



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

The 2016 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR

Edited by:

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Wharton County Junior College

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March 11-13, 2016

The Year 2016 Proceedings of the ASSR

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion

Presents

*The Year 2016
Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*

Edited by:

Jon K. Loessin

*Dallas, Texas: ASSR
March 11-13, 2016*

President's Note

Welcome once again to the *Proceedings* of Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR). It is again both an honor and privilege to serve as ASSR President and as a co-editor for *The Year 2016 Proceedings of the ASSR*. Year after year, the *Proceedings* are another fine collection of papers and presentations from both our perennial authors and presenters as well as a host of new academic talent who bring with them new styles and topics. As usual, this year's papers are again both scholarly and exceptional.

The quality of these *Proceedings* attests not only to the fine work that has been accomplished by the efforts of many who participate and promote our meetings through research, writing, attending our sessions, and sponsorship through both donations and the purchase of this collection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helps to make the ASSR what it has been, what it is, and what it hopes to become. Joining the ASSR only costs \$10.00 yearly and your support and participation in our yearly sessions and helping to make them successful by writing and presenting papers, chairing sessions, contributing to the *Proceedings*, and attending the presentations of others. It is important for our future that every member of the ASSR not only encourages new membership at every opportunity but solicits scholars throughout the colleges, universities, and organizations at which you reside to become involved in our group through chairing sessions, writing and submitting papers, or holding office.

For the first time this year, ASSR is publishing the *Proceedings* online to save expense and paper! Anyone will be able to access the *Proceedings* and print and bind their own copy. Of course, electronic copies of the *Proceedings* will still be available for purchase.

I hope all of you have a good year and the ASSR will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2016-2017. Be sure to visit us online at: www.assronline.org, complete with online publications of papers from past meetings (see the **Archives** on the site). Hopefully you will share this site with colleagues and students alike. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Jon K. Loessin, 2015-16 ASSR President/Editor

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A New Theory of Everything: The Postmodern Prophets And the Paradox of Freedom

Jon K Loessin
Wharton County Junior College

Since time immemorial, people have yearned for freedom, and then rejoiced whenever they lost it. And that is not all. They actively sought, they made desperate efforts to relinquish it.

--Emile Cioran, *Renuntares la libertate* (1937)

[And 50 years later...]

Tyranny destroys or strengthens the individual; freedom enervates him, until he becomes no more than a puppet. Man has more chance of saving himself by Hell than by paradise.

--Emile Cioran, *Anathemas and Admirations* (1987)

Introduction

This paper is an examination of the concept of freedom (the religious, political, and individual forms) and why open societies possessing broad liberties and individual rights and choices (constitutional or otherwise) eventually evolve and descend into despotism and dystopias. A number of influential predecessors to the postmodern notion that “freedom” is no more than an illusion contribute to the development of this perspective.

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), in his remarkable “Grand Inquisitor” chapter from *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) provides dramatic insight into a futuristic vision of how freedom (especially the notion of “religious freedom”) has no true meaning and is merely an idea (or tool) that can be manipulated by powerful entities (in this case, religious ones) to achieve totalitarian authority—an idea not far removed from Karl Marx (1818-1883) and his notion that God had not created man, men created God to be used to placate and exploit the masses.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) set forth the idea that “free will” is a myth—in his words, “a boorish simplicity, a long folly, owing to our extravagant pride”. Freedom to him is the egoistic, inner-directed “will to be responsible for ourselves” and that which “preserve[s] the distance which separates us from other men....[t]o grow more indifferent to hardship, to severity, to privation, and even to life itself”.

Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo (1856-1912) (along with his Western European contemporary Gustave LeBon [1841-1931] and predecessor Louis de Bonald [1754-1840]) argues the inevitability (and merits) of oligarchy rather than granting freedom to individuals precisely to insure all people the maximum “freedoms” possible in perpetuity, as societies

granting religious and political freedoms and rights of the individual are destined for self-destruction.

Emile Cioran (1911-1995) (in his work *History and Utopia*, among others) provides a critical examination of historical events that he believed were predictive of the future of humanity, many of which may be interpreted not only as prophetic but coming to fruition in the current global condition.

Combining ideas of these natures provides a powerful narrative speaking to the future of faith as well as humanity itself. While figures such as Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Menendez y Pelayo, and Cioran are not postmodernists by perspective, all contributed broadly toward the development of such. This paper will also draw a conclusion that while postmodernism generally rejects grand narratives and overarching theories of society, it is this same broad application of postmodern principles to everything that gives postmodernity the ability to foresee the inevitabilities of future states. To the postmodernist, the evolving future has always been, in a sense, fated—a universally consistent model of predictability of the unpredictable, but one with a conclusion, complete with periodic distractions and deviations from the inevitable which are nothing more than the whims of humanity toward the avoidance of the historical future. In this sense, postmodern analysis (like quantum mechanics) produces the ultimate grand narrative that provides the only irrefutable “theory of everything,” from the singularity, to the present, to the infinite—eternity.

Dostoevsky and the Contradictions of Faith

In 1658, Bishop James Ussher in his *Annals of the World*, dated