the context of religious community if they are to be addressed in ways that cut through to both their existential and their ontological articulations. Through a vocabulary of transformation and a grammar of justice, white supremacy was stripped from its religious garb, and the shortcomings of Christianity as support of both subtle and aggressive manifest destiny-styled arguments were noted and vigorously critiqued.

¹ See, for example, Nicholas De Genova, ed., *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians Remaking the United States* (Durham, NC, 2006).

² For information on the challenges of “naming” racial groups that inform this essay, see, for example, Nami Kim, “The ‘Indigestible’ Asian: The Unifying Term ‘Asian’ in Theological Discourse,” in Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology* (Louisville, KY, 2007), 23–43.

RACE AND SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUGGLE

The discussion of race within the United States has been framed often in terms of the civil rights activities of African Americans. And the ways in which religion in America changed in response to issues of race and racism are also framed typically in terms of black churches. Liberal religion's concern with the quality and texture of healthy existential life gave way to preoccupation with personal salvation and the church as the locale for evangelical energy and preoccupations.³ It was becoming evident quickly that African American Christianity in the United States faced a profound dilemma of relevance, and the dynamics of race shifted away from the more explicit framings of segregation during an early period of the twentieth century. This challenge to the relevance of African American Christian churches would continue during the 1970s and 1980s as U.S. citizens tapped into secular organizations for support and took advantage of opportunities for advancement made available through the civil rights movement. These newly minted members of the middle class moved away from "old" neighborhoods and sought status within developing suburban communities. This change continued until the 1990s, when more creative agendas and a desire for cultural connection led African Americans back to the churches of their youth.⁴ In these African American churches, whether or not they agreed with all the doctrine and ritual patterns, they found ways to ground themselves in communities of memory and ways to forge connections to comforting cultural patterns and understandings. The manner in which religious organizations are dimensions of culture, storehouses of certain cultural practices and frameworks, moved to the fore as middle-class African Americans made their way out of the suburbs and into black churches. Religion within African American communities as represented by churches and their theological discourses would face a shifting sociopolitical terrain and would be forced to discuss and respond to race differently.⁵

A similar synergy between issues of race and the structures of religiosity is mirrored in the twentieth-century framing of other communities as

³ Gayraud Wilmore offers an important discussion of this tension between radical religion and "secular" politics in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, 3rd ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1998).

⁴ Beverly Lawrence offers interesting insights into this process as it relates to a large Methodist church in Baltimore. See *Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African Americans Goes Home to Church* (New York, 1996).

⁵ For an interesting study of more contemporary political and economic activism of faith-based organizations, see Richard L. Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago, 2002).

well. For example, with respect to large numbers of Hispanics, the tensions of the civil rights movement and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 served to highlight and charge as a “brown” issue existing patterns of discrimination. Initial efforts to gain better treatment for Hispanics through the channels of the law proved somewhat frustrating. The land grant movement in the Southwest – the Federal Land Grant Alliance – made use of large-scale demonstrations and occupation of land as a way to force changes concerning U.S. takeover of land by questionable means.⁶ And the Crusade for Justice marked an effort to gather the energy of disillusioned youth and direct it toward forging a politically charged sense of identity – Chicano! It was no longer a negative term but now served as a marker of cultural place and political value. Following on this tying of political transformation to preservation of culture, organizations such as La Raza Unida sought to instill pride and transform economic and political opportunities for Hispanics.

Furthermore, modeled after the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets, growing out of the Young Citizens for Communication Action organization, were organized in Los Angeles with an initial aim of safeguarding the community from status quo violence and intimidation. Such activities were not limited to Chicanos in California; Puerto Ricans in New York in the 1960s began organizing for educational opportunities and economic advancement. And while this work took place within existing structures, organizations such as “Free Puerto Rico Now” maintained a rhetoric endorsing violence as a legitimate means of protesting injustice.⁷ It is interesting that within these various contexts the struggle for opportunity was often connected to a more visible racial identity.⁸

The mid-twentieth century entailed changes in the U.S. response to American Indians as the “Indian New Deal” and the political power for tribal governments were eroded.⁹ In response, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) championed struggle against racial oppression framed in terms of land, money, and culture during the 1960s. However, as certain members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee began to challenge the biblically based tactics of the civil rights movement, a group of young American Indian activists began to question the utility of the approach offered by NCAI. Organizing themselves as the National Indian Youth Council, they issued their own vision of transformation

⁶ Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 158.

⁷ James S. Olson, *Equality Deferred: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration in America since 1945* (Belmont, CA, 2003), 64–69.

⁸ López, *Racism on Trial*, vii.

⁹ Olson, *Equality Deferred*, 39.

based on a clear and aggressive pointing out of a central problem. "The Indian problem," they proclaimed in their organizing document, "is the white man."¹⁰ In 1968, the American Indian Movement was initiated in Minnesota and from that location spread to other states as a way to combat the racism resulting in cultural destruction and the theft of American Indian land and rights. A major moment in this development involved the takeover of Alcatraz, spearheaded by a group called Indians of All Tribes. While their demands, including the deeding of Alcatraz to Native Americans, were not met, the roughly two-year takeover, extending from 9 November 1969 to 22 June 1971, did suggest new strategies and a new sense of power against the status quo.¹¹ These various modalities of protest were all meant to illustrate and enhance "Red Power" – the means by which American Indians determine their own lives and future.¹²

While, for example, African Americans pointed to a legacy of slavery and formal segregation and American Indians critiqued a history of socio-political colonialism, Japanese Americans critiqued the sociopolitical and cultural ramifications of World War II internment camps.¹³ Notions that Asian Americans posed little political threat to the workings of the United States were altered as Asian Americans forged "political identity" against stereotypical depictions as apolitical.¹⁴ The term "Asian American" grew in use and marked a growing radicalism and communal identity that would undergird a shared political activism meant to undercut oppression.¹⁵ Modeled in some ways on African American activism, particularly the Black Power ideology, the Asian American struggle for advancement during the late twentieth century employed the activities of organizations such as Filipino farm unions and the Asian-American Political Alliance, which fought for the establishment of Asian studies programs as a way to interrogate and reformulate the nature and content of knowledge.¹⁶ Continuing

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ Steve Talbot, "The Meaning of Wounded Knee," in *Roots of Oppression: The American Indian Question* (New York, 1981), 51–77.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴ Gordon H. Chang, "Asian Americans and Politics: Some Perspectives from History," in G. Chang, ed., *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects* (Stanford, CA, 2001), 21–32.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, "Introduction," 1–10, and "Asian Americans and Politics," 28–32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119; Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," in *ibid.*, 39–78; Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham, NC, 2008), ch. 8; Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai, eds., *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism* (Lanham, MD, 2008), chs. 2–6; Ronald R. Sundstrom, *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (Albany, NY, 2008). William Wei gives priority to the civil

signs of oppression would mean the continued need for activism. Unlike many African American radical organizations, some Asian American community-based efforts were able to survive the repression of the 1960s and 1970s and remain active, although the intended audience and those benefiting from the efforts would shift and change over the decades and would include both better-known action on the West Coast as well as activities on the East Coast and in the Midwest.¹⁷ The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which involved the payment of damages resulting from internment during World War II, entailed economic advancement to some degree; yet it did not stifle the need for political involvement on issues such as racial violence and immigration.

Religious organizations and their supporting theological discourses, try as they might, were not allowed to remain silent in the face of race-based oppression. Those involved in antiracism work critiqued what they perceived as the duplicity of Christianity, and they called for either the transformation of Christianity into a praxis-based aid in the struggle for justice or its demise as an accomplice in the destruction of oppressed communities. How would religious communities respond to this ongoing and race-based sociopolitical challenge? And could they develop a vocabulary and grammar – modalities of thought – and geographies of practice in ways that were both reflexive and reflective?

RELIGION/RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND RACISM

According to Vine Deloria, as did African Americans, American Indians challenged religious assumptions and worked to align their religious commitments with their sociopolitical and economic needs.¹⁸ Furthermore, interest in traditional ritual structures, beliefs, and practices gained momentum as a way by which to rethink cultural identity and to frame political struggle within a framework of “organic” religious sensibilities. In this way, concerns for land and peoplehood took on ontologically significant meaning

rights movement as a major influence on the Asian American movement: Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia, 1993), ch. 1.

¹⁷ Glenn Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s,” in Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, eds., *Asian American Politics: Law, Participation, and Poverty* (Lanham, MD, 2003), 142–47.

¹⁸ Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, updated ed. (Golden, CO, 1994), 39; Ward Churchill, “Contours of Enlightenment: Reflections on Science, Theology, Law, and the Alternative Vision of Vine Deloria, Jr.,” in Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins, eds., *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance* (Lawrence, KS, 2003), 245–72; Inés Talamantez, “Transforming American Conceptions about Native America: Vine Deloria, Jr., Critic and Coyote,” in *ibid.*, 273–89.

as traditional practices and thought centered the earth and humanity in ways that gave the political struggle for land and resources a type of meta-physical importance. For example, the proclamation “God Is Red” served to foster not only a doctrine of God that critiqued colonialism, but also an alternate theological anthropology, a revised “American history.”

For George Tinker the basic premise behind such developments is the promise of harmony and balance – an effort to rethink life for American Indians beyond the categories of existence and the norms of personhood promoted through the post-1492 colonial process. Harmony and balance in this respect entail proper relationships between humans and between humans and the rest of the natural environment.¹⁹ Rather than assuming the correctness of Christianity, Tinker and other scholars like him argue for a turn to organic categories of meaning – for example, ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, vision quest, practices of generosity, and traditional stories – as a way by which to reframe life within geographies of communal and individual relationships prevalent before Europeans arrived in the Americas.²⁰ Time and space take on new connotations. Space as a type of connective tissue takes priority, and time is secondary. The ability to occupy space and time in ways that are respectful and marked by dignity is paramount.²¹ This is both an explicit and an implicit critique of the structural arrangements of life in the United States that privilege bureaucracy over against the person/community.²² Tinker suggests a “uniquely indigenous context” through which sovereignty is demanded as a matter of praxis concerned with both the sociopolitical and the religious dimensions of existence. Connecting to this is a reformulation of theological language, for example, replacing the traditional notion of God with its hierarchical and gender dilemmas and using instead notions of a sacred connection, a duality, a complex arrangement of balance that cannot be captured through a personification of human gender and structures of dominance.²³ The Bible is read using a hermeneutic framed by commitment to the cultural realities of American Indians and experienced as “true” to the extent its lessons are consistent with their experience; their demands for justice,

¹⁹ George Tinker, “American Indian Religious Traditions,” in *The Hope of Liberation in World Religions*, ed. Miguel De La Torre (Waco, TX, 2008), 257.

²⁰ See Carolyn Long, *Significations* (Philadelphia, 1986).

²¹ For example, see Henrietta Mann, “Earth Mother and Prayerful Children: Sacred Sites and Religious Freedom,” in Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkins, *Native Voices*, 194–208.

²² Tinker, “American Indian Religious Traditions,” 260–70; George E. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis, 2004), 2–6; George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008), 1–3.

²³ Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 27–8, 107–9.

including the return of land; and their acknowledgment of the vitality of traditional religiosity.²⁴

In relation to the importance of American Indian experience as a source for religious reflection, Inés Talamantez argues that any usable religious theory must be organic, arising out of the experience and epistemologies lodged within the life activities of American Indians, including the particular experiences of women.²⁵ Connected to this perspective is a renewed valuation of the history of American Indians as a critique of colonization and as positive source material for the construction of a religiously charged strategy of transformation. It is within this overall story of commonality that human violence and appreciation are assessed and critiqued, and this includes growing attention to the unique struggles of women within their communities, struggles resulting from external (outside the community) and internal (inside the community) discrimination.²⁶

Hispanics faced similar difficulties. For example, as Moises Sandoval notes, during the 1960s the Mexican Americans who organized to secure civil rights (*Movimiento*) experienced conflict with the Roman Catholic Church to the extent they insisted that the Church recognize and incorporate Hispanic culture in its thinking and practice. And in response to this conflict, religious practice and thought changed. For example, it was during the period of civil rights activism that César Chávez and the United Farm Workers' national boycott critiqued the failures of the Roman Catholic Church to safeguard the welfare of Hispanics but also connected to religious praxis through the support of organizations such as the California Migrant Ministry.

Some priests and other Church leaders recognized the need for greater connection to the experience and history – the culture – of Hispanics as part of their religious commitment. What resulted, some have argued, was the development of the Hispanic church, the Roman Catholic Church oriented toward the history, cultural reality, and concerns of Hispanics.²⁷ This

²⁴ Jace Weaver, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post-Colonial," in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY, 1998), 17–19.

²⁵ See, for example, Inés Talamantez, "Teaching Native American Religious Traditions and Healing," in *Teaching Religion and Healing*, ed. Linda Barnes (New York, 2006), 113–26.

²⁶ See, for example, Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC, 2008); and Andrea Smith, "Walking in Balance: The Spirituality-Liberation Praxis of Native Women," in Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity*, 178–98.

²⁷ Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY, 1990), 64.

took a variety of forms, including organizations such as Priests Associated for Religious, Educational, and Social Rights (1969). As a group of African American preachers and scholars formed the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) during the late 1960s as a vehicle for articulating a new religious vision, Priests Associated for Religious, Educational, and Social Rights (PADRES) was formed to spark church participation in the liberation struggle of Hispanics. Along these lines, PADRES pushed for more Hispanic representation in the ranks of Church leaders, for greater financial assistance from the national Church, and for greater systematic involvement of the connectional Church in the daily struggles of the oppressed. PADRES was not alone in this socially conscious rearticulation of church purpose and function; women such as Victory Noll Sister Gregoria Ortega pushed for systemic change in the Church. This type of work by women within the Hispanic Church took organizational form through groups such as *Las Hermanas* whereby nuns worked to better the life options of the oppressed.

Systematic efforts to make religion relevant to the needs of Hispanics, marking much of the midtwentieth century, took on theological importance through the formulation of Hispanic theologies of liberation. Typically dated back to the mid-1970s, modalities of Hispanic liberation theology, both Catholic and Protestant, combined early articulations of liberal theology and liberation theologies (black and Latin American), framing them within the cultural and historical realities of Hispanics. During its initial phase, with the work of figures such as Virgil Elizondo, Hispanic theology entailed a clear and directed response to the demands for an involved Church.²⁸ In this regard it took the shape of a practical theology by which the work of Christian communities might be framed and articulated more in line with the contemporary needs of a suffering population. Elizondo does this through a reenvisioning of the Christ Event in ways that highlight the ministry of Jesus Christ as existing between cultural realities – between social worlds. In relationship to the experience of Hispanics, Elizondo presents this in-betweenness as connoting the *mestizo/a*, or marginal.

This turn to “cultural hybridity” the theologian Benjamin Valentin labels a significant innovation for Hispanic thought and praxis, particularly when combined with the utilization of “cultural memory” as source material for the doing of contextual theology.²⁹ Contextual theology in

²⁸ Allen Figueroa Deck, S.J., “Introduction,” in *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. A. Deck (Maryknoll, NY, 1992), xii–xvii; Benjamin Valentin, “Strangers No More: An Introduction to, and Interpretation of, U.S. Hispanic/Latino Theology,” in Anthony Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, eds., *The Ties That Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino(a) Theology in Dialogue* (New York, 2001), 38–53.

²⁹ Eduardo C. Fernández, *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology* [1972–1998] (Collegeville, PA, 2000), 37–40; Benjamin Valentin, “Say, Now What?

relationship to the struggle against racism entails a commitment to the vitality of “popular religion” – thinkers such as Orlando Espín³⁰ and Ada María Isasi-Díaz offer major treatments of this – as a marker of organic engagement with the Divine and with the cultural reality and concerns of Hispanics. Race, hence, becomes not a marker of inferiority, but rather a sign of God’s presence and commitments. Furthermore, Justo González, perhaps the most prolific Hispanic theologian, has argued in numerous contexts that the perspective given to the reading of scripture as a primary source material for theology and to the very doing of theology itself must be grounded in and aligned with the historical context and life experiences of the marginalized – those who Elizondo would agree suffer injustice – and thereby it is communal in nature and focus.³¹ This is not to dismiss the larger Christian tradition; nor is it to denounce standard Western methodologies and theological frameworks. Instead, Hispanic theologians argue for the experience/history of their communities as the final word.

This turn toward organic sources, as several Hispanic theologians have argued, must extend beyond the valorization of cultural materials to their actual application. Along these lines, what theologians such as Valentin call for is a theology that is public in orientation and comprehensive (i.e., connecting the particularities of a group to the aims of a more general common good) and concrete in its framing of social justice.³² However, this is not enough in that the turn to the public nature of theology does not of necessity safeguard against modalities of intragroup oppression. On this score, theologians such as Isasi-Díaz, the first Latina to earn the Ph.D. at Union Theological Seminary, and María Pilar Aquino have promoted theologizing informed by the current gender dynamics in the United States in general and Hispanic communities in particular.³³ While there is some

Perspective Lines of Development for U.S. Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology,” in *New Horizons in Hispanic/Latino(a) Theology*, ed. B. Valentin (Cleveland, 2003), 101–2.

³⁰ For example, Orlando O. Espín, ed., *Building Bridges, Doing Justice: Constructing a Latin/a Ecumenical Theology* (Maryknoll, NY, 2009).

³¹ Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN, 1990).

³² Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg, PA, 2002), chs. 2–3.

³³ Examples include Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco, 1988); Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY, 1996); *En La Lucha – In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis, 1993); María Pilar Aquino, “Perspectives on a Latina/o Feminist Liberation Theology,” in Allan Figueroa Deck, ed., *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, 23–40; “Doing Theology from the Perspective of Latin American Women,” in *We Are a People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto Goizueta (Minneapolis, 1992), 79–105.

disagreement concerning the naming of this theologizing, with some arguing for a model of Latina feminist theology over against Isasi-Díaz's model of Mujerista Theology as the framing of what Hispanic women are doing, there seems to be general agreement on the need to work with a complex arrangement of source materials and in light of the contributions of Hispanic women to the social survival and cultural creativity of Hispanics.

As with the other communities discussed, Asian Americans made Christianity their own, infusing it with a sense of their cultural vision and practices. Some scholars argue that early Asian American theologians, working within the framework of contextual thought, were influenced by the writings of African Americans theologians such as James Cone.³⁴ They developed churches meant to short-circuit the racial animosity and aggression encountered elsewhere in their lives.³⁵ And again, at their best these churches serve more than one purpose – offering spiritual renewal, cultural connection, communal relationships, and sensitivity to political matters. The “secular” and the “sacred,” to the extent this terminology might be used, are intertwined within the workings of these churches, as is the case for the other communities discussed in this essay.³⁶ The manner in which churches buttress cultural life is not limited to Asian American Protestant churches. As the theologian Peter Phan suggests, Catholic churches also serve the socioreligious needs of Asian Americans. Both Asian American Protestants and Catholics have blended their history and experiences with the frameworks and structures of Christianity, promoting along the way popular forms of religiosity. This process of religious recovery is given voice through theological rearticulation of Asian American experiences. Stories of individual and collective life inform the doing of theology from Asian American perspectives, as was also the case for the theological responses to racism found within the other communities of concern in this essay.³⁷

Roy Isao Sano sought to bridge the church and the academy through the founding of the Pacific Center for Theology and Strategies, initially named the Asian American Center for Theology and Strategies.³⁸ This 1970s religio-theological center served as an organizational base for theological

³⁴ Peter Phan provides a short discussion of intersections between liberation theologies in *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY, 2003), ch. 2.

³⁵ Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY, 1996), ix.

³⁶ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women's Christology* (Cleveland, 2002), 70–73.

³⁷ Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008), 102–5; Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN, 1993), 7–8.

³⁸ Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies*, 93–4.

reflection on the challenges faced by Asian Americans and the religious resources available to them for the restructuring of their lives over against racism. While such efforts have helped address issues such as racial discrimination, these churches also promoted other modalities of oppression such as sexism.³⁹ To counter such problems, the Pacific Asian North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry organization was founded in 1984 to provide opportunity for theological engagement, networking, and support for those in ministry.⁴⁰

The radical edge of this religious thought would be sharpened by a new wave of theologians who engaged feminist studies and postcolonial thought. Representative of this shift are scholars such as Rita Nakashima Brock, Kwok Pui Lan, and Chung Hyun Kyung, who have called for radical change to the nature of religious community and have sought to intensify the sting of the theological critique of oppression and racism. Asian American feminist theologians call for attention to the experiences and voices of Asian American women as a necessary dimension of theological discourse that speaks to and for those most deeply affected and damaged by the workings of discrimination. As Grace Kim remarks, using personal narrative, "My Christian upbringing made me question why I was experiencing racism from the wider society and oppression from the patriarchal Korean society."⁴¹ Hence, to exclude Asian American women from the content and focus of theological work is to deny the full impact of Asian American history and culture. It is to endorse the further marginalization of the marginalized.

Asian American theology, if it is true to its community of concern, must read scripture from the perspective of the *minjung*, those who suffer in part as a result of racism.⁴² While initially related to the suffering people of Korea, Asian American theologians in the United States have at times utilized the term *minjung* to express the historical plight and liberative needs of those in the North American context. For example, Grace Ji-Sun Kim argues this concept fits the condition of those outside Korea as well, and it is particularly telling with respect to women.⁴³ Kim connects this naming of the people to the reality of *han*, resentment as a marker of the life of the oppressed and, as a consequence, a major concern for theological engagement of oppression. Andrew Park adds to this definition: "Social injustice,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 58–67; Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 71–7.

⁴⁰ <http://www.panaawtm.org/aboutus.html>.

⁴¹ Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, viii.

⁴² Andrew Sung Park, "The Bible and Han," in Andrew Sung Park and Susan L. Nelson, eds., *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against* (Albany, NY, 2001), 45–59.

⁴³ Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 139.

political repression, economic exploitation, cultural contempt, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, raise the collective *han*. When the oppressed undergo suffering over several generations without release, they develop collective unconscious *han* and transmit it to their posterity.” In part, within the United States, Asian Americans suffer the *han* associated with racial discrimination. Park argues that sin is the theological counterpart of the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural reality of *han*. They are interrelated in that “sin is of the oppressor; *han* is of the oppressed.”⁴⁴

A significant symbol within Asian American theology is the reenvisioned Christ, one with “an Asian Face.”⁴⁵ Through this figure, *han* is not accepted as inevitable, but rather it is addressed and overcome.⁴⁶ It is replaced by *dan*. According to Peter Phan, the concept of *dan* when applied theologically involves a radical shift in life circumstances of the individual and the collective in which “the transformation of the world by raising humans to a higher level of existence” is the property.⁴⁷ In some cases, this push for transformation of Asian American theologians can involve a strong turn whereby the experience and history of the oppressed take priority over a general reading of scripture. In this way the issues analyzed by theologians concerned with race and racism match the experiential concerns of the communities of interest. Through this process, Asian Americans foster theological reflection by which they understand themselves as subjects of significance and importance.

A similar existential and ontological posture early informed developments in African American communities. While some churches and church leaders emphasized personal salvation, others of the 1960s began to shift toward a theological agenda that sought to combine the best of the Christian tradition, the social sensibilities of liberal religion, and the cultural realities of African Americans. These ministers and church-based scholars attempted to combine a radical take on the Christ Event with the black consciousness movement by connecting the best of the Christian tradition as represented by figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and the social critique offered by figures such as Malcolm X. What resulted became known as “Black Theology of liberation.”⁴⁸ This development was akin to theological developments taking place in Latin America related to

⁴⁴ Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing*, 9, 28. See Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 69.

⁴⁵ Peter Phan provides a short discussion of intersections of liberation theologies in *Christianity with an Asian Face*, 98–124.

⁴⁶ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Grace of Sophia*, 59–60, 77–80, 131–61.

⁴⁷ Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face*, 84.

⁴⁸ For a wide-ranging documentary presentation on Black Theology, see James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, 2 vols. (Maryknoll, NY, 1979, 1993).

a growing concern with situations of political oppression and the inactivity of the Catholic Church regarding the suffering of the Latin American poor.⁴⁹ However, while Latin American theologians of liberation concerned themselves with the Christ Event as a response to issues of poverty and class, in the United States theologians of black liberation gave primary attention to the Christ Event as a response to racial oppression. It was argued by James Cone, the first of a long line of black theologians of liberation, that theology within the United States had for too long supported white supremacy and ideologically advocated racial discrimination as a part of God's plan. In place of this position, Black Theology argued God actually sided with the oppressed and would bring about their deliverance. This connection to suffering black humanity was so ontologically significant and epistemologically firm that God is best understood as being ontologically black.⁵⁰

Asian Americans, Latinos/as, and American Indians have found the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness to be too restrictive and to require dismissal of their geographies of origin and current life. While maintaining a sense of the ways in which the religious status quo deforms life and religious meaning, they have responded to the need for new religious identity and new ways of articulating this theologically by their own existential and ontological formulations. What is held in common, however, involves an appreciation for the aesthetic value of these communities and the ways in which the aesthetic dimensions of their lives and struggle for meaning should inform any effort toward theologizing. All four communities seem somewhat framed by a troubled relationship to history, a relationship reluctant to view history as messy, uncertain, and without clear and consistent indications of progress and purpose. That is to say, over against the teleological (manifest destiny–influenced) assumptions of the dominant society that controls the mechanisms of racial discourse, these four communities through their religio-theological response to racism offer an alternate, yet still teleological, take on history.⁵¹

Theology had to be developed within particular cultural contexts and could not be universalized without becoming oppressive in nature and

⁴⁹ The most widely discussed text in Latin American liberation theology is Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 15th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1988).

⁵⁰ See James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY, 1997), *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY, 1990), and *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 1997). See also J. Deotis Roberts, *A Black Political Theology* (Louisville, KY, 1974), and *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY, 2005). Critiques of ontological blackness as well as the use of history within Black Theology include Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness* (New York, 1995).

⁵¹ Eddie Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America* (Chicago, 2007).

function. But theology, within any context, must express the liberative tone of the gospel in order to be authentic and to be true to the meaning of the Christ Event. After all, for Black Theology, Christ was not the passive figure advocated by status quo churches, pastors, and thinkers; rather, Christ was more authentically understood as a black revolutionary who championed the welfare of those who suffer at the hands of unjust political systems and social arrangements. For some, such as Albert Cleage, Christ was physically and historically black; others, such as James Cone, preferred an ontological interpretation of Christ's blackness.⁵² In the latter case, blackness is a symbol of Christ's commitments, a trope related to the focus and intent of God's intervention in human history. Black Theology was formed in significant ways as an extended Christology. But in this it is not alone. Hispanic theology, for example, has also interrogated Christology by framing Jesus Christ as family – for example, as “Uncle.” The key for Black Theology and Hispanic theology in this case is to highlight a framework of familiarity with the Christ, a relationship based on shared epistemology and ethics. In this regard, to be Christ-like is to care for those who suffer most, those who have been historically marginalized for the advancement of the racially dominant group.⁵³

What has been noted concerning Native American, Hispanic, and Asian American modalities of religious thought is just as true concerning Black Theology. While theologians called for advancement on issues of race, they often left intact oppressive thinking and structures related to gender and sexual orientation. In some cases, they assumed addressing race would have a sociopolitical trickle-down effect whereby other modalities of injustice would weaken. Others assumed these issues were of less importance and, therefore, less pressing than race. Still others gave it no thought whatsoever. Womanists within Black Theology and feminists within other modalities of liberation theology, however, did not allow this situation to remain unchallenged. As of the 1980s, womanists such as Delores Williams critiqued the sexism of their male colleagues and began to rethink and envision theology in ways that privileged the experiences of women, arguing that women within oppressed groups suffer multiple and overlapping arrangements of destruction: they are racialized, gendered, and classed in ways that limit life options and expose them to particular strategies of domination.⁵⁴ This

⁵² Albert Cleage, *The Black Messiah* (Trenton, NJ, 1989).

⁵³ Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., and Christopher Tirres, “Latino Popular Religion and the Struggle for Justice,” in Gary Orfield and Holly J. Lebowitz, eds., *Religion, Race, and Justice in a Changing America* (New York 1999), 142–3.

⁵⁴ In terms of womanist thought, see Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, 1989); Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta, 1998); Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The*

is the nature of life when dealing with the “dominant” population and when dealing with men from within their own communities. Marginalized women have used theologies of liberation as a means by which to construct a two-pronged attack against discriminatory practices within their communities and discriminatory logics from without. However, in the way not all Latinas embrace the use of *mujerista* to describe their work, not all African American women make use of the womanist label. Some, such as the ethicist Traci West, prefer to refer to themselves as feminists.

The history of liberation theologies in the United States draws attention to the tangled nature of oppression. That is to say, the preoccupation with race within liberation theologies points out the manner in which the oppressed can also be oppressors. And, what is more, religious organization also plays into the maintenance of these oppressive structures to the extent, for example, that key ministerial positions are typically considered best filled by men, and heterosexism is the typical posture on sexual orientation. Religious communities often reinforce the social status quo through what in general amounts to rather conservative creedal formulations tied to questionable appropriations of scriptural stories, such as the Exodus, without critical attention to the cultural context and the social implications. One cannot assume religious institutions are necessarily positioned for liberation or can be easily reconfigured in order to work on pressing issues; theologians must interrogate this possibility. Liberation must theologically involve critique of all modalities of oppression as well as all structural locations of oppressive activities and behaviors. If the needs and experiences of the oppressed are a fundamental hermeneutic device, no institutions or patterns of thought should be allowed to call into question the “real” nature of the experiences of the oppressed. Simply to concentrate on race is to participate in injustice, or at least to endorse injustice passively.

The first phase of these liberation theologies involved almost strict attention to issues of race and, to a lesser extent, class. However, subsequent generations of theologians have pushed the boundaries, recognizing the manner in which early efforts were tainted by oppressive assumptions. For instance, attention to race and class did not for some time generate a concern with gender/sexism as a dimension of oppression. While highlighting issues of race, race-based discrimination, and class, and doing so with some impact, liberation theologies have addressed with less success issues such as sexuality and heterosexism. These issues are tackled when liberation theologies recognize oppression as weblike in nature: race is tied to gender,

Challenge of Womanist God-Talk (Maryknoll, NY, 1995); Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis, 2007); and Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY, 1999).

and gender is tied to sexuality. In more recent years these connections have become a source of theological concern for liberation theologians within these various communities.

While much of what has developed within the context of Black Theology assumes the utility of the nation-state model as the proper framing of notions of discrimination and social justice, representatives from the other three communities of concern have pushed their thinking and epistemology beyond this framework by urging attention to the hemispheric nature of economics, politics, and culture. For example, some Hispanic theologians of liberation draw links among various peoples within the American hemisphere suggesting a new perspective on the weblike nature of oppression: it is geographically linked within and between nation-states.⁵⁵ Hence, oppressive ideological and political arrangements in the Americas involve overlapping and mutually dependent structures and strategies involving Spain, England, France, and others. In this way some theologians of liberation in the United States concerned with race were able to talk across restrictions of the nation-state and forge theological solidarity with other groups through recognition of overlapping histories of subjugation and struggle. And identity, as a result, began to involve overlapping sensibilities and realities, or what some Hispanic thinkers refer to as life “‘on the hyphen’ between U.S. and Latin American identity.”⁵⁶ At times, hemispheric sensibilities also entailed a challenge to the dominance of English as the language of theological discourse within the United States. Such a challenge was intended to represent more fully the cultural diversity that marks the United States. Proper interrogation of race-based discrimination must involve, these theologians suggest, a full range of critiques leaving no modalities of dominance unexposed and a full accompaniment of tools with which to undertake this process.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Unfortunately, the sense of urgency expressed within these theologies has often meant insufficient attention to matters of theory and method. For example, few of these theologians have given explicit attention to the nature and meaning of religion. What is religion? What distinguishes religion from other cultural realities and frameworks? In addition, what are

⁵⁵ See Virgil Elizondo's *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY, 1983).

⁵⁶ Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., and Christopher Tirres, “Latino Popular Religion and the Struggle for Justice,” in Gary Orfield and Holly J. Lebowitz, eds., *Religion, Race, and Justice in a Changing America* (New York, 1999), 143.

the proper approaches or methods for doing theological work? If one digs, one discovers that sources are viewed by using a particular methodological approach. Borrowing terminology, the approach is typically called “the hermeneutic of suspicion,” whereby the motivation and actions of white Americans are read not at face value, but in light of the workings of white supremacy and the efforts of white America to maintain privileges long held by white Americans. Certain questions frame this hermeneutic as present in these four contexts: What is the purpose? What is the underlying intent? Which structures of interaction and relationship are supported, and which are called into question? Who is in charge of the structures and language of interaction found within this particular discourse?

In essence, liberation theologies such as Black theologies, Hispanic theology, Asian American theologies, and Native American theologies seek to reconstruct what have been despised bodies. Stereotypical depictions of these “colored” bodies seek to dwarf their significance. Bodies that were discursively formed as inferior, lacking refinement and aesthetic value, are rethought through these theologies in ways that connect them to what is best about the universe. And as a result, these bodies receive renewed aesthetic value. The social theory of scholars from these communities seeks to place physical bodies within new spaces of life and relationships in which they are valued and exposed to healthy life options. “Black Is Beautiful” and “Brown Power,” for example, took theological form as these liberation theologies argued for the *imago dei* lodged within suffering bodies in ways that required new conversation concerning their value and importance as well as the correctness of their demands for improved life options within a transformed society.

Through these various theologies of liberation, an effort has been made to remove the religious supports for injustice and to reclaim religious institutions for political activism, arguing that such institutions had the financial and numerical resources, and the ethical disposition when at their best, as well as a history – although spotty – of justice work. Transformation of the United States with respect to issues of race and racism will require, they argued, the effort of these religious organizations at their best, and liberation theologies will call them to account and will offer them both the strategies and language of transformation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Brock, Nakashima, Rita Ha Kim, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang, eds. *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*. Louisville, KY, 2007.

Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. 20th anniversary ed. Maryknoll, NY, 1990.

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AMERICAN RELIGION'S FASCINATION WITH SEX

R. MARIE GRIFFITH

American history carries the unmistakable imprint of religion's regulation of sexual behavior. Religious attention to sex and its many consequences has shaped American legal statutes, moral values, and worldviews in innumerable ways. Religious groups have long concerned themselves with upholding particular rules about marriage, reproduction, and leisure activity through ethical training and sometimes through political activism. Communities know, of course, that some in their midst – religious leaders no less than participants – may find such standards difficult to follow over a lifetime; what to do about various failures and transgressions, then, has been a significant source of discussion and debate. Just as fraught have been varied efforts to broaden or revise sexual regulations within religious traditions on the grounds that many such rules represent outdated customs and unjust cultural prejudices rather than divine and eternal truths. This essay traces the general trajectory of these protracted and overlapping religious struggles and the development of what many view as a full-blown culture war in the United States – a war for the authority to define sex and to control sexuality for the sake of the nation's future.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The long battles waged by Christians over sexuality offer a particularly bewildering set of paradoxes that have played themselves out in American culture no less than in other cultures on which the tradition has had a major influence. Consider, briefly, the biblical context from which Christians trace their tradition's origins. Jesus, Christianity's central figure and *raison d'être*, who was believed to be born of a virgin, said very little about sex, although the gospel writers variously depict him as prohibiting divorce, forgiving an adulterous woman while cautioning his disciples against hypocritical judgments, raising the bar on adultery by cautioning against lustful looks, and praising those who make themselves “eunuchs for the

sake of the kingdom" (Matthew 19:12). Jesus' view apparently prioritized care for the needy over marriage and family. Paul, the avid convert who shaped early Christian views of sex, gender, and the family, spoke with greater urgency about sexual rules. Plainly concerned about desire and sexual sin, he spoke of celibacy as the best and holiest way but also noted that 'twas better to marry than to burn in lust and in hell (see 1 Corinthians 7:9). Early Christian thinkers and leaders followed this disciplined lead, many offering further commentary on what they deemed to be a holy war between the spirit and the wicked flesh.

Not all were called to celibacy, however, and Christian writers developed a robust corpus of rules for marriage and child rearing. Sexuality was invariably part of these discussions, whether directly or implicitly, and rules for sexual discipline were codified and strictly enjoined. By the early modern period, the Catholic tradition had developed into one that glorified chastity while extolling the family, relying on virginal priests for leadership while demanding abundant procreation from married participants. The newer Protestant tradition, forged by Christian leaders who saw themselves as restoring elemental Christian practices, continued to preach sexual control as one of the highest moral virtues, yet marriage gained status as clergy were allowed – and essentially encouraged – to wed and bear children. Christianity, it is clear, has tendered manifold ways of engaging sex and stirred fierce deliberation upon the intimacies of human relations.

In America, Christians with widely diverging histories and belief systems have confronted and clashed with each other and with non-Christians holding a whole range of views, and sex has frequently played a telling role in these encounters. Early American immigrants and settlers, most of them Protestant, carried to the New World a high view of marriage, accompanied by a positive regard for loving sexual relations within the marital union. When sexual scandals erupted, as they invariably did, virtually no one publicly questioned the sexual laws regulating premarital and extramarital relations, nor those clarifying the sexual duties owed to one's spouse. Divorces granted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were preponderantly related to a partner's failure to uphold these religiously derived norms. White Christians often professed repugnance toward what they believed to be the immoral and promiscuous sexual practices of Native American inhabitants and black slaves, although coercive interracial unions between white masters and female slaves were not uncommon. This sexual double standard, based on privileges of both gender and race, meant that women carried the vast burden of the sanctions and burdens of the sexual laws, from rape, legal prosecution, religious shunning, and unintended pregnancies to the very real physical dangers of childbirth in that era. Sexual norms, invariably inflected by unequal power relations,

have played a vital role in distinguishing the privileged from the marginal, insiders from outsiders, throughout the nation's history.

In the nineteenth century, a host of religious conflicts arose with sex as a core focus. The many communitarian movements of the antebellum period that advocated unorthodox sexual arrangements – such as polyamory, or “complex marriage” (notably, the Oneida community of John Humphrey Noyes), and community-wide celibacy (the Shakers of Ann Lee) – were greeted with deep suspicion by Christian advocates of monogamous marriage. The early history of the Latter-day Saints was indelibly marked by church leaders' promotion of polygamy and the horror expressed toward plural marriage by Mormonism's fierce opponents. Catholic-Protestant conflicts were often expressed most vividly in sexual terms, as in the accusations repeatedly made by Protestants of sexual licentiousness and infanticide in Catholic convents, or the Catholic disdain for the married sexuality permitted Protestant clergy. Proponents of Hindu meditative practices in the wake of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions often attracted allegations of orgiastic behavior; the Indian guru Swami Vivekananda himself was rumored to be bedding down large numbers of female followers. Freethinkers were imagined to be universally promiscuous, while feminist advocates of marriage reform laws were cast as lustful wenches. Again and again, charges of sexual licentiousness and especially of female corruption were used as weapons by one religious group against others.

If the turn of the twentieth century soon witnessed a slight lessening of the gendered double standard in the form of the 1920s flapper and new images of women as voters and citizens, no less did it give rise to more aggressive religious condemnation of unconventional sexual arrangements. Catholics and conservative Protestants denounced the movement for birth control that by the 1920s was most vividly associated with Margaret Sanger. Here, however, was where the gulf emerged that would become so crucial to the culture wars. In the wake of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, white liberal Protestants found Sanger's advocacy, with its emphasis on marriage, good breeding, and sound medical advice, far more compelling than the outraged fuming of her conservative opponents, who objected not to Sanger's eugenic alliances but to her feminist commitment to women's rights within as well as outside marriage. Jewish support for the birth control campaign was also strong, with the renowned Reform leader Rabbi Stephen Wise supporting the cause even before the First World War. By the early 1930s, many liberal Protestants had joined Jews in support of contraceptive education and access, hoping and believing that this information would not corrupt single women.

A religious divide pertaining to sex was, then, already visible well before the United States entered the Second World War. It plainly had as much

to do with disagreement over proper gender roles as with norms of sexual propriety, as well as over which parties were in charge of women's sexual education and behavioral norms – indeed, of their very bodies. The long intertwining of gender and sexuality would carry on into the next major period of American history, shaping the weighty politico-religious conflicts still paramount in the early twenty-first century.

SEX AND RELIGION IN POSTWAR AMERICA

The anxious years that followed World War II into the Cold War witnessed enduring attention to sex as a dividing line between insiders and outsiders. Marriage manuals authored by Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders burgeoned in the period, as did the professional vocations of couples therapy and pastoral counseling. The popularity of Freudian or pseudo-Freudian theories of child development and psychosexual adjustment reinforced the belief that “normal” sexual behavior was a crucial component of a person's emotional and psychological health, abnormal sexuality a clear sign of a mental disorder or possibly a deeper mental illness. What constituted normalcy was not always clear, of course, and recent research has shown the great efforts made during this period in such professional arenas as medicine, psychiatry, the military, and the federal government to define and uphold clear standards of normal versus abnormal, often with punitive sanctions toward the latter. Practices and persons deemed beyond the bounds of normalcy were variously categorized as sick, sinful, unpatriotic, and even criminal; the stakes, then, were high indeed.

One of the major stimuli of these intensified discussions of sex in religious settings was the vast publicity given to the two famous reports of the Indiana University biologist Alfred E. Kinsey and his junior associates: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). Both books claimed to present, without moral judgment and with thoroughgoing objectivity, the sex practices of ordinary Americans in all their multiplicity. The sum of it all was that American men and women, boys and girls, were having far more sex – and far more varieties of it, including same-sex activity – than the conservative social norms of the period sanctioned. For women, religious attachment to a Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish community seemed to curb some premarital and extramarital activity; nonetheless, plenty of religious women were found to have been sexually active outside marriage. American religious leaders responded in a variety of ways: Catholics and conservative Protestants tended to denounce the reports as false and Kinsey himself as a lascivious scoundrel, while Jews and liberal Protestants looked for pastoral applications of the reports even while criticizing Kinsey's obvious antireligious bias.

Kinsey's influence among religious Americans remained long after the immediate furor over his reports died down, inspiring both his detractors and his supporters to clarify, justify, and promote their own moral ideas about sex. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the religious arguments developed in Kinsey's wake served as a sort of "talking points" blueprint for culture warriors into the twenty-first century. One illustrative early example was a major national conference held in the Upper Midwest in 1961. It would be a pivotal event from which many liberal religious leaders would take their precepts, and Kinsey's influence was represented throughout.

On 30 April of that year, the Canadian and National (U.S.A.) Councils of Churches convened the First North American Conference on Church and Family at the American Baptist Assembly in Green Lake, Wisconsin. More than five hundred delegates attended the conference, representing thirty-three denominations and fifty-seven states and provinces. For five days running, participants took part in plenary sessions presenting sex research from a wide range of research specialists, response panels from church leaders, lengthy discussion groups, and a number of special events devoted to issues relating to sex and sex education. Sylvanus Milne Duvall, a Congregationalist minister and cochair of the conference, outlined the week's goals:

Today we face two major questions about sex, marriage, and family life. (1) What are the sex standards that we Christians believe in and are prepared vigorously to proclaim, teach, and uphold[?] This question must include such practices as birth control, abortion, and homosexuality, as well as "normal" heterosexual conduct. (2) What is our position regarding the permanence and stability of family life? ... Have changed conditions made the traditionally stable family obsolete? Or have they made permanence and stability more important than ever – a crucially vital social and religious essential?¹

The proceedings were subsequently published under the title *Foundations for Christian Family Policy*, edited by Elizabeth Steel Genné and William Henry Genné, liberal Protestants who were at the forefront of rethinking these questions and who also cowrote a popular trade book for a wide audience, titled *Christians and the Crisis in Sex Morality* (1962).

Much of Kinsey's urgent, broadminded spirit suffused these documents, as clergy "pleaded," in the Gennés' words, "for more understanding of both facts and the spirit of our gospel in place of the all-too-prevalent moralistic, legalistic prejudgments that characterize many church members." Sex

¹ "Call to the Conference," in Elizabeth Steel Genné and William Henry Genné, eds., *Foundations for Christian Family Policy: The Proceedings of the North American Conference on Church and Family*, 3 Apr.–5 May, 1961 (New York, 1961), 23.

researchers who had themselves been influenced by Kinsey gave frank and thorough presentations at the event. Wardell Pomeroy, a close associate of Kinsey's at the Institute for Sex Research who became director of field research upon the sexologist's death, was one of these experts at the church conference, and his frank talk on masturbation was reprinted and cited in all subsequent publications from the event. The Gennés, lamenting the shame heaped by church leaders upon generations of Christian youth who may have succumbed to this temptation, concluded, "The church has a special responsibility to help people handle guilt feelings that may have been engendered."² Pomeroy found the event so remarkable that he later described it at some length in his own book, *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research*. There he praised the increasingly "free and enthusiastic exchange" between experts and ministers and concluded, "Returning to Bloomington from Green Lake, I could only think how much Kinsey would have enjoyed the conference."³

Other sex experts included at the Green Lake conference were Lester Kirkendall, a sexuality educator and later a cofounder of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS); Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist influenced by Kinsey's research on male homosexuality and whose own work led ultimately to homosexuality's being dropped from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; Ruth Proskauer Smith, an abortion rights and family planning advocate; and Mary Steichen Calderone, medical director of the Planned Parenthood Federation (and later the executive director of SIECUS) who had carried on a warm and lengthy correspondence with Kinsey during his lifetime. Working closely with these and other thinker-activists, Christian leaders serving as conference delegates ultimately voted to adopt a statement affirming the church as "a redemptive fellowship – friendly, nonjudgmental, forgiving, accepting." The church, continued the statement, "must be compassionate, supportive, and empathic. It must re-examine the quality of its own interpersonal relationships. It must seek out and be ready to accept all people into fellowship, whatever they have done." Along with an appeal to "strengthen homes and families" in both religious faith and sexual teachings, the statement called the church to "re-evaluate attitudes toward marriage and sex, in light of biblical theology and scientific findings" and to "develop a positive Christian ethic on sexual behavior which will be relevant to our culture."⁴ Kinsey's articulation of what liberal

² Elizabeth and William Genné, *Christians and the Crisis in Sex Morality* (New York, 1962), 16–17, 77.

³ Wardell B. Pomeroy, *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research* (New York, 1972), 453.

⁴ Genné and Genné, *Christians and the Crisis*, 119, 120,

religious leaders could accomplish in terms of their sexual teachings was hardly more straightforward. Indeed, many Protestant signatories to this statement subsequently committed significant time and energy to writing and speaking about the need for new and creative religious thinking about sexual ethics.

Even as liberal Christians shifted toward a more pragmatic set of precepts regarding sexuality, conservative opposition to the Kinsey reports begot further resistance to shifting sexual mores in the church and broader culture. Increasingly, conservative critics denounced what they believed to be a “sexual revolution” made up of persons who were uniformly hedonistic, narcissistic, and wholly immoral – enemies of both religion and the nation. American culture was said to be overly “permissive” in relaxing the reprobation and punishments bestowed in the past on those who broke the sexual codes; homosexuals and sexually active single women were high on the list. This stance fed upon the anti-Communism of the period, comparing Communist sympathy with sexual freedom in a way that proved extraordinarily effective. That connection and the broader conservative activism on sexual matters are helpfully illustrated in one particularly influential leader, Billy James Hargis.

THE EARLY STIRRINGS OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND ITS LIBERAL RELIGIOUS OPPONENTS

In 1964, two major critics of Radical Right organizations noted, “Of all American evangelists propagandizing for the Radical Right, Hargis is the most zealous and energetic and perhaps leaves the greatest impact.”⁵ Hargis, whose ministry extended through radio as well as his magazine *Christian Crusade*, had recently been very successful at stoking public furor against the Supreme Court’s 1962 decision declaring prayer in the public schools unconstitutional. He was best known for his intensive anti-Communist work, including his insistence that Communism had infiltrated and all but taken over the National Council of Churches (NCC). Hargis’ influence was extraordinarily high in these years (almost inexplicably so, to liberals), and it was at this time that sex burst into his writing.

Sex was continuing in the United States to be a highly relevant topic for debate, particularly in the wake of both the emerging feminist movement and increasing liberal sympathy for what was then termed the “homophile movement.” Helen Gurley Brown’s racy best-seller, *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962), and Betty Friedan’s housewife manifesto, *The Feminine Mystique*

⁵ Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Danger on the Right: The Attitudes, Personnel and Influence of the Radical Right and Extreme Conservatives* (New York, 1964), 68.

(1963), signaled fresh challenges to the standing ideal of female submissiveness, symbolized by premarital virginity no less than compliant marital domesticity. Meanwhile, liberal Protestant activism on behalf of gay rights, including repeal of sodomy statutes, received increasing attention in both the religious and the secular press. Such flagrant rejections of conservative gender norms and modes of patriarchal authority were ideal weapons for stoking conservative outrage.⁶

The February–March 1964 issue of *Christian Crusade* magazine included a news item titled “What to Do about Pornography.” It opened on a note of alarm: “A ‘natural’ outgrowth of the ultra-liberal, ‘free-thinker’ viewpoint, which has finally struggled into acceptance throughout the Nation, is the horrifying increase in the *public, legal* distribution of pornographic, smut literature, pictures, films, etc., *in every city in the country*.” The head of Tulsa’s chapter of Youth for Christ was quoted asserting that one billion dollars per year was now being spent on such materials in the United States alone – all because of the Communist-friendly liberals. The article continued, “That international Communism has long subsidized pornography in this and other countries will come as no surprise to our readers, for it fits ideally into their plans for the moral decay of non-Communist countries.” Readers should not merely wring their hands, but boycott all local stores that sold any such materials, for pornography was “A BATTLEGROUND UPON WHICH EVERY AMERICAN CAN GET INTO ACTION TODAY.” The message that evil lurked at one’s trusted grocery and drug-stores fit well with Hargis’ message that the enemy lurked within and was engineered by “the far left.”⁷

In November the Christian Crusader David Noebel, executive assistant to Hargis, upped the ante with his dramatic and lengthy piece “The Morals of a Nation.” There, detailing “the sins of perverted and promiscuous sex,” Noebel cited a number of other professed experts for evidence; his favorite source was Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer’s 1951 book *Washington Confidential*, a book that had “exposed the use of sex (both perverted and promiscuous) as a valuable tool in espionage.” Noebel sought to persuade readers that Communists were using homosexual men and female prostitutes to seduce and blackmail American government employees into divulging highly

⁶ On Brown, see Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown* (New York, 2009). Friedman’s life and impact are chronicled in Susan Oliver, *Betty Friedman: The Personal Is Political* (New York, 2007). On Protestant clergy and the gay rights movement, see Heather Rachelle White, “Homosexuality, Gay Communities, and American Churches: A History of a Changing Religious Ethic, 1946–1977” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2007).

⁷ “What to Do about Pornography,” *Christian Crusade* 16:2 (Feb./Mar. 1964): 4–5. Emphasis in original.

classified military secrets. Despite the State Department's "highly hush-hush Homosexual Bureau, manned by trained investigators and former counter-espionage agents, whose duties were to ferret out pansies in Foggy Bottom," sexual perversions still ran rampant in the nation's highest quarters. "Sexual deviates" were easily seduced and so highly susceptible to foreign infiltration; indeed, homosexuals "have probably been a major factor in revealing top secret information to the enemy." Noebel's article, soon widely distributed in pamphlet form, pressed for urgent action against this sexual threat to national security, as he implored, "Just what is it going to take before the Christians of this nation decide that enough of this 'sewer morals' is enough indeed? Nations in the past have lost their greatness because the moral condition of the people dropped to such an unfitting level that they became easy prey for enemy nations." The United States was in great danger of the same fate, and not only because of homosexuals. Indeed, "In our present situation," he concluded, "it could well be that the whorish woman has brought a nation down to a piece of bread."⁸

Hargis and Noebel were soon joined by a range of conservative religious voices, many of whom readily saw civil rights for women and gays as a portent of apocalyptic doom. There were moderate voices, too, certainly, amid the extremes; plenty of congregational leaders and other Americans advocated a strict sexual code without evoking the decline of civilization. But the battleground metaphors had crystallized a starkly dualistic worldview of good versus evil, discernible via sexuality, and the terms of future polarization were setting successfully. Religious people would increasingly find themselves forced to pick sides on very complicated issues – matters of sex and law that concerned biology, ethics, child rearing, public education, the First Amendment, and everyday conduct, which militants reduced to inflexible competing options. Hargis helped turn sex into the divisive weapon at the core of religious politics and thereby helped forge the Religious Right; while his own career was later undone by sexual scandal, others, including Noebel, would lead the fight into the future.

At the same time that Billy James Hargis was turning to sex in the pages of *Christian Crusade*, another Texas-born minister was tuning up the engines on the other side. Howard R. Moody, the son of "devout hard-shell Southern Baptists," as he would describe them, was by 1964 condemning the conservative Christian outrage over pornography and its contrasting apathy toward inhumanity. His background was not so dissimilar to that of Hargis – Moody was born in Dallas, raised strictly and religiously, and preached at family gatherings by age five – and he grew into an equally passionate crusader on

⁸ David A. Noebel, "The Morals of a Nation," *Christian Crusade* 16:10 (Nov. 1964), 28–34, quotes on 28, 34.

sex. As an adult, he, too, was a family man, with a wife and children to whom he appeared devoted. But the positions that he took were in thoroughgoing opposition to the fundamentalists, and through his work he, too, served as a significant, highly influential figure in the sexual culture wars.⁹

During the early years of his pastorate at Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, Moody's congregation opened the Village Aid and Service Center, a drug treatment center. As part of Moody's own commitment to supporting the arts and to making the church a part of the community it served, Judson Church also hosted an art gallery and showed abstract paintings there, along with supporting any number of theatrical productions. Besides serving as senior pastor, Moody was president of the Village Independent Democrats and later the chair of the Citizens Emergency Committee. He wrote frequently for the *Village Voice* and was actively involved in the civil rights movement.

Moody was well known locally, but the work for which he would eventually be best remembered started in 1967. In the early spring of that year (after urging by the New York writer Lawrence Lader), Moody convened a group of New York clergy to discuss the problem of abortion. This group eventually became the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion, spreading out from New York to become a national organization with chapters in many states. Later recalling the conditions under which the group was formed, Moody and his able coworker and church administrator Arlene Carmen recalled that at the time,

Very few [professionals] were willing to admit that the reasons a woman became pregnant when she preferred not to be had to do with a whole complex of problems related to unsatisfactory sex education, inadequate birth control measures, the heavy moral burden placed on single women if they performed sexually out of marriage, and most importantly related to a way in which men looked at women and put them in their place.

Remembering all that women had had to go through in those days in order to secure a risky, painful, and illegal abortion, "one can only conclude that abortion was directly calculated, whether consciously or not, to be an excessive, cruel, and unnecessary punishment, physically and psychologically, of women."¹⁰

This issue deeply touched Moody, who perceived profound moral implications in the sexual double standard that made women the victims of

⁹ Early profiles of Moody include "Folk-Singing Pastor: Howard Russell Moody," *New York Times*, 8 May 1961, 41; and Lyn Tornabene, "Way-Out Minister of Washington Square," *New York Times*, 6 June 1965, SM116.

¹⁰ Arlene Carmen and Howard Moody, *Abortion Counseling and Social Change: From Illegal Act to Medical Practice* (Valley Forge, PA, 1973), 18–19.

unintended pregnancy and all its hazards. A Judson church member who was also a physician arranged for Moody and Carmen to meet with several women who had undergone illegal abortions to share their harrowing experiences and to express what would have helped them most in their time of fear and need. As noted above, along with twenty other Protestant ministers and Jewish rabbis, Moody established the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion (CCS), a counseling and referral service for women. These Christian and Jewish clergy, many of them deeply revered in their respective congregations and broader denominational affiliations, believed they were offering much needed help to suffering female victims of hypocritical sexual mores. A 1969 profile of Moody's activism on abortion by the feminist writer Susan Brownmiller noted that he "considers the [abortion] law to be at the root, man's vengeance on woman, the self-righteous punishment inflicted on women by men who hold to a double standard on sexual relations." Abortion was plainly not murder, Moody noted, since embryonic life could in no way be equated with the life of a viable infant or young child. The moral question here was how to support the young girl or woman in need without imposing upon her "the judging attitude that she has come to expect" from clergy.¹¹ Though it had been the Quaker Mary Calderone who had published the first major book on abortion (*Abortion in the United States*, 1958), it was the Baptist Moody who successfully drew religious leaders into the center of the movement that he perceived to be not merely about reproductive rights for women however moral or immoral (as abortion's opponents might have seen it), but about removing the sexual stigma, disgrace, and violence that women – not men – had borne and died for throughout the nation's history.

Over his career, Moody took bold stands on a number of other large social questions, all of which were, to him, chiefly moral in nature and focused on sex. He worked in the civil rights movement, opposed the Vietnam War, advocated the decriminalization of prostitution as well as marijuana, served as a member of New York's Democratic Reform movement, initiated an acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) task force at Judson Memorial Church, and championed the reform of drug laws. He also became a vocal advocate of gay men and women, after living among and working with so many in the gay community in Greenwich Village. In all of these efforts, he believed he was fulfilling his pastoral vocation to offer comfort while also working for justice, to focus on caring for those at the margins of society, even – especially – if they seemed to flout the two-faced sexual morality of the times.

¹¹ Susan Brownmiller, "Abortion Counseling: Service beyond Sermons," *New York Magazine*, 4 Aug. 1969, 26–7, 28.

Not all Protestants forged ahead with Moody's commitment to sexual equality. The American denominations took up sex at different moments in time, and most of the changes taking place since the late 1970s – growing acceptance of homosexuality in liberal settings, increasing attention to international sex trafficking among conservatives, expanded action to combat the global AIDS crisis across religious lines – occurred very gradually, after years of bureaucratic committee work, religious arguments, and shifting membership constituencies. In fits and starts, some congregations began welcoming gay clergy to their pulpits, solemnizing gay unions, accepting premarital cohabitation among young singles, and adopting comprehensive sex education curricula for children in Sunday school. Others actively chose *not* to do such things, a decision that often generated new alliances with other religious conservatives, such as conservative Catholics. Church members, then and later, proved ready to switch denominational affiliations after feeling their own code of sexual morality to be mismatched with the direction taken by their leaders. For better or for worse, sex played an extraordinary if underreported role in the shifting religious demographics and realignments so evident at the turn of the twenty-first century.

THE ONGOING BATTLES OVER SEX

Since 1990, the most divisive issue in American Protestantism has been the status of homosexuality and homosexual persons, while in American Catholicism, the burning subject of controversy has been the proliferating revelations of clergy sexual abuse of children. Both topics have generated vast attention and acrimonious debate, nationally as well as internationally; and, quite clearly, neither is simply an American problem but is a source of concern in many parts of the world. Neither issue has disturbed American Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or other religious communities with anything like the powerful force it has exerted on Christian communities – at least, not yet. American Christian communities have provided something of a test case for religious traditions coping with rapidly changing social values and, in particular, the greatly expanded visibility and outspokenness of women, gays, and others once considered sexually unfit for true political, social, and religious equality.

By the end of the twentieth century, all major Protestant denominations had been compelled to confront questions about the compatibility of their religion with homosexual persons, practices, and relationships. Some church bodies issued unambiguous statements opposing homosexuality, though a few of these included qualifiers that one should offer pastoral care and reparative therapy to repentant gays who wished to change. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation's largest Protestant

denomination and one whose leadership had become increasingly fundamentalist since 1979, crafted several clear statements opposing homosexual behavior as sinful and disfellowshipped congregations that dissented. A "Resolution on Homosexuality," passed in 1988 and one of many sex-related SBC resolutions, expressed leaders' disgust as it called homosexuality "a manifestation of a depraved nature," "a perversion of divine standards," "a violation of nature and natural affections," and "an abomination in the eyes of God." God loved homosexuals anyway, the resolution proclaimed, and Christians should do likewise even while denouncing their "deviant behavior" – a stance referred to as "love the sinner but hate the sin."¹² The United Church of Christ (UCC), by contrast, took the opposite route: as early as 1980, the denomination officially accepted ministerial ordination of homosexuals, and the General Synod later issued numerous pronouncements openly welcoming homosexuals to full membership and urging support for civil rights legislation on behalf of gay men and lesbians. Some UCC members and congregations dissented from these statements and sought to pass more restrictive resolutions opposing homosexual clergy and same-sex marriage, but these were voted down.

Most denominations fell somewhere in between the SBC and the UCC and spent years debating the proper stance to take on a whole host of issues relating to homosexuality, often resorting to a sort of compromise position that amounted to allowing gays to be church members but deeming them unfit for leadership positions – secondary or unequal participants, in other words, just as women had been throughout much of American religious history. This timid arrangement was, of course, unsustainable. Denominations that were consciously attempting to hold together members with all points of view on homosexuality were finding it increasingly difficult, and sometimes impossible, to do so.

Defrockings – the rescinding of ordination credentials and the right to serve in the ministry – and subsequent trials of openly gay clergy garnered widespread attention and controversy in this era, pressuring leaders to elucidate the church's key principles and settle its mixed attitudes toward homosexuality. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Methodist Church issued policies that forbade openly gay men or women to serve as clergy; in 2004, a jury of Methodist ministers defrocked Beth Stroud for coming out as a lesbian. In 2001, the Evangelical Lutheran

¹² "Resolution on Homosexuality," June 1988: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=610>. SBC resolutions are searchable online by topic and keyword: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/default.asp>. For an incisive analysis of this position, see Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (New York, 2003).

Church of America (ELCA) commissioned a four-year study of the issue to be undertaken by the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality, but clarity proved elusive; as late as 2007, an ELCA cleric, the Rev. Bradley E. Schmeling, was removed from the ministry for being in a committed relationship with a male partner. Annual meetings and conferences concentrated close attention on questions about homosexuality, and the middle-ground positions that usually emerged from these meetings often frustrated activists at both ends of the spectrum, many of whom defected to other denominations.

By this time, the Episcopal Church in the United States was splintering over homosexuality. Several conservative congregations broke away from their local dioceses to join that of the Nigerian Anglican bishop Peter Akinola, a staunch opponent of gay civil rights. The 2003 election of Gene Robinson, an openly gay priest, to serve as the ninth bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire caused a major furor, as did the 2009 election of Mary Glasspool to bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, the first openly lesbian priest so elected. While Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, continued his attempts to hold together the World Anglican Communion, the likelihood of this possibility had grown dim.

In the meantime, American Catholics faced their own sexual crisis, as the clergy abuse scandal spread to parishes across the United States and beyond. While sexual abuse by priests had received national attention as early as 1985, when the Louisiana priest Gilbert Gauthier was convicted on eleven counts of molestation of boys, and again in 1992–93, when the Massachusetts priest James Porter pled guilty to forty-one counts of sexual abuse of children, the uproar surged in 2002 in the wake of more recent proceedings against the Dallas priest Rudolph Kos and the former Massachusetts priest John Geoghan. As accusations against numerous priests began to come to light, it became clear that the leader of the Boston Archdiocese, Bernard Cardinal Law, had covered up numerous cases of priestly abuse of children; by mid-December, after meetings with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, Law had resigned his post. Throughout 2003 and thereafter, more cases of child molestation and rape came to light in Boston and elsewhere around the country, and courts required numerous Church offices to pay out substantial financial settlements to victims. Questions reached all the way to the Vatican's office, when journalists widely reported that Pope Benedict XVI, in his earlier role as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had failed to respond to several requests pertaining to the handling of sexually abusive priests. Even as late as 2010, 55 percent of American Catholics were said to believe that child molestation by priests remained a problem, while nearly

60 percent believed that the Vatican had done a poor job of handling the sexual abuse crisis.¹³

Protestants and Catholics did not simply sit in the pews watching their leaders deal with contested sexual matters; they also participated in the debate of the many other sexual issues pressing into American politics, law, and the courts. Should the U.S. government fund religiously based programs that promote abstinence-only sexuality education in the public schools, or religiously neutral, comprehensive programs that also teach about contraceptive methods? Should girls have access to emergency contraception (the so-called morning after pill, or RU-486) without their parents' knowledge or consent? Can state or federal authorities insist upon a definition of marriage limited to heterosexual couples? Do confessions of adultery or sex with prostitutes make a government leader unfit for public service? Polls consistently found conservative Christians to hold the most traditional views on these matters they referred to as "family values," creating a robust and more or less dependable political bloc for politicians willing to stand on such a platform.

Progressive Christians and Jews continued to advocate less restrictive policies on sex education, gay marriage, and contraception, and some grew louder in condemning what they believed to be the sexism and hypocrisy at the heart of conservative sexual politics. The sexual falls of several high-ranking Christian ministers and public officials – Ted Haggard, Larry Craig, Newt Gingrich, David Vitter, John Ensign, Mark Sanford, and George Rekers, to name some of the best-known cases – frequently added fuel to this fire, as they reminded observers that Christian leaders did not always practice what they preached. Religious progressives had a more positive reason for their sexual views, however, namely, their support for equal treatment of all human beings, whether male or female, gay or straight, or identifying as another sort of gendered person altogether (bisexual, transsexual, queer, and the like). Gender continued, then, to be at the core of sexual politics in American religion.

These were not only battles between disparate groups of Christians, or pitting Christians against secularists. Accusations of sexual perversion and debauchery continued to serve as weapons against groups thought by some to be deviant or wicked. Mockery of Islam in the wake of the 11 September attacks of 2001, for instance, emphasized both Muslim attention to sexual purity *and* the belief among some Muslim extremists that martyrdom, properly performed, would end with the reward of extraordinary sexual license in the afterworld. Heated arguments arose in the aftermath among

¹³ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20004143-503544.html (accessed 12 July, 2010).

constituencies claiming very different interpretations of Muslim sexual ethics. Separating religion from culture felt as impossible as it ever had.

In some cases, great strength and collaboration across political and religious lines could be achieved by invoking sexual injustices. One successful example has been sexual trafficking, a problem publicized by entities up through the U.S. Department of Justice, which reported in 2009 that around 293,000 American young people were in danger of falling prey to the commercial trade in sexual exploitation.¹⁴ Christians had worked to combat forced prostitution for some years already; one evangelical organization, International Justice Mission, had been fighting sexual slavery since 1997. In July 2010, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a Catholic religious order, organized a multireligious rally in Portland, Oregon, to call attention to the horrors of the oppressive sex trade there and around the world. One Oregon senator, Ron Wyden, joined with Senator John Cornyn of Texas in crafting a bipartisan bill that would drastically increase the penalties on traffickers as well as pay for shelters to house victims.¹⁵ Feminists of all sorts, secular progressives, religious progressives, and religious conservatives could join to fight against the illegal and violent sexual trafficking in children and vulnerable young adults across national borders.

CONCLUSION

Of the many issues that have divided religious Americans over time, few have been as rich in scandal and irony, duplicity and outright betrayal, as sex. And few have been driven so relentlessly by religious leaders and by religious beliefs about what constitutes morality. While some religious traditions have endured only minor conflagrations over sex (most over homosexuality), the history of American Christianity and of America itself would be profoundly different if the tradition's fixation on sex had been matched by attention to poverty, homelessness, world hunger, genocide, or environmental dangers. But measuring by financial and political investment – resources spent covering up and then responding publicly to sexual scandals, not to mention the energy utilized in preaching, lobbying, and mobilizing congregants/voters with the message that the nation's sexual mores will ultimately damn or save America – American Catholic and Protestant urgency about upholding sexual norms has very often exceeded its commitments to these other areas.

¹⁴ http://content.news14.com/human_trafficking.pdf (accessed 12 July 2010).

¹⁵ http://m.democratherald.com/news/state-and-regional/article_65919990-d6a0-57ee-aa1b-cb812eae8c6e.html (accessed 12 July 2010).

At this writing, we are still too deep in the thick of it all to understand fully all the whys and wherefores of religion's obsession with sex. Devotion to female purity, premarital chastity, and marriage as solely a heterosexual union remains strong well beyond U.S. borders, recurrently visible among some hard-line Islamic movements, such as the Taliban, who publicly maim and murder women who break these sexual codes. Most groups do not carry out such violent punishments, but plenty – across multiple religious traditions – share a stringent sense of right versus wrong sexuality. Possibly there are meaningful reasons why many religious groups continue to stress sexual austerity, with or without the traditional sexual double standard: cultivating loving relationships, for starters, or instilling an ethic of care. Perhaps too, though, sex has proven to be the most effective tool yet detected for seizing people's attention, fueling panic about the decline of civilization, and acquiring considerable power as the heroic conqueror of evil – a liberator worthy of your religious or political support. Whatever the case, our nation's fascination with sex and with the religious arguments ever surrounding it is unlikely to dissipate any time soon.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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WOMEN AND RELIGION IN MODERN AMERICA

MARJORIE PROCTER-SMITH

The topic of gender in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American religious life is at once too narrow and too broad. It is too narrow because it implies that the issues of gender are uniquely twentieth- or twenty-first-century issues, and thus lack precedence or a longer history within American religious life, or because it implies that the issues of gender and religion are primarily American issues, exported on a wave of feminist unrest to Europe and beyond. At the same time the topic is too broad; the complexities and contradictions cannot be adequately set out within the scope of even an extended essay. Any attempt to do so must inevitably oversimplify these complexities and thus risk silencing the diverse perspectives and practices, the complex strategies women have employed within religion in America. The most that can be done within this scope is to attempt to draw attention to the varied strategies women have exercised within a representative selection of major religions in America during this period, to draw some connecting lines, however faint, that show this period's relation to the larger history and the larger world, and to point beyond this essay to additional resources.

This essay will limit itself to issues of women and religion as articulated within Christianity and Judaism. Historically speaking, these two religions formed the loci for the challenges, disputes, negotiations, and resolutions that affected American religions across denominations and religious belief systems regarding women's roles. These issues are taken up within Islam and Buddhism, for example, and in ways unique to those religions. But the influences there (and elsewhere) draw from the movements centered in Christianity and Judaism.

Taking American Christianity and Judaism as the epicenters of movements questioning women's roles, two central issues that invoke a cluster of subsidiary issues emerge. Indeed, it would not be altogether incorrect to argue that the issue of women's access to positions of official, recognized religious leadership or women's ordination is the central and overriding

issue, even though it does not represent the concern of every aspect of the movement. But questions about women's ordination always entail questions about biblical interpretation. Is women's ordination to ministry or access to the preaching office permitted by sacred scripture and tradition, or is it forbidden? Answers to this question depend on how the biblical texts in question are interpreted, what authority they hold for the community, and how that authority is invoked and exercised. From this question of biblical interpretation and authority arise other questions, questions about women's roles in the family and in society, women's nature and vocation, and women's relationship with God and place within the sacred story of the faith.

Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, these questions achieved a higher profile, particularly within American Christianity, than had been seen in earlier centuries. The confluence of civil rights movements beginning in the 1950s with school desegregation and the struggle for fair wages, the antiwar movement in response to the Vietnam War, and social protest movements of various orientations produced a context in which questions about women's roles in the family, in the world, and, inevitably, in religious communities had to arise.

As in the case of the first wave of American feminism, although the movement was motivated initially by nonreligious concerns – the right to vote, admission to higher education, rights within the family – these concerns led to questions about religious authority. It must be said, also in both instances, that the introduction of religious themes into debates on these matters was almost always the result of religious-based arguments against these concerns. Arguments on religious and theological grounds identified women's culturally defined roles, particularly as wives and mothers, as being founded on divinely established order. Thus any attempt to change, reinterpret, or expand these roles was interpreted as an affront to God and to God's intentions for the human race. When opposition took this form, feminists who perhaps had not considered the religious questions at all were forced to do so. In the nineteenth-century women's movement, the result was the publication of *The Woman's Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who argued that the true liberating message of the Bible had been hidden or misinterpreted by men, therefore arguing that women's rights were not, in fact, in opposition to Christianity.¹ On the other hand, Matilda Joslyn Gage argued in *Woman, Church and State* that religion, in general, and the church, in particular, is the chief enemy of women's rights.²

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (North Stratford, NH, 2002).

² Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church and State: The Original Expose of Male Collaboration against the Female Sex* (Watertown, NY, 1980).

Similar divergence of opinion marked the twentieth-century women's movement in religion in America, with some arguing that religion had within it liberating elements that, properly interpreted and applied, contribute to women's emancipation, while others held that all major world religions were foundationally patriarchal and deeply misogynist, and not subject to or worthy of reform. Those taking the former position normally continue to identify with their religious tradition but with a critical and reconstructive eye, while those who take the latter view either reject religion altogether or choose reconstructed matriarchal religions, such as Wicca, Neo-Paganism, or nontheistic woman-centered spirituality.

The origins of the twentieth-century women's movement in religion are thus tightly knit with the beginnings of the broader social women's movement, which, in turn, was closely tied to the social unrest of the Sixties. Just as nineteenth-century women working on behalf of progressive social causes such as the antislavery movement became aware that they lacked rights they sought for others, so mid-twentieth-century women engaged in the civil rights movement noticed that they too lacked basic social rights: the right to education, to equal pay, to freedom from violence. And in the process of seeking those rights in society, mid-twentieth-century women also noticed their lack of rights within their religious communities.

Questions about women's access to officially recognized leadership roles within religious communities are hardly new. Within the Christian tradition, the question is as old as the origins of the religion itself, and it is found in the earliest documents of the movement, both canonical and extra-canonical. Nor is the answer as found in sacred texts clear and unequivocal. Therefore, the questions persist.

At least as early as the seventeenth century in England, Margaret Fell, companion and later wife of George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, wrote a spirited defense of the right of women to preach in public, *Women's Speaking Justified*.³ In America, the nineteenth century was a time when women not only were seeking the right to vote and to control their physical, educational, economic, and interpersonal lives, but were also seeking ministerial and religious authority. Examples of women as founders of religious thought and new religious communities in America abound. In 1774 Ann Lee immigrated to America from England with a small group of companions and founded the Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, known popularly as the Shakers, a religious community that perpetuated female leadership in its system of elders and eldresses as leaders of every community.⁴ In 1879 Mary Baker Eddy developed Christian Science (the

³ Margaret Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified* (Los Angeles, 1979).

⁴ See Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

Church of Christ, Scientist).⁵ In the early decades of the twentieth century, Aimee Semple McPherson preached widely throughout the United States, hosted a radio show, and founded the Foursquare Gospel Church.⁶

But these well-known examples of female leaders are drawn from new religious groups existing largely outside traditional mainline communities. Women seeking recognition or ordination within established mainline traditions often had a more difficult time. For example, Antoinette Brown completed ministerial training at Oberlin College in 1850 but was not permitted to speak in class while a student, was not awarded a degree, and was not allowed to participate in diploma ceremonies. In spite of these restrictions, she succeeded in being licensed to preach by the Congregational Church, and she served a church in New York State before resuming her work as a speaker for women's rights.⁷ Other denominations admitted women as ministers or evangelists, only to retract such official recognition later.

Questions about women's ordination to the priesthood in the Anglican Church were raised, and a positive recommendation was proposed as early as 1928 with the publication of C. E. Raven's *Women and Holy Orders*.⁸ In 1944, under circumstances of wartime crisis in China, the bishop of China ordained a woman deacon, Li Tim Oi, as a priest in Macau, since it was impossible for priests from the mainland to travel during the Sino-Japanese War. However, after the war, in 1946 she relinquished her license under pressure from the archbishop of Canterbury. The Society for Equal Ministries of Men and Women in the church helped present a Memorandum to the 1948 Lambeth Conference, an international gathering of Anglican bishops at Lambeth, England, supporting the request from the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui General Synod to permit the Anglican Church in China to "experiment" with ordaining women to the priesthood. The request was based on urgent need in China, but the authors of the Memorandum pointedly noted that a similar sense of urgency in England recommended a similar strategy.⁹ A postwar shortage of male priests and priesthood candidates as well as a sense of social upheaval in the aftermath of the war seem to have prompted this request and its support.

⁵ Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Reading, MA, 1998).

⁶ See Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

⁷ See Elizabeth Cazden, *Antoinette Brown Blackwell, A Biography* (Old Westbury, NY, 1983).

⁸ C. E. Raven, *Women and Holy Orders* (London, 1928).

⁹ A Memorandum to the Lambeth Conference from the Ordination of Women ad Hoc Committee in Support of the Resolution of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood Submitted to the Conference by the General Synod of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (London, 1948).

Questions about women's professional and vocational aspirations were sharpened when men returning from the Second World War claimed jobs that women had stepped in to do in their absence. The fact that women had performed in arenas formerly forbidden to them, or from which they had been barred by convention, gave authority to women's claims that they should have equal access to jobs and the education and training that prepared them for those jobs.

In the field of religion, this question began to be posed especially in relation to religious leadership: were offices of rabbi, preacher, priest, pastor, and parish leader open to women? Could they be admitted to the institutions that provided training for these leadership positions on the same basis as men? If women have access to the same educational and vocational opportunities as men, what is to prevent them from having access to religious education and vocations on the same basis? And what theological defense can be made for preventing women from following what is traditionally understood as a divine calling?

Religious groups that accepted women's ordination to positions of religious leadership often did so in the initial stages for practical reasons: there was a perceived need, and women were available and willing to accept the responsibility. Most arguments in favor of the practice did not ask, "Why ordain women?" but rather, "Why not?" The social restrictions against women's attaining positions of leadership in society were loosening in postwar America, setting the stage for women to consider taking on religious leadership, and for religious groups to accept them.¹⁰ Opposition to women's ordination typically cited four types of objections: biblical injunctions against women's speaking and teaching, lack of historical precedent, symbolic dissonance (this was advanced particularly by the more sacramentally oriented traditions), and arguments based on assumptions about female abilities and inclinations as well as social restrictions about women. Of these, the most durable proved to be the arguments from scripture and tradition. Objections based on women's supposed nature or on social limitations were felled by broad social changes in women's public and professional roles and significant shifts in understandings of human psychology and personality. Theological arguments that women cannot symbolically represent the male Christ at the altar persisted in some circles, primarily Roman Catholicism and some forms of Anglicanism, but even those arguments were themselves founded on biblical and historical models.

In the 1950s the World Council of Churches, a global ecumenical organization that began meeting in 1948 as a means of promoting unity among Christian bodies, established the Department on the Cooperation of Men

¹⁰ See Paula D. Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America* (Oxford, 1997), 9–28.

and Women in Church and Society. This body, in turn, published a statement encouraging its member churches to review policies and practices with regard to women's roles in the church, particularly in expanding opportunities for women to exercise various forms of ministry. Although the question of ordination of women was included in this review, it was not at the forefront of discussion, in part at least because the ecumenical discussions regarding restored unity of churches had foundered precisely on the subject of recognition of the varied forms of ordination among the member bodies. If they could not agree on what constituted proper ordained ministry, they thought they were in no position to take up the complex and even more controversial question of women's ordination. At the time of the beginnings of the World Council of Churches, of course, there were member bodies that already had recognized women as ordained leaders. Thus the question was unavoidable.

The World Council of Churches undertook an extensive survey of women's roles in churches in forty-eight countries, the results of which were reported and assessed in a 1952 publication, drawing attention to the church's work in fostering the education of women, which, in part, contributed to the social changes of women's status across the world.¹¹

While these efforts were intended to recognize women's essential and ongoing contributions to church life, they also were sometimes thinly disguised attempts to forestall changes in women's roles, especially the admission of women to ordained office. A 1966 editorial offering a serious critique of the "scandal in our treatment of full-time women workers" in Lutheran churches also added, "This does not mean we will rush to ordain women into our ministry of Word and sacrament."¹² It proved very difficult, however, to construct a logical argument that women's religious work, particularly full-time rather than volunteer work, should be recognized, affirmed, supported, and adequately compensated without raising the question of women's admission to ordination or its equivalent. Defenses against this move sometimes drew on conventional understandings of female nature. The author of the editorial quoted advocates that the Lutheran Church "try to integrate the distinctively feminine roles of service into our ministry as God's people," without specifying what these distinctively feminine roles might be.

During this same time, Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council, which opened the worldwide Roman Catholic Church to ecumenical and social awareness. Meeting from 1962 until 1965 under the

¹¹ Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches* (London, 1952).

¹² Philip J. Hefner, "The Ministry of Women," quoted in full in Margaret Sittler Ermarth, *Adam's Fractured Rib: Observations on Women in the Church* (Philadelphia, 1970), 97–9.

direction first of John XXIII and later of Paul VI, the council addressed such contemporary matters as the nuclear threat, race relations, economic injustice, social and political unrest, the youth movement, and the women's movement. Two papal documents issuing from this event had significant consequences for Roman Catholic women, especially in the United States. The 1963 papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* pointed out, "Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural worth . . . demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons."¹³ *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World published in 1965, repeated the observation of *Pacem in Terris* in regard to women's growing social and political prominence and declared that it was the responsibility of the Church to "scrutinize the signs of the times."¹⁴ Both of these statements, taken in the wider context of religious change introduced by the Second Vatican Council, encouraged Catholic women to consider the possibility of ordination to the priesthood, and they set the stage for challenges that would occur during the 1970s and that persist to the present day.

The story of women's access to ordination as rabbis in American Judaism followed a similar path to that found among Christian bodies. As early as 1922, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the governing body of the Reform movement in American Judaism, made the following recommendation as part of deliberations on religious matters: "In keeping with the spirit of our age and the traditions of our conference, we declare that woman cannot justly be denied the privilege of ordination."¹⁵ However, the ordination of a woman rabbi in Reform Judaism did not take place until the 1970s.

All of this activity – the occasional access of women to positions of religious leadership, the discussions about the possibility of such action, the resistance to and revoking of access – set the stage for the confluence of social movements and more organized religious movements for women's ordination that peaked during the 1970s.

Inevitably, questions about women's ordination, women in family and social life, and women as community and religious leaders drove religious authorities back to sacred scriptures and traditions, seeking answers to what seemed to be new questions. These questions, in turn, drove new religious research, especially in the scriptural texts that founded Judaism

¹³ *Pacem in Terris*, I, 41.

¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, preface, 4.

¹⁵ Central Conference of American Rabbis, "Ordination of Women as Rabbis" *CCAR Responsa: American Reform Responsa* 32 (1922): 50–1, <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/respdisp.pl?file=7&year=arr> (accessed 20 Aug. 2009).

and Christianity. Biblical studies took up the challenge, and an extraordinary volume of publications began to appear in the second half of the twentieth century dealing with what the previous century called “the woman question.”

Biblical research on the question of the ordination of women waxed and waned as the issue itself became more or less pressing. A flurry of publications from the 1920s, especially in England, gives evidence of the force of the issue in the Church of England during the postwar period. Similarly, research among European scholars peaked during the 1950s as the question of women’s ordination in the Lutheran Church was raised by the wartime practice of permitting women to lead congregations. Several of these studies were also published in America and were appropriated into those conversations. Notably, the work of Fritz Zerbst, arguing against women’s ordination, and the work of Krister Stendhal, arguing in favor, were important in the American discussion of the matter and frequently cited on both sides of the argument.¹⁶

Although the driving question was the appropriateness of ordaining women to positions of religious leadership, it was inevitable that other topics were drawn in. If women are to submit to their husbands, as recommended in the New Testament, how can a married woman preach or lead a religious service? Must ordination of women be limited to unmarried women? And are not women, especially unmarried women, a danger to the morals of men when they display themselves in public?

Biblical arguments in favor of women’s ordination drew on source-critical biblical scholarship that relativized the authority of received scriptures, questioned biblical literalism, and invoked the boundary-breaking power of the Holy Spirit. Opponents cited biblical injunctions against women exercising authority, emphasized the tradition of restricting religious leadership to men, and raised questions about women’s abilities, inclinations, and suitability for the office. Additionally, pragmatic concerns noted the potential for alienating male worshipers who, after the Second World War, were increasingly a minority in church attendance; congregational resistance to women clergy; and the danger of cutting off ecumenical conversations with traditions that rejected women’s ordination. This last argument carried particular weight in denominations like the Episcopal Church and the Lutheran churches that wished to claim continuity with or at least parity with the Roman Catholic Church, while the more conservative

¹⁶ Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Women in the Church* (St. Louis, 1955); Krister Stendhal, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics*, trans. Emilie T. Sander (Philadelphia, 1966). See also Margaret Thrall, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood* (London, 1958).

and evangelical churches relied primarily on biblical injunctions against women speaking in public.

Out of this controversial literature evolved new critical perspectives on scripture and history. Newer scholarship, especially that influenced by the comparable women's movement in academia, drew attention to scriptural mistranslations, historical omissions, and questionable interpretations that had minimized, distorted, or hidden women's roles in the history of both Christianity and Judaism. Critical biblical scholarship raised questions about variants in scriptural manuscript texts and placed scripture increasingly in a historical context that had the effect of relativizing the absolute authority of biblical declarations on any number of topics, including the topic of women. This unsettling of scriptural meaning, together with the feminist recovery of missing history and tradition, set the stage for a veritable explosion of feminist biblical and historical scholarship that changed the face of theology and introduced new methodological frameworks, beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present.

In the past, social and political events had conspired to create the conditions that first opened new avenues of religious leadership to women and then closed them. But by the late 1960s, there was a perfect storm of events that not only fostered yet another period of openness to women's religious leadership, but also made it impossible for these changes to be revoked easily. First, there were religious communities with lived experience of women's leadership during times of crisis that could and did testify that women were at least as capable as men of providing religious leadership. Speculation about potential problems or risks was easily dismissed or at least minimized. Second, the secular women's movement, already a major social force in America from the 1960s, provided a wider context in which not only were religious communities challenged to consider changes in women's roles, but also individual women could find support and inspiration for seeking ordination and other leadership roles. It meant something that women who felt called to ministry and religious leadership were not alone in seeking to blaze new trails. Other women were doing so in comparable professions, especially law and politics, where they had not been welcome before, and their experiences served as both models and inspiration to women seeking positions of religious leadership. Additionally, the feminist movement's emphasis on sisterhood created communities of women that provided support and encouragement to one another. Another important factor was the presence of Roman Catholic women religious who, with community and institutional supports in place for decades, began to orient themselves toward justice issues and education. They had at hand institutions of education, support, and spiritual life for women that women

in other religious traditions had to construct from the ground up.¹⁷ And finally, biblical and historical scholarship had undergone a sea change that made questioning of older interpretations and assumptions not only possible but academically and religiously credible, and this led the way to the development of feminist biblical scholarship, historical research, and theological reflection as academic disciplines in their own right.

By the early 1970s, the notion that women could be trained in theological and biblical studies alongside men but could not conclude their studies with ordination, as their male colleagues did, seemed increasingly outdated and unjust. In the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches, letters, proposals, and demonstrations urging women's ordination began to be commonplace. Most traditions engaged these challenges at the denominational and administrative levels. Reviews of earlier experiments with women clergy were undertaken in order to put at rest assumptions about women's abilities and acceptability in the office.¹⁸

In 1972 Sally Priesand was ordained by Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, as the first woman rabbi in America. While theoretical approval for women rabbis within the Reform movement had been given in 1922, putting this approval to the test awaited someone willing to apply to seminary and to request ordination. Although some reservations about admitting her to the ordination process were expressed by school and religious officials, in the end they supported her through the program and arranged public speaking events for her to introduce Jewish congregations to the reality of a woman rabbi before her ordination. Reconstructionist Judaism followed suit two years later, ordaining Sandy Eisenberg Sasso to the rabbinate.¹⁹

Meanwhile, mainline Protestant Christian denominations that also had approved women's ordination in principle or in practice during earlier decades found themselves with a sudden increase in women applicants to theological schools and to ordination processes. For example, the Methodist Church (now the United Methodist Church) approved women for ordination with full clergy rights in 1956. Before this time women had long been licensed as preachers, missionaries, and evangelists in Methodism. But ordained women constituted only a tiny fraction of ordained ministers within the denomination: in 1970 only 0.7 percent of

¹⁷ See Bridget Puzon, O.S.U., ed., *Women Religious and the Intellectual Life: The North American Achievement* (San Francisco, 1996); and Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (Bloomington, IN, 1995).

¹⁸ Elsie Gibson, *When the Minister Is a Woman* (New York, 1970).

¹⁹ Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, "Celebrating Thirty Years of Women as Rabbis," *Reconstructionism Today* 11:1 (Autumn 2003).

ordained clergy in full connection were women.²⁰ A similar story is found in the American Presbyterian Church, which approved women's ordination to Word and Sacrament (the equivalent of Methodism's "full clergy rights") in 1956, but between 1956 and 1970 women were underrepresented among ordained clergy across the denomination. The Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church (later united as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), following the precedent established by European Lutheran bodies beginning in 1958, approved women's ordination in 1970.

But these denominations had some previous history of women taking ministerial leadership roles in the past, and the admission of women to ordination on the same level as men, while it was an important step, was in a sense part of a continuum already under way that broadened access to religious leadership within mainline Protestantism across gender and racial and ethnic boundaries. More dramatic were challenges within the Episcopal Church U.S.A. and the Roman Catholic Church in its American context.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, women had been admitted to the "order" of deaconesses under the belief that this role, understood to be subsidiary and focused on ministries to women, had historic precedence in the church's history. By the first decades of the twentieth century, disputes about whether deaconesses were ordained or simply "set aside" erupted. An important element in this controversy was that if deaconesses were to be understood as equivalent to (male) deacons, this implied that, like deacons, they were eligible for advancement to the orders of priest and of bishop. In the 1960s, deaconesses in the American Episcopal Church were recognized as deacons and began to be ordained as such, although official approval of this change did not take place until 1970. A 1969 meeting permitted women to read the scriptures in worship and to serve the communion chalice, actions identified with male leadership previously. From 1970 to 1974 a series of recommendations proposed opening all orders of ministry – deacon, priest, and bishop – to women, but the motions consistently failed by narrow margins. Meanwhile, women were completing theological study alongside men, following the processes for admission to ordination alongside male colleagues, but were being denied admission to the ministry for which they were prepared. By 1974 a large number of ordained women deacons served parishes and awaited the next step in the process: ordination to the priesthood. In July 1974 eleven of these women

²⁰ Alan K. Watts, "Data on the Participation of Women in the Organizational Units of the United Methodist Church, prepared for the Committee on the Study of the Role of Women, June 24–6, 1971," II-3, published by United Methodist Church.

were ordained by three Episcopal bishops at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²¹ The event electrified the Christian world, drawing support from denominations that already ordained women and from those that sought ordination, as well as condemnation from within and without. After a year of internal disputation, their ordinations were finally declared “valid but irregular.” At the next General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1976, women’s ordination to priesthood and episcopate was approved.

Women in the American Catholic Church watched these events with deep interest. Tentative questions regarding women’s ordination had already been raised, and theologians and biblical scholars were raising the possibility of ordaining women as priests in the Catholic Church. But the experience of seeing women in priestly vestments performing priestly acts much like those performed only by men in the Catholic Church had a galvanizing effect. In 1975 the first Women’s Ordination Conference was held in Detroit, Michigan, and more than two thousand people, Catholic and non-Catholic, gathered to hear speeches and lectures and to organize in support of women’s ordination to the Catholic priesthood. Around the same time, reflecting the general shift in public attitudes toward women in positions of religious leadership, the Pontifical Biblical Commission, a board of Roman Catholic biblical scholars, produced a report on including women in the priesthood that reached the cautious conclusion that “[i]t does not seem that the New Testament by itself alone will permit us to settle in a clear way once and for all the problem of the possible accession of women to the presbyterate.”²² If this report opened the door to ordination of women to the Roman Catholic priesthood, it was quickly slammed shut. In 1976 the papal encyclical *Inter Insigniores* was published, stating that because women do not bear a “natural resemblance” to Christ, they cannot be validly ordained to the priesthood.²³ This document and the theology it espoused prompted a new look at the meaning of priesthood and of apostolic ministry.

By the time of the second Women’s Ordination Conference in 1978, the focus was not only on admitting women to the priesthood, but also on a reevaluation of the very meaning of the office. It was becoming clear to many that admission into the priesthood as understood at the time was

²¹ For accounts of these events from two of the women priests, see Carter Heyward, *A Priest Forever: The Formation of a Woman and a Priest* (New York, 1976); and Betty Bone Schiess, *Why Me, Lord? One Woman’s Ordination to the Priesthood with Commentary and Complaint* (Syracuse, NY, 2003).

²² Pontifical Biblical Commission, “Report,” *Origins* 6 (1976): 92–6.

²³ *Inter Insigniores*; see also “Commentary by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,” *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 69 (1977).

perhaps an unworthy goal. The theme of the second conference was “New Woman, New Church, New Priestly Ministry,” reflecting the growing sense that there was more at stake than the insertion of women into existing patriarchal and hierarchical Church structures. The Women’s Ordination Conference was incorporated in 1976, and it continues to organize conferences, meetings, protests, and liturgies in support of women’s priestly ministry. Meanwhile, the priest shortage in the Catholic Church continued to grow, leaving many parishes without a priest or being forced to share a priest with other parishes. Theologically trained women, some laywomen and some members of religious communities, were being hired as pastors and parish administrators. Since 2000, a number of Catholic parishes have separated themselves from their dioceses and ordained women as deacons and priests.²⁴

Within mainline Protestantism, as women were accepted into systems of ordination and positions of pastoral leadership, it became clear that they were not being admitted on the same level as men. Denominational and cross-denominational studies of clergywomen all point to the same conclusion: women clergy serve smaller congregations, are paid less, rise less often to “senior” positions, and do not receive the same level of denominational support as male colleagues. This discrimination, in addition to the pressures of parish work and, often, the experience of being the “first woman minister” in a given position or role and the expectation that she represent “all women,” took – and continues to take – a serious toll on clergywomen’s well-being.²⁵

In the academic world, the same forces that were impelling women to seek changes in their status in religious bodies, especially with regard to ordination, were also fostering the development of new areas of research in the study of religion. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of new scholarship that drew to some extent on the broader scholarly work focusing on women and perhaps to an even greater extent on the women’s ordination movement. The citation of scriptural texts and historic precedence to oppose women’s ordination drove scholars to revisit earlier research with an eye now toward sex bias in the acceptance, interpretation, and authority granted such texts and history. Much work focused on recovering lost history, especially the history of women in religions.

²⁴ See Elsie Hainz McGrath, Bridget Mary Meehan, and Ida Raming, eds., *Women Find a Way: The Movement and Stories of Roman Catholic Womenpriests* (College Station, TX, 2008).

²⁵ Adair T. Lummis, Barbara Hargrove, and Jackson Carroll, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for Churches* (San Francisco, 1983); Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia M. Y. Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY, 1998).

As women battled churches and other religious organizations for recognition and ordination, women in academia found themselves engaged in similar struggles within academic guilds, disciplines, and professional organizations. As predominantly male religious institutions resisted accepting women into the ranks of leadership and decision making, so also male-dominated academic societies resisted including questions in their conferences regarding women's roles in history and theology and sacred texts, especially when those questions challenged long-held assumptions, methods, and conclusions. This resistance prompted the founding of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* as a venue for publishing cutting-edge feminist scholarship that often found a hard time being accepted in traditional scholarly outlets.

Perhaps the earliest of these challenges to tradition took the form of an article by a professor of religion at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Valerie Saiving Goldstein, who raised the question about whether male traditional definitions of sin were, in fact, applicable to women. This essay, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," was first published in 1960 in the *Journal of Religion* and began with a memorable observation:

I am a student of theology. I am also a woman. Perhaps it strikes you as curious that I put these two assertions beside each other, as if to imply that one's sexual identity has some bearing on his theological views. I myself would have rejected such an idea when I first began my theological studies. But now, thirteen years later, I am no longer as certain as I once was that, when theologians speak of "man," they are using the word in its generic sense.²⁶

During the 1970s Saiving's article was widely anthologized and reprinted in feminist publications, and her arguments about the difference in women's experience of the world became basic building blocks of subsequent feminist theologians and made the evolution of later feminist theological paradigms possible.

The publication in 1968 of the Catholic theologian Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* was paradigmatic for this new wave of scholarship.²⁷ Classically trained in Roman Catholic tradition, Daly, drawing on the work of the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), argued that the Church is prevented by its deep misogyny from making room for women as anything other than secondary. At issue here was the question of authority. If the male-dominated ecclesial and academic structures made

²⁶ Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (San Francisco, 1979), 25–42.

²⁷ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston, 1968; 1975 edition includes "Feminist Post-Christian Introduction" by the author).

no place for women on an equal basis with men, why would women grant these institutions authority over their lives? For Daly, and many others, this meant leaving behind the oppressive institutions that limited women, moving into “New Space” and “New Time” as an “Exodus community.” When she was invited to preach in Harvard Memorial Church in 1971, she famously ended her sermon, entitled “The Women’s Movement: An Exodus Community,” by leading a walkout of the church and inviting other women present to join her. As she said in her sermon, “We [women] cannot really belong to institutional religion as it exists. It isn’t good enough to be token preachers. . . . Singing sexist hymns, praying to a male god breaks our spirit, makes us less than human.”²⁸ Daly’s second book, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*, published in 1973, reflects her move beyond the Christianity she critiques vigorously in earlier writings, from theologian to philosopher, from critical Catholic Christian to post-Christian feminist.²⁹

Although not all followed Daly out of institutional religion, her critique of the thought structures, language, and symbols of the major religions resonated across religions and denominations. Also during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Feminist Liturgical Movement began to form within established Christianity and Judaism. Women, no longer content to accept the authority and traditions now understood to be the work of men, begin to claim the authority to create their own rituals, prayers, hymns, and worship experiences in Christian and Jewish contexts.³⁰ Collections of prayers, liturgies, rituals, and hymns soon appeared in print and continue to do so. This challenging and creative work, although not without controversy, began to have an effect on the publication of official denominational worship resources as religious organizations struggled to deal with this new perspective on ancient traditions. Indeed, the Presbyterian Church published a new revised worship book in 1970 that did not reflect these changes, and it found that the book was obsolete by the time it appeared in print. Subsequent revisions of prayer books and hymnals were self-conscious about using inclusive language about human beings and expanding language to refer to God, although this last issue generated the greatest amount of controversy. The *Inclusive Language Lectionary*, a multiyear project

²⁸ Mary Daly, “The Women’s Movement: An Exodus Community,” *Religious Education* 67 (Sept.–Oct. 1972): 327–35.

²⁹ See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward A Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston, 1973); *Gyn/Ecology: Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston, 1990); *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (San Francisco, 1992).

³⁰ Arlene Swidler, ed., *Sistercelebrations: Nine Worship Experiences* (Philadelphia, 1974); Marjorie Procter-Smith and Janet R. Walton, eds., *Women at Worship: Interpretations of North American Diversity* (Louisville, KY, 1993).

sponsored by the National Council of Churches, retranslating the three-year cycle of scriptures assigned for reading during public Sunday worship in most mainline Protestant churches, generated publicity and, at times, considerable ill will.³¹ Although attempts to render references to human beings in terms that include women were resisted in some circles, the most controversial decisions made by the translating committee were the substitution of the phrase “Father-Mother” or “Mother-Father” for scriptural references to God as Father and efforts to deal with the even more intractable problem of the maleness of Jesus.

At issue in this movement for reform of worship were the language and symbols used. Certainly this movement was concerned about the more general problem of sexist language, that is, the use of masculine referents to imply inclusion of women when referring to human beings. But an even more serious matter was language about the deity. In both Judaism and Christianity, in scripture and ritual, the deity is overwhelmingly referred to with male nouns, pronouns, and titles. While both feminists and traditionalists agreed that the deity is in truth beyond all human language and symbolism, and theologians of all traditions had always insisted on this, they could not agree on whether this permitted believers to expand the language and symbols beyond those found in the mainstream of the tradition. Feminists, finding evidence that such expansion had taken place in past centuries, argued that current explorations were in line with this history, supported by the demands of the times. Traditionalists argued vigorously that the tradition itself set the limits of the possibilities, and to exceed those limits was to cross over into heresy and blasphemy.

Probably the most well-publicized incident of this clash occurred in the context of a national gathering in celebration of the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women (1988–98) held in Minneapolis in 1993, called “Re-Imagining: A Global Theological Conference by Women.” Sponsored by women’s offices within mainline Protestant denominations, the conference included speeches, sermons, worship and prayer, and opportunities for small group conversations and collaborations. Representatives of conservative religious groups attended the conference and wrote articles charging the planners and participants with heresy and blasphemy for including prayers that addressed God as Sophia, Greek for “wisdom” and a traditional biblical name sometimes assigned to the deity, sometimes to Jesus.

The extreme reactions against women’s explorations of new forms of worship, prayer, and address for the deity did not provoke women to repent and return to traditional forms. Although many women retained

³¹ *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* (St. Louis, 1986).

their membership and participation in the mainline religion in which they grew up or that they had chosen, the effect of the feminist movement was to generate in them a sense of their own authority and autonomy, so that they were less inclined to accept traditional forms of religious authority and more open to exploring new religious paths.³² While many remained connected in some way with their mainline traditions, many chose to participate in women's gatherings for worship, study, and community, either in addition to these traditions or in place of them. Some of these gatherings, following the writings of the Catholic feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Reuther, called themselves Women-Church.³³ These groups began meeting in local contexts either apart from or sometimes within and with the blessing of established churches. In similar vein, Jewish women began to claim their ritual authority. They recovered ancient ritual associated with women, such as the mikveh ritual bath and the new moon rituals, and repurposed them for feminist use.³⁴ They also began to move women into the center of traditional Jewish rituals. Perhaps the most notable of these events was the annual Women's Haggadah, a group of women who began meeting in 1976 in the New York apartment of the poet and novelist Esther M. Broner to celebrate a Passover that retells the Exodus story from the perspective of women. The original group included the politician Bella Abzug and the writers Gloria Steinem, Grace Paley, Phyllis Chesler, and Letty Cotton Pogrebin.³⁵

The struggles and conflicts over matters of ordination, theology, and worship were, at heart, struggles over authority and autonomy. Who decides who participates in decision making, who defines the basic meanings of the tradition, whose stories and questions and needs are included? The strong negative reactions of traditionalists to changes in all of these practices took their toll, and many women and some men chose to separate themselves from traditional religious forms of Judaism and Christianity. For many, the historical and archaeological research that provided evidence of a matriarchal or at least goddess-centered prehistoric society compelled considerable interest, as did renewed research into ancient and present religions that incorporated goddesses in their worldview. A renewal of paganism, sometimes called the Neo-Pagan movement, arose, especially among those

³² See Miriam Therese Winter, Adair Lummis, and Allison Stokes, *Defecting in Place: Women Claiming Responsibility for their Own Spiritual Lives* (New York, 1995).

³³ Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (San Francisco, 1985).

³⁴ See Lynn Gottlieb, *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism* (San Francisco, 1995).

³⁵ Esther M. Broner, *The Telling: The Story of a Group of Jewish Women Who Journey to Spirituality through Community and Ceremony* (New York, 1993).

who concluded, as did Mary Daly, that Judaism and Christianity were not ultimately open to reform, or that their energy was better spent elsewhere. Among the earliest leaders of this movement was Carol C. Christ, whose ground-breaking article "Why Women Need the Goddess" was based not only on her disillusionment with traditional Christianity, but also on a recovery of Greek polytheistic religion.³⁶ Miriam Simos, writing under the name "Starhawk," developed a complex ethical and ritual system based on a reconstructed version of prehistoric religion in her 1979 book *The Spiral Dance: The Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess*, which laid out the foundations of what became known variously as Neo-Paganism, goddess worship, witchcraft, or Wicca.³⁷ Luisa Teish, raised in New Orleans in a rich context of Catholicism, African and Caribbean religions, and community rituals, became a priestess of Oshun and published *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals*, which opened the women's spirituality movement to African American women by drawing on African rituals reinterpreted in a multicultural and interreligious context.³⁸

Another important social movement that had its effect on women and religion in America beginning in the 1970s was the shelter movement to support and protect battered women and children. Early on, the movement saw religion, especially conservative or traditional religion, as one of the barriers to battered women's survival and recovery. Counselors working with battered women commonly heard women tell them that their husband quoted scripture to defend violent behavior or that women who sought help from pastors or rabbis were frequently told that their religion demanded that they accept this abuse.³⁹ Therefore, most women's shelters were unsympathetic to religion and, more significantly, to the religious and spiritual needs of the women they were sheltering. In 1977 the Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, founded the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle to work directly with religious organizations to address the religious and cultural issues of abuse. Now known as Faith Trust Institute, this organization provides training, consultation, and educational publications and other materials for use in religious communities, including Buddhist,

³⁶ Carol C. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in Christ and Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*.

³⁷ Starhawk [Miriam Simos], *The Spiral Dance: The Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess* (San Francisco, 1979). See also Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (New York, 2006).

³⁸ Luisa Teish, *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals* (San Francisco, 1988).

³⁹ See Carol J. Adams, *Woman-Battering* (Minneapolis, 1994).

Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, and Roman Catholic contexts.⁴⁰ Fortune's publications, beginning with the classic book on rape, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin*, published in 1983, set the standard for dealing with the spiritual damage done by violence against women and children.⁴¹ Her work, as well as the leadership of the center, was at the forefront as churches across denominations began dealing with the clergy abuse disclosures in the 1980s.⁴²

As awareness of the extent of the problem of violence against women increased, this became a significant theological issue in feminist thought as well. The negative effects of patriarchy (or, in the coined term of the New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "kyriarchy") had long been identified, but often, at least in postindustrial America, and among well-educated and privileged clergy and academics, in fairly general terms: limitations on access to power, autonomy, and education. But here was concrete and personal evidence of the life-and-death significance of religious patriarchy: women beaten, abused, raped, threatened, their lives at risk, and these actions defended on religious grounds. New theological questions were raised, and old ones given a new framework. The classical theological problem of theodicy, or why God permits suffering, was raised again, in a context in which religion itself is now seen to be responsible, at least in part, for causing terrible suffering.

Biblical studies, too, had undergone a process of questioning, revision, and rewriting. Early work was focused on recovering lost stories of women and responding to the classic women's history question, "What were the women doing?" The Old Testament scholar Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror* offered one answer to that question in a rereading of selected biblical stories of women who suffered violence, thereby linking ancient texts with the contemporary battered women's shelter movement.⁴³ The work of the New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and especially *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, set the stage for a new era of biblical interpretation and offered a complex picture of women's contributions to the development of early Christianity.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Faith Trust Institute online at <http://faithtrustinstitute.org>.

⁴¹ Marie M. Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin* (New York, 1983).

⁴² Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco, 1989); Marie Fortune and James N. Poling, *Sexual Abuse by Clergy: A Crisis for the Church* (Decatur, GA, 1994); Marie Fortune and W. Merle Longwood, *Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: Trusting the Clergy?* (New York, 2003).

⁴³ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia, 1984).

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York, 1983).

Early in the movement to recover women's history in biblical texts, Jewish feminist scholars were engaged not only in reclaiming the stories of the biblical matriarchs and drawing attention to their roles at the center of the Jewish tradition, but also in critiquing Christian feminist readings of women in earliest Christianity. Some early feminist work argued that Jesus, or the earliest Christian movement, showed signs of positive evaluations of women in contrast to women's roles in Judaism.⁴⁵ But Jewish feminist scholars were quick to point out that such a defense of Christianity at the expense of Judaism was ill informed. First of all, they noted that Jesus himself was a Jew, and an observant if occasionally critical one. Second, they noted that when applying the same critical readings to Jewish history that feminist readers were applying to New Testament Christianity, a very similar, and similarly complex, picture of women in Judaism emerged.

Key principles of the women's movement were the principle of sisterhood and an emphasis on shared stories and common struggles, which encouraged the regular gathering of women for support, study, and action. Most of these gatherings were small and local; the process of hearing one another's stories in a nonthreatening and supportive context, what the theologian Nelle Morton famously called "hearing one another into speech," was essential to the movement.⁴⁶ Some gatherings, however, organized themselves into more permanent structures. Some were focused on alternative educational programs. One of the most enduring of these was housed at the Center at Grailville in Ohio. The Grail, an international women's movement with roots in the 1920s, established a farm and retreat center in rural Ohio, which became home to the Seminary Quarter at Grailville, an annual summer for-credit program for women that employed an alternative model for theological education and religious life. More recently, the Women's Alliance for Ethics, Theology, and Ritual in Washington, D.C. (WATER), was established in 1983 as an organizing and educational center focusing particularly on giving a feminist perspective to issues facing the Roman Catholic Church.

In spite of valuing sisterhood, or perhaps because of it, divisions and disagreements among feminists soon emerged. In fact, the very process of encouraging conversation and collaboration exposed the deep social divisions that continue to separate women from one another. Jewish feminists noted the ways in which Christian feminist arguments fell easily into

⁴⁵ Leonard Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," *Catholic World* (Jan. 1971): 177–83; Robin Scroggs, "Paul: Chauvinist or Liberationist?" *Christian Century* (15 Mar. 1972): 327–35. See also Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective* (New York, 1990).

⁴⁶ Nelle Morton, "The Rising Woman Consciousness in a Male Language Structure," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 12:4 (Mar. 1972): 177–90.

anti-Semitism. African American feminists challenged white feminists to examine their complicity in racial systems that favored white women at the expense of women of color. Lesbians drew attention to the heterosexism implicit – and at times explicit – in much feminist spirituality, particularly as that movement emphasized cycles of heterosexual life. Out of these conflicts arose a more nuanced understanding of women's oppression. Whereas early theorists argued that, in the words of Mary Daly, women were the primordial outsiders, and that patriarchy was simply the system whereby men as a class oppress women as a class, it became clear that the reality was much more complex. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's construction of the interlocking patterns of oppression that takes into account race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and a host of other social realities names this system "kyriarchy," the rule of the masters. In this framework, white women, or straight women, for example, can be seen to benefit from the system that favors whiteness and heterosexuality, whereas women of color suffer from double discrimination and gay women of color from threefold discrimination.⁴⁷

Embracing the emerging distinctions among women based on racial and ethnic identity and experience, many feminist theologians developed methods that placed central emphasis on their identity as religious women of color. African American women theologians needed to distinguish themselves from white feminism as well as from African American liberation theology, or Black Theology, since neither approach took into account their unique history and experience.⁴⁸ Borrowing from the poet and novelist Alice Walker, they coined the term "Womanist Theology" and reclaimed the role of women in the history of the liberation of African Americans.⁴⁹

In similar vein, Latina women also recognized the complexity of their relationship with both feminist theologies and Latin American liberation theologies, both of which claimed to speak for them. The distinctive voice of Latina theologians was especially identified by the theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, who introduced the term *Mujerista* as a way of naming these complex and diverse realities of women in countries and cultures with distinct and unique religious and social beliefs and practices.⁵⁰

As challenges from within American feminism altered and expanded the issues faced by religious groups and feminist academicians, so also

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, 1992).

⁴⁸ Jacqueline Grant, "A Black Response to Feminist Theology," in Janet Kalven and Mary Buckley, eds., *Women's Spirit Bonding* (New York, 1984).

⁴⁹ Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (New York, 1993).

⁵⁰ Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (New York, 2004).

challenges from religious feminists from other countries raised yet more new questions. Although religious feminism developed elsewhere at the same time and with much mutual influence early on, postcolonial thought began to draw particular attention to the ways in which American religions had exercised imperialist and oppressive power beyond the American context. This point had already been made by Native American scholars and, in particular, by those recovering Native American religious practices that had been suppressed and all but destroyed by the partitioning of Native American tribes among Protestant churches by the American government. Native American women writers began to publish books and articles on the role of women in these recovered traditions. One of the most influential of these studies was Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in Native American Indian Traditions*.⁵¹

As the recognition of the meaning and history of colonialism for America began to take hold, scholars and religious practitioners began to identify the ways in which women of non-Western societies were depicted in literature and treated in person.⁵² Accounts of violence, sexual exploitation, religious suppression, forced religious conversions, and destruction of native cultures and cultural roles complicate the picture for theologians constructing a liberating religious worldview and demand a greater awareness of the history and relationships that connect American religions with other countries and peoples.

For many American women and men, the feminist movement in religion did not produce vast upheavals in their lives. Perhaps they now had a woman pastor or rabbi; very likely they were singing songs and praying prayers and engaging in rituals and liturgies that were different from earlier practices. But at a deeper level, everything changed. The landscape was now different because of the admission of women to ordained religious leadership in a significant number of American denominations, and traditions that continued to restrict women's access to ordination continue to find themselves having to defend their practices in the face of recent experience with capable women religious leaders. Schools and programs in religious studies found themselves admitting women in larger numbers than ever, a trend that continues today, creating a generous pool of women

⁵¹ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in Native American Indian Traditions* (Boston, 1986); see also Kathleen M. Donovan, *Feminist Readings of Native American Literature: Coming to Voice* (Tucson, AZ, 1998).

⁵² Kwok Pui Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY, 2005). See also Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, 2004); and Natawan Boonprasat Lewis and Marie M. Fortune, eds., *Remembering Conquest: Feminist/Womanist Perspectives on Religion, Colonization, and Sexual Violence* (New York, 1999).

who are trained in religion and theology. And whether they seek ordination or not, they take their training and their perspective into the common religious conversation, both within their own traditions and in the increasingly essential conversations that take place in a world of many religions.

Do women engage in these religious matters in ways different from men? Does it matter, as Valerie Saiving argued in 1960, that they are theologians, and they are women? It is difficult to assess exactly how it might be so. Some have argued (an old argument) that women have greater sensitivity to people's feelings, a greater empathy, some have even said a civilizing influence. Others point out that such assumptions trade on patriarchal definitions of women and subscribe to essentialist understandings of gender that have been discredited especially by the expanded understanding of women's experience that points out that class, race, ethnicity, and a host of other competing identities mean that all women are not alike and experience cannot be generalized. But this is sure: the landscape of religion in America (and beyond) changed when women gained access to religious authority, and it will not be changed back easily. Can hard-earned gains be lost? History suggests that they can. The history of the nineteenth-century women's movement in America was very nearly lost, and resources and texts remain hard to find. Religious rights accorded women can be revoked. Memory can fail, and records can be lost. Perhaps the challenge facing religious women in the twenty-first century is how best to secure for the future the gains made by their foremothers.

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“CULTS” IN AMERICA: DISCOURSE AND OUTCOMES

CATHERINE WESSINGER

The English word “cult” is derived from the Latin *cultus*, referring to “care,” “adoration,” or “worship.” Therefore, the descriptive definition of “cult” as utilized by religious studies scholars and anthropologists refers to an organized system of worship focused on an adored object. The object of adoration is typically regarded as partaking of a sacred, unseen, and spiritual reality that is believed to have a powerful effect on human beings. In the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the term “cult” has been used to refer to religious groups that are feared and hated. Every culture and historical period has had stigmatized, marginal, and dissenting religious groups and movements, but the application of the term “cult” to such groups is relatively recent. Usually these religious groups are misunderstood by their critics, and their dangers are magnified in the popular imagination.

Particularly since the 1970s the term “cult” conveys a stereotype involving what can be called the “myth of the omnipotent leader” in combination with the “myth of the passive and brainwashed follower.”¹ “Myth” is used popularly to refer to a story that is untrue, but a religious studies understanding of myth is also applicable in this case. In religious studies a myth is a narrative that conveys explanations as well as dearly held values. The “myth of the omnipotent leader” and the “myth of the passive and brainwashed follower” provide simplistic explanations of why stigmatized groups attract members. These myths also provide a culturally sanctioned way for former members to explain their previous commitment to such groups and to receive forgiveness and reintegration into families and the wider society. The two myths warn citizens about the types of groups that are not regarded as acceptable; the cult myth in general inhibits public

¹ Verbal communication from James T. Richardson, quoted in Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York, 2000), 273–4.

awareness that similar characteristics and tendencies can be found in mainstream religious institutions. The anticult caricature has been succinctly summarized as “the leader is a nut; the followers are sheep; and they are all in harm’s way.”²

The cult stereotype promoted by the secular anticult movement, the evangelical Christian countercult movement, and news and entertainment media has a strong and pervasive influence on how Americans perceive unconventional religions and their members. The American cult stereotype has been exported to other countries, such as Japan and the People’s Republic of China, where the English word “cult” or an equivalent may be used. In European languages the equivalents of “sect” are used in the pejorative sense of the English term “cult.”

The pejorative cult stereotype of a domineering charismatic leader, passive and emotionally dependent followers, and deviant and harmful beliefs and practices has been applied to religious groups in America with diverse characteristics. “New religions” scholars contend that beginning a study with the “cult” filter is a barrier to unbiased investigation; therefore, many have advocated the use of neutral descriptive terms such as “new religious movement,” “alternative religion,” “emergent religion,” and “unconventional religion.” New religions scholars emphasize that unconventional groups are legitimate religions and that they express human religious creativity in diverse ways.

New religious movements are often “laboratories of social experimentation”³ with alternative gender roles, leadership of women, sexual expressions, family arrangements, authority structures, and social organization, as well as unconventional theologies, philosophies, and practices. Some of these experiments may be condemned by mainstream society, while others may be incorporated gradually into mainstream religious groups. New religious movements may be highly cohesive groups focused on the teachings of a charismatic prophet or messiah, or they may be diffuse movements in which numerous individuals contribute to developing the worldview and practices.

New religions scholars point out that the pejorative meaning of the terms “cult” and “sect” discounts the validity of a movement as a religion and implies that social problems involving the group are due solely to internal characteristics. Most importantly, the application of a pejorative

² Eugene V. Gallagher, “Responding to Resistance in Teaching about New Religious Movements,” in David G. Bromley, ed., *Teaching New Religious Movements*, American Academy of Religion Teaching Religious Studies Series (Oxford, UK, 2007), 276.

³ Thomas Robbins and David Bromley, “Social Experimentation and the Significance of American New Religions: A Focused Review Essay,” *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 4 (1992): 1.

term to members of an unconventional religion has the effect of dehumanizing them. Applying the term "cult" to a religious group produces a discourse in which religious prejudice is expressed and is not raised to self-reflective awareness by persons taking actions against the stigmatized group. Psychological research by Albert Bandura has demonstrated that the application of a dehumanizing term can prompt otherwise ordinary persons to take life-threatening and harmful actions against dehumanized individuals.⁴ The term "cult" inhibits awareness of citizens that believers in socially accepted and dominant religions often carry out manipulative, hurtful, and violent actions. The application of the term "cult" motivates and justifies persecution, prosecution, and coercive actions by state agents and/or citizens against unconventional believers.⁵ This has occurred even in the United States, despite the First Amendment's constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

It is true that sometimes a religious group will engage in illegal and harmful activities that are the legitimate concern of law enforcement agents. But the pejorative cult stereotype has obscured cultural awareness that the actual problem is not unusual religious groups, but rather the development of "totalism" within a social organization. A totalistic institution is one in which members are coerced and prevented from leaving, perceived enemies internal and/or external to the group are attacked, secondary leaders shore up and support a primary leader's domination and control, and rank and file members fail to think critically about their commitment to the group, its methods, and goals. The popular use of the term "cult" implies that these characteristics are found only in small fringe religious groups, when in fact they should be of concern when manifested in any social organization – a religious community (mainstream or marginal); a secular institution such as the military, a school, or a prison; or a nation. The cult stereotype with its connotation of brainwashing implies that a charismatic leader causes group members to behave in destructive ways, whereas "charisma" – the belief that someone has access to a sacred and unseen source of authority – is socially constructed. No leader can exercise totalitarian control without the complicity of secondary leaders and of ordinary followers willing to carry out coercive and violent actions to force compliance with the overarching goals of the movement.

The cult stereotype implies that unconventional religions are inherently volatile and violent, whereas scholarly study has demonstrated that only a

⁴ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York, 2008), 17–18, 307–11.

⁵ Jane Dillon and James T. Richardson, "The 'Cult' Concept: A Politics of Representation Analysis," *Syzygy* 3:1–4 (Winter–Fall 1994): 185–97.

small fraction of new religious movements become involved in violence. When violent episodes occur – either initiated by the believers or initiated by mainstream social actors – typically the *interactions* of state agents and citizens with the religious believers are contributing causes. The cult discourse applied to members of unconventional religions often plays a significant role in violent outcomes.

THE CULT CONCEPT IN AMERICA – SOME HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

Mainstream Protestant Christians have been disturbed by the rise and spread of a variety of new religious movements in America from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. These groups ranged from the Shakers and other communal groups in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to the Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) at mid-nineteenth century, to Theosophy, Christian Science, and the New Thought movement at the end of the nineteenth century into the twentieth.

In the late eighteenth century considerable hostility was directed toward the Shakers, who lived in celibate communities of women, men, and children, initially under the leadership of their prophet, Mother Ann Lee (1736–84), whom the Shakers regarded as the “Second Appearing of Christ in female form.” Lee and other Shakers were often attacked, and residents were occasionally removed by force from Shaker communities. Shakers believed that Mother Ann Lee’s death was due to injuries inflicted by hostile citizens during her missionary travels through the American countryside.⁶

In the 1830s and 1840s the United States was marked by campaigns against the purported evils of Catholicism, Freemasonry, and Mormonism. Mormons were compelled to migrate westward from their place of origin in New York, and in 1833 they were under intense attack in Missouri, where the governor issued an extermination order. Further conflicts in Illinois led to the murder of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., and his brother in 1844.

On 19 December 1890, fears that the Ghost Dance or Spirit Dance activities of Lakota Sioux were war dances prompted skittish American troops to carry out a massacre near Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, in which 153 Lakota men and women, and twenty-six children younger than age thirteen, were killed and forty-four were wounded. In the fighting,

⁶ Stephen J. Stein, *Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America* (New York, 2003), 49–56.

twenty-five white troops were killed and thirty-nine wounded. Women and children were pursued for about 2 miles and killed.⁷

In the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century, mainstream American religious animosity was directed toward participants in the Spiritualism, Mind Cure, Christian Science, New Thought, and Theosophical movements, as well as toward Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal Christians.

The word "cult" acquired its negative connotation in America around 1900 "under the influence of malignant stereotypes about non-Western religions that had been encountered during imperial adventures."⁸ The encounter with diverse religions was facilitated by new modes of travel – steamship and railroad. The mobility of individuals and populations increased through the twentieth century, thanks to air travel. Increasing access to a variety of media in the twentieth century by members of unconventional religions as well as their detractors contributed to the dissemination of the cult stereotype.⁹

Concerns among the World War II generation of parents about the propensity of their baby boom offspring to affiliate with unconventional religions in the late 1960s and 1970s contributed to the growth of the anticult movement. The encounter of young people drawn to the counterculture with foreign teachers was enhanced by the relaxation of immigration laws in 1965 that permitted greater numbers of Asians to enter the United States.¹⁰

Probably the first book to use the term "cult" in its pejorative sense was *Anti-Christian Cults* (1898) by A. H. Barrington, an Episcopalian minister. With the emergence of the fundamentalist movement in American Protestant Christianity in the early twentieth century, and the later development of evangelical Christianity – both concerned to counteract the effects of modernism on Christian faith and practice – a countercult movement developed to identify and fight "heretical" and "false" religions believed to be inspired by Satan to eliminate true Christian faith. A leading author in the countercult movement was Walter Ralston Martin (1928–89), who published *The Rise of the Cults: An Introductory Guide to the Non-Christian*

⁷ Michelene E. Pesantubbee, "From Vision to Violence: The Wounded Knee Massacre," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, 2000), 62–81.

⁸ Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (New York, 2000), 21, also 48.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; J. Gordon Melton, "Critiquing Cults: An Historical Perspective," in Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft, eds., *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, vol. 1, *History and Controversies* (Westport, CT, 2006), 126–42.

Cults in 1955, followed by other books, most significantly *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1965). Contemporary countercultists see their battle against cults as part of their spiritual warfare against Satan.¹¹

In the early to middle twentieth century, the pejorative term “cult” was applied most vigorously against African American new religious movements, such as the Peace Mission of Father Divine, the Black Jews, the Black Muslims and Nation of Islam, and Vodun and related Afro-Caribbean movements, indicating the power of religious prejudice blended with racism.¹²

The secular anticult movement, which continues to have enormous influence on public perceptions of unconventional religious groups through the dissemination of the cult stereotype in the news and entertainment media, began in the late 1960s and early 1970s when parents began to form anti-cult organizations and networks. These parents affiliated with mental health professionals who were also concerned to raise public awareness of the dangers of cults and to induce government and law enforcement officials to take actions against them. The most influential of these organizations was the Citizens Freedom Foundation, which in 1984 became known as the Cult Awareness Network (CAN).

The Cult Awareness Network referred a number of concerned parents to “deprogrammers,” individuals posing as professionals who kidnapped and confined members of new religious groups and attempted to “deprogram” them to counteract the brainwashing to which they had allegedly succumbed. A number of lawsuits were fought in the courts over the brainwashing issue, with the clinical psychologist Margaret Singer (1921–2003) serving as the foremost proponent of the theory. In 1987 the American Psychological Association (APA) withdrew its support for Singer’s understanding of brainwashing as lacking scientific rigor; in 1989–90 in *U.S. v. Fishman*, the brainwashing thesis was disallowed by the court, marking the beginning of similar court rulings that brainwashing could no longer be used as a defense to justify deprogramming. The Church of Scientology in the 1990s provided resources to Jason Scott, a member of a Pentecostal church, to sue his deprogrammer and those who collaborated with him. In 1995 Scott was awarded a multimillion-dollar judgment against his deprogrammer and a million-dollar judgment against CAN, which forced CAN into bankruptcy.

The assets of the “old CAN” were purchased by individuals associated with Scientology, who since 1996 have operated a “new CAN” as a center

¹¹ Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs*, 49; Melton, “Critiquing Cults,” 126–29; Douglas E. Cowan, “Evangelical Christian Countercult Movement,” in Gallagher and Ashcraft, eds., *Introduction*, 1:143–64.

¹² Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs*, 100–20.

for information on new religious movements. Former deprogrammers who remain active in the anticult movement have turned to voluntary "exit counseling." The intellectual leadership of the anticult movement passed to the International Cultic Studies Association, which publishes a journal and holds conferences and workshops.¹³

According to J. Gordon Melton, the impetus for the anticult movement in America was waning in the late 1970s until 918 people died in murders and suicides carried out by members of the Peoples Temple in and near Jonestown, Guyana, on 18 November 1978.¹⁴ This event shocked the world and appeared to confirm all the worst fears popularized by the cult stereotype.

PEOPLES TEMPLE AND JONESTOWN

Peoples Temple was a church founded by its minister, Jim Jones (1931–78), in 1955 in Indianapolis, Indiana, and it affiliated with the Disciples of Christ in 1960. Jones relocated Peoples Temple to northern California in 1965. He was committed to building a multiracial church devoted to working for social justice; once in California, Peoples Temple attracted numerous poor African Americans with its social services, strong community, and lively black church worship style. Jones' inner circle of leaders were primarily college-educated young white adults who joined in California, many of whom Jones tested and bonded to himself through his sexual relations with them. Longtime members from Indiana were central figures in establishing the agricultural commune in Jonestown, Guyana, beginning in 1974, to which the majority of the church members relocated in 1977 because of news media exposés about abuses within the church.

Jim Jones claimed to be a committed Marxist who, in response to the McCarthy era persecutions (late 1940s to late 1950s), decided to utilize religion – Karl Marx's "opiate of the people" – to draw converts into his Marxist organization by offering them "apostolic socialism" based on the gospels and dressed in Peoples Temple's enthusiastic preaching and worship style. Jones declared to his congregation that he was a manifestation of the "Christ Principle," the embodiment of a divine "Socialism"; more privately to his inner circle, he claimed to be the reincarnation of Lenin.

Jones demonstrated his strong commitment to working for the socially disenfranchised in America, especially poor African Americans, but Peoples Temple followed a trajectory that led it, and ultimately Jonestown, into becoming a totalistic community in which dissent drew severe physical

¹³ Melton, "Critiquing Cults," 130–9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133–5.

coercion and punishments. Ultimately, in Jonestown a few dissenters were separated from other residents and kept drugged in a clinic. Upon arrival in Jonestown, residents' passports were confiscated, and they were isolated in the commune in the midst of dense jungle with no ready access to help or even news from the outside world. In the enforced isolation of Jonestown and with Jones' descent into drug addiction and paranoia, Jonestown became an encapsulated community with many residents afraid of repercussions if they attempted to leave. The impoverished African Americans did not have the economic and social resources to leave, and, in fact, their living conditions and health care in Jonestown were arguably better than what they had experienced in the United States. A few of the young educated white residents found ways to leave with the assistance of their families, but other white members of the leadership circle were committed to maintaining the community. Immediately prior to the mass murders and suicides, a handful of residents decided to walk through the jungle to the nearest town. A few other residents opted not to participate in the mass suicide by taking refuge in the jungle while the poisoned Fla-Vor-Aid was being handed out.

It is important to note that a totalistic social group cannot evolve without the support and complicity of key lieutenants and a critical mass of followers who are willing to carry out extreme and violent actions to preserve an ultimate concern – the goal to which the group is dedicated. In the case of Jonestown, the ultimate concern was the residents' commitment to maintain the cohesiveness of their commune at all costs. Such totalistic groups can and do evolve in other institutions besides small religious communities, including nations. No leader can exercise authoritarian control over people through his or her own efforts alone – as the “brainwashing thesis” proposes. Once a small or large group has become totalistic, it is very difficult for dissenters to depart safely or, if they remain, to influence a social trajectory that will lead to greater openness and nonhierarchical and nonabusive exercise of authority.

Despite the problems internal to Peoples Temple and Jonestown, the mass murders and suicides were not a foregone outcome. The tragedy of 18 November 1978 was produced by the *interactions* of stresses internal to Jonestown – which was failing as a communal experiment and whose messianic leader was manifestly failing in his role – with pressures originating outside the commune. The sociologist John R. Hall has highlighted the role of “cultural opposition” in the deaths at Jonestown.¹⁵ The historian

¹⁵ John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987); John R. Hall, “Public Narratives and the Apocalyptic Sect:

of religions Rebecca Moore has written that the Jonestown residents were in a "vise"¹⁶ consisting of pressures applied by a coalition of opponents: former members as well as family members who had organized into a group called Concerned Relatives; the legal father and birth mother who were suing to obtain custody of a six-year-old who Jones claimed was his biological son; news media who were producing exposés about the activities of Jim Jones and members of his church; the Social Security Administration, which withheld Social Security checks, and the United States Postal Service, which disrupted delivery of those checks vital to the economic survival of Jonestown; the Federal Communications Commission, which was threatening to cut off Jonestown's only means of communication with the outside world, shortwave radio; the Internal Revenue Service, which was investigating the church's financial dealings; and perhaps the Central Intelligence Agency.

The opponents of Jim Jones had legitimate concerns about what was going on in Jonestown, but their activities intensified pressure that prompted some of the community's members to take violent actions against perceived enemies and then commit mass murder and suicide. In the pitched conflict, the opponents of Jim Jones publicized a narrative painting Peoples Temple and Jonestown with all the worst characteristics of a cult. They thus perpetuated what Hall calls a "static view" of unconventional religions, which is "a tendency to see the dynamics of 'cults' as internal to such groups" and prevents the examination of "external social interaction in conflict between a sectarian group and opponents and authorities themselves." According to Hall, "cultural opponents have never seriously weighed their own roles in negative outcomes of pitched conflicts with alternative religious movements."¹⁷

There were numerous warnings that the Jonestown residents were prepared to give up their lives if the continued existence of their community were seriously threatened. Jonestown residents wrote letters to congressional representatives and newspapers stating that if they concluded that their community was being destroyed, they would choose to die together. Defectors from Jonestown reported that Jim Jones was leading the community in "white night" drills in which people drank fruit punch allegedly laced with cyanide but were then told that it was a test and preparation for what might occur. Essays were written by Jonestown residents discussing

From Jonestown to Mt. Carmel," in Stuart A. Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago, 1995), 205–35.

¹⁶ Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, NY, 1985), 259, 273–315.

¹⁷ Hall, "Public Narratives," 230.

and affirming the option of “revolutionary suicide” if their community was threatened with extinction.

The mass murders and suicides at Jonestown on 18 November 1978 were precipitated by the unwelcome visit by Representative Leo Ryan (1925–78) of California with an entourage that included all of Jones’ enemies – Concerned Relatives, news reporters, and Ryan and his aides representing the federal government. Because the commune was engaging in illegal coercive activities, Jones was particularly sensitive to criticisms by former members. When a group of longtime Indiana members decided to depart with Ryan’s party, men from Jonetown ambushed the party at the airstrip. Ryan, three reporters, and a defector were killed, and other members of the party were wounded. Then Jones led the community in committing murder and mass suicide by injecting the children and elderly with cyanide and drinking the poisoned Fla-Vor-Aid. Everyone was dead by the time Guyanese soldiers arrived the next day. Jonestown’s residents’ ultimate concern to preserve the cohesiveness of the community had been achieved at a tremendous cost.

The 909 people who died at Jonestown, including more than 300 children below age eighteen, and the Peoples Temple member in Georgetown (Guyana’s capital) who killed her 3 children and then herself, were all dehumanized in the media coverage of the events. Only the gruesome aspects of Jonestown were depicted, while the individuals who loved each other and their community were erased by the images of the bloated corpses festering in the tropical sun and depictions of the mad Jim Jones. “Cognitive distancing” of the Jonestown residents from other Americans was reflected in their distancing in space and time by the American government’s failure to perform an adequate number of autopsies to determine the various causes of death, by the shipping and storage of the bodies for six months at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware – far from their homes in California – and by the final burial of almost five hundred of the bodies under a single earthen mound in an African American cemetery in Oakland, California. Although many of the poor black people had found affirmation of their humanity and value in Peoples Temple and Jonestown, and the idealistic white people likewise found meaningful identity in the community, all were dehumanized in death by the cult stereotype.¹⁸

Jonestown became the icon for the cult stereotype, which directly impacted the outcome in the conflict of relatives and former members, news media, and federal law enforcement agents with the Branch Davidians at their Mount Carmel Center outside Waco, Texas, in 1993.

¹⁸ David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple and Jonestown*, rev. ed. (Bloomington, IN, 2003), 163–9.

THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

On 28 February 1993, a religious community, whose members became known as the Branch Davidians, on property named Mount Carmel Center located ten miles outside Waco, Texas, was attacked by seventy-six agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). The ATF agents were attempting to serve a search warrant to look for illegal weapons and an arrest warrant for the community's leader, David Koresh (1959–93). Instead of serving the warrants peacefully, however, ATF agents attempted to carry out a "no-knock" "dynamic entry." In the ensuing shootout and its immediate aftermath, five Branch Davidians and four ATF agents died. Twenty ATF agents and four Branch Davidians were wounded, including Koresh. A sixth Branch Davidian was shot and killed by ATF agents later in the day as he attempted to walk back to the Mount Carmel residence. During the assault, Branch Davidians dialed 9-1-1 and begged that the shooting stop. Immediately after the shoot-out, Branch Davidians, including the wounded David Koresh, gave interviews via telephone to the media, alleging that ATF agents had shot at them through closed doors and windows and had fired at them from National Guard helicopters. They claimed that the bullet holes in the building would support their allegation that ATF agents did most of the shooting.

Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation soon arrived to take over the negotiations and the siege, which stretched out to fifty-one days. FBI agents secured the perimeter by surrounding the residence with tanks, guards, and snipers. During the siege fourteen adults and twenty-one children exited the residence. However, every time adults walked out, FBI agents ratcheted up tactical punishments and psychological warfare by making threatening maneuvers with tanks, cutting off electricity, shining bright spotlights through the night, and blasting high-decibel and irritating sounds at the residence.¹⁹ On 19 April 1993, FBI agents carried out a tank assault that dismantled significant portions of the residence and inserted CS gas, which culminated in a fire in which seventy-four Branch Davidians died, including twenty-three children below age fifteen (including two fetuses).

The Branch Davidians were a movement that had split off from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. They shared with Seventh-Day Adventists an intense concern with the apocalyptic prophecies of the Bible, as well as

¹⁹ A summary of the events of the two assaults and the siege is found in Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 56–119; and in Catherine Wessinger, "Deaths in the Fire at the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel: Who Bears Responsibility?" *Nova Religio* 13:2 (Nov. 2009): 25–60.

belief that God continued to convey inspiration to living prophets concerning the Bible's "endtime prophecies." The Branch Davidians grew out of the Davidian community established by Victor Houteff (1885–1955) in Waco in 1935. The Branch Davidians under the leadership of Ben Roden (1902–78) gained control of the Mount Carmel property outside Waco in the 1960s. Ben's wife, Lois Roden (1905–86), became the group's next prophet. In 1981 twenty-two-year-old Vernon Howell joined the group, and by 1984 Florence began to indicate that he would succeed her as prophet. In 1985, shortly after marrying the daughter of longtime Branch Davidians, Howell traveled to Israel, where he had a spiritual experience that he believed indicated he was God's Son and Christ returned to orchestrate the events of the endtime.

Upon his return from Israel, the Branch Davidians noted that Howell taught the Bible's prophecies with an increased sense of authority. He drew on passages in the Christian Old Testament to elucidate the endtime events revealed in the "seven seals" of the New Testament book of Revelation. Since Revelation states that only the "Lamb," that is, Christ, can "open" the seven seals (Rev. 5:9, 6), Howell reasoned that he must be Christ. In 1986 Howell began taking young women in the community as additional "wives," and in 1989 he revealed that God wanted all the men, except him, to be celibate, and that all the women, including women married to other men, were his wives. Howell taught that he was supposed to have twenty-four children, who would be the "twenty-four Elders" who are mentioned in the book of Revelation as sitting by God's throne to assist in God's judgment of humanity. Howell associated his status with Cyrus (in Hebrew, Koresh), the Persian king termed a "messiah" ("anointed" or "christ") in Isaiah 45:1, who defeated Babylon in 539 B.C.E., thus ending the exile of the Israelites. In the book of Revelation, "Babylon" is a metaphor for evil society following Satan instead of God, which Koresh taught referred to the United States. In 1990 Howell changed his name legally to "David Koresh," indicating that he was the Davidic Koresh messiah or Christ who would defeat "Babylon" and carry out God's judgment on sinful humanity.

The biblical literalism and apocalypticism of the Branch Davidians were not unusual in the Texas religious landscape. Koresh was successful also in gaining converts, usually Seventh-Day Adventists, from a variety of geographical locations outside Texas – Britain, Australia, California, and Hawaii. Young people were attracted to this youthful messiah, and a number of them played in or promoted Koresh's rock band, through which he attempted to spread his message. The Branch Davidian method of conversion was logical persuasion through lengthy Bible studies given by Koresh or one of his representatives.

Koresh taught that a time would come when their community would be attacked by the agents of "Babylon" and that he and a number of his followers would be killed. He also taught that it was likely that they would have to undergo a purification or "baptism" by fire (Matt. 3:11).²⁰ Subsequently they would be resurrected – he as Christ riding on a white horse and the others as fiery seraphim in his army of two hundred million martyrs (Rev. 9:16) – and would carry out God's violent chastisement against the sinful and unrepentant and then create God's kingdom for the saved on a miraculously risen Mount Zion in the Holy Land. Koresh taught that they would most likely be attacked during the Jewish eight-day holiday of Passover, and Branch Davidians around the nation and the world were strongly encouraged to go to Mount Carmel for the Passover season.²¹

Several members of the Branch Davidian community lost their faith, left, and became critics who allied with anticultists to draw the attention of law enforcement agents and the media to the Branch Davidians as a cult. Noteworthy among these is Marc Breault, who styled himself a "cult-buster" in his coauthored book published shortly after the majority of the Branch Davidians perished.²² Koresh and the community were investigated in 1992 for child abuse by Texas social workers, and the case was closed for lack of evidence, but one non-Branch Davidian father obtained custody of his daughter and removed her from Mount Carmel. Kiri Jewell subsequently testified in a congressional hearing in 1995 that Koresh had sexual contact with her, with the tacit permission of her mother, when she was ten. ATF agents began investigating the Branch Davidians for possible arms violations in 1992, and an investigation was initiated by reporters with the *Waco Tribune-Herald* at the same time.

Many of the weapons purchased by the Branch Davidians were stock that was sold at gun shows to provide income to support the community. But many other weapons were accumulated in the event that the community was attacked by agents of "Babylon." Koresh taught that his followers should arm themselves for self-defense (Luke 22:36) and not die meekly

²⁰ Lois Roden articulated a theology of baptism of fire by "full immersion" in a Bible study given on 21 Mar. 1978, probably elaborating theological interpretations given earlier by Victor Houteff. See Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford, UK, 2006), 166; Wessinger, "Deaths in the Fire," 26–7.

²¹ Interviews reported in unsigned FBI documents, "Passover Summary," 1 Apr. 1993, and "Passover Analysis Addendum," 18 Apr. 1993, in the Lee Hancock Collection, Texas State University–San Marcos.

²² Marc Breault and Martin King, *Inside the Cult: A Member's Chilling, Exclusive Account of Madness and Depravity in David Koresh's Compound* (New York, 1993).

at the hands of Satan's agents. On the other hand, when he was killed, his followers were expected to follow him in martyrdom.²³

ATF agents suspected that the Branch Davidians were converting semiautomatic weapons into automatic weapons. This could be done legally in the United States if a tax were paid to obtain a permit. The allegation was that the Branch Davidians were making the conversion without paying the tax and obtaining the permit, the penalty for which would be a fine. Although the ATF undercover agent who visited the residence numerous times reported that he saw no illegal weapons, ATF commanders decided to make preparations for a dynamic entry to defeat a cult. The cult stereotype magnified the dangers posed by the Branch Davidians in the minds of ATF agents and their commanders. The retired ATF agent James Moore has reported the view the agents had of Koresh and the Branch Davidians (emphasis added).

Along the way, agents were advised by former cult members that Koresh's followers saw him as God, obeying him implicitly to the extent that male followers went celibate, giving him their wives, and that Koresh was sexually abusing children as young as ten. One girl was fourteen when she gave birth to a Koresh son. These reports, *irrelevant to ATF's official mission*, eliminated any possibility that Koresh was a misguided technical violator of federal laws. This suspect was "*a bad guy*." More relevant was Koresh's teaching that people who attended church on Sunday were worshipping Satan. Any agent dubious about investigating a "religious group" shivered at the prospect of *Koresh's sheep* invading a church with bombs and machine guns to "deal with the devil."²⁴

This concise statement of the myth of the omnipotent leader and the myth of the passive, brainwashed followers dehumanizes the Branch Davidians and demonizes David Koresh, who had a history of cooperating with investigations by law enforcement agents and social workers. The Branch Davidians did not become an encapsulated community until they were surrounded by federal law enforcement agents, who enforced their isolation while waging psychological warfare against them, and even then adults could choose to leave the residence. Before the ATF raid there was no evidence that the Branch Davidians intended to assault their neighbors; they were prepared to defend themselves in the event of the expected assault by Satan's agents. James Moore's statement correctly notes that the ATF has no jurisdiction over matters involving child abuse.

Concurrently with the ATF investigation, reporters with the *Waco Tribune-Herald* were conducting an investigation that began in June 1992.

²³ Reports on interviews with former Branch Davidians in FBI documents cited later.

²⁴ James Moore, *Very Special Agents: The Inside Story of America's Most Controversial Law Enforcement Agency – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms* (New York, 1997), 286.

A seven-part series entitled "The Sinful Messiah" was ready for publication in 1993, when ATF commanders asked *Tribune-Herald* editors to hold off publishing the series until after the raid. The editors published the first article on 27 February 1993, calculating that the raid would be carried out on 1 March. The second article was published on 28 February the day of the raid. After the shoot-out at Mount Carmel, the *Tribune-Herald* published the remaining stories on 1 March. The "Sinful Messiah" series became the primary source of information about the Branch Davidians for the federal law enforcement agents and reporters from around the nation and the world arriving in Waco.²⁵

The "Sinful Messiah" series depicted David Koresh as the "omnipotent cult leader," alleging that he administered severe punishments to small children, in addition to reporting the allegations about his sexual activities with underage girls. While Koresh was indeed having sex with underage girls as well as other women in the community, surviving Branch Davidian children have not confirmed the allegations of severe physical punishments. The primary sources for the series were anticult activists and former Branch Davidians who had adopted the anticult perspective. Part 1 of the series asked the question, Why would a rational person join such a group? The former Branch Davidians answered that they had succumbed to "traditional mind-control techniques to entrap listeners," Koresh's Bible studies were "spellbinding," and they had been helpless to resist.²⁶ In part 4 Priscilla Coates of the Cult Awareness Network and Rick Ross, a deprogrammer, depicted Koresh as practicing mind control that made the converts "passive and obedient."²⁷

After the ATF raid and during the siege, national newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* depicted Koresh as a gun-toting, deranged, and sex-crazed "cult leader" and the Branch Davidians as passive followers, and they strongly indicated that the likely outcome of the siege would be a mass suicide for which Koresh would be responsible. The cover of the 15 March 1993 issue of *Newsweek* depicted a grainy picture of Koresh's forehead, his eyes shaded by glasses, with the headline "Secrets of the Cult" in sinister letters. This issue included a story entitled "Cultic America," which was accompanied by photographs of purported "cultists" – followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the bodies at Jonestown, the bombed remains

²⁵ Catherine Wessinger, "The Branch Davidians and Religion Reporting – A Ten-Year Retrospective," in Kenneth G. C. Newport and Crawford Gribben, eds., *Expecting the End: Millennialism in Social and Historical Context* (Waco, TX, 2006), 148–50.

²⁶ Mark England and Darlene McCormick, "Sinful Messiah: Part One," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, 27 Feb. 1993.

²⁷ Mark England and Darlene McCormick, "Sinful Messiah: Part Four," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, 1 Mar. 1993.

of MOVE in Philadelphia, Charles Manson, and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, whose Church Universal and Triumphant had not been involved in violence. This issue also contained a story entitled “From Prophets to Losses” with a photograph of the bodies of Jonestown residents beside the poison vat. The 15 March 1993 issue of *Time* conveyed the same cult theme in relation to the Branch Davidians. The cover depicted distorted photographs of the faces of David Koresh and Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the Egyptian cleric who was accused of inciting the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City – the blinded eyes of Rahman presented as the counterpart to Koresh’s eyes shaded by glasses. The headline between their faces read, “In the Name of God: What Happens When Believers Embrace the Dark Side of Faith.”

The depiction of the Branch Davidians as deluded cultists following a manipulative con man, by the media and by FBI agents in press briefings, served to “manufacture consent about Koresh” as an insane and omnipotent cult leader and his followers as passive, invisible, and therefore dehumanized, thereby conveying the message that the most likely outcome of the siege would be a mass suicide.²⁸ James T. Richardson, utilizing the analysis of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, points out that the media depicted the ATF agents as worthy victims and the Branch Davidians as unworthy victims. When subjects are deemed to be worthy victims, the media will display their grieving loved ones as well as the grief and sympathy of others; memorials will be shown, as well as sympathetic accounts of the lives and photographs of those who died. When subjects are deemed to be unworthy victims, they are erased in the media; they are not depicted as individuals whose loss is grieved by friends, loved ones, and empathetic observers. If the unworthy victims happen to be deemed cultists, in general they and their children will not be depicted in the media, and the focus will be on the cult leader, who is assumed to have complete responsibility for the deaths.

This was illustrated clearly in the issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* that were published after the fire. The 3 May 1993 issue of *Newsweek* was dominated by Koresh’s face surrounded by flames and the words “Death Wish.” The view that Koresh was the sole cause of the deaths was reinforced by the articles, including “Hard Lessons in the Ashes,” with a photograph of the dead from Jonestown and the caption “Jonestown, like Waco, shows the dangers of cults.” Rick Ross was quoted as being a “cult expert” who alleged that Koresh brainwashed his followers. The cover of the 3 May

²⁸ James T. Richardson, “Manufacturing Consent about Koresh: A Structural Analysis of the Role of the Media in the Waco Tragedy,” in Stuart A. Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago, 1995), 153–76.

1993 issue of *Time* likewise consisted of a photograph of Koresh's head engulfed in flames, as he appeared to gaze up to heaven while laughing maniacally. The story inside by Richard Lacayo, entitled "In the Grip of a Psychopath," stated that Koresh was the "most spectacular example [of] the charismatic leader with a pathological edge" since Jim Jones. A photograph of Jones accompanied the article.²⁹

The cult stereotype also dominated the FBI agents' view of the Branch Davidians, and the negotiation tapes and transcripts reveal that they regarded Koresh as the omnipotent leader controlling passive, brainwashed followers, even though Branch Davidians told them that they tested Koresh's interpretations of the prophecies daily against the Bible,³⁰ and fourteen adults left during the siege. The Bible was the ultimate authority for the Branch Davidians. As long as the actions of the federal agents appeared to prove Koresh's interpretations of the Bible's prophecies, the Branch Davidians' belief in Koresh as the Endtime Christ was reinforced.

Primary sources (internal FBI reports, surveillance device audiotapes, negotiation audiotapes, and video footage) indicate that FBI decision-makers were well aware of the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology of martyrdom, which the Branch Davidians began articulating immediately after the raid to law enforcement agents and to the media – until their media access was cut off. Archival documents found in the Lee Hancock Collection include the following FBI reports produced during the siege: "Suicide References," 27 March 1993; "Passover Summary," 1 April 1993; "Suicide Addendum," 18 April 1993; and "Passover Analysis Addendum," 18 April 1993. In these documents the reported consensus of current and former Branch Davidians was that Koresh and his followers were not likely to commit suicide, but that Koresh was likely to provoke a confrontation in which he and his followers would be killed. This consensus was supported by interviews with the social worker who had visited Mount Carmel in 1992 and the psychiatrist who was treating the children who had been sent out during the siege. These documents also stated that this was the conclusion of the FBI's own analysts in the Behavioral Science Unit, who warned FBI decision-makers of a likely "'suicide by cop' scenario," particularly during the Passover period.³¹ A redacted FBI internal memo dated "Apr 93" gives a detailed evaluation of the significance of the prophecies of the book of Revelation for the siege and concludes, "Should Kouresh [*sic*] go over the edge it is likely he will burn the compound," and, if Koresh resolved the conflict between commitment to his religious worldview (his

²⁹ Wessinger, "Branch Davidians and Religion Reporting," 154–5.

³⁰ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 89.

³¹ Quotation in "Suicide References," 27 Mar. 1993.

“myth”) and his “sensate appetites” in favor of his myth, “he will eventually pull a Jonestown!”³²

The FBI’s internal analysis of the Branch Davidians, coupled with FBI agents’ depictions of David Koresh as a cult leader and the Branch Davidians as passive, brainwashed cultists in the media, raises questions about the intentions of FBI decision-makers.³³ The question asked by Clive Doyle, a Branch Davidian who survived the fire, is very pertinent: “If they thought we were all brainwashed and such a bunch of crazies, why would the FBI push David or the rest of us to the limit?”³⁴

In 1993 a CNN/Gallup Poll reported that 73 percent of Americans thought that the FBI’s decision to insert CS gas into the residence was “responsible,” and 93 percent believed that Koresh was to blame for the deaths.³⁵ In 1994 the sociologists Jane Dillon and James T. Richardson concluded that the application of the cult label to the Branch Davidians and the defining of them as “extreme deviants made it acceptable to take actions against them that cost the lives of many, including children.”³⁶ Richardson has also pointed out that the cult label prejudices outcomes in legal proceedings.³⁷ In this case, legal punishments were not directed toward law enforcement agents but were meted out to Branch Davidian survivors. Eight Branch Davidian survivors were convicted in the 1994 criminal trial, five of voluntary manslaughter (while being acquitted of conspiracy to murder federal agents) and three of weapons violations. They were given sentences of up to forty years, but after a successful Supreme Court appeal, they served prison sentences of up to fifteen years.

As time went on, more Americans began to question the actions of federal law enforcement agents against the Branch Davidians, especially after the investigative reporting of Lee Hancock with the *Dallas Morning News* revealed in 1999 that FBI agents had concealed from Congressional testimony that pyrotechnic devices were used to disperse CS gas on the morning of 19 April 1993. Although the Final Report of Special Counsel John

³² FBI internal memo, “FM FBI New Haven (89B-SA-38851) (P) to Director FBI/Priority/ FBI San Antonio (89B-SA-38851),” dated Apr. 93, in two sections.

³³ Accounts of destruction of evidence by FBI agents during the siege and after the fire are presented in Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*; Wessinger, “Deaths in the Fire”; and David T. Hardy with Rex Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault: Penetrating the Web of Official Lies Regarding the Waco Incident* (N.p., 2001).

³⁴ Dan Gifford, William Gazecki, and Michael McNulty, producers, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* (Los Angeles, 1997). The evidence for my conclusions is presented in Wessinger, “Deaths in the Fire.”

³⁵ Stuart A. Wright, “Preface,” in Wright, *Armageddon in Waco*, xv.

³⁶ Dillon and Richardson, “‘Cult’ Concept,” 185.

³⁷ James T. Richardson, “Definitions of Cult: From Sociological-Technical to Popular-Negative,” *Review of Religious Research* 34:4 (June 1993): 354–5.

C. Danforth in 2000 concluded that there was no wrongdoing by the federal agents, numerous questions remain.

After the fire, religious studies scholars with the American Academy of Religion reached out to reporters to educate them on the variety of religions in America and the pejorative nature of the term "cult." Sociologists with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion had long been engaged in a similar outreach to reporters. Reporters in the print media, realizing that they had been misled by the FBI about the Branch Davidians, began to use more careful, nonpejorative language in their stories and to seek out bona fide religious studies experts. However, younger reporters for whom "Waco" is a dim memory continue to be influenced by the cult stereotype. The quality of reporting on unconventional religions in America remains variable, and the cult stereotype is very much alive and well in American entertainment media.³⁸

CONCLUSION

The application of the cult stereotype provides a filter through which members of unconventional religions are viewed, which dehumanizes believers and makes it appear to be reasonable to take extreme actions against them, even to the point of attacking and killing them. It is difficult for Americans to comprehend that their law enforcement agents would take violent actions against civilians justified by the label "cult," but an examination of actions taken by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against Falun Gong practitioners beginning in 1999 illuminates the phenomenon.

Falun Gong was threatening to the PRC government and the Chinese Communist Party leaders because of its demonstrated ability to mobilize thousands of people in mass demonstrations. The group was immediately banned and labeled *xiejiao* (deviant teaching), which was translated into English as "evil cult." The cult stereotype was used to justify repressing the organization and arresting and imprisoning Falun Gong practitioners of *qigong* physical exercises and meditation.³⁹ Falun Gong alleges that arrested practitioners inside the PRC have been subjected to mental

³⁸ Wessinger, "Branch Davidians and Religion Reporting," 169–72; Lynn S. Neal, "'They're Freaks!' The Cult Stereotype in Fictional Television Shows, 1958–2008," *Nova Religio* 14:3 (Feb. 2011). See Stuart A. Wright and Jennifer Lara Fagen, "Texas Redux: A Comparative Analysis of the FLDS and Branch Davidian Raids," in Stuart A. Wright and James T. Richardson, eds., *Saints under Siege: The Texas State Raid on the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints* (New York, 2011), on the role of the "cult" stereotype in the 2008 state raid on the fundamentalist Latter-day Saints community in Eldorado, Texas.

³⁹ Bryan Edelman and James T. Richardson, "Falun Gong and the Law: Development of Legal and Social Control in China," *Nova Religio* 6:2 (Apr. 2003): 312–31.

and physical tortures, with more than three thousand deaths from torture; exhaustion, malnutrition, and hazardous working conditions in labor camps; and extraction of organs for transplant.⁴⁰ These allegations made by Falun Gong are impossible to investigate because of the control of information and the totalistic nature of the People's Republic of China.

The popular use of the cult stereotype implies that the problem lies with religious groups that are defined within a culture as being unacceptable and dangerous. The use of the term "cult" obscures the fact that public concern is actually with whether or not a religious organization is following a trajectory involving totalistic characteristics. Totalism is the problem, and totalism can exist to varying degrees in a range of social institutions, from religious groups to government organizations and prisons to nations. The work of the psychologist Philip Zimbardo points out that in social contexts involving totalistic control, otherwise ordinary human beings may commit extraordinarily hurtful actions.⁴¹ Individuals bear responsibility for thinking critically, for questioning manipulation of all types by leaders, and for not contributing to the development of violent totalistic social contexts. Zeno Franco and Philip Zimbardo have termed this the "banality of heroism."⁴²

The cult stereotype is harmful to members of unconventional religions because it dehumanizes them and may prompt authorities to take extreme actions against them. Government authorities may utilize the cult stereotype to justify taking actions to eliminate a religious group or movement. Jonestown developed into a totalistic group whose members committed mass murder and suicide in 1978 when the internal and external pressures on the community became overwhelming. The Jonestown deaths strongly reinforced the cult stereotype in the popular imagination. The Branch Davidians were a religious community with an apocalyptic theology of martyrdom whose members interacted regularly with the wider society, and dissidents were free to leave. FBI agents in 1993 imposed encapsulation on the Mount Carmel community while deliberately escalating stress by physical and psychological manipulation, leading directly to the deaths in the fire as the culmination of the 19 April tank and gas assault. These

⁴⁰ Falun Dafa Information Center, "Persecution: Killings," 17 May 2008, <http://www.faluninfo.net/topic/6/>.

⁴¹ Zimbardo, *Lucifer Effect*. Unfortunately, Zimbardo uses the term "cult" and has done a good bit of fear-mongering about "cults." See Wessinger, "The Problem Is Totalism, Not 'Cults': Reflections on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Jonestown," *Jonestown Report* 10 (Oct. 2008), <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JonestownReport/Volume10/Wessinger.htm>.

⁴² Zeno Franco and Philip Zimbardo, "The Banality of Heroism," *Greater Good* (Fall–Winter 2006–07): 30–5.

actions were justified to the American and international public by painting David Koresh as an omnipotent cult leader and the Branch Davidians as brainwashed cultists. Nevertheless, legal punishments for the incident were applied only to surviving cultists.

Totalistic manipulation and control are to be investigated carefully and resisted in all social organizations – religious groups, prisons, law enforcement agencies, the military, and nations.

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RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN A CHANGING WORLD

R. LAURENCE MOORE

Narratives of American religious history commonly relate a story about how religious disestablishment led to an unimagined proliferation of religious groups that eventually learned to live in peace. In 2008, close to seventy-five Christian denominations in the United States reported a membership exceeding sixty thousand. There are countless numbers of smaller denominations.¹ This bewildering variety of Christian identities plus the growth of non-Christian faiths, which are also split by different traditions, suggests that the legal and cultural landscape of the United States has not only accommodated but also encouraged diversity.

To be sure, histories that record the multiplication of religious groups also acknowledge that the path to civility was not easy. The ugly clashes between Catholics and Protestants in the nineteenth century, the efforts made by the federal government to eradicate the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Native American religions, the suppression of African religious practices during the period of slavery, and the poison of anti-Semitism that did not weaken until the last half of the twentieth century spoil any story line suggesting that immigrants to the United States somehow jettisoned every bit of the baggage of religious prejudice in their voyage across an ocean. But the fact that Americans very early in their history spun a myth about their tolerance is not necessarily a bad thing. Myths are representations of ideals. The one about immigrants fleeing Europe in search of religious freedom worked to strengthen the Constitution's protections giving equal legal standing to all religions. Compared to the religious strife that has marked contemporary history in other nations, in Ireland, Italy, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Israel, the United States, even in its worst moments of confessional savagery, stands in the vanguard of nations that have expanded the sphere of religious liberty to protect all citizens.

¹ 2009 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (Nashville, TN, 2009), 363–73.

Certainly since the end of World War II, and partly because of what happened during that conflict, much of the foul air that made religious prejudice possible dissipated both in the United States and in Europe. Americans can look back and with more than a modicum of accuracy trace how a suspicion of diversity gave way to a curiosity about the lives of others. Immigrants who populated the United States in the nineteenth century seized upon the free religious practice clause of the Constitution's First Amendment to legitimate and protect their difference from other Americans. They typically were poor and had few other resources to help them negotiate the difficult circumstances of an unaccustomed minority status. Native-born Protestants who belonged to socially elite denominations often disdainfully cast the religious practices of the new arrivals into a category of things marked as "foreign." However, that disdain was neutralized by one central belief that has remained surprisingly strong through the course of American experience: religion is a good thing and carries indispensable public benefits that make democratic life possible.

The Founders, in turning their backs upon England's model of a national church, made clear that they counted upon privately funded churches to sustain republican virtue. Hence Alexis de Tocqueville, in reflections based upon his visit to the United States in 1831, named religion America's first political institution. Probably the strongest meaning that most Americans attach to the idea of church-state separation is the idea that government must leave religion alone and not police its activities. This notion is absent in nations that restrict religious freedom and is subject to qualification in many nations that recognize freedom of religion as a fundamental human right. For example, the laws and practices defining church-state separation in France, encapsulated by the untranslatable word *laïcité*, stem from a different experience with religious wars, a different revolution, and a much different struggle with the power of the Vatican to intrude into national affairs than what characterized the history of the United States. As a result, the French view religion with more suspicion than Americans and permit the government to restrict not only the activities of the Catholic Church, but also those of Islam and of many small sects.

Judging the level of tolerance that existed in the United States in the nineteenth century depends a lot upon one's definition of tolerance. Religious groups, in protecting themselves, often cultivated a dislike of one another. They took steps to prevent the mingling of their youth across confessional lines. Immigrants, who were generally ignored by the Protestant majority as long as they stayed in their place, often sharpened or reinvented distinctive religious practices in ethnic neighborhoods. In the best reading of what finally happened, religious differences were not melted down but formed the elements essential to a vibrant, creative, and

self-renewing republic. In a culture that learned to value pluralism, many religious groups lost the ambition of converting others to their own faith or, alternatively, of maintaining a sharp distance from others. Eclecticism, once a feared consequence of mingling, became a positive value.

Without necessarily challenging these estimates of contemporary American religious experience, some analysts argue that the result springs less from a well-articulated respect for the religious doctrines of others than from an indifference to what other people believe. That is, the contemporary religious calm in the United States does not really indicate that religious groups have learned to see wisdom in what others believe. Americans are not sophisticated in their understanding of fine points of religious doctrine, even the ones that attach to their own faith. Whether or not they belong to a religious organization, their religion has become private and idiosyncratic. It may be eclectic, but not in ways that reflect a genuine understanding of the religious systems of their neighbors.

American religions, according to other analysts, are also instrumental, and therein lies a catch that leads to an important contemporary form of religious tension. For convenience or for social reasons Americans may join a particular religious group. But whatever nominal faith they select, Americans use it to serve worldly purposes. When the worldly aims of one religious group clash with the worldly aims of other religious groups, antagonisms are inevitable, even if those antagonisms surface as political quarrels rather than as theological ones.

Many scholars disagree with these perspectives, but any analysis of religious tensions in contemporary America must begin with this conundrum: a sizable majority of Americans tell pollsters that they believe that religious diversity has been good for America. Yet the same sizable majority agrees with the proposition that America was founded on Christian principles. Obviously these two notions may clash, and when they do, they provide a fundamental reason why religious conflicts and tensions have not disappeared.

In exploring some of the religious fault lines that can divide Americans into less than friendly religious camps, this essay is predicated on several premises. The first and most important is that religious conflicts and tensions are exacerbated now, and may be increasingly exacerbated in the future, by issues that arise beyond the national borders of the United States. Because the world's great religions are not at peace globally, because the means of communication in today's world are instant, and because hatred for the United States has grown in many nations, the religious tensions of one country easily spill across borders and affect the ways Americans regard one another. Globalization affects the way that world religions operate and inevitably links religious movements to global economics and politics.

A second assumption has always been part of an analysis of religious prejudice in any country, but the failure of secularization to weaken religious belief in the United States makes the assumption especially relevant to American experience. Religious prejudice and tensions in the United States result primarily from the attitudes of religious Americans, and not from the celebrated culture war between religion and something called secular humanism. How could it be otherwise in a country where somewhere around 80 percent of the population claims to be religious and only a tiny minority of Americans identify themselves as atheists? Robert Bellah sagely answered his own question of why religion was so often involved in intergroup hostility with the observation that "religion is one of the most important ways of defining our identity and thus making personal and collective boundaries."²

The third assumption is that many religious Americans, even if they cannot offer coherent explanations of predestination, of Trinitarianism, and of other doctrines that once excited tremendous religious controversies, muster ardent religious feelings to press cultural, social, and economic agendas. Religion in the United States is at the same time both very private and very public. Religious Americans may divide themselves according to what they think about the teachings of Calvin or Luther or Wesley, but they also are concerned with calculations about which church offers the best chance to accomplish private and public goals in the here and now. Some of those goals are pursued through partisan politics and become part of the American electoral process. This point reiterates the point made earlier: antagonisms between religious groups may manifest themselves in political issues that on their face seem to have little relevance to forms of worship. To add to the confusion, it is often difficult to separate antagonisms caused by religious practices, the manner of worship, from those caused by cultural practices, the entire manner in which different groups conduct their everyday lives.

THE LAND OF HUDDLED MASSES IN RECENT UNITED STATES HISTORY

Because of its global implications, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, signed by President Lyndon Johnson in an era when the United States was struggling to correct its sorry history of racial discrimination, is key to understanding many of the religious tensions in contemporary

² Robert Bellah, "Competing Visions of the Role of Religions in American Society," in Robert Bellah and Frederick Greenspahn, eds., *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America* (New York, 1987), 220.

America. The law reopened America's portals, which had been closed by a restrictive immigration measure passed in the 1920s. The old law was meant to stabilize America's population according to patterns of racial and ethnic prejudices held by the majority of Americans in the fearful years that followed World War I. Calling for a sort of national time-out period, the 1920s measure probably had an unintended effect of easing tension among the major religions that had become part of American experience in the nineteenth century. Will Herberg's celebrated *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, published in 1955, suggested that the American melting pot had simmered away some but not all of the differences that marked Americans. Thus, although it did not dissolve the boundaries among the three largest religious groups, it weakened barriers that had previously divided Catholics into ethnic parishes, Jews of German extraction from Jews of Eastern Europe and Russian extraction, and Episcopalian Protestants from Methodists. An Italian Catholic now commonly married an Irish Catholic or a Brandeis married a Levinsky without setting off a firestorm among families.

Even before the law of 1965 set the stage for a massive reshuffling of cultural and religious patterns, it was clear that Herberg's three great religious communities had not assimilated everyone. Herberg, originally a secular Jew, found himself worrying that the religious tolerance in America he described was not necessarily a good thing. It might simply reflect a process of homogenization that made boundaries between religious groups largely meaningless. Americans practiced a "religiousness without religion," a way of "fitting in" that was almost indistinguishable from a commitment to some vague "American way of life."³

Rereading Herberg at the beginning of the twenty-first century makes clear that he offered ample evidence to qualify his thesis. Lines of suspicion still divided religious communities in the 1950s, and, as they always had, the divisions reflected socioeconomic status and ethnic difference. The Eurocentric Catholic power structure had absorbed the Irish and the Italians who had moved up the economic ladder in the United States, but it showed little interest in adjusting the Church to the needs of those among the poor who spoke Spanish. The white Protestant part of Herberg's triune religious empire practiced strict segregation and did not reach out to African Americans or to Asian Christians. "Respectable" Protestants looked down upon Pentecostals and fundamentalists. Mormons remained an acceptable target of abuse in polite circles of liberal Americans. Orthodox Jews still did not recognize the legitimacy of Reform Jews, and the Chabad-Lubavitch-Hasidic Jews of Brooklyn kept their walls of Orthodox practice very high.

³ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York, 1955), 276.

After 1965, the portrait of the American religious landscape became much more complicated. The United States absorbed a large influx of people from the Caribbean, from Central and South America, from the Middle East, and from Asia. As had been true in the nineteenth century, many of these recent immigrants live in distinct neighborhoods, where religion is often the center of community life. As they worked to establish a communal identity within American society, they often became more religiously active and more committed to religious organizations than they were in their homelands. Even if they are Christian, and many are, they have joined congregations made up mostly of their ethnic and national kin. The particularities can be quite specific. Spanish-speaking immigrants make clear distinctions among Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans. Immigrants from Ecuador divide their neighborhoods by their city of origin. Latinos/as mark a demarcation between those who are legally in the United States and those who are not.

Non-Christian immigrants – Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains – have become more numerous in the United States than ever before. Nearly two-thirds of the mosques in the United States were founded after 1980. An even higher proportion of places of worship dedicated to Buddhist and Hindu practice are recent. Robert Wuthnow has noted a phenomenon that helps explain the conundrum mentioned earlier: while opinion polls show that most Americans approve of religious diversity, the respondents in those polls think of diversity within the Christian tradition.⁴ To many Christian Americans, non-Christian religions entail practices that are violent, close-minded, backward, and strange.

The charge that something is foreign carries a negative value among many Americans, so that now, as in the past, novel practices among immigrants often take years to become settled parts of the American landscape. For example, the suspicion of foreignness was certainly present among the reasons why many Americans looked with hostility on the Unification Church founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Moon was Korean and spoke English with difficulty. Early reports of the rapid growth of the church seemed inexplicable to those same Americans. To them, the conversions had to be the result of “brainwashing” or fraud. To be fair to religious Americans, other governments, especially in Europe, treated the Unification Church with far more severity than the American government. Rev. Moon went to jail for tax evasion, but the activities of his church were not outlawed. It, too, benefited from the American assumption that religion contributes to the general welfare.

⁴ Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), 131, 228.

However, if foreign imports have not prompted laws meant to restrict religious practice, recent immigration has made people conscious of difference, and difference in concrete settings affected by national and international events is a cause of discomfort and anger. Perhaps ironically, the rise in the public importance of religion, the degree to which people take more seriously their religious identification, is at once a sign of the religious nature of American culture and society and a sign of increasing insularity where the interactions among organizations representing different religions are abbreviated and ceremonial rather than occasions for creating mutual understanding.⁵

GLOBAL LOYALTIES, RELIGIOUS LOYALTIES, AND NATIONALISM

Immigration has always introduced a level of global conflict to domestic religious conflicts. What perhaps became questionable with the large-scale immigration after 1965 was whether religion was closely tied, as was true in the nineteenth century, to a process of becoming American. Stated most strongly the question becomes, Is a long era when religion in almost all countries served the cause of nationalism coming to an end? In the United States in the nineteenth century the connection between religion and love of nation was clear. A religious identity was a characteristic that on an unconscious level may have cut immigrants off from their country of origin. Jewish Americans in the nineteenth century celebrated the United States as the new Zion. Irish Catholics, remembering their homeland as a world of English oppression, became ardent American patriots who invented the St. Patrick's Day parade to mark their proud and specific identity on the American landscape. Many Italian Catholic immigrants decided to return to their native villages, but those who stayed in the United States became Italian Americans who remained loyal to their adopted homeland through two twentieth-century wars when their homeland was the enemy.

Immigrants built their patterns of religious practice in a new setting that over time became quite unlike what they had left behind. The conditions of the world then could not sustain strong transnational feelings of religious identity. The religious practices of global faiths varied from place to place. Even Catholic bishops in the United States learned to walk a fine line between their loyalty to Rome, which refused in the nineteenth century to accept the minority status of the American Catholic Church as normal, and their understanding that what made the American Church different also made American Catholicism a vibrant faith composed of different ethnic

⁵ *Ibid.*, 248.

parishes. Religious loyalties across national boundaries certainly existed in the nineteenth century. However, a revolution in media and communication that has made news and images instantly available around the world has added a significant dimension to the reality and the consequences of transnational loyalties within national states.

What happened on 11 September 2001 made clear just how much could be at stake in a changed world. On that day, many Americans began to think more seriously about whether a religious identification might trump a concern for nation and become a danger to national security. American Protestants once made that charge against Catholics, who were alleged to revere the pope in Rome more than the American president. But that concern faded after the election of John Kennedy in 1960 and the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) that opened in 1962. The leveling of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center was something else. It generated fears of a global-led religious jihad and of alienated pockets of immigrants who used religion as a way to keep their loyalties focused on a cause that placed at its center an image of the United States as a satanic power.

Polls about religion are notoriously difficult to assess, in part because there is usually a culturally acceptable answer to a pollster's question. In the United States the correct answer to whether one believes in God is "Yes." The correct answer to whether one harbors religious prejudice is "No." Even so, students of religion have many polls to choose from, and they consistently indicate that a large number of Christian and Jewish Americans do not hold positive attitudes toward Islam. A 2006 survey conducted by the Council on American-Islamic Relations found that one of four Americans believed that Islam is a religion of hatred and violence. A Gallup Poll in April 2008 indicated that 34 percent of the respondents held a totally negative view of Islam, a figure higher than that for any other religion except Scientology (52 percent) or for atheism (45 percent). The negative views of Islam correlated strongly with the strength of a person's Christian faith. Thus, 71 percent of born-again Christians reported negative views of Islam, compared to 24 percent of non-Christians.⁶ The best that can be said is that most Americans reported that they were neutral to the subject of Islam or knew nothing about it.

Islam, because of U.S. policy in the Middle East and the tensions that exist between the United States and Iran and Syria, is usually the focus of discussions about how global events may incite antinationalist sentiments among adherents of a particular religion who form a minority culture

⁶ Since poll numbers are ephemeral, citations to particular polls are useless for ongoing research. Students must search the Web for the most recent surveys. See also volumes published yearly by the Gallup Poll on American opinion.

within a new homeland. This is true despite the fact that most Muslims in the United States are not from the Middle East but either are African Americans or have immigrated from Indonesia, India, Pakistan, or former Soviet republics. The concerns about the global threat of Islam are tied to disagreements about America's special relationship with Israel. Vocal, and sometimes uncompromising, support for Israel has created tension between Jews and other church groups that have urged more understanding in the United States for the Palestinian cause. The animosities that arose between some African American religious leaders and Jewish leaders in the 1960s still fester. Louis Farrakhan, the controversial leader of the Nation of Islam, has been in the center of this storm of controversy. But other African American pastors, who bristle at the idea that in its deliberate cruelty the Holocaust trumps other examples of collective human suffering, have not necessarily endorsed America's special relationship with Israel. In this respect they have also clashed with conservative white evangelical Protestants who have their own reasons to be hawkish in defense of Israel.

Islam and the Middle East are not the only cases in the United States where a religious identity has become tied to controversies in foreign policy. Catholic Cubans in Florida form a powerful anti-Castro lobby that is opposed by many other immigrants, also Catholic, from Latin America, who wish to see Cuba readmitted into the Organization of American States. Among non-Hispanics, Cuba becomes a divisive point between conservative Protestants and liberal Protestants. Onto this religious controversy, one may overlay religious divisions over the subject of "illegal" immigration into the United States, especially from Mexico and Central America. Religious groups who offer sanctuary and aid to "illegals" anger other religious groups, who view any support given to "lawbreakers" as disruptive of divine intentions.

Beyond particular issues of foreign policy, some religious identities in the United States that grew more numerous after 1965 raised different sorts of questions about the connections between religion and nationalism. Buddhists and Hindus, for example, although they would in every way seem to be model citizens, often cause worry in the United States because they exemplify the relatively recent phenomenon of multiple citizenships. Once upon a time an immigrant had to renounce other citizenships to become an American citizen. That is no longer true. Relatively prosperous immigrants from South Asia commonly carry two passports and travel regularly back to their native countries, where they maintain strong family and emotional ties. Does this fact make them less likely to vote in American elections? Can a young Hindu male be counted on to fight to defend the United States when he can easily go back to India? Cosmopolitan intellectuals in the United States may be astonished at the notion that dual nationalities should cause anxiety. They see little danger

that religious loyalties may in a dangerous way supersede national loyalties. However, cosmopolitan attitudes are not the strong suit of many conservative religious movements in America. One may hope that Samuel Huntington was wrong in proclaiming a clash of civilizations fueled by religion.⁷ However, given the way the world is, one may understand why many Americans entertain terrifying scenarios for the future and why for many of them the idea of Armageddon remains vivid.

MAKING RELIGION POLITICALLY PARTISAN

We now come more directly to the issue of how religious difference may be expressed in the guise of politics, mobilizing people to vote for particular candidates and, in what is not quite the same thing, to vote against other particular candidates. The partisan political role that conservative evangelical groups have played in American elections since Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 is a phenomenon that is often compared to conservative religious movements around the world that have demanded a stronger role in affairs of state. To critics, evangelicals who want to proclaim the United States a Christian nation are the American equivalent of ayatollahs in Iran or of members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In seeking somehow to use religious norms as a blueprint for public policy, again according to critics, evangelicals tarnish the true purposes of religion and undermine the functioning of the secular state.

The truth is more complicated. Religious politics is hardly a new phenomenon in the United States. In the nineteenth century, for example, angry political quarrels over slavery and temperance sparked religious antagonisms that were as strong as any created by doctrinal differences. Religious antagonisms influenced party affiliations. Many Protestants became Whigs, and immigrant Catholics, in reaction, became Democrats. Because the contemporary world is vastly different from antebellum America, religious politics have a different focus. Revolutionary advances in technology, new arenas of protected rights for women and gays, rapid changes in the sexual behavior of young Americans and in family structures have radically altered debates about national moral standards. In arguing about family values, religious groups divide over policy questions and in the process turn the people they oppose into a negative reference group with whom reasoned debate is deemed impossible.

Republicans strategists, who were not necessarily strongly religious, understood that the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the feminist movement

⁷ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996).

of the early 1970s, and the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* had created an anger that could be used to mobilize conservative Christians in significant numbers to take an active role in politics. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, and James Dobson's Focus on the Family were some of the groups whose members became reliable Republican voters. Many of these evangelicals, who were identified by the term "born-again Christians," were part of another major phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, the appearance of large megachurches that had no organizational connection to the historic Protestant denominations. George W. Bush and his political adviser Karl Rove aggressively pursued the favor of the largest blocs of white Christian voters. Many pundits suggested that a Christian voting bloc had provided the margin of victory for Bush in both the 2000 and 2004 elections. It probably had.

Yet although the banner of the Moral Majority had energized many Christian voters who had not been politically active in the past, the way that religion affected politics was much more complicated than the notion of conservative white Christian voters declaring a culture war against everyone else. Since the vast majority of Americans profess religious faith, many religious Americans had in all the elections between 1980 and 2008 voted for candidates who were not Republican. The same 2008 Gallup Poll that suggested that 34 percent of Americans held a totally negative view of Muslims revealed that 23 percent of the respondents had a totally negative view of evangelical Christians, and 25 percent of them a totally negative view of fundamentalist Christians. When some conservative Protestants complain that the separation of church and state is a slogan that marginalizes religion, they are answered by Americans whose religions have benefited from government policies that refuse public monies to anything that might seem an endorsement of a particular religious position. The majority of legal cases protesting breaches in the wall of separation, especially those involving public schools, are brought not by Freethinkers but by religious plaintiffs.

The landmark election of 2008 suggested a complicated religious map of the American electorate, one that included divisions among what some pundits had taken to be a united religious bloc. In the 2008 general election, most white Protestant Americans voted for the Republican candidate John McCain, and in some parts of the country by very large majorities. McCain was a divorced man who had never courted Evangelicals and who had once supported a woman's right to have an abortion. In an apparent effort to mollify evangelical Republicans, McCain chose as his running mate Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska, a self-described hockey mom and a member of an Assembly of God Pentecostal Church. What is interesting, however, is that the McCain victory in the Republican nominating

convention was made possible in part by religious fault lines that helped to block the nomination of two Republican contenders who might seem to have had a stronger appeal to evangelicals than McCain.

In the 2008 campaign to secure the Republican nomination, Mitt Romney started as a front-runner. Romney, a Mormon, had in 2002 been elected governor of the normally Democratic state of Massachusetts. At the time Democratic politicians in the state, many of whom were Catholic, had launched a not very subtle attack on Romney's religion. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it was said, was an organization shrouded in secrecy that told its members to place loyalty to the church above all other loyalties and assured them that someday they could resume the practice of polygamy. Even Senator Edward Kennedy briefly joined the anti-Mormon campaign, despite the fact that the public strictures made against the Mormons bore an eerie resemblance to charges made against Roman Catholicism when his brother ran for president in 1960. When Romney won, many saw it as, among other things, a confirmation of American tolerance.

Yet despite Romney's victory in Massachusetts, the view that his religious faith would help him in 2008 proved to be illusory. Romney's bid for the presidency fizzled for a number of reasons, but toward the top of that list was surely the hostility of many Republican Protestant evangelicals. That result of his poor showing in southern primaries might have been predicted. The Barna Research organization, a conservative religious polling organization, had in 1995 found that born-again Christians held a far more negative view of Mormons than of other churched Americans. In 2007 a Gallup Poll reported that 64 percent of Protestants who attended church regularly had a negative opinion of the Mormon church; 37 percent said they would not vote for a Mormon. To them it mattered little that Romney shifted his views to support school prayer and to oppose abortion and gay marriage. It mattered little that Utah is as solid a Republican state as any in the union whose citizens favor a smaller federal government and lower taxes. It mattered little that Mormons, whatever their former practice of polygamy, supported family values similar to those promoted by the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family. Protestant evangelicals have never regarded the Mormon Church as Christian. For them it is a cult that relies upon the Book of Mormon as much as upon the Bible and ignores the importance of Jesus as a mediator between man and God.

In a category more acceptable to many white Protestants was Mike Huckabee, an ordained Southern Baptist minister and the governor of Arkansas. Although white Protestants who identified themselves as evangelical frequently named him their choice for the Republican nomination, Huckabee did not emerge as the top choice among other Republicans. They

knew, as polls reminded them, that no Republican could win solely with conservative evangelical voters. The born-again label had become a negative reference for too many Americans, including Republicans and a majority of those Americans who called themselves independent. Huckabee did better than Pat Robertson, a Pentecostal with supposedly close ties to conservative Baptists, whose bid to capture the Republican Party nomination in 1988 failed miserably. But both cases suggested that while belonging to a conservative church might win a sizable amount of evangelical votes, it alienated the votes of an even larger number of religious Americans.

Religious fault lines affected the Democratic candidate differently. Barack Obama's personal history was complex in ways that were unparalleled in American political history. His father was African and not a Christian. His mother belonged to no religious group. After divorcing Obama's father, who returned to Kenya, she married an Indonesian Muslim. Obama spent part of his childhood in a Muslim school. Obama as a young adult converted to Christianity, but he belonged to a black church quite different from the ones included in the Moral Majority. One way to interpret Obama's election was to suggest that the United States had become less nervous about America's ability to adjust to a global world where purported Christian values had to coexist with values associated with other religious traditions. If his election did not symbolize the triumph of tolerance in the United States, then what could?

Yet Obama's path to victory revealed religious prejudice in both the Democratic and Republican parties. The canard that Obama was Muslim probably did not lose him many votes that he otherwise would have won. However, the strategy behind the rumor was based on a correct premise. Although most American Protestants were no longer bothered by a candidate who was Catholic, and both Protestants and Catholics said they would vote for a qualified Jewish candidate, they made clear that they would not vote for someone who was Muslim. That view was held most strongly by evangelical Christians, but it applied to other Christians and Jews as well.

Obama's campaign managed to escape the "taint" of Islam more easily than in dealing with another division that ran through the history of American Christianity. Obama belonged to the Trinity United Church in Chicago, a black megachurch with a membership of eighty-five hundred. The pastor of the church for many years was the outspoken black leader Jeremiah Wright. Wright, who officiated at Obama's marriage and had baptized his daughters, held a doctorate in theology and had received any number of awards for service. But he made sharply critical statements about the policies of the U.S. government. In one angry sermon that received a great deal of media attention, Wright suggested that God would damn America for killing innocent people and for treating its citizens as less

than human. Because he had long attended Wright's church, Obama found himself accused of being a Christian who did not love his country.

Some white preachers regularly called down divine judgment upon the United States for legalizing abortion, but that did not stop them from attacking Wright for a lack of patriotism. Their failure to endorse Wright's use of the rhetoric of angry prophets, a rhetorical tradition with a pedigree stretching back to seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay, suggested that in contemporary America religious language did not cross racial boundaries without raising suspicions. Although many white Christians had learned to respond to the powerful rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr., a black preacher who spoke of brotherly love and of a redeemed America, white churches did not speak to the past of slavery and racial discrimination in the same way that black churches did. In 2008 the reasons why black churches separated from white churches had not disappeared. Wright had demonstrated that many black and many white Christians memorialize through their religion different histories of the United States.

Obama revealed another sensitive area of religious "intolerance" when he chose the Rev. Rick Warren, who presided over the very large Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, to lead a prayer at his inauguration ceremony. To many traditional Protestants the mere fact that Warren was part of the megachurch phenomenon that upset traditional denominational lines was a sufficient reason to exclude him from a place on the inaugural podium. However, to Christians who had braved schisms in their churches to anoint women as preachers and to accept gay men as bishops, the choice was an affront. Warren's role in speaking about the need for evangelical Christians to think about social justice and environmental issues did not balance the scales for them. Neither did the fact that his church had raised large sums of money to fight acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in Africa. What Warren's foes could not forgive is that he opposed abortion and gay marriage. Those stances made him an ally of conservative Republicans, whose religious views were supposed to be leaving Washington, D.C., on the helicopter that lifted George W. Bush off the lawn of the White House. Theological positions in this case were not a matter for interfaith communication. They were part of a divisive politics in which one side had no tolerance for another position.

Alexis de Tocqueville issued a prescient warning about religion becoming involved in partisan party politics and thereby linking itself to "fleeting powers." It thereby forms only "burdensome alliances."⁸ Tocqueville was undoubtedly correct in suggesting that political marriages of convenience

⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed., Isaac Kramnick, (New York, 2003), 348.

between different religious groups are inherently unstable and may not serve the cause of interfaith dialogue. In this context, however, the issue that demands analysis is not whether religious politics is a good thing or a bad thing. What requires recognition, given the persistence of religious politics in American democracy, is the way that religious politics causes religious antagonisms that may or may not have much relation to classical forms of religious prejudice.

TOPPLING THE ORDER OF MAJORITY AND MINORITY FAITHS

When American church leaders assembled the World's Parliament of Religions at the Chicago Exposition in 1893, the hope of some was that American Protestantism was at last prepared to listen to religious voices representing other great religious traditions. Hindus from India and Buddhists from Japan were given places on the program. However, the hope of the majority of the organizers was something else. They viewed the parliament as another step in the road toward the eventual triumph of Christianity around the world. Ecumenical feelings of the sort displayed in Chicago were perfectly consistent with the Protestant notion of "evangelizing the world in one generation." That expectation, which was very strong at the beginning of the twentieth century, was the Christian portion of the "white man's burden" to "civilize" countries around the world that did not measure up to democratic standards of government.

That sense of Protestant hegemony, either at home or abroad, is now in doubt. Consider the case of Catholics and Protestants in the United States. Those who keep tabs on the advance of religious tolerance in America can note with legitimate amazement the number of Catholic public officials who sit in Congress and who have run for the presidency without their Catholicism posing a problem (except perhaps to their own church). A majority of the justices who sit on the American Supreme Court are Catholic, whereas in 2009 only a lone Protestant sat on the high bench. No Protestant group has recently lobbied against the nomination of Catholics, unlike when John Kennedy ran for president in 1960 and had to answer for his faith before a group of Protestant ministers in Houston. Even so, the fall of Protestant influence in high places may portend something less than an irenic future between American Catholics and American Protestants.

White Protestants face a reality in which any one of their denominations, the largest of which is the Southern Baptist Convention with around sixteen million adherents, is far outnumbered by the more than thirty million Hispanic Catholics living in the United States. The Catholic percentage of the American population has not grown in recent decades, hovering at around

25 percent of the American population, but the percentage of Americans who belong to Protestant churches has sharply declined, now just above 50 percent. That decline is expected to continue and turn Protestants into one among multiple religious minorities. Adding to that potential source of discomfort is the news that more Christians live in Africa, Latin America, and Asia than in the countries that once defined Christendom.

In this new global reality that has shifted the center of the Christian world to the Southern Hemisphere, the Vatican's influence is increasing more rapidly than that of most Protestant groups. Pope Benedict XVI, who has continued the global peregrinations that became common under the long tenure of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, has at the same time pointed the Church in directions that can undo the important reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics that resulted from Vatican II. These include a bolder insistence by the Church on speaking out on matters of public policy, an assertiveness that has encouraged American bishops to make extremely strong political statements on abortion and stem cell research (conservative) combined with passionate appeals for a more just economic order (liberal). With respect to theological matters, Benedict seems to have reverted to the language of the Church Militant. He has reached out to the far Right of Catholic opinion and lifted the excommunication of bishops who never accepted the reforms of Vatican II. His move in that direction included the reinstatement of a priest who had denied the reality of the Holocaust as well as a Good Friday prayer calling for the conversion of Jews.

Other rapid reversals that have affected the usual Christian order of things have been apparent in challenges made by fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals to liberal and moderate Christians who once thought that they defined a "mainstream." Conservative denominations that encompass the important phenomenon of denominationally independent megachurches are growing. The echoes of the Scopes Darwinism trial in 1925 have returned with a thunderous noise and reminded "elite" groups that more Americans have a strong belief in the idea of "special creation" than have strong belief in a theory of evolution by natural selection. Once, when Americans turned on their radios and then their television sets for programming that networks offered free to religious groups until 1960, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) changed its rules, they heard the voices of America's most respected ministers, those who had degrees from seminaries tied to America's most respected universities. Now that religious programmers must buy air time, Christian conservatives, with much different ideas about what constitutes "respectability," dominate the airways.

Perhaps the strongest challenge to what defines the protocols of "religious respectability" and to long-settled assumptions about appropriate forms

of worship is arising from the fastest-growing segment of the Protestant conservative wing: Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism had its origins on American soil, but it has always sat uneasily with the family of American Protestantism. In 1929, H. Richard Niebuhr pointed out that the most divisive factor in breaking up any semblance of Christian unity was social class.⁹ Sociologists at that time had no trouble identifying a hierarchy of respectability among Christian denominations based on levels of income and education. At the bottom of this Protestant hierarchy stood Pentecostals, the Holy Rollers, who spoke in tongues, handled snakes, and conducted raucous “healing” services in storefronts or tents. The only group with a comparably low reputation was the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who caused friction less because of their social position than because of their refusal to fight wars for the United States or to salute the flag.

From humble origins, Pentecostalism grew rapidly not only in the United States but globally. Although planted first in many countries by American missionaries, Pentecostalism has been for a long time an indigenous church in Africa and in Latin America. Pentecostals are no longer exclusively a church of the poor. Marxists used to cite Pentecostals as a prime example of how religion turned the attention of the oppressed away from the sources of their oppression. No longer. Everywhere Pentecostal churches have spread, they have been associated with upward social mobility and with challenges to existing social and political hierarchies. The Yale-educated Pat Robertson has given Pentecostals a university and a successful television station. Yet many churched Americans still view Pentecostalism in negative ways, as a schismatic faith with an inherent tendency to divide. Some mainline Christians are resentful that their congregations have had to call upon the entertainment techniques in Pentecostal services to enliven their own services.

Pentecostalism has placed a great deal of emphasis upon charismatic leadership, a fact that explains some of its splintering impact as well as some of the scandals associated with its history. In the 1920s, there was Aimee Semple McPherson. More recently there have been Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Bakker. Many white Protestants object to Pentecostalism because it reminds them of what they understand to be the worship of poorly educated African Americans. Pentecostal churches are probably more racially mixed than any other form of Christian church, but that fact, to critics, only links the church to low social status. So does the fact that many recent Hispanic immigrants into the United States gravitate to Pentecostal churches.

⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York, 1929).

Christian missionaries from the United States and Europe have for more than 150 years been trying to convince the non-Christian world to recognize the good news of their gospel. In some areas they succeeded, as in parts of Africa. But the Pentecostals in those areas are now setting up their own missions in North America. The pastor Daniel Ajayi-Adeniran, who belongs to the Redeemed Christian Church of God founded in Nigeria, has introduced that church to Brooklyn and tends its large denominational headquarters in Texas. His venture in reverse missionary work is likely to become common as global connections change the way religions work.

THE USES OF RELIGIOUS TENSION

So what does all this mean? In many ways the basic outline of religious freedom in the United States suggested in the first pages of this essay has not changed. The United States has managed to accommodate an unprecedented level of religious diversity, measured against European standards, and to prevent even mild forms of violence between religious groups from becoming widespread. The immigration into the country after 1965 has in that last respect been much calmer than the immigration of the nineteenth century. Religious antagonisms exist and will continue to exist. They grow from new sources and will certainly be exacerbated by global realities. However, nothing suggests that the United States is poised on the verge of serious religious warfare.

It becomes relevant to ask the question of whether religious tensions do not have a positive impact. In the United States there are many organizations that have been created with the intention of fostering ecumenical cooperation to reduce the causes of tension among various religious groups. Among the oldest and the best funded are the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Christians and Jews. However, many religious groups, including large ones, in the United States have refused to participate, claiming that ecumenical cooperation often means a loss of distinctiveness. To them ecumenicalism means watered-down faith. Members of the National Evangelical Association, a conservative Protestant group, have maintained a separate identity from the National Council of Churches, a more liberal Christian group. Divisive issues, such as those relating to family values and sexual behavior, often make cooperation impossible. Besides, there are many more organizations within specific religions that are intended to shore up a sense of distinct community than there are ecumenical organizations or associations that bridge the communications gulfs among people of different faiths. Many well-publicized

gatherings that are billed as fostering interfaith understanding are superficial in their intentions and their consequences.

And why should it not be that way? Even people committed to ecumenical dialogue acknowledge that up to a point religion should divide people. Difference only matters if important substantial issues underlie the claim of difference. The purpose of interfaith dialogue cannot be to demonstrate that all religions are the same or to convince religious Americans that no religion has a greater claim to truth than another. In its best form, the purpose is to force people to think about what really matters to them and to understand that divine claims to truth, even their own, are expressed through culture. In that sense religious truth is relative. Understanding that fact leads to respect for difference and preserves a variety of religious forms in a global world. If the consequence of pure tolerance is bland homogeneity, it is a bad thing.

Religious tolerance, then, like claims to religious truth, is relative. It cannot bring an end to the issues and the habits that divide religious people. It is no accident that the framers of the American Constitution included religious liberty in the same amendment as freedom of speech. The right to free expression does not mean that everyone will find your ideas intelligent or treat what you say with anything but curt dismissal. Similarly, the right to free religion does not mean that others will not find your religion a mare's nest of incrustated superstitions. In the marketplace of ideas there is often little to separate a prejudice from a considered judgment. So long as people care deeply about their religion and all their other ideas, passionate commitments we are supposed to encourage in democratic society, then we must accept tensions and antagonisms as inevitable and necessary.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Section V

NEW AND CONTINUING RELIGIOUS
REALITIES IN AMERICA

POST 9/11: AMERICA AGONIZES OVER ISLAM

EBRAHIM MOOSA

The terrorist attacks on several American cities on 11 September 2001, by Muslim militants linked to al-Qaeda negatively affected the disposition of many Americans toward Islam.¹ These seismic events have also engendered a surge of latent religion into the public square. All the major religious traditions in the United States gained more visibility in national politics, ranging from tacit endorsements for presidential candidates and fervent debates over morally divisive issues, to aggressive evangelical activities at home and abroad. This surge in religious momentum raised questions whether America was heading toward a postsecular society, given debates about America as a Christian nation and the religiously inflected moral debates in public.

Internationally, the United States-sponsored wars in Afghanistan and then Iraq, followed by worldwide security sweeps, negatively affected America's once-credible global image. In the non-West, especially in large swaths of the Muslim world, but also in parts of Europe, America's image as a superpower morphed into that of a resented imperial power. Not since the Vietnam War had domestic and international politics become so intensely intertwined, but with one crucial difference. If the scourge during Vietnam was the red peril of Communism, then in the minds of significant sections of the U.S. public the threat in the first decade of the new century stemmed from Islam generally, and militant Islam, in particular.

BEFORE 9/11

Prior to 11 September 2001, there was a sense of optimism and jubilation at the collapse of Soviet Communism and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, for which the United States

¹ Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (Lanham, MD, 2008), 43.

took the bulk of the credit. Yet few people noticed that while the threat posed by the USSR to the West was extinguished, many smoldering embers were left around the globe. In far-off places such as Somalia, Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories, and in countries identified as America's allies, such as the oil-rich Arabian Gulf states, Egypt, Pakistan, and Israel, there was discontent arising from the collateral fallout of the Cold War. Large sections of the globe were in the thrall of rapid economic growth since new technologies created visions of a capitalistic world without borders and with free trade.

Two landmark books that turned their authors into celebrities with unquestioned cachet in policy and media circles captured that post-Cold War mood in a mixture of triumphalism and caution. In 1992 Francis Fukuyama, to much acclaim, published *The End of History and the Last Man*.² It was a learned book that mined the canons of Western political thought, especially Hegel, in order to understand the nature of human beings, societies, and institutions in a new time – the era of liberal democracy and capitalism. Fukuyama examined the complexity of human nature in the late twentieth century and was less prescriptive than some of his critics suggested. Nevertheless, he did hold out that liberal democracy and capitalism were ideals and the final destination for all nations. This book gave a massive boost to the United States' foreign policy prescriptions in urging nations to subscribe to liberal democracy with its implicit capitalist overtones. Fukuyama offered recipes for constructing notions of a Western self and forming attitudes that were grounded in the will to triumph and to be better than others. Fukuyama imagined the world's nations on the path of liberal democracy as a long wagon train heading toward their pre-ordained destination. Sure, some wagons might fall off, but they would try to join the train again, while others might decide to make home where they landed.

Samuel Huntington followed in 1996 with *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Noting the optimism invested in liberal democracy and the triumph of Western civilization as it leapt off the pages of Fukuyama's book, Huntington showed the downside of such globalization. He identified the fault lines between civilizations and their potential for future conflict. Huntington went on to show that some wagons that did not, could not, or refused to join the train might be the source of trouble for the West. Each of the wagons had defined characteristics, which placed it within the log of civilizations. The fault lines between civilizations that had the potential to implode included China and the Islamic world. Huntington showed the possible perils lurking in Muslim countries and

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992).

put Islam more strongly into the consciousness of the United States' policy makers and analysts. To be fair, Huntington recommended that it was wise for the United States to abstain from intercivilizational conflicts, to seek international mediation instead of conflict, and to build on commonalities among cultures and civilizations. All three pieces of useful wisdom were unfortunately squandered on U.S. policy makers, while the media clung to the sensational aspects of Sino and Islamic fault lines.³

ISLAM AND 9/11

When 11 September 2001 happened, it was the scale of the attack and the audacity of America's terrorist Muslim adversaries that shocked most observers and surprised security experts. Prior to 9/11, the low-intensity war between America and a range of militant Muslim actors amounted to encounters on foreign soil with minimal loss of American life and treasure. The nature of the encounter changed and took the shape of paralyzing terror attacks on the U.S. homeland.

America's political leadership identified 9/11 as a defining point, if not a messianic moment, in the life of the republic. Ideologues within the George W. Bush White House, together with their supporters in a vocal and highly organized neoconservative movement, immediately pounced on this event. They identified the Islamic terrorists as a totalitarian foe like Communism or fascism in scale. For this reason the United States launched a global war against terror in order to save civilization. From that moment onward the nation's foreign policy would pivot on a culture war against "barbarian" militant Islam and its allies. In pursuit of this goal the United States treated this moment as a state of exception, where any amount of overwhelming force, coded as shock and awe, and disregard for international law, would be justified in order to defeat the terrorists. A new term, "Islamofascism," was coined to describe the enemy. While a few people objected to the overreaction, it was especially Fukuyama who cautioned key government strategists not to treat jihadist terrorism as a great totalitarian foe like fascism or Communism. "The important thing was not to overreact," in Fukuyama's view, according to Peter Beinart, "not to take military action that alienated Muslims, thus strengthening Al Qaeda's inherently weak hand."⁴ "Instead America should rely on diplomacy, intelligence gathering, law enforcement, and patience," Fukuyama suggested,

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996), 310.

⁴ Peter Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris* (New York, 2010), 352.

as reported in Beinhart's book. "History was on its side," he argued, "but history could not be rushed."⁵ But an indignant and wounded America not only rushed into Afghanistan, but in 2003 also invaded Iraq, a country that did not pose a threat to the United States or its Western allies, on the pretext that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

On 7 September 2003, President George W. Bush, after the war in Iraq was well under way, explained the purpose and mission for the war of civilization. "We have carried the fight to the enemy," Bush triumphantly announced. "We are rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power."⁶ What was once a terrorist threat to the strategic interests of the United States now inexplicably morphed into a threat to "civilization." Needless to say, in President Bush's view, America was the perfect embodiment of civilization. The words "enemy" and "civilization" were the key lexical terms that shrouded the new ideology that replaced anti-Communism, namely, militant Islam.

Since American hegemony was receding after the Cold War, plans to wage a global war against Islamic terror meant that America was going to intensify its existing effort to shape non-Western societies culturally by randomly identifying a few Muslim societies. As the chief White House security expert Richard A. Clarke noted, the U.S. leadership already had Iraq in its sights before the smoke and dust of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon had even settled. America's political leadership ignored Huntington's critical admonition. "If non-Western societies are once again to be shaped by Western culture," Huntington insightfully warned five years before 9/11, "it will happen only as a result of the expansion, deployment, and impact of Western power."⁷ Political and cultural imperialism were the natural outcome, he warned, that posed dangerous risks as the West's adversaries would offer resistance. And resist they did, not only in Afghanistan and Iraq, but in an expanding theater of terrorism shading into Pakistan, Indonesia, Yemen, as well as in Spain and Britain. Writing after the 9/11 attacks, Huntington held the United States culpable for its conduct in world affairs.⁸ Commenting on the nation's pariah status in the world, he added:

To a considerable extent we ourselves have generated these attitudes by our efforts to impose our values and institutions on other countries. We suffer from what can be called the universalist illusion that people of other countries have the same values and culture that we do; or if they do not have

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "President Bush's Address to the Nation," *New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2003.

⁷ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 310.

⁸ *Ibid.* Huntington lamented that the Western world was attempting to impose its universality on the rest of the world.

them, then they desperately want to have them; or if they do not want to have them, that something's wrong with them, and we have the responsibility to persuade or coerce them into adopting our values and culture.⁹

In the months and weeks preceding and following the beginning of the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq, an intensified culture war was waged in the media against militant Islam. This war was in part executed by sections of the U.S. government, members of the Bush-Cheney White House and their neoconservative allies, certain elements in the intelligence agencies, politicians, and sections of the independent media, especially the pro-Bush-Cheney electronic media. While the perpetrators of 9/11 were undoubtedly Muslims of a radical stripe, the symbol that subliminally became associated with "the enemy" for many was just simply "Islam." Despite the attempts by political leaders in America and Europe to distinguish between Islam as a religion and the radical Muslim fringe group of terrorists, such nuance did not matter much. An unprecedented number of media productions conflated the two. Soon "Islam" and "terrorism" became synonymous. An amorphous entity called "the Muslim world" stretching from Jakarta to Jersey City was summarily indicted. As Edward Said, the Palestinian American professor of literature, described the pre- and post-9/11 writings about Islam, "The personification of enormous entities called 'the West' and 'Islam' is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoon-like world where Popeye and Pluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand of his adversary."¹⁰

Muslim moderates both in the United States and abroad were suffocated by the deluge of anti-Islam sentiment. In a paranoid media environment, it was difficult to express a rational point of view, suggest nuance, and caution against overkill, without being charged with giving comfort to terrorists. The media frenzy fed on the psychological need of the American public for security and for identification of all potential enemies. Over time, for most Americans the culprit of 9/11 was Saudi Arabia since seventeen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi nationals. The simplistic conclusion deposited in the minds of many was that the source of terror stemmed from Saudi Arabia, where it was nurtured by a fundamentalist puritan Wahhabi ideology. Wahhabi ideology dated back to an eighteenth-century reformist figure in Arabia, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who combated what he believed was superstition and idolatry in the name of Islam. Many in America believed this brand of Islam was exported to Pakistan

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, "America in the World," *Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Culture* 5:1 (2003): 18.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*, 22 Oct. 2001.

and Afghanistan, from whence terrorism was exported. As an ideology, Wahhabism was marginal to terrorism. Central to Muslim-inspired terrorism was a disturbing new theology that translated Muslim grievances into a justification for violence, contrary to the established canons of Islamic law, in order to redeem Muslim societies from their slide into subservience to Western powers. If 9/11 was an act of vengeance by al-Qaeda for American culpability in a host of political grievances reaching back to decades of the Cold War, then it started a chain reaction. It inaugurated a new moment in global political warfare and ideological contestation on an unprecedented scale involving America, but largely the West, against countless groups of Muslim adversaries.

America became the supporter of a moderate Islam, which would serve as an antidote to militant Islam worldwide. Huge amounts of resources were ploughed into creating media outlets intended to promote Western culture and moderate interpretations of Islam overseas. Undisguised in its cultural objectives, several high-profile U.S. representatives also explained that the nation-building project in Afghanistan was necessary, with one of the goals identified to be cultural – to liberate Afghan women from the oppressive yoke of the Taliban, the orthodox religious group that governed Afghanistan before it was unseated by the United States' invasion. The second was to install a democratic political order in Kabul as a security blanket against future possible attacks against the United States. The same was true about the invasion of Iraq when the mission switched to installing a democratic order in Baghdad once nuclear weapons proved elusive.

Many Americans saw 9/11 as an attack on their way of life and their purpose as Americans in the world. This might also be the reason why so few of them demurred at the scale of the wars America launched and the atrocities committed in their name. Only the bravest mourned the loss of Afghan and Iraqi lives as well as American lives. Violations of the civil rights of thousands of Muslim Americans and those captured on foreign battlefields were ignored by the larger American society. Most Americans saw themselves as being invited to stand up for a higher purpose as global peacekeepers and to vanquish evil.

Religion, too, was summoned to resist the threat terror posed to civilization, just as America's adversaries also invoked religion, namely, Islam. Before the dust settled, many people felt that both the diagnosis and the solution to 9/11 were hyped and distorted. Some clear minds, such as the British Pakistani writer Tariq Ali, called the confrontation between America and its militant Muslim adversaries a clash of fundamentalisms.¹¹ But the wagons to save civilization had by then already set out for

¹¹ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jibads and Modernity* (London, 2002).

Mesopotamia and the Hindu Kush mountains, and there was no early turning back. After taking office in 2009, the new American president, Barack Obama, promised to tone down this confrontation between Islam and the West.

AMERICA AS A CHRISTIAN NATION?

The post 9/11 period witnessed energetic attempts to baptize America as a Christian nation. Questions around the political theology or the political philosophy that underwrote America's constitutional democracy were frequently raised in the history of the republic. In theory, secular constitutional democracies did not refer to some divine authority when imagining or referring to the basic political structures of society. Nevertheless, the Protestant and religious inspiration at the base of governance in the United States was undeniable. Despite the secular nature of statecraft, the early religious history of America, coupled with the increased public role of religion in the twentieth century, made it hard to accept the claim that political theology was drained from American political thinking. Even if it were arguably true, then the aftermath of 9/11 showed that political theology might have been merely sublimated, for it quickly resurfaced at a time of crisis.

It had been observed with increasing frequency that America might be heading for a postsecular society. This meant that secularism would no longer be the master narrative that explained everything, but just one particular tradition. In that sense the postsecular allowed for a plurality of public discourses, which would give newer traditions such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism a respectable place at the table. If postsecular means that the state took no stand for or against religion in privileging or proscribing religion, then in that sense America was postsecular. But it was the realm of divisive moral and ethical issues, such as abortion and sexual choice, frequently freighted with a ballast of religious convictions, that gave credence to specters of the postsecular. As compared to Europe, religion performed visibly and publicly in America. And for the last quarter of the twentieth century, religion, especially evangelical Christianity, was on the rise in the United States with the growth of megachurches.

Post 9/11, certain strands of Christianity gained a sharper political edge and became increasingly virulent against other religious traditions. This might, in part, have been related to the fact that 9/11 happened on the watch of a very devout president who embraced an evangelical version of Methodism. Not only did President Bush's religious convictions interfere with the legislative arena in his opposition to stem-cell research and in promoting religious-based social programs, but he waged the post-9/11 wars

in a crusading spirit. In fact, 9/11 was skillfully used as a pretext to exercise imperial power stylized in messianic rhetoric.¹²

On 1 May 2003, President George W. Bush, speaking from the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, after his much publicized media spectacle of landing by fighter plane, pledged, "We have not forgotten the victims of September 11, the last phone calls, the cold murder of children, the searches in the rubble." "With those attacks," he continued, "the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got." Jim Wallis, a conscientious Christian, analyzed Bush's statements as an attempt to cast himself as a messianic Calvinist intent on ridding the world of evil. Wallis also noted that President Bush's former speechwriter, David Frum, said of Bush that "war had made him ... a crusader after all."¹³ After the catastrophic events of 9/11, during which time the term "terrorist" became synonymous with "Islam" and "Muslim," it was difficult to suppress public perceptions that the target of Bush's messianic war was "Islam." For those with longer historical memories, the temptation to go to war with one of the world's largest intracultural religious systems called "Islam" would turn out to be fateful to America. In a fit of overkill and hysteria, the United States went to war with two Muslim countries – one in the Middle East and the other in South Asia – and became entangled in regions fated with complex histories from which few imperial powers left with their reputations intact.

Kevin Phillips, a Republican strategist, took a more critical line, arguing that the legacy of the Bush administration was "to manifest a higher and higher level of outright deception: saying one thing and meaning another."¹⁴ But it was the noted scholar of religion Bruce Lincoln who made the most convincing argument for the doublespeak of President Bush, following a close analysis of the president's address to the nation in October 2001. By the end of the president's speech, "America's adversaries have been redefined as enemies of God," noted Lincoln, "and current events have been constituted as confirmation of Scripture."¹⁵ President Bush spoke to his Christian audiences, Lincoln observed, "indirectly, through strategies of double coding."¹⁶ To his supporters, President Bush provided reassurance, urging them to enlist specialized reading, listening,

¹² See Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion: George W. Bush's Theology of Empire," *Sojourners Magazine*, Sept.-Oct. 2003, 20–6.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Paul R. Krugman, "The Wars of the Texas Succession," *New York Review of Books*, 26 Feb. 2004, 6.

¹⁵ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago, 2003), 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and interpretive skills, said Lincoln, so that they could probe beneath the surface of his text.¹⁷ These same echoes could be consistently heard in the president's subsequent speeches laced with thunderous vendetta and subliminal religious rage.

The declarations made by President George W. Bush and the British prime minister Tony Blair that the "war against terrorism" was not a war against Islam might as well have been the mutterings of soothsayers since they gained very little traction among their intended audiences. What they both failed to comprehend was that Islam was a complex and diverse religious tradition with multiple histories, value systems, and civilizational achievements. To speak about "Islam," or "Christianity," for that matter, was to hide more than to reveal. One had to be concrete when talking about societies, cultures, religions, and histories. Sweeping characterizations of macroentities were often misleading and resulted in caricature.¹⁸

But the proclamations of Bush and Blair were by most recent accounts a fig leaf to hide the carnage that they wreaked in Iraq. Self-justifying strategies were not unknown to Americans. The historian Leo Damrosch wrote that the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville very shrewdly observed America's moral sanctimony in what it did to Native Americans "tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without spilling blood, without violating a single one of the great principles of morality in the eyes of the world."¹⁹ This statement rings as true today as it did centuries ago, for America's wars in the opening decade of the twenty-first century were also ironically prosecuted with the highest philanthropic purposes in mind. The reality on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan told a different story. Widespread devastation of human life and property, insecurity, and anarchy prevailed. With the deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan numbering in the tens of thousands caused by the United States, nothing could convince Muslims around the world that the United States and Britain were not fighting Islam. Furthermore, there was a long record of torture, wrongful imprisonment, and humiliation of innumerable victims in scores of countries around the world that remained unaccounted for. Especially, the invasion of Iraq, Richard C. Clarke, a former Bush White House security czar, noted, only served to "further radicalize Muslim youth into heightened hatred of America."²⁰ Clarke, with his keen sense of security matters, accurately summed up the damage done by the Iraq war to the United States' prestige and security. "Nothing America could have done

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹ Leopold Damrosch, *Tocqueville's Discovery of America* (New York, 2010), 161.

²⁰ Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York, 2004).

would have provided al-Qaeda and its new generation of cloned groups a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country," he wrote. "Nothing else could have so well negated all our other positive acts and so closed Muslim eyes and ears to our subsequent calls for reform in their region. It was as if Usama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting 'invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq.'"²¹

Individual members of the American armed forces associated with fundamentalist brands of Christianity also framed their participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as their Christian duty. This not only impacted on the professional conduct of soldiers on the battlefield, but also became a headache for the civilian leadership. During the Bush presidency the now-retired general William Jerry Boykin made certain pronouncements that betrayed his professional status and offended the many hundreds of Muslim soldiers in the United States army.²² Boykin, who aired his controversial views long after America's engagement in Somalia had ended, told a journalist that when he responded to the boast of the fugitive Somalian warlord Osman Atto, who claimed he would not be apprehended, he, Boykin, said he told himself, "My God was bigger than his. I knew my God was a real God and his was an idol."²³ In an attempt to defuse the controversy, Boykin later clarified that he meant the warlord Atto's "god" was money. Boykin, who was charged with the special operations' plan to hunt down Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda operatives, was known to take his religious commitments into the battlefield, and he truly believed he was engaged in a holy war against Islam. In 2002 Boykin told a church audience in Oregon that Muslims hated America "because we're a Christian nation. We are hated because we are a nation of believers." Our "spiritual enemy," Boykin continued, "will only be defeated if we come against them in the name of Jesus."²⁴ On another occasion, Boykin warned that "there is no greater threat to America than Islam," and he asked patriotic Americans to get educated, get involved, and pray.²⁵ Subsequent developments suggested that Boykin's views were not isolated ones.

Spearheading the movement to reclaim America as a Christian nation, until his death in 2007, was the televangelist D. James Kennedy, founder of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. Coral Ridge was a sizable national operation with an extensive budget of \$37 million annually and

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Gottschalk and Greenberg, *Islamophobia*, 85.

²³ <http://www.commondreams.org/view/03/10/16-08.htm>.

²⁴ <http://www.commondreams.org/view/03/10/16-08.htm>.

²⁵ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5346428-503544.html.

access to an estimated audience of 3.5 million. Kennedy championed the cause of restoring “the standard of good behavior” in judges according to the Constitution and said judges invited impeachment if they refused to acknowledge “God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government.”²⁶ Apart from opposing abortion and the teaching of evolution in schools, Kennedy also cosigned the famous “Land Letter” sent to the president by Richard D. Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. In the letter the evangelical authors controversially asserted that a preemptive invasion of Iraq was justified in terms of “just war” theory.

The battle cry of Kennedy’s plea for restoring the Christian nation was taken to a more visible level in 2001 when Roy Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, caused a national furor when he commissioned a state-sponsored granite monument of the Ten Commandments.²⁷ He was catapulted into national prominence by his determination to show that God was the basis of the American government and that the Founding Fathers intended the United States to be a Christian nation. Although Moore and his rock were both tossed out of the Alabama courthouse, his ideas gradually gained momentum. The vice-presidential candidate and former Alaska governor Sarah Palin also believed that America was a Christian nation and argued that it was “mind-boggling” to suggest otherwise.²⁸

GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST MUSLIMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Law enforcement agencies in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 kept thousands of Muslims under surveillance and closely monitored the actions of major Muslim organizations, especially charities suspected of having links with outlawed organizations abroad. In the weeks after 11 September law enforcement agencies rounded up more than a thousand Arab or Muslim men, according to some figures. Roughly eighty-three thousand people from predominately Muslim nations were forced to register with the government, and nearly fifty thousand people of mainly Muslim backgrounds were deported. Intimidated by scurrilous charges that assailed their patriotism to America, many Muslims endured hostile sentiments directed at them on a daily basis.²⁹ Workplace discrimination for women wearing Islamic

²⁶ Max Blumenthal, “In Contempt of Courts,” *Nation*, 25 Apr. 2005.

²⁷ Joshua Green, “Roy and His Rock,” *Atlantic Monthly* (2005): 70–82.

²⁸ <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/sarah-palin-sparks-church-state-separation-debate/story?id=10419289>.

²⁹ “Immigration Crackdown Shatters Muslims’ Lives,” *Chicago Tribune*, 16 Nov. 2003.

attire and other forms of harassment became more frequent. Islamophobia ran rife to the extent that a member of President Bush's own personal security detail was hauled off an airplane months after 9/11 because he was an Arab Muslim.

A prominent Muslim army chaplain, Captain James Yee, who served at the special prison in Guantánamo Bay, was detained for espionage and held in solitary confinement for seventy-six days. When his indictment failed, Yee was charged with mishandling classified documents, charges that were also later withdrawn. He faced vexatious charges for downloading pornography on a government laptop and adultery, and he was subject to nonjudicial punishment according to army rules.³⁰ His appeal against the sentence was granted, and he received an honorable discharge from the army. Captain Yee pled his innocence and awaited an apology from the government. In his book, *For God and Country*, Yee raised many questions.³¹ He suspected that Muslim servicemen were used as pawns to ratchet up anxiety associated with the war on terror. Yee's case was similar to that of the French captain Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish army officer who was framed for espionage for the Germans in 1894. Yet no one drew attention to the similarities. Dreyfus at least had the courageous novelist Émile Zola on his side; Zola wrote a public condemnation in a famous article headlined "J'accuse," emblazoned on the front page of the major newspaper *Aurore*, in which he charged the French army with a cover-up. Captain Yee received no such visible support, save for some brave columnists who periodically pleaded his case. Yee wrote poignantly:

Maybe I was considered a traitor because I was not afraid to tell my commanders that many of the things we were doing at Guantánamo were wrong. . . . Maybe it was because I was not willing to silently stand by and watch U.S. soldiers abuse the Qur'an, mock people's religion, and strip men of their dignity – even if those men were prisoners. . . . There are times when I fear that my ordeal simply stemmed from the fact that I am one of "them" – a Muslim. I am a soldier, a citizen and a patriot. But in the eyes of a suspicious, misguided minority who have lost touch with America's national inclusiveness, above all else I am a Muslim.³²

The U.S. government successfully prosecuted a number of Muslims in terrorism-related cases. Several people were charged for what appeared to be *prima facie* cases of intention to commit violence or join terrorist

³⁰ Juliette Kayyem, "Military Justice System a Self-Inflicted Casualty in Terror War," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Feb. 2004.

³¹ James Yee, *For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism under Fire*, ed. Aimee Molloy (New York, 2005).

³² *Ibid.*, 220–1.

groups. The most famous was that of John Walker Lindh, a Californian convert to Islam, who in 2001 was detained in Afghanistan and designated as an “enemy combatant” for being a supporter of the Taliban. Similarly, in 2008 Jose Padilla, a New York-born convert to Islam, was also successfully prosecuted for conspiracy to murder, kidnap, and maim people overseas. A major Muslim charity, the Holy Land Foundation, was shut down for supplying funds to the Palestinian group Hamas, which had been listed as a banned group by the U.S. government. After fifteen years of investigation and two trials, the government succeeded in imprisoning the organizers of the charity for illegally funneling funds to Hamas. The case of Sami al-Arian, a Florida engineering professor charged with supporting a banned group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, before it was outlawed, lingered in the courts for nearly a decade. After several extended spells in jail, al-Arian was out on bond and under house arrest. Some of these prosecutions fell into the crosshairs of divisive Middle Eastern politics that played out on the national political scene. Support for Palestinian groups, even humanitarian support, became suspect, thanks to the monitoring and influence of the pro-Israeli lobby among legislators in Washington, D.C.

MEDIA AND HYSTERIA

For some time, negative stereotypes of Muslims prevailed in all forms of media. Hollywood films, television serials, and cyberspace cast Muslims as simplistic characters – either villains or do-gooders as they were portrayed in the 1998 film *The Siege*.³³ But none of this helped to educate the public what it meant to be Muslim in all its complexity in America when cardboard images served as substitutes. Talk shows and twenty-four-hour news cycles often simplified complex issues of politics, let alone religion. Any fair and sober discussion about Islam was too high a bar. Immediately after 9/11 Muslim representatives could hardly make a comment before editors, publishers, and anchors, from *Larry King Live* to hosts of highbrow National Public Radio shows, demanded that Muslim and Arab spokespersons accept communal guilt for the crimes committed by radical Muslims. It became a pattern across the media industry that the first question asked of Muslim interviewees was whether they condemned the actions of the terrorists. As did a section of the American public, these journalists presumed the Muslims interviewed were guilty by association. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 anything that was said about Islam and Muslims was considered to be believable, especially when someone who had the thinnest credentials on Islam made such a claim.

³³ Gottschalk and Greenberg, *Islamophobia*, 61.

Perhaps the most craven conduct was displayed by some high-profile journalists and columnists and talk show hosts who occupied bully pulpits and whose views the public trusted. They uncritically fell behind the Bush-Cheney line in favor of the Iraq war by sugarcoating the intelligence misinformation that was being circulated. Public commentators like William Safire and Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* and Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post* indecorously played the role of cheer-leading chatterers who cajoled a frightened American public to war with scary rhetoric. Friedman brazenly advocated and justified an American military invasion of Iraq, in his words, into the “heart of the Muslim world ... going door to door” in retaliation for 9/11 in order to puncture the “terrorism bubble.”³⁴ Vacuous, if not deceitful, claims linking Muhammad Atta, one of the 9/11 plotters, to meetings with Iraqi intelligence prior to 9/11 were frequently laundered in Safire’s columns as fact. Some of the media pundits disclosed what the Bush administration lacked in courage to say, namely, that the invasion of Iraq was to teach “Muslims” everywhere in the world a punitive lesson for the terrorist attacks against the United States.

It was only after military setbacks in Afghanistan and Iraq began to be reported back home and the Bush administration’s intelligence misdeemeanors became widely known that sections of the media did strike back.³⁵ Hollywood films and television shows started to portray the Bush administration as the villains while showing that the terrorists were mere pawns in their machinations. The film *Syriana* showed the assassination of an Arab prince trying to free his country from America’s grip, and *Mission Impossible III* showed a smuggler who was a neoconservative front man trying to provoke war in the Middle East. And even the TV serial *24*, which sided with the war on terror in some of its earlier episodes, in later shows was skeptical

³⁴ Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist who viewed himself as a moderate, in an interview with Terry Gross on her program, *Fresh Air*, on 21 Apr. 2003, <http://freshair.npr.org/>, unequivocally confirmed that the war on Iraq had an underlying message. The message was going into the “heart of the Muslim world and going door to door” in order to teach Muslims a lesson in response to 9/11 as a way to puncture what he called the “terrorism bubble,” even though there was no evidence of Saddam Hussein’s supporting terrorism or possessing weapons of mass destruction. The difference between Friedman’s viewpoint and those of the neocons, from William Kristol to Doug Feith and others, was that he presented the neocon agenda in a velvet glove. See Robert Worth, “The Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Terror,” *Arts & Ideas*, *New York Times*, 13 Oct. 2001; Holland Cotter, “Beauty in the Shadow of Violence,” *Arts & Leisure*, *New York Times*, 7 Oct. 2001. In these samples of press articles and countless others, everything in Islamic history from the Prophet Muhammad to Muslim art was associated with violence and criminality in a sleight of hand that could only be described as a sinister form of Islamophobia.

³⁵ Beinhart, *Icarus Syndrome*.

of the government line. The mainline electronic and print media marginally recovered their critical apparatus compared to the post-9/11 hyperpatriotic goodwill of the press toward the government, but still not entirely when it came to talking about Islam and Muslims.

AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Much of the anti-Islam narrative or the culture war continued energetically in organs of civil society. Religious organizations and watchdog groups emerged to monitor the actions of Muslim groups as part of a political vigilantism to keep America white and Christian. Soon after 9/11, a textbook suggested for freshmen summer reading became a point of contention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The book by Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an*, made national headlines when the Family Policy Network, a watchdog group, sued the state-funded university in 2002 for breaching the constitutional separation between church and state. In the glare of media frenzy, the outraged Family Policy Network claimed the prescribed text was partisan to a favorable view of Islam and did not contain parts of the Qur'an considered offensive. While the university stood firm in support of academic freedom, the North Carolina legislature cut off funds for anything related to the freshman reading program that year.

Blaming academics for being too tightly wedded to leftist causes or sympathetic to Arabs and Muslims gave rise to another watchdog group called Campus Watch. Denying Campus Watch's strong pro-Israel cause, its founder, Daniel Pipes, claimed that its goal was to promote "rigorous, objective scholarship untainted by political, ethnic, or religious agendas."³⁶ Yet all of its monitoring of academics, college programs, and the writing of academics linked to Middle East studies strangely ended up siding only with conservative causes. David Horowitz, a former leftist turned rightist, also furiously campaigned against a range of Islamic causes, channeling his energies through conservative student bodies on college campuses. Through his David Horowitz Freedom Center he popularized the term "Islamofascism" as shorthand for terror sponsored by Muslim actors. A number of writers and authors who made Islam and Muslims their pet project found it hard to avoid the temptation to insert snarky comments about Islam. Christopher Hitchens, an émigré British writer and commentator, was possibly the most representative of this trend. Not only was militant Islam the target of his comments, but in his broad-brush commentary an

³⁶ <http://www.campus-watch.org/blog/2010/07/campus-watch-setting-the-record-straight-2010>.

entire history and culture of Islam spanning centuries were often denigrated and dehumanized.

From within Christian circles, provocations against Muslims became a regular feature. Franklin Graham, a prominent evangelical figure, and others identified Islam to be essentially evil, resurrecting medieval suspicions and invective against Islam crafted in Europe centuries ago. Fulminations against Islam and Muslims continued as part of the self-indulgent hysteria mounted by the media organs of Christian evangelical churches. A small sample of this occurred when the Rev. Jerry Falwell called the Prophet Muhammad a “terrorist,” while the Rev. Jerry Vines, a pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, called the Prophet a “demon-possessed pedophile.”³⁷ And in most cases organizations and individuals making these charges were not subject to rebuke or held accountable. Often civic watchdog groups countering hate speech and bigotry paid insufficient attention to anti-Muslim statements, failing to hold violators of civic norms accountable. In this respect, the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) did excellent work in monitoring such anti-Muslim offenses.

Even building mosques became controversial, stoking anti-Islam sentiment. In summer 2010 the construction of a proposed mosque in an Islamic cultural center two blocks from Ground Zero in New York City generated a storm of controversy and virulent opposition. Opponents claimed situating the mosque so near the scene of terrorist activity was offensive to feelings of the families of those killed since the terrorists shared the same irredeemable Muslim faith as the organizers of the Islamic center. Opponents claimed that it was a victory mosque celebrating the destruction on 9/11. For the sponsors of the Cordoba House Initiative, named after the *convivencia*, or shared existence, prevalent among religions in Muslim Spain centuries ago, this center was meant to be the very antithesis of what the terrorists did in the name of Islam. The proposed center planned to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and strongly eschewed the ideology that fostered terrorism. The issue became so polarizing that it required the mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, and President Barack Obama, publicly to affirm the constitutional right of Muslims to build a mosque. Despite calls to respect freedom of religion and efforts to quell the ill-informed anxieties of the public regarding the proposed Lower Manhattan mosque, a few other cases of local communities’ opposing mosque applications were reported around the country. Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association went on record to say that no more mosques ought to be allowed to be built in the United States. Islam, in his

³⁷ <http://www.nccusa.org/news/02news56.html>.

view, was not a “religion of peace,” but rather a religion of war and a totalitarian political ideology masquerading as a religion.³⁸

Cyberspace was where a great deal of anti-Islam propaganda circulated. It appeared that the wave of anti-Islamic sentiment that surfaced in summer 2010 was fed on a diet of toxic caricatures and deliberate misinformation campaigns about Islam that circulated in Internet chat rooms, blogs, and Listservs. Right-wing and evangelical groups were extremely successful in circulating their propaganda. A professionally made YouTube documentary with twelve million hits called *Muslim Demographics*, for example, showed with false and skewed statistics that Muslims were poised to overwhelm Christian populations in Europe and North America unless they procreated faster than Muslims.³⁹ To the uninformed it gave the impression that America was to be overrun by a Muslim majority by the year 2050, and that Shari’a, Islamic law, would replace the U.S. Constitution. Given the virility of some of the opposition to mosque building in 2010, it was altogether probable that this documentary and others similar to it fueled some of the fears.

RESPONSE FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The very diverse American Muslim community weathered the post-9/11 encounters with remarkable resilience and creativity. Some of the major religious organizations, such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), launched new programs to introduce Islam and Muslims to the American mainstream. There was a conscientious desire to integrate Muslims into public life while advancing core Islamic values. The constant act of reconciliation between inherited Islamic values and American values occasionally proved to be challenging, but American Muslims demonstrated that they were able to manage such tensions. Some, such as Muzaffar Chishti, called 9/11 a “Muslim moment” in America, and he defined it as “a period of rising Muslim self-consciousness, new alliances outside their own communities, and a generational change. . . . The notion of a distinct ‘American Muslim’ identity has gained new currency. It is an identity that seeks to assert its independence from forces abroad, one that combines the essential elements of Islam and the values of American constitutional democracy.”⁴⁰

What Chishti pointed to were developments in the realm of Muslim ethical practices. On some moral issues ranging from sexuality, gender, the

³⁸ Anderson Cooper, A360.com, 16 Aug. 2010.

³⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-3X5hIFXYU>.

⁴⁰ Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond* (Berkeley, 2009), 220–1.

mixing of sexes, to reproductive issues and stem-cell research, the Muslim community was grappling with complex matters as much as any other faith community. Specifically challenging to Muslim Americans was the fact that immigrant Muslims imported with them cultural baggage that clouded some of these contentious moral issues. For example, women's head covering for the majority of African American Muslim women was often incorporated into their dress style, a cultural practice, rather than simply a religious symbol. On gender relations, African American Muslims also led the way in demonstrating that healthy moral boundaries could be maintained without offending the individual dignity of men and women by viewing the mixing of sexes as a disease-ridden activity. Instead, people were taught how to conduct respectful relations between the sexes. Only when the experiences of American Muslims became part of the renewed moral fabric could one claim that an indigenous "American" tradition of Islam was born.

One genuine "American" tradition of Islam was the one practiced by African American Muslims, who made up one-third of the American Muslim population but were understated in the public representation of Islam.⁴¹ Despite occasional tensions and rifts with immigrant Muslims, the typical newcomer versus old-timers syndrome coupled with racist streaks among some immigrants, the African American experience of being American, black, and Muslim provided enduring lessons from which immigrant Muslims could learn. But the African American Muslim community was as diverse as the immigrant community. Pockets of political radicals among African American Muslims were as evident as they were among immigrant Muslims. Among some African American Muslims, Islam was often seen as more than a faith, an ideology of social salvation from decades of white racial discrimination, exclusion, and economic deprivation. Immigrant Muslims, on the other hand, were animated by grievances experienced by Muslims in their ancestral homeland, be it in Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Kashmir, or Iraq, and they resorted to Islam as an ideology of social and political salvation. The reasons why people sought political and social salvation in religion instead of in political venues were manifold. Yet one cannot discount the fact that if the reigning cultural and political venues were not capacious enough to fulfill the aspirations of minorities, then they would indeed turn to narrower and less helpful brands of ideology, radical notions of Islam not excluded.

A survey shows that the incidence of terrorist-related violence among Muslim Americans was relatively low. Studies done in select American

⁴¹ Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (Oxford, UK, 2005).

cities showed that American Muslim communities were vigilant against individuals who might contemplate terrorist activities, and they worked closely with law enforcement agencies to combat such acts.⁴² Mosques and community centers engaged in self-surveillance realized that homegrown terrorism could jeopardize their communities' hopes and aspirations to be part of American life. Despite that heightened vigilance, a small number of American-born Muslims slipped through the net and attempted to join militant jihadi groups abroad. While most of such individuals were apprehended even before they could execute their plans, concerns about the remnants of such strains within the Muslim community remained. The fact that an American-born and once Virginia-based cleric, Anwar Awlaki, could recruit young people over the Internet from his hideout in Yemen and communicate with Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist who killed thirteen fellow soldiers in a rage at Fort Hood in 2009, gave credence to the concern that disgruntled and disenchanting militant Muslim individuals could wreak havoc with national security.

For many Muslims, the post-9/11 period served as both a steep learning curve and an opportunity to fast-track their assimilation and shed some of the early reservations they might have fostered to integrate fully into American society. The major challenge was how to grow indigenous Muslim cultural resources. Recall that prior to 9/11, groups of Muslim Americans, other than the mainline representative agencies, were focused on their parochial agendas, whether as mystical (Sufi) communities, educational organizations, or religio-cultural institutions, all with limited and self-defined goals. After 9/11, Muslims learned how to create a corporate identity while retaining the internal diversity of Islam. Some Muslim clerics were quickly shaken out of their parochial pursuits and seemed genuine in their search for a more inclusive theology that meaningfully engaged with diversity in America.⁴³

As one person observed, "We found that there is a need to establish an American Muslim culture, a need to develop American Muslim [institutions] . . . that will address issues of Muslims here – not to import answers and edicts and rulings from the Muslim world because it does not respond to the realities of our environment here."⁴⁴ It was one thing to instill Islamic teachings among Muslim Americans; the greatest challenge was

⁴² David Schanzer, Charles Kurzman, and Ebrahim Moosa, *Anti-Terror Lessons of Muslim-Americans* (Durham, NC, 2010).

⁴³ Jack O'Sullivan, "If You Hate the West, Emigrate to a Muslim Country," *Guardian*, Oct. 2001, quotes the California-based Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, who days before 9/11 made a speech warning that "a great, great tribulation was coming" to America. Showing remorse for his pre-9/11 utterances, Yusuf seemed also to have changed his own theology.

⁴⁴ Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, *Backlash* 9/11, 222–3.

to package those teachings in a culturally sensitive manner. Once the Islamophobia was unveiled from the objections to the proposed Lower Manhattan mosque, there might well have been some salient lessons of cultural sensitivity that Muslim Americans could learn from that episode. And cultural sensitivity, many would argue, was a two-way street. If cultural America did not embrace Muslim Americans, then the future looked bleak and daunting.

Stephen Franklin, surveying the Muslim population in the Chicago area, described how many American Muslims were confused by the mixed messages American society seemed to be sending them.

On one hand, [America] reaches out and implores them to become part of society. But at the same time it stereotypes them as religious fundamentalists and views many of their traditions as out of step with American culture and politics. Every violent act by militant Muslims anywhere in the world haunts them, forcing them into public and private denials that they are somehow linked to it. They live with the queasy feeling of being watched, and being judged differently from others.⁴⁵

RESISTANCE TO ISLAM IN THE ERA OF OBAMA

President Barack Hussein Obama's election in 2008 created a surge in ultra-right-wing sentiment, creating a noxious combination of forces from tax protesters, fringe conspiracy theorists, and anti-immigrant groups, to radical Christian evangelicals. Prime among such groups were the sophisticated Tea Party protesters who played to strong nationalist sentiment with close links to elements within the Republican Party. Sarah Palin and other high-profile Republican figures regularly were featured at their events and served as ventriloquists for the movement. While there were fringe conspiracy theorists who doubted President Obama was a U.S. citizen at birth, the real target was Obama's middle name "Hussein." As confusing as it might sound, many of the public debates angled on the place of Islam in American life were also directed at Obama, who was suspected of being a Muslim. For fringe and not-so-fringe groups who managed to get airtime on popular radio and television talk shows hosted by Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, the subtext was clear: President Obama's birth and by implication his citizenship were suspect, and he was "America's first Muslim president," Limbaugh declared.⁴⁶ Speaking about President Obama, the evangelist Franklin Graham told CNN, "I think the president's problem

⁴⁵ Cited by Sam Afridi, "Muslims in America: Identity, Diversity and the Challenge of Understanding," *Carnegie Challenge 2001 Report* (2001): 8.

⁴⁶ <http://mediamatters.org/research/201008190045>.

is that he was born a Muslim. His father was a Muslim. The seed of Islam is passed through the father, like the seed of Judaism is passed through the mother."⁴⁷ Graham's erroneous claims that the seed of faith is passed from father to child aside, he grudgingly accepted the president's Christian bona fides. In the run-up to the 2008 elections, Barack Obama was the frequent target of a rumor mill fueled by his rivals, accused of being a Muslim or of studying at a madrasa, a Muslim school, during his childhood growing up in Indonesia. After Obama's election, other hot-button political issues also layered the Christian national discourse, such as anti-immigration sentiment coupled with xenophobia. As unemployment figures rose and the effects of the unprecedented economic recession grew worse, it seemed likely that immigrants and minorities were also convenient scapegoats for the nation's pathologies.

A grand coalition including Republicans, Democrats, and neoconservatives and their respective institutions strongly resented Obama's reversal of the Bush doctrine of the war for civilization. The desire to install democracy at gunpoint in the Middle East and to save Afghan women from the Taliban was now a shattered goal as Obama attempted to draw down those wars. In his 2009 Cairo speech Obama essentially held out the olive branch to the Muslim world and pleaded for a new start in relations, a prospect that certainly disappointed many hard-liners in political circles, the armed forces, and civil society. If the war for civilization involving Islam had failed on foreign shores, then clearly in the minds of a host of actors who still clung to the messianic ideology of a war for civilization, this war had to be prosecuted against Muslims in the homeland.

CONCLUSION

The post-9/11 period indelibly changed the way many Americans saw Islam, through the lens of the ideology of a terrorist group al-Qaeda. America's subsequent actions in the homeland and abroad also changed its image in the view of most Muslims around the globe. If some Americans could not think of Islam without conjuring up terrorism, then many Muslims too were unable to imagine America without associating it with rapacious imperialism and a cruel occupying power that caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people. In fact, America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq managed to radicalize large sections of the Muslim world and imperiled American allies such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It was difficult to predict how this mutual suspicion would be corrected as long as

⁴⁷ <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/19/graham-obama-born-a-muslim-now-a-christian/>.

military engagements remained the primary vehicle of communication. Reconciliation remained remote, and efforts to foster dialogue were necessary and had to continue despite the odds.

The strategy to cast Islam not as a religion but as a totalitarian ideology was bound to result in confrontations, conflicts, and intense public debates, whether they involved the building of mosques, the freedom of Muslim Americans to express themselves in public, or treatment of representatives in government and civil affairs as being suspect because they were Muslim. All of these pathologies were bound to increase. But the civic energy invested in engaging these debates might not be entirely futile. This was a second opportunity for Muslim Americans to engage and educate the rest of America about their faith and in the process to find their own feet in an American culture in ways that countless other religious minorities had successfully used. This would not be easy, or without costs, but it was inevitable.

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Section V

NEW AND CONTINUING RELIGIOUS
REALITIES IN AMERICA

POST 9/11: AMERICA AGONIZES OVER ISLAM

EBRAHIM MOOSA

The terrorist attacks on several American cities on 11 September 2001, by Muslim militants linked to al-Qaeda negatively affected the disposition of many Americans toward Islam.¹ These seismic events have also engendered a surge of latent religion into the public square. All the major religious traditions in the United States gained more visibility in national politics, ranging from tacit endorsements for presidential candidates and fervent debates over morally divisive issues, to aggressive evangelical activities at home and abroad. This surge in religious momentum raised questions whether America was heading toward a postsecular society, given debates about America as a Christian nation and the religiously inflected moral debates in public.

Internationally, the United States-sponsored wars in Afghanistan and then Iraq, followed by worldwide security sweeps, negatively affected America's once-credible global image. In the non-West, especially in large swaths of the Muslim world, but also in parts of Europe, America's image as a superpower morphed into that of a resented imperial power. Not since the Vietnam War had domestic and international politics become so intensely intertwined, but with one crucial difference. If the scourge during Vietnam was the red peril of Communism, then in the minds of significant sections of the U.S. public the threat in the first decade of the new century stemmed from Islam generally, and militant Islam, in particular.

BEFORE 9/11

Prior to 11 September 2001, there was a sense of optimism and jubilation at the collapse of Soviet Communism and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, for which the United States

¹ Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (Lanham, MD, 2008), 43.

took the bulk of the credit. Yet few people noticed that while the threat posed by the USSR to the West was extinguished, many smoldering embers were left around the globe. In far-off places such as Somalia, Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories, and in countries identified as America's allies, such as the oil-rich Arabian Gulf states, Egypt, Pakistan, and Israel, there was discontent arising from the collateral fallout of the Cold War. Large sections of the globe were in the thrall of rapid economic growth since new technologies created visions of a capitalistic world without borders and with free trade.

Two landmark books that turned their authors into celebrities with unquestioned cachet in policy and media circles captured that post-Cold War mood in a mixture of triumphalism and caution. In 1992 Francis Fukuyama, to much acclaim, published *The End of History and the Last Man*.² It was a learned book that mined the canons of Western political thought, especially Hegel, in order to understand the nature of human beings, societies, and institutions in a new time – the era of liberal democracy and capitalism. Fukuyama examined the complexity of human nature in the late twentieth century and was less prescriptive than some of his critics suggested. Nevertheless, he did hold out that liberal democracy and capitalism were ideals and the final destination for all nations. This book gave a massive boost to the United States' foreign policy prescriptions in urging nations to subscribe to liberal democracy with its implicit capitalist overtones. Fukuyama offered recipes for constructing notions of a Western self and forming attitudes that were grounded in the will to triumph and to be better than others. Fukuyama imagined the world's nations on the path of liberal democracy as a long wagon train heading toward their pre-ordained destination. Sure, some wagons might fall off, but they would try to join the train again, while others might decide to make home where they landed.

Samuel Huntington followed in 1996 with *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Noting the optimism invested in liberal democracy and the triumph of Western civilization as it leapt off the pages of Fukuyama's book, Huntington showed the downside of such globalization. He identified the fault lines between civilizations and their potential for future conflict. Huntington went on to show that some wagons that did not, could not, or refused to join the train might be the source of trouble for the West. Each of the wagons had defined characteristics, which placed it within the log of civilizations. The fault lines between civilizations that had the potential to implode included China and the Islamic world. Huntington showed the possible perils lurking in Muslim countries and

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992).

put Islam more strongly into the consciousness of the United States' policy makers and analysts. To be fair, Huntington recommended that it was wise for the United States to abstain from intercivilizational conflicts, to seek international mediation instead of conflict, and to build on commonalities among cultures and civilizations. All three pieces of useful wisdom were unfortunately squandered on U.S. policy makers, while the media clung to the sensational aspects of Sino and Islamic fault lines.³

ISLAM AND 9/11

When 11 September 2001 happened, it was the scale of the attack and the audacity of America's terrorist Muslim adversaries that shocked most observers and surprised security experts. Prior to 9/11, the low-intensity war between America and a range of militant Muslim actors amounted to encounters on foreign soil with minimal loss of American life and treasure. The nature of the encounter changed and took the shape of paralyzing terror attacks on the U.S. homeland.

America's political leadership identified 9/11 as a defining point, if not a messianic moment, in the life of the republic. Ideologues within the George W. Bush White House, together with their supporters in a vocal and highly organized neoconservative movement, immediately pounced on this event. They identified the Islamic terrorists as a totalitarian foe like Communism or fascism in scale. For this reason the United States launched a global war against terror in order to save civilization. From that moment onward the nation's foreign policy would pivot on a culture war against "barbarian" militant Islam and its allies. In pursuit of this goal the United States treated this moment as a state of exception, where any amount of overwhelming force, coded as shock and awe, and disregard for international law, would be justified in order to defeat the terrorists. A new term, "Islamofascism," was coined to describe the enemy. While a few people objected to the overreaction, it was especially Fukuyama who cautioned key government strategists not to treat jihadist terrorism as a great totalitarian foe like fascism or Communism. "The important thing was not to overreact," in Fukuyama's view, according to Peter Beinart, "not to take military action that alienated Muslims, thus strengthening Al Qaeda's inherently weak hand."⁴ "Instead America should rely on diplomacy, intelligence gathering, law enforcement, and patience," Fukuyama suggested,

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996), 310.

⁴ Peter Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris* (New York, 2010), 352.

as reported in Beinhart's book. "History was on its side," he argued, "but history could not be rushed."⁵ But an indignant and wounded America not only rushed into Afghanistan, but in 2003 also invaded Iraq, a country that did not pose a threat to the United States or its Western allies, on the pretext that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

On 7 September 2003, President George W. Bush, after the war in Iraq was well under way, explained the purpose and mission for the war of civilization. "We have carried the fight to the enemy," Bush triumphantly announced. "We are rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power."⁶ What was once a terrorist threat to the strategic interests of the United States now inexplicably morphed into a threat to "civilization." Needless to say, in President Bush's view, America was the perfect embodiment of civilization. The words "enemy" and "civilization" were the key lexical terms that shrouded the new ideology that replaced anti-Communism, namely, militant Islam.

Since American hegemony was receding after the Cold War, plans to wage a global war against Islamic terror meant that America was going to intensify its existing effort to shape non-Western societies culturally by randomly identifying a few Muslim societies. As the chief White House security expert Richard A. Clarke noted, the U.S. leadership already had Iraq in its sights before the smoke and dust of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon had even settled. America's political leadership ignored Huntington's critical admonition. "If non-Western societies are once again to be shaped by Western culture," Huntington insightfully warned five years before 9/11, "it will happen only as a result of the expansion, deployment, and impact of Western power."⁷ Political and cultural imperialism were the natural outcome, he warned, that posed dangerous risks as the West's adversaries would offer resistance. And resist they did, not only in Afghanistan and Iraq, but in an expanding theater of terrorism shading into Pakistan, Indonesia, Yemen, as well as in Spain and Britain. Writing after the 9/11 attacks, Huntington held the United States culpable for its conduct in world affairs.⁸ Commenting on the nation's pariah status in the world, he added:

To a considerable extent we ourselves have generated these attitudes by our efforts to impose our values and institutions on other countries. We suffer from what can be called the universalist illusion that people of other countries have the same values and culture that we do; or if they do not have

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "President Bush's Address to the Nation," *New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2003.

⁷ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 310.

⁸ *Ibid.* Huntington lamented that the Western world was attempting to impose its universality on the rest of the world.

them, then they desperately want to have them; or if they do not want to have them, that something's wrong with them, and we have the responsibility to persuade or coerce them into adopting our values and culture.⁹

In the months and weeks preceding and following the beginning of the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq, an intensified culture war was waged in the media against militant Islam. This war was in part executed by sections of the U.S. government, members of the Bush-Cheney White House and their neoconservative allies, certain elements in the intelligence agencies, politicians, and sections of the independent media, especially the pro-Bush-Cheney electronic media. While the perpetrators of 9/11 were undoubtedly Muslims of a radical stripe, the symbol that subliminally became associated with "the enemy" for many was just simply "Islam." Despite the attempts by political leaders in America and Europe to distinguish between Islam as a religion and the radical Muslim fringe group of terrorists, such nuance did not matter much. An unprecedented number of media productions conflated the two. Soon "Islam" and "terrorism" became synonymous. An amorphous entity called "the Muslim world" stretching from Jakarta to Jersey City was summarily indicted. As Edward Said, the Palestinian American professor of literature, described the pre- and post-9/11 writings about Islam, "The personification of enormous entities called 'the West' and 'Islam' is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoon-like world where Popeye and Pluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand of his adversary."¹⁰

Muslim moderates both in the United States and abroad were suffocated by the deluge of anti-Islam sentiment. In a paranoid media environment, it was difficult to express a rational point of view, suggest nuance, and caution against overkill, without being charged with giving comfort to terrorists. The media frenzy fed on the psychological need of the American public for security and for identification of all potential enemies. Over time, for most Americans the culprit of 9/11 was Saudi Arabia since seventeen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi nationals. The simplistic conclusion deposited in the minds of many was that the source of terror stemmed from Saudi Arabia, where it was nurtured by a fundamentalist puritan Wahhabi ideology. Wahhabi ideology dated back to an eighteenth-century reformist figure in Arabia, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who combated what he believed was superstition and idolatry in the name of Islam. Many in America believed this brand of Islam was exported to Pakistan

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, "America in the World," *Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Culture* 5:1 (2003): 18.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*, 22 Oct. 2001.

and Afghanistan, from whence terrorism was exported. As an ideology, Wahhabism was marginal to terrorism. Central to Muslim-inspired terrorism was a disturbing new theology that translated Muslim grievances into a justification for violence, contrary to the established canons of Islamic law, in order to redeem Muslim societies from their slide into subservience to Western powers. If 9/11 was an act of vengeance by al-Qaeda for American culpability in a host of political grievances reaching back to decades of the Cold War, then it started a chain reaction. It inaugurated a new moment in global political warfare and ideological contestation on an unprecedented scale involving America, but largely the West, against countless groups of Muslim adversaries.

America became the supporter of a moderate Islam, which would serve as an antidote to militant Islam worldwide. Huge amounts of resources were ploughed into creating media outlets intended to promote Western culture and moderate interpretations of Islam overseas. Undisguised in its cultural objectives, several high-profile U.S. representatives also explained that the nation-building project in Afghanistan was necessary, with one of the goals identified to be cultural – to liberate Afghan women from the oppressive yoke of the Taliban, the orthodox religious group that governed Afghanistan before it was unseated by the United States' invasion. The second was to install a democratic political order in Kabul as a security blanket against future possible attacks against the United States. The same was true about the invasion of Iraq when the mission switched to installing a democratic order in Baghdad once nuclear weapons proved elusive.

Many Americans saw 9/11 as an attack on their way of life and their purpose as Americans in the world. This might also be the reason why so few of them demurred at the scale of the wars America launched and the atrocities committed in their name. Only the bravest mourned the loss of Afghan and Iraqi lives as well as American lives. Violations of the civil rights of thousands of Muslim Americans and those captured on foreign battlefields were ignored by the larger American society. Most Americans saw themselves as being invited to stand up for a higher purpose as global peacekeepers and to vanquish evil.

Religion, too, was summoned to resist the threat terror posed to civilization, just as America's adversaries also invoked religion, namely, Islam. Before the dust settled, many people felt that both the diagnosis and the solution to 9/11 were hyped and distorted. Some clear minds, such as the British Pakistani writer Tariq Ali, called the confrontation between America and its militant Muslim adversaries a clash of fundamentalisms.¹¹ But the wagons to save civilization had by then already set out for

¹¹ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jibads and Modernity* (London, 2002).

Mesopotamia and the Hindu Kush mountains, and there was no early turning back. After taking office in 2009, the new American president, Barack Obama, promised to tone down this confrontation between Islam and the West.

AMERICA AS A CHRISTIAN NATION?

The post 9/11 period witnessed energetic attempts to baptize America as a Christian nation. Questions around the political theology or the political philosophy that underwrote America's constitutional democracy were frequently raised in the history of the republic. In theory, secular constitutional democracies did not refer to some divine authority when imagining or referring to the basic political structures of society. Nevertheless, the Protestant and religious inspiration at the base of governance in the United States was undeniable. Despite the secular nature of statecraft, the early religious history of America, coupled with the increased public role of religion in the twentieth century, made it hard to accept the claim that political theology was drained from American political thinking. Even if it were arguably true, then the aftermath of 9/11 showed that political theology might have been merely sublimated, for it quickly resurfaced at a time of crisis.

It had been observed with increasing frequency that America might be heading for a postsecular society. This meant that secularism would no longer be the master narrative that explained everything, but just one particular tradition. In that sense the postsecular allowed for a plurality of public discourses, which would give newer traditions such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism a respectable place at the table. If postsecular means that the state took no stand for or against religion in privileging or proscribing religion, then in that sense America was postsecular. But it was the realm of divisive moral and ethical issues, such as abortion and sexual choice, frequently freighted with a ballast of religious convictions, that gave credence to specters of the postsecular. As compared to Europe, religion performed visibly and publicly in America. And for the last quarter of the twentieth century, religion, especially evangelical Christianity, was on the rise in the United States with the growth of megachurches.

Post 9/11, certain strands of Christianity gained a sharper political edge and became increasingly virulent against other religious traditions. This might, in part, have been related to the fact that 9/11 happened on the watch of a very devout president who embraced an evangelical version of Methodism. Not only did President Bush's religious convictions interfere with the legislative arena in his opposition to stem-cell research and in promoting religious-based social programs, but he waged the post-9/11 wars

in a crusading spirit. In fact, 9/11 was skillfully used as a pretext to exercise imperial power stylized in messianic rhetoric.¹²

On 1 May 2003, President George W. Bush, speaking from the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, after his much publicized media spectacle of landing by fighter plane, pledged, "We have not forgotten the victims of September 11, the last phone calls, the cold murder of children, the searches in the rubble." "With those attacks," he continued, "the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got." Jim Wallis, a conscientious Christian, analyzed Bush's statements as an attempt to cast himself as a messianic Calvinist intent on ridding the world of evil. Wallis also noted that President Bush's former speechwriter, David Frum, said of Bush that "war had made him ... a crusader after all."¹³ After the catastrophic events of 9/11, during which time the term "terrorist" became synonymous with "Islam" and "Muslim," it was difficult to suppress public perceptions that the target of Bush's messianic war was "Islam." For those with longer historical memories, the temptation to go to war with one of the world's largest intracultural religious systems called "Islam" would turn out to be fateful to America. In a fit of overkill and hysteria, the United States went to war with two Muslim countries – one in the Middle East and the other in South Asia – and became entangled in regions fated with complex histories from which few imperial powers left with their reputations intact.

Kevin Phillips, a Republican strategist, took a more critical line, arguing that the legacy of the Bush administration was "to manifest a higher and higher level of outright deception: saying one thing and meaning another."¹⁴ But it was the noted scholar of religion Bruce Lincoln who made the most convincing argument for the doublespeak of President Bush, following a close analysis of the president's address to the nation in October 2001. By the end of the president's speech, "America's adversaries have been redefined as enemies of God," noted Lincoln, "and current events have been constituted as confirmation of Scripture."¹⁵ President Bush spoke to his Christian audiences, Lincoln observed, "indirectly, through strategies of double coding."¹⁶ To his supporters, President Bush provided reassurance, urging them to enlist specialized reading, listening,

¹² See Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion: George W. Bush's Theology of Empire," *Sojourners Magazine*, Sept.-Oct. 2003, 20–6.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Paul R. Krugman, "The Wars of the Texas Succession," *New York Review of Books*, 26 Feb. 2004, 6.

¹⁵ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago, 2003), 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and interpretive skills, said Lincoln, so that they could probe beneath the surface of his text.¹⁷ These same echoes could be consistently heard in the president's subsequent speeches laced with thunderous vendetta and subliminal religious rage.

The declarations made by President George W. Bush and the British prime minister Tony Blair that the "war against terrorism" was not a war against Islam might as well have been the mutterings of soothsayers since they gained very little traction among their intended audiences. What they both failed to comprehend was that Islam was a complex and diverse religious tradition with multiple histories, value systems, and civilizational achievements. To speak about "Islam," or "Christianity," for that matter, was to hide more than to reveal. One had to be concrete when talking about societies, cultures, religions, and histories. Sweeping characterizations of macroentities were often misleading and resulted in caricature.¹⁸

But the proclamations of Bush and Blair were by most recent accounts a fig leaf to hide the carnage that they wreaked in Iraq. Self-justifying strategies were not unknown to Americans. The historian Leo Damrosch wrote that the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville very shrewdly observed America's moral sanctimony in what it did to Native Americans "tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without spilling blood, without violating a single one of the great principles of morality in the eyes of the world."¹⁹ This statement rings as true today as it did centuries ago, for America's wars in the opening decade of the twenty-first century were also ironically prosecuted with the highest philanthropic purposes in mind. The reality on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan told a different story. Widespread devastation of human life and property, insecurity, and anarchy prevailed. With the deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan numbering in the tens of thousands caused by the United States, nothing could convince Muslims around the world that the United States and Britain were not fighting Islam. Furthermore, there was a long record of torture, wrongful imprisonment, and humiliation of innumerable victims in scores of countries around the world that remained unaccounted for. Especially, the invasion of Iraq, Richard C. Clarke, a former Bush White House security czar, noted, only served to "further radicalize Muslim youth into heightened hatred of America."²⁰ Clarke, with his keen sense of security matters, accurately summed up the damage done by the Iraq war to the United States' prestige and security. "Nothing America could have done

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹ Leopold Damrosch, *Tocqueville's Discovery of America* (New York, 2010), 161.

²⁰ Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York, 2004).

would have provided al-Qaeda and its new generation of cloned groups a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country," he wrote. "Nothing else could have so well negated all our other positive acts and so closed Muslim eyes and ears to our subsequent calls for reform in their region. It was as if Usama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting 'invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq.'"²¹

Individual members of the American armed forces associated with fundamentalist brands of Christianity also framed their participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as their Christian duty. This not only impacted on the professional conduct of soldiers on the battlefield, but also became a headache for the civilian leadership. During the Bush presidency the now-retired general William Jerry Boykin made certain pronouncements that betrayed his professional status and offended the many hundreds of Muslim soldiers in the United States army.²² Boykin, who aired his controversial views long after America's engagement in Somalia had ended, told a journalist that when he responded to the boast of the fugitive Somali warlord Osman Atto, who claimed he would not be apprehended, he, Boykin, said he told himself, "My God was bigger than his. I knew my God was a real God and his was an idol."²³ In an attempt to defuse the controversy, Boykin later clarified that he meant the warlord Atto's "god" was money. Boykin, who was charged with the special operations' plan to hunt down Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda operatives, was known to take his religious commitments into the battlefield, and he truly believed he was engaged in a holy war against Islam. In 2002 Boykin told a church audience in Oregon that Muslims hated America "because we're a Christian nation. We are hated because we are a nation of believers." Our "spiritual enemy," Boykin continued, "will only be defeated if we come against them in the name of Jesus."²⁴ On another occasion, Boykin warned that "there is no greater threat to America than Islam," and he asked patriotic Americans to get educated, get involved, and pray.²⁵ Subsequent developments suggested that Boykin's views were not isolated ones.

Spearheading the movement to reclaim America as a Christian nation, until his death in 2007, was the televangelist D. James Kennedy, founder of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. Coral Ridge was a sizable national operation with an extensive budget of \$37 million annually and

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Gottschalk and Greenberg, *Islamophobia*, 85.

²³ <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/1016-08.htm>.

²⁴ <http://www.commondreams.org/view03/1016-08.htm>.

²⁵ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5346428-503544.html.

access to an estimated audience of 3.5 million. Kennedy championed the cause of restoring “the standard of good behavior” in judges according to the Constitution and said judges invited impeachment if they refused to acknowledge “God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government.”²⁶ Apart from opposing abortion and the teaching of evolution in schools, Kennedy also cosigned the famous “Land Letter” sent to the president by Richard D. Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. In the letter the evangelical authors controversially asserted that a preemptive invasion of Iraq was justified in terms of “just war” theory.

The battle cry of Kennedy’s plea for restoring the Christian nation was taken to a more visible level in 2001 when Roy Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, caused a national furor when he commissioned a state-sponsored granite monument of the Ten Commandments.²⁷ He was catapulted into national prominence by his determination to show that God was the basis of the American government and that the Founding Fathers intended the United States to be a Christian nation. Although Moore and his rock were both tossed out of the Alabama courthouse, his ideas gradually gained momentum. The vice-presidential candidate and former Alaska governor Sarah Palin also believed that America was a Christian nation and argued that it was “mind-boggling” to suggest otherwise.²⁸

GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST MUSLIMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Law enforcement agencies in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 kept thousands of Muslims under surveillance and closely monitored the actions of major Muslim organizations, especially charities suspected of having links with outlawed organizations abroad. In the weeks after 11 September law enforcement agencies rounded up more than a thousand Arab or Muslim men, according to some figures. Roughly eighty-three thousand people from predominately Muslim nations were forced to register with the government, and nearly fifty thousand people of mainly Muslim backgrounds were deported. Intimidated by scurrilous charges that assailed their patriotism to America, many Muslims endured hostile sentiments directed at them on a daily basis.²⁹ Workplace discrimination for women wearing Islamic

²⁶ Max Blumenthal, “In Contempt of Courts,” *Nation*, 25 Apr. 2005.

²⁷ Joshua Green, “Roy and His Rock,” *Atlantic Monthly* (2005): 70–82.

²⁸ <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/sarah-palin-sparks-church-state-separation-debate/story?id=10419289>.

²⁹ “Immigration Crackdown Shatters Muslims’ Lives,” *Chicago Tribune*, 16 Nov. 2003.

attire and other forms of harassment became more frequent. Islamophobia ran rife to the extent that a member of President Bush's own personal security detail was hauled off an airplane months after 9/11 because he was an Arab Muslim.

A prominent Muslim army chaplain, Captain James Yee, who served at the special prison in Guantánamo Bay, was detained for espionage and held in solitary confinement for seventy-six days. When his indictment failed, Yee was charged with mishandling classified documents, charges that were also later withdrawn. He faced vexatious charges for downloading pornography on a government laptop and adultery, and he was subject to nonjudicial punishment according to army rules.³⁰ His appeal against the sentence was granted, and he received an honorable discharge from the army. Captain Yee pled his innocence and awaited an apology from the government. In his book, *For God and Country*, Yee raised many questions.³¹ He suspected that Muslim servicemen were used as pawns to ratchet up anxiety associated with the war on terror. Yee's case was similar to that of the French captain Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish army officer who was framed for espionage for the Germans in 1894. Yet no one drew attention to the similarities. Dreyfus at least had the courageous novelist Émile Zola on his side; Zola wrote a public condemnation in a famous article headlined "J'accuse," emblazoned on the front page of the major newspaper *Aurore*, in which he charged the French army with a cover-up. Captain Yee received no such visible support, save for some brave columnists who periodically pleaded his case. Yee wrote poignantly:

Maybe I was considered a traitor because I was not afraid to tell my commanders that many of the things we were doing at Guantánamo were wrong. . . . Maybe it was because I was not willing to silently stand by and watch U.S. soldiers abuse the Qur'an, mock people's religion, and strip men of their dignity – even if those men were prisoners. . . . There are times when I fear that my ordeal simply stemmed from the fact that I am one of "them" – a Muslim. I am a soldier, a citizen and a patriot. But in the eyes of a suspicious, misguided minority who have lost touch with America's national inclusiveness, above all else I am a Muslim.³²

The U.S. government successfully prosecuted a number of Muslims in terrorism-related cases. Several people were charged for what appeared to be *prima facie* cases of intention to commit violence or join terrorist

³⁰ Juliette Kayyem, "Military Justice System a Self-Inflicted Casualty in Terror War," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Feb. 2004.

³¹ James Yee, *For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism under Fire*, ed. Aimee Molloy (New York, 2005).

³² *Ibid.*, 220–1.

groups. The most famous was that of John Walker Lindh, a Californian convert to Islam, who in 2001 was detained in Afghanistan and designated as an “enemy combatant” for being a supporter of the Taliban. Similarly, in 2008 Jose Padilla, a New York-born convert to Islam, was also successfully prosecuted for conspiracy to murder, kidnap, and maim people overseas. A major Muslim charity, the Holy Land Foundation, was shut down for supplying funds to the Palestinian group Hamas, which had been listed as a banned group by the U.S. government. After fifteen years of investigation and two trials, the government succeeded in imprisoning the organizers of the charity for illegally funneling funds to Hamas. The case of Sami al-Arian, a Florida engineering professor charged with supporting a banned group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, before it was outlawed, lingered in the courts for nearly a decade. After several extended spells in jail, al-Arian was out on bond and under house arrest. Some of these prosecutions fell into the crosshairs of divisive Middle Eastern politics that played out on the national political scene. Support for Palestinian groups, even humanitarian support, became suspect, thanks to the monitoring and influence of the pro-Israeli lobby among legislators in Washington, D.C.

MEDIA AND HYSTERIA

For some time, negative stereotypes of Muslims prevailed in all forms of media. Hollywood films, television serials, and cyberspace cast Muslims as simplistic characters – either villains or do-gooders as they were portrayed in the 1998 film *The Siege*.³³ But none of this helped to educate the public what it meant to be Muslim in all its complexity in America when cardboard images served as substitutes. Talk shows and twenty-four-hour news cycles often simplified complex issues of politics, let alone religion. Any fair and sober discussion about Islam was too high a bar. Immediately after 9/11 Muslim representatives could hardly make a comment before editors, publishers, and anchors, from *Larry King Live* to hosts of highbrow National Public Radio shows, demanded that Muslim and Arab spokespersons accept communal guilt for the crimes committed by radical Muslims. It became a pattern across the media industry that the first question asked of Muslim interviewees was whether they condemned the actions of the terrorists. As did a section of the American public, these journalists presumed the Muslims interviewed were guilty by association. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 anything that was said about Islam and Muslims was considered to be believable, especially when someone who had the thinnest credentials on Islam made such a claim.

³³ Gottschalk and Greenberg, *Islamophobia*, 61.

Perhaps the most craven conduct was displayed by some high-profile journalists and columnists and talk show hosts who occupied bully pulpits and whose views the public trusted. They uncritically fell behind the Bush-Cheney line in favor of the Iraq war by sugarcoating the intelligence misinformation that was being circulated. Public commentators like William Safire and Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* and Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post* indecorously played the role of cheer-leading chatterers who cajoled a frightened American public to war with scary rhetoric. Friedman brazenly advocated and justified an American military invasion of Iraq, in his words, into the “heart of the Muslim world ... going door to door” in retaliation for 9/11 in order to puncture the “terrorism bubble.”³⁴ Vacuous, if not deceitful, claims linking Muhammad Atta, one of the 9/11 plotters, to meetings with Iraqi intelligence prior to 9/11 were frequently laundered in Safire’s columns as fact. Some of the media pundits disclosed what the Bush administration lacked in courage to say, namely, that the invasion of Iraq was to teach “Muslims” everywhere in the world a punitive lesson for the terrorist attacks against the United States.

It was only after military setbacks in Afghanistan and Iraq began to be reported back home and the Bush administration’s intelligence misdeemeanors became widely known that sections of the media did strike back.³⁵ Hollywood films and television shows started to portray the Bush administration as the villains while showing that the terrorists were mere pawns in their machinations. The film *Syriana* showed the assassination of an Arab prince trying to free his country from America’s grip, and *Mission Impossible III* showed a smuggler who was a neoconservative front man trying to provoke war in the Middle East. And even the TV serial *24*, which sided with the war on terror in some of its earlier episodes, in later shows was skeptical

³⁴ Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist who viewed himself as a moderate, in an interview with Terry Gross on her program, *Fresh Air*, on 21 Apr. 2003, <http://freshair.npr.org/>, unequivocally confirmed that the war on Iraq had an underlying message. The message was going into the “heart of the Muslim world and going door to door” in order to teach Muslims a lesson in response to 9/11 as a way to puncture what he called the “terrorism bubble,” even though there was no evidence of Saddam Hussein’s supporting terrorism or possessing weapons of mass destruction. The difference between Friedman’s viewpoint and those of the neocons, from William Kristol to Doug Feith and others, was that he presented the neocon agenda in a velvet glove. See Robert Worth, “The Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Terror,” *Arts & Ideas*, *New York Times*, 13 Oct. 2001; Holland Cotter, “Beauty in the Shadow of Violence,” *Arts & Leisure*, *New York Times*, 7 Oct. 2001. In these samples of press articles and countless others, everything in Islamic history from the Prophet Muhammad to Muslim art was associated with violence and criminality in a sleight of hand that could only be described as a sinister form of Islamophobia.

³⁵ Beinhart, *Icarus Syndrome*.

of the government line. The mainline electronic and print media marginally recovered their critical apparatus compared to the post-9/11 hyperpatriotic goodwill of the press toward the government, but still not entirely when it came to talking about Islam and Muslims.

AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Much of the anti-Islam narrative or the culture war continued energetically in organs of civil society. Religious organizations and watchdog groups emerged to monitor the actions of Muslim groups as part of a political vigilantism to keep America white and Christian. Soon after 9/11, a textbook suggested for freshmen summer reading became a point of contention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The book by Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an*, made national headlines when the Family Policy Network, a watchdog group, sued the state-funded university in 2002 for breaching the constitutional separation between church and state. In the glare of media frenzy, the outraged Family Policy Network claimed the prescribed text was partisan to a favorable view of Islam and did not contain parts of the Qur'an considered offensive. While the university stood firm in support of academic freedom, the North Carolina legislature cut off funds for anything related to the freshman reading program that year.

Blaming academics for being too tightly wedded to leftist causes or sympathetic to Arabs and Muslims gave rise to another watchdog group called Campus Watch. Denying Campus Watch's strong pro-Israel cause, its founder, Daniel Pipes, claimed that its goal was to promote "rigorous, objective scholarship untainted by political, ethnic, or religious agendas."³⁶ Yet all of its monitoring of academics, college programs, and the writing of academics linked to Middle East studies strangely ended up siding only with conservative causes. David Horowitz, a former leftist turned rightist, also furiously campaigned against a range of Islamic causes, channeling his energies through conservative student bodies on college campuses. Through his David Horowitz Freedom Center he popularized the term "Islamofascism" as shorthand for terror sponsored by Muslim actors. A number of writers and authors who made Islam and Muslims their pet project found it hard to avoid the temptation to insert snarky comments about Islam. Christopher Hitchens, an émigré British writer and commentator, was possibly the most representative of this trend. Not only was militant Islam the target of his comments, but in his broad-brush commentary an

³⁶ <http://www.campus-watch.org/blog/2010/07/campus-watch-setting-the-record-straight-2010>.

entire history and culture of Islam spanning centuries were often denigrated and dehumanized.

From within Christian circles, provocations against Muslims became a regular feature. Franklin Graham, a prominent evangelical figure, and others identified Islam to be essentially evil, resurrecting medieval suspicions and invective against Islam crafted in Europe centuries ago. Fulminations against Islam and Muslims continued as part of the self-indulgent hysteria mounted by the media organs of Christian evangelical churches. A small sample of this occurred when the Rev. Jerry Falwell called the Prophet Muhammad a “terrorist,” while the Rev. Jerry Vines, a pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, called the Prophet a “demon-possessed pedophile.”³⁷ And in most cases organizations and individuals making these charges were not subject to rebuke or held accountable. Often civic watchdog groups countering hate speech and bigotry paid insufficient attention to anti-Muslim statements, failing to hold violators of civic norms accountable. In this respect, the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) did excellent work in monitoring such anti-Muslim offenses.

Even building mosques became controversial, stoking anti-Islam sentiment. In summer 2010 the construction of a proposed mosque in an Islamic cultural center two blocks from Ground Zero in New York City generated a storm of controversy and virulent opposition. Opponents claimed situating the mosque so near the scene of terrorist activity was offensive to feelings of the families of those killed since the terrorists shared the same irredeemable Muslim faith as the organizers of the Islamic center. Opponents claimed that it was a victory mosque celebrating the destruction on 9/11. For the sponsors of the Cordoba House Initiative, named after the *convivencia*, or shared existence, prevalent among religions in Muslim Spain centuries ago, this center was meant to be the very antithesis of what the terrorists did in the name of Islam. The proposed center planned to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and strongly eschewed the ideology that fostered terrorism. The issue became so polarizing that it required the mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, and President Barack Obama, publicly to affirm the constitutional right of Muslims to build a mosque. Despite calls to respect freedom of religion and efforts to quell the ill-informed anxieties of the public regarding the proposed Lower Manhattan mosque, a few other cases of local communities’ opposing mosque applications were reported around the country. Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association went on record to say that no more mosques ought to be allowed to be built in the United States. Islam, in his

³⁷ <http://www.nccusa.org/news/02news56.html>.

view, was not a “religion of peace,” but rather a religion of war and a totalitarian political ideology masquerading as a religion.³⁸

Cyberspace was where a great deal of anti-Islam propaganda circulated. It appeared that the wave of anti-Islamic sentiment that surfaced in summer 2010 was fed on a diet of toxic caricatures and deliberate misinformation campaigns about Islam that circulated in Internet chat rooms, blogs, and Listservs. Right-wing and evangelical groups were extremely successful in circulating their propaganda. A professionally made YouTube documentary with twelve million hits called *Muslim Demographics*, for example, showed with false and skewed statistics that Muslims were poised to overwhelm Christian populations in Europe and North America unless they procreated faster than Muslims.³⁹ To the uninformed it gave the impression that America was to be overrun by a Muslim majority by the year 2050, and that Shari’a, Islamic law, would replace the U.S. Constitution. Given the virility of some of the opposition to mosque building in 2010, it was altogether probable that this documentary and others similar to it fueled some of the fears.

RESPONSE FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The very diverse American Muslim community weathered the post-9/11 encounters with remarkable resilience and creativity. Some of the major religious organizations, such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), launched new programs to introduce Islam and Muslims to the American mainstream. There was a conscientious desire to integrate Muslims into public life while advancing core Islamic values. The constant act of reconciliation between inherited Islamic values and American values occasionally proved to be challenging, but American Muslims demonstrated that they were able to manage such tensions. Some, such as Muzaffar Chishti, called 9/11 a “Muslim moment” in America, and he defined it as “a period of rising Muslim self-consciousness, new alliances outside their own communities, and a generational change. . . . The notion of a distinct ‘American Muslim’ identity has gained new currency. It is an identity that seeks to assert its independence from forces abroad, one that combines the essential elements of Islam and the values of American constitutional democracy.”⁴⁰

What Chishti pointed to were developments in the realm of Muslim ethical practices. On some moral issues ranging from sexuality, gender, the

³⁸ Anderson Cooper, A360.com, 16 Aug. 2010.

³⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-3X5hIFXYU>.

⁴⁰ Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond* (Berkeley, 2009), 220–1.

mixing of sexes, to reproductive issues and stem-cell research, the Muslim community was grappling with complex matters as much as any other faith community. Specifically challenging to Muslim Americans was the fact that immigrant Muslims imported with them cultural baggage that clouded some of these contentious moral issues. For example, women's head covering for the majority of African American Muslim women was often incorporated into their dress style, a cultural practice, rather than simply a religious symbol. On gender relations, African American Muslims also led the way in demonstrating that healthy moral boundaries could be maintained without offending the individual dignity of men and women by viewing the mixing of sexes as a disease-ridden activity. Instead, people were taught how to conduct respectful relations between the sexes. Only when the experiences of American Muslims became part of the renewed moral fabric could one claim that an indigenous "American" tradition of Islam was born.

One genuine "American" tradition of Islam was the one practiced by African American Muslims, who made up one-third of the American Muslim population but were understated in the public representation of Islam.⁴¹ Despite occasional tensions and rifts with immigrant Muslims, the typical newcomer versus old-timers syndrome coupled with racist streaks among some immigrants, the African American experience of being American, black, and Muslim provided enduring lessons from which immigrant Muslims could learn. But the African American Muslim community was as diverse as the immigrant community. Pockets of political radicals among African American Muslims were as evident as they were among immigrant Muslims. Among some African American Muslims, Islam was often seen as more than a faith, an ideology of social salvation from decades of white racial discrimination, exclusion, and economic deprivation. Immigrant Muslims, on the other hand, were animated by grievances experienced by Muslims in their ancestral homeland, be it in Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Kashmir, or Iraq, and they resorted to Islam as an ideology of social and political salvation. The reasons why people sought political and social salvation in religion instead of in political venues were manifold. Yet one cannot discount the fact that if the reigning cultural and political venues were not capacious enough to fulfill the aspirations of minorities, then they would indeed turn to narrower and less helpful brands of ideology, radical notions of Islam not excluded.

A survey shows that the incidence of terrorist-related violence among Muslim Americans was relatively low. Studies done in select American

⁴¹ Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (Oxford, UK, 2005).

cities showed that American Muslim communities were vigilant against individuals who might contemplate terrorist activities, and they worked closely with law enforcement agencies to combat such acts.⁴² Mosques and community centers engaged in self-surveillance realized that homegrown terrorism could jeopardize their communities' hopes and aspirations to be part of American life. Despite that heightened vigilance, a small number of American-born Muslims slipped through the net and attempted to join militant jihadi groups abroad. While most of such individuals were apprehended even before they could execute their plans, concerns about the remnants of such strains within the Muslim community remained. The fact that an American-born and once Virginia-based cleric, Anwar Awlaki, could recruit young people over the Internet from his hideout in Yemen and communicate with Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist who killed thirteen fellow soldiers in a rage at Fort Hood in 2009, gave credence to the concern that disgruntled and disenchanting militant Muslim individuals could wreak havoc with national security.

For many Muslims, the post-9/11 period served as both a steep learning curve and an opportunity to fast-track their assimilation and shed some of the early reservations they might have fostered to integrate fully into American society. The major challenge was how to grow indigenous Muslim cultural resources. Recall that prior to 9/11, groups of Muslim Americans, other than the mainline representative agencies, were focused on their parochial agendas, whether as mystical (Sufi) communities, educational organizations, or religio-cultural institutions, all with limited and self-defined goals. After 9/11, Muslims learned how to create a corporate identity while retaining the internal diversity of Islam. Some Muslim clerics were quickly shaken out of their parochial pursuits and seemed genuine in their search for a more inclusive theology that meaningfully engaged with diversity in America.⁴³

As one person observed, "We found that there is a need to establish an American Muslim culture, a need to develop American Muslim [institutions] . . . that will address issues of Muslims here – not to import answers and edicts and rulings from the Muslim world because it does not respond to the realities of our environment here."⁴⁴ It was one thing to instill Islamic teachings among Muslim Americans; the greatest challenge was

⁴² David Schanzer, Charles Kurzman, and Ebrahim Moosa, *Anti-Terror Lessons of Muslim-Americans* (Durham, NC, 2010).

⁴³ Jack O'Sullivan, "If You Hate the West, Emigrate to a Muslim Country," *Guardian*, Oct. 2001, quotes the California-based Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, who days before 9/11 made a speech warning that "a great, great tribulation was coming" to America. Showing remorse for his pre-9/11 utterances, Yusuf seemed also to have changed his own theology.

⁴⁴ Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, *Backlash* 9/11, 222–3.

to package those teachings in a culturally sensitive manner. Once the Islamophobia was unveiled from the objections to the proposed Lower Manhattan mosque, there might well have been some salient lessons of cultural sensitivity that Muslim Americans could learn from that episode. And cultural sensitivity, many would argue, was a two-way street. If cultural America did not embrace Muslim Americans, then the future looked bleak and daunting.

Stephen Franklin, surveying the Muslim population in the Chicago area, described how many American Muslims were confused by the mixed messages American society seemed to be sending them.

On one hand, [America] reaches out and implores them to become part of society. But at the same time it stereotypes them as religious fundamentalists and views many of their traditions as out of step with American culture and politics. Every violent act by militant Muslims anywhere in the world haunts them, forcing them into public and private denials that they are somehow linked to it. They live with the queasy feeling of being watched, and being judged differently from others.⁴⁵

RESISTANCE TO ISLAM IN THE ERA OF OBAMA

President Barack Hussein Obama's election in 2008 created a surge in ultra-right-wing sentiment, creating a noxious combination of forces from tax protesters, fringe conspiracy theorists, and anti-immigrant groups, to radical Christian evangelicals. Prime among such groups were the sophisticated Tea Party protesters who played to strong nationalist sentiment with close links to elements within the Republican Party. Sarah Palin and other high-profile Republican figures regularly were featured at their events and served as ventriloquists for the movement. While there were fringe conspiracy theorists who doubted President Obama was a U.S. citizen at birth, the real target was Obama's middle name "Hussein." As confusing as it might sound, many of the public debates angled on the place of Islam in American life were also directed at Obama, who was suspected of being a Muslim. For fringe and not-so-fringe groups who managed to get airtime on popular radio and television talk shows hosted by Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, the subtext was clear: President Obama's birth and by implication his citizenship were suspect, and he was "America's first Muslim president," Limbaugh declared.⁴⁶ Speaking about President Obama, the evangelist Franklin Graham told CNN, "I think the president's problem

⁴⁵ Cited by Sam Afridi, "Muslims in America: Identity, Diversity and the Challenge of Understanding," *Carnegie Challenge 2001 Report* (2001): 8.

⁴⁶ <http://mediamatters.org/research/201008190045>.

is that he was born a Muslim. His father was a Muslim. The seed of Islam is passed through the father, like the seed of Judaism is passed through the mother.”⁴⁷ Graham’s erroneous claims that the seed of faith is passed from father to child aside, he grudgingly accepted the president’s Christian bonafides. In the run-up to the 2008 elections, Barack Obama was the frequent target of a rumor mill fueled by his rivals, accused of being a Muslim or of studying at a madrasa, a Muslim school, during his childhood growing up in Indonesia. After Obama’s election, other hot-button political issues also layered the Christian national discourse, such as anti-immigration sentiment coupled with xenophobia. As unemployment figures rose and the effects of the unprecedented economic recession grew worse, it seemed likely that immigrants and minorities were also convenient scapegoats for the nation’s pathologies.

A grand coalition including Republicans, Democrats, and neoconservatives and their respective institutions strongly resented Obama’s reversal of the Bush doctrine of the war for civilization. The desire to install democracy at gunpoint in the Middle East and to save Afghan women from the Taliban was now a shattered goal as Obama attempted to draw down those wars. In his 2009 Cairo speech Obama essentially held out the olive branch to the Muslim world and pleaded for a new start in relations, a prospect that certainly disappointed many hard-liners in political circles, the armed forces, and civil society. If the war for civilization involving Islam had failed on foreign shores, then clearly in the minds of a host of actors who still clung to the messianic ideology of a war for civilization, this war had to be prosecuted against Muslims in the homeland.

CONCLUSION

The post-9/11 period indelibly changed the way many Americans saw Islam, through the lens of the ideology of a terrorist group al-Qaeda. America’s subsequent actions in the homeland and abroad also changed its image in the view of most Muslims around the globe. If some Americans could not think of Islam without conjuring up terrorism, then many Muslims too were unable to imagine America without associating it with rapacious imperialism and a cruel occupying power that caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people. In fact, America’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq managed to radicalize large sections of the Muslim world and imperiled American allies such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It was difficult to predict how this mutual suspicion would be corrected as long as

⁴⁷ <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/19/graham-obama-born-a-muslim-now-a-christian/>.

military engagements remained the primary vehicle of communication. Reconciliation remained remote, and efforts to foster dialogue were necessary and had to continue despite the odds.

The strategy to cast Islam not as a religion but as a totalitarian ideology was bound to result in confrontations, conflicts, and intense public debates, whether they involved the building of mosques, the freedom of Muslim Americans to express themselves in public, or treatment of representatives in government and civil affairs as being suspect because they were Muslim. All of these pathologies were bound to increase. But the civic energy invested in engaging these debates might not be entirely futile. This was a second opportunity for Muslim Americans to engage and educate the rest of America about their faith and in the process to find their own feet in an American culture in ways that countless other religious minorities had successfully used. This would not be easy, or without costs, but it was inevitable.

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THE MEGACHURCH PHENOMENON: RESHAPING CHURCH AND FAITH FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

SCOTT L. THUMMA

On its first service on 27 February 2000, Rock Church of San Diego, California, drew 3,300 participants. This church, founded by a former football player for the San Diego Chargers, Miles McPherson, sprang into existence as a megachurch at its initial worship service. Less than a decade later, the church draws more than 12,000 to attend its five Sunday services and countless activities. Rock Church meets in a nearly 300,000-square-foot converted naval training building situated in the midst of an exclusive residential area of Point Loma and the Liberty Station shopping district. This multimillion-dollar renovated space houses a Christian school, a bookshop, a restaurant, offices, and a state-of-the-art 3,500-seat sanctuary with a remarkable sound system, described as the most technologically advanced venue in San Diego. Miles McPherson is a charismatic communicator of the gospel. Miles' sermons combine self-effacing humor and biblical narratives to relate an evangelical message in everyday language that is both effective and appealing. As a young college-age woman commented, "This is a place I can bring my friends to and they'll like it."¹

With various naval facilities and four major colleges and universities less than ten miles away, there is a strong youthful orientation to the congregation as a whole, with the majority of attendees between twenty and thirty-five years of age. This is reinforced both in the themes of the sermons and especially in the types of activities and small groups offered, including rock climbing, 4×4ing, motorbiking, sea kayaking, downtown art shows, and clubs such as surfing, island dancing, skateboarding, and martial arts. This youthfulness gives a tremendous energy to the congregation, an energy that is strongly channeled into social activism. Each week a street in front of the church is closed off and hosts different ministry booths to recruit volunteers. As one attendee commented, "Miles constantly

¹ This quotation and all others in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, are from the author's research and interviews with megachurch participants in 2008.

preaches, ‘You’ve got to get involved.’” In fact, the church in 2009 donated 600,000 “Do Something” hours in service to the community of San Diego. As another attendee noted, “In a megachurch you get involved, and all of a sudden it’s not mega anymore.” This activism includes traditional outreach ministries of food and clothing distribution, nursing home care, and prison ministry but also efforts to address human trafficking, adult entertainment workers, same-sex attraction, and domestic violence.

Although megachurches like Rock Church have attracted tremendous attention in the past few decades, the presence of very large congregations in urban America is not entirely new in the religious landscape. Moody Memorial Church of Chicago and Angelus Temple in Los Angeles are prominent historical examples of churches that gathered thousands who were led by charismatic preachers who mesmerized them with fiery evangelical oration or entertained them with skits and popular music, while also employing multiple ministries and the use of small groups to keep them occupied. A few churches such as these dominated the religious ecology in the largest urban centers in nearly every period of the nation’s history. Yet the megachurch phenomenon of the past several decades is different. At the very least it is dramatic in terms of the rapid proliferation and sizable number of these very large churches across the U.S. landscape and their central role in influencing new models of religious life.

This megachurch model of a successful church in the twenty-first century is beginning to reshape the style and methods of local faith assemblies and the larger national religious organizational forms of our society in dramatic ways. The megachurch model, while predominantly associated with a size characteristic, is significant for its cultural resonance and its elective affinity with a contemporary American reality. This religious form is one shaped to correspond to a modern suburban context. As such, the megachurch phenomenon is beginning to transform the ecclesiastical landscape of America. Yet no distinctively new religious reality arises without any attachment to past patterns or models. Even in turbulent and unsettled cultural periods, new organizational forms are constructed from the tools and materials of previous generations. Much about contemporary megachurches resonates with and explicitly parallels earlier religious forms.² Very large churches of past centuries were guided by entrepreneurial, highly charismatic, and gifted orators. These churches incorporated the latest technologies in their services whether they were sounding boards, vast obstruction-free structural spans, radio, or television broadcasts.³

² As Anne Loveland and Otis Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, MD, 2003), describe in their exploration of megachurches.

³ Mark Chaves, “All Creatures Great and Small: Megachurches in Context,” *Review of Religious Research* 47 (2006): 340.

The originality of the megachurch phenomenon stems not just from the model of church that is evolving, but also from its broad receptivity in a cultural climate and social context of suburbia. The megachurch adaptation has become highly successful. In other words, this religious form has a resonance with contemporary mainstream culture in ways that traditional models of Protestant Christian religious life have lost. There are both push and pull factors at work in making this religious form so appealing. This model of church excels in attracting religious participants with technological savvy, and with media-rich, highly produced, and expertly marketed services to a far greater degree than do most other religious options. However, societal changes in musical tastes, an expectation of professional quality, the need for intentional communities, and the desire for personal spiritual choice all contribute as much to the push out of smaller traditional churches as they do the pull into a megachurch model.

The exact social shifts that created these changes and facilitated this transition are complex and multifaceted and cannot be fully explored in this context. They are rooted in population patterns due to the baby boom and its effect on organizational size. Likewise, migration patterns and the transition of Americans from rural to urban to suburban contexts as well as rapid immigration and the pluralism within the culture play a part. This change may also be attributed to a waning of the significance of denominational identities, distrust of national bureaucracies, and increased cost of running a traditional church, or even the rise in therapeutic, personalist spiritual seeking. Additionally, transportation patterns, economic and market trends, as well as technological inventions from phone systems to the Internet all contribute to the success of this model of church. Whatever the configuration of factors, it is undoubtedly a combination of these and others that produced a reality where megachurches are now ubiquitous and play an increasingly significant role in shaping religious life. The contemporary American context is outgrowing a traditional understanding of church. As such, the megachurch phenomenon can be seen as a reshaping of local congregational forms to fit a new geographic, cultural, and religious context.

THE MEGA RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

The definition of a megachurch used here is any Protestant Christian congregation that has 2,000 or more average weekly attendees (both adults and children) at all services and locations. The number of these very large churches has increased dramatically in the last forty years. It is estimated that throughout much of the twentieth century there were no more than 10 to 20 very large churches at any given time. Something changed after

the World War II period. In the 1950s and 1960s, churches vied for having the world's largest Sunday school programs, with several dozen having more than 2,000 students.⁴ In 1958, Rex Humbard, among others, paved the way in part for the modern megachurch movement with his 5,000-seat domed church, prophetically named the Cathedral of Tomorrow. By 1970 approximately 50 such churches existed, growing to 150 by 1980, 310 in 1990, and at least 600 by 2000. The number doubled to 1,210 in 2005. This rapid growth had slowed somewhat as of 2009 with an estimate of 1,350 megachurches in the United States at that time.⁵

Success is a powerful marketing tool, and the megachurch phenomenon is successful in a culture where bigger is better. The largest U.S. megachurch, Lakewood Church of Houston, Texas, gathers in a converted sports arena that seats 16,000 and has more than 45,000 weekly participants. Three dozen megachurches in the United States have sanctuaries that hold 5,000 or more persons; several have a million square feet under roof, and a number own 300 acres of property. The typical megachurch, however, is considerably smaller, on average having 4,142 weekly attendees, seating for 1,800, and property of around 40 acres. It must be remembered that the smallest megachurch is mammoth compared to the vast majority of American churches. The median church in the United States has 75 regular participants in worship on Sunday mornings. Likewise, 94 percent of the nation's churches have attendance of 500 or fewer people.⁶ Yet, even with this high proportion of small churches, more than 50 percent of regular participants attend the largest 10 percent of churches. The top 20 percent of churches garner two-thirds of not just participants, but also income and full-time staff.⁷ Megachurches, which account for barely 0.3 percent of all religious organizations in the United States, are home to 5.5 million, nearly 10 percent of weekly church attendees. This remarkable concentration of people and resources in the country's largest churches marks as dramatic a change to the nation's religious landscape as it is culturally significant.

⁴ Elmer Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1969).

⁵ Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco, 2007), 6–7. Unless otherwise noted, all the facts and data about megachurches referenced in this chapter are from the author's (with the Leadership Network researcher Warren Bird) national studies of megachurches in 2000, 2005, and 2008, which are available at www.hartfordinstitute.org/megachurch/megachurches_research.html.

⁶ Marks Chaves, Mary Ellen Konieczny, Kraig Beyerlein, and Emily Barman, "The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 458–76.

⁷ Chaves, "All Creatures," 333.

These congregations are evident in most major cities. Currently, four megachurches exist for every one million persons in the country, whereas in 1990 it was one per four million people. Recent research has shown that nearly every major religious denomination in the country has considerably more large churches now than it did at the turn of the twentieth century.⁸ Although many of these are not of megachurch proportions, nevertheless, the move toward increasingly larger churches, whether due to an economy of scale or a desire for large institutional forms, is a dramatic change across Protestant religious traditions.

While the megachurch phenomenon is often defined exclusively in terms of size, it is better understood as a distinctive approach to congregational life. Megachurches combine practical, programmatic, and organizational characteristics that may have been directly shaped by doing worship on a grand scale and in a suburban, market-driven, technologically rich context. These characteristics, rather than size alone, make them different from their equally large counterparts in Catholicism or other faiths. While considerable diversity exists among the many megachurches in terms of message, theology, and style, nevertheless the appeal and structural characteristics of the phenomenon are quite similar. It is this common approach that marks them as a religious form tailor-made to fit a contemporary suburban reality.

A REGIONAL SUBURBAN DESTINATION

Large influential churches have claimed a prominent place at the center of public life since the founding of the colonies. Whether on the New England village green or the city center of a metropolitan area, dominant congregations shone their godly light on a profane society. Likewise, megachurches are present today at the center of contemporary community life – the suburbs and exurbs of sprawling metropolitan areas. This pattern, however, has evolved over time. Early megachurches flourished in urban industrial centers throughout the country but gradually concentrated in the suburban South as the phenomenon grew. By the mid-1990s two-thirds of megachurches were located within the Sunbelt, most of those in the southern region. Currently 80 percent of megachurches are located in suburban communities. The remaining 20 percent, although located within cities, have constituents who often travel from the suburbs and bring their cultural styles with them. This religious form continues to spread throughout the country as it follows the development of suburban sprawl around the most rapidly growing cities. The most predominant clusters are around the largest

⁸ *Ibid.*, 335.

sprawling metropolitan areas of Dallas, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston with significant groupings found in growing cities such as Tampa, Charlotte, Seattle, Minneapolis, Phoenix, Denver, and Austin.

Whether they are newly formed churches or intentionally transplanted congregations, megachurches are found in newer suburbs for good reasons. This placement is ideal because of an abundance of expansive tracts of undeveloped land, which are often less expensive and have fewer land use regulations attached. Additionally, suburbs contain growing concentrations of ideal megachurch clientele – middle-class, educated, consumer-oriented, uprooted younger families.⁹ More than half the nation's population lives in suburban areas and increasingly in regions of the country where a conservative Evangelical Protestant orientation has the greatest salience. Although mobility rates are declining in the United States, nevertheless, younger and more educated persons are still the most likely to move and settle in suburbs. Additionally, overall commuting time to work continues to increase in the nation. As a result, most suburban community dwellers are transplants and willingly commute for employment, shopping, and even faith.

Megachurches fit perfectly into this social context of suburbia where individualism and consumerism thrive, and popular media images and the Internet shape its cultural reality. An entrepreneurial pastor who plants a church in one of these areas can rapidly build a ministry equal to twenty or more average-sized churches. This new church can instantly dominate the new religious market. A megachurch can capture this suburban spiritual market before a denominational bureaucracy even considers planting a new church.

In keeping with this context, megachurches establish themselves along major highways and near the other inhabitants of the suburb – shopping malls, big-box retail stores, magnet schools, amusement park complexes, and college campuses. They become a regional destination just like these other entities. Their attendees often drive thirty to forty-five minutes from all parts of a city to a specific church. These churches draw from and reflect the makeup of an entire region far more than they do local neighborhoods or a single town's constituency. As such, many megachurches have a variety of economic and educational levels represented and are perhaps more racially diverse than any other congregational form in America.

Given this regional draw, the religious competition is considerable. Megachurch attendees pass countless other churches, often including several other megachurches, to arrive at their spiritual destination. In order to

⁹ Kimberly Karnes, Wayne McIntosh, Irwin L. Morris, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, "Mighty Fortresses: Explaining the Spatial Distribution of American Megachurches," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (2007): 261–8.

attract persons across this broad competitive market, these churches must consider their location, message, and identity in ways few smaller churches seldom do. Most megachurches excel at locational placement. Their prominence is intentional for both practical and symbolic reasons. They need to be found easily, with quick access from major highways, thus making them readily available to suburban commuters. Additionally, they want to proclaim symbolically that God is alive and well in soulless suburbia. So, too, a clear, well-defined vision and message are critical. The more distinct a church's identity and brand, the clearer the choice becomes among other options. As in the secular market-driven world, a unique product is easier to market. In turn, as numerous national studies have shown, a clear vision and sense of purpose attract more religious customers.¹⁰

"BIG BOX STORE" GENERIC EVANGELICALISM

The regional draw of most megachurches, which often includes a deemphasis of a denominational tradition, means that attendees have a diversity of religious backgrounds including not having participated in church for a long time. As such, many megachurches either explicitly or implicitly create seeker-friendly worship services to reach those who have given up on a specific form of traditional religion but still long for spiritual fulfillment. When these variables are combined, the resulting architectural and theological format is distinctively different within the megachurch.

The architectural style of this approach reflects the desire to remake the traditions or create new forms that are acceptable to a modern person who had soured on established religion. This impulse results in megachurch buildings that duplicate everyday secular structures such as office complexes, schools, or warehouses. This look is intentional, but it is often also driven by cost considerations, ease of construction, and the fact that most megachurches grow quite large very rapidly. A typical megachurch is a box-shaped, relatively nondescript facility with a semicircular or fan-shaped sanctuary. Inside this structure, a visitor encounters large lobbies with well-lighted signs, information booths, and often a mall-like courtyard that includes cafes and coffee shops. Their sanctuaries are usually spacious auditoriums, with comfortable theater seating, large stages, huge projection screens, state-of-the-art sound systems, and a minimum of religious symbols.

¹⁰ Kirk Hadaway, *Facts on Growth* (2006), shows this connection between a clear vision and congregational growth. <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/all/themes/factzen4/files/CongGrowth.pdf> (accessed 4 July 2009).

The boxlike form distinctively marks what is taking place within the megachurch as something other than “typical religion.” This form then can be seen as intentionally implying that megachurch religion is a break from tradition. It suggests a contemporary faith that is practical, relevant, and part and parcel of everyday suburban life. One comparison made by many commentators on this religious form is how mall-like they are. In fact, without signage, these structures could easily be mistaken for shopping malls. And much as in the malls of suburbia, there is little variance by region. Everywhere a suburbanite relocates, he or she can find a megachurch to call home.

Indeed, the worship space of a megachurch suggests that while God may be sought here, this God is a communal and performative rather than an inaccessible austere deity. The architectural form connects the community of worshipers to each other while also giving them an unobstructed and immediate encounter with the performance onstage, although mediated by the television cameras and huge projection screens. Megachurches provide reassurance for highly individualistic believers that they are not alone in their spiritual seeking; they are among thousands of like-minded Christians. In all these ways, the architectural style reshapes believers’ ideas of “church” even as they create new and different ways of being religious together.

This religious togetherness is of the Protestant Evangelical, conservative theological variety for nearly all megachurches. While some theological variation exists, over the past decade megachurches increasingly describe (two-thirds as of 2011) their theological approach as evangelical. This evangelicalism basically asserts an orthodox presentation of conservative Christianity, but seldom with specific denominational identifiers or symbolism of Pentecostal, Holiness, Baptist, or other specific religious heritages. It is a generic evangelical and functionally nondenominational theological approach. Yet this approach does not necessarily water down the tenets of the faith, since the ideal often preached is a high-cost version of commitment that includes regular attendance, biblical education, personal piety, tithing of a tenth of one’s income, and service to the church and community. Nevertheless, the assumption is that visitors and new attendees should come as they are – unbelievers and uncommitted. The leadership and longtime Christians accept and support this reality even as they attempt to school them in what it means to be a “fully functioning follower of Christ.” The approach of most megachurches is to insist constantly that all attendees participate, volunteer, and engage in a process of discipleship and education. But they are willing to accept that this may happen gradually as one becomes more involved in the life of the congregation.

CHARISMA BUILT – VOLUNTEER DRIVEN

Given the need for a distinctive visionary identity, it is not surprising that spiritual leadership is reconceptualized within megachurches. Most megachurches are led by male clergy who have considerable personal charisma and excel as spiritual entrepreneurs. They are often innovative risktakers who inspire the trust and admiration of those around them. In our 2008 study of twenty-five thousand attendees, the pastor ranked second to the church's worship style as the characteristic that most attracted people initially to the megachurch, and first in keeping them attracted over time. While these pastors have boards of elders or may espouse a team leadership approach, in most cases they are the singular visionary leaders of the church. Their primary task is to discern the church's spiritual direction, encapsulate it in a dynamic vision, and then offer engaging sermons that motivate attendees to participate in the embodiment of that vision. This situation can lead to an intense focus on and marketing of the senior pastor's success and visionary leadership which has the potential to create a "cult of personality" or at least cause difficulties with pastoral succession.

A large team of full-time paid employees – twenty-eight ministerial and thirty-one program staff persons on average – assists these primary leaders. These employees implement the distinct vision of the church, provide pastoral care, and manage the programs. Even in a charismatically led organization, these efforts are accomplished with bureaucratic efficiency. In a media-driven world, the message is also spread through marketing slogans, slick banners, brochures, and ad campaigns. Such media trappings are possible within the resource-rich megachurch. While the average-sized church struggles to pay its pastor and maintain the building, the annual budget of a typical megachurch in 2010 was \$6.5 million. Roughly half of this is spent on personnel costs, 20 percent on buildings and operations, 13 percent on missions, and the remaining 17 percent on programming and its support.

Nevertheless, even this income cannot buy enough of the staff required to support hundreds of church programs or provide pastoral care for thousands of congregants. Therefore, out of necessity, these churches must rely on a large percentage of attendees not just to participate, but also to share the leadership and pastoral care of the church. Our 2008 national study showed on average a megachurch had 320 volunteers (roughly one-tenth its attendance) giving ten or more hours a week to the church, and the parallel study of megachurch attendees found that 55 percent had volunteered in the past year, and a third did so at least monthly.

According to surveys and interviews, megachurch attendees are predominantly highly educated, individualistic, middle-class professionals

who are seeking spiritual meaning in their lives. They want to commit themselves to a vision greater than they are, but they also want it on their terms, in a way that fits their needs and utilizes their individual gifts and skills. They want to work with, enhance, and expand a church's vision they find meaningful. Megachurch leaders intentionally cultivate attendees' personal motivations through training and nurturance of their individual gifts and callings. The result is that more than two-thirds of attendees felt a great effort had been made to train them as leaders, and their gifts and skills were encouraged by staff to be used. New ministry efforts often arise from these persons' desires to express their intrinsic gifts and callings. This culture of empowerment places the actual ministry of a megachurch in the hands of the participants, not just those who are paid by the church. A shared leadership approach creates participants who are spiritually fulfilled, excited to be at church, and energized to tell their friends about their unique involvement with the church. As such, 87 percent of attendees had invited someone to church, with a quarter asking six or more persons in the past year.

WORSHIP AS ATTRACTIVE PERFORMANCE SPECTACLE

Worship in nearly all megachurches is contemporary, dynamic, and media-driven. Praise teams accompanied by electric guitars, drums, and even full orchestras lead the congregation through straightforward lyrics projected on video screens set to music that is readily learned without the need for hymnals. Announcements might take the form of "on the street" film clip interviews, followed by live reports from several young adults on a mission trip to Costa Rica. The pastor's sermon draws on the latest television programs or movie excerpts, also projected along with that week's scriptural references for all to see. The preaching is often humorous and practical, with the pastor mixing biblical stories, sports scores, and his own daily trials and tribulations in living out his faith. The service seldom presupposes any insider religious knowledge. Transitions between service moments are smooth and well rehearsed. The entire event is professional and polished and of a quality equal to that of most secular performances.

In many ways any worship ritual is theater. As the size of the congregation increases, this worship drama moves in part from participatory ritual to performance spectacle. This is a direct function of size as much as it is theological intentionality. It is nearly impossible to involve the entire congregation adequately when there are thousands rather than dozens of participants. Megachurches have distinctively shaped the worship experience into a highly professional, technologically enhanced performance that accommodates the space in which they worship. Such changes as projection

screens, image magnification, and complex sound systems are essential because of the increased size of the sanctuary. Additionally, the logistics of holding multiple services on Sunday morning or televising them, as roughly 30 percent do, requires a more regimented and well-timed service structure. It is easier to script a worship leader and small team of singers into a time slot than to speed up a choir or congregational hymn. Likewise, the service moves more quickly if associate pastors pray and scripture is flashed on the screen rather than hunted for in members' Bibles. Attendees follow along, respond to, and are engaged in the service, but in a more scripted, less participatory manner than they might be in a smaller church service. This does not necessarily make the worship meaningless or less powerful. Our study of attendees showed that megachurch worshipers were just as likely to have their spiritual needs met as those in other size churches. Likewise, megachurches consistently rate their services higher in spiritual vitality, joyfulness, and being a place where God's presence is felt than smaller churches do. Additionally, the less participatory experience of worship parallels nearly all other day-to-day media-rich activities of suburban inhabitants. It reflects the social forms most common to contemporary suburban life such as television watching, computer use, and Web surfing.

Within this social context, where cultural messages, whether economic, recreational, or educational, are professionally produced, technologically driven, and calculated to generate the most emotional impact, there could well be an increasingly innate need for the scripted but still intense spiritual excitement of mass worship gatherings like megachurches offer. The fast-paced, big-screen, and polished contemporary worship service of megachurches resonates far better with the daily lives most Americans lead than does the small-scale, slow-moving worship with centuries-old hymns, organ accompaniment, and archaic language that a traditional church's service offers. The megachurch style fits an American constituency that flocks to professional major league sporting events, theme park vacations, and rock concerts in massive arenas.

The professional worship spectacle and seeker orientation, combined with the intense evangelistic efforts of megachurch attendees, have turned the sanctuary into a mission field. The strategy for witnessing to the lost is to ask them to come along with you to an attractive performance, in ways similar to tent revivals or Billy Graham crusades. Given the diverse avenues into the life of a megachurch, visitors do not even have to enter its "front door," the worship service. Rather, visitors can encounter the church, and a life of faith, through the outreach or service projects, sports leagues or diet groups, parenting classes or book clubs, or a hundred other ways. Conversion is a soft sell as well. Salvation is seldom presented as a dramatic

transformative experience but rather is portrayed as an act of commitment followed by a gradual nurturing in the faith, a step-by-step turning one's life over to Christ and becoming increasingly involved in the church. As such, the explicit message in megachurches is that a one-time experience of conversion followed by church membership is insufficient. Likewise, consistent worship service attendance alone is not adequate Christian practice either. Rather much more is required of a person of faith. Involvement in a megachurch is assumed to include participation throughout the week in small group fellowship, educational activities, evangelistic outreach, ministry to others, and an active role in leadership. This ideal is continually reinforced, a goal that attendees data show that many more than half of those in megachurches come close to achieving.

READY-MADE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

The contemporary suburban context alters the programmatic shape and function of a megachurch. Church leaders understand that because of participants' transience and wide dispersal throughout a region, the lives of members may not overlap with each other except as a result of involvement in the church's services, small groups, and ministry programs. As such, megachurches explicitly and intentionally cultivate a feeling of community in numerous ways. The leadership attempts to recreate "the town" through the wide array of programs, activities, and opportunities. Small group participation and ministry involvement are strongly promoted to first-time visitors and new attendees. The clear message is that you are not truly a part of the church unless you are involved with its activities beyond worship. As countless attendees have admitted, the more one is involved, the smaller the church feels. By creating a holistic Christian community, a transient and highly mobile suburban family can quickly and easily find a network of like-minded friends, programs to be involved in, and a place to call home within the dislocative reality of sprawl city.

This effort is intentionally engineered through the creation of public places for interaction. Following the design of malls, megachurches often have expansive and inviting entry areas, courtyards, and garden settings to promote the informal interaction of relative strangers. These spaces include fountains, plantings, natural light, conversational spaces, free wifi, video screens, snack areas, and various literature and recruitment kiosks. The churches encourage milling around and even train members of a "hospitality team" to engage with persons and facilitate connections with the church and other attendees.

If the small groups, programs, and space configurations are insufficient to convey this small-town feeling, many megachurches also employ

wall murals portraying small-town settings and the rhetoric of “home,” “community,” and “family” throughout their literature. Additionally, locational references such as “Crossroads,” “Lakeview,” “Valley,” or “Hillside” are often used in the names of megachurches. It is not uncommon to hear church leadership proclaim, “We’re not a large church; we’re a small town.”¹¹

Customization of Religious Experience: A Tailor-Made Faith

Another key component of the megachurch approach is its use of a vast array of programs, ministries, and educational options. These churches have an extremely rich assortment of children, youth, and adult programs for personal and social growth as well as sports and entertainment opportunities within their facilities. They often provide gyms and personal fitness areas that may include pools, bowling alleys, game rooms, outdoor courts, and ball fields. Church leaders offer programs and ministries, usually housed in separate “family life centers,” related to every aspect of personal and interpersonal life, such as marriage development, child rearing, support groups, job skills, leadership development, and personal enrichment through hobbies, weight loss, education, and mission trips. Additionally, many have separate buildings in support of their outreach and social ministry components. Indeed, it is possible for many megachurches to be one-stop shops for a family to meet all their physical, emotional, familial, and interpersonal, as well as spiritual, needs. These activities also mean that megachurches need countless volunteers and must strongly emphasize lay involvement. Simultaneously, this wide array of activities provides the possibility to meet a diversity of personal needs, offer extensive opportunities for service, and provide countless outlets for a great variety of skills and talents.

The variety of programs and events to meet needs, ministries and activities to develop leadership, and service opportunities to use one’s gifts and skills, in addition to a number of diverse service times and worship formats, creates an involvement dynamic unparalleled in most smaller congregations. This plethora of choices and the flexibility it creates allow for multiple patterns of commitment and integration into the life of the church. As a result, individual involvement covers a remarkable spread from minimal involvement, that of a free-riding anonymous spectator, to persons volunteering more than forty hours a week and giving a third of their income to the church. Almost no two attendees engage in the services, programs, ministries, and classes of the megachurch in the exact same

¹¹ Patricia Leigh Brown, “Megachurches as Minitowns,” *New York Times*, 9 May 2002, section F, 1.

pattern. Additionally, the multiple choices within a megachurch allow for a renegotiation of commitment and involvement over time to meet changing needs as a person or family evolves throughout the life course.

As such, the megachurch approach offers attendees a choice of ways to be religious within a congregational setting. Rather than requiring attendees to conform to a predetermined involvement path of limited options, megachurches allow them to participate on their own terms. Megachurches offer the freedom to create a commitment matrix that best suits individualized spiritual desires. Participants can select and tailor their involvement in diverse programs and ministry options that best fit the needs and spiritual gifts of each family member. Not only is participation an individual's choice, but one's involvement and commitment can be customized to match time constraints, style and taste considerations, and personal social and spiritual needs. The leadership in many megachurches attempts to direct this individual freedom by continually encouraging participants to increase their involvement, deepen their faith, and further their commitment to live out that faith in service to the church and larger community. However, this message is nearly always predicated on the freedom and desires of the individual customer. That is just what a suburban consumer has come to expect.

MULTISITE CONGREGATIONS

The megachurch phenomenon is not only reshaping internal congregational dynamics, but also the organizational and structural characteristics of American church life. One such transformation is the growth strategy of dispersing a single congregation across multiple campuses. Many megachurches are "multisite" and hold worship services at locations across town, in other states, internationally, or even in cyberspace. A multisite church functions under the umbrella of a single name, a common vision and identity, with a unified budget, a consolidated central staff, and a solo senior leader. The typical multisite pattern is that each location has a campus pastor responsible for the spiritual care of that congregation. Likewise, each satellite has its own worship team and musicians, Christian education staff, small group structure, and hospitality team. Often the programmatic resources such as the worship plan for the week, materials for education classes, signage, and advertising are centrally created and shared among all the sites, as are many of the outreach and ministry efforts. Services are held as if the local branch were independent until the time for the sermon. The sermon itself is delivered by the senior pastor of the overall church or another leader, usually by video feed or recorded and played on DVD. Ideally, the sermon presentation avoids specific references that date the

event such as time, weather, or sports events, and particular locations, or the immediately present live audience.

This phenomenon has increased dramatically among the megachurches in the past decade. In part, this is due to technological advances, but it is also the result of rising construction costs and contentious land use battles over church expansions. In 2000, 22 percent of megachurches were multi-site; by a decade later, 37 percent of megachurches used this approach, with another 22 percent considering the option. Clearly the strategy has helped megachurches create larger congregations as well as avoid prolonged zoning battles with local government agencies, but it also is creating a radically different dynamic within the worship service and a revision of what constitutes a local church.

The satellite campuses allow the megachurch to be simultaneously large and small. Satellites often have smaller attendance but remain part of a very large church. Likewise, these campuses add new participants, ensuring that the overall church is successful and the brand ever-expanding. Megachurches with multiple sites have grown larger than single-site churches in the past five years without increasing the size of their primary worship space. This congregational approach accommodates a postmodern flattened and networked organizational style while also spreading its influence and growing its membership. It also facilitates the megachurch's entry into a virtual mission field. It is a minor step from a digital connection between branch campuses to having an Internet campus in a social networking reality for hypertext younger generations. The Internet is, after all, a central part of daily lives of most megachurch attendees.

CONGREGATION AS DENOMINATION

In an era when many of the nation's seminaries and denominations are struggling, megachurches have successfully replicated many of their functions at the local congregational level. They have created alternative connectional pathways to train religious leaders. A quarter of megachurches have formal Bible institutes, and more than half sponsor ministerial leadership conferences. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of these large churches have internship and residency programs to train potential staff and ministerial candidates. These informal on-the-job leadership programs educate many of the clergy employed in their own churches, as well as the clergy to lead their satellite locations and church plants.

For the past half-century, megachurches have been instrumental in planting new autonomous churches; however, this impetus is growing stronger and is beginning to reshape the religious landscape. Over the past decade, the percentage of megachurches starting new churches had grown

by 10 percent in eight years to 77 percent in 2008. Three of the most notable planting efforts (the Vineyard Fellowship, Calvary Chapel, and Dream Center movements) are responsible for more than a thousand new congregations in the past few decades. Interestingly, the megachurches with satellite campuses were also more likely to have planted churches than those with just a single campus.

These large congregations often turned to television and radio to generate income and spread their influence. This pattern has declined somewhat with roughly 20 percent involved in these media forms. Conversely, use of the Internet and Web for e-newsletters, twitters, blogs, and streaming video has grown dramatically. Many megachurches have shifted from more costly radio and TV media to Web-based media to broadcast their message globally for a fraction of the cost. These low-cost Internet distribution channels further enhance a megachurch's efforts at creating and making available music, programmatic resources, and training literature. Much of this worship and education material has been tremendously influential throughout the Christian world and is directly responsible for many of the contemporary worship trends.

Additionally, while most megachurches support national mission programs, increasingly they also heavily invest in their own homegrown, hands-on mission trips for their attendees and other churches. These churches further have begun to stress social ministry and community service programming and involvement both locally and globally. A recent survey found three-quarters of megachurches giving considerable programmatic emphasis to community service activities, and 58 percent said they explicitly invited new members to volunteer for service in the community.

Many high-profile megachurches, such as Willow Creek Community Church and Calvary Chapel, Anaheim, California, have a well-known quasi-denominational approach to organizing informal networks of pastors and associations of like-minded churches around them. Likewise, countless other megachurches sponsor similar informal associations, with many having their own structures of bishops and archbishops. These multitudes of networks provide resource, accountability, and fellowship venues for clergy throughout the nation and globally. These networks make extensive use of the Internet and have created global connections. Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, for instance, has created the Purpose Driven Network and the resource Web site Pastors.com as a global alliance of pastors from more than 150 countries and nearly every denominational tradition.

All these changes together suggest a possible shift that may well be taking place in the American religious institutional reality. In some sense megachurches are becoming *de facto* replacements for denominations and seminaries in that they are duplicating many of the functions

of these bureaucratic national bodies and organizations but at the local church level. Research over the past decade clearly shows megachurches are increasingly providing more varied resources for smaller churches, making these available globally through the Web, sponsoring pastors' training conferences, educating would-be clergy, organizing and carrying out missions and social programs both locally and internationally, engaging in church planting, and spinning off affiliated satellite locations that are flourishing under a popular and recognizable name brand. This pattern of congregation qua denomination may never fully supplant existing denominational structures, but it is a thriving alternative for more churches than just the nondenominational ones.

Learning from What Works

Nothing sells like success. The changes that megachurches have made to adapt worship to a large-scale congregational life and fit a new suburban and cultural context are highly successful in attracting people to religious services at a time when most other religious forms are struggling. This phenomenon continues to expand and garner tremendous attention and influence in the religious and secular world. Every week megachurches or their leaders figure prominently in the nation's newspapers, television stations, Internet Web sites, and blogs. Megachurch pastors are often called upon as influential religious leaders to represent faith to the nation, as several did during President Obama's 2009 inauguration ceremonies. Their books are often found on the *New York Times* best-seller list, most notably the megachurch pastor Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life*, which has garnered more than thirty million sales to date and is the best-selling hardcover nonfiction book in U.S. history. Additionally, clergy of all stripes and nationalities flock to megachurch Web sites, attend their conferences, join their networks, and buy their growth and evangelism programs. The result of this influence is that many congregations have begun to adopt the style and forms of the megachurch model, whether intentionally or unknowingly.

The megachurch model of worship is a religious expression that resonates with the lives of modern American suburbanites. Whether they have attended church recently or not, worship is user-friendly and spectator-oriented and is one in which they feel comfortable participating. The service is technologically sophisticated, professional, and fast-paced. The music is similar to what they might hear on a top-40 station throughout the week. In case they do not know the words to a song or where to find a scripture passage, these are conveniently projected on the 30-foot screens. The preaching is vibrant and relevant to the daily struggles faced by a young couple in modern suburbia. But they are also challenged and encouraged to mature as

Christians, to give, to invite their friends, and to live out their faith in service to others. And they can participate in the life of the church in ways they customize to be uniquely meaningful and fulfilling for them as individuals. But the intentional structures of intimacy and small groups also give them a place to fit in and a community to replicate the small town of generations past. Even the megachurch's physical configuration patterns the economic icon of the suburbs, the mall. The megachurch has embraced the spirit of capitalism and a market-driven approach symbolized by the mall, but so too has American society. Americans are consumers; they identify with brand names. The market defines human nature, and market forces are as much at work in the megachurch as they are in all expressions of faith.

Many criticisms have been leveled at both individual megachurches and the general approach as a whole. Much of this negative critique is entirely justified in relation to certain megachurches but not to the phenomenon generally. It is important to remember that while this essay has discussed the megachurch movement as a single phenomenon, the roughly 1,350 churches are extremely diverse and can vary widely in style and approach. A common accusation against megachurches is related to money. On average, salaries of these senior pastors range from \$150,000 to \$300,000 (in a budget of \$6.5 million); however, roughly 10 percent of pastors, and often the high-profile television preachers, draw outrageous incomes and flaunt their extravagant lifestyles. Not surprisingly, most of these clergy are the same ones who emphasize a prosperity gospel that claims that God rewards faithfulness materially as well as spiritually. Additionally, certain megachurch clergy have been accused of personal indiscretions and abuse of their authority and power. While the media scrutiny in these cases is intense, megachurch clergy are no more likely to exhibit moral failings than other pastors. Megachurches are also often accused of being bastions of right-wing Republicanism and being political power players in conservative moral causes. In part, this is a justified accusation. Megachurches are predominantly Republican-leaning and strongly supportive of conservative moral causes such as being pro-life and in favor of military intervention and opposed to gay marriage. Nevertheless, the vast majority of megachurches, as with all churches, are not engaged in political activities. No more than 30 percent of megachurches are hosting voter registrations or handing out voter guides, and just 10 percent have allowed politicians to speak at their church. Likewise, in the past some megachurches, in an effort to make Christian worship contemporary and relevant, have denigrated conventional forms of worship and the very traditions that formed their clergy and most of their participants. This pattern has shifted somewhat, with quite a few churches now attempting to rework traditional hymns and worship forms to have more relevance while also respecting the history of

this approach. Additionally in the 1980s and 1990s, megachurches were justly accused of caring only for their participants and ignoring the needs of local communities. However, this pattern has dramatically reversed in many contemporary megachurches. Most are now seriously engaged in local and global community outreach, with most spending between 10 and 20 percent of their annual budgets on social ministry and missions.

Although research findings answer many of these negative assessments of megachurches, numerous worrisome dynamics of the model remain to be better understood. Will a consumer-driven congregational life result in a least common denominator spirituality? Does an attractional model of worship produce passive and uncommitted spectators and a lack of maturity? What is gained or lost in terms of accountability or tradition with a deemphasis of denominational heritage, national hierarchical leadership, or centrally controlled mission efforts? Are technologically mediated, highly professionalized sermons that are digitally streamed to screens on remote branch campuses able to inspire, motivate, and form moral beings and enliven communities of faith? Do charismatically led religious groups increase the potential for abuse, betrayal of trust, cults of personality, and the eventual collapse of these churches? Time and further study may answer these questions. However, for good or ill, this model of religious organization is prominent and continually expanding as it exerts considerable influence on the American religious landscape. Because of its resonance with middle-class, suburban society, this approach can be seen as offering a window into the character and ideals of contemporary America.

The rapid proliferation and acceptance of the megachurch organizational form speak volumes about cultural assumptions that size equals success, even in relation to spiritual achievements. Likewise, it is interesting at a time when aspects of American society are becoming increasingly secular that the spiritual presence in the form of megachurches has super-sized accordingly. These congregations are obvious reminders in the rapidly growing secular centers of commerce and innovation that God is still present in a sizable and economically prosperous way. They show the power of the mass gathering and the continued draw of charismatic leaders. The presence of megachurches also highlights the increasing influence of technology and media in our world and the acceptance of a mediated digital image as reality. Most importantly, the megachurch model reinforces the fact that faith and religious forms are never as static as the ordained guardians of the cherished traditions would like us to believe or the majestic stone cathedrals, pipe organs, and stained glass artwork imply by their material presence. The expression of faith in religious communities and their organizational forms continue to evolve to meet the spiritual needs of a changing context.

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ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

JAMES M. O'TOOLE

On the afternoon of Sunday, 5 November 1989, three hundred Roman Catholic bishops from around the United States gathered in Baltimore for a Mass to celebrate the bicentennial of their Church. It had been almost exactly two hundred years before, to the day, that Pope Pius VI had appointed John Carroll, a former Jesuit and the scion of an old Maryland family, as the first Catholic bishop for the recently independent colonies, thereby establishing the institutional presence of this ancient church in the new nation. The Church and the republic were the same age: Carroll had become a bishop just a few months after George Washington had become president. The landmark Catholic anniversary was observed with an extensive program that ran over several days: historical symposia, special performances by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, an exhibit of treasures from Vatican museums in the city's Walters Art Gallery, and meetings with representatives of other faiths. The capstone of the commemoration was this special Mass, presided over by a Roman cardinal representing the current pope and conducted in the magnificent Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, built for Carroll by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, later the architect of the U.S. Capitol. Civic and political dignitaries filled the pews, together with Protestant ministers, Jewish rabbis, and parishioners. "The bicentennial," said the just-retired archbishop of Baltimore, "is an occasion where we can project in a positive way the mission of the church" – "without triumphalism," he felt compelled to add – "and recognize the contributions of the church to the people of the United States."¹ The mood of the day was at once solemn and festive, suitable for marking the progress of Catholicism in America over the preceding two centuries.

¹ "Catholic Hierarchy Marks 200 Years of U.S. Church," *Baltimore Sun*, 6 Nov. 1989; "Archdiocese Ready to Celebrate Its 200th Birthday," *Baltimore Catholic Review*, 18 Oct. 1989.

On the face of it, “progress” was the right word to describe the historical experience of the Church in the United States. From that single bishop and diocese in 1789, Catholicism in America had expanded steadily until, by 1989, it consisted of 181 dioceses, covering territories large and small and containing almost 20,000 local parishes. Lay Catholics numbered 55 million, roughly 22 percent of the American population, a level they had sustained throughout the better part of the twentieth century, making them the largest single religious denomination in the country. Fifty-three thousand priests and nearly 105,000 vowed religious sisters provided the personnel for what had become the most extensive private educational and social service system in the world. The United States had 230 Catholic colleges and universities, 1,300 Catholic high schools, and 8,300 local elementary schools, a network unmatched by any other faith and in some places rivaling the public systems for teaching and learning.² By almost any conventional measure, American Catholicism was successful and healthy as the twentieth century drew toward its close.

At the same time, a newspaper reported that participants in the bicentennial celebration were acutely aware of the “vexing problems” facing their Church. The number of priests in the country, while still impressive, was in the midst of a long, steady decline that had begun two decades earlier and would continue unabated thereafter. The high-water mark for the ranks of the Catholic clergy in America had been about 1970, with a little more than fifty-nine thousand men serving as ordained priests in the parishes and other institutions of the Church. By 1989, that number had already shrunk, and by the turn of the century it would be down to forty-six thousand, a drop of more than 20 percent from its peak. Moreover, the priests who remained were rapidly “graying,” their average age rising toward (and then past) sixty and with ever smaller numbers of seminarians studying to take their places. The decline in the ranks of religious sisters was even more dramatic. They had reached their historic high in the mid-1960s, numbering then almost 180,000; by the time of the bicentennial, that number had been reduced by 40 percent, with few young women joining their ranks to serve in Catholic schools, hospitals, and social service agencies. The Catholic population, by contrast, was still growing – up to sixty-two million by the year 2000, holding steady at just below one-quarter of the nation – and Catholicism was certainly faring better than many mainline Protestant churches. Between 1970 and the end of the century, the Catholic population would expand by almost 25 percent, while membership in the United Methodist Church was declining by one-fifth and in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. by more than one-third. Even so,

² *Official Catholic Directory*, 1989 (New York, 1989), foldout “General Summary.”

Catholic lay people increasingly lived in parishes without a resident pastor, and they sent their children to parish schools whose classrooms had no sister at the teacher's desk.³

An even more vexing problem for American Catholicism at the time of the bicentennial was a growing awareness of the sexual abuse of minors by some of the church's priests. A handful of cases, scattered around the country, had come to light, in which priests had taken advantage of their positions to engage in illegal (not to mention immoral and sinful) sexual contact with children and adolescents. At first, it had seemed possible to view each of these cases in isolation from the others, to see them as more exception than rule. They were thought merely the personal problems of particular priests, to be dealt with individually, rather than evidence of a larger pattern. Even so, the members of the hierarchy who gathered in Baltimore could not remain unaware of the issue, for as they marched into the basilica for their celebration, they were confronted by a protester, who asserted that he himself had been abused as a child in Hawaii thirty years before. "The problem of priests and child abuse is a serious one," declared a statement from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the administrative office of the American hierarchy, "but not a very common one."⁴

In the next few years, Catholic bishops and parishioners – indeed, the entire country – would become painfully aware of just how common the problem was. Enterprising journalists uncovered case after case of priests who had abused young members of their parishes repeatedly and over extended periods. Typically, when complaints reached the local bishop's office, an offender was sent to woefully inadequate psychological treatment or, worse, simply reassigned to a new parish, often without any warning that he might repeat his actions, as he almost invariably did. These scattered reports assumed epidemic proportions in 2002, when repeated instances of the pattern were exposed in Boston, leading eventually to the forced resignation of the city's cardinal archbishop and the revelation of similar offenses almost everywhere across the country. Civil and criminal prosecutions sent some of the offenders to jail (some were already dead) and resulted in the payment of billions of dollars to victims and their families; many such cases are still pending at this writing. A comprehensive study subsequently commissioned by the bishops' conference concluded that 4 percent of all Catholic priests active in the United States between 1950 and

³ All data have been taken from the statistical summaries included in the annual *Official Catholic Directory* (New York). See also Brian T. Froehle and Mary L. Gautier, *Catholicism USA: A Portrait of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY, 2000), table 1.3; and Richard A. Shoenherr and Lawrence A. Young, *Full Pews and Empty Altars: Demographics of the Priest Shortage in United States Catholic Dioceses* (Madison, WI, 1993).

⁴ "Catholic Hierarchy Marks 200 Years," 6 Nov. 1989.

the end of the century had been credibly accused of this kind of behavior. This rate was apparently no higher than the rate of child sexual abuse in the population at large, but the fact that priests were the perpetrators made the cases all the more horrifying. "Even one case is too many," a spokesman for the hierarchy finally said, truthfully if weakly. The American bishops adopted more rigorous procedures for the investigation and punishment of any priest charged with such behavior, but the disaffection many lay Catholics felt toward their Church's leadership in the aftermath of the whole business was both intense and persistent.⁵

As dramatic as these cases were, more subtle structural and demographic changes were also presenting challenges for Catholic leaders. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church had been a church of immigrants, with successive waves of new arrivals landing on American shores, fleeing famine, war, and social dislocation in the countries of Europe. Many faiths were represented in this massive migration, but large percentages of the immigrants had been Catholics – from Ireland and Germany in the 1840s, from Italy in the 1890s, from Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe after the turn of the century. The closing of the immigration doors by Congress in the 1920s seemed to signal that this chapter in American history had been permanently ended and that the story thereafter, for Catholics and non-Catholics alike, would be one of relentless assimilation into an undifferentiated American norm. Immigration reform legislation in the 1960s reopened the gates, however, and Catholics again figured prominently among those immigrating to the United States – not principally from Europe now, but from Central and South America, from Asia and the Pacific Rim, and from Africa. The Hispanic Catholic population was particularly noticeable in its impact: Cubans in Florida, Mexicans in Texas and California, Puerto Ricans in New York City, and Central Americans from several nations in northern Rust Belt cities. By the start of the new century, Hispanics constituted more than 20 percent of all American Catholics, and, although some were attracted to Pentecostal and other Protestant churches, their identification with Catholicism remained strong. One dramatic example illustrated the way in which these newer Catholic ethnic groups might replace older ones. Every year on Good Friday in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, once a center for the city's Polish Catholic community, the streets were the stage for a dramatic *via crucis*, an hours-long public

⁵ See Stephen J. Rossetti, *A Tragic Grace: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse* (Collegeville, PA, 1996); Paul R. Dokecki, *The Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis: Reform and Renewal in the Catholic Community* (Washington, DC, 2004); and National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002* (Washington, DC, 2004).

re-creation of the suffering path Jesus had walked to his death, attracting thousands of Spanish-speaking participants and viewers.⁶

The process by which one nationality of Catholics had replaced another in the churches of Pilsen had not been easy, and the tensions accompanying ethnic succession had surfaced in other American cities as well. Earlier ethnic populations had built churches where, as one Italian pastor told Boston's archbishop in the 1920s, "they can attend mass and understand just what is going on." Before the 1960s, the Mass and the sacraments were, of course, offered entirely in Latin, a language that was foreign to everybody. Even so, parishioners wanted to hear sermons in their own language. They wanted their children to learn that language in the parish school, and in confession they wanted to speak to their priest using the language in which they were most comfortable. These factors spurred the demand for so-called national parishes for distinct groups of non-English-speaking immigrants. In some cities, churches serving different ethnicities might occupy two or three corners of the same intersection, and these parishes became determinative markers of neighborhood identity. The benefits of such strong community ties were many, but they could also encourage a virulent insularity. Established ethnic groups often resisted "outsiders" who sought to occupy their turf. Milwaukee in the 1960s, for example, had been the scene of persistent tension and violence as white ethnic Catholics resisted African Americans' efforts to move into their neighborhoods, while in Boston in the 1970s it was largely Irish Catholics who led resistance to court-ordered desegregation of the city's public school system.⁷

As the population of American cities continued to change with the new immigration, the Catholic Church found itself by the end of the century facing a nagging practical problem: too much infrastructure in some places and too little in others. Second- and third-generation parishioners from the older ethnic churches had typically moved out of the urban core to the suburbs, leaving the churches where their grandparents had been married and their parents baptized largely empty on Sunday mornings. Hispanic and other recent immigrants took up some of their places, but bishops across the country had no choice but to close older, underutilized churches that were expensive to maintain or repair, in part so they could open new ones

⁶ Froehle and Gautier, *Catholicism USA*, 16–18, 55–7, and fig. 1.1; Karen Mary Davalos, "'The Real Way of Praying': The Via Crucis, Mexicano Sacred Space, and the Architecture of Domination," in Timothy Matovina and Gary Riebe-Estrella, eds., *Horizons of the Sacred: Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism* (Ithaca, NY, 2002), 41–68.

⁷ On this subject generally, see John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago, 1996); see also James M. O'Toole, "'The Newer Catholic Races': Ethnic Catholicism in Boston, 1920–1940," *New England Quarterly* 65 (Mar. 1992): 117–34; quotation from the Italian pastor is at 121–2.

elsewhere. The process could be an emotionally painful one. In some places, parishioners even occupied their church buildings, changing the locks and organizing round-the-clock vigils in the hope of preventing closure. The underlying problem was chronic, however, and it was only intensified by the declining numbers of priests and sisters available to staff those parishes. Dioceses everywhere undertook the closing of many parishes outright and the merger of others, contracting the Church's footprint on the landscape. The city of Pittsburgh, for example, had seventy-five Catholic parishes in 1990, but just forty-one in 2000. Older ethnic distinctions, once significant, now mattered less, and new realities were accommodated in the reconfiguration of local Catholic life. An Irish parish and a Polish parish in Pittsburgh's Strip District were combined under the compromise name Saint Patrick–Saint Stanislaus, while in the city's East End three other churches of different ethnicities were consolidated into Saint Charles Lwanga parish, named now for a Nigerian convert and martyr.⁸

Even as the Church was shrinking in the cities that had once constituted the American Catholic heartland, new parishes had to be opened in suburbs, exurbs, and regions of the country where growing populations demanded them, particularly in the states of the Sunbelt. In 2000, there were thirteen parishes within the city limits of Atlanta, for example, all but one of them opened before 1964. In the northeast suburbs of the metropolis, however, there were nine parishes, the oldest of them dating only from 1970, and in the northwest suburbs there were ten new churches, all but one built in the quarter-century after 1973. The same pattern could be seen in and around Houston. Between 1970 and the end of the century, the number of parishes in the city itself grew by a healthy one-third – the number in Toledo, Ohio, was shrinking in the same period by more than one-quarter – and church expansion in Houston's booming near-suburbs was keeping pace. The town of Katy, due west, had three parishes, all of them opened after 1965, and the town of Spring had four, all established since 1969; one of these had ten thousand parishioners on the membership roster, a congregation rivaling that of many nearby evangelical and non-denominational "megachurches."⁹

This simultaneous growth and decline also pointed to the more complex social profile of American Catholics by the beginning of the twenty-first century. Until the Second World War, theirs had been unmistakably a church of the working class. In the 1950s, an American cardinal had remarked casually that not a single one of his fellow bishops in the United

⁸ Catholic parishes are listed in *Pittsburgh Catholic Directory*, 2001 (Pittsburgh, 2001), B20–134.

⁹ Statistics compiled from the relevant diocesan Web sites and the listing of parishes in *Official Catholic Directory* for the appropriate years.

States was the child of parents who had gone to college. He may or may not have been correct in that assertion, but he had succinctly characterized the social standing of the families who filled the pews of Catholic churches every week. In the aftermath of the war, however, Catholics had begun to take advantage of the benefits offered by the G.I. Bill, flooding into colleges, both Catholic and secular, and emerging from them to take up positions in the white-collar labor force. Catholics were not alone in this, of course, but the progress they achieved was marked in its rapidity. A survey from the 1980s found that only Episcopalians and Presbyterians, traditionally the churches of the American Protestant elites in many parts of the country, had greater numbers in the highest income brackets. By the end of the century nearly one-third of all American Catholic adults had graduated from college, and another 13 percent had also attended graduate or professional schools. Increasingly, Catholic college students were members of third- and fourth-generation college-going families, thereby solidifying their place in the middle – in many cases, the upper-middle or above – class.¹⁰

Sociologically, American Catholicism had thus become two churches in one. The middle- and upper-class descendants of Irish, German, and Italian immigrants sat in church beside poor and working-class newer immigrants from Latin America or Southeast Asia. Social distinctions were not left entirely at the church door, but, in a reversal of the traditional formula, Sunday morning may actually have become a less segregated time than the rest of the week for many parishioners. Church leadership and personnel responded to this new diversity, particularly by learning and speaking the languages of immigrant newcomers as never before. A century earlier, it would have been unthinkable for an Irish priest to try to learn, for example, Lithuanian, so as to accommodate those among his parishioners who spoke that language: the cultural divide that accompanied the “mother tongue” was thought to be simply unbridgeable. But now, non-Hispanic priests and nuns routinely learned Spanish, and parishes everywhere became multilingual. With most services and sacraments now conducted in the languages of the people, facility in the several vernaculars had become all the more important. Every Sunday, one church in rapidly growing Houston, for instance, had three morning masses in English, another at noon in Spanish, and yet another at four o’clock in the afternoon in

¹⁰ George Gallup, Jr., and Jim Castelli, *The American Catholic People: Their Beliefs, Practices, and Values* (Garden City, NY, 1987), 1–9; William V. D’Antonio et al., *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (Kansas City, 1996), 10–15; Froehle and Gautier, *Catholicism USA*, 3–19. For the more recent continuation of these trends, see William V. D’Antonio et al., *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (Lanham, MD, 2007).

Vietnamese. Masses in Portuguese, Cambodian, Haitian Creole, and other tongues were now regular features of American Catholic parishes. Priests recruited from foreign countries, whose numbers fluctuated over time, also contributed to this ability to serve the religious needs of parishioners who were not English speakers.¹¹

Regardless of the languages they spoke, lay American Catholics had, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, become accustomed to playing active roles in their Church. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) had emphasized lay participation, and this was not limited to the prayers of the Mass. Lay people might also undertake some formal duties in the Church that had once been the exclusive purview of the ordained clergy or the vowed religious sisterhoods. Lay ministries of all kinds proliferated. In 1973, for example, the Church had authorized “extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist.” These were parishioners who, at the point in the Mass when Holy Communion was offered to the congregation, left their places and helped the priest distribute it. This was partly a response to practical considerations, given the declining number of priests. But the change was also a deliberate effort to involve laypeople in the spiritual and other works of the Church, and soon the number of lay ministers of all kinds in American Catholic parishes – musicians, directors of religious education, youth ministers, “bereavement ministers” (who helped conduct funerals), and others – was approaching that of the clergy. By the late 1990s, one study had identified almost thirty thousand laypeople (more than half the number of active priests) working at least twenty hours per week in some official capacity in American Catholic parishes. Seventy percent of these reported that they conducted prayer services in the absence of a priest; 58 percent had some designated role in Sunday Mass; and 41 percent visited sick parishioners at home or in the hospital. The work of the Church was now done as much by the laity as the clergy.¹²

The overwhelming majority (close to 80 percent) of these lay ministers were women, thereby altering the gender profile of those who had official parish responsibilities, but a new role specifically for men also emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Most Protestant churches had had deacons, with variously defined responsibilities, for centuries, but the office had been less important among Catholics. Traditionally, a Catholic seminarian was designated a deacon shortly before his ordination to the

¹¹ *The Catholic Directory, Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 2001* (Houston, 2001), 127. See also Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities* (Collegeville, PA, 2006).

¹² Philip J. Murnion, *New Parish Ministers: Laity and Religious on Parish Staffs* (New York, 1992); Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Lay Parish Ministry* (New York, 1999).

priesthood, giving him a period in which he could practice some of the specific pastoral tasks (preaching and visiting the sick, for instance) that he would subsequently perform as a priest. After Vatican II, however, these “transitional” deacons were joined by a body of “permanent” deacons who would never become priests and had no intention of doing so. Applicants for such positions were laymen who continued to work at their regular jobs – doctors, lawyers, policemen, electricians; their social profile was decidedly diverse – but who would also, after a period of study and what was called “formation,” undertake a number of church duties, including even some of the sacramental activity that had once been conducted only by priests. Deacons could baptize, officiate at marriages, and preside at burial services, and many worked as hospital or prison chaplains. They could not celebrate Mass (they could, however, preach at a Mass that was said by a priest), hear confessions, or anoint the dying. Even more significant, a deacon could be married, though if his wife died he could not subsequently remarry. By the end of the century, more than twelve thousand deacons were serving in American Catholic parishes. One in three parishes in the United States had at least one such deacon serving alongside the clergy, and many parishes had more than one. In the West and Sunbelt South, the number of Hispanic men who signed up to become deacons was especially noteworthy.¹³

Lay Catholics who undertook these ministries evinced a widespread desire to participate in the official work of their Church, and even those who disagreed with some of its teachings continued to identify strongly with their religion. These might want to change the Church in one way or another, but they maintained a loyalty to it nonetheless. This was perhaps most evident with a group called Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), organized in response to the sexual abuse crisis. At first simply an ad hoc assemblage of parishioners in a Boston suburb who met in their church’s basement, the group assumed a more formal organizational structure, rallying members under the slogan “Keep the Faith, Change the Church.” The phrase expressed their desire to remain Catholics, even as they grew increasingly critical of their bishops. Almost on a whim, the group called for a national convention of the laity, and on short notice they attracted four thousand Catholics from around the country to a day-long meeting, criticizing the hierarchy for its past response to the problem of abuse and demanding a more sustained effort to suspend offenders. Members of VOTF were overwhelmingly white, middle class, and middle-aged, and back home

¹³ *A National Study on the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Washington, DC, 1995); Owen Cummings, *Deacons and the Church* (New York, 2004); Froehle and Gautier, *Catholicism USA*, chap. 8, 141–9.

many of them exercised in their own parishes the very kind of lay ministries on which local churches had come to rely. Formal membership in the organization peaked early at about thirty thousand and fell off sharply thereafter, but a national office and annual meetings, together with active local branches around the country, ensured that an ongoing body of self-consciously “faithful” Catholics would continue sometimes to challenge their Church’s leadership.¹⁴

Disagreement with some clearly defined Church positions already had something of a history among American Catholics by the time of the sexual abuse crisis. This had been most clearly apparent shortly after the close of Vatican II in response to the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. In that document, Pope Paul VI had reasserted the traditional Catholic moral teaching that held as seriously sinful the use of so-called artificial means of contraception. The pope had intended his letter to reaffirm the larger Catholic understanding of marriage, and his language was philosophically nuanced and subtle. Reaction from American Catholics, however, was swift and almost uniformly negative. Poll after poll revealed that laypeople were not following his teachings on this subject, and Catholics quickly became indistinguishable from other Americans in their attitudes toward and their practice of birth control. Other examples of Catholic dissent were also apparent. In 1975, a national meeting had called for the ordination of women to the priesthood, and a small organization continued to press for this thereafter, even as Church officials in Rome rejected it as theologically out of the question. Similarly, local and national groups called Dignity worked to change the Church’s teaching on homosexuality and to work with gay and lesbian Catholics. Finally, Catholics for a Free Choice pressed for a change in the Church’s stance on abortion, particularly in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* ruling of 1973.¹⁵

Dissent from Church teaching was by no means confined to what might be considered the liberal side of the spectrum; dissident groups with a more conservative – they often used the word “integralist” – agenda also proliferated throughout the second half of the twentieth century. A small Catholic traditionalist movement had formed in the United States in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II, dedicated to opposing the changes in the liturgy of the Mass. Members were convinced that these had ruined both the aesthetics and the spiritual effectiveness of Catholic worship, and they pressed for a return to the use of Latin. Catholics United for the Faith was organized in

¹⁴ William D’Antonio and Anthony Pogorelc, *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* (New York, 2007).

¹⁵ Michele Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power* (New York, 1999); Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception: An American History* (Ithaca, NY, 2004).

1968, expressly to defend the papal teaching on contraception, while other groups with roots in Europe fought what they saw as a “Protestantizing” of Church theology. An organization called Communion and Liberation, originally an Italian youth group, denounced interpretations of the Church’s social teachings that seemed to lean toward Marxism. By far the best known among these conservative groups was Opus Dei (the work of God), first established in Spain in the 1930s. Structured as a religious order, the group reasserted some pre-Vatican II theological positions, and it required intense levels of commitment of its lay members, sometimes including celibacy. Secrecy about its structure, membership, and activities gave rise to suspicions about its true intent, though the group won papal approval and worked to counter representations of it as sinister.¹⁶

However much these groups, Left and Right, disagreed with each other and with Church leadership, their members all evinced a desire to remain Catholics. They might define the Church, its authority, and their relationship to it differently, but they held on tenaciously to their identity as Catholics. A large-scale poll, conducted in 2008, asked respondents to identify their religion and seemed to find some “leakage” among those who had been raised as Catholics but who no longer considered themselves as such. The sample apparently overcounted such people, however, and in any case continued immigration meant that the Catholic percentage of the American population remained stable at 24 percent, at or slightly above where it had been for nearly a century. In the end, perhaps the most remarkable result of the sexual abuse crisis was the number of Catholics who did *not* abandon the Church for another one or for none at all.¹⁷ More than anything else, it was the sacramental and devotional system of Catholicism, particularly as it had been remade after Vatican II, that continued to hold their loyalty.

The ways in which Catholics in the United States practiced their sacraments and other devotions had changed considerably over the centuries, but few changes were as dramatic as those that occurred in the half-century

¹⁶ William D. Dinges and James Hitchcock, “Roman Catholic Traditionalism and Activist Conservatism in the United States,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, 1991), 66–141; James A. Sullivan, “Catholics United for the Faith: Dissent and the Laity,” in Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), 107–37; John L. Allen, Jr., *Opus Dei: An Objective Look behind the Myths and Realities of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church* (New York, 2005).

¹⁷ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, available at pewforum.org (accessed June 2009). Thirty-one percent of the respondents said that they had been raised as Catholics, but since Catholics have never constituted more than 24 percent of the American population, according to census reports, that number seems high.

after the council. Rituals were translated into the vernacular and simplified in ways that were hard to miss. As early as 1970, the experience of going to Mass was radically different from what it had been in 1960. In the earlier year, the priest had stood with his back to the people, saying all the prayers in Latin in a voice he had been trained to use softly so that no one but the altar boys standing beside him could hear. Only the gospel passage of the day was read aloud in the congregation's language, after the priest had read it quietly to himself in Latin. Parishioners sitting in the pews said prayers of their own (frequently the rosary, an enduringly popular devotion to the Virgin Mary), or they simply daydreamed until the service was over; a few might try to follow the priest's movements in prayer books of their own, but most did not. In the aftermath of the liturgical reforms of the council, almost everything seemed different. A new altar was set up in the middle of the sanctuary, and the priest stood behind it facing the people. He spoke in a loud and distinct voice, and they were expected to recite some prayers with him. Churches were built with more modern architectural designs, and a greater variety of musical styles – contemporary “folk” music but also, perhaps even more noteworthy, such traditionally Protestant hymns as “Faith of Our Fathers” and “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” – were employed in worship services. Not all of this was welcomed by all Catholics, but the speed and the ease with which the changes were generally accepted seem remarkable in retrospect.¹⁸

American Catholics' practice of their sacraments underwent similarly dramatic change, and three of these show the process at work. The Eucharist was the centerpiece of every Catholic Mass, but throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most laypeople rarely received the sacrament. The Catholic theological understanding of the “real presence” of Christ in the elements of the Eucharist highlighted the gulf between the divine nature of God and the sinful nature of humankind, and Catholics were thus inclined to focus on their unworthiness to partake of communion. As a result, rates of regular communion by laypeople remained very low. A priest in turn-of-the-century Boston, for instance, had noted on one occasion that there were almost seven hundred people at an early Sunday Mass, but that no more than forty of them came forward for communion. Later Church officials worked at changing these attitudes and made sustained efforts to increase lay participation: the requirements for fasting before communion were progressively lessened, and the age of a child's first reception of communion was lowered to about seven in the hope of

¹⁸ James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 202–10.

instilling greater frequency as a lifelong habit. These had only minimal effect, however, and into the 1950s communion was for many Catholics a twice-yearly event – once on Christmas, once on Easter – even though they attended Mass every week.¹⁹

In the aftermath of Vatican II, however, the rate of reception of communion skyrocketed, up to 50 percent of Mass-goers by the middle 1970s and at 90 percent or above by the end of the century. American Catholics quickly acquired the habit of receiving communion every time they went to Mass, and most would have thought it strange not to do so. Moreover, the form in which laypeople received the sacrament also changed in ways that were fraught with subtle significance. The priest – or the lay eucharistic minister – now placed the communion host in recipients' hands, from which they picked it up and placed it in their own mouths. This was a simple enough change from the previous practice of placing it on the tongue, but it signaled a dramatic shift from an earlier understanding that demanded that, because the sacrament was so holy, it should never be touched by ordinary parishioners. Similarly, laypeople might now also share the wine of the communion cup, formerly forbidden to them. Critics charged that both changes reduced the reverence with which parishioners approached the Eucharist, but the newer accessibility of the sacrament had broad appeal to lay Catholics. These changed attitudes also had the unintended effect of undercutting some traditional distinctions between the clergy and the laity. If laypeople could touch the sacred elements and consume them in ways that had once been reserved only to priests, perhaps other distinctions between the clergy and the laity were less significant than previously thought.²⁰

In American Catholic practice, communion had always been linked to another of the Church's sacraments – confession, once officially known as the sacrament of penance, but renamed “reconciliation” after the council. Whereas rates of communion increased steadily throughout the last third of the twentieth century, rates at which laypeople went to confession plummeted. This change, too, occurred quickly. In 1965, the year of the final sessions of Vatican II, 38 percent of American Catholics reported that they were going to confession at least once a month. Parishes everywhere had constructed their schedules to accommodate large numbers of

¹⁹ Margaret M. McGuinness, “Let Us Go to the Altar: American Catholics and the Eucharist, 1926–1976,” *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Practice in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. James M. O'Toole (Ithaca, NY, 2004), 187–235.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, esp. 221. For other measures of frequent communion, see Andrew M. Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (New York, 1977), 127, and Greeley, *American Catholics since the Council: An Unauthorized Report* (Chicago, 1985), 51.

penitents, typically setting aside four or five hours every Saturday for this purpose, together with additional times during the week. In many places, confessions were even heard while Mass was being said. Priests became accustomed to hearing large numbers of confessions at a time. One pastor in New York in the early twentieth century seemed disappointed when, as he noted in his diary, he heard “only 88” at a sitting; on another occasion, he judged ninety confessions in an afternoon to be “less than usual.” Immediately after Vatican II, however, the practice of confession fell off dramatically. Fewer and fewer parishioners sought forgiveness in this way, and so it made little sense for priests to sit in confessional boxes, waiting for penitents who did not arrive. Parishes cut back their hours until, by the end of the century, most churches allotted only half an hour per week for this purpose. Polling data confirmed the decline. In 1975, a national survey discovered that the rate of monthly confession had fallen by more than half to only 17 percent, while the number of those who reported that they simply never went at all had risen to 38 percent. A later survey of “core Catholics” (identified as those who were most active in their parishes) found that one-quarter never confessed at all, while about one-third did so at most once a year.²¹

Several factors had contributed to this collapse of confession. The council’s urgings that laypeople take greater responsibility for their religious lives might have been expected to increase their disposition to seek the direct spiritual encounter of the confessional. Instead, it seems to have opened the door to a decision by many of them to give up going to confession as either too embarrassing (even when done anonymously) or no longer meaningful to them personally. Shifting attitudes toward the nature of sin also had a significant impact. Catholic preaching increasingly emphasized the collective, social dimensions of sin – offenses such as racism, damaging the environment, and unjust economic systems – but these were difficult to discuss in the traditional forms of confession. They might indeed be serious moral failings, but how could individual Catholics take their own personal share of responsibility for them in a brief whispered conversation with their confessor? Moreover, many Catholics apparently began to believe that it was the Eucharist that reconciled them with God just as effectively as (or perhaps even more effectively than) the separate procedure of confession. If they could achieve that spiritual goal through their increasing reception of communion, why did they need to submit to this other sacrament, which was always accompanied by a certain amount of dread? Church leaders sought ways to revive the practice, but these were largely unavailing. At

²¹ James M. O’Toole, “In the Court of Conscience: American Catholics and Confession, 1900–1975,” in O’Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion*, 131–85; quotations at 134.

this writing, confession has essentially disappeared as a regular aspect of American Catholic religious practice.

A third sacrament showed surprising vigor in the aftermath of Vatican II. This was the anointing of the sick, formerly known as extreme unction. Traditionally, such anointing had been administered only to those who were in immediate danger of death, and it was understood as offering final religious assistance to those who were soon to meet God in judgment. Laypeople internalized this understanding so fully that they put off calling for a priest to anoint a dying relative for as long as possible, sometimes until it was too late. The appearance of a priest at the bed of the dying, most Catholics feared, would be a sign that the family had given up all hope of recovery, and this in itself might simply frighten the patient into death. The council documents severed the link between anointing the dying and imminent death: the sacrament was no longer intended exclusively for conditions that were truly “extreme.” Pastoral practice in America (as elsewhere) changed almost overnight. Parishes instituted regular communal anointing services – sometimes free-standing liturgies, sometimes as a part of Mass – in which anyone with any affliction, physical or spiritual, might walk forward for the grace of the sacrament, regardless of the degree of danger. In the 1980s and after, as churches developed various forms of ministry to those who had human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), some parishes conducted special services for those afflicted in this way. Catholics might be anointed many times in the course of their lives, and the sacrament might be administered either privately or as part of a liturgical observance. In the space of only a few years, this sacrament had been almost entirely reimagined and reinvented in ways that appealed to American Catholics.²²

These and other devotional practices continued to serve as the points of contact between lay Catholics and the institution of the Church. Laypeople showed a persistent reluctance to give up on them, even in the midst of the many “vexing problems” that plagued their Church as an institution. No less than the members of other religious denominations, American Catholics continued to worry about how to transmit their faith and practice to subsequent generations, but the enduring size and reach of the Church seemed to indicate that that goal could be accomplished, however imperfectly. The sexual abuse crisis and the pressures of changing demographics had been successive shocks to their system, but Catholics showed a remarkable desire to persist in the face of these challenges.

²² James M. O’Toole, “Reinventing the Sacrament: American Catholics and Extreme Unction,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 16 (2009): 72–85.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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NEW TECHNOLOGIES

STEWART M. HOOVER

Religions exist through their mediation. Without symbols, signs, texts, practices, codes, and languages, religions could not be represented, shared, or understood. Certainly the means of their mediation vary widely across time and across cultures. It is significant of so-called primitive religions that they used rudimentary systems of communication, and of more modern religions that they use the modern media. This is of course to say that the mediation of religion is significant of its context in time or space, a point that seems banal, but at the same time is deeply significant. It means that the most basic terms of engagement with and by religion are terms that are generated outside the religion itself. To be known and expressed, religions may need to depend on logics that are cultural or social more than they are religious. Indeed, any religion – and any religious mediation – must be embedded in its cultural or social context almost by definition. The fact that these contexts are typified by particular methods and means of communication – and thus mediation – means that the practices and technologies of communication have always been essential to religion, and that changes in those technologies have at least the potential of bringing about changes in the nature of religion.

It has been commonplace in relation to Christianity to note the important effects that a shift in communication technology – the development of movable type printing – had on religion. While it is probably not correct to credit printing with encouraging the Reformation, it is clear that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation each carried the signature of printing as a technology and as a social force.¹ The emergence of printing as a commercial enterprise meant that a new force of knowledge production arose alongside the church and the state, and that this force came to vie with those sectors for authority and legitimacy in Early Modern Europe. The effects of

¹ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (New York, 1978), 71–159.

printing on religious authority were thus widely felt, as were its effects in the social arena, where it encouraged new forms of education directed at popular literacy, for example. It is also widely claimed to have led to new forms of and ideas about democratic discourse, now instantiated in Anglo-American traditions of press and politics. These three implications of change in media technology – authority, social uses, and democratic participation – persist in relation to the mediation of religion in the twenty-first century.

To understand the role of the new media of communication that have emerged in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to look back to the twentieth, during which the overall mediation of religion took on whole new forms and – more importantly – became increasingly obvious as a formative dimension of the nature of religions, religious meanings, and religious practices. Prior to that, religion and “the media” could be commonly taken to be separate spheres with little contradiction in relation to the experience of emergent religious publics.² The twentieth century, however, saw a breathtaking rush of developments in the means of communication, most of which had important implications for the way we think about religion.

Among these, the singular technologies were film, radio, and television, followed late in the century by the digital era, a matter we will return to later. As the dominant religious tradition in North America, Christianity was, of course, the most implicated by these developments. For most of the century, Protestantism was the dominant form of Christianity, and the Protestant establishment dominated culture, politics, and the arts.³ Thus, the relationship of media change to this establishment was important in both practical and conceptual terms. That is, as these new technologies gradually wove their way into North American life, they were expressed and felt first in the domestic sphere, where they gradually became commonplace, at least commonly known, but were also considered from a more formal perspective by clerical, educational, and cultural leaders.⁴

The story of the deployment of these new technologies in the culture across that century was, in fact, the story of almost contradictory modes of adoption on the domestic and clerical levels. As film, radio, and television became more widely available, they became more widely accepted in everyday, informal practice. While there were clearly important contexts of opposition and contestation (for example, a widespread Protestant mistrust of “entertainments,” at least early in the century), these media were

² Doug Underwood, *From Yabweh to Yahoo! The Religious Roots of the Secular Press* (Urbana, IL, 2002).

³ E. Digby Balzell, *Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York, 1964).

⁴ Michele Rosenthal, *Satan and Savior: American Protestants and the New Medium of Television* (Hampshire, UK, 2004).

remarkably successful in finding a place for themselves at the center of daily life and daily discourse. At the same time, formal religious and educational thought leaders had their doubts and expressed them. The very success of these media was greeted with suspicion in such circles, illustrating the extent to which the practice of media consumption is codified according to rather strict class and taste lines, a phenomenon that continues to this day. In brief, the theological and clerical establishments retain a consistent suspicion of the media and popular culture.

It can be argued that this suspicion is rooted both in class and taste attributes and in a direction that sees some portent in the presence of religion in these media. Simply put, religious leaders can fairly easily recognize that the modern media of communication have at least the potential to contest or to change religion. This potential is rooted in the fact that ubiquitous modern media are located in social and cultural space such that they can interpose their own symbols, values, practices, and conventions on meaning practice among their audiences. More importantly, the media deploy these resources in precisely the same spaces and toward the same concerns as where religions are active. These modern media can be said to inhabit the same significant locations in culture and society as described with reference to theater by classicists. From such a location, the media are in a position to frame and refine social and cultural discourse by providing both the languages and the vocabularies of belief, value, and action. Religion – and in particular, religious institutions and traditions – can be understandably concerned about this.

The media that evolved in the first half of the twentieth century thus set an emergent agenda of concern and critique in the religious sphere. At the same time, however, a broader set of concerns and issues in the relations between religion and media began to find their way into broader social, political, and cultural contexts. Scholarship addressing these concerns thus also began to emerge. Among these concerns was the evolution of new forms of mediated communication among Christian groups, movements, and interests. Most notable among these at midcentury were the expansion of media productions and ministries in the evangelical world and a newly prominent role for Catholicism on the national stage, particularly in the notable (and iconic) form of Bishop Fulton Sheen. For the evangelicals, the rising media prominence of Billy Graham and his various ministries achieved an influential cultural centrality. For Catholics, the fact that Sheen was able to develop a successful national prime-time television program became emblematic of their own ascendancy in American culture.

Scholarship today explores the question of whether the emergence of the media, particularly the electronic media, is a difference in kind from prior eras. Simply put, those who think about these matters wonder whether

there might be an important distinction to be made between the mere “mediation” of religion and a deeper and more profound transformation of religion brought about by its interaction with media. This latter view has more recently been labeled “mediatization theory.”⁵ As the thinking goes, all religions are, and always have been, mediated. Various media, from voice, to pictograms, to oral traditions, to rites and rituals, to print, are essential to the understanding, transmission, and practice of religion. This goes without saying. The more profound question is whether the increasing complexity and ubiquity of media and processes of mediation across both public and private realms, and the integration of media forms and practices ever more completely into the nooks and crannies of experience, behavior, and consciousness, might be fundamentally remaking the nature of religion?

Such an implication of the media was not so obvious in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. Religions, religious cultures, and religious leaders were able to see themselves in a place of centrality in culture and society. In the case of the United States, a Protestant establishment tended to define the position and prerogatives of religion in relation to private life and – more importantly – public culture. An emergent Catholic voice arose alongside Protestantism, and it is interesting to note that one way in which these two branches of Christianity achieved some contiguity was in relation to emergent media forms. This was obvious in the first instance with regard to their shared position of authority with regard to emergent forms of popular culture, most importantly, the film industry. Both Protestant and Catholic authorities began to see a challenge in the emergence of film and the need for them to assume a new kind of position in the culture, one that objectified the whole question of cultural influence and assumed that religions and religious leaders should have an opinion about what we now think of as popular culture.

Broadcasting posed a similar kind of problem. Radio was less open to question – and more unproblematically integrated into domestic life – but Christian leaders saw this as another new context or platform for action. The particular form that broadcasting took in the United States – essentially a commercial system with a public mandate – meant that broadcasters felt (and in the early years, in fact, were required to feel) a responsibility to include religion in their programming schedules. In Canada, broadcasting developed along a more European “public model” with more explicit mandates for religion. In both contexts, this meant that formal arrangements evolved between broadcast institutions and religions. And the religions involved were, understandably, the dominant and established ones.

⁵ S. Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change,” *Northern Lights* 6 (2008): 9–26.

This meant that by the 1960s North American Christianity, as represented by the central institutions of denominational Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church, had found a settled and privileged place at the center of North American broadcasting. In the United States, the mechanism that evolved for this was called “sustaining time,” by which it was meant that broadcasters were encouraged to provide free airtime for broadcasts with access provided to the leading Christian denominations. Centralized, established religion worked hand in hand with centralized, established broadcasting in an arrangement that can be argued to have had obvious benefits to both and to society in general, but at the same time it had important lacunae within it.

A leading problem with this system was that it was in a way so public and so prominent, and its exclusiveness became increasingly obvious in a North American context typified by great religious diversity and ferment. Judaism found a place at the table almost from the beginning, but by the 1960s other religious organizations and interests began to seek access to airtime. The fact that one of the most important emergent movements, evangelicalism, was in many ways defined by its interests in mass media-tion made it a particularly insistent critic of the situation. Billy Graham, the new form and face of evangelicalism was, after all, an important media figure. Evangelicalism’s roots were in fundamentalism, a movement that was itself a media phenomenon typified in the minds of the majority of North Americans by the ubiquitous “radio preacher.”

As Christian leaders and movements (and indeed, any religion) contemplated the modern media, they faced a dilemma. The media sphere is, by its definition, public and heterogeneous. This enforces certain standards, expectations, and subjectivities on those who wish to project religious symbols, values, or truth claims into it. There is a certain ambiguity at the core of this situation where religions wish, on the one hand, to project particularism, but, on the other hand, to speak to a broad and general audience. Indeed, the whole purpose of the evangelical impulse that is at the center of Christian witness is Christ’s Great Commission. Various forms of Christianity nuance this in various ways, of course, but the notion that Christians should, on some level, find ways of expressing a witness, either through works or through direct evangelism, lies beneath the ways most of them think about media.⁶

There is thus a trade-off for those who wish to use public media for religious ends. On the one hand, motivations for witness and evangelism are

⁶ Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago, 2004), 17–51; Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age* (London, 2008).

rooted in particularism. On the other hand, the public sphere resists such particularism, expecting more general and generally accessible approaches. The situation is made more complex by the fact that the evangelical impulse actually values expression in larger contexts, taking the word to those who really need it. The characteristics of mediated Christianity at midcentury tended toward central sources of media and centralized religious interests finding common purpose, but with questions about the threats and challenges media and mediation might pose beginning to emerge. Returning again to the question of whether the issue is mediation or mediatization, we can see the roots of the latter here. The rise of modern mass communication was substantially changing the bases on which Christianity was instantiated in American culture and society and substantially changing the rules of engagement for Christians and Christian groups.

A wave of technological change began washing over these arrangements in the 1970s. Tellingly, these changes coincided with the beginnings of a major restructuring of American religion. The previously dominant institutions began to decline in power and influence. The once-dominant denominations of the Protestant establishment began to account for less and less of the religious cultures of the United States and Canada. The influence of Catholicism also began to wane, though in different ways and along different lines. For both Catholicism and Protestantism, the decline in public influence was accompanied by parallel changes in the ways that individual adherents thought about themselves and their relationship to these traditions. While individuals seemed to retain some sense of loyalty to the local congregation, the hold that those congregations had as links to larger historical and doctrinal sources was beginning to fade, at least for Protestants.⁷ Across the board, this restructuring was rooted in a new sense of autonomy that individuals were increasingly feeling in relation to religious institutions, authorities, and labels. People were feeling increasingly free to redefine for themselves the nature of their religious identities and indeed were beginning to think in terms of identity and of identity's being a project of the self. From the 1960s onward, an ever-widening and deepening marketplace of religious choice evolved. Conservatives, of course, continued to hold rather firmly to the importance of discipline and tradition, but among the choices offered were, of course, new religious options that were themselves represented in this marketplace. The matters of choice and autonomy began to be determinative as the century wore on.⁸

⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ, 1990).

⁸ Stewart M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London, 2006), ch. 3.

These trends were, of course, embedded in longer-standing traditions and practices of American Christianity. Eighteenth-century frontier and later urban revivalism left Protestants, in particular, with a sense of religion as a kind of marketplace of choice. The notion that one could make his or her own decision about which form of faith to adopt became an important dimension of American religious culture, encouraged, of course, in the case of the United States by the constitutional traditions of governmental nonintervention in religion. Thus, when a variety of forces began to undermine the position of establishment Christianity, there were strong traditions of practice that supported individuals as they became more active in selecting those sources and contexts through which they might experience and express their faith.

It is important to note how important a role media played in all of these trends. The “democratic” religious marketplace had at its base practices of mediation that were central to the American experience of religious choice.⁹ The religious sensibilities that settled the North American continent had a strong evangelistic impulse, related no doubt to their sense that this new, virgin territory required particular attention in order to flourish as a fertile field for Christianity. Among the earliest publishing enterprises on the new continent were religious ones. Frontier evangelism depended to a great extent on the support of printed materials from Bibles to books to tracts.¹⁰ And by the turn of the twentieth century, the mediation by print had been joined by an increasing interest in the emerging electronic media. This means that the forces of religious change that began to be felt later in the century might well be described in part as the result of mediatization.

While the sands had begun to shift under the leading Christian institutions long before, a series of developments in the media sphere placed these changes, and anxieties about them, front and center. Two technological developments proved to be decisive. The first was the development of cable television as an alternative to terrestrial broadcasting. Whereas over-the-air broadcasting was limited in the number of channels it could offer by the relative scarcity of the broadcast spectrum, cable systems could provide a much larger number of channels. Cable had developed originally as a service to rural areas and other places that were difficult for broadcast television signals to reach, but as cable systems developed, their potential to compete with broadcasting led the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) (with the encouragement of broadcasters) to assert control over it and move to limit its development. The second technological development

⁹ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT, 1991).

¹⁰ David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America, 1790–1860* (New York, 2004).

was the geostationary communication satellite. Satellite transmission made long-distance transport of television signals much more efficient and much less costly than terrestrial services and, by lowering barriers to entry, made it feasible for new programming providers to envision national and even international programming services. These two developments, transmission by satellite and delivery to homes by cable, promised to reorganize the television market massively.¹¹

Federal restrictions on cable TV and on satellite transmission held well into the 1970s, when a series of court decisions forced the FCC to rethink its policy and to move to deregulate both services. The most significant decisions were court decisions in 1975 and 1979 that essentially removed most significant barriers to further expansion of cable television and its interconnection with satellite services. Home Box Office (HBO) was the pioneer in the commercial arena, the first service to use satellites to deliver an alternative and specialized channel to homes via cable, beginning in 1975.

Religion followed quickly. The emblematic example of the form was Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, which had begun in the early 1960s on ultra high frequency (UHF) television and by the mid-1970s had a small but significant network of stations and syndicated broadcasting outlets for its flagship program, *The 700 Club*. Access to satellite transmission meant that *The 700 Club* was soon joined by other nationally distributed program services (they tended to call themselves "networks," but this was a misnomer) such as Jim and Tammy Bakker's *The PTL Club* and the California-based Trinity Broadcasting Network. Access to satellite transmission and expanded distribution opportunities through cable and UHF also meant that longstanding evangelistic programs also soon became more available in more and more television markets. Among the most prominent of these were Robert Schuller's *Hour of Power* and weekly programs from Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Jimmy Swaggart, Jerry Falwell, and, in Canada, 100 *Huntley Street*.

There were interesting theological dimensions to these developments. Billy Graham represented the first wedge of what later came to be known as Neo-Evangelicalism, a movement that carefully moderated the stricter and more confrontational forms of conservative Protestantism that had been identified with fundamentalism. Graham and his cohort were not modernists, by any means, but they were intentionally moderate and intentionally moderated their messages in order to be more generally accessible in a broad, public media sphere.¹² Interestingly Graham never competed

¹¹ Stewart M. Hoover, *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church* (Newbury Park, CA, 1988).

¹² George Marsden, "Preachers of Paradox," in Mary Douglas and Steven Tipton, eds., *Religion and America: Spiritual Life in a Secular Age* (Boston, 1993).

with these new television-based ministries that came to be referred to as “televangelism,” preferring instead to limit his television presence to focused moments of urban revival.

Where Graham represented a moderate evangelicalism, the emergent television ministries of the 1970s represented a greater diversity of Christian conservatism. The dominant televangelism ministries were connected with the emergent charismatic movement within Protestantism, and some were longtime Pentecostals. Robertson and the Bakkers were examples of the former, Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart of the latter. Some, most notably Falwell, were more traditional fundamentalists, as was Humbard. Interestingly, among this group was one mainline Protestant pastor in good standing, Robert Schuller.

There were differences among the programs that fell along the lines of these theological differences. Schuller simply broadcast his Sunday services. Roberts began by televising his healing services, Swaggart his revivals, and Falwell his preaching services. Robertson, the Bakkers, and the Canadian David Mainse’s *Huntley Street* moved quickly to construct formats that broke the mold of revivalism and resembled a conventional television form: the talk show with features. And it was, in fact, these latter forms that attracted the most attention from religious and media leaders. That religious television had transformed itself to resemble secular television was widely noted and had important implications in both public and scholarly settings.¹³

For public discourse, the development of these more entertainment-oriented religious programs signaled the arrival of evangelicalism, however tenuous the link between them and the broader movement. It also raised the possibility that mediated religion could constitute an important challenge or even threat to conventional religion, and a good deal of the debate about these programs concerned their impact on local congregational membership and income. For scholars, these programs suggested an evolution of religious cultures and media culture toward one another, lowering a boundary that had enforced a rather strict separation between them before that time. The leaders of the religious establishment had embraced the media conditionally, but within an understanding that it is important to maintain a careful boundary between what kinds of ideas, symbols, and practices belong on which side of that line.¹⁴

In technological terms, what had happened was a process of capacity building within the media sphere that substantially lowered a range of barriers to entry. Not only did these new technologies make it less expensive to build so-called religious networks, they also encouraged a diversity

¹³ Hoover, *Mass Media Religion*, 77–91.

¹⁴ William F. Fore, *Mythmakers: Gospel, Culture and Media* (New York, 1990), ch. 2.

of sources and media forms to vie for access to this expanding inventory of time and audience attention. This also encouraged the development of new infrastructures in the religious world in the form of a variety of parachurch agencies and organizations. Most importantly, perhaps, these new platforms encouraged the development of new religious discourses and religious leaders, legitimated by their presence in this evolving media sphere. Similarly to Graham's rise in influence, these new leaders derived a good deal of their authority from the profile they achieved in the secular world. These new forms of religious media attracted a good deal of public attention and influence, even though it can be argued that their actual position in the evangelical marketplace of ideas was more limited than was assumed by those outside the movement. There is a kind of self-fulfillment in this development, where opinion leaders in the secular world who are themselves media figures assume that the mere presence in media confers power and influence regardless of actual underlying legitimacy.

Several of these new religious voices achieved important, even iconic status in subsequent years. Falwell and Robertson became important voices in American politics, each founding a lobbying and public-policy organization, and Robertson running for the presidency himself in 1988 as a "cable television executive," not as a television preacher – a measure of the newfound legitimacy made possible by his mediation. Other important figures, most notably Swaggart and the Bakkers, fell from grace in very public ways, serving to undermine some of the early flush of influence of these programs. But satellite-distributed religion on cable continues as a stable form, with these early evangelical channels being joined by many others, and by a smattering of nonevangelicals as well, most notably the Catholic "Eternal Word Television," a network founded by a Louisiana-based nun, Mother Angelica.

As was the case with the emergence of print in relation to religion, a significant dimension of technological change in the later twentieth century was the development of new infrastructures and markets. The new religious television spawned a wide range of other agencies and initiatives, from program suppliers to marketing and advertising firms, to publishing operations. Thus, this marked a major expansion in the commodification of religion, a feature of growing importance particularly in evangelicalism for most of the century. These new programs became important platforms for the marketing of new commodities including books, cassettes, videos, and personal-growth programs.¹⁵ The commodified religious marketplace thus became more and more centered on media and on mediated contexts outside the realm and the control of traditional religious institutions, authorities, and leaders.

¹⁵ Einstein, *Brands of Faith*, 16–36.

In this way, these media technologies coincided with, encouraged, and helped define an era of great change in American religion. Without ignoring the larger social forces involved, nonetheless, it is important to note the role that this mediated religious marketplace played in an era that saw the decline of the traditional Christian establishments, the rise of personal autonomy in faith exploration that came to be known as “seeking,” and the diversification and restructuring of American and Canadian congregational life.¹⁶ Independent and nondenominational congregations fit better with a marketplace and “seeker” religious sensibility, and these trends were realized in the emergence of the form of the nondenominational “megachurch” late in the century. It goes without saying that these latter institutions are directly rooted in this media-linked marketplace approach to religion. All are themselves heavily mediated and use media of a variety of forms. More importantly, their modes of practice in congregational life are extensively integrated into a religious media sphere that makes increasing sense to attendees who are, after all, embedded in a secular public sphere that is itself heavily mediated and increasingly commodified.

That the world of religion seemed to be invading the media sphere had important effects on the media themselves. The emergence of evangelical media, accompanied by the larger emergence of evangelicalism as a political force, served to undermine the longstanding notion of “secularization” that had long held sway in journalistic circles. Religion had apparently not abandoned the public sphere but now was back in it in new and newly influential ways. This meant that it became increasingly obvious to media planners that religion had a place in secular programming content. By the end of the century, some high-profile examples had appeared on U.S. television, most notably the successful network series *Touched by an Angel*. Secular cable channels also began offering more religion and religiously modulated programs, and religion became a more common theme in places such as cable television talk shows.

The relationship between religion and media thus entered the new century in a very different place than a century earlier. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Christianity and powerful national Christian institutions were at the center of religious life in North America. These institutions were, of course, mediated to a certain extent in that the media they produced in the form of books, tracts, and other printed materials were quite significant. However, the kind of activity we think of as “mediated religion” today existed at the margins in such forms as fundamentalist radio. These latter activities were considered by the established authorities with a good deal of suspicion.

¹⁶ Wade Clark Roof, *The Spiritual Marketplace* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

Suspensions and tensions continue, of course, but today the commodified sphere of mediated religion is more and more the context within which religion is understood, expressed, and experienced. Even those who remain loyal to traditional denominations and congregations increasingly access resources through various mediations of religion. What has changed, significantly, is the assumption that one of these contexts is necessarily preferable to the other. Scholars increasingly recognize that the question needs to be one of which needs and satisfactions are achieved in which context? Necessary or essential differences between them are breaking down, as individual Christians think of themselves, and of their relationship to media, public, and religious cultures, in new ways.¹⁷

The major dimensions of the situation with religion and media technology are thus becoming clear. First, there are important questions and issues related to the impact that media technological change has on religious institutions. Second, there is the issue of the impact that these media have on religious authorities of various kinds, including both clerical and scholarly authorities. Third, there is the issue of the evolving nature of individual Christians' sensibilities and actions in relation to their religious and spiritual lives, where their own "seeking" or "questing" defines practice. Fourth, there is the issue of the development of new infrastructures of parachurch organizations and activities, many of them extensively commodified. Finally, there is the issue of important changes in the nature of congregations and of congregational life.

This set of conditions is far from settled, however. While the new forms of religious television dominated much public attention for the 1980s and 1990s, an even more significant technological development was promising to introduce even greater changes. Electronic computers, using digital systems for storage and transmission, had been introduced in the 1960s, but ongoing research and development made them smaller and less expensive in a kind of inexorable process that moved them closer and closer to private life. Most of this change was opaque to the private lives of individuals, but the most significant developments were probably the introduction of digital switching (essentially the computerization of telephone transmission) in the 1970s and the introduction of the home computer in the 1980s. These twin developments, once they were integrated into the network of services we now know of as the Internet and World Wide Web, introduced digital technology into the home and have served to transform personal and private life.

The Internet and the Web also promised important possibilities for religion, and their impact on religion is still evolving. One of the most

¹⁷ Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age*, 200–3.

important questions in relation to the digital revolution in religion is whether this transformation will have similar effects on Christianity to those of the television revolution or whether another restructuring of interests and practices may be under way. Trends in television, as we have seen, served to bring new forms, interests, and authorities to bear in the emergent neoevangelical movement and played an important, though controversial, role in its development. The integration of television ministries and the later development of more extensive commercial networks of ministry, publicity, marketing, and other services are now essential to understanding contemporary evangelicalism.

The question in relation to the digital revolution in mediated religion is whether evangelicalism is so connected with older, analog forms of communication (television and the other screen media) that it may well not be so closely allied to these new media. This remains to be seen, obviously, but there are some indications worth considering. As many observers have noted, there is something about the process of mediated communication that makes sense to evangelicals. As instruments of transmission and persuasion, television, radio, and mass print publishing are intuitively consistent with the Great Commission. A second indicator is that evangelicals and nonevangelicals differ in their readiness to see technologies' capacities in such unproblematic ways. Evangelicals have always seemed to be more accepting of communication technologies as *prima facie* valid forms for religious expression and practice. And it is important to note that an important dimension of this is the very issue of commodification itself. Simply put, evangelicals and nonevangelicals tend to differ on whether materializing or commercializing religion is on its face troubling. While there is a good deal of variation within these categories, evangelicals seem to have less problem with commodification than nonevangelicals do.¹⁸

The digital realm also raises important questions about evangelical authority itself. In the era of evangelical television, authority remained an important issue. The established Christian scholarly and clerical authorities were challenged by new voices and new forms. This challenge extended to their institutional bases as well. The authority of these new evangelical leaders and ministries was linked to their position in this new media sphere. What happens, then, when this sphere itself is challenged by new forms of transmission and – most importantly – reception?

This latter question is important because the primary significance of the digital revolution is its dynamic shift from *production or transmission* to *reception* as the primary locus of action. In the era of dominant and

¹⁸ Quentin Schultze, "The Mythos of the Electronic Church," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4:3 (1987): 245–6.

centralized screen media, the emphasis is on the sources of symbols, messages, and programs and on the content of those programs. Digital media shift the dynamic balance toward the user and her practices of reception. This “interactivity” defines digital media, and it defines most of the developments of these media since their inception. The structure of the Internet and Web in fact enforces interactivity as the mode of practice and undermines other uses.¹⁹

The earliest user-oriented practices on the Internet, newsgroups and MUDs (multi-user dungeons), were wide-ranging in their content, but religious tastes and interests quickly found a place. These uses of digital media necessarily raised the central point of discussion and controversy surrounding digital religion: the question of community. Interactive digital media promise at least an approximation of community and interactivity through copresence with other – often anonymous – users in real time or serially in common experiences of conversation, gaming, simulation, or interaction. That this capacity of the online environment could be inhabited by users in new and fungible ways led to widespread claims by users of its authenticity as an experience of community and by critics of its superficiality and artificiality.

It goes without saying that these new modes of technological practice connected even further with the evolving dimensions of religion we have been discussing. That so much of the orientation and action around religion could take place online further integrates media into experiences of religion motivated by autonomy and seeking. Questions of the authenticity of these practices as commodified practices existing according to market (as opposed to theological) logics tend to fade. When the subjectivities enforced by digital practice seem so much to be about the individual and her own logics of meaning practice, there is a sense that this is all authentic practice in the first instance. When so much true interaction and communication can be felt online, it can almost seem to its users to be a self-regulating system of authentic community.

The very elasticity of the digital realm is another important element of its significance and an important condition of its use and experience. The interactivity of digital media has at its base the claim that it can support and encourage innovation and even entirely unique and solipsistic uses. This has meant that new religious forms, practices, and even institutions are imaginable online. And, as digital media have developed, an ever-expanding range of religious and religiously motivated uses has emerged.

¹⁹ Espen Aarseth, “We All Want to Change the World: The Ideology of Innovation in Digital Media,” in G. Liestol, A. Morrison, and T. Rasmussen, eds., *Digital Media Revisited* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 415–39.

This ludic quality of digital media connects in a particularly powerful way with the seeker or quester sensibility discussed earlier.

The earliest adopters of digital media were, for a variety of reasons, oriented both toward “seeking” in their sensibilities and toward newer, more elastic, and less traditional forms of American religion. Simply put, the earliest religious explorations online were done by users who were open to the volubility of religious exploration once identified as the “New Age” movement. This suggests that the development of digital religion will maintain the most significant trends unleashed by other changes in media technology in that it will further instantiate a contestation of religious tradition and authority in both institutional and clerical forms.²⁰

Digital audiences (and that is obviously an imperfect term to describe users of digital media) are encouraged to think about these media in new ways. First and foremost is their presumed interactivity. There are, of course, limits to this capacity related to technical and market factors, but personal computing does open up new opportunities for talking back and for talking with others, as was demonstrated by early experiments in discussion lists, newsgroups, and MUDs. This, in turn, encouraged a sensibility that stressed the positionality of individual users and their needs and interests. The second way digital media are different is in their ability to specialize and “narrowcast” to and for specific audiences and communities. There is no particular economic or practical reward to volume in digital media in that unit costs of production and distribution are essentially insensitive to volume. This means that digital media provide the opportunity for the development of extremely narrow “niche” audiences, markets, and interests. Third, the emerging digital media take interactivity further by inviting and encouraging users to be their own producers. Individuals are able to construct their own Web sites, discussion lists, online games, and interactive communities. For those who lack the technical skills or interests, there are increasing opportunities for users to produce their own media by such methods as “me-casting” on YouTube and constructing online identities through Facebook and MySpace. Fourth, digital media are becoming more and more central in relation to traditional centers of power and authority in society. The Obama election of 2008 was widely noted for its integration of digital media into the political process, capturing the capacities of the Internet discussed previously through techniques and strategies that have become known as “viral.”

Digital media have thus moved to the center of public discourse across a range of domains from commerce, to government, to politics, to religion. The particular implications of digital religion are becoming apparent as

²⁰ Brenda Brasher, *Give Me That On-Line Religion* (Piscataway, NJ, 2004).

more and more online practice emerges. It was once enough to think in terms of a rather simple division between two radically different visions of the media: those religious uses of digital media that were focused on the care and maintenance of existing religious organizations, networks, and practices, and those that saw the digital realm as a place for the construction of entirely new forms of organization, networking, and practice. This approach, called “religion online” by early observers of this scene, thought of the Internet and Web as particularly colorful and sophisticated extensions of existing media, providing new platforms for traditional functions and needs. Many churches moved quickly to construct Web sites that were nothing more than glorified versions of their prior print newsletters and other publications; others used the Web to distribute informational and other materials that had been sent out in other ways previously. The latter approach, known early on as “online religion,” tended to introduce ludic religious and spiritual exploration into the Internet and Web, with some proponents speculating that religions and spiritualities specific to the Web might be in the offing.²¹

In many ways, it is the very imagination unleashed by the digital revolution that is the most important factor here. The development of technologies that allow for such exploration is, of course, a necessary, but not a sufficient explanation of what has developed. American Christianity has made several turns in relation to media technological change, as we have seen, and this one is fundamentally connected with, and supportive of, an evolving Christian subjectivity of autonomy and reflexivity. Individuals today feel a great sense of responsibility and authority for their spiritual lives, as a greater sense of mastery of the social relations and structures of power and effectivity of modern life, than would have been the case in the past, and digital practice both accommodate and encourage this sensibility and subjectivity. And, there were features of the digital media as they emerged that connected well with needs and interests of individual Christians. Most notable, perhaps, was the capacity of these media to support and encourage the development of new communities and groups online, ones that in prior years would have been thought of as entirely too narrow, specialized, even solipsistic. There was a notable trend for online groups to form around specific areas of need or theological orientation, allowing widely dispersed individuals who might not have even known each other personally to find kindred spirits online. Such groups included those who were linked by a common spiritual or personal issue or concern

²¹ Christopher Helland, “Online Religion/Religion Online and Virtual Communitas,” in Jeffery K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan, eds., *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises* (New York, 2000).

and those who were linked by a common theological position or a critique of existing institutions or practices.²²

It has long been known that technological innovation flows along certain predictable patterns. Early adopters differ from those who accept a technology later. In the case of religion, it is generally the case that the earliest adopters have been more ludic and exploratory than those who have arrived later. This makes perfect sense in relation to the existence of a prior infrastructure of marketing and mission (paralleling arrangements in the secular world) that has begun to develop its own prepackaged products and services online, both making it less necessary for individuals to innovate and providing more accessible opportunities for the ever larger audiences that are turning to digital media. There is, at the same time, an implicit contradiction, or at least an ambiguity, as matters develop further. The subjectivity of autonomy and purpose that is at the root of digital production and use is contradicted by an increasing standardization and regularization of online practice resulting from the development of secondary online sources and sites that consolidate information, access, and action.

In any case, the range of religion online has expanded markedly since the dawn of the Internet era, when religion was found mostly in newsgroups, dedicated Listservs, and the protovirtual environments known as MUDs. The most significant development, perhaps, has been the massive growth in the number of sites that are simply the online outlets of existing groups and institutions. This has meant that as digital media are more widely diffused into social space, they have become more banal in terms of the religion and spirituality they represent.²³

There are a variety of ways of classifying online religion today, but beginning with the question of religious institutions and their relation to these media, it is possible to organize the marketplace in this way. There are, of course, those uses of digital media that support and extend institutions. These include denominational Web sites of various kinds that tend to be devoted to developing and controlling the public face of the institution, developing and connecting institutional relations in the public sphere, and connecting with members and other individuals. There are also a limited number of ecumenically oriented Web sites as well, though these tend to be more focused on specific issues such as social witness than on institutional maintenance. Finally, an increasing number of local congregations have their own Web sites and online activities. These range from rather

²² Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online* (New York, 2005).

²³ S. Hoover, L. S. Clark, and L. Rainie, *Faith Online: 64 Percent of Wired Americans Have Used the Internet for Spiritual or Religious Information* (7 Apr. 2004), Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved 8 Dec. 2009 from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2004/Faith-Online.aspx>.

straightforward extensions of congregational life, publicizing programs, schedules, and so on, to those congregations that have developed sophisticated interactive sites that provide a variety of services online.

Moving outward, as it were, from institutions, there are then a range of online activities that are linked to institutions but are not institutionally sponsored or approved. These include many sites, discussions, Facebook and Myspace pages, and virtual communities devoted to recovery from various religions to those devoted to other needs and interests of members of those movements. These institutionally identified online communities have at least the potential to influence significantly the IRL ("in real life") constitution of those same institutions. They derive a great deal of their energy from the sense that the digital realm allows members to express themselves and make solidarities well outside the control of religious authority, and from the sense that these sites allow new articulations of traditional and new sources of insight and meaning.

There are then those online religion sites that represent movements, ideas, and communities unrelated to existing institutions or congregations. These are one of the present-day expressions of what was once known as "online religion," where individuals think of the digital realm as an obvious and probative locus for the exploration of new religious possibilities outside the confines of existing religious symbols and claims. Many of these sites are explicitly Christian; others are, of course, explicitly Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. However, many more articulate Christian traditions in relation to other traditions and sources of insight.

As we have seen, developments in digital media have instantiated and extended the ongoing commercialization and commodification in religious media. It is thus not surprising that a wide range of Christian para-institutional organizations and service providers have a presence online. These include marketing firms, business consultants, publishers and producers of various kinds, and online information sources related to the practice of constructing religion online.

There are less mercenary examples of the para-institutional presence online. Both *Christianity Today* and the *Christian Century* have significant online presence through which they intend to extend the reach of their various publications. These are joined by many lesser-known publishers and publications, many of which are exploring ways to do entirely new things in the digital realm.

There are also a growing number of entirely commercial online religion sites devoted to religious journalism, information about religion, and individual religious or spiritual reflection or exploration. The pioneer in this area was Belief.net, which was founded in 1999 and later sold to Newscorp, owner of Fox television and the *Wall Street Journal*. Joined by sites such as

Patheos.com, these services provide information, forums, links, journalism about religion, and discussion boards, all supported by commercial advertising. They devote a good deal of attention to Christianity, of course, and may constitute an entirely new context for public discourse about religion. In addition, there are a variety of commercial and nonprofit blogs, online newsletters, and online discussion groups more devoted to religious critique and commentary.

Many purely commercial online operators also devote time and attention to religion. These include the online "Fox Faith" Web site through which the Fox studio promotes films and other materials to the religious community. More notable, perhaps, is the number of religious sites that have emerged in the commercial online virtual environment Second Life. There are, of course, a number of online attempts to construct virtual churches and communities online, but these have met with limited success. Not only have they had to contest received skepticism about the possibility of virtualizing religious communities, but they have also embodied a contradiction. The online environment enforces a subjectivity of exploration and individual autonomy, and that conflicts in a fundamental way with the interests of individuals who might wish to construct something that looks like a church online.

The digital revolution has not only spawned the more formal settings and formalized audience or user patterns of the Internet and World Wide Web, however. First, there are those online services that stress reflexivity, interactivity, and individualism. The social networking MySpace and Facebook are the most obvious examples of this. In each, individuals are encouraged to construct online identities, through which they can express faith and spiritual identities, and to construct online networks, which can be organized according to religious and spiritual logics. This is an area of increasing importance, but other media have emerged that are even more informal, elastic, and individualized. There is evidence that young people, in particular, are increasingly using instant messaging and cell phone texting as locations for religiously motivated exploration and expression. Twitter expands such solipsistic practice back toward more general networking.

Sites such as YouTube encourage individuals to turn the instrumental logic of the media around and to "me-cast." This provides important opportunities for such individuals to develop new audiences and markets, moving toward something that more represents the television broadcasting of an earlier era.

In all of this, it is important to note that some of the significant dynamics in the relationship between Christianity and the media endure. First and foremost is the question of religious authority. As we have noted, each

iteration of the development of the so-called new technologies we have discussed here has raised challenges to settled clerical, scholarly, and doctrinal authority. This struggle continues in the digital era, with some authorities trying to reassert prerogative in these contexts and channels. This may or may not be successful but does run up against logics of structure and practice that are in many ways inimical to authority.

Second, these new media invoke questions of authenticity and community. Digital media encourage us to think of our online practices in community terms, and we do find ourselves developing, or at least strengthening, networks of community there. To what extent this serves our received understandings of Christian community remains controversial.

Third, these new media enforce a sense of autonomy and reflexivity among individuals who, in the North American context, have been encouraged to think of Christian faith as something that is under their own control. This autonomy has always coincided with a developing marketplace of religious supply, and such markets are finding ever more exquisite expression and outreach in the digital realm.

Finally, these new media further instantiate the media sphere as one that is institutionally autonomous and to an extent independent of other spheres of modern life. Thus there are an inevitability and ubiquity to media as individuals and institutions encounter them in the context of daily public and private life. There is no doubt that they will continue to condition the experience and expression of Christianity in North America in new ways.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Campbell, Heidi. *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One in the Network*. New York, 2005.

Einstein, Mara. *Brands of Faith*. London, 2008.

Hendershot, Heather. *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture*. Chicago, 2004.

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READING RACE AND AMERICAN TELEVANGELISM

MARLA F. FREDERICK

Father, touch in this place. Heal in this place. . . . Don't anoint our masks. . . . Touch who we are, where we live. Touch the places in our lives that people don't even know exist. . . . Release an anointing in this place because somebody in this room is in trouble. Somebody's mama is in trouble. Somebody's wife is in trouble. Some mother of the church, some first lady is in trouble – encumbered with duties and responsibilities, functioning like a robot, but bleeding like a wounded dog. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus . . . that the spirit of the Lord God would permeate this place and resurrect our evangelists and our missionaries and our ministers. And, raise up mamas and raise up wives and raise up our sisters that have been slain by circumstances.

Bishop T. D. Jakes, Azusa Conference 1993, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Commanding women to be “loosed” from their burdens and circumstances of affliction in his nearly canonical sermon, “Woman Thou Art Loosed,” Bishop T. D. Jakes momentarily evoked for the listener in his opening prayer splintered images of women’s despair and possibilities for their redemption. In 1993 this sermon catapulted him to international fame. Ministering in an obscure auditorium on the campus of Oral Roberts University, Jakes would eventually package and redistribute this message, through the power of satellite broadcasting, to national and international audiences. What began as a small Pentecostal movement turned into a worldwide phenomenon.

In September 2001, *Time* magazine featured T. D. Jakes on its cover with the provocative caption, “Is This Man the Next Billy Graham?” With a subtitle expanding their question, they opined, “In Part 3 of our America’s Best series, we look at the galvanizing preacher T. D. Jakes and others who are *changing the way we see the world*” (italics mine). The striking image of Jakes – robust, bald, middle-aged, and black – in contrast to our iconic cultural image of Graham – tall, lanky, elderly, gray-haired, and white – was certainly meant to capture the attention of *Time*’s readership. In addition, the article seemed to interject a new set of questions into our arsenals

around religion in the twenty-first century. This new interjection would feature, among other things, the acknowledgment of race as central to our contemporary meanderings about the practice of faith. While the article falls quite short on these high expectations, settling instead on a cultural narrative about Jakes' oratorical proficiencies, the issues remain.

Unlike earlier scholarly as well as popular narratives of American religious media icons, which focused on presumably race-neutral white figures, any contemporary discussion of religious broadcasting and its star preachers must take up the complex question of race, not only because of the rise in African American and other nonwhite religious broadcasters, but also because of the dramatic growth in Christianity, particularly Pentecostalism, in the rest of the world. It is a move that shifts questions of race from the periphery to the center in our deliberations about religious broadcasting.

In this essay I explore the ways in which televangelism and scholarship on televangelism have shifted over the past forty years. While religious broadcasting in the late 1970s became known for its charismatic appeal, it was not simultaneously examined for its white normative positionality. I, therefore, focus on the dramatic changes in religious broadcasting since the days of Oral Roberts, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Pat Robertson, and Kenneth Hagin, pointing to some of the questions that might animate our discussions of religious broadcasting. While some traditional figures are still active and in many ways influential in religious broadcasting, they no longer (if ever they did) tell the full story of religious broadcasting and its appeal to throngs of people around the world. In order to explore this topic, I begin with a brief history of religious broadcasting, followed by a discussion of some important literature that has explicated the phenomenon, concluding with a discussion of new religious broadcasting personalities, literatures, and questions that are shaping the field.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TELEVANGELISM

With the signing of the first Radio Act in 1912 by President Taft, electronic broadcasting officially began.¹ Given the rapid expansion of radio, religious leaders, quick to recognize the power of broadcasting, soon acquired licenses and stations in order to spread the gospel. According to one estimate, "Of the six hundred stations operating in 1925, more than sixty were licensed to religious organizations."² Pioneers in religious radio

¹ Dennis N. Voskuil, "The Power of the Air," in *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*, ed. Quentin Schultze (Grand Rapids, MI, 1990), 70.

² *Ibid.*, 71.

broadcasting included regional favorites like R. R. Brown with his *Radio Chapel Service* broadcast from WOW in Omaha, Nebraska, and John Roach Stratton of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City.³ The renowned female evangelist Aimee Simple McPherson, according to one biographer, was “the foremost pioneer of religious broadcasting.”⁴ Her national appeal was comparable to that of popular radio broadcasters including Theodore Epp of *Back to the Bible*, Walter Maier of *The Lutheran Hour*, and Charles E. Fuller of *The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour*. These early trends, however, were truncated by the desire of Congress to establish stronger regulations on radio broadcasting. As a result, by 1933 fewer than thirty religious stations were able to remain on the air.⁵ Later legislative changes that correlated with the establishment of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the National Religious Broadcasters Association (NRB) helped to restore radio ministries and pave the way for the burgeoning market of television ministries.

The history of televangelism, an outgrowth of radio broadcasting, began with the official launching of religious television on Easter Sunday 1940, in New York City. The growth of evangelical television is a story of survival, revival, and transformation. While evangelical Protestantism had experienced unprecedented growth during the Great Awakening of the nineteenth century, the Scopes trial of the 1920s and the expansion of American modernism, along with the influx of Catholic immigrants, forced evangelicalism to the fringes of American culture.⁶ The Federal Council of Churches (later the National Council of Churches), an ecumenical organization representing more than twenty Protestant denominations, dominated religious airwaves with the expansion of radio in the 1920s. The emergence of religious television in the 1940s allowed the liberal Federal Council of Churches, along with other mainstream religious groups, to enjoy the benefits of technological progress and widespread popular and financial support.

The Communications Act of 1934 brought “indiscriminate use of the airwaves” to a halt, insisting that “broadcasters operate ‘in the public interest, convenience and necessity.’”⁷ This ruling secured the place of the Federal Council of Churches in broadcasting decisions. After that time,

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Daniel Mark Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York, 1993), 235.

⁵ Voskuil, “Power of the Air,” 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷ Kimberly A. Neuendorf, “The Public Trust versus the Almighty Dollar,” in Robert Abelman and Stewart M. Hoover, eds., *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions* (Norwood, NJ, 1990), 71–2.

religious television programs fell into two main groups: “sustaining-time programs, where the network or local station meets all or part of the costs of producing and broadcasting the program; and paid-time programs, where the broadcaster himself meets all the costs of producing and broadcasting the program, mainly by raising money from viewers.”⁸ The Federal Council of Churches enjoyed the lion’s share of the sustaining-time programs because major radio and television stations were comfortable with the “well-organized” and “predictable” efforts of mainstream churches. Other prominent groups, such as the U.S. Catholic Conference, the New York Board of Rabbis, and the Southern Baptist Convention, later enjoyed the perquisites of sustaining-time programs.⁹

Feeling shut out of broadcasting efforts, a group of evangelicals organized the NAE in 1942 and the NRB in 1944. The NRB was formed out of the NAE as a separate association charged with investigating the possibilities for evangelical broadcasting. In 1946 this group drew clear lines between it and the liberal Federal Council of Churches with a resolution sent to radio and television broadcasters throughout the country. “One misconception is that American Protestantism is one unified religious group, whereas in fact there are two distinct kinds of Protestants in America today. Each adheres to a particular form of teaching – the one the antithesis of the other. One group believes the Bible to be the infallible rule for belief and conduct whereas the other does not.”¹⁰

Among the early evangelical leaders in religious television broadcasting were men like Billy Graham with his *Hour of Decision*, as well as Rex Humbard and Oral Roberts. Humbard broadcast his *Cathedral of Tomorrow* show from Akron, Ohio, while Roberts began televising his healing crusades in 1954 under traveling tents. Roberts would eventually build his own television studio on the campus of Oral Roberts University, where his station served as a launching pad for talented new charismatic ministers. Pioneers like Graham, Humbard, and Roberts were contemporaries of other emerging television stars including Kathryn Kuhlman and Robert Schuller, who were geniuses at using the power of media technology to advance their ministries. Fulton Sheen was one of the early Catholic priests to gain a footing in religious media with his consistent presence on the radio program *The Catholic Hour* from 1930 to 1950. That initial show was followed by two subsequent television broadcasts, *Life Is Worth Living*

⁸ Peter Horsfield, *Religious Television: The American Experience* (New York, 1984), 40.

⁹ Stewart M. Hoover, *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church* (Newbury Park, CA, 1988), 51.

¹⁰ Voskuil, “Power of the Air,” 85–6. Voskuil cites James DeForest Murch, *Cooperation without Compromise: A History of the National Association of Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1956), 78–9.

from 1951 to 1957 and *The Fulton Sheen Program* from 1961 to 1968. The media scholar Razelle Frankl suggests that many early televangelists took cues from the performance techniques developed by urban revivalists like Billy Sunday. The capacity for visual storytelling, “exaggerated and strident preaching,” and dramatic imagery all contributed to the success of early television preachers.¹¹ While these media pioneers represented both evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, and in the case of Sheen, Roman Catholicism, they were each committed to more fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible, which for them differed from the message emerging from the Federal Council of Churches.

The NAE encouraged evangelicals to purchase airtime in furtherance of the gospel and as a means of asserting its version of biblical truth on the airwaves. Audience reception and support of paid-time religious television grew to a point where the Federal Communications Commission decided to reconsider the allotment of religion-based sustaining-time programs. In 1960 the Federal Communications Commission decided to end the distinction between sustaining-time and paid-time religious broadcasting, arguing that “there is no public interest basis” for such a distinction. Stations could both satisfy the public interest and earn a profit. This decision saw an effective decline in sustaining-time programming from 47 percent in 1959 to a mere 8 percent in 1977,¹² ushering in the new wave of paid-time religious programming and the beginning of the “electronic church” phenomenon. “By 1977, 92 percent of all programming was paid-time.”¹³

During the 1980s, according to the scholar Mimi White, “The most visible religious programs that emerged on American television in this context did not represent mainstream Protestant religious practice; instead they featured evangelical Protestantism with a Fundamentalist or Pentecostal emphasis. In this sense, the conservative religious doctrine purveyed by the programs embraces a popular, conservative religious subculture.”¹⁴ Over the years, this type of twenty-four-hour Christian programming, with its stunning array of religious producers, has multiplied in airtime, and its viewership now reaches from the United States to South America, Africa, Europe, and beyond.¹⁵ The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), founded in 1960 by Pat Robertson, and the Trinity Broadcasting Network

¹¹ Razelle Frankl, *Televangelism: The Marketing of Popular Religion* (Carbondale, IL, 1987), 55.

¹² Neuendorf, “Public Trust versus the Almighty Dollar,” 77.

¹³ Voskuil, “Power of the Air,” 90.

¹⁴ Mimi White, *Tele-advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992), 112.

¹⁵ Quentin Schultze, *Televangelism and American Culture: The Business of Popular Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1991), 55–6.

(TBN) of Paul and Jan Crouch, founded in 1973, have become world-famous satellite-transmitted networks.¹⁶ In addition to these networks, the Inspirational Channel (INSP), Daystar, and Black Entertainment Television (BET) have been host to a number of ministers who seek out technology as a means of sharing the gospel with the world. In recent years the development of black-owned sites of distribution such as Mercy and Truth Ministries in Jamaica and View Africa Network in South Africa has also influenced ways the messages of black religious producers make their way to the market.

TRADITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Given the rise of evangelical and charismatic programming, scholars in their analysis of the phenomena have often focused on the intersection of politics and religious media, especially given the simultaneous rise of the Christian Right in the 1980s during the presidential candidacies of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.¹⁷ In question has been the political influence of such men as Pat Robertson, who ran for president during the 1980s, and Jerry Falwell, who organized the Moral Majority, a conservative political action group, which has been credited by some for the national success of the Republican Party in the 1980s. These men and their organizations not only stuck to a “prolife and family values” campaign, but also championed Republican economic values related to deregulation and economic liberalism. Critiques of the political influence of religious broadcasting thus focused largely on the impact of white male evangelists on the American political scene.

In addition to exploring the political impact of these ministries, scholarship on televangelism questioned the moral impact of the medium on Christianity proper.¹⁸ In their edited volume, *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions*, Robert Abelman and Stewart M. Hoover included chapters that explored the financial, political, and social implications of religious

¹⁶ The now-defunct Praise the Lord (PTL) ministry of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker was the first satellite-transmitted religious broadcast to launch in the United States.

¹⁷ See Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann, *Prime Time Preachers: The Rising Power of Televangelism* (Reading, MA, 1981), and Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier* (New York, 1988).

¹⁸ Many other critiques of television ministries weigh the influence of materialism and American culture on the types of messages that are preached by religious personalities to the larger public. See Schultze, *Televangelism and American Culture*. See also Robert Abelman and Stewart M. Hoover, eds., *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions* (Norwood, NJ, 1990); and Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, 1985).

broadcasting. Some chapters with titles like “Heresies in Evangelical Fund Raising” and “The Selling of Salvation in the Electronic Church” made clear that poor handling of finances was central to some of the more controversial elements of religious broadcasting.¹⁹ Similarly, in his work *Televangelism and American Culture*, Quentin Schultze offered a piercing critique of the influence that religious media would have on the operations of church life, turning a faith culture into a corporate culture. The concerns in Schultze’s work emphasized the theological and ethical implications of religious broadcasting. Would ministries be driven to focus more on fund-raising than soul saving? Would religious broadcasters become celebrities ensconced in luxurious lifestyles and liberated from the institutions of accountability that govern more modest and denominationally affiliated ministries? Might these trends filter throughout the rest of Christianity, creating a self-centered, money-driven faith? Taking cues from Neil Postman’s 1984 critique of media, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Schultze pondered the impact of the entertainment demands of television on the sanctity of Christian worship.

In light of Schultze’s ethical concerns regarding the business of religion, scholars began to explore just what the relationship looks like between religion and the market. A number of books addressing the relationship between religious broadcasting and/or the branding of religious messages in the marketplace began to appear in and around 2000. Heather Hendershot’s *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* was one of the leading books to explore this intersection. It explores the boundaries between secular and sacred, examining the ways in which religious messages were being shaped for the consumption of mass audiences, often middle-class, mostly white. Hendershot argues that “over the course of the past thirty years Christian media have become not more secular but more ambiguous.”²⁰ This expansion of meanings in order to appeal to the masses is the transition in culture that intrigued media critics. In addition, books like Mara Einstein’s *Brands of Faith* and the edited volume produced by Lynn Schofield Clark, *Religion, Media and the Marketplace*, pondered these overlapping themes.²¹

¹⁹ See Carl F. H. Henry, “Heresies in Evangelical Fund Raising,” 165–72, and Robert Abelman “The Selling of Salvation in the Electronic Church,” 173–84, in Abelman and Hoover, eds., *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions*.

²⁰ Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago, 2004), 7.

²¹ Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age* (New York, 2008); Lynn Schofield Clark, ed., *Religion, Media and the Marketplace* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2007).

Beyond an examination of religious producers themselves, anthropologists such as Susan Harding have explored the experiences of both producers and consumers of televangelists' messages through detailed ethnographic research. In *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, Harding explores the subtle use of language in the construction of a fundamentalist subculture committed to saving America with the strategic power of electoral politics. Media scholars such as Stewart Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark have built upon audience analysis research in media studies and challenged reader/response theories. Instead of assuming a one-to-one correlation between what people watch and what people practice, edited volumes produced by Hoover and Clark explore the uses of religious media in communities as well as the types of communities that emerge from religious broadcasting.²² Taking cues from theoretical interventions like that presented by the literary scholar Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance*, as well as the personal interviews of anthropologists in their critiques of media and culture, Clark and Hoover began to spend time with individuals and families as they watched media, attempting to make sense of the spaces that the genre enabled. In one example, Clark and her coauthors, Stewart Hoover and Diane Alters, suggest that parents use the presence of respectable (at times religious) television shows in their homes in order to offset the potentially negative perceptions outsiders could develop if their children were seen watching television shows with morally questionable characters and scenarios. They argue that people's "accounts of the media" are important ways of understanding the role the media play in "how families negotiate a sense of identity collectively."²³ Good television, even religious television, in these instances offers the pretense of parental respectability. "Overall," they contend, "the accounts created in the interview context brought symbolic resources of the media into a negotiation that located people on larger maps of morality, religion, gender, social location, individual purpose, and other parameters of modern life."²⁴ Such analysis by scholars attempts to identify meaning in what the genre itself symbolizes for people and not necessarily in the ways people respond directly to it.

²² See Stewart Hoover, *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church* (Newbury Park, CA, 1988); Abelman and Hoover, *Religious Television*; Bobby Chris Alexander, *Televangelism Reconsidered: Ritual in the Search for Human Community* (Atlanta, 1994); and Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds., *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion and Culture* (New York, 2002). See also, Stewart M. Hoover, Lynn Schofield Clark, and Diane F. Alters, eds., *Media, Home and Family* (New York, 2004).

²³ Hoover, Clark, and Alters, *Media, Home and Family*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

RACE, CLASS, AND (INTER)NATIONAL SPACES

In addition to these more recent turns in the study of religious media, scholars have begun to engage in serious questions about race and religious broadcasting. While some of this work moves between an analysis of producers and an analysis of consumers, these scholars are trying to take into serious consideration the role of race in the development of certain African American televangelists as well as the implications of these evangelists' racial politics. Such scholars have focused primarily on the rise of African American religious broadcasters, taking to task earlier omissions in religious media studies surrounding the growing influence of persons of color as broadcasters.²⁵ They have taken exception to observations like those of Heather Hendershot, who proffers that "some Christian media may attempt to speak to nonwhite consumers, but for the most part, evangelical media are made by whites and for whites."²⁶ The ethicist Jonathan Walton makes a clear critique of such scholarly analyses in his book *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism*, insisting that "among media theorists and sociologists of religion who have examined religious broadcasting, it seems that African American religious broadcasters are victims of racial invisibility. Their stories have simply not been recognized."²⁷ Leveling this critique, he goes on to suggest that even scholars of African American religion have not focused their attention on black televangelists because "their [black televangelists'] stories have not been consistent with the culturally accepted character of the 'true black church.'"²⁸

Walton is well aware that long before televangelists such as T. D. Jakes assumed positions of influence within popular religious broadcasting, Rev. Frederick Eikerenkoetter (commonly referred to as Rev. Ike) was the most widely known African American minister to broadcast on television. Rev. Ike established the United Christian Evangelistic Association (UCEA) in 1962 and began broadcasting in the late 1960s. He claimed more than one million followers in 1972 and more than seven million by 1982. Rev. Ike continued to receive both praise and harsh criticism, especially from those who believed that his message of prosperity distorts the Christian gospel, until his death on 28 July 2009. Most studies of religious television,

²⁵ Marla Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley, 2003); Shayne Lee, *T. D. Jakes: America's New Preacher* (New York, 2005); Scott Billingsley, *It's a New Day: Race and Gender in the Modern Charismatic Movement* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2008); Jonathan Walton, *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism* (New York, 2009).

²⁶ Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus*, 10.

²⁷ Walton, *Watch This!* 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

however, fail to mention the pioneering work of Rev. Ike. Instead, historians focus primarily on white male television preachers of that era. The broader history of televangelism thus sets the stage for understanding the racial implications of the rise of religious broadcasting among African Americans. While battles ensued among white televangelists over the extent to which charismatic versus mainline and later charismatic versus evangelical forms of religious broadcasting should be on the air, African Americans struggled over what cultural image of black preaching and what message of black religion should inform African American communities.

Only recently have scholarly assessments of black televangelists and the communities that they influence begun to emerge. For example, in *T. D. Jakes: America's New Preacher*, the sociologist Shayne Lee offers a biographical narrative of the rise of the televangelist T. D. Jakes and what his story says about contemporary religion in America. He argues that Jakes' background as a poor black kid from West Virginia, whose parents struggled financially, inspired his commitment to upward mobility. His parents' strong work ethic and belief in entrepreneurialism, evidenced by his father's cleaning business and the garden from which his mother sold vegetables, instilled in him the belief that upward mobility was rooted in taking hold of the American dream and making it one's own. This upbringing, for Lee, informed Jakes' theological orientation toward a prosperity gospel that would eventually animate his sermons to those struggling on the margins of society.

Lee's account sets Jake's ministry against traditional understandings of the nature of the "black church" and a presumed naturalized discourse of social and political liberation. No longer beholden to the protest narratives of earlier liberation theologies, Jakes' message falls largely within the possibility discourses of New Thought, Word of Faith, and an individualism inspired by a Pentecostal reliance upon the spirit for personal transformation. According to Lee, "Jakes uses his personal testimony of transcending poverty to convince his listeners that they too can be blessed by God if they are faithful. He inspires his listeners to believe they are destined for greatness because God is working on their behalf to maximize their moments. Thus, Jakes uses theological principles that appeal to the American mentality of success and prosperity."²⁹ This analysis ties Jakes to a ministry focused on personal financial gain, rooted in an American ethos. Lee's exploration of Jakes situates him squarely within a prosperity theological tradition that obscures social, economic, and/or political problems that might account for the conditions of poverty in poor black communities. While Lee's work offers Jakes as an "American" preacher,

²⁹ Lee, *T. D. Jakes*, 113.

an alternative to earlier white normative understandings of what it might mean to be an “American” preacher, Lee does so without necessarily exploring the racial dynamics of his ascendancy and what this might tell us about race in America. If anything, the invisibility of a racial marker in his title – that is, the use of the term “America’s preacher,” as opposed to “Black America’s” new preacher – might signal outright a new type of racial politics that Jakes himself is embracing, a possible attempt to construct himself over and against his racial past (and present).

In *It’s A New Day: Race and Gender in the Modern Charismatic Movement*, Scott Billingsley moves into a discussion of race, class, and gender, without necessarily drawing attention to their intersectionality.³⁰ In his work he discusses the rise of both African American broadcasters as well as white female broadcasters. He offers biographical sketches of twentieth-century charismatic figures such as Rev. Frederick Eikerenkoetter and Kathryn Kuhlman and relates their experiences and struggles along race and gender lines to the concerns raised by contemporary ministers such as the African American evangelists T. D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, and Frederick Price, along with the white female evangelists Joyce Meyers and Paula White. Billingsley, for example, points to the ways in which these evangelists are often able to host large interracial gatherings in a post-civil rights era when many church communities are still largely segregated along racial lines. He probes the reasons behind these occurrences while problematizing the ongoing challenges of race in contemporary ministries. In exploring gender he ponders the ways in which gendered experiences of sexuality often inform the teaching messages of both pre- and postwar female evangelists. As a historian, however, in his work he pursues a biographical explication of the leaders’ lives that warrants a deeper sociological analysis.

Jonathan Walton offers just such a critique in his analysis of African American religious broadcasting, wrestling with its meaning for the contemporary experiences of blacks in the United States. In *Watch This!* Walton provides an ethical analysis of the work of the televangelists T. D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, and Eddie Long. He argues for a greater appreciation of the differences between black televangelists based upon their differing theologies, politics, and personal histories. In other words, they are not all simply “prosperity preachers,” or ministers advocating the same type of social and economic advancement strategies. One emerges from the Baptist tradition, another from oneness Pentecostalism, and another from the Word of Faith movement. These varying trajectories explain the ways in which they approach theology as well as politics. For Walton, this differentiation in itself requires that we look at the multiple and competing ways in which

³⁰ Scott Billingsley, *It’s a New Day*.

they engage their audiences. Openness to these distinctions illuminates the fact that black televangelists often offer differing analyses as to the causes and solutions for race, gender, and/or economic problems. At the same time, Walton suggests that three ideals ultimately link Jakes, Dollar, and Long and account partially for their success on television. “Regardless of their contrasting views, all seem to promote similar aims, objectives, and desires for the African American community – economic advancement, the minimizing of race, and Victorian ideals of family.”³¹ Walton’s analysis of these three African American televangelists offers important insight into how these figures have reshaped historical understandings of religious broadcasting and significantly influenced the discourse around African American theology and preaching.

Ethnographic research on religious broadcasting offers an examination of the impact of televangelism on local communities. In one section of *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*, I examine the ways in which African American women in a poor rural community in North Carolina interpret the messages of televangelists such as Jakes, Dollar, and Price. Women often find liberating messages in T. D. Jakes’ sermons about abuse and self-worth and a sense of peace from Creflo Dollar’s affirmations of prosperity. While the social and political conditions in which they find themselves belie the possibility of *community* liberation from poverty through the messages of Dollar, his message of personal empowerment and that of Jakes offer a much more personalized message of individual transformation than that traditionally attributed to the “black church.”³² In many ways their theologies indicate a growing trend in American popular religion toward self-actualization and personal empowerment and away from calls for social justice and communal uplift. At the same time, women read these ministries in complex ways that defy easy correlations between the sermon that is preached and the way in which women appropriate the messages. This is as true for women in the United States as it is for women abroad whose television networks help facilitate the global expansion of American religious broadcasting.

Focusing on the influence of these ministries in the United States, therefore, only taps into a limited understanding of T. D. Jakes and the greater pool of African American televangelists and American televangelists in general. These televangelists represent not simply an American phenomenon, but an international phenomenon. People as far away as Australia, Eastern

³¹ Walton, *Watch This!* 171.

³² Marla Frederick, *Between Sundays*. See also Frederick, “‘But It’s Bible’: African American Women and Televangelism,” in R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Savage, eds., *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora* (Baltimore, 2006).

Europe, Africa, and South America consume the mediated messages generated by African American televangelists. In 2008 T. D. Jakes held his first “MegaFest International” in Soweto, South Africa, because of the large number of international guests who originally began attending his MegaFest events in the United States, a conference that drew at its height more than 250,000 people to the Atlanta Convention Center. Between 6 October and 11 October 2008, however, nearly one thousand men and women from Dallas, Texas; Richmond, Virginia; Montgomery, Alabama; Brooklyn, New York; Seattle, Washington; and a host of other cities and towns across the United States boarded aircraft for a fifteen-hour journey to Johannesburg, South Africa, in order to participate in Jakes’ MegaFest International. During the open-air revival, sermons were offered by the American preachers Bishop T. D. Jakes, Pastor Paula White, and Bishop Noel Jones, as well as the Ghanaian bishop Mensa Otabil and the UK bishop John Francis. Vendors sold books, music, jewelry, clothes, and home décor in large exhibit halls in the rear of the arena while in adjoining buildings, volunteer doctors and nurses from T. D. Jakes’ ministry and local medical teams offered free health exams including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) screening.

The expansion of religious broadcasting to countries beyond the United States as well as an increase in religious broadcasting to the United States, raise questions about how people embedded in different social, political, and economic histories receive and appropriate these messages. Scholars examining the impact of globalization have long worried about the power of elite corporations and governments to overrun the economies, cultures, and ways of being of local communities. In talking to and investigating the life views of people on the ground as to the influence of religious broadcasting in their communities, it is important that scholars take seriously how everyday people understand and respond to the messages presented by religious broadcasters. For example, how do women in communities beyond the United States interpret the religious narratives of personal empowerment and self-actualization offered by ministers like Jakes? How are women employing the mediated messages about abuse, sexual violence, and sexual promiscuity that emanate from American female televangelists? Furthermore, how do people of African descent, who have traditionally been on the underside of economic development, construe logics of prosperity and the free market?

The rise in prosperity gospels, for example, according to the anthropologists John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, has occurred simultaneously with the rise in what they term “occult economies,” popular in South Africa. “These economies,” they suggest, “have two dimensions: a material aspect founded on the effort to conjure wealth – or to account for its

accumulation – by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason; and an ethical aspect grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the real or imagined production of value through such ‘magical’ means.”³³ Along with the dramatic rise in casinos around the world, these types of economies attempt to create wealth by means other than traditional reasoned methods because under “millennial capital,” global economic policies tend to transfer money to the wealthiest citizens as opposed to the poorest. Likening substitutive occult economies to evangelical prosperity gospels, the Comaroffs conclude that “these alchemic techniques defy reason in promising unnaturally large profits – to yield wealth without production, value without effort. Here, again, is the specter, the distinctive spirit, of neoliberal capitalism in its triumphal hour.”³⁴

According to the Comaroffs’ analysis, the decline of market opportunities of production in distressed communities has led to an increased opportunity for these alternative economies to proliferate. Scholarship on neoliberalism helps us understand some of the ways in which these new theologies take root in communities and expand through their own networks of production and distribution.³⁵ With the growing influence of prosperity theologies, a number of scholars have begun to wrestle with their implication for communities both within and outside the United States. How do we make sense of the proliferation of prosperity gospels among African American televangelists who have achieved wealth within an American system of capitalism, who then offer this same thesis of prosperity to persons of color outside the United States? What do we make of the rise of black televangelists from other countries who render these messages as viable to their own local constituencies? How are issues like race and class mediated throughout these discourses?

ONGOING RESEARCH

The work of prosperity gospels has been the subject of study in Nigeria, Ghana, Brazil, and in parts of Europe and Asia. From plush urban settings of Los Angeles, London, and Johannesburg, to the favelas and paradise isles of Brazil, viewers of charismatic religious broadcasting are giving

³³ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming,” in Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, eds., *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism* (Durham, NC, 2001), 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁵ See Marla Frederick, “Rags to Riches: Religion, Media, and the Performance of Wealth in a Neoliberal Age,” in *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*, ed. Carol Greenhouse (Philadelphia, 2009).

increasing attention to theologies that promise prosperity in this present age. In light of these emerging trends, scholars have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the history of these theologies and the ethical questions that they inspire. Anthropologists and sociologists concerned with the social import of these theologies have situated their studies within specific communities to explore how they influence people within particular historic, geographic, and political contexts.³⁶

Several of these studies examine the modernist impulse that prosperity theologies offer, often linking up-and-coming middle-class worshippers with a theology that facilitates and supports their movement into the middle class.³⁷ Rosalind Hackett, for example, suggests that in Nigeria while the prosperity gospels are an “obvious draw in hard times,” “the benefits of the organizational skills they impart and the social networks they offer should not be downplayed. Their progressive, goal-oriented attitudes attract the youth, disillusioned with the empty moral claims of their elders and leaders.”³⁸ Similarly, in Ghana, Marleen De Witte suggests that such ministries offer a “message of self-making cast in the rhetoric of individual success that seems to attract so many young people to the possibilities of modern capitalism.”³⁹ Attending relatively large churches with media ministries, praise and worship bands, and opportunities for mingling with other individuals aiming for middle-class life affirms for these young people the value of the prosperity gospel. As they stake their claims on their future, they are able to make the right connections and learn skills that might pay off for them in the future. In the United States, the sociologist Milmon Harrison describes the sense of open possibility that members of African American Word of Faith churches experience, in

³⁶ See Paul Gifford, “Ghana’s Charismatic Churches,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24:3 (1994): 241–65; David Maxwell, “‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty’: Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (1998): 350–73; Rosalind Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:3 (1998): 258–77; Daniel Jordan Smith, “‘The Arrow of God’: Pentecostalism, Inequality, and the Supernatural in South-Eastern Nigeria,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71:4 (2001): 587–613; Marleen De Witte, “Altar Media’s Living Word: Televised Charismatic Christianity in Ghana,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33:2 (2003): 172–202; Milmon Harrison, *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion* (New York, 2005); and Stephanie Mitchem, *Name It and Claim It! Prosperity Preaching in the Black Church* (Cleveland, 2007).

³⁷ Maxwell, “‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty’”; Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media”; DeWitte, “Altar Media’s Living Word”; Harrison, *Righteous Riches*.

³⁸ Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media,” 260.

³⁹ De Witte, “Altar Media’s Living Word,” 178.

contrast to their memberships in mainstream churches, which have historically focused on the problems and limitations of race in America.⁴⁰

While these studies point to the ways in which prosperity gospels act as welcomed facilitators of modernity, this is not always the case. Individuals and communities are at times hostile to the message of the prosperity gospel. The anthropologist Daniel Smith argues that in one instance the individualistic framework of the prosperity gospel in Nigeria came into conflict with the communalistic nature of Nigerian society. Such rampant individualism, he argues, sparked the Oweri riots, which resulted in the burning down of a large prosperity gospel church. Residents presumed the individualism and material showmanship of members of the prosperity-driven church were actually manifestations of the occult.⁴¹ These responses to prosperity narratives tell an intricate tale of how they have been successful or unsuccessful in gaining acceptance in poor communities.

As these messages are repeatedly simulcast through mediated forms of distribution, compressing time and space, we will continue to see dramatic changes in the nature of religious practice around the world. American-based theologies of prosperity, like theologies advocating female self-actualization, travel uninhibited by local media outlets. The increase in African American televangelists and the communities of color to which they often (though not exclusively) minister requires scholars to take seriously the expansion of religious broadcasting beyond earlier forms of analysis. Questions related to the marketing of religion as well as to the political consequences of religious broadcasting are sure to remain salient for years to come. At the same time, we must begin to include analyses that take seriously even the racialized component of how religious television is constructed, the audiences it speaks to, and the social outcomes that it advances. If nothing else, recent U.S. elections should inspire scholars to unsettle any comfortable ideals about who evangelicals and Pentecostals are, the access they have to the media, and the social outcomes that emerge from their full-time engagement with the public.

Race should no longer be an invisible element in our interpretations of religious broadcasting. Black, Asian, Latino, and white televangelists are dramatically reshaping religious discourses around the world, and communities of varying racial compositions are actively engaging these messages. Ongoing scholarship should explore the new and complex questions that emerge as the genre traverses the social, political, and economic histories and realities of these communities.

⁴⁰ Harrison, *Righteous Riches*, 25.

⁴¹ Smith, "Arrow of God." 587–9.

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RELIGION, GOVERNMENT, AND LAW IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES

DANIEL O. CONKLE

In two decisions of the 1940s, *Cantwell v. Connecticut*¹ and *Everson v. Board of Education*,² the Supreme Court foreshadowed the dominant role that it would play in defining the relationship between religion and government in the contemporary United States. In these cases, the court offered new and important interpretations of the religion clauses of the First Amendment (the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses), which state that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Notably, the court ruled that these provisions, applicable by their terms only to the federal government, henceforth would be applied to the states as well, including their local subdivisions. In so holding, the court concluded that the Fourteenth Amendment, which explicitly addresses the states, incorporated the First Amendment’s religion clauses by reference. The court earlier had ruled likewise concerning the First Amendment’s free speech provisions, meaning that after *Cantwell* and *Everson*, the states effectively were bound by the First Amendment no less than the federal government.

Cantwell, decided in 1940, protected the right of Jehovah’s Witnesses to promote their faith through sidewalk evangelism and soliciting in a heavily Roman Catholic neighborhood, even though their appeals included provocative and strongly worded attacks on the Catholic religion. Invalidating the Connecticut laws under which the defendants had been convicted, the Supreme Court cited not only the Free Exercise Clause, which specifically addresses religion, but also the Free Speech Clause, which more generally forbids laws that “abridg[e] the freedom of speech.” *Cantwell* set the stage for a series of Supreme Court decisions addressing questions of religious liberty, especially the liberty of religious minorities, in cases arising under the Free Exercise and Free Speech clauses.

¹ 310 U.S. 296 (1940).

² 330 U.S. 1 (1947).

In the court's 1947 decision in *Everson*, by contrast, the question was whether the government had gone too far in the other direction, promoting religion to the point of creating a forbidden establishment. The first of many modern cases challenging financial aid programs, *Everson* narrowly approved a state and local program of bus-fare reimbursement that extended to children attending Roman Catholic schools. Even so, in an often-quoted and influential passage, the court announced a broad and strongly separationist interpretation of the Establishment Clause:

Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. . . . No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. . . . In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect "a wall of separation between church and State."³

In a long line of subsequent decisions, the court has addressed Establishment Clause challenges in a variety of contexts. In some cases the court has vigorously enforced the "wall of separation," but in others it has permitted a considerable degree of church-state interaction.

More generally, the Supreme Court's interpretations of the First Amendment have evolved since the 1940s, in part as the result of broader religious, cultural, and political developments. In terms of religious controversies, the decade of the 1950s was relatively quiet for the court, as for the country. But beginning in the turbulent 1960s and continuing into the 1980s, the court tended toward aggressive interpretations of the religion clauses. It suggested that the religion clauses might demand a capacious definition of religion, one that encompasses nontheistic moral perspectives. Further, its interpretations offered distinctive constitutional protection to religious free exercise and often demanded a strict separation of church and state. More recently, by contrast, in the continuing wake of the Reagan revolution, the Supreme Court has embraced more conservative and restrained judicial sensibilities. As a result, it has adopted more relaxed constitutional standards. The court has continued to invalidate laws that discriminate against or in favor of religion, either in imposing regulatory burdens or in conferring tangible or symbolic benefits. But it increasingly has upheld nondiscriminatory laws that proceed "neutrally" with respect to religion, even if the laws, in actual operation, have the effect of imposing a burden or conferring a benefit on religious practices.

This essay begins by addressing the Supreme Court's attempts to provide a legal definition of religion. It then discusses the court's wavering

³ *Id.* at 15–16.

path of decisions confronting the issues introduced by *Cantwell* – the protection of religious exercise and religious speech – along with congressional attempts to “restore” religious freedom after the court repudiated earlier constitutional standards. Thereafter, the essay turns to Establishment Clause developments since *Everson*, including Supreme Court decisions concerning religion and the public schools, religious symbolism in other settings, and financial aid to religious schools and organizations. It also discusses related political developments, including, for example, the “Faith-Based Initiative” of President George W. Bush. In addressing these various issues, the essay focuses on the direct intersection of religion and law in the contemporary United States.⁴ In closing, however, the essay briefly highlights a range of broader legal and political developments and notes their relationship to the Supreme Court’s First Amendment rulings.

DEFINING “RELIGION”

In earlier historical periods, the “religion” of the religion clauses seemingly was confined to theistic perspectives, and Christianity in particular appeared to have special constitutional status. Religion entailed duties owed to God, nothing more and nothing less. And it was broadly understood that one form of theism, Christianity, was entitled to political and legal support as the favored, if not established, religion. Justice Joseph Story captured the general sentiment of the Founders: “that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state, so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions . . . would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation.”⁵ A similar understanding prevailed throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. In 1892, for example, on the basis of its survey of American law and culture, the Supreme Court declared that “this is a Christian nation.”⁶ And some forty years later, in 1931, the court officially reaffirmed that “we are a Christian people.”⁷

This sort of language soon disappeared from judicial opinions, however, and there was in the twentieth century a gradual but dramatic shift of

⁴ In so doing, the essay draws upon the author’s more comprehensive discussion and legal analysis in Daniel O. Conkle, *Constitutional Law: The Religion Clauses*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2009).

⁵ Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States*, 5th ed. (Boston, 1891), vol. 2 (1874), 630–1.

⁶ *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 457, 471 (1892).

⁷ *United States v. MacIntosh*, 283 U.S. 605, 625 (1931).

thinking. Driven by changing religious demographics and evolving values, the American understanding of religious liberty eventually rejected the idea of legally sanctioned Christian dominance, embracing instead a vigorous requirement of equality between and among all religions. Beyond that, the very concept of “religion” was tested by America’s ever-expanding religious and moral pluralism.

The Supreme Court confronted these new realities in a 1965 case, decided in the midst of the Vietnam War, which included a compulsory military draft. In *United States v. Seeger*,⁸ the court interpreted a statutory religious liberty provision that protected religious objectors to military service. In its definition of religion, the statute referred to “an individual’s belief in a relation to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation, but [not including] essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code.” To earlier generations, this definition would have seemed entirely unexceptional. But by 1965, it seemed problematic – so much so that the court saw fit to rewrite the definition, through creative statutory interpretation, to include any “sincere and meaningful” belief that “occupies a place in the life of its possessor parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God of one who clearly qualifies for the exemption.” So understood, the definition included the beliefs of a conscientious objector who acknowledged his skepticism concerning the existence of God but who claimed a “belief in and devotion to goodness and virtue for their own sakes, and a religious faith in a purely ethical creed.”⁹ Indeed, as the court held in a later decision, the definition likewise extended to an objector who had stricken the word “religious” from his application and who had declared that his beliefs were not religious in any conventional sense.¹⁰

Seeger’s expansive, “parallel position” understanding of religion – an understanding that included deeply held moral beliefs that were not theistic – reflected the rapidly changing character of religion in the United States. As the court observed, American religion was remarkably diverse by the 1960s, and it extended well beyond the traditional confines of Christianity and Judaism. Perhaps more important, modern theology was transforming certain strands of the traditional faiths themselves. The court noted, for example, that the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich had concluded that God should no longer be understood “as a projection ‘out there’ or beyond the skies but as the ground of our very being.” And “if that word [God] has not much meaning for you,” Tillich explained, “translate it, and

⁸ 380 U.S. 163 (1965).

⁹ *Id.* at 166.

¹⁰ *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970).

speak of the depths of your life, and the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation.”¹¹

Although influenced by constitutional considerations, *Seeger* rested on statutory, not constitutional, interpretation. In subsequent decisions, the Supreme Court sometimes has suggested that it might adopt a more narrow approach in other legal contexts. Indeed, an overly broad constitutional definition of religion could render religious liberty unmanageable in an era of pervasive government, because the government, of necessity, frequently burdens or favors particular moral perspectives. Even so, the *Seeger* definition may be fitting at least for the Free Exercise Clause, which addresses claims of constitutional protection for conscience-based acts or abstentions. In fact, since the 1960s we have seen an ever-increasing religious and moral diversity in the United States, both within and outside the traditional religious faiths, arguably making the court’s reasoning in *Seeger* even more compelling today.

In any event, it is quite clear that the religion clauses’ core protection of *belief and profession* (as opposed to conscience-driven acts or abstentions) today reaches well beyond its historical boundaries. In a 1985 decision, the court explained the contemporary scope of an individual’s “freedom to choose his own creed” and “his right to refrain from accepting the creed established by the majority.”

At one time it was thought that this right merely proscribed the preference of one Christian sect over another, but would not require equal respect for the conscience of the infidel, the atheist, or the adherent of a non-Christian faith such as Islam or Judaism. But when the underlying principle has been examined in the crucible of litigation, the Court has unambiguously concluded that the individual freedom of conscience protected by the First Amendment embraces the right to select any religious faith or none at all.¹²

As society changes, so does the law. And the realm of religion and conscience that is respected and valued in contemporary America – in law and society alike – plainly is not confined to past understandings.

FREE EXERCISE AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

From the 1960s to the present, the United States has witnessed the rise, fall, and partial reinstatement of vigorous legal protection for the free exercise of religion. Building upon its 1940 decision in *Cantwell*, the Supreme

¹¹ *Seeger*, 380 U.S. at 180, 187, quoting Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York, 1948), 57.

¹² *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 52–3 (1985).

Court interpreted the Free Exercise Clause expansively in the 1960s and 1970s. The court later changed course, and its 1990 decision in *Employment Division v. Smith*¹³ dramatically curtailed the constitutional protection that had previously been in place. Congress responded to *Smith* with a pair of important religious liberty statutes, thereby restoring a measure of protection for religiously motivated conduct. In addition, the Supreme Court itself, despite *Smith*, has increasingly protected one important component of religious freedom, religious *speech*, through its interpretations of the Free Speech Clause.

THE FREE EXERCISE CLAUSE

The Supreme Court's decisions interpreting the Free Exercise Clause typically have involved religion in a conventional and indisputable sense, obviating the need for definitional discussions of the sort undertaken in *Seeger*. Instead, the court generally has focused on the scope of the clause when it is conceded that religion is at stake. As already suggested, the contemporary Free Exercise Clause protects, at a minimum, the freedom to believe or disbelieve, and to profess or not, as one sees fit. Accordingly, religious tests or oaths cannot be required for state officeholders, just as they are banned at the federal level by the explicit command of Article VI of the original Constitution. As the court explained in its 1961 decision in *Torcaso v. Watkins*,¹⁴ "neither a State nor the Federal Government can constitutionally force a person 'to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion.'"¹⁵ This much today is uncontested and uncontroversial. But what about religious conduct, that is, religiously motivated acts or abstentions going beyond mere profession? Is such conduct protected by the Free Exercise Clause even in the face of legal prohibitions or restrictions? This has been the main point of contention in contemporary debates concerning the clause. It is a question of fundamental importance in our increasingly pluralistic society, especially for religious minorities whose practices may be deliberately or inadvertently impaired by the law, which tends to reflect conventional, majoritarian sentiments.

In early cases, the Supreme Court suggested that the Free Exercise Clause offers no protection for religious conduct, apart from religious profession or speech. Thus, in its 1879 decision in *Reynolds v. United States*,¹⁶ the court held that the clause did not protect the Mormon practice of polygamy.

¹³ 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

¹⁴ 367 U.S. 488 (1961).

¹⁵ *Id.* at 495.

¹⁶ 98 U.S. 145 (1879).

"Laws are made for the government of actions," the court wrote, "and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices," lest "every citizen . . . become a law unto himself."¹⁷ In the 1960s, by contrast, the Supreme Court rejected this restrictive approach and interpreted the Free Exercise Clause to protect religious conduct, that is, acts or abstentions that are sincerely motivated by religious beliefs. The court recognized that religious conduct, unlike mere belief, cannot be absolutely protected, but it ruled that laws substantially burdening religious conduct would be declared unconstitutional unless they were found to serve sufficiently important or (in constitutional parlance) "compelling" governmental interests.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, the Free Exercise Clause offered protection not only from laws that targeted religious conduct for discriminatory treatment, but also from nondiscriminatory laws of general applicability. If the government could not justify the application of a nondiscriminatory law to religious conduct, an exemption from the law was constitutionally required. This analysis extended not only to laws that made religious conduct illegal, but also to laws that imposed more indirect burdens, burdens that discouraged religious conduct by making it difficult or costly.

The Supreme Court first embraced this expansive interpretation in 1963, in the seminal case of *Sherbert v. Verner*.¹⁸ South Carolina law made unemployment compensation available only to those who would accept Saturday employment, but the court ruled that the Free Exercise Clause demanded an exemption for a Seventh-Day Adventist. Although the law did not make her religious practice illegal, the court found that it exerted unmistakable pressure on the exercise of religion by offering the claimant a financial incentive to violate her Sabbath. The state contended that it had a "compelling" interest in avoiding fraudulent religious claims, but the court ruled that this did not justify a categorical ban on religious exemptions, even for claimants who were undeniably sincere.

In 1972, the Supreme Court issued another important ruling, protecting Old Order Amish from the operation of a compulsory education law that required parents to send their children to school until the age of sixteen. In this case, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*,¹⁹ the burden on religious conduct was direct and inescapable. Under threat of criminal sanction, the law required the Amish to abandon a religious obligation: protecting their children from the worldly influences of high school. The court recognized Wisconsin's strong interest in education, but it found that requiring Amish children to

¹⁷ Id. at 166–7.

¹⁸ 374 U.S. 398 (1963).

¹⁹ 406 U.S. 205 (1972).

attend one or two years of high school (they attended elementary school) would do little to serve that interest, especially since the Amish community itself provided an alternative form of education, including informal vocational training. Accordingly, the court ruled that the Amish were entitled to an exemption from the law.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Supreme Court continued to endorse the constitutional framework of *Sherbert* and *Yoder*. Even so, it rejected a number of free exercise claims in the 1980s, setting the stage for the more dramatic judicial retrenchment that would follow. In *United States v. Lee*,²⁰ for instance, the court rejected an exemption sought by the Amish from participation in social security, finding that the government's interest in a uniform tax system should prevail. In addition, the court adopted explicit exceptions to the *Sherbert/Yoder* approach for military and prison regulations.²¹ And it ruled that the Free Exercise Clause did not limit the government's internal operations, including the use of government land, no matter the adverse impact on religious practices. In *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*,²² for example, the court found no constitutional impediment to a proposed National Forest road that, according to the challengers, would have seriously damaged the sanctity of Native American sacred sites. (The court in *Lyng* also rejected a claim under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, finding that the act confers no enforceable legal rights.) Outside these exceptional contexts, however, the court continued to apply the *Sherbert/Yoder* framework, and, indeed, it specifically reaffirmed its decision in *Sherbert* in several comparable cases.

Employment Division v. Smith, decided in 1990, marked a clear and controversial turn in the Supreme Court's constitutional jurisprudence. In *Smith*, the court was asked to recognize a free exercise exemption for the sacramental use of an otherwise illegal drug, peyote, by members of the Native American Church. Not only did the court refuse to do so, but, on a five-four vote, it also declined to apply the analysis that *Sherbert* and *Yoder* appeared to require. Although the court purported to distinguish and preserve its particular holdings in those and similar cases, it renounced their interpretive underpinnings. Thus, the court declared that nondiscriminatory laws affecting religious conduct do not implicate the Free Exercise Clause, do not require special constitutional justification, and do not require religious exemptions. Giving new life to its century-old decision

²⁰ 455 U.S. 252 (1982).

²¹ *Goldman v. Weinberger*, 475 U.S. 503 (1986) (military); *O'Lone v. Estate of Shabazz*, 482 U.S. 342 (1987) (prisons).

²² 485 U.S. 439 (1988).

in *Reynolds*, the court suggested that to grant a religious exemption would be to permit the religious believer, “by virtue of his beliefs, ‘to become a law unto himself,’” a result that “contradicts both constitutional tradition and common sense.”²³

Although more complex interpretations of the court’s constitutional doctrine are possible, *Smith* essentially reduced the Free Exercise Clause to a prohibition on deliberate discrimination against religion. Accordingly, a law burdening religious conduct no longer triggers presumptive constitutional protection unless the law targets that conduct for unequal treatment. As interpreted in *Smith*, the Free Exercise Clause no longer protects religious conscience or voluntarism as an independent value. Instead, it merely ensures a type of formal religious equality.

In the contemporary period, laws that deliberately discriminate against religion are rare, but they are not nonexistent, as became clear in a case decided just three years after *Smith*. In *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*,²⁴ the Supreme Court invalidated a series of ordinances that had been adopted by the City of Hialeah, Florida, in a transparent attempt to stop the establishment and spread of the Santería religion, which practices animal sacrifice as a principal form of devotion. The ordinances effectively outlawed Santería animal sacrifice even as they left other animal killings unaffected. Unlike, for example, a general ban on animal killing (which, under *Smith*, would raise no free exercise issue), the Hialeah ordinances specifically targeted Santería religious exercise. As a result, the ordinances triggered presumptive constitutional protection and rigorous judicial scrutiny, and they could not survive that review.

CONGRESSIONAL AND STATE-LAW PROTECTIONS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Notwithstanding *Lukumi*, the court’s current understanding of the Free Exercise Clause offers far less protection to religious believers, including religious minorities, than did the pre-*Smith* approach. Some state courts, as a matter of state constitutional law, have rejected the Supreme Court’s reasoning and have continued to protect religious conduct from nondiscriminatory laws. In addition, the Supreme Court’s restrictive interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause has generated a remarkable series of legislative responses.

In its initial reaction to *Smith*, Congress concluded that the decision gave inadequate protection to religious freedom and, indeed, that the

²³ *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872, 885 (1990).

²⁴ 508 U.S. 520 (1993).

Supreme Court's interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause was erroneous. Accordingly, Congress attempted to "restore" the legal protection provided by the earlier approach of *Sherbert* and *Yoder*, now as a matter of statutory rather than constitutional right. Thus, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) declared that "government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability" unless the burden "is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest."²⁵ RFRA was supported by a broad coalition of divergent interest groups, ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Southern Baptist Convention, and it was approved in Congress by nearly unanimous votes. But the Supreme Court was not impressed by Congress' attempt effectively to overrule the court, and it responded with a 1997 decision dramatically curtailing the statute's reach. In *City of Boerne v. Flores*,²⁶ the court ruled that RFRA violated the Constitution because Congress lacked the power to impose the statute's requirements on state and local governments. By contrast, it appears that RFRA remains valid as applied to federal laws and practices. In its 2006 decision in *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal*,²⁷ the Supreme Court not only assumed the constitutionality of RFRA in the federal context, but also offered a vigorous interpretation of the statutory protection that it affords. In so doing, the court unanimously approved an exemption under RFRA for a small religious group, indigenous to Brazil, that uses a sacramental tea containing a hallucinogen otherwise banned by federal law.

In response to *Boerne*, some state legislatures enacted state-law versions of RFRA to replace the invalidated portion of the federal law. Congress initially considered a broad response of its own, but it ultimately enacted a more limited statute, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA). RLUIPA reimposed federal, RFRA-like provisions on state and local governments, but only for land use regulations and regulations affecting institutionalized persons, including prisoners.²⁸ Despite its limited reach, RLUIPA raises significant issues of federalism, but it so far has survived – or avoided – constitutional challenges addressing these concerns.

All of these developments, taken together, mean that the *Sherbert/Yoder* approach now applies in some legal contexts but not others. It applies to federal laws by virtue of RFRA, and it applies to state laws falling within the selective coverage of RLUIPA. It also applies if a particular state elects

²⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb-1 (2006).

²⁶ 521 U.S. 507 (1997).

²⁷ 546 U.S. 418 (2006).

²⁸ 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000cc to 2000cc-5 (2006).

to offer this protection as a matter of state law. Otherwise, the restrictive approach of *Smith* continues to control, confining the Free Exercise Clause mainly to discriminatory laws.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND RELIGIOUS SPEECH

Despite *Smith*, the contemporary Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment aggressively with respect to one type of religious conduct, religious *speech*, which it has protected under the Free Speech Clause. Building upon and expanding the free speech component of *Cantwell*, the court has ruled that private religious speech, including religious worship, is entitled to the same free speech protection as core political speech. And it has extended its distaste for discrimination to the free speech context, issuing a series of rulings granting religious speakers equal access to public property even when the government argues that the separation of church and state demands their exclusion. Notably, these cases often have involved Christian groups, and they have included claims of access to public school buildings. As we will see, the Supreme Court has consistently ruled that the establishment clause forbids public schools to sponsor prayers or religious exercises. But the court also has ruled that private religious groups have the right to use public school buildings, after hours, on the same basis as other private groups. In its 1993 decision in *Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District*,²⁹ for example, the court ruled that a public school district, having opened its facilities for after-hours use by various nonreligious groups, could not bar a religious group from presenting a film series promoting "Christian family values."

In a 2001 decision, the court extended its equal access doctrine even to after-school religious meetings for elementary students. In *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*,³⁰ an evangelical Christian organization requested permission to conduct meetings for elementary school students immediately after school, meetings at which the children would sing songs, hear Bible lessons, memorize scripture, and pray. School policy permitted privately sponsored after-school meetings for various purposes, including morals and character education for children, but it prohibited the use of school facilities "for religious purposes." Citing this prohibition as well as the Establishment Clause, the school denied the organization's request. The Supreme Court ruled that the school's policy, as applied to the proposed meetings, impermissibly discriminated against religious speech in violation of the Free Speech Clause. Contrary to the school's argument, moreover, the

²⁹ 508 U.S. 384 (1993).

³⁰ 533 U.S. 98 (2001).

court found that the policy was not redeemed by the Establishment Clause. The court reasoned that although public schools cannot themselves promote religion, this does not occur when schools merely provide the sort of nondiscriminatory access that the Christian organization was seeking – possible misperceptions to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Supreme Court's equal access doctrine offers protection to Christian as well as other religious speakers and groups, and it operates as a limitation on the court's Establishment Clause doctrine. In the equal access context, Christian conservatives, among others, have achieved considerable success by invoking arguments for equal treatment, which resonate strongly in the political and legal culture of the contemporary United States.

THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE: RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Prayer and Religious Instruction

Although the Supreme Court's equal access decisions protect privately sponsored religious speech, even in public school buildings, the court has ruled that the Establishment Clause forbids the public schools themselves to sponsor or promote religion. Citing the impressionability of children and their susceptibility to peer pressure and to the influence of teachers and other school officials, the court has aggressively enforced this prohibition, and in this respect the court's stance has been relatively stable throughout the contemporary period. Thus, in a long line of cases from 1948 to the present, the Supreme Court has invalidated school-sponsored prayer and religious instruction in the public schools, even when student participation is designated as voluntary. Apart from its aberrational 1952 decision in *Zorach v. Clauson*,³¹ the court has consistently reasoned that the public schools cannot act to favor Christianity, any other religion, or even religion in general. In so ruling, the court has protected religious minorities and nonbelievers not only from the risk of direct or subtle coercion, but also from feelings of exclusion, affront, and alienation.

The Supreme Court's initial encounter with religion and the public schools occurred in 1948, only a year after *Everson v. Board of Education*. In *Everson*, the court had declared that the Establishment Clause forbids the government to aid either one religion or religion in general. In *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education*,³² the court relied on this principle to invalidate a public school program that provided religious instruction

³¹ 343 U.S. 306 (1952).

³² 333 U.S. 203 (1948).

through a “released-time” arrangement. Under the program, weekly classes in religious instruction, taught by privately employed religious teachers of various faiths, were conducted in the school building during regular school hours. The classes were offered only to students whose parents had requested that they attend; students not attending continued their secular studies. The court noted the challengers’ argument that the program was voluntary in name only, and it also noted the fact of compulsory school attendance. But the court did not base its decision on coercion. Instead, the court ruled that the program of religious instruction was unconstitutional because (unlike an equal access program) it singled out religion for special, advantageous treatment, promoting religion over irreligion in violation of the principle announced in *Everson*.

Four years later, by contrast, the court in *Zorach v. Clauson* upheld a very similar program of religious released time. As in *McCollum*, the challenged program offered weekly religious instruction during regular school hours to students whose parents requested that they attend. Unlike in *McCollum*, however, the religious classes were conducted off the premises of the public schools, at religious centers to which the participating students retreated. For the court in *Zorach*, this made all the difference, because now the public schools were doing “no more than accommodat[ing] their schedules to a program of outside religious instruction.”³³ In reality, however, the court’s attempt to distinguish *McCollum* was tenuous, because the *Zorach* program still promoted religion over irreligion: aided by compulsory attendance laws, the public schools singled out religious instruction, and nothing else, for special, preferential treatment. Nevertheless, and despite later decisions further undermining its premises, *Zorach* has not been overruled. Some school districts, especially in rural areas, continue to sponsor off-the-premises released-time programs, and such programs are permissible as a matter of prevailing constitutional law.

In the years since *Zorach*, the Supreme Court has consistently and repeatedly invalidated laws and policies promoting school-sponsored prayers and devotional exercises in the public schools, even if nonsectarian and formally voluntary. In its landmark decisions of 1962 and 1963, the court addressed the classic form of school-sponsored prayer and devotion: spoken exercises in the classroom. In *Engel v. Vitale*,³⁴ the court struck down a program that called for teachers to lead their students in a daily, state-prescribed prayer. The prayer was brief and nondenominational: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.” In addition, the prayer was

³³ *Zorach*, 343 U.S. at 315.

³⁴ 370 U.S. 421 (1962).

designated as voluntary; no student who objected was required to participate. Nonetheless, the court invalidated the prayer. And in *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*,³⁵ the court extended *Engel* to devotional practices not involving a state-prescribed prayer, including the reading of Bible verses to nonobjecting students and their collective recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Justice Stewart, the sole dissenter in *Engel* and *Schempp*, noted that there was no proof of demonstrable coercion in either case. The majority of the court, by contrast, was content to note the risk of "indirect coercive pressure upon religious minorities to conform to the prevailing officially approved religion."³⁶

Engel and *Schempp* were enormously controversial decisions, and the controversy has not died. Critics have pushed for a constitutional amendment, but these efforts have failed. Despite ongoing criticism, moreover, the Supreme Court has not only reaffirmed the decisions, but also extended them. It has imposed constitutional limits on moments of silence, and it has precluded school-sponsored prayers even during graduation ceremonies and at extracurricular events, and even when offered by students rather than teachers.

As one response to *Engel* and *Schempp*, more than half of the states have adopted statutes authorizing moments of silence in the public schools, moments that may be used by religious students as a time for silent prayer. In its 1985 decision in *Wallace v. Jaffree*,³⁷ however, the court declared that moment-of-silence statutes are unconstitutional if they are purposefully crafted to promote silent prayer. In *Wallace*, the court invalidated a 1981 Alabama statute that authorized a period of classroom silence "for meditation or voluntary prayer." This holding went well beyond *Engel* and *Schempp*, but it did not reach all moment-of-silence laws. As the court explained, preexisting Alabama law had already authorized a period of silence "for meditation," and the stark legislative history of the 1981 enactment confirmed that it was "entirely motivated by a purpose to advance religion" by "convey[ing] a message of State endorsement and promotion of prayer."³⁸ The court's opinion suggested that a moment-of-silence law not mentioning prayer would be constitutionally permissible. Taking into account the views of five justices who wrote concurring and dissenting opinions, moreover, it appears that the court likewise would have approved a law that did mention prayer as one permissible use for a moment of silence – as long as the law's language and history did not reveal the impermissible purpose of

³⁵ 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

³⁶ *Engel*, 370 U.S. at 431.

³⁷ 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

³⁸ *Id.* at 56, 59.

favoring silent prayer over other forms of quiet reflection. In the years since *Wallace*, lower courts have been left to apply the decision to other moment-of-silence laws. There have been mixed results in these cases, but most of the laws have been upheld and remain in place.

After *Wallace*, the Supreme Court next confronted a school prayer challenge in 1992. Through a series of appointments, Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush had attempted to move the court in a more conservative direction, and there was speculation that the newly constituted court might limit the Establishment Clause to cases involving demonstrable coercion, much as Justice Stewart had urged in *Engel* and *Schempp*. In fact, the court in *Lee v. Weisman*³⁹ did utilize a coercion analysis of sorts, but, over the vigorous dissent of four justices, the court nonetheless concluded that it was unconstitutional for a public school to sponsor a clergy-led, nonsectarian prayer at a graduation ceremony. Unlike the dissenting justices, the court took an extremely broad view of illicit governmental coercion. Noting the “subtle coercive pressure” of the public school environment and the role of “public pressure, as well as peer pressure,” the court found that the school had placed objecting students in an “untenable position” of “indirect coercion.” This coercion did not necessarily induce objecting students to join the prayer, even silently. But it did subject them to “pressure, though subtle and indirect,” to “participate” in a more passive way. Thus, they felt obliged to attend the ceremony despite their objection, and, once there, they felt obliged to acquiesce quietly in the prayer, giving others the impression that they were either joining or approving it.⁴⁰

In its 2000 decision in *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*,⁴¹ the court applied and extended *Weisman*, invalidating a school board policy that called for student votes to determine whether there would be a student-led “invocation and/or message” before high school football games, in part “to solemnize” the games. A six-justice majority found that the policy’s purpose, as revealed by its text and context, was to preserve and promote the school district’s longstanding practice of school-sanctioned prayers at the games. As in *Weisman*, moreover, the court found indirect and subtle coercion even in the absence of compulsory attendance.

EVOLUTION AND CREATIONISM

At least since the notorious *Scopes* trial of the 1920s,⁴² there has been tremendous controversy concerning the topic of human origins and how it

³⁹ 505 U.S. 577 (1992).

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 590–9.

⁴¹ 530 U.S. 290 (2000).

⁴² See *Scopes v. State*, 289 S.W. 363 (Tenn. 1927).

should be taught in the public schools. The Supreme Court has declared that the Establishment Clause imposes significant limitations in this context. In essence, the court has treated creationism as a matter of religious instruction, bringing into play the same sort of reasoning that the court has applied to school-sponsored prayer and religious instruction generally. Thus, in its 1968 decision in *Epperson v. Arkansas*⁴³ and its 1987 decision in *Edwards v. Aguillard*,⁴⁴ the court invalidated laws that were designed to prohibit the teaching of evolution or to promote the teaching of creationism.

In *Epperson*, the court invalidated an Arkansas law that had been enacted in 1928, in the aftermath of the *Scopes* case. As did the Tennessee law at issue in *Scopes*, the Arkansas law prohibited public school teachers to teach “the theory or doctrine that mankind ascended or descended from a lower order of animals.” Focusing on the history of the law, the court concluded that “fundamentalist sectarian conviction was and is the law’s reason for existence” and that the law prohibited the teaching of human evolution “for the sole reason that it is deemed to conflict with a particular religious doctrine; that is, with a particular interpretation of the Book of Genesis by a particular religious group.”⁴⁵ As a result, the law had the unconstitutional purpose of advancing religion, and, indeed, a particular religion, by protecting that religion from competing views.

Going a step beyond *Epperson*, the court in *Edwards* invalidated a Louisiana “balanced treatment” statute. The Louisiana statute did not preclude the teaching of evolution, at least not categorically. Rather, it declared that any public school that elected to teach evolution was required to teach “creation science” as well. The state claimed that creation science reflected legitimate scientific opinion that had been improperly repressed, and it contended that the statute permitted students to confront the competing evidence and decide the matter for themselves. Over a vigorous dissent by Justice Scalia, however, the court rejected the state’s arguments and concluded that its secular defense of the statute was a “sham.” The court noted that public school teachers are free to teach genuinely scientific evidence about human origins, even if this evidence might undermine the prevailing theory of evolution, and it suggested that a legislature would be free to require that the public schools include this type of scientific critique. On the basis of the content of the Louisiana statute and its legislative history, however, the court found that it was not designed to promote the teaching of diverse scientific theories. Rather, the legislation was adopted to advance and endorse a particular religious understanding of creation, an

⁴³ 393 U.S. 97 (1968).

⁴⁴ 482 U.S. 578 (1987).

⁴⁵ *Epperson*, 393 U.S. at 103, 108.

understanding that appeared to be drawn from a literal reading of Genesis. As a result, the law was unconstitutional.

In recent years, a new line of argument has featured the theory of “intelligent design,” which contends that evolution and natural selection are inadequate to explain the biological complexity of life, meaning that an intelligent force must be at work. The Supreme Court has not addressed intelligent design, but the issue garnered national attention in 2004 when the school board of Dover, Pennsylvania, adopted a policy requiring that students be informed about this theory in addition to the theory of evolution. In a broadly written decision (which was not appealed), a federal district court invalidated the policy.⁴⁶ Although the argument for intelligent design does not track the biblical account of creation, the court concluded that this argument, like that of creation science before it, is nothing more than a veiled attempt to advance a religious understanding of creation. Accordingly, under the reasoning of *Epperson* and *Edwards*, the Dover policy was unconstitutional.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Public schools routinely sponsor recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance, through which students recite the following, congressionally prescribed language: “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”⁴⁷ Congress added the “under God” language in 1954, during the Cold War, in part to distinguish the United States from the Soviet Union. Even before this addition, the Supreme Court had ruled in its 1943 decision in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*⁴⁸ that public schools cannot force objecting students to participate. Conversely, it has been widely assumed that schools are free to lead willing students in the pledge. In 2002, however, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, citing the Establishment Clause, ruled that school-sponsored recitations of the pledge, even if formally voluntary, could no longer include the “under God” language.⁴⁹ The court’s holding appeared to follow logically from the Supreme Court’s prevailing Establishment Clause jurisprudence, including its school prayer decisions. Even so, the Ninth Circuit’s decision triggered a public outcry, including condemnation by political officials of all stripes. The Supreme Court granted review,

⁴⁶ *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005).

⁴⁷ 4 U.S.C. § 4 (2006).

⁴⁸ 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

⁴⁹ *Newdow v. U.S. Congress*, 292 F.3d 597 (9th Cir. 2002), amended, 328 F.3d 466 (2003), rev’d, 542 U.S. 1 (2004).

but the case ended with a whimper when the court avoided a ruling on the merits.

In *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*,⁵⁰ the Supreme Court reversed the Ninth Circuit on procedural grounds, concluding that the challenger (a parent with limited and disputed custodial rights) lacked “prudential standing” to bring the case in federal court. In a potentially influential separate opinion, however, Justice O’Connor reached the merits and argued that the “under God” reference is permissible.⁵¹ Citing the tradition and ubiquity of the pledge, she noted that the “under God” language dates back half a century, and she suggested that its recitation in the public schools has become part of the American social fabric. Distinguishing the court’s school prayer decisions, she emphasized that the pledge is not a prayer, and its recitation is not a religious exercise. Rather, it is a patriotic exercise that includes a brief and general religious reference or declaration. As a result, she argued, it is not fatal to the pledge (as it is to a school-sponsored prayer) that students may feel subtle coercive pressure to participate, as long as the school, in line with *Barnette*, does not directly compel students to join the recitation, either in full or in part.

The Pledge of Allegiance issue tests the limits of the Establishment Clause in the public school setting. The issue remains unresolved, and it is likely to return to the Supreme Court in the future.

THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE

Prayer and Religious Symbolism outside the Public School Setting

Beginning in the 1980s, the Supreme Court moved beyond the public schools to consider claims that the government was improperly promoting prayer and religious symbolism in other settings. In theory, the Establishment Clause prohibition is fully applicable here, no less than in the public schools, even though here any risk of coercion may be slight. In practice, however, the court’s decisions have followed a wavering path, with the justices issuing mixed results depending on fine distinctions. Mirroring Justice O’Connor’s opinion in *Newdow*, the court sometimes has relied upon tradition. Otherwise, it has focused on the particular governmental practice under review, asking whether that practice, properly understood, acknowledges or recognizes religion for secular reasons or instead conveys an impermissible message of governmental promotion or endorsement, a message that might affront and alienate religious minorities and nonbelievers.

⁵⁰ 542 U.S. 1 (2004).

⁵¹ *Id.* at 33–45 (O’Connor, J., concurring in the judgment).

In its 1983 decision in *Marsh v. Chambers*,⁵² the first ruling in this context, the Supreme Court invoked tradition to uphold the practice of legislative prayer by publicly paid chaplains. The court emphasized that legislative prayer goes back to the First Congress and is such a longstanding tradition that it is “part of the fabric of our society.”⁵³ On similar grounds, the court has suggested that other longstanding practices are likewise permissible, including, for example, our national motto, “In God We Trust,” and the court’s own opening cry, “God Save the United States and this Honorable Court.”

In other decisions, the court sometimes has alluded to tradition in a more general way, noting the prominent role of religion in American political and governmental history, but its decisions generally have turned on a fact-specific evaluation of the particular practice under review. A year after *Marsh*, for example, in *Lynch v. Donnelly*,⁵⁴ the court upheld the use of a nativity scene in a municipal Christmas display that also included a Santa Claus house, reindeer, and other secular symbols. According to the court, the city was simply celebrating Christmas, a public and heavily secularized holiday, by giving recognition to its various traditional symbols. Five years later, however, distinguishing *Lynch*, the court in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*⁵⁵ ruled against a stand-alone nativity scene even as it approved a separate display that included a Chanukah menorah, a Christmas tree, and a sign promoting liberty.

More recently, in 2005, the Supreme Court addressed similar issues in highly publicized cases challenging governmental displays of the Ten Commandments. The court once again reached mixed results, focusing on the particular facts at hand. In *McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky*,⁵⁶ a five-justice majority invalidated recently erected courthouse displays of framed copies of the Ten Commandments. The commandments were surrounded by the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and other historical documents, but the current arrangements had been preceded by earlier, more limited displays that clearly were designed to promote the religious content of the commandments. According to the court, the current displays, developed only in response to litigation, still conveyed the same, predominantly religious message. In *Van Orden v. Perry*,⁵⁷ by contrast, a different five-justice majority upheld the constitutionality of a forty-year-old display of the Ten Commandments on the outdoor grounds

⁵² 463 U.S. 783 (1983).

⁵³ *Id.* at 792.

⁵⁴ 465 U.S. 668 (1984).

⁵⁵ 492 U.S. 573 (1989).

⁵⁶ 545 U.S. 844 (2005).

⁵⁷ 545 U.S. 677 (2005).

of the Texas State Capitol, where the commandments stood as one monument among many in a large, parklike setting. Switching sides as he cast the deciding vote, Justice Breyer reasoned in his controlling opinion that unlike the displays in *McCreary*, the Texas monument, in its particular historical context and physical setting, conveyed a predominately secular message – a message about the Ten Commandments’ historical significance and their importance to secular morality.⁵⁸

The Supreme Court’s nuanced decisions in this area have elicited criticisms from both sides, but they have effected something of a culture-war compromise. Traditional and tempered religious displays may be permitted, but stark endorsements of religion typically are not. As a result, the government can celebrate America’s religious heritage and culture to a degree, but religious minorities and nonbelievers are protected from more flagrant affronts to their religious or irreligious sensibilities.

THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE

Public Aid to Religious Schools and Organizations

The Supreme Court’s seminal Establishment Clause decision from the 1940s, *Everson v. Board of Education*, also was the modern court’s first encounter with a public aid controversy. As noted earlier, the court narrowly approved the particular program before it, which extended bus-fare reimbursement to students attending Roman Catholic schools. At the same time, however, the justices used strongly separationist language, signaling that the clause would be construed to impose significant limitations on financial support for religious beneficiaries. The court did not return to the public aid context for twenty years, but, since then, it has considered numerous challenges. Moreover, unlike in its public school and religious symbolism cases, the court’s stance in this context has shifted dramatically over time.

In a series of cases in the 1970s and 1980s, the Supreme Court approved some public aid programs, but it invalidated others. The court’s jurisprudence was muddled and depended on fine distinctions. Nevertheless, it appeared to reflect, in part, the belief that government and religion should be confined to their own, separate realms, thereby protecting the autonomy and vitality of each. Indeed, in its invalidation of various programs, the court sometimes appeared to adopt a strong and categorical interpretation of its separationist language in *Everson*, which had declared that the government cannot “pass laws which aid one religion [or] all religions” and that “no tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any

⁵⁸ Id. at 698–706 (Breyer, J., concurring in the judgment).

religious activities or institutions.”⁵⁹ During this period, the court also adopted and applied an influential constitutional test, drawn from its 1971 decision in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*,⁶⁰ which invalidated programs that reimbursed religious schools for various educational expenses. Under this test, a statute (or other governmental action) was required to satisfy each of three requirements: “First, the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion . . . ; finally, the statute must not foster ‘an excessive governmental entanglement with religion.’”⁶¹

The high-water mark of public aid separationism, and, it seems, its last hurrah, was in two 1985 decisions. In *School District of Grand Rapids v. Ball*⁶² and *Aguilar v. Felton*,⁶³ the court, applying the *Lemon* test, ruled that the Establishment Clause barred publicly paid teachers from providing secular, remedial education on the premises of primary and secondary religious schools. The challenged programs extended to religious and nonreligious schools alike, and the court found that they had the purpose of supporting secular education. Nonetheless, the court concluded that the challenged program in *Grand Rapids* impermissibly advanced the “sectarian enterprise” of the religious schools because the aid was “direct and substantial.” The court also was concerned that the publicly funded teachers might knowingly or unwittingly “conform their instruction to the environment in which they teach” and that the children attending the schools might perceive a “symbolic union of church and state.”⁶⁴ In *Aguilar*, the challenged program included a system of governmental monitoring to ensure that the remedial classes and therefore the aid would remain entirely secular, both in reality and in perception. That very system of monitoring, however, led the court to find an excessive governmental entanglement with religion. In a dissenting opinion that foreshadowed the jurisprudential change that was to follow, then-Justice Rehnquist lamented the “Catch-22” that he believed the court had created.⁶⁵

In the years since 1985, the Supreme Court, influenced by the appointment of more conservative justices, has embraced a considerably more relaxed approach in this setting, much as it has adopted a more relaxed interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause. Indeed, the court’s free exercise

⁵⁹ *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947).

⁶⁰ 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

⁶¹ *Id.* at 612–13.

⁶² 473 U.S. 373 (1985).

⁶³ 473 U.S. 402 (1985).

⁶⁴ *Grand Rapids*, 473 U.S. at 388, 390, 396.

⁶⁵ *Aguilar*, 473 U.S. at 420–1 (Rehnquist, J., dissenting).

shift, exemplified by *Employment Division v. Smith*, has been mirrored in the public aid context by a similar emphasis on neutrality as the critical touchstone of constitutional analysis. Accordingly, the court has retreated from its earlier, separationist decisions, ruling that the government generally is free to provide aid to religious beneficiaries under programs that extend “neutrally” to religious and nonreligious recipients alike. In its 1988 decision in *Bowen v. Kendrick*,⁶⁶ for instance, the court permitted Congress to include religious organizations as grant recipients in a funding program designed to address teenage sexuality, as long as the grants were confined to secular activities.

In *Bowen*, the court distinguished *Grand Rapids* and *Aguilar*, but those decisions were becoming increasingly tenuous. By 1997, the court was prepared to overrule them outright, and so it did in *Agostini v. Felton*.⁶⁷ In *Agostini*, the court approved exactly what it had rejected twelve years earlier: the use of publicly paid teachers to provide secular, remedial education at religious schools. Three years later, in *Mitchell v. Helms*,⁶⁸ the court likewise approved a program that provided federally funded computers and other instructional equipment and materials to primary and secondary schools, religious as well as nonreligious, with the amount of aid dependent on the number of students at each school. In so doing, the court overruled additional precedents from the earlier, more separationist period. As the court explained in *Agostini*, it now is strongly inclined to uphold aid that “is allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and is made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries on a nondiscriminatory basis.” According to the court, such programs respect religious freedom, if not separation, because they do not “give aid recipients any incentive to modify their religious beliefs or practices” in order to qualify.⁶⁹

The court has been especially approving of neutral funding programs that support religious organizations indirectly, through voucher or similar programs under which aid flows initially to individuals and reaches religious organizations only if individual recipients, as a matter of private choice, elect to use it there. Chief Justice Rehnquist played an influential role in this setting, writing a series of majority opinions that culminated in the court’s 2002 school voucher decision. In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*,⁷⁰

⁶⁶ 487 U.S. 589 (1988).

⁶⁷ 521 U.S. 203, 235–6 (1997).

⁶⁸ 530 U.S. 793 (2000).

⁶⁹ *Agostini*, 521 U.S. at 231, 232.

⁷⁰ 536 U.S. 639 (2002).

the court rejected an Establishment Clause challenge to a voucher program that provided substantial tuition support for low-income parents, who could use the support at religious as well as nonreligious schools. The program was formally nondiscriminatory, but more than 90 percent of the vouchers were being used at religious schools. Even so, the court upheld the program, suggesting that nondiscriminatory programs of indirect aid promote religious liberty and are virtually immune from Establishment Clause invalidation, even if individuals disproportionately direct their benefits to religious destinations. As long as a program of indirect aid is neutrally drawn and is “a program of true private choice” that is not “skewed” to favor religious organizations, the court wrote, the program “is not readily subject to challenge under the Establishment Clause.”⁷¹ The court emphasized that it had never invalidated such a program, and it implied that it never would.

Some constitutional limits remain, at least for now, on direct aid programs. The most important restriction is that direct aid, even under neutrally drawn programs, cannot support religious activities as such. It must be segregated and confined to secular uses. For example, the government can directly provide religious schools with computers and secular textbooks, but it cannot provide them with Bibles. Conversely, this restriction does not apply to indirect aid. As *Zelman* makes clear, the ultimate destination of indirect aid is beside the point, as long as the program itself is neutral. Thus, there is no need to segregate indirect aid, including the proceeds of vouchers, to uses that are secular in nature.

The court’s increasingly permissive stance concerning public aid, both direct and indirect, laid the constitutional groundwork for funding religious organizations that provide social services addressing such problems as poverty, crime, and drug addiction. During the presidency of Bill Clinton, Congress enacted a limited program called “Charitable Choice.” The inclusion of religious organizations in social-services funding was expanded and promoted through the “Faith-Based Initiative” of President George W. Bush, and it has continued in a different form with the support of President Barack Obama. A number of states have adopted similar programs. Under prevailing constitutional law, these programs, which extend neutrally to religious and nonreligious groups alike, probably are permissible as long as direct grants are confined to secular services. And *Zelman* strongly supports the constitutionality of another aspect of these initiatives, the funding of vouchers that recipients can use at providers of their choice, even if some of the providers offer religiously oriented services.

⁷¹ *Id.* at 649–53.

THE FREE EXERCISE CLAUSE AND DISCRIMINATORY FUNDING EXCLUSIONS

One question left unresolved by *Zelman* was whether the government even retains the constitutional *option* of excluding religious organizations from programs of indirect funding for privately provided education or social services. This issue arises not under the Establishment Clause, but under the Free Exercise Clause. As explained earlier, the Supreme Court, despite the restrictive approach of *Employment Division v. Smith*, has continued to insist that laws targeting religion for discriminatory disadvantage trigger strict free exercise scrutiny and probable invalidation. There was a credible argument that this reasoning would extend to indirect funding programs that discriminate against religion by precluding recipients from choosing religious options. An argument along these lines persuaded the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit,⁷² but a seven-justice Supreme Court majority, in yet another opinion by Chief Justice Rehnquist, reversed the Ninth Circuit in *Locke v. Davey*,⁷³ decided in 2004.

In *Locke*, the court considered a State of Washington program that provided scholarships to students at public and private colleges, but that denied the scholarships to otherwise eligible students at religious colleges if they were majoring in devotional theology, typically to prepare for careers in the ministry. The state relied on a provision in Washington's state constitution, which mandated a stronger separation of church and state than that required by the First Amendment. Declaring that there is room for "play in the joints" between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses,⁷⁴ the Supreme Court permitted the state's antiestablishment policy to prevail. The court asserted that the burden on religious exercise was relatively minor, and it rejected strict scrutiny in favor of a far more lenient balancing approach. Under that approach, the state's denial of funding was justified by historical antiestablishment concerns about taxpayer-supported clergy, concerns that were reflected in a number of state constitutions. Read narrowly, *Locke* might be limited to the selective denial of funding for the devotional religious work and training of clergy and other religious professionals. Conversely, and perhaps more likely, it might permit the government to exclude religious beneficiaries in other contexts as well, including voucher programs of all sorts. If so, then *Zelman* and *Locke*, taken together, leave the inclusion or exclusion of religious beneficiaries largely to the discretion of Congress and the states.

⁷² *Davey v. Locke*, 299 F.3d 748 (9th Cir. 2002), rev'd, 540 U.S. 712 (2004).

⁷³ 540 U.S. 712 (2004).

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 718.

RELIGION, LAW, AND POLITICS

This essay has focused on religion's direct interaction with government and law in the contemporary period, especially in connection with First Amendment and related legal claims. More broadly, religion has played an important role in other political and legal developments, many of which are discussed elsewhere in this volume. In the presidential election of 1960, Americans for the first time elected a Roman Catholic, John F. Kennedy. Another progressive achievement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was inspired by the religious vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. More recently, in part as a reaction to the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*,⁷⁵ religion has been a prominent feature in conservative politics. Courted strongly by Ronald Reagan and later Republican leaders, religious conservatives have become an important constituency in the Republican Party. They have worked to undo the Supreme Court's protection of abortion rights, have protested the destruction of embryos for stem cell research, and have resisted the movement toward same-sex marriage. Even so, progressive religious voices have not disappeared, and Democratic candidates and officials, including President Barack Obama, have made notable appeals for religious support.

These broader political and legal developments are not entirely disconnected from the First Amendment. Much to the contrary, that amendment, as construed by the Supreme Court, sets the outer boundaries of religious politics. In the contemporary period, the court has precluded the adoption of certain governmental policies, including school prayer and starkly promotional religious symbolism. By contrast, the court increasingly has declared other issues a matter of political choice. Generally speaking, it has ruled that the government may, but need not, protect religious conduct from nondiscriminatory laws, and that the government may, but need not, include religious beneficiaries in broader funding programs. At the same time, the court has strongly protected private religious speech, no less than political speech, and it has shown no inclination to confine the role of religious advocacy on political issues.

At present, the First Amendment's constraints on religion-related policy making are relatively limited, at least as compared to those imposed by the court from the 1960s to the 1980s. But the justices have been deeply divided in many of their recent decisions. Moreover, as the history of the last half-century reveals, the Supreme Court's positions are not static. The court responds to political and cultural changes even as its decisions themselves influence those developments. This cycle of change is certain to continue.

⁷⁵ 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN AMERICA: 1945 TO THE PRESENT

TISA WENGER

For a historian, even for a historian of religion in the United States, religious thought is a decidedly unfashionable subject. The rise of social history in recent decades directed attention away from the elites and toward those at the margins of society, most of whom lacked the education or the resources to produce the kinds of work easily recognized by posterity as “religious thought.” Religious studies scholarship simultaneously began to problematize its own assumptions about what counted as religion, moving away from intellectual and institutional histories and toward a focus on culture and practice. Any current survey of the field would identify trends that include the study of lived religion, material religion, and the intersections of religion with the body, gender, sexuality, race, politics, secularism, and popular culture. All of these are vibrant areas of study that have reconfigured the ways we think about religion in America, and none of them places a high priority on narrating religious thought.

Such historiographical trends encourage an expansion of the category of religious thought beyond academic theologians and recognized religious leaders to include the ideas of activists, popular writers, and thinkers outside formal religious contexts. This sort of inclusive turn cannot be made without attention to the power dynamics and differentials that made it possible for some, and not for others, to gain recognition as influential religious thinkers in the first place. The study of religious thought, in other words, cannot be separated from its political, economic, and social contexts, and these dimensions of the topic should only enrich our understanding of religion as it is implicated in (yet also often works to resist) local and global relations of power. An expanded approach to religious thought must also attend to the material circumstances of its production, to the practices and lived contexts from which religious thought emerges, and to the complex ways in which theology interacts with lived religion in the communities of practice it touches.

In the essay that follows, three loosely defined periods structure the narrative: the early Cold War, roughly 1945 to 1960; the era of revolutionary religion, from the 1960s forward; and a final period, beginning in the 1980s, of culture wars and postmodern redefinitions. Themes of freedom and modernity take center stage throughout. Freedom emerged as a key thread through theological formations from Neo-Orthodoxy to liberation theology. The role of modernity, along with the closely related concept of the secular, was more complex. Many thinkers expressed a tension between tradition and modernity, however they understood it, and directed their energies toward strengthening religion against the assaults of the secular. Others, generally considered “liberals,” were more inclined to embrace both modernity and the secular, intentionally adapting their theologies in an effort to speak in compelling ways to contemporary life.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

Religious thought in the middle of the twentieth century can only be understood in its postwar and Cold War contexts. As the global tragedy that was World War II ended in 1945, the United States found itself in a position to assert a new level of international influence. The war's aftermath established the nation's status as a global superpower, and a booming postwar economy facilitated a new degree of social mobility. Yet Americans found themselves haunted by revelations about the Nazis' calculated murder of six million Jews and other “undesirables” in the Holocaust, by the world-ending terrors of the atomic bomb, and by the growth of Communism around the world. For many intellectuals, these specters made a prior generation's optimistic faith in progress appear naïve, and the once-attractive revolutionary dogmas of Communism now seemed to threaten civilization itself. Many religious thinkers found themselves engaged in a common cause against such perils. Despite renewed concerns in some circles that Catholicism was antifreedom and antidemocracy, even Catholics and Jews gained a new cultural legitimacy. The idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition, which became current in the 1930s as primarily a Protestant statement of solidarity against fascist erasures of Judaism, now marked America's self-image as a religious and democratic nation over and against the atheism and totalitarianism of the Soviets. Seeking some blend of solace, salvation, and social connection, Americans turned toward religion in numbers that added up to a full-fledged religious revival in the 1950s.¹

¹ Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America since World War II* (New York, 1988), 41, 55–69.

In this context, religious thinkers across traditions proclaimed religion as the only source of meaning in a meaningless world and a bulwark against secular and scientific hubris. Harry Emerson Fosdick, the popular voice of liberal Protestantism, whose sermons reached a nationwide radio audience of millions, preached that in an atomic age science itself was calling the modern world to repentance. This was an unfamiliar message for Fosdick, but it was shared across the theological spectrum by a figure like Billy Graham, whose fame was only beginning to take off in his 1949 crusades in Los Angeles and Boston: "This has been an age in which we have humanized God and deified man, and we have worshiped at the throne of science." The differences among Protestant fundamentalists and liberals were certainly not gone, but they seemed temporarily to recede in the existential crisis of the postwar period. Graham himself represented a new approach among evangelicals who rejected the strict exclusivism of the fundamentalists, reflected also in the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943.²

The chastened spirit of the times found expression in the growing influence of theologies that sought to recover religious orthodoxies for the modern world. Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy had its beginnings with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth in the 1910s, but in America it was associated above all with Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary. Countering a previously ascendant liberal theology but rejecting the doctrinal defensiveness of fundamentalism, Neo-Orthodoxy advocated a return to Calvinist emphases on the transcendence of God and the significance of human sin. Niebuhr applied these insights to national and international affairs, calling on the United States to bear its new global responsibilities with an awareness of the moral ambiguities of power. Existentialist philosophy provided a useful starting point for religious thinkers concerned with questions of meaning and human freedom. Avoiding the nihilism of such philosophers as Camus and Sartre, the existentialist theologians argued that faith provided the resolution to modern dilemmas. For Niebuhr's colleague Paul Tillich, the ultimate source of courage in the face of meaninglessness was the God "beyond the god of the religions." Tillich advocated replacing traditional religious terms with new metaphors, most famously speaking of God as "the ground of all being." Although less concerned with theological orthodoxy, as did Niebuhr, he emphasized the indispensability of faith in modernity, and his existentialist language spoke to many intellectuals who wanted religion to seem relevant again.³

² Harry Emerson Fosdick, *On Being Fit to Live With: Sermons on Post-War Christianity* (New York, 1946), 19, 23; Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York, 2007), 168, 285–91.

³ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Discerning the Signs of the Times* (New York, 1946); Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT, 2000), 187–9.

American Catholic thought addressed the contemporary situation out of a Neo-Scholastic tradition, built on the philosophies of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians, which emphasized the absolute perfection of God and the universality of natural law. In America, this tradition had considerable appeal both to lifetime Catholics and to potential converts as a foundation for moral clarity. One such convert was Thomas Merton, whose instant classic *Seven Storey Mountain* (1948) recounted his journey through Marxism and atheism to the Church and then into a Trappist monastery. Linking an existentialist concept of God as “Being Itself” to Neo-Scholastic thought, Merton communicated the philosophical and mystical depth of Catholicism to a broad readership. Along with other Catholic thinkers, he found in the Church the only resolution to the world’s crises. “If we follow nothing but our natures, our own philosophies, our own level of ethics, we will end up in hell.” God’s mercy and the guidance of the one true Church were essential to the salvation of the soul and the world alike.⁴

Many Jewish theologians also called for a return to traditions whose significance seemed newly evident. The most influential Jewish thinker heading into the postwar era was Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, who advocated the reconstruction of Judaism as a “religious civilization” that could contribute to the creation of a “free, just and cooperative social order” for all. In the wake of the Holocaust, a new generation of Jewish thinkers challenged this kind of liberal and humanistic Judaism to insist on the necessity of specifically religious commitments. The leading new voice in Conservative Judaism was Abraham Heschel of Jewish Theological Seminary, who had fled Germany before the war. Heschel insisted on the critical role of a God-centered theology in addressing existential dilemmas and called on Jews to return to a meaningful (though not legalistic) observance of halacha, the accumulated body of Jewish laws and practices. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, another German immigrant, who taught at Yeshiva University, was the towering figure of postwar Orthodox thought. Soloveitchik’s *Halakhic Man* idealized “a free man” who strives to live out the “ideal world” of the *halacha* in the real world. In existentialist tones, these thinkers advocated an integrated Jewish faith and practice as the foundation for Judaism’s future.⁵

America’s leaders in this Cold War era defined Communism as the primary threat to American ideals of religion, democracy, and freedom. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews alike supported this political culture by making the case for religion, or for their religion in particular, as the

⁴ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York, 1948), 173, 69.

⁵ Mordecai Menahem Kaplan, *The Future of the American Jew* (New York, 1948), xvii; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, 1951); Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia, 1983).

indispensible foundation for human freedom and democracy. Niebuhr identified Christianity as the essential “spiritual basis” for the democratic principle of the “dignity of the individual,” which America must now defend in the global struggle of “freedom against tyranny,” and as the only meaningful source of moral resources that could handle these new global responsibilities. The liberal Catholic internationalist Francis McMahon, the Reform Jewish thinker Will Herberg, and the Protestant ecumenist John Bennett all drew on traditions of religious personalism to define Communism as a violation of the basic Jewish and/or Christian principle that the human person, created in the image of God, had inherent dignity.⁶

This apparent religious consensus met with challenges from a variety of thinkers more concerned with religious purity than with American unity. One conservative Catholic dissenter was Leonard Feeney, a Jesuit priest whose public insistence that salvation came only through the Roman Catholic Church embarrassed his ecumenically minded archbishop. Defrocked for disobeying his superiors, Feeney became a minor celebrity among Catholics who disliked their Church’s accommodations to American culture. Fundamentalist Protestants similarly resisted the ecumenical drift of the new evangelicals, with conservative leaders like Bob Jones and Carl McIntire critical of Billy Graham’s willingness to work with more liberal Protestant churches.⁷ Reies López Tijerina, who would become a Chicano nationalist hero in the 1960s, began his career as a Pentecostal preacher who denounced American culture and its churches for their materialism, hypocrisy, pride, and violence. With a quintessentially American restorationist vision, he rejected contemporary Christianity as corrupt and appealed directly to the first-century church as he understood it. On that basis he founded a short-lived utopian community in the Arizona desert, where “all who believed were together and had things in common,” an experiment that revealed the extraordinary religious vision of a Latino Pentecostal preacher in defiance of the Cold War consensus.⁸

Other religious dissenters included pacifists and African American theologians who protested the violence and racism of the dominant order. The Quaker activist and writer A. J. Muste argued passionately that nonviolent resistance, including peaceful means to counter Soviet expansion and the

⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York, 1952), 1–5, 125–6, 72–3; Francis Elmer McMahon, *A Catholic Looks at the World* (New York, 1945); Will Herberg and David G. Dalin, *From Marxism to Judaism: The Collected Essays of Will Herberg* (New York, 1989); John C. Bennett, *Christianity and Communism* (New York, 1948).

⁷ Silk, *Spiritual Politics*, 74–81; Graham, *Just As I Am*, 302–3.

⁸ Rudy V. Busto, *King Tiger: The Religious Vision of Reies López Tijerina* (Albuquerque, NM, 2005), 97–132.

dismantling of the American military, was the only authentically Christian answer and the only way to break the cycle of violence. Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker movement in the 1930s, modeled a life of voluntary poverty following Christ and the saints as a spiritual discipline in service to the poor. Linking social injustice with militarism, Day and other Catholic Workers were jailed several times in the late 1950s for their refusal to participate in civil defense drills, offering inspiration to later generations of peace activists. Howard Thurman, cofounder of the interracial Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco in the 1940s and the first black dean of the Chapel at Boston University, wrote *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949) in response to Gandhi and other Indian critics of Christianity, concluding that Jesus was among the disinherited and had showed others how to survive with dignity. These thinkers brought the nation's self-proclaimed values of democracy, equality, and freedom to bear on America's long-standing patterns of poverty, violence, and racial discrimination.⁹

The growth of Asian religions presented another challenge to the majority religious landscape. Both Hinduism and Buddhism had long attracted some positive attention from religious liberals and spiritual seekers, and Chinese and Japanese immigrants were shaping American varieties of Buddhism particularly in the Pacific Rim states of Hawaii, California, and Oregon. By the 1950s, Zen Buddhism was particularly influential in an emerging American counterculture, in part through the influence of the Japanese immigrant and Zen teacher D. T. Suzuki. Suzuki presented Zen as a mystical teaching and a disciplined practice with the goal of enlightenment, which he glossed as freedom: "emancipation, moral, spiritual, as well as intellectual." Given the emphasis on freedom in a culture preoccupied with opposing totalitarianism, it is not surprising that Suzuki's teaching proved compelling to many. Alan Watts, who converted to Zen Buddhism in his native Britain and moved to the United States in the late 1930s, similarly insisted that Buddhism was not a "religion" but a "way of liberation" relevant to anyone seeking a way to understand the universe and how to live in it. These versions of Zen became important to writers of the "Beat generation" such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg, and Gary Snyder, who embraced the quest for a new consciousness as the spiritual dimension of their resistance to social convention.¹⁰

⁹ Abraham John Muste, *Of Holy Disobedience* (Wallingford, CT, 1952); Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (Maryknoll, NY, 1997); Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York, 1949).

¹⁰ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1959), 16–17; Alan Watts, *Eastern Wisdom, Modern Life: Collected Talks, 1960–1969* (Novato, CA, 2006), 3–12.

REVOLUTIONARY RELIGION AND THEOLOGIES OF LIBERATION

If the dominant theologies of the 1940s and 1950s tended to affirm American ideals, the most influential religious thinkers of the next generation raised powerful challenges to the status quo. The 1960s was famously a decade of political and cultural revolutions, from the civil rights and peace movements to the developing “sexual revolution” that challenged long-standing gender roles and sexual mores. In step with these trends, religious thinkers from Vatican II-era American Catholicism and the “death of God” movement to black, Hispanic, and feminist liberation theologies called for revolutionary changes in American religion. In their own self-understanding, all of these thinkers were reacting against the previous generation’s conformist or conservative tendencies, which they believed had obscured the injustices of American society and made religion increasingly irrelevant. Yet they made these critiques in the name of the same principles of freedom and democracy that had motivated their predecessors, and in this sense the radical theologies of the 1960s and 1970s were simply turning the early Cold War theologians’ central concerns back home to challenge American culture and religion.

Some of the most far-reaching developments in American religious thought emerged out of the African American civil rights movement. The political and legal strategies of earlier decades turned into a large-scale movement in 1955 after the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, sparking a boycott that ultimately desegregated the city’s public transportation system. The Baptist minister and theologian Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged through these events as the movement’s leading figure. King’s thought powerfully blended the black church tradition, liberal Protestant theology, American democratic ideals, and Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolent resistance. Reacting to white ministers’ criticisms of his actions as “unwise and untimely,” he insisted that the church in America must stop serving as the “arch-defender of the status quo” and instead become “extremists ... for love.” By the March on Washington in 1963, many white Protestants, Catholics, and Jews were actively supporting the movement. King himself grew ever more radical, developing a broader critique of racial discrimination in housing and economic policy in the North, joining in the protest against the war in Vietnam as another instance of the oppression of the poor.¹¹

¹¹ Martin Luther King, *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York, 1964).

Both the successes and the limitations of the civil rights movement radicalized black religious thought. Violent backlash against civil rights workers and black communities, along with the continuing realities of poverty, contributed to a growing disillusionment with nonviolence among a new generation. Articulating the righteous anger of so many African Americans at a system stacked against them, the Nation of Islam spokesman Malcolm X attacked Christianity as an oppressive “white man’s religion” and rejected King’s goals and methods as “Uncle Tom” strategies that did nothing to counteract the legacies of slavery and discrimination.¹² The theologian James Cone wrote his books *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) with an urgency forged in this crucible. Cone drew inspiration from both King and Malcolm X, and he argued alongside the Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez that the Bible’s central message was one of justice for the oppressed. From his position at the prestigious Union Theological Seminary, he attacked mainstream theology for a pretended universalism that ignored racism. “Because white theologians are well fed . . . the problem of hunger is not a theological issue for them. That is why they spend more time debating the relation between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith than probing the depths of Jesus’ command to feed the poor.” Cone’s later work turned toward African American religious and artistic traditions as sources for theological reflection, supported emerging feminist and womanist theologies, and connected with liberation theologies around the world.¹³

American Catholic participation in this revolutionary ferment took shape in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), convened by the Vatican to reconsider the Church’s relationship to the world. The buzzword *aggiornamento*, literally “bringing up to date,” expressed the council’s spirit of openness to change. The “Declaration on Religious Freedom,” drafted by the American theologian John Courtney Murray, officially affirmed the freedom of religion as fully consistent with Catholic doctrine. This and other declarations encouraging ecumenical dialogue and a positive attitude toward non-Christian religions transformed many outsiders’ impressions of the Church. Even more important within Catholic culture were significant reforms in the areas of liturgy, lay leadership, and the life of religious communities. Philip Berrigan and John O’Connor expressed the excitement many felt. “What’s been happening in the church, as everywhere else, is a revolution: everybody admits that Pope John let the fresh

¹² Malcolm X and Benjamin Karim, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches* (New York, 1971).

¹³ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York, 1975), 52; James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968–1998* (Boston, 1999).

air in, [and] the breeze turned into a hurricane” that could no longer be controlled “according to some cleverly designed, paternalistic plan.” As part of an emerging Catholic Left, they called for the Church to support movements for liberation and peace at home and around the world.¹⁴

Latin American and U.S. Latino/a theologies were a key part of this new Catholic ethos. The activist roots of liberation theology included the work of the United Farm Workers (UFW) organizers César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, who incorporated banners of Our Lady of Guadalupe into their picket lines in the mid-1960s, and, as did King, appealed in broadly civil-religious terms to the ecumenical goodwill of the American people. A full-fledged liberation theology emerged out of PADRES, an association of Mexican American priests that challenged the under-representation of Latinos in the priesthood, and its sister organization of Latina religious women, Las Hermanas. A leading figure in PADRES was Virgilio Elizondo, who insisted along with Gutiérrez and Cone on the gospel’s “preferential option for the poor.” Studying at the Institute Catholique in Paris in the 1970s, Elizondo developed the concept of *mestizaje* (mixed racial and cultural heritage) as a positive approach to Mexican American identity. Jesus, too, was the product of a *mestizaje* heritage, an identity with liberating potential for today’s Mexican Americans that could provide the foundation for a truly universal Church.¹⁵

Many religious thinkers opposed the Vietnam War and the accelerating nuclear arms race. As they moved out of their former cultural isolation, Mennonite thinkers joined the Quakers in publicly articulating a pacifist theology. The most influential was John Howard Yoder, who called for Christians to live in a “voluntary society” as modeled by Jesus and his followers, and to embrace “the renunciation of the sword” as a key to “the problem of Christian faithfulness ... in the age of the atom.” Meanwhile, the Jesuit priest Philip Berrigan, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, and the Lutheran minister Richard John Neuhaus cofounded Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV), a primary voice of religious activism against the war. Philip Berrigan and his brother, Daniel Berrigan, a Josephite priest and civil rights activist, were both imprisoned for burning draft records in Catonsville, Maryland. “Jesus Christ was a nonviolent revolutionary,” explained Philip Berrigan; “therefore, Christians have a duty to subvert society in order to create a world where justice

¹⁴ John Courtney Murray, *Religious Liberty, an End and a Beginning* (New York, 1966); John O’Connor and Philip Berrigan, *American Catholic Exodus* (Washington, DC, 1968), 2.

¹⁵ Jacques E. Levy and Cesar Chavez, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York, 1975), 72–86; Virgilio P. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY, 2000); Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet*, rev. ed. (Bloomington, IL, 1988).

prevails.”¹⁶ Some who rejected absolute pacifism nevertheless condemned this particular war. Reinhold Niebuhr opposed military action in Vietnam as “a meat ax” and called for a foreign policy focused on correcting the evils of racism and colonialism. Other religious voices supported the war in Vietnam as part of a strategy of containment necessary to prevent an all-out global war. The ethicist Paul Ramsey, who revived just war theory among Protestants, broke with Niebuhr to argue that this war was a “lesser evil” than its alternatives, and that counterinsurgency operations could be conducted according to just war principles.¹⁷

Some of the most celebrated new theologians of the era started with the assumption that traditional religion was on the decline in an increasingly secular world. Most prominent among them was Harvey Cox, who insisted in *The Secular City* (1965) that an authentic Christianity must be lived out in the world in support of social justice and social change. Cox criticized the institutional church as a stultifying force that could not “even make the first step in the pressing task of responding to God’s work in the present social revolution.” Learning from Gutiérrez that the theologian’s conversation partner in the Third World was not “the nonbeliever” but “the nonperson,” he increasingly called on liberal theologians to focus on the needs of the oppressed rather than the challenge of secularism.¹⁸ An even more radical embrace of the secular was that of the “death-of-God” theologians, most prominently Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, who proclaimed God’s demise as a cultural reality and a positive development for Christian theology. Reacting against Neo-Orthodoxy, these thinkers rejected traditional theological categories as impediments to real engagement with the world. Authentic Christianity for them involved a radical immersion in the world and its problems. In the modern experience of God’s absence, William Hamilton wrote, it was “in the city with both the needy neighbor and the enemy” that Christians could live out the deepest meaning of Christ’s incarnation. Among those who built on this movement was the feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, whose early work called for a radical renewal of Catholicism in the post-Vatican II context.¹⁹

¹⁶ John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottdale, PA, 1972), 8; Philip Berrigan and Fred Wilcox, *Fighting the Lamb’s War: Skirmishes with the American Empire; The Autobiography of Philip Berrigan* (Monroe, ME, 1996), 109.

¹⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson (Philadelphia, 1957), 299, 194; Paul Ramsey, *War and the Christian Conscience: How Shall Modern War Be Conducted Justly?* (Durham, NC, 1961), xix–xx, 11–12.

¹⁸ Harvey Gallagher Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York, 1965) 72–3, 206.

¹⁹ Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis, 1966), 41; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *The Church against Itself:*

Reflections on the “death of God” had quite different resonances in post-Holocaust Jewish thought, which took new form after the crisis of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967. The novels of Elie Wiesel helped set the context for the new theology, giving voice to Jews in the concentration camps who had questioned the reality or the continued existence of God in the face of their suffering: how could the God of the covenant stand by and allow the mass murder of his chosen people? For Richard Rubenstein, the Holocaust demonstrated the futility of any further belief in a deity who acts in history and so caused the death of God for contemporary Jews. Emil Fackenheim, who had escaped Nazi Germany to become a leading Reform theologian, countered that God had in fact been present in the very suffering of the Jews, and he formulated the widely influential “614th commandment” that Jews must remain faithful to their identity lest they “grant Hitler a posthumous victory.” Many saw this history and the ongoing hostility Israel faced as ample justification for a strong military in self-defense. According to the modern Orthodox theologian and rabbi Irving Greenberg, “While power must be used morally, it is immoral to impose upon Israel the kinds of limits that will guarantee its destruction.”²⁰ Countering this conclusion, some Jews on the political Left argued that Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians not only was making its geopolitical situation more precarious, but constituted a betrayal of Jewish ethical obligations and religious identity.²¹

Feminist theology emerged in the early 1970s as another kind of challenge to religious orthodoxy, both within the established religions and beyond them. Rosemary Radford Ruether challenged the patriarchal dimensions of Western religious traditions and worked to reconstruct Christianity in feminist terms. Sharing the premises of liberation theology, she remained committed throughout her career to developing Christianity’s liberating potential. Jewish feminists made parallel arguments, most prominently Judith Plaskow, who argued for a Judaism that honored women as “heirs and shapers of Judaism.”²² A different trajectory in feminist religious thought rejected Christianity and Judaism, and implicitly or explicitly

An Inquiry into the Conditions of Historical Existence for the Eschatological Community (New York, 1967).

²⁰ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis, 1966); Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (New York, 1982), 299–313; Irving Greenberg and Shalom Freedman, *Living in the Image of God: Jewish Teachings to Perfect the World* (Northvale, NJ, 1998), xxi.

²¹ Michael Lerner, *Healing Israel/Palestine: A Path to Peace and Reconciliation* (Berkeley, 2003); Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation: The Challenge of the 21st Century*, 3rd ed. (Waco, TX, 2004).

²² Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York, 1975); Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York, 1990).

other major world religions as well. Mary Daly, whose earlier work had criticized the sexism of Christianity from within, determined in her influential *Beyond God the Father* (1973) that Christianity and Judaism were inherently patriarchal, and she began to seek “post-Christian” feminist alternatives. Carol Christ, who eventually left the academy to lead workshops at ancient sites associated with goddess worship, argued for the benefits of turning to goddess-centered spirituality as a woman-friendly tradition whose origins predated both Judaism and Christianity.²³ Also important in the feminist spirituality movement was Wicca, whose leading thinkers Starhawk and Zsuzsanna Budapest articulated a nondualistic and nature-based tradition that positively valued women, the body, and the earth.²⁴

African American and Latina women soon began to challenge feminist and liberation theologies as failing to attend to the distinctive experiences of women of color. Audre Lorde was among the first to criticize the feminist movement for presenting white women’s experiences as an unspoken norm, pointing out that white women’s liberation had often been built on the continued oppression of black women and men. Meanwhile, rejecting the idea that feminism only concerned white women, Jacquelyn Grant condemned the continued sexism of Black Theology and insisted on the equal partnership of black women as theologians and church leaders.²⁵ Black women ethicists and theologians such as Katie Cannon and Emilie Townes soon began to call themselves “womanists” – a term coined by the novelist and essayist Alice Walker to express black women’s strength, creativity, and concern for the entire African American community – and explored black women’s historical and literary traditions as a resource for womanist religious thought.²⁶ In similar terms, the Latina theologians Ada María Iasí-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango developed a distinctive Mujerista Theology that challenged the sexism and the racism of the Roman Catholic Church, insisting on the right of Latinas to define their own experiences, identities,

²³ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, 1973); Carol P. Christ, *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess* (San Francisco, 1987).

²⁴ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco, 1979); Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Los Angeles, 1979).

²⁵ Audre Lorde, “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” (1979), reprinted in Paul Harvey and Philip Goff, *The Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America since 1945* (New York, 2005), 214–17; Jacquelyn Grant, “Black Theology and the Black Woman” (1979), in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979* (Maryknoll, NY, 1979), 418–33.

²⁶ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, 1983); Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta, 1988); Emilie Maureen Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* (Atlanta, 1993).

and theological perspectives. Other new perspectives arose from Asian American women such as Rita Nakashima Brock, whose work employed postcolonial theory to give positive valence to Asian religious hybridity in the experience of Asian American women. Starting in the mid-1980s, feminist, womanist, and Mujerista theologians joined in searching dialogues aimed at addressing multiple structures of oppression.²⁷

Where African American, Latino/a, and feminist/womanist theologians developed Christian thought in liberationist directions, some Native Americans used indigenous traditions to critique Christianity as part of the legacy of conquest. The theoretical and religious rationale for the “Red Power” movement was developed most extensively by Vine Deloria, Jr. (Yankton Sioux), a lawyer, activist, and leading American Indian intellectual. Deloria was the son of an Episcopal priest and had attempted to work within the church until he grew disillusioned with its failure to honor indigenous leadership. He forcefully rejected the ideal of assimilation or of “civil rights” within the dominant system, and he demanded Indian sovereignty in both political and religious terms. *God Is Red* (1970) judged Christianity as a system of oppressive dualisms that justified violence against Indians and against the earth, in stark contrast to the balance and relationality of Native American religious traditions. Other Native Americans remained committed to a Christianity that had helped nurture tribal identities, and they developed distinctive theologies in support of Indian struggles for justice and sovereignty. Robert Allen Warrior (Osage) pointed out that liberation theologians had overlooked the experiences of the indigenous Canaanites “who already lived on the land” and were dispossessed just as Native Americans had been. Native American theology took mature form by the end of the century, when Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George Tinker systematically reinterpreted Christian theological categories through the lens of indigenous traditions.²⁸

Another source of alternative religious visions was Buddhism, both in dialogue with the established traditions and through the growth of distinctively American Buddhist traditions. The Beat generation poet Gary Snyder studied intensively with Zen teachers in Japan during the late 1950s and most of the 1960s, and he addressed issues of injustice, Native

²⁷ Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco, 1988); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York, 1988); Katie G. Cannon and Mud Flower Collective, *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York, 1985).

²⁸ Vine Deloria, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Golden, CO, 1992); James Treat, ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York, 1996); Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY, 2001).

American land rights, and environmental problems from a Buddhist perspective. In his later work, Snyder developed an expanded vision of the Buddhist *sangha* (community) as a “Village Council of All Beings,” conceiving of human beings as part of an interconnected ecosystem.²⁹ Legal reforms in 1965 facilitated the growth of new immigrant Buddhist communities including the Vajrayana Buddhism of the Tibetan diaspora, the Pure Land tradition of the Buddhist Church of America, the Theravada Buddhism of Thai and Sri Lankan immigrants, and the various traditions of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Korean immigrant communities. An important thinker from these communities was Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk famous for his peace activism in the Vietnam War who wrote more than sixty books as the leading proponent of socially engaged Buddhism. Nhat Hanh emphasized the Mahayana principles of the inter-relatedness of all living things and the practice of universal compassion as the foundation for activism on behalf of peace, social justice, and the environment.³⁰ Converts to Buddhism included many women who found in it a radically egalitarian tradition, in philosophy if not always in practice. Feminists told the stories of Buddhist women teachers, nuns, and mystics and protested against the marginalization of women in contemporary Buddhist traditions. Rita Gross argued that unlike traditions premised on the worship of a male God, Buddhist philosophies, worldviews, and symbol systems were egalitarian. Its patriarchal dimensions were at the level of institutions and religious practice, which she saw as less basic to the tradition than philosophy and symbol systems and, therefore, easier to reform.³¹

THE CULTURE WARS AND POSTMODERN RELIGION IN THE 1980S AND BEYOND

Even as progressive voices remained active, the decades of the 1980s and 1990s saw a resurgence of conservative influences across American religions. Virtually every religious group found itself divided over the “culture wars” that seemed to break America apart between a liberal Left and a conservative

²⁹ Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York, 1974); Charles Strain, “The Pacific Buddha’s Wild Practice: Gary Snyder’s Environmental Ethic,” in Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher S. Queen, *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship* (Richmond, VA, 1999), 143–67.

³⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh and Rachel Neumann, *Being Peace*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, 2005).

³¹ Tsultrim Allione, *Women of Wisdom* (Boston, 1984); Lenore Friedman, *Meetings with Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America*, rev. ed. (Boston, 2000); Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (Albany, NY, 1993).

Right. Where religious activists in the 1960s had focused on peace, civil rights, and social justice, more visible by the 1980s were religious conservatives who opposed abortion, homosexuality, and secularism as threats to the moral order. Theological debates within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam revealed competing views of scripture and tradition in all three traditions. Conservative voices insisted that religion, public morality, and civil society must rest on a firm foundation of revealed and unchanging truth. On the other hand, liberals and progressives across religions argued for a more open-ended understanding of tradition that continued to develop in and through contemporary experience.

American Muslim thought took shape as theologians grounded in Islamic philosophical traditions strove to articulate principles for living faithfully in non-Islamic contexts, a task complicated by the negative perceptions of Islam that dominated American culture well before the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. About one-fourth of Muslims at the end of the twentieth century were African Americans, who had converted to various Islamic movements from the 1920s onward. An important leader in this community was Warith Deen Muhammad, who moved the Nation of Islam, renamed the American Society of Muslims, toward more orthodox Sunni practice and emphasized concerns of racial and social justice in a global Islamic dialogue.³² The other three-fourths were immigrants, including substantial numbers from the Arab world, South Asia, Iran, and sub-Saharan Africa. Although these Muslims appreciated the education, technologies, and political freedoms of the United States, many were deeply critical of the social and spiritual ills they saw in their adopted country and had no desire to accommodate American ways of life. A leading advocate of this traditionalist position was the Iranian-born Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who studied at Harvard, taught in Iran for twenty years, and then returned to the United States after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Nasr sought to recover the sacred foundations of knowledge, defending Islamic tradition in particular and religion in general against the onslaughts of secularism in the modern world. For American Muslim youth he offered an informed map of Western intellectual culture, presenting the Qur'an and the rich philosophical and spiritual traditions of Islam as the "intellectual and moral armor" necessary to maintain faith in a "world which has lost its direction and orientation."³³

Other thinkers advocated a more open Muslim identity that could fully engage with modern culture. An important moderate-to-liberal theologian

³² Muhammad's essays and speeches are available at <http://newafricaradio.com/> (accessed 30 Oct. 2009).

³³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York, 1981); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1994), ix.

was Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, who earned his doctorate at Oxford University in 1949, taught in England and in Canada, and was forced to leave a political appointment in his native Pakistan during the 1960s because of his theological liberalism. Rahman criticized medieval Islamic thinkers for developing a static interpretive tradition, and he argued for a recovery of early Islam's dynamic spirit in order to apply the principles of the Qur'an to contemporary realities. He interpreted the Qur'an not as a strict law book dictating every detail of life, but as a source of legal and ethical guidelines that prioritized a just and egalitarian social order. Rejecting the notion of a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West, he saw the modernization of Muslim thought not as an accommodation to Western culture but as an intrinsic part of Islamic tradition. By the 1990s, Muslim feminist scholars diagnosed the subordination of women in many Islamic societies as a product of patriarchal cultures that should be challenged rather than endorsed by Islam. Amina Wadud, an African American Muslim scholar, emphasized the gender-inclusive and egalitarian principles of the Qur'an and called for the inclusion of women's perspectives in shaping Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic tradition. In keeping with their respective approaches to tradition, Fazlur Rahman supported full equality for women in accordance with the Qur'anic ethic of justice, while the conservative Sayeed Hussein Nasr affirmed the "complementarity" of Islamic gender roles and cautioned Muslims against adopting changing Western fashions such as feminism.³⁴

Jewish thinkers also addressed a felt tension between tradition and modernity. The vocal minority of ultra-Orthodox Haredim and Hasidim defined Judaism in terms of strict halachic observance and separation from the non-Jewish world. Modern Orthodox thinkers, though sharing the concern for Torah and halacha, advocated a far more extensive engagement with modernity. Irving Greenberg's influential theology of a "voluntary" covenant posited that God had broken his covenant with the Jewish people by failing to intervene in the Holocaust. The post-Holocaust miracle was that Jews had freely chosen to take up the covenant again, demonstrating an amazing faithfulness to God and to the now-voluntary work of the covenant: *tikkun olam*, the perfection or the healing of the world. Greenberg rejected the cultural isolation of the Haredim as a dead end that would prevent Judaism from fulfilling this covenantal promise and argued for an intellectual deepening of Orthodoxy facilitated by historical and biblical

³⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago, 1982); Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1999); Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, 1980), 47–51; Nasr, *Young Muslim's Guide*, 33–5.

criticism. The modern Orthodox theologian Michael Wyschogrod likewise insisted that Judaism must maintain “the ties that bind it to the rest of humanity and that make it a surrogate of that humanity” if Jews were to fulfill their role as the Chosen People. At the same time, Wyschogrod rejected the non-Orthodox tendency toward selective observance and insisted “the commandments of the Torah are binding and it is the obligation of every Jew to obey them to the best of his or her ability.” In this view, both halachic faithfulness and full engagement with the world were necessary for Jews to live out their covenantal obligations.³⁵

Non-Orthodox Jewish thinkers, especially those in the Reform movement, developed a far more open understanding of halacha and tradition. Feminist theologians in particular argued that the entire Jewish tradition must be reconfigured to account for women’s experiences, and they conceptualized Judaism as an “extended conversation” that must include biblical, talmudic, and contemporary voices, especially those of women who had been excluded for so long. Judith Plaskow argued that halacha was a fundamentally patriarchal construction and that women should, therefore, focus on remaking theological discourse. She configured Jewish identity in a characteristically Reform way as primarily a matter of ethical obligation: “I assume that to have been a slave in the land of Egypt is the basis of a profound religious obligation to do justice in the world. I assume that one finds God in the world, in acts of love and justice, and not beyond or outside the world.” Attempting to move beyond the Orthodox-liberal stalemate, the Reform thinker Eugene Borowitz’s “covenant theology” called for a postmodern Judaism that took religious obligation seriously even when Jews could no longer be disciplined by the requirements of halacha. “Because I know myself to be related to God as part of the people of Israel’s historic Covenant with God, I can be true to myself only as I, in my specific individuality, am true to God, to other Jews, to the Jewish tradition, and to the Jewish messianic dream.” Here, being an observant Jew followed not from externally imposed obligation but from internal identity lived out in engagement with the tradition and the community.³⁶

Conservative Christians grew more vocal in the 1980s largely in reaction against the liberal politics of the previous decades. An opening salvo in the culture wars was *The Naked Public Square* (1984) by the former antiwar

³⁵ Irving Greenberg and Shalom Freedman, *Living in the Image of God: Jewish Teachings to Perfect the World* (Northvale, NJ, 1998), 57–8, 160–80; Michael Wyschogrod and R. Kendall Soulen, *Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 232, 236.

³⁶ Judith Plaskow and Donna Berman, *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1972–2003* (Boston, 2005), 56–64; Eugene B. Borowitz, *Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew* (Philadelphia, 1991), 299.

Lutheran minister Richard John Neuhaus, who soon became a Catholic and a leader in the neoconservative movement. Neuhaus argued that Christians must not assent to the privatization of religion, and that America needed a religious center as the source for civic morality and “transcendent sanctions” against abuses of power. In order to restore such a center, he called for Catholic intellectuals to abandon their postconciliar turn to the Left – which he considered a dangerous capitulation to American-style individualism and relativism – and restore the older “tradition of reasoned political discourse” exemplified by the midcentury theologian John Courtney Murray. Another influential Catholic neoconservative was George Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., whose best-selling *Witness to Hope* (1999) praised Pope John Paul II as a champion of human rights, democracy, and religion against the dangers of secularism and totalitarian rule around the world. Among those dangers for Weigel was liberation theology, which he rejected as a Marxist “vanguard” that threatened individual liberties and falsely politicized religion. He applauded the Vatican for silencing several liberation theologians in the 1980s, and more generally for its efforts to repudiate relativism and secularism as destructive forces in the modern world.³⁷

Thinkers in the wider spectrum of conservative Catholicism insisted on the universal authority of the Church and the eternal truth of its doctrines. Many conservatives placed particular emphasis on issues of sexual morality, especially in opposition to contraception and abortion. The Catholic bishops’ “consistent ethic of life,” which at least in theory cut across the political spectrum by condemning abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, social/economic injustice, and the practices of modern warfare, was unacceptable to the most conservative thinkers because it overemphasized “politically correct social justice issues” that had no firm basis in scripture or tradition. The Dominican moral theologian Benedict Ashley decried what he saw as a widespread failure to distinguish “between what is authentically Christian and what is simply a reflection of American culture dominated by secular humanists.” He blamed Karl Rahner, the leading midcentury “Transcendental Thomist,” for denying the objective nature of natural law and so providing an entree for a range of liberal theologies into Catholic circles. In contrast, the more moderately conservative Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles, named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 2001, affirmed Rahner’s view of Church teachings as open to ongoing

³⁷ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1984), 6–8, 258–64; George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York, 1999); George Weigel, *Freedom and Its Discontents: Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (Washington, DC, 1991), 41–5.

development, as long as this was applied only to the *presentation* of essentially eternal doctrines. Countering the liberal efforts to expand on Vatican II reforms, Dulles emphasized the continuity of tradition and cautioned against the tendency “to portray the Catholic polity and dogma as if they were subject to perpetual reinvention.”³⁸

Realigned and rearticulated conservative identities encouraged new levels of political engagement. The Protestant side of this story involved the sort of transformation epitomized by the Rev. Jerry Falwell, a Baptist minister in Virginia, who had once condemned ministers in the civil rights movement on the grounds that religion and politics should not be mixed. By the late 1970s, Falwell had determined that fundamentalists had the moral obligation to staunch America’s decline by reclaiming the nation for God, and his Moral Majority organization became the core of the decade’s new “Religious Right.”³⁹ Another key leader was Pat Robertson, a Southern Baptist minister and televangelist whose initiatives included the much-viewed Christian Broadcasting Network, Regent University as a flagship conservative institution, and the Christian Coalition, arguably the most important conservative Christian organization of the 1990s. Robertson railed against the “agendas of the radical feminists, homosexuals, [and] Planned Parenthood” and vowed to win the nation back for Christianity. His “dominion theology” held that Christians should therefore work to align U.S. laws with the biblical model.⁴⁰

Conservative evangelicals and Catholics soon found common cause against the liberal influences that both groups believed were destroying America. A key figure here was Charles Colson, a former member of the Nixon administration, who converted to evangelical Christianity in prison after his conviction in the Watergate scandal. Colson’s book, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (1987), responded to Neuhaus as a kindred spirit, arguing that America must recapture its Christian character in order to stave off disaster. Colson and Neuhaus convened a meeting of Catholic and evangelical conservatives, whose statement “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (1995) emphasized their shared battle against the “widespread secularization [that]

³⁸ Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby, *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), 78–83; Avery Robert Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma: Faith, Authority, and Dogma in a Changing World* (New York, 1982), 195, 203; Avery Robert Dulles, *A Testimonial to Grace and Reflections on a Theological Journey*, 50th anniversary ed. (Kansas City, 1996), 109–10.

³⁹ Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

⁴⁰ Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide: The Fall of Liberalism and the Rise of Common Sense* (Dallas, 1993), 302–3; Pat Robertson and Bob Slosser, *The Secret Kingdom* (Nashville, TN, 1982).

increasingly descends into a moral, intellectual, and spiritual nihilism.” Its signatories included the leading conservative Catholic theologians George Weigel and Avery Dulles alongside a range of evangelical luminaries such as Pat Robertson, Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), and Richard Muow (Fuller Theological Seminary).⁴¹

Resisting this conservative analysis, progressive Christian thinkers continued to develop theologies that placed liberation and justice at the heart of the Christian gospel. The variety of “liberal” Catholics shared an embrace of experience as a crucial source for theology, an emphasis on justice for the oppressed, and a critical stance toward the authority of the hierarchy based on an understanding of the church as the plural people of God. These trends were fully consistent with the ideas of midcentury theologians such as Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx, who had found God’s revelation revealed and reinterpreted through history and human experience. Working in this vein, David Tracy of the University of Chicago argued that theology must incorporate interpretive analysis of the current situation with reflection on an already plural religious tradition. Expressing the impact of “two-thirds world” theologies in his thought, he advocated “a positive theological hermeneutics guided by the strength and, above all, the hope present in the struggles for justice and integrity across the globe.” Meanwhile, Latino/a liberation theologies developed with increasing attention to the diversity of Hispanic communities in the United States – Protestant as well as Catholic; Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central American as well as Mexican American. Orlando Espín, a founding member of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS), insisted that mainstream Catholic theology must take Latino/a religious experiences and expressions seriously in order to address an increasingly polycentric and multicultural age. Feminist and womanist theologians also developed new critiques of America’s role in the twenty-first-century global order. Thus, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argued for an anti-imperial scholarship of the Christian Testament (New Testament) that could deconstruct its uses “in the service of empire, colonialist expansion, racist, exploitation, and heterosexist discrimination,” and advocated new interpretive methods “in the interest of constructing [an alternative] scriptural ethos of radical democracy.”⁴²

⁴¹ Charles W. Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (New York, 1987), 47–9, 78; Charles W. Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas, 1995), xvii.

⁴² David Tracy, *On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll, NY, 1994), ix–xii; Orlando O. Espín, *Building Bridges, Doing Justice: Constructing a Latino/a Ecumenical Theology* (Maryknoll, NY, 2009); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis, 2007), 6–7.

Starting in the 1980s, new theological voices emerged out of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community. GLBT theologians and biblical scholars argued that Christian condemnations of homosexuality were based on misinterpretations of a few scriptural passages and that the essential liberating message of the Bible should be understood as an affirmation of GLBT identities. The Episcopal priest and theologian Carter Heyward coined the term “goddling” to express the concept that each person could incarnate God, just as Jesus did, through just and loving relationality. On this basis she rethought the basis of sexual ethics neither as a matter of divinely ordained rights and wrongs, nor in the standard liberal formulation of “mutual consent,” but in terms of whether the sexual activity in question contributed to the well-being of those involved. Robert Goss, a former Jesuit priest and gay rights activist, built on liberation theology to argue that God’s love for the poor and outcast included gays and lesbians.⁴³ African American and womanist theologians also challenged the heterosexism in the black church, arguing that African American concerns for liberation must extend to the GLBT community.⁴⁴ Similarly, progressive Jewish theologians advocated the reinterpretation of traditions and texts in ways that honored the sacredness of GLBT identities and experiences.⁴⁵

Other liberal thinkers continued to mine the implications of historical-critical analysis of the Bible in search of relevance in a secular age. The “Jesus Seminar,” which in the eyes of critics exemplified the worst of liberal scholarship’s deconstructive tendencies, attempted to strip away the “mythology” of Christianity in order to access the “historical Jesus” and the religion he taught. For its founder, Robert Funk, this was at heart an effort to determine “the contours of a faith suitable for the third millennium and the global age we are now entering.” Dismissing gospel accounts of miraculous events including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus, he believed the seminar had discovered the basis for a new Christianity far more compatible with “the modern mind.” The seminar member Marcus Borg’s best-selling books used historical-critical tools to dethrone dogmatic and literalistic views of God and the Bible, advocating in their place a panentheistic, loving, and relational God. A similar impulse motivated

⁴³ Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation* (New York, 1984); Carter Heyward, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco, 1989); Robert Goss, *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (San Francisco, 1994).

⁴⁴ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY, 1999); Dwight N. Hopkins and Anthony B. Pinn, *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic* (New York, 2004).

⁴⁵ Rebecca T. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* (New York, 1997); Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer, *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible* (New York, 2009).

the work of the New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, whose writing introduced popular audiences to modern biblical scholarship with the goal of making more liberal Christians: “A historical-critical approach to the Bible does not necessarily lead to agnosticism or atheism,” but “can in fact lead to a more intelligent and thoughtful faith” that emphasizes Christianity’s overall ethical concerns of love and justice.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, “postliberal” theologies attempted to transcend the conservative/liberal divide by refocusing on the internal norms of Christian communities and traditions. The “Yale school” of the 1970s and 1980s, led by Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, focused attention on the role of biblical and theological narratives in shaping Christian communities. Without rejecting the validity of historical-critical hermeneutical practices, they suggested that such preoccupations had largely missed the point of theology as renarrating the Christian tradition in its own terms.⁴⁷ The best-known postliberal theologian was Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University, who rejected what he saw as the fundamentally misguided effort to make Christianity relevant to the modern world. Instead, theologians needed to highlight Christianity’s distinctiveness so as to strengthen the witness of Christian communities. Hauerwas saw Christians as “resident aliens” whose allegiance must be not to nation or world but to God’s kingdom, a way modeled and made possible by Jesus Christ. Following the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, he insisted on “nonviolence as a hallmark of the Christian way of being in the world.”⁴⁸ Postliberal theology found popular expression in the “emerging church movement,” led by the former English professor Brian McLaren, who called for a “generous orthodoxy” to address the emerging postmodern culture. McLaren wrote that the church needed to redirect its attention to Jesus’ radical invitation to live out “the kingdom of God” in the here and now, presenting “a non-violent, radical alternative” for tackling major contemporary problems such as environmental destruction, poverty, war, and an absence of meaning.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Robert W. Funk, *The Once and Future Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA, 2000), 5–26; Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally* (San Francisco, 2001); Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know about Them)* (New York, 2009), 271–83.

⁴⁷ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT, 1974); George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, 1984).

⁴⁸ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN, 1989); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Cross-Shattered Church: Reclaiming the Theological Heart of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), 145.

⁴⁹ Brian D. McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything* (Nashville, TN, 2006); Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville, TN, 2007).

Religious thinkers across traditions addressed issues of environmental destruction and climate change. An influential essay by Lynn White in 1967 located the roots of the crisis in the Judeo-Christian tradition's exploitative attitudes toward nature. Many theologians found aspects of this indictment accurate, and they set themselves the task of rethinking their traditions to support environmental sustainability. Some found inspiration in process theology, which understood God as encompassing and guiding an always-developing universe. Process theologian John Cobb called for an understanding of human beings as part of an "ecological system of interpenetration and interdependence," and he developed practical recommendations based on his analysis of the intersections of economy, ecology, and justice.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, as part of a broader ecofeminist movement, feminist and womanist theologians identified parallels between the "rape of the earth," the patriarchal subjugation of women, and structures of racial, colonial, and class-based exploitation. Building on feminist, liberation, and process theologies, Sallie McFague argued for a "model of the universe as God's body" and insisted that "the liberating, healing, and inclusive ministry of Jesus" must now "be extended to a new poor – nature."⁵¹ Liberal Catholic thinkers developed similar perspectives. Matthew Fox, a leader in the "creation spirituality" movement, imaged environmental destruction as the crucifixion of a Cosmic Christ incarnate in the earth and the universe itself. More influential among academic theologians was the "cosmologist" and ecotheologian Thomas Berry, who challenged Christians to take a leading role in halting the destruction of ecosystems, the extinction of countless species, and the current environmental threats to future generations.⁵² Evangelical Protestants were more hesitant, many of them alienated by what they saw as "nature worship" among advocates of earth-centered spirituality. In the 1990s, however, progressive evangelicals like Tony Campolo began to articulate an environmentally friendly theology that emphasized traditional Christian themes of stewardship and care for God's creation. Soon other leaders such as Rick Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals were advocating what they called "creation care," including a focus on global warming, a trend that remained controversial in evangelical circles.⁵³

⁵⁰ John B. Cobb, *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1972), 91, 100; John B. Cobb, *Sustainability: Economics, Ecology, and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY, 1992).

⁵¹ Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, 1993), vii–viii, xii.

⁵² Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco, 1988); Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, 1988); Thomas Berry, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (Maryknoll, NY, 2009).

⁵³ Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshipping Nature: A Christian's Call to Save Creation* (Nashville, TN, 1992); "Interview with Rev. Richard Cizik," The

Despite predictions of religion's demise from its critics and champions alike, it was clear by the dawn of the twenty-first century that secularization was a historically contingent phenomenon, and that religious commitments remained influential around the world. Fearing it as a destructive or divisive influence, some thinkers such as the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty continued to call for the strict confinement of religion to the private sphere. Other philosophers, notably Jeffrey Stout of Princeton University, joined both liberal and conservative religious thinkers to support the full inclusion of religious voices in public debate.⁵⁴ But whatever the philosophers' opinions on the matter, a wide variety of religious voices had asserted themselves on matters of public import throughout U.S. history and would do so into the foreseeable future. And whether or not religious thinkers wanted their thought to be influenced by modern life, it was clear that the wide variety of American cultural developments and conflicts would continue to shape the contours of American religion.

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Great Warming, <http://www.thegreatwarming.com/revrichardcizik.html> (accessed 16 Dec. 2009).

⁵⁴ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London, 1999); Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).

RELIGION AND MISSIONS

ANGELYN DRIES

Virtually all of the geographic area of the Americas reveals multiple strata of interaction between religion and “foreign” cultures for more than five centuries of missions. The period exhibits a major dynamic of forced or voluntary immigration/migration, a diversity of ethnic and mixed populations, and a perennial mission impulse to meet multiple situations. Missions were not simply about religion but involved complexities around gender, language, culture, politics, authority, and identity. Mission to, within, and from the Americas was driven by the relationship between church and government at home and abroad, particular political and socioeconomic conditions in the new country, theological perspectives, missionary perception of the nature of the human person, variations of pedagogical/mission methods within groups, and assumed or expressed definitions of mission.

The term “missions,” from the Latin *missio*, “a sending away,” has its own history with different emphases in various Christian and academic communities. The use of the word is situated in mid-sixteenth-century explorations of the New World, particularly with Ignatius Loyola’s identification of Jesuit work as missions. Felix Anton Scheffler’s sketch for a church ceiling mural, *St. Ignatius and the Four Parts of the World: Allegory of Jesuit Missionary Work*, 1701–60, portrayed Ignatius in the center, looking up toward the Spirit in the form of a dove, with winged cherubs pointing toward figures representing the “corners” of the world. America was portrayed as an indigenous person carrying an arrow.¹ Christian missions since then have meant a specific place missionaries established, or the interaction of missionaries with a religious culture (or no religious culture, as was sometimes thought), ethnicity, or a country different from European or American culture. Missions could signify efforts to “preach Christ,” “plant

¹ For the sketch and its interpretation, see J. B. Harley, “The Map as Mission: Jesuit Cartography as an Art of Persuasion,” in Jane ten Brink Goldsmith et al., *Jesuit Art in North American Collections* (Dobbs Ferry, NY, 1991), 28–30, 59.

a church,” “reach unreached peoples,” organize for justice in the face of oppression, or introduce to those not Christian religious and cultural elements (education, health care, and social services) associated with “civilization.” In practice, missions and evangelization have often been conflated, though “foreign missions” implied the processes outlined here beyond one’s home country. Invariably, missions carried an energy, spirit, and attempt to communicate with “the other,” with varying degrees of sensitivity toward local cultural practices and worldviews. Generally, experiences of revival or reform issued in some type of mission or missions.

European and African first contact with the Americas took place in a land where tribal goods, services, and terrain distribution had occurred through barter, trade, or warfare over several thousand years. Missionaries, who arrived on the continent simultaneously with colonial expansion, at times actively sought to rid indigenous groups of everything not recognized as “religious” or “civilized.” Evidence abounds where natives actively, passively, or in quasi-liturgical mockery resisted Christianity. While missionaries destroyed objects they considered “idols” or not “religious,” conquistadores did the same thing for other purposes and usurped Aztec temples, for example, as fortresses. Contemporary scholarship has reexamined the complex relationship that existed between missionaries and those with whom they interacted and has taken into account, among other things, the agency of indigenous groups, an analysis of sociolinguistic dynamics of cross-cultural relations, the role of the arts, and various nuances of “conversion,” as experienced by indigenous people and missionaries.

MISSION TO THE AMERICAS IN A COLONIAL CONTEXT

European missionaries’ arrival in what was thought of as a “New World” was initiated during colonial exploration, expansion, and search for new commodities and wealth. Wherever missionaries first waded ashore, the land was defined by indigenous groups, some of whom had banded together willingly for mutual support or, as had the Mayans in Central America and the Incans in modern-day Peru area, had formed empires through military expansion. Each encounter with indigenous people raised new questions for missionaries who took particular spiritual traditions to a situation vastly different from their home country in culture, climate, and religion. The geographic extent of Spanish and Portuguese colonial missions, while theoretically encompassing entire sections of a continent, hovered for decades around the waters’ edges, either oceans, rivers, or lakes. While the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) cleared up the confusion as to which lands were assigned to Portugal, that country concentrated mainly on the routes to the East, including Africa. The *Patronato/Padronado Real*, or king’s patronage, meant

that the crown had absolute control over the Church in the lands designated to them in the New World. As part of the settlement with the papacy, the crown was to “propagate the faith,” a task they assigned to religious orders. Missioners followed the path of colonial powers that provided authorization for travel, though the relation between missioners and the crown and colonial governance was often at odds, as was sometimes the case between missioners and other ecclesiastics at the mission site. More than five centuries of missions and the Americas eventually contributed to a larger picture of a global Christianity, especially through a continuous process of migration and immigration.

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE AMERICA, 1492–1800

Early Spanish missioners arrived in the glow of a “golden age” of literature, the arts, humanism, and orthodox Catholicism. Christianity’s origins in the New World began in the Caribbean (1493–1522), with mission emanating from Mexico, including the Franciscan mission college of Querétaro, Mexico, and from Peru (1524–60), with church planting moving out from Mexico and Uma (1551–1620).

The first band of Franciscan missioners, who called themselves the “Twelve Apostles,” were influenced by the humanist ideas of the utopian experimental urban communities of Bishop Vasco de Quiroga of Michoacán and Thomas More’s *Utopia*, as well as millennial thought that saw the present age to be that of the Spirit and the New World as the locus for the Spirit’s action through the mendicants. The Franciscans, who valued simplicity and poverty, spoke with praise of the same values they saw among the natives: they had small houses, possessed few items of clothing or material goods, took only the necessities to sustain life, and lived amicably with each other. These values indicated Native American capacity for receiving grace and baptism. The Franciscans learned the language and wrote grammars and dictionaries, though the next generation of friars did not have the same mind-set or interest in learning the language.

Interaction of missioners and “the other” occasioned the emergence of international law, as theologians in Spain and missioners in the New World each argued for or against the protection and rights of Native Americans and the abolition of torture. Prominent in these arguments was the thought of the Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas in *Brevisima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*. Las Casas’ thought framed Pope Paul III’s *Sublimus dei* (1537) in defense of natives’ humanity and capability of response to God.

Notable missioners who learned and wrote about native languages and cultures or who protested treatment of the native population included the Franciscan Bernadino Sahagún (*Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva*

España), the Jesuit Jose de Acosta (*Historia Natural y Moral de Las Indias*), and the Franciscan Jeronimo de Mendieta (*Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana*). Antônio Vieira (*Clavis Prophetarum*) fought the exploitation of indigenous and African peoples in Brazil.

Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, steeped in the Spanish Catholic Reformation, began the first printing press in the New World (1537) and published *Doctrina Cristiana* to guide the spiritual formation of local populations. It was to him that Cuauhtlatoatzin (Juan Diego), a Christian Aztec of low social status, went in 1531. Diego had been visited with a vision of the dark-skinned Virgin Mary, dressed in an Aztec princess garb and speaking in Nahuatl, his language. He delivered the message Mary sent, namely, that the bishop was to build a church on the spot where she appeared to remind the natives of her compassion and care for them. After several attempts to make the bishop listen, Juan's cloak, which held roses gathered in winter, miraculously contained a painting of Mary. Known as Our Lady of Guadalupe, the devotion over time became enmeshed in Latino/a spirituality, both for Catholics and for some Protestants. This would be one of many stories over the centuries, including the Virgin of Caridad del Cobre in Cuba (1600), where the Virgin Mary appeared to uneducated or otherwise disenfranchised persons with a message to the hierarchy.

FRENCH NORTH AMERICA, 1565–1803

Missions from France to North America were fed with reformed, evangelical, and mystical late-sixteenth-century French Catholicism. Interior holiness and evangelization/mission went hand in hand. The French Jesuits introduced their mission heritage and a humanist *ratio studiorum* (plan of studies) emphasis. As chaplains, they accompanied explorers but served as cartographers, whose area maps were often embellished with religious and symbolic drawings, indicating that “maps were a form of seeing – and an art of persuasion,” a form of evangelization for people back home. Maps situated rivers, lakes, and continental sections, but they also portrayed the relationship between moral devotional life and physical geography in the wilderness.² The popular *Jesuit Relations* (1610–1791) raised money for missions but also provided impressions of tribal customs, rites, and dispositions, intertribal warfare, and Jesuit efforts at evangelization of indigenous groups. The letters, bundled off by ship from the northern part of the American continent to France and elsewhere, became highly popular, providing the first impressions and knowledge of the North American tribes to Europe.

² See, for example, Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries and the American Frontier* (New York, 2003).

Patterns of mission sanctity were advocated initially by secular and religious leaders of Montreal and Quebec. The One Hundred Associates, who termed themselves an apostolic community, settled Ville-Marie (Quebec). This group replaced the Protestant company in Quebec in 1627 and ushered in a “golden era” for missions among the natives. Women missionaries, such as Marie Guyart (Marie of the Incarnation), inspired by the *Jesuit Relations* and visions of opening a school for Native Americans, and Marie-Madeleine de Chauvigny de La Peltrie, cured of a severe illness after vowing to build a school in Canada for native girls, became members of the Ursuline community, which carried out their mission of education. Guyart, who saw prayer as an essential instrument for the conversion of the natives and emphasized the similarities between natives and the French, developed dictionaries in the Huron, Iroquois, and Algonquin languages.

As had been true among the Franciscans and Jesuits in Iberian-held lands, French Jesuits separated some of the Hurons into Christian communities so they would avoid the profligate behavior of the French. Since the native communities were mobile and eventually dispersed because of attacks from other tribes, the French fighting the Indians, and restrictions on Jesuits by English governors, the Jesuits learned the languages and followed the natives on their hunting and fishing expeditions. The missionary ideal in France and in North America passed down by means of images of martyrdom and saintliness through Isaac Jogues and his Jesuit companions, and Kateri Tegahkouita (Tekakwitha), whose life demonstrated that virtuous living was possible for Native Americans.

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA 1607–1776

British ships plied the waters off what became Canada and New England, but without an intention to convert the Native Americans they encountered. When the Pilgrims and Puritans arrived, they sought religious self-determination and had a covenant theory and practice. They were a city on the hill, a light to the nations, a mission theme that would flow through American life in the next centuries. The first Bible printed in North America was a translation into Wampanoag (1663). A Puritan missionary, John Eliot, who facilitated the *Eliot Indian Bible*, also was an early editor of the *Bay Psalm Book* printed in Massachusetts. The printing press symbolized the importance of reading scripture for Protestant missionaries.

The missions among Native Americans in New England were shaped by efforts to induce them to change their behavior, appearance, and rituals in order to possess generally what John Eliot termed “visible civility.”³ The

³ John Eliot quoted in James P. Ronda, “Generations of Faith: The Christian Indians of Martha’s Vineyard,” in Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell, eds., *American*

case of Thomas Mayhew, Jr., missionary among the Wampanoag of Martha's Vineyard in the 1640s, represents the growth of a Native American-led church that provided prayer, Bible reading, devotions, and gathered worship among the Wampanoag but that also allowed for various native rituals and practices that did not conflict with Christian life.

The New England revivalist, theologian, and pastor Jonathan Edwards edited and published the diary of missionary David Brainerd, *An Account of the Life of the Late Rev. David Brainerd, chiefly taken from his own Diary and other Private Writings*, as an example to New Englanders of the piety and evangelistic values congregants should appropriate.⁴ The melancholy Brainerd had spent an itinerant four years among Native Americans in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. In ailing health for much of his adult life, Brainerd died at age twenty-nine in Jonathan Edwards' home in Northampton in 1747. In 1750, Edwards was called to a frontier post in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, after his estrangement from the parish in Northampton. While he preached to Native Americans and to local settlers, he used the next seven years in Stockbridge to write what would become some of his most famous works.

MISSION WITHIN THE AMERICAS, MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

It has been argued that with the nonestablishment of a state religion in the new United States and elsewhere in the Americas at a later date, the nature of church/state relationships and the notion of *voluntariness* tended to make all religions evangelistic in presumption and style.⁵

Vast stretches of land on the continent remained a frontier through much of the nineteenth century. The geographic frontier evoked multiple spiritual and social roles and created space for new options in mission, evangelization, catecheses, sacramental rubrics, and moral categories. While gender defined what it was to be a missionary for much of the period encompassed in this essay, women found ways to be missionaries and evangelizers in their own right. The Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, founded in 1800, organized women from several Protestant denominations to raise money for missions. The society was a first, though short-lived ecumenical endeavor, in spite of the fact that doctrinal differences existed among the women. By the twentieth century, American women were the

Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500–1850 (New York, 2000), 138–60, here 139.

⁴ Boston, 1749.

⁵ David O'Brien, "An Evangelical Imperative: Isaac Hecker, Catholicism and Modern Society," in *Hecker Studies: Essays on the Thought of Isaac Hecker*, ed. John Farina (New York, 1983), 87–132.

majority of missionaries overseas. Women converts were more numerous than men. Indeed, it has been argued that world Christianity is a women's movement.⁶

MISSION TO NATIVE AMERICANS

Canada remained in a colonial situation with France and England until 1791, when Upper and Lower Canada were formed on the eastern coast. The greatest number of indigenous people were located in western Canada, where the Oblate Fathers and Brothers, a mission-sending society founded in France in 1816, arrived in 1841. The Oblates were part of a nineteenth-century movement to conquer the world for Christ, for his Church, and for the papacy. With headquarters in the Hudson Bay area, they began evangelization among the First Nations especially through residential schools and parishes, and they invited the Gray Nuns to work with them. When Canadians sought to include the western area in the Canadian Confederation in 1871, the Oblate bishop Alexandre Taché spoke to the government asking for "justice and clemency" for the Métis leaders of the provisional government in Manitoba, but to no avail. From 1860 to 1960, the Oblates operated the majority of the residential schools, and as Terence Fay points out, three viewpoints often not reconcilable surfaced among the missionary men and women who offered their service to educate and deepen indigenous spirituality, the natives who attended the schools and yearned for the day they could leave them, and the federal government, which did not see a need to give the schools funding, because natives could not vote.⁷ A century of mission residential schools left scars on the native and Canadian political and religious bodies.

For reasons sometimes unknown to them, missionaries, in spite of "good intentions," lost their lives among native peoples. The six Jesuit martyrs in North America (1642–49) and the physician Marcus and his wife, Narcissa (Prentiss), Whitman were two cases in point. Among the Jesuits, Isaac Jogues and René Goupil worked among the Hurons. Goupil was killed by Iroquois, enemies of the Hurons. Jogues, after capture and torture by the Iroquois, was freed. Later, on a peace mission to the Iroquois, he left behind a box of religious objects, which the tribe considered as the source of their crop failure. To rid themselves of the evil, a group of Mohawks killed the Jesuit. The Whitmans, whose mission call occurred after they attended a

⁶ Dana Robert, "World Christianity as a Women's Movement," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* XXX:4 (Oct. 2006): 180–8.

⁷ Terence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism, and Canadianism* (Montreal, 2002), 318.

revival in New York, were sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions as a missionary outreach to Native Americans in the Oregon Territory. But with the arrival of more settlers and the influx of disease, Native American hostility grew, and several Cayuse men massacred the small community in 1847, believing that Whitman was poisoning them. The retelling of the lives of these and other martyrs formed an affective culture of martyrdom, which for Christians became the “ultimate” form of witness.

Russian Orthodoxy, which saw itself as the culmination of Cyril and Methodius’ mission to Slavic people, sent a group of ten monks to Alaska in 1794, the first Russian Orthodox mission beyond the European continent. Some of the earlier Russian traders and frontiersmen in the Aleutian and Kodiak Islands had married natives and baptized their children so that when the first Orthodox priest arrived, he found a small Orthodox community. A Russian American Company had been formed to send furs, fish, seals, and other commodities to Russia. The ten monks arrived on the frontier and, remembering their history in Siberia of settling among shamanist people, viewed favorably the religious traits observed among the Aleuts. The Orthodox mission intended to live among the people as a monastic community and to let the attraction of the liturgy appeal to Aleut religious sensibility. The monks used the same mission approach, thinking that Orthodoxy was the fulfillment of Aleut religious beliefs and practices rather than a replacement of them. With the assistance of Aleuts, the monks translated the liturgy into local languages. They opened small mission schools, which produced seamen, cartographers, priests, musicians, physicians, and administrators in the Russian American Company. In disputes with the company over various injustices, clergy and bishops stood with the natives, even though the mission was financed by the Russian government. When Alaska was separated from Siberia as a diocese in 1870, three years after the United States purchased Alaska, twelve thousand Indians were Russian Orthodox.

Among Roman Catholics, a popular method to instruct natives while missionaries learned Indian languages was through the use of a “Catholic Ladder.” Bishop Francis Norbert Blanchet in the 1840s in Oregon Country developed the idea by using a native *sabale*, a stick with carved notches, to designate various aspects of Christian life and history. The method supported the oral, visual, and historical ways of Native American knowing. Soon the “stick” expanded to a chart with pictures and symbols painted on the ladder. The method was adapted by Methodists and Presbyterian missionaries and is still in use among native communities.⁸

⁸ Mark Thiel, “Catholic Ladders and Native American Evangelization,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* XXVII:1 (Winter 2009): 49–70.

The frontier presented situations where the roles and functions of missionaries were less clearly delineated and where versatility was required in response to unfamiliar situations. This led to crossing of some social and religious boundaries and the adoption of multiple tasks for the missionary. The French-born Gabriel Richard and the Belgian Jesuit Pierre Jean de Smet not only provided pastoral care and liturgical services for congregants in North America, but also performed governmental and civic functions in the first half of the nineteenth century. Richard was a nonvoting elected delegate from the Michigan Territory to the U.S. Congress and founder of what became the University of Michigan. De Smet was a trusted negotiator between warring Indian tribes and the U.S. Indian Bureau. He also took cattle and other animals into Montana for settlers and cowboys. Ursuline Sisters, under the leadership of Sarah Theresa Dunne (Sister Amadeus), left the “settled” areas of Ohio and a regularized convent life to head toward Montana, where they created schools for young girls in rugged Miles City. They also ventured as missionaries among the Cheyenne, working with women and young girls, noting especially the native rituals that seemed to affect women adversely.

MISSION TO AFRICAN AMERICANS

Slavery and its effects have been an overarching experience for Africans in the Americas, with deep-seated, lingering echoes into the present, affecting patterns of mission toward and within the groups. Although plantation masters were encouraged to provide Christian instruction to their black slaves, many were negligent in doing so. Slaves’ religious services combined music, remnants of ancestral sounds and movements from Africa, and scriptural passages particularly with an emphasis on the Exodus story. Even though in many cases it was forbidden to teach slaves to read, some learned on their own or did so when empathetic plantation owners provided instruction. Blacks became leaders and evangelizers of other slaves.

Catholic bishops in the United States did not take common action with respect to slavery, seeing it as a local problem but not as a moral or mission issue. Catholics were on both sides of the slavery debate. While Bishop John England of Charleston, South Carolina, led Catholics with an Enlightenment mentality in many respects, he wrote eighteen letters to show that the Catholic Church did not condemn slavery. The bishop of Orléans, Félix-Antoine-Philibert Dupanloup, whose influential voice was heard in the United States, argued in opposition to slavery on the basis of the unity of the human family, “the principle of dignity, of equality,

of liberty, of humanity among persons.”⁹ Slavery also divided most of the Protestant communities in the United States.

Despite a double discrimination from society and often from the Catholic Church, African American Catholic women formed religious communities to serve African Americans. Prior to the Civil War, the Oblate Sisters of Providence were the first successful religious congregation founded by women of color. Beginning in 1828 to work with Caribbean refugees who had settled in Baltimore at that time, the women established St. Francis Academy for education of refugees and for young girls of African descent. By 1900 the sisters opened their first overseas mission in Havana, Cuba. In New Orleans, Henriette DeLille and two other free women of color founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1837 to work with the poor, and by 1898 DeLille’s religious community began a mission among the Caribs in Stann Creek, British Honduras (Belize).

Daniel Rudd (1854–1933), editor of the Cincinnati black newspaper, *American Catholic Tribune*, organized African American Catholic laity in a series of congresses beginning in 1889 to discuss and take action against discrimination, to highlight the importance of education and evangelization of blacks, and to promote the ordination of more black Catholic clergy. In 1917, the university professor Thomas Wyatt Turner (1877–1978), a leader among a group of educated black Catholics in the Baltimore area, helped organize the Federated Colored Catholics to address again practices of the Catholic Church and civil discrimination that adversely affected the Catholic mission to people of color in North America.

MISSIONS AND IMMIGRANTS IN THE AMERICAS, 1820–1960s

After 1820, a sizable population growth in North America resulted from immigration, an experience that proved to be a testing ground of mission theology and praxis for the majority Protestant population and for those arriving on America’s shores. Canadians would experience a swell of immigrants later, after World War II. When the U.S. Catholic bishops met in 1883 to discuss a growing Church’s needs, their missions agenda included Native Americans, African Americans, and a multiethnic population in cities and rural areas. With the surge of foreigners was a nineteenth-century outpouring of institutions to meet their needs. Many Catholic

⁹ “Letter of the Bishop of Orléans to the Clergy of His Diocese on Slavery,” 1862, in Cyprian Davis, OSB, and Jamie Phelps, OP, eds., *“Stamped with the Image of God”: African Americans as God’s Image in Black* (Maryknoll, NY, 2003), 43–6.

social institutions were created by women religious who had few financial resources but who viewed their “missions” as a way to concretize their love for God and neighbor. In some cases, the women’s charitable services of welfare programs or hospitals in places such as New York City and Tucson predated any civic social services. Catholic schools and hospitals, while providing services for people of all religions or of none, served also as a haven against proselytizing by Protestants. The influx of many Roman Catholic immigrants increased hostility toward that group. Protestants thought Catholics would have a dual allegiance, to the papacy first and then to the country, and would not possess the skills for or interest in democracy.

Among Roman Catholics a need for missions/evangelization outstripped resources as more geographic territory was added to the United States. Week-long parish missions were conducted to revive the faith of Catholics and to encourage regular church attendance and sacramental practice. The Jesuit Francis X. Weninger, the Redemptorists, and the Paulists were well known among the circuit missionaries for this purpose. Their methods and intent were similar to those of the various Protestant revivals in this period. Missioners spent a week or two in a parish providing a full slate of morning and evening prayers, sermons, devotions, and masses in the parish church. Sermons would sometimes be accompanied with drama – acting out of Bible stories or planting a large cross in front of the church – and people left with leaflets that gave practical examples of how to keep their faith alive and how to spread the faith. Meant to make people “better” Catholics, the intense time of devotion, prayer, and teaching anchored people in their parishes and created a Catholic ethos.¹⁰

Many immigrants settled in cities where issues of unity and diversity surfaced with political and religious outcomes. Missions in this context took the form of a campaign to ensure that immigrants think and act as the Protestant hegemony had in mind. Protestant and Catholic antipathies in America reflected shadows of the European Reformation bitterness. The influential evangelist Josiah P. Strong preached and wrote in *Our Country* that the Protestant mission was to “save America, for the world’s sake.” While some immigrants were “fine,” he noted they had no democratic experience, had a “low moral tone,” and lived in ghettos. “Romanism” was a particular danger from which America needed to be saved.¹¹

Catholics in the United States also advocated the “save America and save the world” idea. Orestes Brownson, a leading nineteenth-century

¹⁰ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: From Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN, 1992), 245–6.

¹¹ Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Present Crisis*, introduction by Austin Phelps (New York, 1895).

intellectual and convert to Catholicism from Methodism, Presbyterianism, Unitarianism, and Transcendentalism, argued that evangelical Protestantism, which emphasized subjectivity, individualism, and a depraved human nature, was incapable of addressing “modern” times. Roman Catholicism was the only religion that could hold together ethnically diverse people. The American mission, while not strictly nationalist, created one family from distinct nationalities, just as Catholicism did in the supernatural order. If America had a mission to save the world, the mission of Catholics was to save America. These themes were carried forward in Catholic lay congresses in the 1890s organized by Brownson’s son, Henry.¹²

Where was the godly life to be found? With many immigrants arriving in the cities seeking work, Protestants fled the urban environment, which came to symbolize decay, prostitution, drinking, and supposed anarchic tendencies. The evangelical mission response to the growth of cities into the twentieth century ranged from settlement houses, especially in areas where Protestant church buildings still stood but congregants had moved to suburbs, to the development of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA). Theorists, some with experience among immigrant groups, emphasized the social implications of scripture and prayer and formed the foundations of the Social Gospel. Advocates ranged from Francis Peabody and Washington Gladden to Walter Rauschenbusch.¹³

Nineteenth-century Protestant immigration from Europe to South America was aided by changes in political and economic factors after the independence of South American countries from Spain. When bishops returned to Spain, the clergy *criollos* (people born in Latin America, but of Spanish ancestry) in local parishes gained more influence, and liberal governments supported Protestant immigration. The fear of “Protestant contagion” or even of Protestant proselytizing was no longer as strong a value for newly formed South American governments, even though for some time government leaders expected Catholicism to be the language of the state. Some South American governments sought skilled European immigrants. In that capacity, German Lutherans settled in Brazil and Argentina. Their congregations grew with conversions of local inhabitants to Lutheranism. African Americans, mainly from the Africa Methodist Episcopal Church, left for black republics in the Caribbean and began mission work among

¹² Patrick W. Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weathervane* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004). For proceedings of one of the conferences organized by Brownson’s son, Henry, see *Official Report of the Catholic Congress, 1889* (Detroit, 1889).

¹³ See, for example, Janet F. Fishburn, “The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810–1914*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 218–42.

the settlers. Anglican churches in Latin America, relying more on sources in that hemisphere and less on England, questioned what their mission was in the new, non-English context. These groups represented the first of what José Míguez Bonino identified as the four “faces” of Latin American Protestantism. The other faces he identified are the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century evangelical missionaries who entered Central and South American countries, churches established by European immigrants throughout modern Latin American history, and, after 1950, Pentecostal mission groups who gained many converts.¹⁴

While nineteenth-century Latin American Christianity could be characterized by much indifference of the laity and little pastoral attention by clergy, people did actively participate in devotional life, an area that did not necessarily require the presence of clergy, unlike the eucharistic liturgy. Some popular religious practices entwined indigenous practices with Catholic symbols or stories. Lay brotherhoods and sisterhoods sprang up as a source of self-identification and acted as a type of peer evangelization. Beginning in the 1930s, the Catholic Church targeted the elite of some South American countries through higher education and through the mission of Catholic Action in order for educated Catholics to have an impact on the political and social order. While these approaches were not successful, the basic dynamic of Catholic Action (Observe, Judge, and Act to make a change in society) became, in effect, the underlying dynamic of the Basic Christian Communities (BCC). By the 1960s, the BCCs, influenced by missionaries from the North and indigenous Catholics, reinvigorated Catholicism and Christianity in several Central and South American countries through liberation theology. The Second Vatican Council provided an opportunity for the northern and southern bishops to get acquainted with each other and to collaborate across the continent on common mission/evangelization issues. The BCCs and Bishops’ Conferences at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) thrust Central and Latin America into the international spotlight. In 2003 the Mexican and U.S. Catholic bishops issued a joint document on the mission of justice across borders in relation to immigration, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*.

MISSION FROM THE AMERICAS

The great impetus for mission from the Americas began in the nineteenth century, a period the Yale mission historian Kenneth Scott Latourette called “the Great Century.” The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), founded in 1810, represented one of the

¹⁴ José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1997).

most significant Protestant mission-sending groups in North America in that century. Generally Protestant missionaries went to China, India, or areas of the British Empire. Women's mission-funding groups, such as the Woman's Board of Missions (Congregational), the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions (Presbyterian), and later the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (Methodist Episcopal), raised substantial amounts of money and interest in the mission cause. The formation of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) in 1806, a result of the "Haystack Prayer Meeting," where three students dedicated themselves to missions overseas, crystallized the energy of the Protestant mission impulse in the United States and Canada in the nineteenth century with the phrase, "the evangelization of the world in this generation." Arthur T. Pierson in the late nineteenth century evoked missionary enthusiasm, as did John Mott, an SVM leader, into the twentieth century. Mott was also one of the organizers of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910), where the millennial urgency of evangelization intertwined with American hallmarks of efficiency, pragmatism, and business administration, rather than arising from a particular theological bent.

Especially at the time of the Spanish American War, a "potent blend of Providence, piety, politics and patriotism"¹⁵ underscored the optimism of U.S. Protestant missions. Presidents and public officials spoke at missionary conferences. It seemed a time when "social uplift" was a possibility for all nations who would convert to Christianity. After that war, American Protestant missionaries went to the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Missioners, especially those with evangelical elements in their tradition, often took with them cultural, political, and religious values of individualism, enthusiasm, pragmatism, and an interest in "modern" approaches, as they preached and set up schools and hospitals.

White and black Christian communities financially supported African American missionaries to work in Africa. Lott Carey was the leader of the first African American mission to Africa as part of the American Colonization Society's plan to settle newly founded colonies. Freed black slaves and their sons and daughters were among those sent to Liberia and Congo in the mid-nineteenth century to introduce the governing experience of "democracy" and Western "civilization," even though blacks themselves had not experienced its full effects. The American Methodist Episcopal Church and the Lott Carey Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Convention of the United States were among the black groups who financially supported or sent missionaries to Africa. It was through the diaries,

¹⁵ Gerald H. Anderson, "American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission: 1886–1986," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* XII:3 (July 1988): 98–118, here 100.

letters, and descriptions of life in Africa that black Americans learned of African customs, rites, and traditions, the beginning of black interest in their African past, a phenomenon Alex Haley poignantly captured a century later in *Roots* (1976).¹⁶ The experience of black American missionaries who had gleaned the gospel message while in slavery and then traveled to Liberia also demonstrated how their experience was central to the network of white abolitionists in England and the United States.¹⁷

Roman Catholic missions from the United States received an impetus through the gathering of missionaries to non-Catholics. The Catholic Missionary Union (CMU) hosted conferences in the spirit of the founder of the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, Isaac Hecker, whose evangelism emphasized values Protestants and Catholics had in common, the importance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals and the “aspirations of the human heart.”¹⁸ At subsequent gatherings of the CMU, Thomas F. Price and James A. Walsh met and in 1911 founded the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll). Other national Catholic mission-sending groups founded in the Americas for missions overseas were the Scarboro Fathers (Canada, 1918) and the Guadalupe Fathers (Mexico, 1949). Catholic missions, until after the mid-twentieth century, tended to be the responsibility of religious orders or mission-sending societies, such as the Jesuits, the Maryknoll Society, and the Society of St. Columban.

A study sponsored by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and chaired by the Harvard University professor William Hocking analyzed material compiled from statistics and interviews of missionaries in China, Japan, and Burma. The Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry Report (1932) suggested that a new mode of missionary was needed in the twentieth-century world, namely, that of an “ambassador.” While the report did not condemn education and health projects as a form of mission, it suggested that what was needed in this time was “world understanding on a spiritual level.”¹⁹ Given this perspective, the number of missionaries could be reduced. Needless to say, the report stirred up controversy among the groups who represented the majority of American missionaries overseas.

In the twentieth century, evangelicals’ interaction with indigenous Christians in Third World countries was one of the factors that led to the development of a new mission theology among evangelicals. Charles van Engen has proposed that the evangelical mission outlook moved from a

¹⁶ Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, NY, 1976).

¹⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

¹⁸ Isaac T. Hecker, *Aspirations of Nature* (New York, 1857).

¹⁹ William Ernest Hocking quoted in William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World* (Chicago, 1987), 158–9.

reactionary position in the post–World War II period, characterized by an “over-against,” separatist stance, to reassessment in the 1960s, having been stretched somewhat by the attitudes toward mission and ecumenism in the Second Vatican Council and the official and unofficial dialogues that took place thereafter. In the 1970s, a reaffirmation of evangelicalism ensued, partially based upon the presence of indigenous leaders from countries earlier defined as “missionary” countries. In the 1980s, a redefinition of evangelical missions presented a more holistic approach to mission, embodying both attention to the proclamation of a personal faith in Jesus Christ and an attention to cultural analysis and use of the latest technological instruments in the service of mission.²⁰

Pentecostal missions, which emphasized healings, exorcism, baptism of the Holy Spirit, “faith missions,” and an imminent return of Christ and his kingdom, received an impetus after a strong outpouring of the Spirit, first in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901 and ultimately in the Azusa Street Revival of 1906–9. Characterized by independence, antiorganization, and initially a strong triumphalism, Pentecostal missions have seen themselves as a “corrective” in missions, have appealed to indigenous groups with a tradition of healing, and have tended to flourish in countries historically Roman Catholic. The Brazilian *Assembléias de Deus* developed from the efforts of independent missionaries from North America with roots in the Pentecostal tradition. North American immigrants from Sweden felt called to preach in Brazil and to gather a Pentecostal-inspired congregation. The Brazilians later contacted the North American Assemblies of God and adopted their name. The diverse and sometimes ambiguous strands of Pentecostalism, either as a denomination or as an impulse, feature prominently in Latin American Christianity into the twenty-first century and continue to be a globalization factor, which embraces both indigenous and more overarching patterns of relationships among Spirit baptism, gifts of the Spirit, and “the world.”

THE AMERICAS AND GLOBAL MISSIONS, 1975 TO THE PRESENT

The stream of new groups arriving in the Americas continues to this day and with it new as well as traditional forms of Christianity. In the post–Vietnam War era, Vietnamese and Laotians arrived in North America.

²⁰ Charles Van Engen, “A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946–1986,” in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880–1980*, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1990), 203–34. Van Engen traced these developments through key evangelical missions conferences around the world in 1943–80.

The first wave of Vietnamese was generally well educated and had worked with American agencies before the fall of Vietnam. The second wave was less educated and was poor. In both cases, missionaries who worked in Vietnam, the Vietnamese themselves, and local Christian service organizations served the immediate physical and religious needs of the immigrants, and then assisted with education and citizenship formation as part of a mission to the group. Greater numbers of Central Americans arrived in North America by the 1970s. African immigrants arrived in the 1970s initially because of the Nigerian oil crisis. Since then, other African Christian immigrants, who see themselves as a Diaspora, took their own missionaries with the intent to convert North America from its materialist ways and to promote a more “orthodox” Christianity. The variety of African religions with a mission impulse has included Anglo-Catholic, Roman Catholic, African Independent Churches, and the Pentecostal Aladura groups of West Africa. Several of the African Christian groups view their immigrant experience and “portable faith”²¹ as a participation in a fulfillment of the universality of the Christian message.

Christians from Third World countries where North and South American missionaries had been sent in the last hundred years were, by the second half of the twentieth century, members of the major gatherings of Anglicans in Toronto (1963), Roman Catholics at Vatican II (1962–65), and Evangelicals at Lausanne (1974).

CONCLUSION

The relationship between religion and missions in the Americas illustrates a continuous mission impulse in much of the continent for more than five hundred years. Beginning with the colonial period, America was thought of as a “chosen” nation to embody the ideals of Christianity, a new venue to start afresh and leave behind the conflicts and corruption of European Christianity. The nineteenth-century version of a chosen nation included a mission to the world, preaching a gospel to enlighten all nations about democracy, progress, and social “uplift,” with political “manifest destiny” seen as an expression of the kingdom of God.

Missionaries, as informal anthropologists, linguists, and ethnologists, provided records of impressions of “the other” for the sake of understanding better the people to whom they were sent. Later missionaries were formally educated in the “science of missions” (i.e., cultural anthropology,

²¹ Elias K. Bongma, “Portable Faith: The Global Mission of African Initiated Churches,” in Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignanai, eds., *African Immigrant Religions in America*, (New York, 2007), 102–32.

linguistics, sociology) in the hope of better understanding other cultures. This, in turn, implied the translatability of Christianity into language, print, image, or music. Missioners continued to struggle with the “Christ and culture” debate. Protestants had to deal with the Lady of Guadalupe. On the other hand, contact with Christianity by indigenous groups has led them to reclaim their cultural roots, either as “native” practices or as the incorporation of indigenous rituals and symbols in Christian liturgies.

By the mid-1970s mission praxis and theory in the Americas had inaugurated or enhanced new academic areas of intercultural theology, women’s history, world Christianity, religious pluralism, ethnohistory, transoceanic history, and, in some cases, a reappropriation of indigenous religious identity in a modern world. Statistics over the last thirty-five years indicate a shift of Christianity from Europe and North America to “the South,” that is, Africa and Latin America, the latter particularly due to the increase in a Pentecostal and evangelical impulse from the North and from within the southern part of the continent. “Missions” linked continent to continent, continuing the initial dynamisms of a world Christianity. While the range of missions theory/practice was diverse and broad over five centuries, missions present a fluid, virtually continuous movement through the Americas bound up with the migrations of peoples across continents.

Five centuries of migration/immigration have changed immigrant religion and religion in the Americas. Missions, internal or external to the particular groups, were the bridge that spanned the particularity of each section of the continents. Missions were a key element that taught thousands in North and South America to “think in global terms.”²² Jehu J. Hanciles opines that global migration patterns today, with accompanying heavily non-Western mission mind-sets, will not only affect the understanding of missions, but will reshape Western Christianity itself.²³

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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²² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Missions and the American Mind* (Indianapolis, 1949), 36.

²³ Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008).

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Section VI

CONCLUDING ESSAYS

RELIGION AND MYTHS OF NATIONHOOD IN CANADA AND MEXICO IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

PAMELA KLASSEN

The religious situations in Canada and Mexico at the start of the twenty-first century are shaped in profound ways by these countries' long and often fraught relationships to the United States. Put most starkly, the main points of direct intersection across their religious landscapes are the following: the flow, illegal and legal, of people, money, and commodities across their increasingly fortified borders; the ongoing legacies of the history of colonial violence and dispossession of land that marked the birth of all three nations as either "revolutionary" or "commonwealth" nations; the increasingly global and/or transnational varieties of religious experience and organization that are becoming options for belonging and practice in both Canada and Mexico; and, finally, the changing salience of religion as a category at play in the public sphere. All three countries consider themselves democracies, and they are joined by the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which liberalized the flow of goods and capital (if not always people) among the three countries. The trade between Canada and the United States alone encompasses the largest bilateral exchange of goods, services, and income in the world. After Canada, Mexico is the second-largest trading partner of the United States, and Canada and Mexico are also very important trading partners for each other.¹ Long before the neoliberal economic policies of NAFTA, however, religion flowed abundantly across these borders, via symbols, stories, media, and people.

After the World Trade Center bombings of 2001, the relationships among Canada, Mexico, and the United States were increasingly shaped by the growing militarization, at the insistence of the United States, of the relatively peaceful Canada-United States border and the already highly fortified Mexico-United States border. Even with such increased fortification, however, the permeability of religion in and around the borderlands

¹ Rebecca Jannol, Deborah Meyers, and Maia Jachimowicz, "U.S.-Canada-Mexico Fact Sheet on Trade and Migration," Migration Policy Institute, Nov. 2003.

of North America is an ongoing reality. To assess both the effects and the limits of this permeability, this essay focuses on contemporary religious situations in Canada and Mexico with an approach that considers both the vestiges of the past in the present, as well as various imaginings of what the future should be. Paying attention both to specific stories of religious mixture and to wider demographic trends, this essay demonstrates how religion takes on different meanings depending on the scale of analysis, whether a hagiographic tale of a national icon or a demographic narrative of the transformation of peoples and cultures.

MYTHS OF NATIONHOOD

The task of imagining how religion might be transformed in the futures of Canada and Mexico must begin by considering how these nation-states have understood their past. Canada and Mexico are nations that have both cultivated strong national myths of cultural belonging, while remaining haunted by their colonial pasts and watchful of their powerful shared neighbor. Encounters – both consensual and violent – between varieties of Christianity and native traditions of the Americas have firmly embedded contestation and combination over what counts as “religion” in the foundations of these nation-states. Indeed, Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues that the encounter of European conquerors and scholars with the indigenous peoples of the Americas was a key site for the formation of the modern category of religion itself.² Any attempt to assess the present or future of religion in the Americas, then, requires awareness of how the very notion of religion gained popular and scholarly salience in the historical conditions of colonial encounter. At the same time, especially in Canada, increasing religious diversity due to late twentieth-century immigration patterns means that a growing variety of groups seeks to be considered within the category of religion as it is articulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (enacted 1982), Canadian courts, and government policies. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and, less prominently, new religious movements such as the Raelians have all sought, with more or less success, to be “reasonably accommodated” as *religions* within the Canadian state.³

² Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundations of the Modern/Colonial World,” American Academy of Religion Centennial Scholars Lecture, Montreal, 2009.

³ See Roger O’Toole, “Dominion of the Gods: Religious Continuity and Change in a Canadian Context,” in Annika Hvithamar, Margit Warburg, and Brian Arly Jacobsen, eds. *Holy Nations and Global Identities: Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Globalisation*, (Leiden, 2009), 137–57.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, both Canada and Mexico understood themselves as countries of mixture, whether in the Mexican invocation of *mestizaje*, or in Canada's national project of multiculturalism. While religion has not always been a prominent feature of this mixture, some contemporary versions of the story emphasize Mexico's persistent combination of "folkloric" indigenous religions with colorful forms of Catholicism, in what Ana Maria Alonso has called an "aesthetic statism."⁴ More recently, others have pointed to how currents of violence following the underground cross-border drug economy are themselves legitimated by similarly hybrid practices of devotion. For example, the cult of Santa Muerte, or Holy Death, involves rituals of devotion to a skeleton-saint who is in many ways the Virgin of Guadalupe inverted: not sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church, la Santa Muerte is nevertheless counted on for protection and vengeance by many in the drug trade. The cult of Santa Muerte and others like it have grown so popular among a range of devotees, including drug lords, gang members, and laypeople implicated more in networks of poverty than those of criminality, that the critic Alma Guillermoprieto has called these devotional forms *narcocultos*. As new religious movements embedded in Catholic idioms, consumer products, and popular culture, *narcocultos* involve "the production of symbols, rituals and artifacts – slang, religious cults, music, consumer goods – that allow people involved in the drug trade to recognize themselves as part of a community, to establish a hierarchy in which the acts they are required to perform acquire positive value, and to absorb the terror inherent in their line of work."⁵

Canadians have developed a different narrative of mixture, that of the modern society that can foster sustainable diversity largely without recourse to violence. The Canadian story of multiculturalism depends primarily on the demographic fact of its immigrant diversity, which includes the growing presence of a plethora of religious communities. This multicultural narrative, however, continues to be shadowed by the violence at its foundation, whether the hanging of the Métis revolutionary and mystic Louis Riel in 1885, or the battles between French Catholics and British Protestants on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.⁶ Where it was once establishment Protestants who declared Canada to be a Protestant Christian

⁴ Ana Maria Alonso, "Conforming Disconformity: 'Mestizaje,' Hybridity, and the Aesthetics of Mexican Nationalism," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:4 (2004): 459–90.

⁵ Alma Guillermoprieto, "The Narcovirus," *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (Spring 2009): 5.

⁶ Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* (Albuquerque, NM, 2008).

nation, despite its histories of aboriginal spiritualities and Roman Catholic institutions, it is now conservative evangelicals who do so, together with their more conservative Catholic allies. With increasing religious diversity that includes rising numbers of Muslims, Hindus, and those professing “no religion,” this vision of Christian nationhood is being forcefully questioned (if not also sometimes just simply ignored) through debates in the courts, schools, and media.⁷

Two pairs of examples of religious border crossing serve as introductions to the tropes of mixture in Canada and Mexico: 1) the colonial/aboriginal Catholic icons, Kateri Tekakwitha and the Virgin of Guadalupe, and 2) the early twentieth-century visionaries, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo and the Canadian-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Considering these two pairs, the second more unlikely than the first, reveals how these women continue to function as icons of mixture and foils for anxieties about the connections among religion, colonialism, and capitalism that were animated on the borderlands of North America. After considering these paired icons, this essay’s perspective widens to consider the changing place of religion in the national myths of belonging predominant in Canada and Mexico, especially as demographic narratives of the religious situations of the two countries have shaped these myths. Juxtaposing this demographic vantage point with more local “on-the-ground” perspectives, this essay then addresses how the flows of practices, politics, communities, and capital have changed national and local conversations about the significance of religion in Canada and Mexico.

EMBLEMS OF MIXTURE

Two emblems of Christian femininity that exemplify both nationalist myths of mixture and the fact of religious permeability have found renewed life in the early twenty-first century: the Virgin of Guadalupe and Catherine/Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–80). Indigenous, female icons revered by Catholics the world over, both the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha have taken on new importance in the twenty-first century, crossing borders of nation, century, and religious tradition with the help of a spreading network of clergy supporters, devotees, scholars, and popular culture entrepreneurs. The Virgin of Guadalupe, an apparition of the Virgin Mary, was said in seventeenth-century accounts to have appeared to an Indian peasant, Juan Diego, in 1531 at the top of a hill called Tepeyac, also the site of an Aztec temple. More than four centuries later, she was still going strong, and Pope John Paul II named her patroness of the Americas in 1999. In 1990, during

⁷ Richard Moon, ed., *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada* (Vancouver, 2008).

an earlier visit to Mexico, the pope had beatified her “confidant,” Juan Diego, after a long and contentious debate about his historical existence. A few years later in 2003, John Paul II canonized Juan Diego.⁸

By comparison, Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk/Algonquin convert to Catholicism, still lingers between beatification and canonization. Tekakwitha was born around 1656 in the autonomous Mohawk village of Gandaouagué in what is now upstate New York. Baptized at nineteen and given the name “Catherine” in honor of Catherine of Siena, at the age of twenty-one she moved across what the colonizers considered “the border” to Kahnawake close to what is now Montreal. Her national and religious identities – Mohawk, Canadian, Catholic, American – have been fought over by her scores of biographers ever since.⁹ Since she was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980, a strong lobby of clergy and laypeople continues to hope that the Roman Catholic Church will accept the proof of her miracle-working powers and canonize her as a saint. Pope John Paul II did, however, name her the patroness of World Youth Day in Canada in 2002.¹⁰

As the patroness of the Americas and an apparition of the Virgin Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe is in a different league from the merely human Kateri, but both figures share transnational and transcultural powers that stem from a strong network of their nineteenth- and twentieth-century supporters. The Virgin of Guadalupe, in her official status and her popular practice, is ubiquitous throughout the Americas, thanks to a centuries-long (and controversial) campaign by Church officials, laypeople, and scholars to forward her cause along with the canonization of Juan Diego. Though not all devotees of the Virgin of Guadalupe consider themselves loyal to the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, others are among its staunchest supporters. Kateri Tekakwitha, less prominent but also the focus of intense devotion, has been claimed as a Christian worthy of sainthood by American Catholics, often in conflict with French-Canadian clergy who would see her canonized as a particularly Quebecois saint. In recent years, her popularity has spread from the Mohawk Valley to Montana and has even encroached on Guadalupe’s territory in New Mexico, largely as a result of networks of indigenous women devotees.¹¹

As emblems of the earliest colonial encounters in the Americas, the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha reveal the complex and labile

⁸ D. A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries* (Cambridge, UK, 2001).

⁹ Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford, UK, 2005).

¹⁰ See http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bl_kateri_tekakwithas_cause_for_sainthood_going_to_vatican/ (accessed 22 Dec. 2009).

¹¹ Greer, *Mohawk Saint*; Luis D. León, *La Llorona’s Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

nature of religion, gender, race, and nation in North America. That they continue to have resonance – or more emphatically that their stories and likenesses have increased in prominence and ubiquity – probably has as much to do with the proliferation of mediated images used for both devotion and commerce as it does with the persistence of indigenous peoples in both the narratives and the populations of the Americas. An image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in blue robes surrounded by a golden glow can be found on everything from T-shirts to shower curtains. Her basilica in Mexico City is one of the most visited Catholic shrines in the world. She has even traveled to Rome, the “heart” of Catholicism, carried there by Mexican devotees, largely clergy and nuns, living in the city either temporarily or permanently.

As the anthropologist Valentina Napolitano has argued, in Rome la Guadalupana is not primarily a symbol of indigenous resistance. Instead, she has become a “nexus of affect” that conflates the valorization of an ideal traditional Catholic family with cherished (and contested) memories of those conservative Catholic devotees who fought the anticlericalism of the Mexican nation-state during the Cristero Revolt of the 1920s. La Guadalupana “reverberates with a ‘residue’” of this conflict. “This residue, which is woven into histories of martyrdom and violence, emerges through anxieties about the laicization of society and the hope of a (Catholic) religiosity intimately married to public, national, and intimate spheres.”¹² A most palpable example of this residue took the form of a controversy over the dress of the 2007 Miss Mexico contestant in that year’s Miss Universe pageant. First decorated with images from the Cristero Revolt, including depictions of Catholic men lined up in front of a firing squad, the dress caused such controversy before the pageant that it was eventually redesigned, replacing the explicitly violent imagery with a large image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.¹³

Kateri’s celebrity, while more modest, is nevertheless growing. The poet and musician Leonard Cohen gave her a major role in his 1960s novel *Beautiful Losers*, in which she was evoked in intertwined saintly and sensual ways.¹⁴ More traditionally pious biographies of her, both scholarly and popular, continue to be written, and as she awaits canonization, churches, schools, and statues are erected in her honor. Although Kateri still awaits her sainthood, another pious Montrealer, Brother André (1845–1937), a monk-healer who helped to found Montreal’s Saint Joseph’s Oratory,

¹² Valentina Napolitano, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Nexus of Affect,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 15 (2009): 108.

¹³ “Miss Mexico ‘War Gown’ Toned Down,” BBC News, 19 Apr. 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6571061.stm> (accessed 22 Feb. 2010).

¹⁴ Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (Toronto, 1966).

achieved the distinction first. In late 2009, Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged a second “scientifically inexplicable” healing miracle attributed to Brother André, and then in early 2010 the Vatican announced that Brother André will soon be consecrated as a saint. This consecration will surely catapult Brother André’s memory to a new level of recognition, and it may delay the success of Kateri’s cause.¹⁵

The celebrity and holiness bestowed upon the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha by the Roman Catholic Church ensure their continued presence in North American imaginaries. Two other emblems of mixture, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907–54) and the Canadian-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), remain more controversially liminal figures without a transnational Christian corporation with the power of the Roman Catholic Church to tend to their memories. Both the inspiration for multiple films as well as numerous (and recent) biographies, Frida Kahlo and “Sister Aimee” took very different approaches to the confluence of religion and nation. Kahlo was deeply critical of what she saw as the spiritual wasteland of American imperialism and materialism, while McPherson, a Canadian transplanted to California, considered herself a “loyal American” crusader against Communism and for patriotic purity.

Both women, however, publicly expressed visions of political spiritualities that traveled across national lines and that still reverberate today. Kahlo’s image and art – often drawn upon by practitioners of feminist spirituality – are certainly more pervasive today than are images or stories of McPherson. Sister Aimee’s legacy, however, remains not only in the popular culture of films, plays, and documentaries that continues her ritual of telling “the story of my life,” but also in the lasting effects of her form of popular revivalism, which blended political conservatism, sexuality, and celebrity. Crossing ethnic, denominational, and national lines (including those of Canada, the United States, and Mexico), Sister Aimee set the stage for a wider acceptance of and legitimacy for Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity in public contexts.¹⁶

Kahlo’s travels to the United States were not those of the willing immigrant. She traveled to the United States in 1932 to accompany her husband, Diego Rivera, as he painted his monumental murals for the scion of U.S. capitalism, John Rockefeller. Kahlo’s art from this time reveals her distaste for a United States that she saw as dominated by consumerism and technology, along with her frequent theme of valorizing the spiritual past of preconquest Mexico. Her *Self-Portrait on the Border Line between Mexico*

¹⁵ See http://www.saint-joseph.org/en_1274_1467.asp (accessed 17 Feb. 2010).

¹⁶ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993).

and the United States (1932) is a vivid depiction of her view of the aridity of American industry and the fertility of Mexican history – her arms cross at the wrists, with the “stateside” hand holding a cigarette and the southerly hand a Mexican flag. On the cigarette side, a Ford plant spews clouds of pollution into the air, and small electrical appliances are “plugged” into the ground with black cords. On the Mexican side, calla lilies and succulents grow from their white roots, while an anthropomorphized Sun and Moon send lightning, rain, and warmth down from the air to an ancient temple.

Kahlo’s bifurcation of herself on the borderline was matched by her ongoing love-hate relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and her trenchant critique of patriarchal hierarchies. As a woman who lived in great physical pain for much of her life as the result of an accident, and who struggled with the emotional pain of miscarriages and an unfaithful husband, but who also had affairs of her own, Kahlo in her painting grappled with her suffering in wholly original and critical ways.¹⁷ Not content simply to accept her suffering, her paintings of ebullient sacred hearts and her body-and-soul-baring self-portraits conveyed a powerful mixture of critique and love for the ways that religious devotion and sexual desire enabled and disabled her. This powerful vision continues to offer Chicana and other artists ways to reimagine their own contemporary situations via religious imagery not conventionally pious, with some artists even conflating Frida Kahlo with the Virgin of Guadalupe herself.¹⁸

Aimee Semple McPherson, born and raised in rural southwestern Ontario, a land of rolling hills largely dominated by varieties of English-speaking Protestants, led a life with just as much sexual intrigue, suffering, and artistic originality as Frida Kahlo. McPherson’s genius, however, lay not in painting herself as a complicated soul, but in preaching her way into international celebrity and church leadership even in the midst of scandal and sexual innuendo. Leaving Canada in 1908, she embarked on what would be a lifetime of United States-based international evangelism, ending up as (arguably) the most famous woman evangelist of the twentieth century, leader of an international network called the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. After a mysterious six-week disappearance in 1926, McPherson claimed to have been kidnapped, while her detractors accused her of running off with her married lover. A grand jury ensued, giving McPherson even greater celebrity and eventually making her

¹⁷ See Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York, 1989).

¹⁸ Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, “Revisiting Chicana Cultural Icons: From Sor Juana to Frida,” in *The State of Latino Theatre in the United States*, ed. Luis A. Ramos-Garcia (New York, 2002), 30–38. See also Napolitano, “Virgin of Guadalupe.”

another kind of pioneer – the media tycoon/evangelist laid low and, ironically, raised high by sexual scandal. In the end, all charges were dropped, with McPherson persisting in her claim of innocence and painting her true enemy as the devil himself.¹⁹

McPherson crafted her spiritual originality from a mixture of media artistry, which included publishing a magazine, starting one of the earliest radio stations in the United States, and mimicking/embodying the early Hollywood culture of dramatic celebrity. She also turned to the techniques and theologies of Pentecostal revivalism, faith healing, American patriotism, and anti-Communist fervor to convince her audiences. While Frida Kahlo nurtured a friendship and a brief affair with the Russian Communist Leon Trotsky, McPherson spent much of her later years condemning the “red scare” in both patriotic and religious terms. She parlayed a blend of revivalism, faith healing, and media savvy into a kind of religious celebrity that made space for her as a political and religious figure at a time when women were usually neither. Though her image has not taken on the same iconic status as that of Frida Kahlo, two recent biographies, a film, and a documentary attest to her abiding appeal for both popular and scholarly audiences seeking to understand the ongoing transnational appeal of Pentecostal Christianities as “political spiritualities.”²⁰ Nevertheless, the self-made prominence of McPherson as a healer, revivalist, and institution builder, who created her own Christian empire based at the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, has faced more significant challenges to its longevity than have the saintly healers of Catholicism.

The ongoing, if variable, power of all four of these icons of religiously hybrid womanhood demonstrate how difficult it is to contain iconic saints/celebrities within the changing contours of religious orthodoxy or political ideologies. The Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha are alternatively – and sometimes simultaneously – cast as examples of devout, chaste Christian femininity and/or powerful, anticolonial womanhood, across the borders of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Frida Kahlo, the radical free spirit and sexually liberated artist, was at the same time the scorned wife whose husband cheated on her with her own sister and whose art depicted an intensity of bodily suffering often through the material of Mexican Catholic devotions. Aimee Semple McPherson went from being a rural Canadian young woman trained in the ways of the Salvation Army to being a worldwide celebrity by turning the mediating practices of Hollywood to her own ends of building a spiritual empire. While neither was named patroness of anything by any reigning male clergy, the lasting

¹⁹ See Susan Wise Bauer, *The Art of the Public Grovel* (Princeton, NJ, 2008).

²⁰ See Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities* (Chicago, 2009).

presence of Frida Kahlo and Sister Aimee suggests that their stories and examples of border crossing continue to excite imaginations at the intersection of gender, religion, art, and entertainment.

MESTIZAJE AND MULTICULTURALISM

Moving from the biographical/hagiographic stories of these four emblems of mixture to the wider-scale myths of nationhood in Canada and Mexico sets the stage for discussing larger trends in religious mixture in these two countries. Unlike Canada, the United States and Mexico are nation-states based in strong narratives of revolutionary origins that include accounts of the ideal relationship between the state and religious authority. In the United States, breaking violently in the eighteenth century from a motherland whose king was also the head of the Church of England resulted in an ideal, if not always a practice, of the separation of church and state. By comparison, in Roman Catholic-dominated Mexico, the early nineteenth-century war of independence from Spanish rule was partly led by clerics, such as "Father Hidalgo." The early twentieth-century Mexican Revolution, however, was accompanied by an anticlericalism that prompted the revolutionary state to put strong constraints on the public role and political power of the Catholic Church, severely limiting its ability to operate as a public entity, especially in the crucial arena of education. In reaction, the Cristero Revolt of the late 1920s pitted priests, nuns, and Catholic laymen and laywomen in a violent, but unsuccessful confrontation with the state that encompassed issues of land reform, religious innovation, and Church-state relations. These state constraints against Catholicism have only recently begun to loosen.²¹

Stories of revolution and rebellion have not dominated Canadian myths of origin, as Canada largely perceives itself as a commonwealth land without a revolution. As at its origins in 1867, Canada remains a constitutional democracy in which the head of government is the leader of the political party elected to the most seats in Parliament. The head of state is the queen of England, represented by the governor general; in 2010, this was Michaëlle Jean, a journalist and comparative literature scholar who immigrated with her family from Haiti in 1968. Several violent rebellions in the wake of the nation's founding, including the 1885 "North-West Rebellion" led by Métis Louis Riel, have been reread in the late twentieth century not as acts of treason, but as foiled bids for sovereignty.²² More prominent in the national myth is a story of Canadian absorption of those

²¹ Matthew Butler, ed., *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (New York, 2007).

²² Reid, *Louis Riel*; see also Maria Campbell, *Half-Breed* (Toronto, 1973).

fleeing U.S. violence – whether British loyalists in the wake of the revolution, slaves traveling the Underground Railroad to the North, or Vietnam War resisters of the 1960s and 1970s. The only conflict that was dubbed a “revolution” in Canadian history was itself a nonviolent transformation that had contention over the role of religion in state power at its very heart: the “Quiet Revolution” radically reshaped the power of the Roman Catholic clergy in Quebec and started an unfinished process of secularizing schools, hospitals, and life-cycle rituals. As in the Mexican Revolution, the anticlericalism of the Quiet Revolution was paired with an opposition to popular, and largely female-led, religious practices.²³ Even with such secularization, French-speaking Catholicism and varieties of English-speaking Protestantism still undergird much state practice in the country, even though Canada largely understands itself as a secular state.

In Canada, a narrative of “biculturalism” that had understood the country in terms of its two “founding peoples,” the largely Roman Catholic French and the initially Protestant English, gave way in the 1970s to a discourse of “multiculturalism.” Officially marked by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s establishment in 1973 of a Ministry of Multiculturalism, Canada’s project of multiculturalism sought to move from policies of “assimilation” to those of “integration” of the plurality of immigrants who had made their way to Canada from all over the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adopted on the heels of the 1969 “Official Languages Act” that ensconced French and English as the languages of government and public service nationwide, multiculturalism celebrated multiple cultural differences in both official languages. A missing piece in this new narrative of Canadian diversity was the “third” group of founding peoples of Canada – the aboriginal inhabitants of the land claimed by the French, the British, and the fur-trading Hudson’s Bay Company in the early modern era.²⁴ Also less heralded were the black loyalists who settled in British North America in the wake of the American Revolution – never a large number, but a testament to the racialized limits of what counted as the “English” people.²⁵ With time, the descendants of nineteenth-century Japanese and Chinese immigrants would also point out the ways their contributions to the beginnings of Canada’s religious and cultural diversity were ignored in a European-centered narrative of nationhood.

²³ Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931–1970* (Montreal, 2005).

²⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford, UK, 2001).

²⁵ See George Elliott Clarke, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto, 2002).

Mexico, by contrast, long cultivated a national narrative defined not by biculturalism or multiculturalism, but by a mestizo identity, which in its most idealized form was born of Spanish fathers and indigenous mothers. According to the anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz, the story that Mexico was a mestizo nation served as a nationalist myth meant to resist “foreign aggression and neocolonial exploitation,” establishing as the core of the country a revolutionary Mexican nationalism distinct from Spanish dominance.²⁶ That the Maya, Aztec, or Nahuatl were necessary for the story, however, did not mean that they avoided the fate of marginalization faced by their “Canadian” counterparts, such as the Cree or the Haida. Instead, according to many accounts, the “ideology” of *mestizaje* meant not the celebration, but the abjection of indigenous peoples through their “whitening.”²⁷

In both Canadian and Mexican discourses of national identity, the modern concepts of race and ethnicity have functioned as organizational pivots. Canadian multiculturalism has recognized “ethnic” communities as relatively stable groups of people with their origins in another land, often expressed via the hyphen: Ukrainian-Canadians, Caribbean-Canadians, Indo-Canadians. Though many have shown that the concept of race has been at play in Canadian versions of mixture and exclusion, ethnicity and culture have been the dominant categories at work in the discussion of multiculturalism. In a recent reconsideration of Canadian nationalist myths, John Ralston Saul argues for the erasure, or at least the displacement, of the hyphen, in favor of a narrative that understands Canada as a Métis nation from its earliest imaginings. A Victorian racialized hierarchy was a late nineteenth-century imposition on relatively harmonious interactions among the old and new inhabitants of what is now Canada, argued Saul, and those who focus only on the tragic violence of Canadian colonialism do not recognize its longer tradition of *métissage*.²⁸

Mexican *mestizaje*, with its dependence on the image of the “mixing of blood” in sexual reproduction, has operated much more explicitly with race as its organizing principle. Interestingly, however, Claudio Lomnitz argues, similarly to Saul, that Mexican national discourse underwent a process of racialization via the increasing influence of late nineteenth-century “scientific racism.” By the postrevolutionary 1920s, Mexican public intellectuals such as Jose Vasconcelos were writing of a “cosmic race,” imbuing

²⁶ Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 2001), 53.

²⁷ Peter Wade, “Rethinking *Mestizaje*: Ideology and Lived Experience,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 239–57.

²⁸ John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto, 2008). See also Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of *Mestizo* America,” *Journal of American History* 82:3 (Dec. 1995), 941–64.

mestizaje itself with “spiritual” import.²⁹ Mexican and Canadian narratives of national identity, comparatively speaking, have been less concerned to orient to their mapping of diversity by way of the modern concept of religion. While the predominance of Roman Catholicism (at least by the numbers) is clearly attested to in both countries, the key narratives of multiculturalism and *mestizaje* have not been overtly rooted in questions of religious difference – not, at least, until recently, with the public rise of specific non-Christian forms of “religious” diversity as an issue of both local and global importance.

In Canada, the concept of religion has been a late entry to the national debate, and one that is still in emergence, through such measures as the recent report about “reasonable accommodation” written by the philosopher Charles Taylor and the historian Gerard Bouchard.³⁰ In an unusual example of state-sponsored study of religion, the government of Quebec commissioned these scholars to address the question of the state’s accommodation of “cultural differences,” which, in their report, largely took the form of religious differences. Based on four months of public consultations that the authors held across Quebec, the report makes a case for “open secularism” as the best means for protecting freedom of conscience and religion along with a flexible practice of state neutrality.

In Mexico, a formal celebration of indigenous religious traditions sits awkwardly with a de facto national Catholicism, and the less-remarked entry of evangelical Protestants, Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, conservative Mennonites, and transnational Buddhists into the fray. Anticlericalism still casts a long shadow over Mexican political life, embodied especially in continued emotional and symbolic investments in the battles of the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Revolt and the persistent debates about the legacies of the postrevolution constitution for the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the Mexican nation-state. Debate about religion in Mexico’s public sphere has focused less on the significance and challenges of increasing religious diversity, and more on the persistent question of the role of varieties of Roman Catholicism in both popular and political contexts – from the ultramontane Legionaries of Christ to the place of liberation theology in the revolutionary movements of Chiapas.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the governments of both countries faced revitalized indigenous activism that called their colonial pasts and their current legal and property systems into question. Strengthened in part by a wider turn to “identity politics,” these indigenous

²⁹ Vasconcelos as quoted in Alonso, “Conforming Disconformity,” 465.

³⁰ Gerard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*, <http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/documentation/rapports/rapport-final-abrege-en.pdf>.

movements depend both on political claims to sovereignty, as well as on arguments about spiritual or religious kinds of authenticity.³¹ In Mexico this most publicly took the form of the political uprising in Chiapas, while in Canada the visibility of First Nations was most evident in the public apologies and legal settlements churches and government undertook in recognition of the devastation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christian-run residential schools.³² Regardless of how sovereign or how Christian politicians or citizens hoped their countries to be, early twenty-first-century movements of aboriginal sovereignty, self-government, and religious freedom make it clear that the linked goals of Christianization and assimilation to a national ideal were never, and probably never will be, complete.

At the same time, in both countries new discourses of religious diversity have begun to shape public conversation and public landscapes, inflected by transnational tropes and practices ranging from Buddhist meditation to the practices of Muslim dress. These transformations are perhaps most evident in urban contexts in Mexico and Canada, where a wide diversity of religious organizations have established themselves. In Canada, these organizations cater both to new immigrants and to Canadian-born converts, while in Mexico the convert audience is more prominent in such places as Buddhist meditation centers. Although cities such as Montreal and Mexico City have long been sites of cosmopolitan mixture, the immigration patterns in Canada have led to a much higher level of religious diversity – in both numbers of religious traditions and numbers of adherents – than in Mexico. In part, it is these demographic transformations that have forced a new confrontation with myths of nationhood in Canada and Mexico, and with the significance of religion to these national stories.

DEMOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES AND THE LURE OF NUMBERS

Thinking with numbers is an alluring, yet sometimes a misleading approach to predicting the future (or surmising the past) of a country, as many scholars have pointed out. To portray adequately the religious situations in early twenty-first-century Canada and Mexico, however, at least a short venture into demographic data is required. Fortuitously, within a year

³¹ Courtney Jung, *The Moral Force of Indigenous Politics: Critical Liberalism and the Zapatistas* (Cambridge, UK, 2008); Kristin Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life: Ritual in the Popular Culture of Oaxaca* (New York, 2006).

³² Courtney Jung, "Canada and the Legacy of the Indian Residential Schools: Transitional Justice for Indigenous Peoples in a Non-Transitional Society" (8 Apr. 2009). <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1374950> (accessed 12 May 2009).

of each other, both the Canadian and the Mexican governments conducted censuses that asked questions about religion.

In 2000, the Mexican government conducted a census that confirmed yet again the predominance of Roman Catholics: within a country of almost eighty-four million people, almost 88 percent were Roman Catholic. With such an overwhelming majority, that left approximately 8 percent as “non-Catholics” and 4 percent in the “none” or “unspecified” category. Though Catholic/non-Catholic is the highest level of abstraction in the Mexican census categories, Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Renée de la Torre Castellanos have shown how recent demographic shifts, especially among the growing and constantly dividing Protestant groups in Mexico, have made it challenging to craft long-lasting census categories. At the next level of distinction, the census charts less than 1 percent “historical Protestants” (including Presbyterians, Baptists, and Mennonites), 4.5 percent “Evangelical” (Pentecostals and evangelicals), 2 percent “biblical not evangelical” (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists), and less than 0.5 percent of “other religions.” This last category includes Spiritualists, Jews, and Muslims, along with 5,346 Buddhists and 1,487 “Nativists,” meaning those people identifying as practitioners of indigenous traditions or Mexicanidad movements. Despite these numbers, there are clearly fewer Buddhists in Mexico than practitioners of indigenous traditions – the capacious category of Catholicism has claimed many of the latter, as census categories make it difficult to account for the multiple religious affiliations of those who integrate Catholicism and indigenous religious traditions.³³

One of the most contentious issues in the demography of religious affiliation in Mexico has been the rise of non-Catholic Christianity. Though the combined numbers of 7 percent still do not add up to much of a numerical threat to the predominance of Roman Catholics, the rise of various forms of Protestantism in Mexico and throughout Latin America has seen evangelicals, Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Mormons all establish communities in strategic locations in Mexico. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars turned their attention in new ways to this phenomenon of rapid conversion. In some cases, whole villages became Protestant at once, largely because local kin and ritual networks facilitated, or encouraged, the change.³⁴ By

³³ For an overview of religion in the 2000 census figures for Mexico, see *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática. La Diversidad Religiosa en México* (Aguascalientes, 2005). For analysis of the data, see Renée de la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga, *Atlas de la diversidad religiosa en México* (Mexico, 2007).

³⁴ James Dow, “The Theology of Change: Evangelical Protestantism and the Collapse of Native Religion in a Peasant Area of Mexico,” in Frank A. Salamone and Walter Randolph Adams, eds., *Exploration in Anthropology and Theology* (Lanham, MD, 1997),

the twenty-first century, varieties of Protestantism had clearly established themselves throughout Mexico, but without meeting the predictions of some observers that waves of conversion from Catholicism would result. Though it would be a mistake to think of Mexico as entirely a “Catholic country,” the numerical, architectural, economic, political, and symbolic dominance of the Catholic Church is ongoing.

What this dominance can obscure, of course, is how small communities can endure, even with profound effects on their surroundings and the constellations of religion they inhabit. One example of this in Canada and Mexico is the significance of Jews and Judaism to the cultural, political, economic, and religious life of both countries. Jewish communities have deep historical roots in both Canada and Mexico, largely, but not entirely, centered in urban contexts such as Toronto, Montreal, and Mexico City. Jewish immigration to Canada has been on a larger scale than to Mexico, beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing today, with many new immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. Compared to Mexican Jews, who number a little more than 45,000, the Canadian Jewish community of almost 330,000 includes a more diverse array of people in terms of national origin, class, and religious observance, and it has played a more influential role in national life.³⁵ In and around Mexico City, however, is a fascinating and still controversial community of Jews who claim to descend, in part, from the Jewish *conversos* who lived and suffered under the Mexican Inquisition, which only ended in 1821. The more recently arrived and more Orthodox Jews of Mexico City, who have maintained a separate identity in which they distinguish themselves from “Mexicans,” consider this mixture of Judaism and Mexicanness to make for “mestizo Jews.” The history and uniqueness of this mixture, however, have attracted many visits from U.S. Jews over the past fifty years, both as tourists and as philanthropists.³⁶

Also difficult to track is the influence of noninstitutionalized forms of spiritual affiliation and practice. Mexico has long nurtured traditions of what might be called “alternative spirituality.” Whether in the form of the spirit mediums described by the anthropologist Ruth Behar, who enter into trance in front of altars bedecked with images of Pancho Villa, or the politicized and aestheticized spirituality of women such as Frida Kahlo and her admirers, there are multiple forms of spiritual practice that operate outside

113–23; Peter Cahn, *All Religions Are Good in Tzintzuntzan: Evangelicals in Catholic Mexico* (Austin, TX, 2003).

³⁵ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto, 2008).

³⁶ Ronald Loewe and Helen Hoffman, “Building the New Zion: Unfinished Conversations between the Jews of Venta Prieta, Mexico, and Their Neighbors to the North,” *American Anthropologist* 104:4 (2002): 1135–47.

or in opposition to priestly authority.³⁷ While Mexico City has long been a center for such alternative practices, in recent decades the introduction of transnational Buddhist meditation centers, along with yoga retreat centers appealing to both Mexicans and tourists, has extended a broader diversity of religious practices to rural settings as well.

In the Canadian case, the 2001 census made room for a wider categorization of religious identities, albeit within a similar large-scale distinction of Catholic, Protestant, Other, and None. Compared to earlier versions of the census, this one told a story of increasing diversity. Of a population of almost thirty million, almost half were Roman Catholic (43.2 percent), while the "Protestant" category, of which the largest groupings were the United Church of Canada (9.6 percent) and the Anglican Church (6.9 percent), added up to a little more than a quarter of Canadians (27.7 percent). The "Other" category, made up of a mix that included Orthodox Christian traditions (1.5 percent), Mormons (0.3 percent), Aboriginal spirituality (0.1 percent), Muslim (2.0 percent), Jewish (1.1 percent), Buddhist (1.0 percent) and Hindu (1.0 percent), constitutes a growing group that in 2001 totaled a little more than a tenth of the population (11.1 percent). The religious "Nones," those claiming no religious affiliation when asked by government census takers, are an even more popular and growing group, at almost five million (16.2 percent).³⁸

Immigration plays an important role in the changing demographics of Canadian religion. Almost half of the growing group of Muslims in Canada immigrated between 1991 and 2001. By comparison, in the United Church, the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, only 0.6 percent of its members were recent immigrants. The effects of this immigration are most clearly felt in urban settings, where Muslim mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, and Sikh *gurdwaras* now share space on the streetscapes of Canadian cities along with century-old churches and synagogues. The most lavish religious building projects are usually found in the suburbs, where space is more affordable and accessible, but another approach to securing worship space has many historical precedents the world over, namely, the repurposing of the sacred space of one religion into another. In Toronto, for example, the first mosque was established in a former Presbyterian church, with the pews, pipe organ, and crosses removed. More recently, a Toronto Protestant church that once hosted a Ukrainian Orthodox congregation

³⁷ Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (Boston, 1993).

³⁸ The census information is available at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Religion/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1b&Code=01&Table=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Canada&B2=Counts> (accessed 21 Dec. 2009) and <http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/default.aspx?s=est&c=9400> (accessed 21 Dec. 2009).

has been renovated into the Kadampa Meditation Centre of Canada. The centre practices a form of Mahayana Buddhism with a Tibetan lineage, and it appeals largely not to an immigrant community, but to native-born Canadians converting to Buddhism in adulthood.³⁹

In recent discussion of the significance of changing religious demographics in Canada, the sociologist Roger O'Toole traces the arguments among scholars about the success or failure of Canadian approaches to the challenges and possibilities of religious diversity. O'Toole remarks that those critical of the state's reticence to engage directly questions of religious diversity in policy terms are unlikely to convince politicians or policy makers to turn from Canadian traditions of largely ignoring religion in political life. Instead, he suggests that immigrant religious diversity has "resulted in a *de facto* separation of religion and state, which effectively reduces religion to the status of a purely personal and private matter."⁴⁰ However, given the historical precedence of state support of Christianity, such as provincial funding for Catholic and Protestant public education or legal accommodation for Christian and Jewish modes of family dispute reconciliation, it is not surprising that calls for state support of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Sikh forms of sociability and schooling are disrupting this *de facto* (and partial) separation.

Any demographic account of Canada and Mexico should mention the important role of the United States as a draw for both Canadians and Mexicans, whether as immigrants with legal papers or without. More Canadians and Mexicans head to the United States than Americans move to either Canada or Mexico.⁴¹ While immigrants from Mexico constituted the largest group of legal immigrants (20.6 percent) to the United States in 2002, Canadian immigrants were a much smaller percentage at 1.8 percent. Beyond these immigration figures, 20.6 million people indicated they were "Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano" in the 2000 U.S. census, making up 58.5 percent of the larger category of "Hispanic." Many of these people would not have been born in Mexico but still choose to maintain the identity of "Mexican."⁴²

Beyond the well-known phenomenon of legal and illegal Mexican immigration to the United States is the lesser known, but equally difficult to quantify, phenomenon of seasonal migrations between Canada and Mexico.

³⁹ See <http://nkt-kmc-canada.org/en> (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

⁴⁰ O'Toole, "Dominion of the Gods," 150.

⁴¹ See Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," in *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Malden, MA, and Oxford, UK, 2002), 157–71 and http://www.migrationinformation.org/aug04_spotlight_table.cfm (accessed 18 Feb. 2010).

⁴² Betsy Guzmán, *The Hispanic Population: Census 2000 Brief* (Washington, DC, 2001).

While largely poor Mexicans go, both legally and illegally, to Canada as agricultural laborers in the summer, many middle- to upper-class Canadians move to the southern United States and Mexico during the winter. Known as “snowbirds” in Canadian parlance, these temporary residents are a cross between tourists and “nonresident aliens,” in that they often purchase homes in the southern United States or Mexico, and return to them for a few months each winter. The significance of religion for both kinds of seasonal migration has been little studied.⁴³ According to one group of scholars, however, the snowbirds’ flight from winter weather “may well prove to be one of the most important social and economic developments of the new millennium, challenging national loyalties, enriching or disrupting host and sending communities, forming an expanded continental consciousness, and spreading the influence of continental integration across North America.”⁴⁴ The importance (or nonimportance) of religion to this “expanded continental consciousness” is even more obscure than the significance of the seasonal migration itself. Related scholarship on cross-border travel, however, suggests that whether as tourists, snowbirds, or religious pilgrims, when people with means visit places with sacredness, they leave money and attention behind that can have very profound effects on how “religion” is valued in both monetary and symbolic terms.⁴⁵

RELIGIOUS FLOWS

Demographic numbers can give us some sense of the flows of people and religions within and between Canada and Mexico in recent years. They do little, however, to clarify how a diversity of religious practices and unmarked numbers of people circulate within and transform the religious landscapes of these two countries. This next section, based in part on limited field experience in both Canada and Mexico, gives perspective to the reality of the complicated messiness of religious flows and mixtures in early twenty-first-century Canada and Mexico, without claiming to be representative.

On a hilltop just outside Valle de Bravo, a small town a couple of hours outside Mexico City, stands a massive white and gold Buddhist stupa. Erected in 2006 by an organization called Casa Tibet and watched over by

⁴³ Luann Good Gingrich is undertaking research on Mexican Mennonite women’s seasonal labor in Canada.

⁴⁴ Ken S. Coates, Robert Healy, and William R. Morrison, “Tracking the Snowbirds: Seasonal Migration from Canada to the U.S.A. and Mexico,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32:2 (Autumn 2002): 448.

⁴⁵ Thomas S. Bremer, *Blessed with Tourists: The Borderlands of Religion and Tourism in San Antonio* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

a caretaker who lives in a small house at the foot of the hill, the Lhabab Chorten stupa is a testament to twenty-first-century flows of both spiritual and financial capital. Built largely with the energies and donations of the wealthy Mexico City residents who flock to their lakeside homes in Valle de Bravo on the weekends, the stupa is an elaborate materialization of the powerful presence of Buddhism among an influential sector of Mexican society. The colossal structure, built of wood, cement, and plaster and decorated with gold, was consecrated in March 2006 during the visit to Mexico of the seventeenth Karmapa Thaye Dorje, the spiritual head of Karma Kagyu, a Tibetan Buddhist lineage also known as the “Diamondway.” In addition to the four thousand Buddhist practitioners who attended the Karmapa’s “empowerment” rituals in Mexico City and the fourteen hundred people who arrived for the stupa’s consecration, the India-based Karmapa was welcomed to Mexico by the general director for religious associations of the secretary of the government, the federal state secretary, the host of a high-profile television talk show, and the wife of the governor of the State of Mexico, who invited him after the consecration to her private family home in Valle de Bravo.⁴⁶

The Lhabab Chorten stupa is not the only one in town, however. On the other side of Valle de Bravo, on another forested hilltop, stands a Bön Buddhist stupa, begun in 2006, but not yet completed. Garuda Mexico, an organization under the leadership of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoché, a Tibetan-born master living in Charlottesville, Virginia, lovingly documents the construction of the “Gran Stupa para la Paz Mundial” (the Grand Stupa for World Peace) on its Web site, while appealing for more funds to complete the project.⁴⁷ Though without mention of the same kind of political or media support enjoyed by Casa Tibet, the list of donors details contributions of more than \$U.S. 3 million to the project. In addition to Tibetan forms of Buddhism, Valle de Bravo is host to a Burmese-inspired Vipassana Meditation Center, called “Dhamma Makaranda,” which invites local and international visitors to take its classes.⁴⁸ Clearly, Buddhism has found a warm reception among the wealthy and powerful in Mexican society and has provided the grounds for new forms of tourism and trade.

A relatively new development, this version of the importation of Buddhism into Mexico is layered onto stories of earlier flows of monks and tourists, including one that testifies to the presence of Buddhism in Mexico from

⁴⁶ For more on the stupa, see http://www.karmapa.org/news/picture_archive_mexico_2006.htm (accessed 21 Aug. 2009).

⁴⁷ See <http://garudamexico.org/content/view/24/59/&#stupa> (accessed 21 Aug. 2009).

⁴⁸ See http://www.makaranda.dhamma.org/gen/en/gen_home.en.htm (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, courtesy of Chinese monks who made the trans-Pacific journey.⁴⁹ Whether or not the monks actually arrived in Mexico, the story has provided a tale of contact echoed in later Mexican-Buddhist encounters, including the one told in Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*. Kerouac, acclaimed in the 1950s as the harbinger of the Beat generation, was the son of Catholic French-Canadian immigrants to Massachusetts. Escaping what he considered to be the conformity of life in the postwar United States, he traveled to Mexico City to join a collection of like-minded artists and to write. The resulting work, *Mexico City Blues*, arose from his reading of Buddhist texts, his encounter with the mixture of Catholicism and indigenous Mexican religions, and his own experiences as a French-speaking Catholic in the northeastern United States. In a set of 242 choruses, replete with Buddhist and Christian declarations – "I believe in the sweetness of Jesus / And Buddha – / I believe / In St. Francis, / Avaloki / Tesvara" – he also merged French-Canadian and Mexican songs along an axis of Indianness:

Indian songs in Mexico
(the Folk Chanties of Children
at dusk jump rope –
at Saturday Night power failure –)
are like the little French Canuckian
songs my mother sings –
Indian Roundelays –
Row Canoe –
Ma ta wacka
Johnny Picotee
Wish-tee
Wish-tee
Negwayable
Tamayara
Para ya
Aztec squeaks
(ONLY THE MOTHERS ARE HAPPY)⁵⁰

Though by the time of his death Kerouac had returned to the conservative Catholic views of his parents, his travels both literary and geographical left behind documents of "continental consciousness" that were also documents of cosmic consciousness, writ large.⁵¹

⁴⁹ L. W. Pilcher, "Gautama and Lao-Tzu," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 63 (3 Oct. 1876): 644–54.

⁵⁰ Jack Kerouac, *Mexico City Blues* (1959) (New York, 1990), 12, 15.

⁵¹ "Cosmic consciousness" was a phrase coined by an earlier transnational seeker, the Canadian Maurice Bucke, in *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1913) (New York, 1970).

The flow of Eastern religious traditions to Mexico is not only a story of upper-class cosmopolitans taking back sacred treasures from their global pilgrimages or northern artists taking religious experimentation to the city. Down the hill from the Casa Tibet stupa, a ritual expert with none of the wealth or media savvy of the Buddhist organizations takes a diverse group of twenty men, women, and teenage girls, including a visitor from Canada, through the psychologically and physically grueling heat and darkness of the *temascal*, the ancient Mexican practice of the sweat bath. While firmly rooted in the indigenous symbolism of the *temascal* – with its burning hot rocks given by Mother Earth – the leader, Pedro, is also a Reiki master, who reads books about Hindu paths to healing.

Pedro's *temascal* took place in a small dome made of cement and adobe, with one small door and three evenly spaced airholes around the perimeter. One entered the dark dome crouching, crawling clockwise around the pit of glowing, red-hot rocks to find a place to sit, with one's back against the low overhang of the dome, feet pointed to the rocks. With everyone gathered, new rocks were added to the pit and welcomed with the greeting "Bienvenida abuelita, corazón de la tierra" [Welcome grandmother, heart of the earth]. The curtain at the opening of the *puerta* (door) was then closed, the airholes filled with cloths, and the *temascal* was in complete darkness. As Pedro sprinkled water and herbs on the rock, the steaming heat slowly rose in an overwhelming blanket, stifling one's breathing little by little, doing the work of the sweat bath.

Pedro welcomed all those in the dome and then invoked the *gran misterioso*, by whatever names it might appear – Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad. When he invited the participants to introduce themselves in the darkness, most said that a search for *salud*, or health, for themselves, family, or friends led them to the *temascal*; one woman sought self-confidence. The group responded to each testimony with cries of "Bienvenida" or "Fuerza!" Over the next few hours, the group went through the four symbolic *puertas* of the *temascal* – the first representing childhood, the second adolescence, the third adulthood, and the fourth the stage of elderhood. During each door, Pedro talked of the beauty, challenges, and possibilities of the *temascal*, giving participants a chance to address their personal struggles to Ometeotl, the Nahuatl mother/father creator divinity. Collectively, the group sang folk songs, Christian hymns, and indigenous chants. Between doors, those who wished could exit for a brief breath of fresh air and some cold water, while several hardier participants stayed inside the *temascal*. By the last *puerta*, the hottest one, silence largely reigned, until finally, as the group moaned and begged for the door to be opened, Pedro called out *Puerta!*, and the group clapped and cried with joy. Emerging from the darkness into the daylight to pour cold water over sweating bodies, the participants

quietly chatted while eating popcorn provided by Pedro's wife. Upon leaving, participants could place a small donation in a dish as a token of their appreciation.

The *temascal* was a powerful ritual of cleansing and regeneration that, in the hands of Pedro, blended indigenous Mexican traditions – both native and Christian – with a cosmic sensibility that could welcome Mother Earth, Omēteotl, Jesus, Buddha, and Muhammad into the dome. Rooted in a four-stage metaphor of the ideal life cycle, the *temascal* became a psychological and physical test, experienced communally among strangers and friends lying next to each other in the dark. A religious practice situated in a modest courtyard, outside any larger institutional structures, the *temascal* was not only “meaningful,” but also productive of religion in a way that is difficult to measure. Pedro's work has its parallels in the Mexican/American traditions of *curanderismo*, or healing, which readily blend Omēteotl and other indigenous divinities with Christian symbols and rituals, statues of the Buddha and Shiva, and practices of Afro-Caribbean Santería.⁵² For a few hours one afternoon, the hot, steamy dome in Pedro's courtyard became the incubator for crisscrossing religious flows and personal testimonies, none of which could be easily encapsulated in a particular religious identity.

Another blend of indigenous traditions, New Age sensibilities, and Catholicism was staged in the few days prior to Pedro's *temascal*, when the *zocolo* (town square) of Valle de Bravo and that of Toluca, a city to the east, hosted a traveling group of dancers and runners who were symbolically retracing the journey of the dead body of the last Aztec emperor, Cuauhtémoc. Killed by the Spanish in 1525 for allegedly plotting a revolt, Cuauhtémoc eventually became a national hero among Mexicans, revered for his bravery in the face of the conquerors. The 2009 Carrera Kuauhtemok (Race for Cuauhtémoc) began in a town close to the Mexican-Guatemala border, where Cuauhtémoc had been killed almost 500 years earlier, and was to end in Ixcateopan de Cuauhtémoc, a town north of Valle de Bravo, where, in the mid-twentieth century, an ossuary supposedly containing Cuauhtémoc's bones was unearthed from beneath the local Catholic church. The ensuing political contestation over the authenticity of the remains demonstrated that these new relics were fraught with political risks, as repeated denials of the bones' authenticity from federal government archaeological commissions did little to dissuade those convinced that the bones were powerful nationalist relics.⁵³

⁵² On *curanderismo*, see Luis D. León, *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

⁵³ On the varying accounts of Cuauhtémoc's death, see Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford, UK, 2004). On the history of his “remains” see Paul

Just as those arguing for the authenticity of the remains of Cuauhtémoc represented a diversity of class, racialized, and political positions, so too did the Carrera Kuauhtemok, as professionals, local politicians, backpacking young people, indigenous elders, and Native Americans from the United States all joined in rituals and dances in honor of the Aztec emperor and Omēteotl in the hot sun of Toluca's *zocolo*. After the dances, speakers attested to the importance of indigenous values for planetary harmony, with one advocating the "evolutionary, not revolutionary," power of indigenous traditions. The anthropologist Renée de la Torre Castellanos describes the wider context of communities of "neoindigenous" dance in Mexico, including some that draw from Indian notions of shakras, Lakota symbolism, Catholic devotions, and New Age vocabularies. She argues that this plethora of invented traditions demonstrates the dynamism of the uses of "religion" in Mexico: "While keeping the mythical past of our indigenous roots alive, [the dances] depend for their vitality on the resignifying of our current multiculturalism, one that is based on a *mestizaje*, and regenerate the bonds of identity between the indigenous-colonial past and the traditional-modern present."⁵⁴ Implicated in a complicated network of political affiliation, claims to indigeneity, and transnational, spiritual imaginaries, the Carrera Kuauhtemok demonstrates the lingering power of Cuauhtémoc as a malleable martyr.

Traveling from the *temascal* and *zocolo* to a hilltop on the other side of Valle de Bravo, those seeking healing can find it in yet another unexpected combination. The Maranatha Center for Carmelite Spirituality, designed and built in the 1970s in the style of an Italian palazzo, offers a quiet sanctuary of green in the scruffy hills outside the town. Though much of the convent is not accessible to visitors as the nuns are cloistered, there are two chapels in which visitors can pray, whether according to traditional practices of Catholic meditation or to their own disciplines of prayer. In the bookstore, there are yet more possibilities, as visitors can buy books detailing the controversial innovations of a Carmelite priest, Luis Jorge González, who writes of ways to combine traditional Catholic devotion with the techniques of neuro-linguistic programming, a method of psychotherapy with roots in the nexus of psychology and spirituality of 1970s California.⁵⁵

Gillingham, "The Emperor of Ixcateopan: Fraud, Nationalism and Memory in Modern Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 561–84. On the run, see also <http://cecuauhtemoc.blogspot.com/> (accessed 12 Mar. 2010).

⁵⁴ Renée de la Torre Castellanos, "The Zapopan Dancers: Reinventing an Indigenous Line of Descent," trans. Nicholas Barret, in Olga Nájera-Ramírez, Norma Elia Cantú, and Brenda M. Romero, eds., *Dancing Across Borders: Danzas Y Bailes Mexicanos* (Champaign, IL, 2009), 41.

⁵⁵ Maximiliano Herráiz, *New Age, Internet, Iglesia* (Mexico City, 2001).

The multinational religious flows represented by the rival stupas, the *temascal*, and the Carmelite convent within this small central Mexican town are not prominent in scholarship on religion in contemporary Mexico. For reasons of both the influence of numerical significance and the weight of historical narratives, we know more about Roman Catholicism, indigenous traditions, and evangelical Protestantism, and their intersections and contests, than we do about the significance of traditions such as Buddhism or Hinduism in Mexican contexts. A growing network of scholars, including Luis León and Valentina Napolitano, have demonstrated the variety of transnational networks in which Mexican religious traditions have taken on lives outside Mexico, including the United States and Italy. Transnational flows of symbolism and ritual, along with economies of pilgrimage, tourism, and missionary networks, will clearly continue to play an important and transformative role in what is counted as “religion” in Mexico’s future.

In the study of Canadian religion, scholars are also paying increasing attention to the significance of an ever wider variety of transnational religious flows. Characterized by a diversity brought about both by immigration patterns and by missionary networks that include Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and other advocates, “religion” in Canadian public and lay discourse no longer signifies a tacit Christianity, as it once often did. These patterns of immigration and mission are, of course, not entirely new and indeed could be located in the earliest encounters among First Nations, French, and English peoples, which still resonate today.⁵⁶ The weight of their significance in the daily lives of especially urban Canadians, however, has clearly grown. Alongside the overwhelming predominance of churches in Canadian streetscapes, yoga centers, Buddhist meditation institutions, Dawa centers, or streetfront mosques are now a regular sight in both larger and smaller cities, with the Greater Toronto Area the metropolitan center with the greatest numbers of Hindus and Muslims.

The forms of religious diversity cultivated by immigration and those forms created by missionary efforts are not always fully integrated. Take, for example, the case of the Hindu temples being built in the suburbs of Toronto and the ISKCON (Hare Krishna) temple situated since 1976 in a massive former church in an upscale city neighborhood. The Hare Krishna movement entered North America through the missions of Indian gurus and really took hold in the late 1960s, a time of great religious experimentation. ISKCON Toronto, as did the Hare Krishna movement more generally, grew largely thanks to the devotions of Euro-American converts in the 1970s,

⁵⁶ See John Barker, “Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga’a of British Columbia,” *American Ethnologist* 25:3 (1998): 433–51.

although many Hare Krishna temples in North America, often being the only Hindu temple in town, served as the first stopping point for South Asian Hindu immigrants.⁵⁷ The Toronto temple now describes itself as a “multicultural congregation” and asserts that the Hare Krishna movement, though with strong ties to Hinduism, is a mode of devotion open to Buddhists, Christians, Jews, or Muslims.⁵⁸ Even without this wholesale repurposing from church to temple, Christian spaces of worship have become common sites for yoga practice, sometimes led by Christian teachers, other times by practitioners who simply rent out commodious parish halls.⁵⁹

The Hindu temples in the suburbs, meanwhile, are increasingly oriented to specific ethnic or devotional groupings, such as Sri Lankan Tamils or the Arya Samaj, many of whom would consider ISKCON Toronto unrecognizable as Hinduism. Even the Arya Samaj community is itself divided by ethnicity, as one temple in Toronto is composed of Hindi speakers from India and East Africa, and the other is made up of non-Hindi speakers from the Caribbean.⁶⁰ The relationship between religion and ethnicity has long been complicated in Canadian society, whether one considers Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Judaism. While practitioners within these groups may sometimes be quick to separate the sheep from the goats, scholars of contemporary religion need to appreciate the fluidity of religious identities and markers, whether in a *temascal* outside Mexico City or in Hindu temple in Toronto. In the words of the religion scholars Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, “We need to avoid the fetishization of increasingly anachronistic notions of authenticity.”⁶¹ The risk of fetishizing authenticity is equally prevalent both outside and within particular religious traditions. For example, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who appears to embody indigenous Mexican nationalism in one context, may represent an ultramontane Roman Catholicism in another. Or, when twenty-first-century Canadian Anglican priests teach yoga in their nineteenth-century city sanctuaries – practices of devotion and “fitness” learned via the tutelage of gurus in India and Canada alike – fixed notions of religious identity, appropriation, and authenticity must give way to more malleable

⁵⁷ Diana L. Eck “Negotiating Hindu Identities in the U.S,” in *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, Harold Coward, John R. Hinnells, and Raymond Brady Williams, eds. (Albany, NY, 2000), 229.

⁵⁸ See <http://toronto.iskcon.ca/faq.html#> (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

⁵⁹ Pamela E. Klassen, “Ritual Appropriation and Appropriate Ritual: Christian Healing and Adaptations of Asian Religions” *History and Anthropology* 16:3 (2005): 377–91.

⁶⁰ Harold Coward, “Hinduism in Canada,” in *South Asian Religious Diaspora*, 157.

⁶¹ Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, “Charting the New Terrain: Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada,” in Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, eds., *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, (Toronto, 2008), 20.

conceptualizations that can account for the historical, political, and ritual significance of transnational religious borrowing and giving.⁶²

When Tibetan Buddhist lamas travel to greet their followers and consecrate stupas on rural hilltops in the center of Mexico, they spread their message and blessings on ground that has long been seeded with an ongoing tangle of indigenous and “invasive” religious metaphors and rituals. When Kateri, a seventeenth-century Mohawk young woman from Kahnawake – still a contested site in which Mohawk sovereignty and the Canadian state conflict – continues to take on new life and new followers in the currents of transnational Catholicism, the significance of these layers of politics, mysticism, and memory holds unpredictable effects. Such confluences of place, people, and ritual practice encompass not only Canada, Mexico, and the United States, but also the world, and they call for a sharpened awareness of how local sites of religious innovation are created within transnational economies saturated with power, history, and imagination.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Bender, Courtney, and Pamela E. Klassen, eds. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*. New York, 2010.
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⁶² See Pamela Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Healing, Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley, CA, 2011).

Section VI

CONCLUDING ESSAYS

RELIGION AND MYTHS OF NATIONHOOD IN CANADA AND MEXICO IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

PAMELA KLASSEN

The religious situations in Canada and Mexico at the start of the twenty-first century are shaped in profound ways by these countries' long and often fraught relationships to the United States. Put most starkly, the main points of direct intersection across their religious landscapes are the following: the flow, illegal and legal, of people, money, and commodities across their increasingly fortified borders; the ongoing legacies of the history of colonial violence and dispossession of land that marked the birth of all three nations as either "revolutionary" or "commonwealth" nations; the increasingly global and/or transnational varieties of religious experience and organization that are becoming options for belonging and practice in both Canada and Mexico; and, finally, the changing salience of religion as a category at play in the public sphere. All three countries consider themselves democracies, and they are joined by the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which liberalized the flow of goods and capital (if not always people) among the three countries. The trade between Canada and the United States alone encompasses the largest bilateral exchange of goods, services, and income in the world. After Canada, Mexico is the second-largest trading partner of the United States, and Canada and Mexico are also very important trading partners for each other.¹ Long before the neoliberal economic policies of NAFTA, however, religion flowed abundantly across these borders, via symbols, stories, media, and people.

After the World Trade Center bombings of 2001, the relationships among Canada, Mexico, and the United States were increasingly shaped by the growing militarization, at the insistence of the United States, of the relatively peaceful Canada-United States border and the already highly fortified Mexico-United States border. Even with such increased fortification, however, the permeability of religion in and around the borderlands

¹ Rebecca Jannol, Deborah Meyers, and Maia Jachimowicz, "U.S.-Canada-Mexico Fact Sheet on Trade and Migration," Migration Policy Institute, Nov. 2003.

of North America is an ongoing reality. To assess both the effects and the limits of this permeability, this essay focuses on contemporary religious situations in Canada and Mexico with an approach that considers both the vestiges of the past in the present, as well as various imaginings of what the future should be. Paying attention both to specific stories of religious mixture and to wider demographic trends, this essay demonstrates how religion takes on different meanings depending on the scale of analysis, whether a hagiographic tale of a national icon or a demographic narrative of the transformation of peoples and cultures.

MYTHS OF NATIONHOOD

The task of imagining how religion might be transformed in the futures of Canada and Mexico must begin by considering how these nation-states have understood their past. Canada and Mexico are nations that have both cultivated strong national myths of cultural belonging, while remaining haunted by their colonial pasts and watchful of their powerful shared neighbor. Encounters – both consensual and violent – between varieties of Christianity and native traditions of the Americas have firmly embedded contestation and combination over what counts as “religion” in the foundations of these nation-states. Indeed, Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues that the encounter of European conquerors and scholars with the indigenous peoples of the Americas was a key site for the formation of the modern category of religion itself.² Any attempt to assess the present or future of religion in the Americas, then, requires awareness of how the very notion of religion gained popular and scholarly salience in the historical conditions of colonial encounter. At the same time, especially in Canada, increasing religious diversity due to late twentieth-century immigration patterns means that a growing variety of groups seeks to be considered within the category of religion as it is articulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (enacted 1982), Canadian courts, and government policies. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and, less prominently, new religious movements such as the Raelians have all sought, with more or less success, to be “reasonably accommodated” as *religions* within the Canadian state.³

² Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundations of the Modern/Colonial World,” American Academy of Religion Centennial Scholars Lecture, Montreal, 2009.

³ See Roger O’Toole, “Dominion of the Gods: Religious Continuity and Change in a Canadian Context,” in Annika Hvithamar, Margit Warburg, and Brian Arly Jacobsen, eds. *Holy Nations and Global Identities: Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Globalisation*, (Leiden, 2009), 137–57.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, both Canada and Mexico understood themselves as countries of mixture, whether in the Mexican invocation of *mestizaje*, or in Canada's national project of multiculturalism. While religion has not always been a prominent feature of this mixture, some contemporary versions of the story emphasize Mexico's persistent combination of "folkloric" indigenous religions with colorful forms of Catholicism, in what Ana Maria Alonso has called an "aesthetic statism."⁴ More recently, others have pointed to how currents of violence following the underground cross-border drug economy are themselves legitimated by similarly hybrid practices of devotion. For example, the cult of Santa Muerte, or Holy Death, involves rituals of devotion to a skeleton-saint who is in many ways the Virgin of Guadalupe inverted: not sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church, la Santa Muerte is nevertheless counted on for protection and vengeance by many in the drug trade. The cult of Santa Muerte and others like it have grown so popular among a range of devotees, including drug lords, gang members, and laypeople implicated more in networks of poverty than those of criminality, that the critic Alma Guillermoprieto has called these devotional forms *narcocultos*. As new religious movements embedded in Catholic idioms, consumer products, and popular culture, *narcocultos* involve "the production of symbols, rituals and artifacts – slang, religious cults, music, consumer goods – that allow people involved in the drug trade to recognize themselves as part of a community, to establish a hierarchy in which the acts they are required to perform acquire positive value, and to absorb the terror inherent in their line of work."⁵

Canadians have developed a different narrative of mixture, that of the modern society that can foster sustainable diversity largely without recourse to violence. The Canadian story of multiculturalism depends primarily on the demographic fact of its immigrant diversity, which includes the growing presence of a plethora of religious communities. This multicultural narrative, however, continues to be shadowed by the violence at its foundation, whether the hanging of the Métis revolutionary and mystic Louis Riel in 1885, or the battles between French Catholics and British Protestants on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.⁶ Where it was once establishment Protestants who declared Canada to be a Protestant Christian

⁴ Ana Maria Alonso, "Conforming Disconformity: 'Mestizaje,' Hybridity, and the Aesthetics of Mexican Nationalism," *Cultural Anthropology* 19:4 (2004): 459–90.

⁵ Alma Guillermoprieto, "The Narcovirus," *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (Spring 2009): 5.

⁶ Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* (Albuquerque, NM, 2008).

nation, despite its histories of aboriginal spiritualities and Roman Catholic institutions, it is now conservative evangelicals who do so, together with their more conservative Catholic allies. With increasing religious diversity that includes rising numbers of Muslims, Hindus, and those professing “no religion,” this vision of Christian nationhood is being forcefully questioned (if not also sometimes just simply ignored) through debates in the courts, schools, and media.⁷

Two pairs of examples of religious border crossing serve as introductions to the tropes of mixture in Canada and Mexico: 1) the colonial/aboriginal Catholic icons, Kateri Tekakwitha and the Virgin of Guadalupe, and 2) the early twentieth-century visionaries, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo and the Canadian-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Considering these two pairs, the second more unlikely than the first, reveals how these women continue to function as icons of mixture and foils for anxieties about the connections among religion, colonialism, and capitalism that were animated on the borderlands of North America. After considering these paired icons, this essay’s perspective widens to consider the changing place of religion in the national myths of belonging predominant in Canada and Mexico, especially as demographic narratives of the religious situations of the two countries have shaped these myths. Juxtaposing this demographic vantage point with more local “on-the-ground” perspectives, this essay then addresses how the flows of practices, politics, communities, and capital have changed national and local conversations about the significance of religion in Canada and Mexico.

EMBLEMS OF MIXTURE

Two emblems of Christian femininity that exemplify both nationalist myths of mixture and the fact of religious permeability have found renewed life in the early twenty-first century: the Virgin of Guadalupe and Catherine/Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–80). Indigenous, female icons revered by Catholics the world over, both the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha have taken on new importance in the twenty-first century, crossing borders of nation, century, and religious tradition with the help of a spreading network of clergy supporters, devotees, scholars, and popular culture entrepreneurs. The Virgin of Guadalupe, an apparition of the Virgin Mary, was said in seventeenth-century accounts to have appeared to an Indian peasant, Juan Diego, in 1531 at the top of a hill called Tepeyac, also the site of an Aztec temple. More than four centuries later, she was still going strong, and Pope John Paul II named her patroness of the Americas in 1999. In 1990, during

⁷ Richard Moon, ed., *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada* (Vancouver, 2008).

an earlier visit to Mexico, the pope had beatified her “confidant,” Juan Diego, after a long and contentious debate about his historical existence. A few years later in 2003, John Paul II canonized Juan Diego.⁸

By comparison, Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk/Algonquin convert to Catholicism, still lingers between beatification and canonization. Tekakwitha was born around 1656 in the autonomous Mohawk village of Gandaouagué in what is now upstate New York. Baptized at nineteen and given the name “Catherine” in honor of Catherine of Siena, at the age of twenty-one she moved across what the colonizers considered “the border” to Kahnawake close to what is now Montreal. Her national and religious identities – Mohawk, Canadian, Catholic, American – have been fought over by her scores of biographers ever since.⁹ Since she was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980, a strong lobby of clergy and laypeople continues to hope that the Roman Catholic Church will accept the proof of her miracle-working powers and canonize her as a saint. Pope John Paul II did, however, name her the patroness of World Youth Day in Canada in 2002.¹⁰

As the patroness of the Americas and an apparition of the Virgin Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe is in a different league from the merely human Kateri, but both figures share transnational and transcultural powers that stem from a strong network of their nineteenth- and twentieth-century supporters. The Virgin of Guadalupe, in her official status and her popular practice, is ubiquitous throughout the Americas, thanks to a centuries-long (and controversial) campaign by Church officials, laypeople, and scholars to forward her cause along with the canonization of Juan Diego. Though not all devotees of the Virgin of Guadalupe consider themselves loyal to the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, others are among its staunchest supporters. Kateri Tekakwitha, less prominent but also the focus of intense devotion, has been claimed as a Christian worthy of sainthood by American Catholics, often in conflict with French-Canadian clergy who would see her canonized as a particularly Quebecois saint. In recent years, her popularity has spread from the Mohawk Valley to Montana and has even encroached on Guadalupe’s territory in New Mexico, largely as a result of networks of indigenous women devotees.¹¹

As emblems of the earliest colonial encounters in the Americas, the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha reveal the complex and labile

⁸ D. A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries* (Cambridge, UK, 2001).

⁹ Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford, UK, 2005).

¹⁰ See http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bl_kateri_tekakwithas_cause_for_sainthood_going_to_vatican/ (accessed 22 Dec. 2009).

¹¹ Greer, *Mohawk Saint*; Luis D. León, *La Llorona’s Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

nature of religion, gender, race, and nation in North America. That they continue to have resonance – or more emphatically that their stories and likenesses have increased in prominence and ubiquity – probably has as much to do with the proliferation of mediated images used for both devotion and commerce as it does with the persistence of indigenous peoples in both the narratives and the populations of the Americas. An image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in blue robes surrounded by a golden glow can be found on everything from T-shirts to shower curtains. Her basilica in Mexico City is one of the most visited Catholic shrines in the world. She has even traveled to Rome, the “heart” of Catholicism, carried there by Mexican devotees, largely clergy and nuns, living in the city either temporarily or permanently.

As the anthropologist Valentina Napolitano has argued, in Rome la Guadalupeana is not primarily a symbol of indigenous resistance. Instead, she has become a “nexus of affect” that conflates the valorization of an ideal traditional Catholic family with cherished (and contested) memories of those conservative Catholic devotees who fought the anticlericalism of the Mexican nation-state during the Cristero Revolt of the 1920s. La Guadalupeana “reverberates with a ‘residue’” of this conflict. “This residue, which is woven into histories of martyrdom and violence, emerges through anxieties about the laicization of society and the hope of a (Catholic) religiosity intimately married to public, national, and intimate spheres.”¹² A most palpable example of this residue took the form of a controversy over the dress of the 2007 Miss Mexico contestant in that year’s Miss Universe pageant. First decorated with images from the Cristero Revolt, including depictions of Catholic men lined up in front of a firing squad, the dress caused such controversy before the pageant that it was eventually redesigned, replacing the explicitly violent imagery with a large image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.¹³

Kateri’s celebrity, while more modest, is nevertheless growing. The poet and musician Leonard Cohen gave her a major role in his 1960s novel *Beautiful Losers*, in which she was evoked in intertwined saintly and sensual ways.¹⁴ More traditionally pious biographies of her, both scholarly and popular, continue to be written, and as she awaits canonization, churches, schools, and statues are erected in her honor. Although Kateri still awaits her sainthood, another pious Montrealer, Brother André (1845–1937), a monk-healer who helped to found Montreal’s Saint Joseph’s Oratory,

¹² Valentina Napolitano, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Nexus of Affect,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 15 (2009): 108.

¹³ “Miss Mexico ‘War Gown’ Toned Down,” BBC News, 19 Apr. 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6571061.stm> (accessed 22 Feb. 2010).

¹⁴ Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (Toronto, 1966).

achieved the distinction first. In late 2009, Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged a second “scientifically inexplicable” healing miracle attributed to Brother André, and then in early 2010 the Vatican announced that Brother André will soon be consecrated as a saint. This consecration will surely catapult Brother André’s memory to a new level of recognition, and it may delay the success of Kateri’s cause.¹⁵

The celebrity and holiness bestowed upon the Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha by the Roman Catholic Church ensure their continued presence in North American imaginaries. Two other emblems of mixture, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907–54) and the Canadian-born evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), remain more controversially liminal figures without a transnational Christian corporation with the power of the Roman Catholic Church to tend to their memories. Both the inspiration for multiple films as well as numerous (and recent) biographies, Frida Kahlo and “Sister Aimee” took very different approaches to the confluence of religion and nation. Kahlo was deeply critical of what she saw as the spiritual wasteland of American imperialism and materialism, while McPherson, a Canadian transplanted to California, considered herself a “loyal American” crusader against Communism and for patriotic purity.

Both women, however, publicly expressed visions of political spiritualities that traveled across national lines and that still reverberate today. Kahlo’s image and art – often drawn upon by practitioners of feminist spirituality – are certainly more pervasive today than are images or stories of McPherson. Sister Aimee’s legacy, however, remains not only in the popular culture of films, plays, and documentaries that continues her ritual of telling “the story of my life,” but also in the lasting effects of her form of popular revivalism, which blended political conservatism, sexuality, and celebrity. Crossing ethnic, denominational, and national lines (including those of Canada, the United States, and Mexico), Sister Aimee set the stage for a wider acceptance of and legitimacy for Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity in public contexts.¹⁶

Kahlo’s travels to the United States were not those of the willing immigrant. She traveled to the United States in 1932 to accompany her husband, Diego Rivera, as he painted his monumental murals for the scion of U.S. capitalism, John Rockefeller. Kahlo’s art from this time reveals her distaste for a United States that she saw as dominated by consumerism and technology, along with her frequent theme of valorizing the spiritual past of preconquest Mexico. Her *Self-Portrait on the Border Line between Mexico*

¹⁵ See http://www.saint-joseph.org/en_1274_1467.asp (accessed 17 Feb. 2010).

¹⁶ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993).

and the United States (1932) is a vivid depiction of her view of the aridity of American industry and the fertility of Mexican history – her arms cross at the wrists, with the “stateside” hand holding a cigarette and the southerly hand a Mexican flag. On the cigarette side, a Ford plant spews clouds of pollution into the air, and small electrical appliances are “plugged” into the ground with black cords. On the Mexican side, calla lilies and succulents grow from their white roots, while an anthropomorphized Sun and Moon send lightning, rain, and warmth down from the air to an ancient temple.

Kahlo’s bifurcation of herself on the borderline was matched by her ongoing love-hate relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and her trenchant critique of patriarchal hierarchies. As a woman who lived in great physical pain for much of her life as the result of an accident, and who struggled with the emotional pain of miscarriages and an unfaithful husband, but who also had affairs of her own, Kahlo in her painting grappled with her suffering in wholly original and critical ways.¹⁷ Not content simply to accept her suffering, her paintings of ebullient sacred hearts and her body-and-soul-baring self-portraits conveyed a powerful mixture of critique and love for the ways that religious devotion and sexual desire enabled and disabled her. This powerful vision continues to offer Chicana and other artists ways to reimagine their own contemporary situations via religious imagery not conventionally pious, with some artists even conflating Frida Kahlo with the Virgin of Guadalupe herself.¹⁸

Aimee Semple McPherson, born and raised in rural southwestern Ontario, a land of rolling hills largely dominated by varieties of English-speaking Protestants, led a life with just as much sexual intrigue, suffering, and artistic originality as Frida Kahlo. McPherson’s genius, however, lay not in painting herself as a complicated soul, but in preaching her way into international celebrity and church leadership even in the midst of scandal and sexual innuendo. Leaving Canada in 1908, she embarked on what would be a lifetime of United States–based international evangelism, ending up as (arguably) the most famous woman evangelist of the twentieth century, leader of an international network called the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. After a mysterious six-week disappearance in 1926, McPherson claimed to have been kidnapped, while her detractors accused her of running off with her married lover. A grand jury ensued, giving McPherson even greater celebrity and eventually making her

¹⁷ See Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York, 1989).

¹⁸ Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, “Revisiting Chicana Cultural Icons: From Sor Juana to Frida,” in *The State of Latino Theatre in the United States*, ed. Luis A. Ramos-Garcia (New York, 2002), 30–38. See also Napolitano, “Virgin of Guadalupe.”

another kind of pioneer – the media tycoon/evangelist laid low and, ironically, raised high by sexual scandal. In the end, all charges were dropped, with McPherson persisting in her claim of innocence and painting her true enemy as the devil himself.¹⁹

McPherson crafted her spiritual originality from a mixture of media artistry, which included publishing a magazine, starting one of the earliest radio stations in the United States, and mimicking/embodying the early Hollywood culture of dramatic celebrity. She also turned to the techniques and theologies of Pentecostal revivalism, faith healing, American patriotism, and anti-Communist fervor to convince her audiences. While Frida Kahlo nurtured a friendship and a brief affair with the Russian Communist Leon Trotsky, McPherson spent much of her later years condemning the “red scare” in both patriotic and religious terms. She parlayed a blend of revivalism, faith healing, and media savvy into a kind of religious celebrity that made space for her as a political and religious figure at a time when women were usually neither. Though her image has not taken on the same iconic status as that of Frida Kahlo, two recent biographies, a film, and a documentary attest to her abiding appeal for both popular and scholarly audiences seeking to understand the ongoing transnational appeal of Pentecostal Christianities as “political spiritualities.”²⁰ Nevertheless, the self-made prominence of McPherson as a healer, revivalist, and institution builder, who created her own Christian empire based at the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, has faced more significant challenges to its longevity than have the saintly healers of Catholicism.

The ongoing, if variable, power of all four of these icons of religiously hybrid womanhood demonstrate how difficult it is to contain iconic saints/celebrities within the changing contours of religious orthodoxy or political ideologies. The Virgin of Guadalupe and Kateri Tekakwitha are alternatively – and sometimes simultaneously – cast as examples of devout, chaste Christian femininity and/or powerful, anticolonial womanhood, across the borders of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Frida Kahlo, the radical free spirit and sexually liberated artist, was at the same time the scorned wife whose husband cheated on her with her own sister and whose art depicted an intensity of bodily suffering often through the material of Mexican Catholic devotions. Aimee Semple McPherson went from being a rural Canadian young woman trained in the ways of the Salvation Army to being a worldwide celebrity by turning the mediating practices of Hollywood to her own ends of building a spiritual empire. While neither was named patroness of anything by any reigning male clergy, the lasting

¹⁹ See Susan Wise Bauer, *The Art of the Public Grovel* (Princeton, NJ, 2008).

²⁰ See Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities* (Chicago, 2009).

presence of Frida Kahlo and Sister Aimee suggests that their stories and examples of border crossing continue to excite imaginations at the intersection of gender, religion, art, and entertainment.

MESTIZAJE AND MULTICULTURALISM

Moving from the biographical/hagiographic stories of these four emblems of mixture to the wider-scale myths of nationhood in Canada and Mexico sets the stage for discussing larger trends in religious mixture in these two countries. Unlike Canada, the United States and Mexico are nation-states based in strong narratives of revolutionary origins that include accounts of the ideal relationship between the state and religious authority. In the United States, breaking violently in the eighteenth century from a motherland whose king was also the head of the Church of England resulted in an ideal, if not always a practice, of the separation of church and state. By comparison, in Roman Catholic-dominated Mexico, the early nineteenth-century war of independence from Spanish rule was partly led by clerics, such as "Father Hidalgo." The early twentieth-century Mexican Revolution, however, was accompanied by an anticlericalism that prompted the revolutionary state to put strong constraints on the public role and political power of the Catholic Church, severely limiting its ability to operate as a public entity, especially in the crucial arena of education. In reaction, the Cristero Revolt of the late 1920s pitted priests, nuns, and Catholic laymen and laywomen in a violent, but unsuccessful confrontation with the state that encompassed issues of land reform, religious innovation, and Church-state relations. These state constraints against Catholicism have only recently begun to loosen.²¹

Stories of revolution and rebellion have not dominated Canadian myths of origin, as Canada largely perceives itself as a commonwealth land without a revolution. As at its origins in 1867, Canada remains a constitutional democracy in which the head of government is the leader of the political party elected to the most seats in Parliament. The head of state is the queen of England, represented by the governor general; in 2010, this was Michaëlle Jean, a journalist and comparative literature scholar who immigrated with her family from Haiti in 1968. Several violent rebellions in the wake of the nation's founding, including the 1885 "North-West Rebellion" led by Métis Louis Riel, have been reread in the late twentieth century not as acts of treason, but as foiled bids for sovereignty.²² More prominent in the national myth is a story of Canadian absorption of those

²¹ Matthew Butler, ed., *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (New York, 2007).

²² Reid, *Louis Riel*; see also Maria Campbell, *Half-Breed* (Toronto, 1973).

fleeing U.S. violence – whether British loyalists in the wake of the revolution, slaves traveling the Underground Railroad to the North, or Vietnam War resisters of the 1960s and 1970s. The only conflict that was dubbed a “revolution” in Canadian history was itself a nonviolent transformation that had contention over the role of religion in state power at its very heart: the “Quiet Revolution” radically reshaped the power of the Roman Catholic clergy in Quebec and started an unfinished process of secularizing schools, hospitals, and life-cycle rituals. As in the Mexican Revolution, the anticlericalism of the Quiet Revolution was paired with an opposition to popular, and largely female-led, religious practices.²³ Even with such secularization, French-speaking Catholicism and varieties of English-speaking Protestantism still undergird much state practice in the country, even though Canada largely understands itself as a secular state.

In Canada, a narrative of “biculturalism” that had understood the country in terms of its two “founding peoples,” the largely Roman Catholic French and the initially Protestant English, gave way in the 1970s to a discourse of “multiculturalism.” Officially marked by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s establishment in 1973 of a Ministry of Multiculturalism, Canada’s project of multiculturalism sought to move from policies of “assimilation” to those of “integration” of the plurality of immigrants who had made their way to Canada from all over the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adopted on the heels of the 1969 “Official Languages Act” that ensconced French and English as the languages of government and public service nationwide, multiculturalism celebrated multiple cultural differences in both official languages. A missing piece in this new narrative of Canadian diversity was the “third” group of founding peoples of Canada – the aboriginal inhabitants of the land claimed by the French, the British, and the fur-trading Hudson’s Bay Company in the early modern era.²⁴ Also less heralded were the black loyalists who settled in British North America in the wake of the American Revolution – never a large number, but a testament to the racialized limits of what counted as the “English” people.²⁵ With time, the descendants of nineteenth-century Japanese and Chinese immigrants would also point out the ways their contributions to the beginnings of Canada’s religious and cultural diversity were ignored in a European-centered narrative of nationhood.

²³ Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931–1970* (Montreal, 2005).

²⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford, UK, 2001).

²⁵ See George Elliott Clarke, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto, 2002).

Mexico, by contrast, long cultivated a national narrative defined not by biculturalism or multiculturalism, but by a mestizo identity, which in its most idealized form was born of Spanish fathers and indigenous mothers. According to the anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz, the story that Mexico was a mestizo nation served as a nationalist myth meant to resist “foreign aggression and neocolonial exploitation,” establishing as the core of the country a revolutionary Mexican nationalism distinct from Spanish dominance.²⁶ That the Maya, Aztec, or Nahuatl were necessary for the story, however, did not mean that they avoided the fate of marginalization faced by their “Canadian” counterparts, such as the Cree or the Haida. Instead, according to many accounts, the “ideology” of *mestizaje* meant not the celebration, but the abjection of indigenous peoples through their “whitening.”²⁷

In both Canadian and Mexican discourses of national identity, the modern concepts of race and ethnicity have functioned as organizational pivots. Canadian multiculturalism has recognized “ethnic” communities as relatively stable groups of people with their origins in another land, often expressed via the hyphen: Ukrainian-Canadians, Caribbean-Canadians, Indo-Canadians. Though many have shown that the concept of race has been at play in Canadian versions of mixture and exclusion, ethnicity and culture have been the dominant categories at work in the discussion of multiculturalism. In a recent reconsideration of Canadian nationalist myths, John Ralston Saul argues for the erasure, or at least the displacement, of the hyphen, in favor of a narrative that understands Canada as a Métis nation from its earliest imaginings. A Victorian racialized hierarchy was a late nineteenth-century imposition on relatively harmonious interactions among the old and new inhabitants of what is now Canada, argued Saul, and those who focus only on the tragic violence of Canadian colonialism do not recognize its longer tradition of *métissage*.²⁸

Mexican *mestizaje*, with its dependence on the image of the “mixing of blood” in sexual reproduction, has operated much more explicitly with race as its organizing principle. Interestingly, however, Claudio Lomnitz argues, similarly to Saul, that Mexican national discourse underwent a process of racialization via the increasing influence of late nineteenth-century “scientific racism.” By the postrevolutionary 1920s, Mexican public intellectuals such as Jose Vasconcelos were writing of a “cosmic race,” imbuing

²⁶ Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 2001), 53.

²⁷ Peter Wade, “Rethinking *Mestizaje*: Ideology and Lived Experience,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 239–57.

²⁸ John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto, 2008). See also Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of *Mestizo* America,” *Journal of American History* 82:3 (Dec. 1995), 941–64.

mestizaje itself with “spiritual” import.²⁹ Mexican and Canadian narratives of national identity, comparatively speaking, have been less concerned to orient to their mapping of diversity by way of the modern concept of religion. While the predominance of Roman Catholicism (at least by the numbers) is clearly attested to in both countries, the key narratives of multiculturalism and *mestizaje* have not been overtly rooted in questions of religious difference – not, at least, until recently, with the public rise of specific non-Christian forms of “religious” diversity as an issue of both local and global importance.

In Canada, the concept of religion has been a late entry to the national debate, and one that is still in emergence, through such measures as the recent report about “reasonable accommodation” written by the philosopher Charles Taylor and the historian Gerard Bouchard.³⁰ In an unusual example of state-sponsored study of religion, the government of Quebec commissioned these scholars to address the question of the state’s accommodation of “cultural differences,” which, in their report, largely took the form of religious differences. Based on four months of public consultations that the authors held across Quebec, the report makes a case for “open secularism” as the best means for protecting freedom of conscience and religion along with a flexible practice of state neutrality.

In Mexico, a formal celebration of indigenous religious traditions sits awkwardly with a de facto national Catholicism, and the less-remarked entry of evangelical Protestants, Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, conservative Mennonites, and transnational Buddhists into the fray. Anticlericalism still casts a long shadow over Mexican political life, embodied especially in continued emotional and symbolic investments in the battles of the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Revolt and the persistent debates about the legacies of the postrevolution constitution for the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the Mexican nation-state. Debate about religion in Mexico’s public sphere has focused less on the significance and challenges of increasing religious diversity, and more on the persistent question of the role of varieties of Roman Catholicism in both popular and political contexts – from the ultramontane Legionaries of Christ to the place of liberation theology in the revolutionary movements of Chiapas.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the governments of both countries faced revitalized indigenous activism that called their colonial pasts and their current legal and property systems into question. Strengthened in part by a wider turn to “identity politics,” these indigenous

²⁹ Vasconcelos as quoted in Alonso, “Conforming Disconformity,” 465.

³⁰ Gerard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*, <http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/documentation/rapports/rapport-final-abrege-en.pdf>.

movements depend both on political claims to sovereignty, as well as on arguments about spiritual or religious kinds of authenticity.³¹ In Mexico this most publicly took the form of the political uprising in Chiapas, while in Canada the visibility of First Nations was most evident in the public apologies and legal settlements churches and government undertook in recognition of the devastation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christian-run residential schools.³² Regardless of how sovereign or how Christian politicians or citizens hoped their countries to be, early twenty-first-century movements of aboriginal sovereignty, self-government, and religious freedom make it clear that the linked goals of Christianization and assimilation to a national ideal were never, and probably never will be, complete.

At the same time, in both countries new discourses of religious diversity have begun to shape public conversation and public landscapes, inflected by transnational tropes and practices ranging from Buddhist meditation to the practices of Muslim dress. These transformations are perhaps most evident in urban contexts in Mexico and Canada, where a wide diversity of religious organizations have established themselves. In Canada, these organizations cater both to new immigrants and to Canadian-born converts, while in Mexico the convert audience is more prominent in such places as Buddhist meditation centers. Although cities such as Montreal and Mexico City have long been sites of cosmopolitan mixture, the immigration patterns in Canada have led to a much higher level of religious diversity – in both numbers of religious traditions and numbers of adherents – than in Mexico. In part, it is these demographic transformations that have forced a new confrontation with myths of nationhood in Canada and Mexico, and with the significance of religion to these national stories.

DEMOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES AND THE LURE OF NUMBERS

Thinking with numbers is an alluring, yet sometimes a misleading approach to predicting the future (or surmising the past) of a country, as many scholars have pointed out. To portray adequately the religious situations in early twenty-first-century Canada and Mexico, however, at least a short venture into demographic data is required. Fortuitously, within a year

³¹ Courtney Jung, *The Moral Force of Indigenous Politics: Critical Liberalism and the Zapatistas* (Cambridge, UK, 2008); Kristin Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life: Ritual in the Popular Culture of Oaxaca* (New York, 2006).

³² Courtney Jung, "Canada and the Legacy of the Indian Residential Schools: Transitional Justice for Indigenous Peoples in a Non-Transitional Society" (8 Apr. 2009). <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1374950> (accessed 12 May 2009).

of each other, both the Canadian and the Mexican governments conducted censuses that asked questions about religion.

In 2000, the Mexican government conducted a census that confirmed yet again the predominance of Roman Catholics: within a country of almost eighty-four million people, almost 88 percent were Roman Catholic. With such an overwhelming majority, that left approximately 8 percent as “non-Catholics” and 4 percent in the “none” or “unspecified” category. Though Catholic/non-Catholic is the highest level of abstraction in the Mexican census categories, Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Renée de la Torre Castellanos have shown how recent demographic shifts, especially among the growing and constantly dividing Protestant groups in Mexico, have made it challenging to craft long-lasting census categories. At the next level of distinction, the census charts less than 1 percent “historical Protestants” (including Presbyterians, Baptists, and Mennonites), 4.5 percent “Evangelical” (Pentecostals and evangelicals), 2 percent “biblical not evangelical” (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists), and less than 0.5 percent of “other religions.” This last category includes Spiritualists, Jews, and Muslims, along with 5,346 Buddhists and 1,487 “Nativists,” meaning those people identifying as practitioners of indigenous traditions or Mexicanidad movements. Despite these numbers, there are clearly fewer Buddhists in Mexico than practitioners of indigenous traditions – the capacious category of Catholicism has claimed many of the latter, as census categories make it difficult to account for the multiple religious affiliations of those who integrate Catholicism and indigenous religious traditions.³³

One of the most contentious issues in the demography of religious affiliation in Mexico has been the rise of non-Catholic Christianity. Though the combined numbers of 7 percent still do not add up to much of a numerical threat to the predominance of Roman Catholics, the rise of various forms of Protestantism in Mexico and throughout Latin America has seen evangelicals, Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Mormons all establish communities in strategic locations in Mexico. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars turned their attention in new ways to this phenomenon of rapid conversion. In some cases, whole villages became Protestant at once, largely because local kin and ritual networks facilitated, or encouraged, the change.³⁴ By

³³ For an overview of religion in the 2000 census figures for Mexico, see *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática. La Diversidad Religiosa en México* (Aguascalientes, 2005). For analysis of the data, see Renée de la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga, *Atlas de la diversidad religiosa en México* (Mexico, 2007).

³⁴ James Dow, “The Theology of Change: Evangelical Protestantism and the Collapse of Native Religion in a Peasant Area of Mexico,” in Frank A. Salamone and Walter Randolph Adams, eds., *Exploration in Anthropology and Theology* (Lanham, MD, 1997),

the twenty-first century, varieties of Protestantism had clearly established themselves throughout Mexico, but without meeting the predictions of some observers that waves of conversion from Catholicism would result. Though it would be a mistake to think of Mexico as entirely a “Catholic country,” the numerical, architectural, economic, political, and symbolic dominance of the Catholic Church is ongoing.

What this dominance can obscure, of course, is how small communities can endure, even with profound effects on their surroundings and the constellations of religion they inhabit. One example of this in Canada and Mexico is the significance of Jews and Judaism to the cultural, political, economic, and religious life of both countries. Jewish communities have deep historical roots in both Canada and Mexico, largely, but not entirely, centered in urban contexts such as Toronto, Montreal, and Mexico City. Jewish immigration to Canada has been on a larger scale than to Mexico, beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing today, with many new immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. Compared to Mexican Jews, who number a little more than 45,000, the Canadian Jewish community of almost 330,000 includes a more diverse array of people in terms of national origin, class, and religious observance, and it has played a more influential role in national life.³⁵ In and around Mexico City, however, is a fascinating and still controversial community of Jews who claim to descend, in part, from the Jewish *conversos* who lived and suffered under the Mexican Inquisition, which only ended in 1821. The more recently arrived and more Orthodox Jews of Mexico City, who have maintained a separate identity in which they distinguish themselves from “Mexicans,” consider this mixture of Judaism and Mexicanness to make for “mestizo Jews.” The history and uniqueness of this mixture, however, have attracted many visits from U.S. Jews over the past fifty years, both as tourists and as philanthropists.³⁶

Also difficult to track is the influence of noninstitutionalized forms of spiritual affiliation and practice. Mexico has long nurtured traditions of what might be called “alternative spirituality.” Whether in the form of the spirit mediums described by the anthropologist Ruth Behar, who enter into trance in front of altars bedecked with images of Pancho Villa, or the politicized and aestheticized spirituality of women such as Frida Kahlo and her admirers, there are multiple forms of spiritual practice that operate outside

113–23; Peter Cahn, *All Religions Are Good in Tzintzuntzan: Evangelicals in Catholic Mexico* (Austin, TX, 2003).

³⁵ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto, 2008).

³⁶ Ronald Loewe and Helen Hoffman, “Building the New Zion: Unfinished Conversations between the Jews of Venta Prieta, Mexico, and Their Neighbors to the North,” *American Anthropologist* 104:4 (2002): 1135–47.

or in opposition to priestly authority.³⁷ While Mexico City has long been a center for such alternative practices, in recent decades the introduction of transnational Buddhist meditation centers, along with yoga retreat centers appealing to both Mexicans and tourists, has extended a broader diversity of religious practices to rural settings as well.

In the Canadian case, the 2001 census made room for a wider categorization of religious identities, albeit within a similar large-scale distinction of Catholic, Protestant, Other, and None. Compared to earlier versions of the census, this one told a story of increasing diversity. Of a population of almost thirty million, almost half were Roman Catholic (43.2 percent), while the "Protestant" category, of which the largest groupings were the United Church of Canada (9.6 percent) and the Anglican Church (6.9 percent), added up to a little more than a quarter of Canadians (27.7 percent). The "Other" category, made up of a mix that included Orthodox Christian traditions (1.5 percent), Mormons (0.3 percent), Aboriginal spirituality (0.1 percent), Muslim (2.0 percent), Jewish (1.1 percent), Buddhist (1.0 percent) and Hindu (1.0 percent), constitutes a growing group that in 2001 totaled a little more than a tenth of the population (11.1 percent). The religious "Nones," those claiming no religious affiliation when asked by government census takers, are an even more popular and growing group, at almost five million (16.2 percent).³⁸

Immigration plays an important role in the changing demographics of Canadian religion. Almost half of the growing group of Muslims in Canada immigrated between 1991 and 2001. By comparison, in the United Church, the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, only 0.6 percent of its members were recent immigrants. The effects of this immigration are most clearly felt in urban settings, where Muslim mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, and Sikh *gurdwaras* now share space on the streetscapes of Canadian cities along with century-old churches and synagogues. The most lavish religious building projects are usually found in the suburbs, where space is more affordable and accessible, but another approach to securing worship space has many historical precedents the world over, namely, the repurposing of the sacred space of one religion into another. In Toronto, for example, the first mosque was established in a former Presbyterian church, with the pews, pipe organ, and crosses removed. More recently, a Toronto Protestant church that once hosted a Ukrainian Orthodox congregation

³⁷ Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (Boston, 1993).

³⁸ The census information is available at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Religion/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1b&Code=01&Table=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Canada&B2=Counts> (accessed 21 Dec. 2009) and <http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/default.aspx?s=est&c=9400> (accessed 21 Dec. 2009).

has been renovated into the Kadampa Meditation Centre of Canada. The centre practices a form of Mahayana Buddhism with a Tibetan lineage, and it appeals largely not to an immigrant community, but to native-born Canadians converting to Buddhism in adulthood.³⁹

In recent discussion of the significance of changing religious demographics in Canada, the sociologist Roger O'Toole traces the arguments among scholars about the success or failure of Canadian approaches to the challenges and possibilities of religious diversity. O'Toole remarks that those critical of the state's reticence to engage directly questions of religious diversity in policy terms are unlikely to convince politicians or policy makers to turn from Canadian traditions of largely ignoring religion in political life. Instead, he suggests that immigrant religious diversity has "resulted in a *de facto* separation of religion and state, which effectively reduces religion to the status of a purely personal and private matter."⁴⁰ However, given the historical precedence of state support of Christianity, such as provincial funding for Catholic and Protestant public education or legal accommodation for Christian and Jewish modes of family dispute reconciliation, it is not surprising that calls for state support of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Sikh forms of sociability and schooling are disrupting this *de facto* (and partial) separation.

Any demographic account of Canada and Mexico should mention the important role of the United States as a draw for both Canadians and Mexicans, whether as immigrants with legal papers or without. More Canadians and Mexicans head to the United States than Americans move to either Canada or Mexico.⁴¹ While immigrants from Mexico constituted the largest group of legal immigrants (20.6 percent) to the United States in 2002, Canadian immigrants were a much smaller percentage at 1.8 percent. Beyond these immigration figures, 20.6 million people indicated they were "Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano" in the 2000 U.S. census, making up 58.5 percent of the larger category of "Hispanic." Many of these people would not have been born in Mexico but still choose to maintain the identity of "Mexican."⁴²

Beyond the well-known phenomenon of legal and illegal Mexican immigration to the United States is the lesser known, but equally difficult to quantify, phenomenon of seasonal migrations between Canada and Mexico.

³⁹ See <http://nkt-kmc-canada.org/en> (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

⁴⁰ O'Toole, "Dominion of the Gods," 150.

⁴¹ See Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," in *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Malden, MA, and Oxford, UK, 2002), 157–71 and http://www.migrationinformation.org/aug04_spotlight_table.cfm (accessed 18 Feb. 2010).

⁴² Betsy Guzmán, *The Hispanic Population: Census 2000 Brief* (Washington, DC, 2001).

While largely poor Mexicans go, both legally and illegally, to Canada as agricultural laborers in the summer, many middle- to upper-class Canadians move to the southern United States and Mexico during the winter. Known as “snowbirds” in Canadian parlance, these temporary residents are a cross between tourists and “nonresident aliens,” in that they often purchase homes in the southern United States or Mexico, and return to them for a few months each winter. The significance of religion for both kinds of seasonal migration has been little studied.⁴³ According to one group of scholars, however, the snowbirds’ flight from winter weather “may well prove to be one of the most important social and economic developments of the new millennium, challenging national loyalties, enriching or disrupting host and sending communities, forming an expanded continental consciousness, and spreading the influence of continental integration across North America.”⁴⁴ The importance (or nonimportance) of religion to this “expanded continental consciousness” is even more obscure than the significance of the seasonal migration itself. Related scholarship on cross-border travel, however, suggests that whether as tourists, snowbirds, or religious pilgrims, when people with means visit places with sacredness, they leave money and attention behind that can have very profound effects on how “religion” is valued in both monetary and symbolic terms.⁴⁵

RELIGIOUS FLOWS

Demographic numbers can give us some sense of the flows of people and religions within and between Canada and Mexico in recent years. They do little, however, to clarify how a diversity of religious practices and unmarked numbers of people circulate within and transform the religious landscapes of these two countries. This next section, based in part on limited field experience in both Canada and Mexico, gives perspective to the reality of the complicated messiness of religious flows and mixtures in early twenty-first-century Canada and Mexico, without claiming to be representative.

On a hilltop just outside Valle de Bravo, a small town a couple of hours outside Mexico City, stands a massive white and gold Buddhist stupa. Erected in 2006 by an organization called Casa Tibet and watched over by

⁴³ Luann Good Gingrich is undertaking research on Mexican Mennonite women’s seasonal labor in Canada.

⁴⁴ Ken S. Coates, Robert Healy, and William R. Morrison, “Tracking the Snowbirds: Seasonal Migration from Canada to the U.S.A. and Mexico,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32:2 (Autumn 2002): 448.

⁴⁵ Thomas S. Bremer, *Blessed with Tourists: The Borderlands of Religion and Tourism in San Antonio* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

a caretaker who lives in a small house at the foot of the hill, the Lhabab Chorten stupa is a testament to twenty-first-century flows of both spiritual and financial capital. Built largely with the energies and donations of the wealthy Mexico City residents who flock to their lakeside homes in Valle de Bravo on the weekends, the stupa is an elaborate materialization of the powerful presence of Buddhism among an influential sector of Mexican society. The colossal structure, built of wood, cement, and plaster and decorated with gold, was consecrated in March 2006 during the visit to Mexico of the seventeenth Karmapa Thaye Dorje, the spiritual head of Karma Kagyu, a Tibetan Buddhist lineage also known as the “Diamondway.” In addition to the four thousand Buddhist practitioners who attended the Karmapa’s “empowerment” rituals in Mexico City and the fourteen hundred people who arrived for the stupa’s consecration, the India-based Karmapa was welcomed to Mexico by the general director for religious associations of the secretary of the government, the federal state secretary, the host of a high-profile television talk show, and the wife of the governor of the State of Mexico, who invited him after the consecration to her private family home in Valle de Bravo.⁴⁶

The Lhabab Chorten stupa is not the only one in town, however. On the other side of Valle de Bravo, on another forested hilltop, stands a Bön Buddhist stupa, begun in 2006, but not yet completed. Garuda Mexico, an organization under the leadership of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoché, a Tibetan-born master living in Charlottesville, Virginia, lovingly documents the construction of the “Gran Stupa para la Paz Mundial” (the Grand Stupa for World Peace) on its Web site, while appealing for more funds to complete the project.⁴⁷ Though without mention of the same kind of political or media support enjoyed by Casa Tibet, the list of donors details contributions of more than \$U.S. 3 million to the project. In addition to Tibetan forms of Buddhism, Valle de Bravo is host to a Burmese-inspired Vipassana Meditation Center, called “Dhamma Makaranda,” which invites local and international visitors to take its classes.⁴⁸ Clearly, Buddhism has found a warm reception among the wealthy and powerful in Mexican society and has provided the grounds for new forms of tourism and trade.

A relatively new development, this version of the importation of Buddhism into Mexico is layered onto stories of earlier flows of monks and tourists, including one that testifies to the presence of Buddhism in Mexico from

⁴⁶ For more on the stupa, see http://www.karmapa.org/news/picture_archive_mexico_2006.htm (accessed 21 Aug. 2009).

⁴⁷ See <http://garudamexico.org/content/view/24/59/&#stupa> (accessed 21 Aug. 2009).

⁴⁸ See http://www.makaranda.dhamma.org/gen/en/gen_home.en.htm (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, courtesy of Chinese monks who made the trans-Pacific journey.⁴⁹ Whether or not the monks actually arrived in Mexico, the story has provided a tale of contact echoed in later Mexican-Buddhist encounters, including the one told in Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*. Kerouac, acclaimed in the 1950s as the harbinger of the Beat generation, was the son of Catholic French-Canadian immigrants to Massachusetts. Escaping what he considered to be the conformity of life in the postwar United States, he traveled to Mexico City to join a collection of like-minded artists and to write. The resulting work, *Mexico City Blues*, arose from his reading of Buddhist texts, his encounter with the mixture of Catholicism and indigenous Mexican religions, and his own experiences as a French-speaking Catholic in the northeastern United States. In a set of 242 choruses, replete with Buddhist and Christian declarations – “I believe in the sweetness of Jesus / And Buddha – / I believe / In St. Francis, / Avaloki / Tesvara” – he also merged French-Canadian and Mexican songs along an axis of Indianness:

Indian songs in Mexico
(the Folk Chanties of Children
at dusk jump rope –
at Saturday Night power failure –)
are like the little French Canuckian
songs my mother sings –
Indian Roundelays –
Row Canoe –
Ma ta wacka
Johnny Picotee
Wish-tee
Wish-tee
Negwayable
Tamayara
Para ya
Aztec squeaks
(ONLY THE MOTHERS ARE HAPPY)⁵⁰

Though by the time of his death Kerouac had returned to the conservative Catholic views of his parents, his travels both literary and geographical left behind documents of “continental consciousness” that were also documents of cosmic consciousness, writ large.⁵¹

⁴⁹ L. W. Pilcher, “Gautama and Lao-Tzu,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 63 (3 Oct. 1876): 644–54.

⁵⁰ Jack Kerouac, *Mexico City Blues* (1959) (New York, 1990), 12, 15.

⁵¹ “Cosmic consciousness” was a phrase coined by an earlier transnational seeker, the Canadian Maurice Bucke, in *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1913) (New York, 1970).

The flow of Eastern religious traditions to Mexico is not only a story of upper-class cosmopolitans taking back sacred treasures from their global pilgrimages or northern artists taking religious experimentation to the city. Down the hill from the Casa Tibet stupa, a ritual expert with none of the wealth or media savvy of the Buddhist organizations takes a diverse group of twenty men, women, and teenage girls, including a visitor from Canada, through the psychologically and physically grueling heat and darkness of the *temascal*, the ancient Mexican practice of the sweat bath. While firmly rooted in the indigenous symbolism of the *temascal* – with its burning hot rocks given by Mother Earth – the leader, Pedro, is also a Reiki master, who reads books about Hindu paths to healing.

Pedro's *temascal* took place in a small dome made of cement and adobe, with one small door and three evenly spaced airholes around the perimeter. One entered the dark dome crouching, crawling clockwise around the pit of glowing, red-hot rocks to find a place to sit, with one's back against the low overhang of the dome, feet pointed to the rocks. With everyone gathered, new rocks were added to the pit and welcomed with the greeting "Bienvenida abuelita, corazón de la tierra" [Welcome grandmother, heart of the earth]. The curtain at the opening of the *puerta* (door) was then closed, the airholes filled with cloths, and the *temascal* was in complete darkness. As Pedro sprinkled water and herbs on the rock, the steaming heat slowly rose in an overwhelming blanket, stifling one's breathing little by little, doing the work of the sweat bath.

Pedro welcomed all those in the dome and then invoked the *gran misterioso*, by whatever names it might appear – Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad. When he invited the participants to introduce themselves in the darkness, most said that a search for *salud*, or health, for themselves, family, or friends led them to the *temascal*; one woman sought self-confidence. The group responded to each testimony with cries of "Bienvenida" or "Fuerza!" Over the next few hours, the group went through the four symbolic *puertas* of the *temascal* – the first representing childhood, the second adolescence, the third adulthood, and the fourth the stage of elderhood. During each door, Pedro talked of the beauty, challenges, and possibilities of the *temascal*, giving participants a chance to address their personal struggles to Ometeotl, the Nahuatl mother/father creator divinity. Collectively, the group sang folk songs, Christian hymns, and indigenous chants. Between doors, those who wished could exit for a brief breath of fresh air and some cold water, while several hardier participants stayed inside the *temascal*. By the last *puerta*, the hottest one, silence largely reigned, until finally, as the group moaned and begged for the door to be opened, Pedro called out *Puerta!*, and the group clapped and cried with joy. Emerging from the darkness into the daylight to pour cold water over sweating bodies, the participants

quietly chatted while eating popcorn provided by Pedro's wife. Upon leaving, participants could place a small donation in a dish as a token of their appreciation.

The *temascal* was a powerful ritual of cleansing and regeneration that, in the hands of Pedro, blended indigenous Mexican traditions – both native and Christian – with a cosmic sensibility that could welcome Mother Earth, Omēteotl, Jesus, Buddha, and Muhammad into the dome. Rooted in a four-stage metaphor of the ideal life cycle, the *temascal* became a psychological and physical test, experienced communally among strangers and friends lying next to each other in the dark. A religious practice situated in a modest courtyard, outside any larger institutional structures, the *temascal* was not only “meaningful,” but also productive of religion in a way that is difficult to measure. Pedro's work has its parallels in the Mexican/American traditions of *curanderismo*, or healing, which readily blend Omēteotl and other indigenous divinities with Christian symbols and rituals, statues of the Buddha and Shiva, and practices of Afro-Caribbean Santería.⁵² For a few hours one afternoon, the hot, steamy dome in Pedro's courtyard became the incubator for crisscrossing religious flows and personal testimonies, none of which could be easily encapsulated in a particular religious identity.

Another blend of indigenous traditions, New Age sensibilities, and Catholicism was staged in the few days prior to Pedro's *temascal*, when the *zocolo* (town square) of Valle de Bravo and that of Toluca, a city to the east, hosted a traveling group of dancers and runners who were symbolically retracing the journey of the dead body of the last Aztec emperor, Cuauhtémoc. Killed by the Spanish in 1525 for allegedly plotting a revolt, Cuauhtémoc eventually became a national hero among Mexicans, revered for his bravery in the face of the conquerors. The 2009 Carrera Kuauhtemok (Race for Cuauhtémoc) began in a town close to the Mexican-Guatemala border, where Cuauhtémoc had been killed almost 500 years earlier, and was to end in Ixcateopan de Cuauhtémoc, a town north of Valle de Bravo, where, in the mid-twentieth century, an ossuary supposedly containing Cuauhtémoc's bones was unearthed from beneath the local Catholic church. The ensuing political contestation over the authenticity of the remains demonstrated that these new relics were fraught with political risks, as repeated denials of the bones' authenticity from federal government archaeological commissions did little to dissuade those convinced that the bones were powerful nationalist relics.⁵³

⁵² On *curanderismo*, see Luis D. León, *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

⁵³ On the varying accounts of Cuauhtémoc's death, see Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford, UK, 2004). On the history of his “remains” see Paul

Just as those arguing for the authenticity of the remains of Cuauhtémoc represented a diversity of class, racialized, and political positions, so too did the Carrera Kuauhtemok, as professionals, local politicians, backpacking young people, indigenous elders, and Native Americans from the United States all joined in rituals and dances in honor of the Aztec emperor and Omēteotl in the hot sun of Toluca's *zocolo*. After the dances, speakers attested to the importance of indigenous values for planetary harmony, with one advocating the "evolutionary, not revolutionary," power of indigenous traditions. The anthropologist Renée de la Torre Castellanos describes the wider context of communities of "neoindigenous" dance in Mexico, including some that draw from Indian notions of shakras, Lakota symbolism, Catholic devotions, and New Age vocabularies. She argues that this plethora of invented traditions demonstrates the dynamism of the uses of "religion" in Mexico: "While keeping the mythical past of our indigenous roots alive, [the dances] depend for their vitality on the resignifying of our current multiculturalism, one that is based on a *mestizaje*, and regenerate the bonds of identity between the indigenous-colonial past and the traditional-modern present."⁵⁴ Implicated in a complicated network of political affiliation, claims to indigeneity, and transnational, spiritual imaginaries, the Carrera Kuauhtemok demonstrates the lingering power of Cuauhtémoc as a malleable martyr.

Traveling from the *temascal* and *zocolo* to a hilltop on the other side of Valle de Bravo, those seeking healing can find it in yet another unexpected combination. The Maranatha Center for Carmelite Spirituality, designed and built in the 1970s in the style of an Italian palazzo, offers a quiet sanctuary of green in the scruffy hills outside the town. Though much of the convent is not accessible to visitors as the nuns are cloistered, there are two chapels in which visitors can pray, whether according to traditional practices of Catholic meditation or to their own disciplines of prayer. In the bookstore, there are yet more possibilities, as visitors can buy books detailing the controversial innovations of a Carmelite priest, Luis Jorge González, who writes of ways to combine traditional Catholic devotion with the techniques of neuro-linguistic programming, a method of psychotherapy with roots in the nexus of psychology and spirituality of 1970s California.⁵⁵

Gillingham, "The Emperor of Ixcateopan: Fraud, Nationalism and Memory in Modern Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 561–84. On the run, see also <http://cecuauhtemoc.blogspot.com/> (accessed 12 Mar. 2010).

⁵⁴ Renée de la Torre Castellanos, "The Zapopan Dancers: Reinventing an Indigenous Line of Descent," trans. Nicholas Barret, in Olga Nájera-Ramírez, Norma Elia Cantú, and Brenda M. Romero, eds., *Dancing Across Borders: Danzas Y Bailes Mexicanos* (Champaign, IL, 2009), 41.

⁵⁵ Maximilliano Herráiz, *New Age, Internet, Iglesia* (Mexico City, 2001).

The multinational religious flows represented by the rival stupas, the *temascal*, and the Carmelite convent within this small central Mexican town are not prominent in scholarship on religion in contemporary Mexico. For reasons of both the influence of numerical significance and the weight of historical narratives, we know more about Roman Catholicism, indigenous traditions, and evangelical Protestantism, and their intersections and contests, than we do about the significance of traditions such as Buddhism or Hinduism in Mexican contexts. A growing network of scholars, including Luis León and Valentina Napolitano, have demonstrated the variety of transnational networks in which Mexican religious traditions have taken on lives outside Mexico, including the United States and Italy. Transnational flows of symbolism and ritual, along with economies of pilgrimage, tourism, and missionary networks, will clearly continue to play an important and transformative role in what is counted as “religion” in Mexico’s future.

In the study of Canadian religion, scholars are also paying increasing attention to the significance of an ever wider variety of transnational religious flows. Characterized by a diversity brought about both by immigration patterns and by missionary networks that include Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and other advocates, “religion” in Canadian public and lay discourse no longer signifies a tacit Christianity, as it once often did. These patterns of immigration and mission are, of course, not entirely new and indeed could be located in the earliest encounters among First Nations, French, and English peoples, which still resonate today.⁵⁶ The weight of their significance in the daily lives of especially urban Canadians, however, has clearly grown. Alongside the overwhelming predominance of churches in Canadian streetscapes, yoga centers, Buddhist meditation institutions, Dawa centers, or streetfront mosques are now a regular sight in both larger and smaller cities, with the Greater Toronto Area the metropolitan center with the greatest numbers of Hindus and Muslims.

The forms of religious diversity cultivated by immigration and those forms created by missionary efforts are not always fully integrated. Take, for example, the case of the Hindu temples being built in the suburbs of Toronto and the ISKCON (Hare Krishna) temple situated since 1976 in a massive former church in an upscale city neighborhood. The Hare Krishna movement entered North America through the missions of Indian gurus and really took hold in the late 1960s, a time of great religious experimentation. ISKCON Toronto, as did the Hare Krishna movement more generally, grew largely thanks to the devotions of Euro-American converts in the 1970s,

⁵⁶ See John Barker, “Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga’a of British Columbia,” *American Ethnologist* 25:3 (1998): 433–51.

although many Hare Krishna temples in North America, often being the only Hindu temple in town, served as the first stopping point for South Asian Hindu immigrants.⁵⁷ The Toronto temple now describes itself as a “multicultural congregation” and asserts that the Hare Krishna movement, though with strong ties to Hinduism, is a mode of devotion open to Buddhists, Christians, Jews, or Muslims.⁵⁸ Even without this wholesale repurposing from church to temple, Christian spaces of worship have become common sites for yoga practice, sometimes led by Christian teachers, other times by practitioners who simply rent out commodious parish halls.⁵⁹

The Hindu temples in the suburbs, meanwhile, are increasingly oriented to specific ethnic or devotional groupings, such as Sri Lankan Tamils or the Arya Samaj, many of whom would consider ISKCON Toronto unrecognizable as Hinduism. Even the Arya Samaj community is itself divided by ethnicity, as one temple in Toronto is composed of Hindi speakers from India and East Africa, and the other is made up of non-Hindi speakers from the Caribbean.⁶⁰ The relationship between religion and ethnicity has long been complicated in Canadian society, whether one considers Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Judaism. While practitioners within these groups may sometimes be quick to separate the sheep from the goats, scholars of contemporary religion need to appreciate the fluidity of religious identities and markers, whether in a *temascal* outside Mexico City or in Hindu temple in Toronto. In the words of the religion scholars Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, “We need to avoid the fetishization of increasingly anachronistic notions of authenticity.”⁶¹ The risk of fetishizing authenticity is equally prevalent both outside and within particular religious traditions. For example, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who appears to embody indigenous Mexican nationalism in one context, may represent an ultramontane Roman Catholicism in another. Or, when twenty-first-century Canadian Anglican priests teach yoga in their nineteenth-century city sanctuaries – practices of devotion and “fitness” learned via the tutelage of gurus in India and Canada alike – fixed notions of religious identity, appropriation, and authenticity must give way to more malleable

⁵⁷ Diana L. Eck “Negotiating Hindu Identities in the U.S,” in *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, Harold Coward, John R. Hinnells, and Raymond Brady Williams, eds. (Albany, NY, 2000), 229.

⁵⁸ See <http://toronto.iskcon.ca/faq.html#> (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

⁵⁹ Pamela E. Klassen, “Ritual Appropriation and Appropriate Ritual: Christian Healing and Adaptations of Asian Religions” *History and Anthropology* 16:3 (2005): 377–91.

⁶⁰ Harold Coward, “Hinduism in Canada,” in *South Asian Religious Diaspora*, 157.

⁶¹ Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, “Charting the New Terrain: Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada,” in Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, eds., *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, (Toronto, 2008), 20.

conceptualizations that can account for the historical, political, and ritual significance of transnational religious borrowing and giving.⁶²

When Tibetan Buddhist lamas travel to greet their followers and consecrate stupas on rural hilltops in the center of Mexico, they spread their message and blessings on ground that has long been seeded with an ongoing tangle of indigenous and “invasive” religious metaphors and rituals. When Kateri, a seventeenth-century Mohawk young woman from Kahnawake – still a contested site in which Mohawk sovereignty and the Canadian state conflict – continues to take on new life and new followers in the currents of transnational Catholicism, the significance of these layers of politics, mysticism, and memory holds unpredictable effects. Such confluences of place, people, and ritual practice encompass not only Canada, Mexico, and the United States, but also the world, and they call for a sharpened awareness of how local sites of religious innovation are created within transnational economies saturated with power, history, and imagination.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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⁶² See Pamela Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Healing, Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley, CA, 2011).

AMERICA'S DIVIDED SOUL, 2000–2009

WADE CLARK ROOF

Despite expectations to the contrary, Americans entered the twenty-first century with remarkably little fanfare. A new century – overlapping with a new millennium – might conceivably have aroused considerable hoopla about a new global world in the making or, to the contrary, apocalyptic scenarios about end-times soon to occur; but except for buzz about a possible Internet collapse due to user overload at the time, nothing much happened. But the calm was short-lived. George W. Bush's election in 2000 had marked a clear break from the earlier Clinton years, ushering in a more conservative era, politically and religiously. According to the polls, early on, roughly half of all Americans were a bit uneasy with his God-and-country rhetoric, but after 11 September 2001, this was of less concern. The impact of 9/11 was, of course, immediate and immense. Aside from shock and fear, it had two major religious consequences: one, public consciousness of the presence of Muslims in the United States greatly increased; and, two, Americans realized as never before how politics, economics, and faith traditions were all deeply intertwined in a global world, and in ways that were neither well understood nor predictable.

This essay traces the shifting alignments of religion and politics in the United States during the first decade of this century. First, we look at these shifts for the nation as a whole, then second, at their regional variations. While some attention is given to presidential voting patterns, primarily the focus is upon the “softer” cultural aspects of the religion-and-politics nexus – the mythic, ritual, narrative, and symbolic realities. These encompass a wide spectrum of emotions, perceptions, and interpretive frames defining the nation's identity, its meaning, and its purpose. Here as well is where the struggle for the soul of the country is fought, over visions and values, principles and priorities. In brief, my argument is that in this “nation with the soul of a church,” to cite Sidney E. Mead's description,¹

¹ Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation with the Soul of a Church* (New York, 1975).

conflicted and unresolved issues relating to national identity stretching back to 1980 with the Reagan presidency, if not before, reached a moment of intense, heated confrontation in the early twenty-first century. This essay attempts to give some greater clarity to this series of developments.

MYTHIC AMERICA

The Gore-Bush controversy in 2000, Bush's defeat of Kerry in 2004, and the election of Barack Obama in 2008 all point to more than just contentious political debates. No better expression of this underlying, much deeper symbolic contestation perhaps was the talk that erupted during the 2004 presidential election and was quickly absorbed in public discourse about a "God Gap" within the country. Though the alignment of evangelical faith and conservative politics was obvious earlier, only then did journalists and commentators begin to fathom the greater depths and significance of the connection. Increased and more explicit endorsements of conservative politicians for public office by religious leaders were apparent. There was also the growing number of fund-raising activities that were sponsored by special-purpose groups whose identities were blurred – whether they were political or religious. In public perception it had become more obvious: Republicans were the party of God and country, the defenders of the family and traditional morality, and Democrats the party of humanists, agnostics, secularists, and liberal elites, those for whom faith seemed of little relevance. On closer scrutiny, records showed that the Catholic and white main-line Protestant vote for Democrats had declined in the 1980s, while the ranks of evangelical Christian "values voters" had swelled. There had been the Monica Lewinsky affair during Bill Clinton's second term and a morally charged, highly politicized impeachment trial, and six years later the Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry fumbled on the campaign trail when addressing religious questions. While Democrats shied from talking about faith, Republicans were quick to do so. Their rhetoric may have seemed deliberate and calculated – the "God Strategy," as this explicit use of religious language and symbols for partisan goals was described – but it mobilized voters.² In 2004, religious service attendance, more so than even socioeconomic class, was the best single predictor of voting Republican.

Looking further at this "God Gap," we discern several religious and political strands meshed together. Prominent was the strong emphasis on personal piety and morality. An individual's standing before God, uprightness, marriage, and family commitment all took precedence over social justice

² David Domke and Kevin Coe, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (New York, 2008), 33–48.

issues involving broader structural social change. So viewed, the country was founded on Judeo-Christian principles emphasizing personal faith and responsibility. There were serious national problems, but these were largely a result of the moral failure of individuals. Abortion and gay lifestyles topped the list of the nation's ills, because either individuals themselves engaged in such practices or politicians, judges, and even some religious leaders in high levels of authority condoned them – both thus forsaking the nation's moral heritage. References to the nation's Founding Fathers as Christian, or at least deeply influenced by Judeo-Christian principles, were widely voiced, thereby expanding further the perceived gap between values and behavior. The country's treasured religious past was seen as becoming threatened by the secularity, moral relativism, and lifestyle pluralism that had begun to characterize contemporary society, and the efforts of conservative believers and politicians working together to restore its firm foundations were not just welcomed – their successes in doing so were often seen as evidence of divine favor, if not direct intervention.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the sociologists Robert Wuthnow and James Davison Hunter spoke of an emerging, newly energized cultural and religious polarization of traditionalists/conservatives and progressives/liberals.³ They observed a deepening division cutting across major American social institutions – law, media, politics, the arts, not just religion – all tapping deeply felt sentiments and moral convictions. So pervasive were the “culture wars” that Wuthnow described “two civil religions” competing with one another for the deepest of American loyalties. He contrasted the traditional version with its “myth of origin” relating the country to divine purposes drawing upon Judeo-Christian notions of a “chosen people,” “innocent nation,” and “millennial nation,” over against a more liberal, progressive version emphasizing the well-being of humanity as a whole and American responsibilities for addressing human rights, the environment, economic inequality, and liberty and justice for all people. Myths and symbols for the latter were more universalistic and espoused by those who sought to expand the country's civil religious canopy in a global age, much along the lines that Robert N. Bellah had called for during the Vietnam years in his well-known 1967 essay on American civil religion.⁴ It was not so much that there were two distinct versions of civil religion as it was that the country was deeply polarized culturally, to the point that civil religious symbols, myths, and narratives were themselves selectively, and quite deliberately, drawn upon and interpreted to legitimate opposing political and moral agendas.

³ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ, 1988); and James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York, 1991).

⁴ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96:1 (1967): 1–21.

The highly contested vote on Bush versus Gore in 2000, an election finally resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court, inspired both traditionalists and progressives to intensify political efforts. George W. Bush's inauguration signaled a mixing of the religious and the political by its triumphal, religiously sectarian tone: the ceremony closed with a benediction given by the new president's Methodist pastor from Texas, saying that his was a "humble prayer in the name that's above all names, Jesus the Christ. Let all who agree say, Amen." The president's speeches and press conferences that followed repeatedly gave voice to the older myths of the country as divinely chosen, of its innocence and goodness, and particularly of its millennial mission of carrying democracy to the world and ridding it of tyranny and oppression. At times he spoke of the design of nature, invoking the myth of America's alignment with "Nature's God," the notion that the nation and the values for which it stands were self-evident truths in creation in place since the beginning of time. But it was the millennial myth that evoked his most passionate claims. While the myth could potentially inspire a positive role for the nation extending equality and fair dealings to all humankind, in its absolutized, self-centered, and more righteous version, as the historian Richard T. Hughes observes, it could be interpreted to mean that "the United States has a divine obligation to export and impose its cultural and economic values throughout the world, regardless of the impact those policies might have on poor and marginalized people."⁵ This connotation seemed readily apparent in 2003 when George W. Bush spoke about his decision to invade Iraq. "The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country," he said; "we believe that liberty is in the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history."⁶ Speaking to the National Endowment for Democracy as to why American-style democracy had and would have continuing widespread global influence, he explained, "It is no accident that the rise of so many democracies took place in a time when the world's most influential nation was itself a democracy. . . . Freedom honors and unleashes human creativity and creativity determines the strength and wealth of nations. Liberty is both the Plan of Heaven for humanity and the best hope for progress here on Earth."⁷

Heaven's plan of liberty and progress on earth, notions reminiscent of an older doctrine of manifest destiny, fit well with Bush's broadened economic interpretation of the millennial myth in two important respects: one, rather than territorial expansion, the resources of oil, military bases,

⁵ Richard T. Hughes, *Myths Americans Live By* (Urbana, IL, 2004), 193.

⁶ George W. Bush, Speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, 7 Sept. 2003. <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

and economic markets were to be expanded and defended; and, two, freedom and prosperity, the fruits of the market system, were the great gifts the United States could and should offer the world.⁸

By the time of George W. Bush's reelection in 2004, the struggle for freedom was even more deeply conflated symbolically with religious meaning, described variously as "hope," "America's righteous causes," "progress," "overcoming our enemies," all underscoring the point that the nation's mission was, indeed, God's mission. In the second inaugural address he invoked the words "freedom," "liberty," and "free" forty-nine times, solidifying political and evangelical Christian visions of a nation under attack and confronted by a dangerous world. There was a tone of defensiveness, even desperation in his speech, facing as he did at the time growing public sentiment that opposed the Iraq war. The inaugural ceremony was less triumphal in religious tone, more respectful of other faiths than four years earlier; the president spoke of "the truths of Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the Qu'ran, and the varied faiths of our people." And once again his pastor offered the benediction, but this time it was modified somewhat: "Respecting persons of other faiths, I humbly submit this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." Even so, as Bruce Lincoln astutely observes, the overture to other religions seemed contrived if not deceptive, not just privileging Christianity but carefully coding the language and assumptions about other faiths so as not to offend an evangelical audience.⁹ At best, the 2004 inaugural rhetoric demonstrated the challenges of crafting an American civil religious ritual in a time of growing religious diversity at home and faced with a war intimately bound up with global religions and politics abroad; at worst, it showed just how orchestrated and politicized the use of religious myths, symbols, and rhetoric had become for a president determined to defend his legacy amid a growing chorus of dissent.

For Bush, America had to be the militarily strong defender of freedom in a world of "us" versus "them," in a situation where good, well-intentioned Americans were locked in a struggle against evildoers who despised the freedom, democracy, and values for which the country stood. After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, his Manichean-style rhetoric had become and remained more pronounced. And once the decision was made to invade Iraq, the "culture wars" that previously had been fought on the domestic terrain were rhetorically

⁸ See Roberta A. Coles, "Manifest Destiny Adapted for 1990's War Discourse: Mission and Destiny," *Sociology of Religion* 63:4 (2002): 403–26.

⁹ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, 2nd ed., (Chicago, 2006).

transformed into “cosmic war” with a foreign enemy on the world stage.¹⁰ Worries remained throughout his presidency about the likelihood of continued globally organized terrorism within the United States at the hands not just of radical Muslims, but also possibly of Sikhs, Hindus, and other non-Western religious groups. Identification of a foreign enemy, even without solid evidence of intention of direct aggression, intensified reassertions of the nation’s myths of innocence and goodness. The president’s rhetoric resonated with a public that had experienced a “cultural trauma,” to use the sociologist Neil J. Smelser’s apt description,¹¹ a moment when the best of “us” is juxtaposed with the worst of “them” and this all imprinted on people’s minds, arousing fear especially about the possibility of foreign aggression on American soil. Moreover, a righteous defensiveness of freedom and national autonomy was reinforced, as Smelser suggests, by a sense of divine “chosenness,” in which case an attack on America is seen as an attack on God. As I have written elsewhere:

Given the nation’s identity so deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian myths, any attack from the outside would likely be seen as an attack not just upon the nation’s fundamental political, economic, moral and religious values, but upon divine purpose itself. This being the case, a plan for immediate and strong action, unilaterally if necessary, was called for to assert both the nation’s military superiority and, in a broader sense, alignment with divine purpose.¹²

Freedom – a cherished word within the American vocabulary, yet God’s gift of freedom is interpreted in many and diverse ways: whether to hold religious belief or not, how to pursue economic opportunity, how to live up to one’s potential. Religious and secular meanings mesh in its everyday usage as observers of American life since the time of Tocqueville have repeatedly observed. Recently, much attention has been given to rhetorical constructions of the word and its sociolinguistic enmeshment. The Berkeley theorist George Lakoff, for example, examines its ideological “framing” in his recent book *Whose Freedom? The Battle over America’s Most Important Idea*.¹³ By “framing” he refers to mythic and symbolic meanings associated

¹⁰ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA, 2003). Also see Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror* (New York, 2009).

¹¹ Neil J. Smelser, “September 11, 2001 as Cultural Trauma,” in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Gielsen, Neil J. Smelser, and Peter Sztompka, eds., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA, 2004), 276.

¹² Wade Clark Roof, “American Presidential Rhetoric from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush: Another Look at Civil Religion,” *Social Compass* 56:2 (2009): 286–301.

¹³ George Lakoff, *Whose Freedom? The Battle over America’s Most Important Idea* (New York, 2006).

with ideas and how these shape our mental pictures of the way things are, or ought to be, and especially so in a time when people know more about how language is used for achieving desired results. Higher levels of education and media exposure enhance public awareness that ideologies are constructed realities, and especially so at the hands of the so-called knowledge and creative classes. Even self-reflecting ordinary individuals often grasp how their religious views connect with their social location, family background, or socioeconomic standing. Round-the-clock news and political commentary, plus public discontent over Bush's policies and what appeared to be, as Bill Moyers put it, a "hijacking of Jesus"¹⁴ by neoconservatives for partisan political purposes, all contributed to a degree of critical awareness among many in the latter years of his presidency.

The election of Barack Obama as the forty-fourth president in 2008 obviously marked a significant shift in mythic conception and vision for the country. If, as has been said, a country may be thought of as an "imagined community,"¹⁵ then Obama offered a reimagining of what the country stands for and of how its values can be put into practice, both domestically and globally. Varying assessments will be placed upon his presidency and how it departs from the Bush era, but of particular interest here are the following overlapping themes: his view on multifaith and nonfaith diversity, his call for choosing our better history, his pragmatic approach to divisive social issues and formulating policies, and his calls for a "new era of responsibility." Aside from what these features tell us about Obama himself, these themes must be understood in relation to the previous period of Republican politics, to broadly based religious and cultural changes now under way within the country, and to new and difficult challenges now facing the country.

Noteworthy in Obama's inaugural address in January 2009 was what he said about American diversity and a common humanity.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bill Moyers, "Democracy in the Balance," *Sojourners Magazine* 33 (Aug. 2004): 15.

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

¹⁶ Barack Obama, Inaugural address, 20 Jan. 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html>.

The themes identified here are expressed, directly or indirectly, in this compact, highly charged statement.

Obama extends the parameters of religious diversity to include non-believers, a bold step for a president in an inaugural address. The size of the nonreligiously affiliated sector within the United States reached new levels for the modern period during this past decade – between 14 and 16 percent of the population, according to the polls. Voices within this sector were quite critical of the God-and-country rhetoric of the Bush era, calling for greater recognition of the rights of nonbelievers. The public presence of atheists especially had become more visible as a result of best-selling books by so-called New Atheist authors including Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens.¹⁷ But more than just atheists, nonbelievers are a diverse constituency including several other distinct subgroups: agnostics, secularists, those who say they are spiritual but not religious, and still others not affiliated with or peripherally involved within organized religion, who, perhaps religious in their own way, find themselves at odds with normative definitions of faith and practice. For this last group, a sense of distance results in part because they differ from evangelical Christians, who are the ones popularly thought of as “believers.” Hence a sizable sector of the American public is either nontraditional in belief or nonbelieving. Many within it are among the 24 percent of Americans Baylor University’s national survey in 2005 found who hold a “Distant God” image, that is, God as an impersonal, metaphysical force very different from traditional Judeo-Christian conceptions. In addition, another 5.2 percent could be more properly defined as atheist.¹⁸ Almost 30 percent of Americans thus may resonate to one degree or another with Obama’s inclusion of them as part of, and as significant contributors to, the nation’s diverse patchwork heritage of believers and Freethinkers.

The new president also placed the diverse religious faiths – Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus – in juxtaposition with one another, thereby downplaying the presumption of a normatively defined Christian nation. Reference to “Christians and Muslims” was particularly well phrased, given the current geopolitics and the axis of greatest misunderstanding globally. Moreover, Obama drew attention to religious pluralism as constitutive of American identity. Pluralism, more than diversity, is a culture of respect and acceptance and must be envisioned, cultivated, shared, and, most important of all, practiced; it is a “work in progress,” as William R. Hutchison

¹⁷ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terrorism, and the Future of Reason* (New York, 2005); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston, 2006); and Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York, 2007).

¹⁸ The Baylor Survey on Religion was conducted in late 2005 for the Institute of Studies of Religion at Baylor University. See <http://isreligion.org/>.

says,¹⁹ shaped by historical circumstances and fundamental challenges to democratic inclusion in any given moment. Such inclusiveness rests heavily upon a complex of “symbols, ideas, rituals, and myths that maintain the worth of plurality,”²⁰ selectively combined and interpreted as situations require. For Obama, opportunity for offering new perspective on inclusion was enhanced by the backlash to Bush’s sectarian religious style, and by a change in public mood favorable to greater religious acceptance. A Pew Forum survey in 2007 found that 70 percent of Americans, and even 57 percent of evangelicals, agreed that “many religions can lead to eternal life.”²¹ As exclusivist religious beliefs decline somewhat, possibilities for cultivating a more unified, civic-based bonding among Americans are perhaps enhanced. Whether the president’s leadership on this front can lead to a more inclusive civil society, religious and nonreligious, or backfire into a resurgence of a defensive, reactionary faith movement among the less educated, rural, and small-town Protestant population – those most worried about the loss of a traditionally defined religious hegemony – remains to be seen.²²

The Baylor survey on God imageries sheds some light on why Obama’s candidacy attracted the mix of supporters it did. Aside from the Distant God image held by almost one-fourth of the adult American population, the study identified two other widely held God imageries, plus yet another less common one: the Authoritarian God (31.4 percent), the Benevolent God (23 percent), and the Critical God (16 percent).

Authoritarian believers are mostly fundamentalist-leaning Christians, conservative evangelicals, and hard-core traditionalists of other faiths who see themselves embattled in a cause to restore the country to its moral and religious foundations and thus inclined to embrace a monarchical, crusading God of law and order. Benevolent believers, in contrast, emphasize a nurturing and supportive God concerned not just with personal well-being but with building a just and responsible world, those who value love as expressed not just in personal terms but also in social justice causes. Religious scholars will recognize these two types of imageries and divergent interpretations as deeply embedded, competing strands within American religious, especially Christian thought since the early years of the previous century. Today, they are sharply aligned, as George Lakoff says, with very differing “deep frames” of values and dispositions arising out of family life, the first, a father ideology and projection of a strict God and government as

¹⁹ William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in the United States: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT, 2003).

²⁰ Richard E. Wentz, *The Culture of Religious Pluralism* (Boulder, CO, 1998), 5.

²¹ U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in mid-2007.

²² *Ibid.*

the agency for promoting morality and eliminating restrictions on the free market, and the second, a more motherlike ideology of a caring, supportive society that places some restraints upon the market and emphasizes human rights, equality, and justice.²³

Without elevating God imagery to a simple causal reductionism, it is not too far-fetched to posit an “elective affinity” between authoritarian believers and support for Bush, and between benevolent-minded believers and support for Obama. The challenge Obama faced in 2008 was to build a constituency among moderate to liberal believers and nonbelievers, as in fact he did. Conducted during Bush’s second term in office, the Baylor survey found that authoritarian believers, compared with the other believers, and especially the benevolent believers, were far more strongly opposed to abortion, to believe that “God favors the U.S.,” to support the Iraq war and spending for the military, and to “Trust Bush a Lot.” Catholics, Jews, and mainline Protestants were all deeply divided in their imageries of God, but with more of them believing in a Benevolent God than in an Authoritarian God and, perhaps more surprising, more believing even in a Distant God than in an Authoritarian God. Combining Benevolent and Distant God believers plus Critical God believers (those who believe that the country does not live up to its religious values), the three total 63 percent of the American population. This amounts to a sizable majority of the population that might be disposed to a visionary candidate for president with a “soft,” caring image of God. Postelection polls support this interpretation: Obama was supported disproportionately by women, the less affluent, those less frequently or never attending religious services, independents and moderate Republicans – all constituencies who might be favorable to an inclusive image of deity.²⁴

More than any other president in recent memory, Obama aspires to be, as Ronald F. Thiemann says, “a public theologian for the whole nation.”²⁵ To unite the country in celebration of a common humanity, he must draw upon the nation’s pluralist, deeply textured philosophical traditions. Partly this involves addressing religious diversity creatively: to uphold a vision of a genuinely multireligious nation. But at another level, the task is far more challenging: to lay claim to a transcendent framework of meaning locating its sources in a sacred set of democratic values – the freedom of individual conscience, human equality, the indispensable role of public debate in a democracy, and respect for both religious and nonreligious

²³ George Lakoff, *Whose Freedom?* 65–72.

²⁴ Capps Center/Lichtman Survey, conducted by Zogby International, Inc., 2009.

²⁵ “Obama as Public Theologian: Old Wine in New Wineskins,” 28 May 2009. In *The Immanent Frame*. http://www.ssrrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/2009/05/28/obama-as-public-theologian-old-wine-in-new-wineskins/ (accessed 18 June 2009).

voices.²⁶ It was precisely this huge challenge facing the country that drew attention at the “Debating the Divine” conference sponsored by the Center for American Progressives in June 2008. Though held prior to the presidential election, the public debate already was partly informed by views Obama had expressed during the campaign. Two political-philosophical positions emerged in the discussion, both progressive but one more radical than the other. The first was voiced by the Berkeley historian David A. Hollinger. “When one participates in the public life of a democracy, one has an obligation to interact with other participants on the basis of shared civic status,” and, hence, what is called for is “reaffirmation of a civic sphere in which our common membership in democratic national solidarity trumps all religious loyalties.”²⁷ Because religion in the democratic American polity has to be privatized especially in practice, whatever social concerns arise out of faith must also be translated into a universal vocabulary with values sufficiently shared as to be amenable to public debate. In Hollinger’s view then, religious particularities ought to be divorced from politics, and while he differs with the political philosopher Michael Walzer on this point, he shares with him, and endorses the critical need for, in the latter’s words, “the guarantee of a civic domain in which religiously motivated particular actions will face the pressure of democratic argument.”²⁸

A second, more religiously accommodating perspective was advanced at this conference by Eboo Patel, the Chicago-based religious pluralist activist. “Religious pluralism allows democratic scrutiny of religious voices,” he says, “while encouraging their expression toward the goal of a common vibrant society.”²⁹ He holds out hope that in the marketplace of ideas moderating religious voices will prevail over sectarian ones and believes strongly that faith-based values and concerns are critical in shaping notions about the common good. Similarly to other progressive commentators, he values the direct participation of religious communities in the civic sphere since they are among the most voluntary, broadly based of grassroots constituencies. Because these communities and the alliances they create are shaped by the people, when mobilized, they can yield considerable influence and play a role in establishing social priorities. To those who say there is too much religion in the public square, he argues the contrary,

²⁶ See Barbara A. McGraw, *Rediscovering America’s Sacred Ground: Public Religion and Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America* (Albany, NY, 2003).

²⁷ David A. Hollinger, “Civic Participation and the Critical Discussion of Religious Ideas,” in Sally Steenland, ed., *Debating the Divine: Religion in the 21st Century American Democracy* (Washington, DC, 2008), 9.

²⁸ Quoted in Hollinger, “Civic Participation,” 12.

²⁹ Eboo Patel, “Religious Pluralism in the Public Square,” in Steenland, ed., *Debating the Divine*, 17.

that we need more, especially more moderating voices. He holds the view that democratic practice, the force of reason, and a spirit of religious pluralism – the three mutually reinforcing one another – will prevail, placing the common good of the people over narrow selfish and partisan interests. Quoting Jim Wallis, he says religion must be “disciplined by democracy”³⁰ and as such should encourage basic American values and possibly even critique contemporary cultural trends such as materialism, greed, and hyper-individualism, which otherwise would be left unchecked.

Patel does not name Obama in his essay, but his perspective is similar to the president’s with regard to religious and ethical sensitivities. Rather than appeal to the outworn myths of a divinely chosen, innocent people with a millennial vision of the country closely aligned with selfish political and economic interests, Obama in his inaugural address quite shrewdly called upon us as Americans “to choose our better history.” His phrase invites self-reflection and critical scrutiny of the nation’s experience. Without saying so, he advanced a view of the nation’s history as open to various and selective interpretations while he also creatively juxtaposed an older conception of divine election with human choice. As the social commentator Todd Gitlin writes,

He invited us as a nation to perform a necessary twist on the seventeenth-century notion that we were divinely elected, “God’s new Israel,” entitled to establish dominion. In Obama’s version, Americans get to choose – to choose *perennially* – from among multiple and intertwined strands. We were from the beginning (in fact, from before the beginning) a people of more than one history – freedom *and* slavery, cooperation *and* savagery, republic *and* empire – not easily disentangled. That is why the choosing has to be intricate, deliberate, subtle, ongoing.³¹

Far more than glossing over our failures, Obama’s point was that as a nation ours is a checkered history, of good and not-so-good deeds. Recognizing the mix of motives in human affairs and the ethical perils that accompany the political and economic interests of nations, his sensitivities resonate with those of Reinhold Niebuhr, the pragmatic realist who, many years ago in his probing text *The Irony of American History*, wrote of “the ironic tendency of virtues to turn into vices when too complacently relied upon; and of power to become vexatious if the wisdom that drives it is trusted too confidently.”³² Self-criticality combined with a sense of optimism held in tension with a

³⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 19.

³¹ Todd Gitlin, “Choosing Our Better History,” in *The Immanent Frame*. Social Science Research Council, 2009. http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/2009/06/01/choosing-our-better-history/ (accessed 18 June 2009).

³² Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York, 1962), 133.

notion of the tragic appears to be central in Obama's vision. Whether such "pessimistic optimism" can guard him from the vulnerabilities of the office he holds is itself, of course, a challenge: the seductions of power and the temptation to believe too confidently in one's own agendas and strategies confront every president. Critical to his success is maintaining a self-reflexive posture about the nature of American democracy, combining visionary leadership with realistic awareness of the limits of human efforts in any one time or circumstance, or recognizing, as Gitlin writes, that the nation is ever a "work in progress, something to be renewed and, in the process, its meaning fought over."³³ Democracy is reinvented as old inconsistencies between values and practices are resolved and in moments when the nation addresses new challenges by laying claim to its highest values – "its meanings fought over." But this process is always incomplete and inevitably tinged by the human potential for absolutizing definitions of the good.

To his credit, Obama's vision of democracy is that of an ongoing, highly deliberative enterprise, of responding to challenges and reinscribing social practices to fit the social circumstances. Important is the "primacy of practice," that is, doing and acting in ways that model the good in a manner transcending partisan differences. This begins with the celebration of a unity born out of difference in keeping with the nation's motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, presuming a cosmopolitan framework of values that not only is respectful of, but creatively engages dissimilarity. But the process has to extend to translations of the nation's myths, stories, symbols, and texts to actual behavior in people's everyday lives. Civility can flourish only if social activities follow: ongoing, deliberate efforts at implementing new practices overcoming old boundaries and broadening the spheres of social inclusiveness, or as David Hollinger says, the "circle of the we."³⁴

Hence the poignant question becomes, On what basis do people bond within a democracy? The principle of similarity comes to mind, but there is also the potential of dissimilarity. The philosopher Charles Taylor offers important insight here: "People can also bond not in spite of but because of difference. They can sense, that is, that the difference enriches each party, that their lives are narrower and less full alone than in association with each other. In this sense, difference defines a complementarity."³⁵ Obviously this is a formidable undertaking, convincing ideologues and partisans of all stripes that humanity is better realized not in each human being alone, but

³³ Gitlin, "Choosing Our Better History," 2009.

³⁴ David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York, 1995), 106.

³⁵ Charles Taylor, "Democracy, Inclusive and Exclusive," in Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, eds., *Meaning and Modernity: Religion, Polity, and Self* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), 191.

rather in communion among all humans, including with the “other” we would like to reject. Obama confronts this serious challenge in building the America he envisions. To the extent that presidential charisma, intelligence, and leadership skills can help him in this challenge, Obama, at least in the beginning of his presidency, enjoyed a considerable degree of public confidence and high levels of expectation. At the end of his first hundred days in office in April 2009, 78 percent of Americans in a national poll gave him positive marks for his “intelligence,” 60 percent for his “leadership,” and 58 percent for his “honesty” and “integrity.”³⁶

The president’s favorability ratings have, of course, declined over time. Public expectations were overly high to begin with, and the hugely controversial issues of the economy and health care reform have taken a toll on his approval. The alignments of religion, ideology, and politics continue to shift as policy issues arise, but overall the “God Gap” between the Democrats and Republicans so noticeable during the Bush years is somewhat less striking today.³⁷ Several factors account for why this is the case: one, Obama and Democrats generally have positioned themselves as more favorable to religious faith and practice; two, generational changes as apparent with the mobilization of young Americans in Obama’s campaign holding to a more progressive social agenda; three, a cleavage within Christian evangelicalism between traditionalists and moderates on some moral and ethical issues; four, a significant number of partisan crossovers, that is, Republicans and independents voting Democratic and/or supporting the new president; and five, the rise of a grassroots progressive, religious-based movement, coalescing around common social concerns and at times leading to alliances among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and other faith traditions. Especially noteworthy are the efforts led by Sr. Joan Chittister, Jim Wallis, and Rabbi Michael Lerner working as an interfaith team addressing, in particular, poverty and income inequality, health reform, women’s issues, human rights including gay marriage, anti-war issues, global warming, and environmentalism.

REGIONAL PATTERNS

A closer mapping of these trends by region reveals details that otherwise would be unnoticed. Religiocultural profiles, more so than demographic

³⁶ Capps Center/Lichtman Survey.

³⁷ A CNN exit poll in 2004 found that among weekly churchgoers, 61 percent voted for Bush, 39 percent for Kerry, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/US/P/00/epolls.o.html>. In 2008, a *New York Times* exit poll showed weekly churchgoers split 55 percent for McCain, 43 percent for Obama, <http://election.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/exit-polls.html>.

and socioeconomic patterns, are identifiable by region and in ways that have long been recognized; despite earlier predictions by mass-culture theorists that media influences and geographical mobility would erode geographically based distinctiveness, this has not happened. The religious scholars Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh, in fact, go so far as to argue that regional analysis is key to understanding the realignments of religion and politics playing out in this decade.³⁸ They “retell the national story” looking at regions as players in an unfolding drama, so to speak, suggesting that regional cultures and the competition among them influence what happens in the country. In the discussion that follows, I draw heavily from their interpretation.

As have other commentators, Silk and Walsh point to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 as a turning point in national mood, but they go further, looking at the role the regions themselves play in this transition. Involved, they say, was a “turning away from the sense that ‘do your own thing’ religion, Pacific style, had become normative in American society,” as “the Southern Crossroads style came into its own, with religious conservatives leading the way.”³⁹ If the Pacific style was that of a 60s cultural liberalism that had evolved into a vacuous New Age self-indulgence and yearnings for primitive spirituality, which was fairly widespread in the 1990s, the Southern Crossroads style (Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri) heralded the return to a more robust America, one acknowledging the authority of traditional faith and morality and the advent of yet another Cold War, with militant Islam in Iraq and other places now replacing atheistic Communism as the chief enemy of American freedom. That is to say, people’s mental images of their country were dramatically shaken in 2001, from that of a “spiritual cafeteria” catering to individual quests to one of a society divided between, as these observers say, “people of faith,” those grounded in strong religious belief and moral values, and “those without faith or much of it.” Good Americans were the entrepreneurs and hardworking businessmen and businesswomen, those who valued God, country, and family and would do their part defending the country in a time of foreign threat. And who else better to lead it through such perilous times than George W. Bush, who himself had indulged in 60s-like excesses but then had a religious conversion and turned his life around and, let us not forget, had impeccable credentials as a Republican and was a native son of the region?

In some respects the two regions are mirror opposites. Compare California and Texas, the lead states within their regions: the former with its sunshine,

³⁸ Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh, *One Nation, Divisible: How Regional Religious Differences Shape American Politics* (Lanham, MD, 2008).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 216–17.

beaches, and surfing; freeways and cars; fluid identities and lifestyles; the dream factories of Hollywood and Disney; nouvelle cuisine and wine; new spiritualities bordering on the bizarre; and the latter with its high school football, cheerleaders, and patriotic half-time festivities; rugged ranchers and oil field workers; “Don’t Mess with Texas” bumper stickers; BBQ and beer; fiery Southern Baptists and spirit-possessed Pentecostals. Despite the media’s magnification of their cultural differences, it is not surprising that family issues have surfaced to attention in both places. On virtually every family structure item for which the U.S. Census collects data, California is less traditionally intact than Texas: it has proportionately fewer married couples plus more unmarried partner households, more spouses absent from their families, more male-head families, more multigenerational households.⁴⁰ Imageries of a Distant God dominate in California, Authoritarian God images in Texas. Thirty-two percent of Californians report regular worship attendance, 49 percent in Texas.⁴¹ Individual freedom and rights play out differently, California with a higher legal abortion rate owing to its more feminist and expressive cultural climate, and Texas with its frontier-style heritage and higher reported levels of possessing firearms.⁴²

But beyond these surface features, there is a more fundamental historical pattern encompassing them. The trajectory of modernity since the time of the Enlightenment has been in the direction of greater individual autonomy and religious privatization, or the diminishing of religion’s spheres of meaning and influence largely to the individual’s own life-world. Processes of social-structural change like the separation of church and state, secularization, and modern democracy encouraged this trend, though more so in some places than in others. Historically in the Pacific region, and especially in California, lacking is a strong religious hegemony and, to the contrary, high levels of religious diversity combined with hypermodernity, or rapid-paced social and cultural change, as compared with the Southern Crossroads. Important, too, as the sociologist Jose Casanova argues, there are strong deprivatizing trends, or countermovements to the detraditionalizing influences of modernity seeking to reclaim public space presumed to have lost its religious content. Infusing partisan religious beliefs and values in the state is an obvious example; demands that public schools hold

⁴⁰ *United States Census, 2000* (Washington, DC: Department of Commerce, 2001). Surprisingly, Texas reports more female-headed families than California. See <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001/pubs>.

⁴¹ Gallup Poll, 2006. “Regular” is defined as attending once a week or almost every week.

⁴² Abortion rates are reported by the Guttmacher Institute, January 2008. See http://www.guttmacher.org/presentations/state_ab_pt.html. On firearms, see the *Washington Post*, data collected in 2001. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/health/interactives/guns/ownership.html>.

mandatory prayers are another.⁴³ Fundamentalist and conservative evangelical movements along with smaller reactionary groups engage most deliberately and doggedly in such activities. Countermovements are active in both regions, but the alignments of traditional faith and morality with political conservatism are far stronger in the Southern Crossroads than in the Pacific region. And in times of crisis when taken-for-granted views of social reality and national security are threatened, as occurred in September 2001, appeals to religion's symbolic resources for legitimating a rationale for an aggressive, unified front in defense of the country naturally intensify.

With the ascendancy of the Southern Crossroads cultural warriors (and not without the support of the Deep South), increased attention to "red" states and "blue" states soon followed. Red signaled the crusading God, patriotism, defense of the country, and the rhetoric of moral values; blue, that of a less militant posture, greater openness to belief and lifestyle diversity, and less of a direct connection between faith and voting patterns, as found in the Pacific region. Describing how quickly this color mapping of the states took on a new public significance immediately after the 2004 election, Silk and Walsh point out:

As is customary in the wake of a national election, journalists rushed on to the field of battle while the smoke was still clearing to search out the meaning of it all. What greeted them was a national exit poll showing that, by a small plurality, "moral values" was "the one issue that mattered most" to Americans voting for president. This datum seemed to fit the red state/blue state maps, suggesting that once again the country had narrowly picked the conservative side in a geographically organized culture war.⁴⁴

Red states and blue states themselves cluster much as the sociocultural regions do. For the past three presidential elections there are recognizable, fairly consistently blue-state, or Democratic, clusters in the Northeast, Pacific Northwest, Pacific, Middle Atlantic, and Upper North Central regions; and red-state, or Republican, clusters in the Deep South, Mountain West, and Southern Crossroads regions; the Midwest cluster of states are the most divided. The 2008 election differs from the previous two with Obama's picking up additional states, such as North Carolina and Virginia in the South, Indiana in the Midwest, and Colorado and New Mexico in the Mountain West.

What about the claim that moral values are the key to this clustering and, hence, the election outcomes? With the 2004 presidential election, patterns are clear. When asked why people voted as they did in exit polls, voters in all the red-state clusters cited moral values as the issue that

⁴³ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994).

⁴⁴ Silk and Walsh, *One Nation*, 217.

mattered most (more so than the possibility of terrorism, the Iraq War, or the economy); in blue-state clusters, moral values were far less cited. And how are we to account for the regional differences in moral values? Clearly, religious identity is a major, if not the critical factor. Nationally, as Silk and Walsh show in their research, white evangelicals account for 48 percent of the Bush moral values vote, Catholics 19 percent, mainline Protestants 15 percent, and other religious groups the remaining 18 percent. In every region, including those in which Kerry won, the Bush moral values vote was overwhelmingly evangelical-based, buttressed by Catholics in the Middle Atlantic and New England regions and by Latter-day Saints (included in the “other religious groups”) in the Mountain West and Pacific regions. Moreover, their research found that 71 percent of the Bush moral values supporters were regular attenders at worship services, thus substantiating the point that the “God Gap” had reached a high level during the 2004 presidential race. The gap was most prominent in the Mountain West, where 82 percent of moral values supporters were regular religious attenders, least so in New England with 58 percent. Given these patterns, the case for distinct regional religiopolitical cultures – clusters where strong belief in God and country and moral values hang closely together, forming a strong ideological constellation – seems obvious enough.

My argument is not that Obama's election signaled a return to a Pacific regional religiocultural style. His emphasis upon the importance of strong faith commitments, if nothing else, suggests something quite different. But his vision of an open, highly pluralistic society of people working together in support of the common good did find much support. He enjoyed disproportionately greater support than did Kerry four years earlier among blacks, Jews, other minorities, Hispanic and other minority Catholics, less observant Catholics, unaffiliated believers, and seculars, all with majorities supporting him over McCain. This voting bloc of minorities and low-committed and noncommitted religionists was more solidified than previously, in no small part because of the backlash to the Bush administration's evangelical Christian alignments; in voting for Obama they were also voting against something, itself deeply symbolic. The older constellation of God, country, and morality that worked so well for Bush drew out, as expected, a strong Republican vote in the South, the Mountain West (excluding Colorado and New Mexico), and the Midwestern states of Nebraska and Kansas. Religious attendance as a factor was clear especially with the large white Christian communities. Among weekly attending white Catholics, McCain handily won. Among white mainline Protestants, the less observant believers showed only a slight preference for McCain, whereas weekly religious attenders supported him in far greater numbers. Even within the white evangelical vote there was a similar split:

among weekly attenders, McCain won decisively; among less observant evangelicals, McCain won but by a smaller margin, and one lower than Bush won over his Democratic opponent four years earlier. Obama picked up some evangelical voters largely among its younger, irregular attending constituency, those who were more receptive to gay rights, global warming, and environmental issues. This appears to have happened more in blue states, an observation that, if accurate, underscores the subtlety of regional cultural influence on voters.⁴⁵ What might be called a progressive evangelical sector today is small, but it might increase, and if so, this could result in a more divided conservative-versus-moderate set of political alignments in the future.⁴⁶ But overall, the political scientist John Green is probably correct when he observes that despite some important Democratic inroads in the 2008 election, the basic structure of the faith-based vote has not changed all that much since 2004.⁴⁷

Symbolically, the Obama-Biden election, of course, stands out for other reasons. Aside from Obama's being born outside the continental United States, the first African American, and the first openly acknowledged biracial president, all of which has been widely touted, the Obama-Biden presidential and vice-presidential ticket is the first ever elected in which neither is a WASP (Biden is a Roman Catholic). This fact has yet to be fully assimilated in the consciousness of Americans. If John F. Kennedy first cracked the WASP presidential ceiling in 1960, with the 2008 election it was truly shattered – yet another, and a hugely significant development in the direction toward a more open, responsive democracy that came to a head in this recent decade. The decline of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant hegemony is unparalleled in any listing of the country's major historic cultural transitions and in some deep-culture sense is the critical backdrop for understanding much of the political maneuverings and ideological contestations of the past half-century. Only in its shadow can we begin to grasp such widely ranging phenomena as “identity politics” and multiculturalism as these terms are understood today, the rise of the Religious Right and the causes it champions, worries generally about immigration policy, and even books like Samuel P. Huntington's *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See Andrew Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 79–83.

⁴⁶ “How People of Faith Voted in the 2008 Presidential Race,” Barna Research Group, 11 Nov. 2008.

⁴⁷ “A Post-Election Look at Religious Voters in the 2008 Election,” <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventId=209>.

⁴⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York, 2004).

Whatever else they are, American presidential elections are, or potentially can be, exercises in democratic renewal, times when citizens debate one another fundamentally about who they are and how best to structure their common life. Beneath all the hoopla of political campaigns and the rhetoric of the candidates lie, if not always well articulated, the myths, stories, dreams, and ideals of the people – the “deep meanings of our culture,” as Robert Wuthnow says.⁴⁹ Yet as he also observes, these deep meanings are both impediments to social change as well as its facilitators; they are at once stabilizing and past-oriented while inspirational and forward-looking. He calls for a reflective democracy in which we examine our cultural assumptions not in the sense of thinking we can find some final and persisting meaning, but instead opening ourselves to meanings implied but yet unfolding. Democracy as a normative system is somewhat analogous to legal text: there is its strict reading embedded in tradition and precedent, but also its evolving, reconfigured reading arising out of applied interpretation. In a very real sense, the religious and political maneuverings within this first decade of the twenty-first century point to a similar conflict in interpreting the practice of democracy. The task ahead for Americans is to take conscious responsibility for forging a future in keeping with the best of its past.

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⁴⁹ Robert Wuthnow, *American Mythos: Why Our Best Efforts to Be a Better Nation Fall Short* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), 37.

GLOBAL RELIGIOUS REALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

GARY LADERMAN

One of the more popular tourist attractions in Atlanta, Georgia, is the Dekalb Farmer's Market, which bills itself as "A World Market." Once inside, a tourist and many locals who shop there regularly will find food-stuff from around the globe – spices from India, cheeses from Uruguay, produce from Mexico, wines from Italy, coffee from Kenya, and nuts from Israel, to name only a few examples of this worldwide selection. In addition to the food, the workers inside all wear name badges that include country of origin, including countries such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Nigeria, Russia, and Egypt.

The market is not unlike many other food markets throughout the United States that serve as culinary microcosms of global realities and diversity and that attract many Americans and visitors who value both the range of available choices to satisfy their tastes and the cross-cultural encounters and mixing that occur inside. Of course, the flip side to this domestic *mélange* of available food, spices, and beverages from around the globe is the vast amount of distinctive victual originating in America and exported to international markets, where, for example, individuals in Paris can buy artichokes grown in Northern California, shoppers in Mumbai can purchase a McDonald's hamburger, connoisseurs in Brisbane can munch on peanuts from Georgia, and so on.

Why begin an essay about global religious realities in the United States with food? Certainly the material sustenance and gastronomic joys associated with food are light-years away from the immaterial powers and transcendent purposes associated with the life of the spirit, and the comfortable coexistence and the harmless plurality of many different foods under the same roof in a market are worlds apart from the tense conflicts and the dangerous interactions of different religions in the same city.

The global movements and interactions associated with food – or clothing, music, home furnishings, and any number of products – are similar to religion in this sense: now more than ever Americans are aware of and

affected by global networks that are substantially transforming the social landscape, subverting national boundaries, and challenging at both superficial and profound levels American national identity. From a global perspective, the spectrum of religions and the realities of religious diversity in the United States signal the need for dramatically altering America's self-image – perhaps best conveyed as a movement away from the image of America as a bland and starchy slice of white “Wonder Bread” and toward an image of America as a spicy and flavorful bowl of gumbo.

THE BIG PICTURE

Religion is not static and unchanging. It is, on the contrary, constantly in flux, vibrantly and dynamically incorporated in and transformed by individual lives in motion. Religion does not stay in one place – in the mosque or in the church or in the synagogue or in the temple or in the home altar – but is transportable and mobile, embodied in individual lives, but also in ideas, practices, dispositions, material culture, and other carriers that keep religion relevant, intimate, and handy. Not unlike foodstuff in the American culinary marketplace, religion thrives across cultures and communities containing diverse individuals with peculiar tastes and appetites, and communally relying on distinctive traditional and innovative spiritual recipes and ritual strategies to satisfy body as well as soul.

Religions from around the world and homegrown religions with global reach can be found throughout American society. In metropolitan areas like Atlanta or Boston or San Francisco or Houston, and in smaller cities and towns in the Pacific Northwest or Deep South, or in the expanse of the Rocky Mountain region or the states of New England, a visitor can find Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Mormons, Pentecostals, Jains, Sufis, Baptists, Wiccans, and members of other well-defined traditions and religious communities. Still, beyond the more clearly visible signs of religious difference and pluralism, a visitor would have to dig beneath the surface for a more complex, multidimensional picture of the global impact on religion. Less-clearly demarcated religious cultures associated with Native Americans, African-derived practices, metaphysical and occult movements, and other peoples and ideas also exert a profound and lively influence in the daily efforts to find meaning, purpose, and value in the United States.

Given this complexity, how best to tease out the global dimensions of religion in the lives of Americans? It is not uncommon to read superficial characterizations of the multiple, diverse, varied types of religious traditions and cultures at work in American society that reduce the story to numbers and percentages, a view easily illustrated in pie charts with information about what percentage of the pie is Protestant, what percentage is Hindu, what

percentage is Muslim, and so on. But in addition to this one-dimensional view is another complicating factor that cannot easily be represented on a pie chart. In fact, the pie begins to fall apart when the details of the ingredients are brought into sharp relief. Global religions in the United States do not simply fall along a spectrum of difference between one tradition and another; in addition to this crucial and obvious detail about “difference between” is the more obscured and multidimensional detail about “difference within” each one of the religious traditions and cultures that make up the pie.

An illustration of this point can be found in Los Angeles, California. Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard University, has famously remarked that Los Angeles has become the most complex Buddhist city in the world.¹ It is not enough to say that there are lots of Buddhists from around the world in Los Angeles. “Buddhism” does not really accurately capture the widely diverse expressions of Buddhism in the lives of community members who affiliate with the Thai, Korean, Sri Lankan, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Japanese, and other temples and centers often associated with different ethnicities and nationalities; nor does it fully represent the varieties of Buddhist practices available to casual but interested outsiders who are taken by Buddhist philosophy or persuaded by friends to learn meditation techniques; nor does the label quite convey the reach and influence of Buddhism in Los Angeles and around the nation as mediated through popular culture channels such as music, film, or television.

The complexity of global religious realities in the United States is a product of these particular ingredients – ideas, practices, popular culture, public representations, traditions, institutions, and so on – interacting in cultural networks, but most significantly and dynamically in the individual lives of people in families and communities with both local and international connections. Buddhists in Los Angeles are one illustration of this complexity, but there are many: Muslims in Detroit, Hindus in Boston, Jews in New York, and so on, with other world religions in other communities throughout the states. American religions and religious lives are caught up in global webs of interaction and inspiration that defy easy generalizations offering the big picture or complicated reductions minimizing the significance of difference.

NEW DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES

A brief glance at some recent changes in the American population can help set the stage for a deeper understanding of the global realities that

¹ Eck mentions this, for example, in her conversation with Bill Moyers after the attacks on 9/11. *America Responds: Moyers in Conversation*, <http://www.pbs.org/americaresponds/moyers919.html>.

are contributing to changes in the religious landscape. The diversification, and indeed globalization, of the U.S. population was in full swing over the second half of the twentieth century, though the variety of religious commitments and practices transplanted from outside the national boundaries did not substantially add to the number of different religions in America. Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Muslims, and on down the line of different religious traditions have been present in America's diverse spiritual marketplace for decades now. Newcomers from around the globe reinvigorate and oftentimes offer new forms of practice and adherence within traditions. However, rather than adding to the choices, they make the available religions more intricate and nuanced, enriching and expanding the boundaries of each one on the basis of such factors as ethnic identities, cultural differences, interpretive traditions, and community practices found in their countries of origin.

A U.S. Census Bureau report published in 2000 stated that by the end of the twentieth century, the foreign-born population exceeded 25 million people, the highest figure ever recorded in the census.² The number of individuals who were not U.S. citizens at the time of birth but are now residents jumped 168 percent from 1970, from 16.2 million then, to 25.8 million in 1997. While the numerical change is monumental in and of itself – the 1997 number is larger than populations in all but thirty-six nations and, except for California, is larger than the population of individual states in the United States – the details and patterns behind these numbers are extraordinarily revealing.

First and foremost, half of the foreign-born population was from Latin America, most of these individuals from Mexico. While it is easy to assume that this influx of peoples from south of the border is simply increasing the numbers of Catholics in American society, the surging growth in evangelical Protestantism and especially Pentecostalism in many Latin American countries makes the picture more complicated. It can be safely asserted that most of the immigrants from Mexico, Cuba, El Salvador, and other Latin countries of origin are carrying Christianity in a variety of forms into the United States, including forms that have successfully and creatively integrated indigenous religious cultures with Christian church cultures planted in the age of exploration during the eighteenth century and solidified over the course of colonization and nation building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An iconic but salient example of this religious innovation is the set of popular cultural myths and rituals surrounding

² US Census Bureau, "Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign Born," (August 2000). Also see the longer discussion in A. Dianne Schmidley, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P23–206, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*, (Washington, DC, 2001).

Our Lady of Guadalupe, a multivalent symbol for Mexicans, who draw, among other things, a religious identity that straddles various cultural divides in the long history of Mexico and the rich landscape known as the borderlands.

Second, more than one-quarter of the foreign-born population were from countries in Asia, including China, Vietnam, India, and the Philippines. Here too the movement of people from these regions is introducing new cultural amalgamations of Christianity that have evolved over time in some cases, such as Christians from Kerala in India, who trace traditional community expressions back directly to St. Thomas, or those forms of Christianity that have blossomed relatively recently but now exert a great deal of influence in societies such as South Korea.

Finally, the number of foreign-born individuals is much smaller from countries in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and islands in the Pacific. But the impact of diverse kinds of Christianity, ranging from Eastern Orthodox Churches to the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, as well as of regional variations in Islamic communities stretching from Northern Africa to the Balkans, is profoundly altering the range of lived religious experience within these traditions when newcomers arrive and settle alone or with families already here.

Still, foreign-born populations residing in the United States are bearing many more religious resources in the movement from home country to America. Indigenous cultures and practices, tied to ancestor worship, shamanism, alternative healing, animal sacrifice, and divination, to name only a few examples, also make their way to the spiritual and religious landscapes of American culture. The global flow of these religious sensibilities and commitments, rituals and theologies, spiritually enlivened imports, is adding freshness and texture to the larger religious offerings currently operating and available to Americans in the twenty-first century. But in fact these seemingly new offerings readily fit into a deeply rooted historical stream of alternative and diffused religious cultures and experiences that goes back to the founding of the nation in the late eighteenth century.

HISTORICAL PATTERNS: ARE THESE GLOBAL REALITIES REALLY NEW?

Religious life in the twenty-first century is subject to global currents and flows, an interconnecting social matrix dynamically tied to rituals, myths, theologies, ultimate commitments, and sacred investments that envelops the entire world and transcends local peculiarities of region, culture, or nation. This is, in many ways, nothing new. In other words, to understand current and future realities better we should consider the past. Perhaps a

historical look back will raise a seemingly novel notion about the global context for religious life in the United States: the more conditions change, the more they stay the same.

Who were the original inhabitants of North America? Have some people been on this land from time immemorial? Did the evolution of the human species begin on one continent, or did it take place in many regions of the world simultaneously? These are loaded, controversial questions for many, with some claiming absolute authority from geological studies to answer them, and others speaking from within religious traditions who rely on sacred stories to provide incontrovertible evidence for answers. According to one scientific theory, more than 12,000 years ago a relatively small number of people from parts of Siberia migrated across the Bering Strait on a frozen landmass connecting Asia and the Americas. The descendants of these “foreign-born” communities, so the theory argues, became the “native” Americans inhabiting the North and South American continents.³

Native Americans, on the other hand, by and large reject a theory like this that subverts their indigenous identities and assertions about their own origins and ties to this landmass. Many native cultures look to ancestral myths passed down through the generations that tell of their creation in this world – either rising from another world below this one through kivas, in the case of Pueblo cultures in the Southwest, or being given life by creator deities and spirits, as in the case of Cherokee stories in the Southeast.

Without committing to one side or the other, it is safe to say that the earliest residents on the North American continent arrived from outside it – from other parts of the world, according to scientists, from beyond this world, according to native sacred stories. The origin of religious life here, in other words, is a global phenomenon itself, a fundamental feature of the circumstances through which peoples from beyond the boundaries of the continent are taken inside them – in mythic acts of creation from other worlds of experience for some native cultures, or in the long migration of nomads and hunters from Eurasia into Alaska to geologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists.

The global features of religion in native North America do not begin and end, however, with the origins of life on this continent. In the long sweep of history, oftentimes referred to as “prehistory,” from the earliest hunter-gatherer Paleo-Indians to the more complex civilizations inhabiting North American lands before contact with Western European empires, native cultures here had a variety of encounters with people from elsewhere, especially the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures from the

³ For one thorough discussion of the scientific evidence, see David J. Melzter, *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America* (Los Angeles, 2009).

South. The Hohokam culture, for example, grew and thrived in parts of southern Arizona from the first century through the fifteenth century C.E. as a result of its economic, cultural, and ceremonial interconnections with societies in Mexico.

The global realities bearing on religious life in North America in prehistory, however, are nothing compared to the social and cultural upheavals that occurred when Christians from the “Old World” of Europe explored and laid claim to the “New World” discovered by Christopher Columbus. When prehistory ended and Anglo and European history began in the wake of Columbus, conquest and colonization by the French, Spanish, and English carried the global power of Christianity in its Catholic and Protestant forms to the shores and ultimately to the interior of the continent. The transference and importation of Christianity to the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the establishment of Protestantism as the dominant religious culture in the colonial era, ensured the monotheistic God of the Old and New Testaments would rule over the creation of a new nation. The rise of Christianity in North America originating from other parts of the world, however, corresponded with the decimation, in some cases obliteration, of native religious cultures inhabiting these lands before outsiders took them over.

From the start, the new nation was indeed a society of immigrants. Over the course of the nineteenth century, foreign-born people from Ireland, Scotland, England, Germany, Italy, and other parts of Europe emigrated to the new republic, drawn for all kinds of reasons to travel the globe to get here. By the end of the nineteenth century, one of the most revered symbols of the nation and a gift from France, the Statue of Liberty, explicitly expressed the invitation many foreigners associated with the United States during the first century of its existence: “Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”⁴

Catholics entered from across Europe during the nineteenth century, as did Protestants from Lutheran, Moravian, and Anglican churches, to name only a few denominations. Jews from Europe made the journey as well, also with diverse backgrounds spanning Sephardic cultural traditions from Spain to more secular cultural Jewish sensibilities from Germany. Tragically, while many voluntarily made the global trek with dreams of freedom and material fulfillment, millions of human beings from West Africa and the Congo-Angola region of the African continent were forcibly enslaved and removed from their homeland. The Atlantic passage to North

⁴ Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/liberty/lazarus-poem.html>.

America for these foreigners promised not freedom and fulfillment, but misery and suffering, and frequently for many, horrible death. The African slaves arrived from Yoruba, Bakongo, Fon, and other cultures; some were Muslim, but many practiced a wide variety of African religious traditions. Most of these cultural practices from the African continent were suppressed and fragmented, if not completely wiped out, in the Middle Passage and under the oppressive system of slavery. This system destroyed families and other forms of African social relations but gave the slaves Christianity.

Protestants and Catholics dominated the religious landscape of nineteenth-century America both numerically and culturally. The Christianities that entered the New World with explorers, early settlers, and successive waves of immigrants and took root in the social and cultural soil over the first century of national life, however, were only one dimension of the religious cultures carried over from Britain, Ireland, Spain, and other European countries. Another significant dimension to the global flow of religions in this era that became part and parcel of the spiritual landscape in the United States were the practices and beliefs tied to astrology, witchcraft, metaphysics, divination, and a host of other popular practices. These sacred pursuits, often more diffused and less institutionally organized, found fertile soil in America, where they often meshed with certain Native American and African spiritual practices in healing rituals, for example, or served as critical elements in the creation of new, homegrown religions such as Spiritualism or Theosophy later in the century.

A watershed moment in U.S. history marking both heightened awareness of global religions beyond national boundaries and increased infiltration of non-Christian and non-Jewish traditions into American society was the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. Part of Chicago's World Columbian Exposition, this parliament drew together representatives from the world's religions on America's soil in an unprecedented display of interreligious cooperation and dialogue, even though the tone and politics of the event were tightly controlled by the Protestants in charge. Hindus and Buddhists, Bahai's and Jains, congregated with mainstream Christian and Jewish representatives, as well as with a variety of alternative religious communities such as Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, and Theosophists.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, immigration to the United States skyrocketed to extraordinary heights – more than eight million immigrants in 1900–10, with close to 15 percent of the U.S. population foreign-born at the start of the second decade of the century. The majority of this global movement to America came from Western and Eastern Europe, importing increasingly popular versions of Catholicism, for example, and enough varieties of Jewish experience to broaden and strengthen the spectrum of American Jewish cultures, including Orthodox Jews,

socialist Jews, and Hasidic Jews, to name a few. But with the onset of two world wars beginning in 1914 and lasting through midcentury, numbers of newcomers entering the country dramatically decreased, and the global forces of religious diversity in the nation began to wane, at least temporarily.

Wane, but not extinguish – even during a period of reduced migration of peoples to American shores, religious life in some corners of society could not be separated from a more worldly perspective on justice, morality, and community bonds. The growth of Islam among African Americans, beginning especially with the founding of the Moorish Science Temple in New Jersey in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali, on through the teaching of Wallace Fard and the creation of the Lost Found Nation of Islam in Detroit by 1930, to the rise of Elijah Muhammad and the conversion of Malcolm X to Islam in the 1960s, represents one of the more significant global movements of a tradition that is transformed and incorporated into distinctly American religious idioms and dynamic national identities, in this case, tied to the African homeland, domestic racial prejudice and discrimination, and cultural innovation in the experience of some blacks.

Changes in immigration policy in the 1960s that demolished the national quota system in place for most of the first half of the twentieth century, which restricted the number of immigrants entering the country to certain countries, had a dramatic impact on social demographics in the United States in the second half of the century. The percentage of the foreign-born population increased from 5 percent in 1970 to 8 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 1997; at the start of the 1970s, there were 4.5 million immigrants, and by the close of the twentieth century, 7.6 million. And contrary to earlier waves of immigration through most of American history, the post-1960s immigrants were not primarily from European countries but, as the numbers mentioned earlier indicate, increasingly from Latin America and Asia.

Before turning to global religious realities in the present and considering how these trends might play out in the future, it is important also to note how religions and religious sensibilities in the United States flow out and impact the rest of the world. Throughout American history the immigration of peoples, practices, and ideas from around the globe occurred simultaneously with the exportation of American peoples, practices, and ideas to foreign lands. The global web in which religious cultures make their way to the United States also supports the dispersion of distinctively American religious concerns and commitments beyond national borders.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, the growth of evangelical Protestantism and particularly the Methodist and Baptist denominations produced a mission-minded determination to carry the gospel to non-Protestants in

the United States as well as throughout the world. In 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions supported the missionary impulse to take not only the message of Jesus Christ, but also the new patriotic messages tied to freedom and democracy to new worlds. This and other institutionalized church initiatives to evangelize the globe sent American Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others to India, West Africa, Turkey, Hawaii, and other far-flung places.

The global reach and influence of American brands of religion are also evident in the worldwide successes of Mormonism in the twentieth century and Pentecostalism at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Mormonism provides an alternative origin story about life entering from outside North America in its sacred text, the Book of Mormon, relating the migration of members of one of the ten tribes of Israel to the continent and the special visit of Jesus to their descendants living in the land. From a persecuted sect in their early years, Mormons eventually transformed themselves into a patriotic religious movement that soon dominated the Rocky Mountain region in the United States before more global aspirations led to worldwide growth in numbers, especially in Latin America and the South Pacific.

Over time, and with increasing international political, economic, and military involvements, United States foreign policy was directed implicitly and sometimes not so implicitly by Protestant values and sensibilities tied to the missionary, generally millennial, impulse to see America's destiny in the world as fulfilling providential plans to promote freedom and democracy, and battling evil if it threatens those ultimate concerns. Across the twentieth century, in times of war, diplomacy, and cooperation with other nations, America's foreign interests were interwoven with religious motivations that understood global machinations in cosmic terms.

The dramatic, devastating events that took place on 11 September 2001 put into terrifying relief how contested that vision of America's role in the world had become by the dawn of the new century. In some segments of radical Islam, Muslims have taken up arms against the global religious realities associated with American power and influence and through this terrorist attack unleashed the fury of religious fundamentalists willing to kill innocent people and themselves in their cosmic battle with those perceived to be aligned with evil and against Allah.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Religion in America has been and continues to be embedded in global networks of peoples and ideas crossing national boundaries, of experiences and aspirations creating transnational orientations, and of rituals and mythologies transcending local communities. This vision of religious activity and

commitments embedded in worldwide patterns of social migration and cultural calibration is an important corrective to the conventional view of American religious history. In other words, religion in America is not simply a domestic matter, unfolding seamlessly through time after the creation of a Constitution that singled out religious freedom as a basic human right and in isolation from religious histories unfolding around the rest of the globe at the same time.

With this longer, broader global context in mind, religious realities in the United States appear messy and confusing, a vibrant mix of cultures, ethnicities, histories, memories, identities, and values that cannot be reduced to formulaic standards of measurement and explanation. Attempts to clarify the picture are hampered by the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau has not included religion in its survey questions since the 1950s, unfortunate timing given the incredible rates of diversification taking place in subsequent decades.⁵ Other religious and nonreligiously affiliated organizations have stepped in to try to provide data about numbers, but these surveys are only beginning to produce accurate, fine-grained analyses.

What do these surveys tell us about world religions in the United States? According to the 2007 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey that was based on 35,000 interviews with adults, nearly 80 percent of Americans identify as Christian, with more than half affiliated with Protestant churches and roughly a quarter aligned with the Catholic Church. Beyond Christianity, other religious traditions in America are comparatively much smaller: 1.7 percent of those surveyed identified as Jews, 0.7 percent as Buddhists, 0.6 percent as Muslim, 0.4 percent as Hindu, and somewhere close to 0.4 as either New Age, Native American, or "Other world religion."⁶

This survey also provides some data about immigration and religion. A large majority of recent immigrants to the United States – roughly 80 percent – is Christian, though in contrast to the divisions in the American context noted earlier, close to half of those arriving are Catholics, with significant numbers especially from Mexico, and only one-quarter is Protestant. Additionally, the percentage of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims migrating from a foreign country is much higher than their percentages in the total population – close to 2 percent for Buddhists and Muslims, and about 3 percent for Hindus.⁷ More than one-third of Muslim immigrants are arriving from South Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa;

⁵ Anne Farris Rosen, "A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census," Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=509>.

⁶ U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.

⁷ *Ibid.*, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-3.pdf>.

close to 15 percent of the Buddhists are emigrating from East Asia; and more than half the Hindu immigrants are from South Central Asia, though mostly from India. According to this survey, Catholic, Muslim, and Hindu communities are significantly populated with immigrants arriving from other lands.

Another source for data about the religious landscape in the United States is the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), a study carried out first in 1990, then in 2001, and most recently in 2008.⁸ This longitudinal orientation reinforces the basic demographic picture provided by Pew, and it also notes certain significant patterns in religious identity in the last decade, such as the growing number of Americans who switch religious affiliation, with Jews, Catholics, and mainstream Protestants experiencing the greatest losses from people leaving congregations (though Catholics make up for those losses through immigration).

Additionally, another important trend in both surveys is the fastest-growing group emerging in these reports: the unaffiliated, or those who identify as “none” when asked about their religious affiliation and who are presumed to be rejecting organized religion. Individuals who claim no religion are now, according to these studies, around 15 percent of the population. Many of the “nones” were originally Catholics and Jews, and in both surveys Asians are identified as the ethnic group with the largest numbers who align with this category. Even though many of the “nones” choose not to affiliate with a specific religion, many are probably religious in ways that do not translate readily in the survey format.

The picture offered by these kinds of surveys, together with the historically long view of cultural diversity in North America, suggests that the United States is a nation with deep, multilayered, and multidimensional worldwide connections that dynamically affect religious life here. In a sense, the picture is constantly shifting as a result of demographic forces tied to immigration, cultural adaptations related to internal diversification of religions and to external negotiations between religions and the larger social setting, and identity transformations effected by changing religious affiliations. But even so, some clear patterns emerge that are difficult to deny.

Christianity continues to be the dominant religious presence, though the contours and composition of this tradition in the United States have been and are currently shaped by patterns of immigration. The arrival of Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century had an enormous impact on neighborhoods, local politics, and church membership; today and in the

⁸ Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keyser, American Religious Identification Survey, <http://www.americanreligiousurvey-aris.org>.

future, Hispanic Catholics will make an impact on the life of the Church, ranging from an increase in bilingual services to intensified debates over illegal aliens. On the Protestant side, many denominations that were composed primarily of Anglo-Europeans, such as Methodists in the nineteenth century, are confronting the rise of ethnic congregations such as the Korean Methodist Church.

This internal diversification of Christianity in America is more than just the multiplication of churches; it is a symptom of larger globalizing forces and processes that will transform cultures and theologies and bear on lived experiences and moral communities. Specifically, it can be understood as what the historian Philip Jenkins identifies as the global consequences of Christianity's shifting worldwide alignment to the Southern Hemisphere, and particularly Africa, Asia, and Latin America. How this realignment – de-Europeanization might be overstating it, but not by much – of Christian communities in America affects politics, ecumenical relations, and inter-religious dialogue remains to be seen, but the American Christianity of tomorrow will look nothing like that of the past.

This same kind of internal diversification based on global pathways leading new immigrants to American shores is happening in all the world religions, a pattern that will continue to evolve and reshape institutional structures, communal practices, and personal identities. While Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and other religious communities in America are grappling with these changes in texture and composition, Muslims in America offer a unique set of circumstances that will continue to grow in importance here as the number of Muslims increases globally. Today, Islam in the United States is interlaced with multiple cultural and sectarian strands, including progressive as well as more orthodox theological dispositions, creating a tapestry held together by sacred texts, commitment to Allah, and individuals who self-identify as Muslim. The political realities associated with these changes will also be mixed, with liberal Muslims growing in visibility and engagement with liberal forces in other world religions in America, while more orthodox forms of Islam are less likely to align with conservative Christians and certainly not with Orthodox Jews, and therefore will remain more isolated from public life.

Religious life in America will grow even more enlivened and enveloped by global politics and transnational identities in the years ahead. This too is highlighting a familiar characteristic of U.S. history. African American religious cultures during slavery and in its aftermath drew sacred sustenance from the African homeland, with myths and rituals refashioned in the American context but still tools of empowerment and social solidarity. Popular Catholicism in diasporic Cuban communities took shape after Fidel Castro gained power and offered exiles a vision of national identity that

redefined, and made sense of, their experiences in America. Thai Buddhist monks look to councils in Thailand for guidance and direction about practicing their religion and living a monastic life at temples in diverse, fast-paced environments found in American metropolitan areas. Religious identities may draw power, meaning, and definition from national symbols and experiences in American history and culture, or they may be animated by national mythologies outside the United States, or they may embrace multiple national and political sacred commitments.

In this era of instantaneous and pervasive communications technologies providing immediate global access to events transpiring around the world, political interests that are quite often sacred investments in international conflicts will have an even greater impact on the volatile and delicate relations among religious groups in the United States. The longstanding and still explosive differences over the state of Israel play a role in American Jewish identities, American Muslim communities, and American evangelical and fundamentalist politics. The participation of the Dalai Lama in American events celebrating Tibetan Buddhism can draw Chinese American protesters who understand the symbolic status of Tibet on radically different terms than those who sympathize with a Free Tibet.

The realities of religious diversity in the United States continue to produce a spectrum of social practices and political alignments. Unfortunately, American history offers abundant examples of violent actions against people deemed threatening outsiders, attacks all too often rationalized and legitimated on religious terms, but mostly driven by religious fears of global contamination of American purity. The unfortunate, misguided, and tragic murder of a Sikh after the 9/11 attacks – an individual assumed to be a Muslim because he was wearing a turban – is a recent example of this deeper American proclivity to inflict violence against those perceived to be aligned with foreign religious powers like radical Islam in this case or like the pope in anti-Catholic violence earlier in U.S. history.⁹

On the other hand, the profound and well-orchestrated interreligious ceremonies including Muslims, Jews, Christians, and others in the wake of 9/11 signal a dramatically different phenomenon, also deeply familiar and embedded in the history of religions in the United States. Coordinated efforts among religious groups to address social injustice, natural disasters, political outrages, and other special causes paint a different kind of portrait inspired by the realities of religious diversity. Blacks who were descendants of slaves walking arm in arm with Jews whose ancestors were persecuted

⁹ The man who killed the Sikh was found guilty and sentenced to death, a story covered by many news outlets in 2003. See, for example, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2003/10/10/964237.htm>.

in Europe during the civil rights movement provide one illustration from the recent past; the interfaith services motivated by the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010 are another example of religious traditions joining in common cause to alleviate suffering and respond to a calamitous event.

The political and social contradictions integral to the American experience today and yesterday – constitutional provisions for religious freedom, but widespread and longstanding forms of religious discrimination and persecution; democratic ideals shaping civic culture simultaneously with rampant instances of power inequalities; promotion of cherished human rights abroad, yet ongoing conflicts over such highly charged domestic issues as immigration and sexuality – make any sweeping generalizations about the present and future difficult. Is assimilation the dominant narrative theme when telling the story of religious diversity in America? For some religious immigrant groups, to different degrees, in different social contexts, that would be correct. What about forms of cultural resistance and shoring up traditional practices to maintain distinctive ethnic and national identities? Many global religions in the United States carefully and successfully negotiate cultural lines of power in ways that enhance continuity with traditions flourishing outside American national boundaries, while others shift over time, gradually moving away from strict adherence to local cultural practices in the home country and toward greater accommodations to national patterns of religious organization and expression.

The increasing thickness of global religious diversity in the United States (multiple Christianities, Buddhisms, Islams, Hinduisms, Judaisms) rather than its expansion (no new religions to add on to the list) is what American society will face in the next few decades. Simplistic sociological theories and historical narratives about religious pluralism will no longer be useful in capturing and characterizing the lived experiences of communities shaped by global forces but found in metropolitan areas and rural outposts throughout American society. Instead, religions of the world seeking to survive and thrive in America will be increasingly subject to complex global forces and events that energize the faithful, reinvigorate collective identities, and determine lines of cooperation, as well as hostility, between communities.

The continuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as ongoing conflicts in the Middle East generally; the social consequences of environmental shifts on land and with water; natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis; disparities of resources and wealth that keep some comfortable but many others around the globe in poverty – America's religious future will be determined as much, if not more, by such worldwide phenomena unfolding outside its national borders as by mythical visions of its destiny in the world. Or perhaps it is more accurate to state that both will work

simultaneously, acknowledging a consistent reality in the present and certainly in the years ahead: religious life in America is shaped by global forces and phenomena, and America's religious identities can have a powerful impact on lives around the world.

At one time, the favored metaphor used to capture and control the social diversity so fundamental to United States history was the "melting pot," global cultural differences "cooked" out of particular communities in the creation of national citizens. Perhaps an accurate description of times past, perhaps an imagined ideal never really attained, the melting pot metaphor no longer carries much signifying weight. Even in its wake, food metaphors continue to be used to represent the peculiar way religious and spiritual life is experienced in America – a "mixed salad" to some, a "cafeteria" to others who no longer abide theories of assimilation that assert the possibility of sameness or cultural homogeneity, or that religious diversity can be "mashed up" to produce bland, cookie-cutter American religious experiences and expressions.

To return to the beginning of this essay, "gumbo" is one useful metaphor to portray adequately the true spiciness and pizzazz of the *mélange* of global religious ingredients mixing together in the American religious landscape. With a lineage that is characterized by cultural syncretism and historical transgressions, gumbo is both an amalgamation of diverse elements and a distinctively American product based on the lived experiences and tastes of individuals in communities searching for sustenance and succor from the foods they consume. The religions of the world provide Americans with spiritual nourishment and collective provisions that creatively establish identities and affiliations – with God, gods, spirits, and other sacred powers and agents – separated out from, though sometimes blending in with, multiple forms of religious life and expression simmering in American society.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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VISIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS FUTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

MARTIN E. MARTY

In 1945, with the Great Depression and the Second World War behind them, citizens of the United States, often led by academics, with surprising confidence projected visions of the religious future – and, with them, of the secular future of their country. They stood in a grand tradition that reached back to the original Catholic explorers, was best articulated by the Puritan founders of the Protestant colonies, and then intentionally expanded to include all the people who formed the nation. The motto on the seal of the United States, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, typified the widespread if not universal sense that the future was open to the enterprise of the people, many of whom would say, using a phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, that they were acting “under God.” Some of them projected utopias, others announced that they were advancing the Kingdom of God, while others included religion in their civil concepts of Manifest Destiny.

Projecting their visions of the future in every case built upon their assessments of the American present and past. Since that record was rich in variety and since it included competitive claims and ambiguous reports, the new visions, programs, and plans necessarily reflected great diversity. To anyone who tries to gain a synoptic view of these by reference to the literature or the use of the Internet, the first impression can be one of chaos. The hippie philosopher Emmett Grogan in the 1960s may have provided the best summary when he wrote, “Anything anybody can say about America is true.”¹

THE TWOFOLD SIGN OF INCREASING SECULARITY AND RELIGION

Pace Emmett Grogan, however, to the careful and critical student of the scene certain “sayings” are more “true” than others, and one can discern

¹ Quoted in Art Spiegelman and Bob Schneider, eds., *Whole Grains* (New York, 1973), 52.

certain accents, motifs, and convergences that provide a measure of structure to an assessment of the competing visions. In the matter of the futures of religion and its alternatives, certain polarities stand out. The word “growing” or “increasing” became attached to both poles by most assessors of the modern spiritual landscape. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who knew much about modernity, observed that “the modern world can be viewed under the twofold sign of a growing rationality along with a growing absurdity.”² He was by no means equating “religion” with “absurdity.” However, many prophets who were committed to ideologies of “rationality” feared religious growth, which they found to be irrational and thus absurd. Conversely, those who were dedicated to religion viewed the rationalist rejection of even the most profound religion to be its own “absurdity.”

Sign 1: The Strongly Secular and the Twofold Sign

Some futurists simply foresaw and advocated the long-term and drastic reduction unto death of the spheres of religious devotion and influence. The militantly antireligious among them pictured that such an inevitable death would be slow and partial, so they urged citizens to kill religion, not with lethal weapons but with critical reason, polemics, and political action. Typical of the popular works written early in the new millennium by a small group of scientists and publicists was the pitch of Sam Harris in *The End of Faith*. “The days of our religious identities are clearly numbered. Whether the days of civilization itself are numbered would seem to depend, rather too much, on how soon we realize this.”³

A more sophisticated and influential vision that better served the post-war generations was that of Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener. In 1967 they proposed *A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years*, which was the subtitle of their book, *The Year 2000*. Affiliated with the prestigious Hudson Institute and fostered by the Commission on the Year 2000 of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, these scholars insisted that they were not attempting to “predict” any particular aspect of

² Paul Ricoeur, “Science humaine et conditionnement de la foi,” in *Dieu aujourd’hui* (Paris, 1965), 140–1. Quoted in Martin E. Marty, *The Search for a Usable Future* (New York, 1969), 60–1. See chap. 2, “The Present’s Twofold Sign” (p. 68), for my own appropriation of the “twofold sign” and the coinage “‘religio-secular’ to characterize the past, the present, and the tendency of American society,” a coinage that was admittedly inelegant but, I believed and believe, is defensible and appropriate.

³ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York, 2004), 227. A historical framework for this study appears in Charles Mathews and Christopher McKnight Nichols, eds., *Prophecies of Godlessness: Predictions of America’s Imminent Secularization from the Puritans to the Present Day* (New York, 2008).

the future. Yet their opener, Table I: There Is a Basic, Long-Term Multifold Trend . . . , which they described as “surprise free,” turned out to be valid, to use their description, as “a framework for speculation.”

The first of thirteen elements had been a “trend toward . . . increasingly Sensate (empirical, this-worldly, secular, humanistic, pragmatic, utilitarian, epicurean or hedonistic, and the like) cultures.” In Ricoeur’s terms, these eight adjectives would point to “growing rationality” at the expense of religion. Less noticed was the fact that Kahn and Wiener, having borrowed the concept of “Sensate” culture from Pitirim Sorokin, also dealt with the other sign. They foresaw a longer-term, “post-Sensate” emergence, which they numbered and called “7. A New Religiosity.” The coauthors had the wisdom to include a brief reference to this. They noted that “almost all of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophers of history seem to believe it likely that some new kind of ‘religious’ stage will follow . . . the Sensate.” This emergence might be represented by something “spiritual and intellectual,” a “simple development of Christianity,” a “new synthesis of East and West,” or “it could be something completely different.”

Sign 2: The New Religiosity as the Second Sign

These major philosophers of history, according to Kahn and Wiener, “usually argued that there will be some unpleasant events” between the Sensate and the new religiosity, and they envisioned that “chaos, anarchy, nihilism, and irrationality” were likely to appear. Decades after they wrote, alert and nervous Americans saw these appear in the rise of militant fundamentalisms around the world along with religious justifications for lethal actions in “tribal” conflict on most continents. Closer to home, many identified bewilderingly ecstatic or violent expressions that were at least quasi-religious, as they erupted in fabled “countercultural” excrescences in the fabled “sixties.”⁴

As for the first sign, the growing “secular rationality” revealed itself in the secular habits of mind and the conventional practices of elites in the cultures of universities, laboratories, clinics, markets, and entertainment centers. Ideological secularism was a more rare expression advocated within a rather defined cohort in American life. Most of those who demonstrated a firmly secular mind-set viewed the “growing religiosity” not as a full-fledged absurdity, but as a part of overlookable or irrelevant ways of life. They might read news reports of the prosperity of suburban churches, the place of religion in the life of ethnic minorities, the abundance of

⁴ Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener, *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years* (New York, 1967), xix, 6–7, 48.

scholarly writings on religion and be aware of its presence on radio, television, and the Internet, as something to be opposed only if these expressions got out of hand. Not until what came to be called “culture wars” a quarter-century after the war, with the invention of “secular humanism” to define one pole and “the Religious Right” the other, did the projections of the future power of religion move from the informal and casual zone to the formal and militant.

THE SECULAR SIGN

The term “secularity” more than “rationality” prevailed in most polar visions of the American religious future. In fact, in the course of the decades after 1945, many expressions of rationality were themselves put on trial by sets of religious and nonreligious prognosticators and visionaries alike. To their critics they were too identified with styles of reason born of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment but now obsolete. Instead, words associated with “the secular” won out. Derived from the word *saeculum*, it came to signal what belonged to “this age” over against varied and broad concepts of the transcendent and the sacred. Originally a useful term in the Christendom of Europe, it had characterized land, property, professions, and topics that were not ecclesiastically controlled. In nineteenth-century England the invention of “secularism,” as of most “isms,” indicated an ideological commitment. In this case it was an often militant expression of the claim that nothing transcendent existed or mattered. Kahn and Wiener in their statement of a basic, long-term, surprise-free trend amplified the description.

In the period after 1945 the modern concept of the secular was invented and applied. (The dictionary tells us, “invented” can mean – and here does mean – both something “discovered” and something “made-up.”) In sociology, debates grew over “the secularization theory.” Standard in most European and American studies of cultures that had manifested religious dimensions, it connoted several themes. First, in keeping with the historic use, secularization would in the future denote “differentiation” and “separation.” These occurred as Americans, who “separated church and state” in law, progressively did such separating of various other spheres of life from religion. Thus now and in the future most higher education, scientific endeavor, and commerce were no longer under churchly control or agencies that privileged religion.

The second use of the secularization theory was less practical and more philosophical. It called for ever less employment of religious ideas to explain nature, human individual and social conduct, philosophical contentions, and folkways. The secularization theorists confirmed their philosophical

thesis by assessing the increasing independence of sectors of life from religion and the increasing obsolescence of religious institutions and ideas.

A TEST CASE: RADICALLY SEPARATED CHURCH AND STATE

Debates over the future of the secular and religious dimensions of life often dwelt on inherited concepts of the historically blurred lines separating “church and state.” Through and since the forties there have been conflicts in courts, school boards, and public ceremonies. Secularists who insisted on ideological purity protested the appearance of any traces of religious themes, such as the slogan “In God We Trust” on coins or the “growing” religiosity that impelled the Congress in 1954 to insert the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. They protested most insertions of God language at civil occasions and cheered when in 1962 and 1963 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against established public “school prayer” or devotional Bible reading. The secular visionaries, however, had to do more than criticize religion. They had to suggest that democratic documents and life, unburdened by religious claims, were sufficient and beneficial for the workings of the republic and support of justice for all.

A large literature developed in the elite culture work to clarify what had to be done to assure the secular vision. The most eloquent and influential proponent of the secular claim, who here has to stand for many, was John Dewey as he offered this creed in his book *A Common Faith*. Portentously, the nation’s foremost philosopher of education employed the twofold vision: “Never before in human history has mankind been so much of two minds, so divided into two camps, as it is today.” Over against conventional, shall we say churchly, religion he contended that a godless civic faith should be taught with metaphysical sanctions and expressed with ceremonial reinforcements. In the last line of his book he said it was time to make such a faith “explicit and militant.”⁵

THE RELIGIOUS SIGN

“Religion” in postwar culture was as difficult to define as was “secularity.” In new situations after World War II, what had long been taken for granted in the definition of religion became problematic. Scholars probing the word and meaning of religion at sessions of the American Academy of Religion and similar groups could count on large audiences. Many scholars saw it to be a second-order term, one applied by social scientists even

⁵ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT, 1934), 87.

if it does not match the experience of most people. Ask citizens about their identity, polltakers reported, and they would more likely call themselves Catholic or Jewish or “spiritual” than describe themselves as having a “religion.”

One approach to the use of the term in civil discourse is phenomenological, which we may think of as characterized by what I call “sophisticated naivete.” A category marked “religion” exists in libraries, bookstores, advertisements, polls, and phone books and is available for examination. It is with such phenomena that demographers, interviewers, poll takers, curricular experts, and ordinary citizens deal. They know, for example, what is meant by “interreligious” dialogue and cooperation. They know what to watch for when a political candidate mentions or denies that he or she is introducing religion into a campaign. Sounding flippant but quite serious about this matter, I sometimes mention that when I was on the six-person editorial committee of a fifteen-volume work called *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, we decided that “religion” is the name for the kind of stuff one includes in a reference work with such a title. The amount and intensity of such stuff were pictured as having growth potential for the future.

Before the postwar versions of secular versus religion lines hardened in culture wars, some scholarly analysts envisioned some bridging. Among the best known of these were sociologically informed thinkers like Will Herberg and Robert N. Bellah. They both saw value in offering visions of the future in what Herberg called a “civic faith.” Bellah, following usages of the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the sociologist Emile Durkheim, spoke of “civil religion.”⁶ While Herberg as a Jewish theologian in the prophetic tradition feared idolatry in the form of worship of the nation, he argued that what he called a “civic faith” could be “an authentic religion,” a “genuine religion,” a “noble religion,” one that a complex and pluralist society would need to function and effect justice. For Bellah, emergent and growing “civil religion” would only serve between and beyond ideological secular versus religious extremes in the American future.

Such envisioning of a civil religious future did not satisfy the interests of “explicit and militant” Americans who claimed that in 1962 and 1963 the Supreme Court was “taking God out of the schools” and out of public life. Others feared that proponents of civil religion would displace the particular biblical, often newly called “Judeo-Christian tradition”⁷ inherited

⁶ Robert N. Bellah, “American Civil Religion in the 1970s,” in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion* (New York, 1974), 255ff., especially 264; Will Herberg, “America’s Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes,” 76ff. and notes 86–7, also in Richey and Jones, *American Civil Religion*.

⁷ Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America since World War II* (New York, 1988), 40–53.

from the American past. Through the years after the war, as some Supreme Court decisions went against their vision for America, extreme secularists viewed these decisions as being too friendly to public religion. At the same time, intense religious conservatives foresaw a militantly secularistic, “anti-God” future in America.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS SHIFT POSITIONS

Advocates of a defined religious America versus an aggressive one used different strategies and even modified their positions as decades passed. Proponents of the growing religious model responded to cultural changes, political frustrations and opportunities, and available strategic choices, even as they reacted to the positions and actions of those they saw as secularists. Some of them switched their positions as they adapted to change. Thus in the early years of the Cold War, back when mainline Protestants were the privileged members of an informal national establishment, notable leaders among them were satisfied to live with a kind of blend between John Deweyite “common faith” and generalized Protestantism. And then, when the more conservative Protestants and sometimes Catholics and Jews turned aggressive, moved into the center of political contentions, and organized to the point that they often eclipsed the vision and fought the power of secular America, the mainliner Protestants turned and became ready for a more neutral and even religiously recessive approach in public life.

The about-face occurred when newly prosperous militants rose to prominence and projected futures in which their view of religion would find its place and perhaps even become dominant. Seen as nonpolitical or antipolitical in the 1950s, they made drastic changes and projected futures that the older elites in turn rejected. Mainly these newcomers to the scene were evangelical Protestants who coalesced with conservative Roman Catholics and, on selective causes such as the policies and practices of Israel, even with Jews, cohorts that they had avoided or attacked decades before. Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore spoke of the most celebrated leaders in this camp – the evangelists Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Francis Schaeffer – as pushers of what we might call “in your face” attacks on secular humanism and on most mainstream Americans. Soon the most-recognized religious visions in public life were projected from this company whose mainly evangelical wing named their groups successively the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and Focus on the Family. They foresaw a religious, even a Christian America and gained millions of followers as they did so.

Their vision was clear. They spoke of moving America back to its religious sources. The historian Moore quoted the Dallas pastor who pronounced the

benediction at the Republican Convention of 1984 as saying that “there is no such thing as separation of church and state. It is merely a figment of the imagination.”⁸ Three evangelical historians, hardly propagators of a secular humanist future, illustrated how the search for a Christian America led to a forward vision based on a presumed past. They quote the best-known television evangelist of the time, Jerry Falwell, as proclaiming, “It is time for Americans to come back to the faith of our fathers, to the Bible of our fathers, and to the biblical principles that our fathers used as a premise for this nation’s establishment.” The way to do this, urged the also-cited evangelist Tim LaHaye, is for Christians to “vote in pro-moral leaders who will return our country to the biblical base upon which it is founded.”⁹

Not all in the evangelical vision were so historically uninformed or so aggressive in shaping the future. There were changes in their camp, too. Some had visions of the secular that could be compatible with evangelical witness. One of the reasoned statements is that of Darryl Hart in *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State*. Its subtitle indicates his positive view of such separation, which, in classical uses of the term, was “secular.” Hart envisioned and promoted within evangelicalism a view that is and would be less defensive and isolationist than its predecessor and was ready to engage the society without promoting the simply antisecular vision of “A Christian America.”¹⁰ Few in the new millennium expected to see an easy and enduring change to this depolarizing vision. Challenges to it remain, thanks to the ambiguities in the charter documents of the nation and the myriad competing camps that interpret them. If the record since 1945 provides clues, citizens will be picking their way among options described as secular and religious into indefinite futures.

ALTERNATIVES TO A PURELY SECULAR PRACTICE AND VISION

Alongside the competing visions of religion in secular public life was a less political but largely unforeseen projection. We speak of the phenomenon emergent post 1945, one that came to be called simply “spiritual.” The alert observer of the many forms this took in what came to be called “The Age of Aquarius” or “The New Age” might well ask whether it represented growing secularity or growing religion? It seemed to have

⁸ Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case against Religious Correctness* (New York, 1996), 22, 165.

⁹ Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, CT, 1983), 126.

¹⁰ Darryl G. Hart, “A Secular Faith,” in *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago, 2006), 240–57.

to battle against enveloping secularism. In 1966 I was assigned the task of dealing with the concept and reality of spirituality in American life. Consultation with readers' guides to periodical literature at the time did reveal references to the noun "spirituality." Almost always it was accompanied by adjectives such as "Franciscan," "Medieval," "Russian Orthodox," "Transcendentalist," or "Desert." Very seldom had the noun been detached from such adjectives when it had been used at all. I was chartered to seek embodiments and exemplars in a study for American Academy of Arts and Letters conferences and publications. I found enough to write "The Search for a Spiritual Style in Secular America." It quoted Paul Tillich, the most celebrated theologian of the period, who had written in 1963 that there were good reasons to reinstate the designation "spiritual," which Tillich set out to do. But as for attempts to resuscitate "the adjective spiritual, it is 'lost beyond hope.'"¹¹

It was not lost, but it had suffered a linguistic and historical near-death experience. Among the slight traces we found were some "spiritual" models among world citizens such as Pope John XXIII, Dag Hammarskjöld, Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Each of them expressed a particular version of a spiritual tradition. Then, as we continued to track the word, with startling suddenness the word appeared to be associated with broadened usages. Secular humanists writing in popular magazines complained that the word "spiritual," long identified with historic religion, was too good a designation to let the religious have a monopoly on it. They promoted a kind of disembodied, individualized spirituality. Secularists whose questioning religious vision had long ruled out the spiritual now were playing hosts to it, as were many of the religious, who now saw themselves turning "postreligious." One need not document at length the spread of the new usage, so common has it become, voiced almost in a mantra: "I am not a member of an organized church. I do not believe in institutional religion. I am not even religious. But I am very spiritual."

Spirituality in the Western world had long been connected to religion. Yet now increasingly it was envisioned as prospering apart from particular communities or traditions. Would it be an element in the increasing secularization, or would it fill roles that would qualify it as religious – even if so many who favored it distanced themselves from religion? The word began to appear in major sections of bookstores and libraries and became associated with tangible products such as lotions and potions, figures of angels, as well as experiences such as retreats and pilgrimages.

¹¹ Martin E. Marty, "The Spirit's Holy Errand: The Search for a Spiritual Style in Secular America," *Daedalus* (Winter 1967): 100, 110.

Part of the positive lure of spirituality resulted from the negative image many citizens held of much institutional religion, the tiredness of many systems of religious thought, or the ethical lapses of leaders and members of religious groups. Sometimes the new spirituality represented an individualistic impulse so strong that in the eyes of its critics it often turned solipsistic and narcissistic. Still other impulses toward spirituality implied a figurative passage from home, a repudiation of the familiar, and a hope that new exotic and esoteric sources and resources would be alluring and could satisfy. Critics found this spirituality to be gradually acquiring a kind of Gnostic character, and along with it an attempt to transcend the material. Yet the critics only contributed to the spread of the term and, quite possibly, to the phenomena that it designated. In any case, few visions of the future were as common and constant as prophecies of the future prevalence of spirituality.

This largely unforeseen religious vision of a phenomenon called spirituality included many elements that fair-minded observers across the secular spectrum could view positively. There were aesthetic dimensions in the rich historic and sometimes vivid contemporary artistic, musical, and literary expressions that challenged weary traditions-gone-to-seed. In fields of therapy, some pointed to documentations of improved mental health among people who practiced the disciplines they received or chose. Only decades after its being isolated and designated as a postreligious but certainly not “merely” a secular expression, spirituality also began to be increasingly embodied in organizations, institutions, and commercial expressions that looked suspiciously like the religious elements they were out to replace. An ironist could make much of that turn, but the tone of this essay could become offensive if we overdid the irony, made too many judgments about foolish or failed expectations, and used the perspective of hindsight too readily.

TRANSINSTITUTIONAL VISIONS AND CONTENTIONS

Any survey of spiritual and religious visions of the future has to include the institutional expectations that house them. These suffer or prosper depending upon the interactions of participants with surrounding cultures. They often are rocked, prodded, or inspired by changes that are not conceived first of all as affecting institutions. Thus prophecies about the futures as they affect or are affected by major forces and issues such as racial change, concerns relating to gender and sexuality and reproduction, approaches to dealing with environmental crises, war and peace cannot be understood without an assessment of their religious dimensions. Here we can only illustrate the theme of the interwebbing of churches and culture in the future.

No doubt the accent that portended most change and issued in most revision of prophecy was the cluster of women’s movements, in religion

and in the larger, usually called secular, culture. This vision was largely unforeseen in 1945 and did not take form until the 1960s, after secular works like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*¹² inspired or coincided with an unstopped stream of similar publications on the roles of women. Immediately after these earliest books appeared, the voices of women in religion were heard as never before. The movement of liberation, according to its enemies – and there were many – led to prophecies that the trend would lead to new secularization, as women would assert their rights and state their claims in ways that would upset traditional family life or deny some teachings in sacred scriptures.

Instead, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and others alike heard voices from their own cohorts providing religious justifications for resistance or, on the other hand, for change. A summary and projection appeared in a book by Barbara Hargrove, Jean Miller Schmidt, and Sheila Greeve Davany. They offered a synoptic view of changing gendered roles and what these would mean for the future. Feminists found vast differences and much polarization among religious advocates but mainly looked ahead. Their vision? “It is the hope of all feminist theologians that [differences caused by race, class, and religious heritage] can and will become new resources for a deeper vision, rather than continued sources of division.” The changes underway, in the eyes of the religious feminists, “must almost inevitably move the society further in the direction of social change.” They closed with a cautious and mixed projection: “Some kind of transforming power seems present; only the future will tell what becomes of it.”¹³

Similar energy went into prophetic judgments and appeals on the racial front. A reader of documents on the racial movements in the United States would learn that, while secular courts made change possible, the movements for civil rights and affirmations of various racial identities virtually always prompted visionaries to take the present of “Free at Last” into the future, “I have seen the mountain!” in the prophesies of Martin Luther King. What was merely secular about a movement led by so many “Reverends,” inspired by a holy book, and rallied for in sanctuaries? Unforeseen developments of this sort also characterized Hispanic movements.

FUTURES OF INTERFAITH AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Visions of interfaith and ecumenical communities varied widely. Largely unforeseen before 1945 were the changes in interfaith activity. Histories

¹² Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, 1963).

¹³ Barbara Hargrove, Jean Miller Schmidt, and Sheila Greeve Davaney, “Religion and the Changing Role of Women,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 48 (July 1985): 131.

covering that previous period are given over to stories of hostility and conflict, between Christians and Jews, Chinese and those who practice various other Asian religions versus Western religions, while Islam was usually ignored. The great exception to the facts of indifference or malice was the famed World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Some legacy of that conclave persisted, but most of the vision has come from leaders who profess that whether or not the religions have a common core, they have a common cause, to promote justice and work to enhance human dignity and freedom. In 1993 a second parliament was held to advance interfaith relations. Older agencies like the National Conference of Christians and Jews had to be transformed to include Muslims and others. It became the National Conference of Community and Justice (NCCJ), whose acronym kept the old NCCJ usage alive but with a new mission.

Late in the century, interfaith visions had moved to the fore in a world of conflict, often religiously based conflict. Many visions were apocalyptic, as secular and many kinds of Christian voices viewed Islamic, Hindu, and other militant fundamentalisms as threatening the American, if not the world's future. At the same time, leaders of movements who worked at reducing appeals to religious violence and for concord projected visions of new interrelations among the religions. The mutual hostility of many religious and other Americans, resulting from the Iranian Revolution in 1979–80 and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, challenged the groups that worked for interfaith amity – just as, many agree, it rendered the agenda more urgent. As Americans realized that on a large scale they made up as pluralist a society as any ever seen, in local communities and almost numberless organizations and occasions they worked against the tide. Theologians, religious thinkers across the board, and volunteer citizens began to grasp the interfaith vision and find ways to adapt it to their own experience and calling.

Within the larger Christian community the working out of a vision came to be called “ecumenical,” a dream and plan that was addressed from 1945 until 1965 to the vast majority of Christians other than Roman Catholics, conservative evangelicals, and fundamentalists. After the Vatican Council (1962–65) it also informally included the Catholics. The dream of seeing greater measures of Christian unity was one thing; the institutional agents to help realize them were another matter. But ecumenism was very much a part of the dream of American Christians, partly realized through conciliar and federated structures such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) after 1948 and the National Council of the Churches (NCC) of Christ in the United States of America after 1951. The WCC had begun to be envisioned outside the United States since early in the century, and the NCC built on and replaced a Federal Council of Churches, which also

originated early in the century. So we cannot speak of these as post-1945 religious visions.

If the early postwar visions had included almost utopian pictures of religious concord, the century ended with the sound of comment on ecumenical organizations charging that they had grown tired or lost their appeal. They had been inspired by the language of far-seeing clerics such as Archbishop William Temple, who spoke of the movement as “the great new fact of the era.” Councils, services of worship, rallies, and work programs of such variety that we have to be content merely to point to them demanded visions of the future. These were of many varieties. Some in America talked of the formation of one great Christian organization, others of a strategic invention to advance one or another Christian cause. Still other ecumenically minded Christians were content with councils or ad hoc activities that encouraged a uniting spirit. One of the great global or ecumenical surprises – I know of no American Catholic who anticipated it – was the change in policy of Catholicism at and after its council. The churches were far from realizing communion fellowship, but a new spirit was present, causing a decline in hostility across the boundaries of church bodies and inspiring many theological, humanitarian, and liturgical common actions in the nation with the largest number of separated churches.

THE FUTURE OF DENOMINATIONS AND CONGREGATIONS

Among other zones of institutional life that demanded religious visions and visionaries was the denomination, the most prevalent and varied form for organized religious life. This was true among the Christian, largely Protestant and evangelical majority, but also among Catholics, who often do not like to be thought of as members of a denomination, and Jews who saw denominations as a Christian invention. Yet, clearly, Catholicism is located among denominations in the yearbooks, like it or not. Therefore, many Catholics put energy into what this form meant for their future. And Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews gathered as much into denominations as did Protestants, and these elicited new visions for the future. In all of them, the denomination was under stress.

The denomination was being put on trial and its future seen as insecure through all the decades after 1945. The form, while it had some prehistory in England, was largely an American invention, designed to permit the various immigrant and evangelized peoples to be faithful to their traditional creeds, to perpetuate inherited liturgies, to assure the integrity of faiths, and to provide the theological basis for attracting new members, nurturing longer-term members, and directing their mission. All those

intentions would put the denomination on the side of “the religious” in the American twofold scheme. However, the historian Sidney E. Mead observed of Protestantism what was evident in all: competition among the churches and programmatic needs led them to be increasingly purposive and needing to adapt to the culture.¹⁴ This meant their visions for the future necessitated adopting techniques of advertising and public relations professions and patterns of bureaucratic management. This secular side was not judged to be evil or compromising; it merely pointed to the way things were in a free society, with religious institutions needing to rely on voluntary support, and all of them carrying a heavy burden in their budgets, for real estate, building and maintaining programs, and the like.

Of course, denominations, even when hierarchically organized, both fostered and were dependent upon local institutions: the parish, the congregation, the synagogue. Those who observed trends in giving for religious purposes foresaw that the denominational budget and program were going to be increasingly deprived of funds and power relative to the prosperity of the local institutions. At the same time, the judgment made on denominations by ecumenical agencies would deprive denominations of some of their rationale. How could they be guardians of the truth, as many of them claimed they were, if leaders and laity alike professed to see theological and ecclesiastical validity in other denominations? Meanwhile, the invention of new forms such as the megachurch, which did not “need” the denomination and in effect competed with it, challenged the foundations of denominations as basic forms and presented challenging visions for the future of these forms. With so much burden of proof placed on the defenders of denominations, prophecies of an emergent postdenominational religious America became increasingly common during the whole period.

Despite such prophecies of the demise and disappearance of denominations, they did not disappear and even proliferated in the ecumenical era. They may have continued because of cultural inertia: it is very difficult to kill off a functioning form. Somehow they remained bearers of particular traditions that had to do with polity, liturgy, and practices. “Low-church” bodies, which stressed congregationalism and feared hierarchy, were tenacious in their resistance to episcopal polities, while “high-church” denominations replied in kind, warning against chaos. Most denominations were split down the middle over issues, many of them dealing with social and specifically sexual matters; yet, for all the stress, almost all of them survived, with compromised visions of their own future. Visions

¹⁴ Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York, 1963). See ch. VII: “Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America,” 103–33.

of the future, surprisingly, to those who took the long ecumenical vision of unity on one hand and those who emphatically stressed the local, still included projections of various denominational futures. The language of “renewal,” “reformation,” “new forms,” and “experiment” was more common than was discourse appropriate for the writing of denominational obituaries.

Tied to the fate of denominations, in many envisionings, was that of the local congregation. No matter where local churches or synagogues fit into the theology of the traditions, in practice they demonstrably attracted the most loyalty, energy, and concern. In many of these the mix of secular practice and religious intent was most clear, and pursuit of these demanded projections and visions. Congregational leaders formed a massive front in support of tax exemption for religious institutions. Aware of what usually was called “separation of church and state” and ordinarily cherishing the idea and reality of such separation, these religious entities had to contend in civil legislatures and courts for tax exemption on the grounds that they merited favor because of the secular services they performed, for instance, as social service agencies, where their contribution to civil life is consistently and demonstrably huge. They did so in an era when “bigness” and “universalizing” projects in government, corporations, mass media, and the like, in many ways detracted from the power of the local as it remained in American myth and nostalgia. Paradoxically, those very challenges awakened local responses in religion. Believers in most faiths showed that they trusted the local, where they might have a say in determining policies for the future.

Those who envisioned struggles for local institutions but saw that they were surviving and predicted that they would survive put more of their energies into promoting images of varying futures within the congregational model. Many of these, for example, in Roman Catholicism and prosperous suburban Protestant churches, stressed the need to satisfy the hunger of many for more personal, intimate, up-close religious expression. At the same time that they advertised the rewards of their “mega-”character, they also spoke of futures wherein the small group within congregations would draw support and find a mission.

Alongside inherited but adapting denominational and congregational forms, a third pattern, which grew out of a vision of specific futures, developed after World War II. They were most attractive to futurists, who often despaired of working with inherited forms. Some of the new creations were called parachurches, voluntary agencies that drew on the resources of believers in congregations and denominations even as they competed with them. The sociologist Robert Wuthnow observed these project-focused forms and projected that they would increasingly attract energies that

had once been put into denominations and congregations. They appeared across the spectrum of churches from Orthodox and Catholic to Baptist, from liberal to conservative, focusing on interests of donors and supporters or visions of need. World Vision, Bread for the World, Campus Crusade, the Voice of the Faithful, and thousands more made their appeals to the faithful and helped them become involved with “stories,” as opposed to “budget items,” in many places. Their very diversity and novelty helped attract visionaries.

Wuthnow’s projection of new styles was rooted in his view of the history of American religion after 1945. These times, he thought, may have been an era of promise, but “religious discourse was filled with prophecies of doom.” Further, “religious leaders hoped for the best, but often spoke of the worst” for society, culture, and church. “As one religious observer ventured, ‘disillusionment, rather than optimism’ was the keynote of the time.” Some foresaw the end of the Protestant era. “The most common response . . . was growing awareness of the tremendous odds against which the religious vision would have to contend.” Yet, Wuthnow found, not all were gloomy, and some offered plans and promoted piety that reflected more hope.¹⁵

Add to these a turn-of-the-millennium vision of the religious future, a set of projections and inventions frankly intending to be “postmodern.” A term of increasing prominence if not always clear designation was “the emergent church.” Asked to define it doctrinally, liturgically, in polity, and in mission, the various leaders and authors of best-selling manuals touted the emergence of religious life mainly devoted to Jesus, more storied than creedal, mingling elements of early Christian practice with the latest business techniques and music once considered profane. Leaders envisioned this rather free-form, viscous, adaptive Christianity as ushering in a new stage of Christian expression.¹⁶ The “emergent church” in some ways builds upon what a half-century earlier were called “new structures of ministry.” Not many of these visions-turned-institutional proved to be durable, and it is too early in the life of the emergent patterns to see whether they will indeed prevail or will challenge and enrich the existing forms.

The leaders of these evangelical movements in politics hoped to turn America away from its secular character back to its religious sources. The

¹⁵ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 39–45.

¹⁶ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2005).

spokesmen of this evangelical vision rejected the notion of the church and state being completely separate and of the United States being a secular society as proposed by secular humanists. Evangelical television preachers were the most strident voices urging this return to a religious vision of the nation and to the explicit promotion of religion in public life. Their attack on secular humanism was fueled by a desire to return to the biblical principles that they believed had been operative in the founding generation and on which the nation had been established.

The secularization theorist observed the activity of church and parachurch, local and national bodies, and saw them in sometimes imitative and sometimes defensive postures in the secular culture of government, management, and entertainment. They saw all adjustments and compromises as losses, twitches during death throes. Some other critics see them as not secular enough, thriving as islands apart from the rational world, places of escape by those in the thrall of malign religions or unimaginative routine, or self-serving structures. Yet those who have little bias – typically, a European visitor who sees the churches back home emptying – look at the data of religious expressions and foresee religious prosperity that results from new engagements with the culture that is best described, though with an inelegant term, as “religio-secular,” made up of woven strands.

The future looked and looks very different to varieties of futurists, planners, and essayists who speak about or to or for particular cohorts in American religious life. To explore secularization theory and religious reality among the varieties of American religions, be they Catholic, Sikh, Presbyterian, Wiccan, Jewish, Muslim, is both tempting and impossible. It is tempting because the responses of each to modernity give fresh evidence of the reality of the “twofold” sign in religion. It is impossible because most books about religion in America, whether they be theological, historical, practical, or poetic, usually end with visions of where the events and trends in history would take the nation. Thus one could concentrate on the swaggering stance of many mainline Protestants in their midcentury prime and then see what increasing secularization and increasing religion not of their kind have done.

Thus from the left wing of this standard-brand Protestant camp issued extravagant visions of the banes and boons of the new religiosity or the boons and banes of secularity surrounding and within such religious groups. There have been vast changes within these, and we can point to several trends that fulfill or deny past projections or inspire new ones. First among these has to be Protestant, since all the stripes of Protestantism together amounted to much more than one-half of the population, though

religious visions of the future saw it slip into becoming merely the largest minority. Most open to “the secular,” and often celebrating what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “the world come of age,” they were confident as they lowered barriers between “church and world” even as they saw that their openness meant institutional seepage and loss. Many of them redefined the secular as the favored sphere for serving God in Christ, while seeing many of their followers content to lose passion for denominational and congregational life and find satisfaction in “merely secular” alternatives: social service agencies, support of congenial governments, devotion to causes critical of racial prejudice and war.

The most dramatic and most immediately contradicted vision of the secular triumph appeared in “secular theology” and a deviation to the left of Protestantism, the momentary sensation called “The Death of God Theology.” Its most articulate spokesperson, William Hamilton, wrote that “pessimism doesn’t persuade any more.” He chose 5 January 1965 as a symbolic date for the change of sensibility to “optimism” – he did not like the term, but he needed it – the day on which gloomy T. S. Eliot had died in London and the day President Lyndon Johnson delivered his State of the Union message, full of progressive programs and the promise of a new future.¹⁷ Unfortunately for his vision, his article did not appear that winter but instead was published in the following autumn, by which time President Lyndon B. Johnson had committed great numbers of troops to the futile war in Vietnam, racial conflict had led to riots in Watts in California and in many cities, and fissures and failures in the Great Society program contributed to a new pessimism.

Sociologically informed scholars with a theological vision such as Harvey Cox and Peter Berger, writing in the mid-1960s and after, sensed a cultural change with the potency of what might be called “neoreligious” expressions. The high point of secular interpretation in religious circles, around 1965, therefore, was followed by a counterforce, which Cox best chronicled and Berger critically engaged. They saw a present and then projected a future first represented by countercultural quasi-religious expressions as in “the Age of Aquarius,” the new religions – often imported from Asia or products of innovators in the West, “ethnic religion” and the celebration of Afro-Asian, Hispanic, Native American, spiritual, and ritual ways. Many of these were ephemeral and exploited, yet, because of their attraction to the young, people bored with convention, and serious adult “searchers” on “pilgrimage,” they inspired visions

¹⁷ Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis, 1966), 158–9.

of a new religiosity marked by disdain for the secular models promoted a few short years before.

The peculiar mix of secularization as religious decline and various signs of religious vitalities led many serious scholars within religious communities to view the future less enthusiastically than before and to hedge their bets. They became neither so optimistic about human nature and achievement as visionaries before and in the early sixties had been, nor so “down” as prophets of cultural and religious life had been. Typical of the sane and sagacious appraisal was that of the leading historian of American religion in the first generation or two after 1945, Sydney Ahlstrom. He had made a heavy investment in the amplified Puritan-Protestant contribution but in the sixties saw it increasingly rejected and replaced by spiritual chaos. “Evil seemed triumphant. . . . Evidence of God’s love for the world was hard to find.” Still, he pictured future interpreters of the almost apocalyptic scene finding the American people “drawing on the profounder elements of their traditions, . . . and thus vindicating the idealism which has been so fundamental in the country’s past.”¹⁸

A chronicle including notice of failed predictions, prophecies, proposals, and visions should probably not end with a prediction. Call it a projection or reporting on trends, then: the “Sensate” culture of Sorokin, Kahn, and Wiener grows only more intensely secular. And the “new religiosity” that, they reported, the modern prophets foresaw as its successor had not succeeded in replacing it. But the intensity with which it was being pursued and observed in the waves of cultural change suggests that it will remain one of the two “folds” in signs of the present and future.

In 1987 Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney measured American religious affiliation and did justice to the twofold signs of American religion during the previous several decades. They reported on historians and sociologists who discerned “a profound religious awakening and the return of the sacred.” They agreed that there were “of course some signs of a religious upswing,” but they foresaw its limits. There was much evidence, they noted, “of a growing secularity which is perhaps even more important.” Still, they did not write off the modern world “as an age of rampant secularization and religious decline” as did many scholars and intellectuals. Americans did need to reckon with secularization as a corrosive influence upon organized religion. Modernity brought about a “situation that is open-ended and varied, somewhat unpredictable, and certainly one that defies simple and easy generalizations.” They sided with “many commentators”

¹⁸ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972), 1093, 1096.

who had said, “Americans are deeply religious and deeply secular.” The challenge was not in choosing one or the other of these labels, “but in sorting out the intricacies of relations between them.”¹⁹

Increasingly those who looked into the future of American religion posed much of it between two extremes. On one hand, the secular style of Western Europe evidently had and would have more and more counterparts in the United States. On the other hand, the global countertrend toward growth among intense religious expressions also matched some counterparts evident in the United States. If the world was living under a “twofold sign,” the citizens of the United States, with their “religio-secular” blends and trends, should feel right at home.

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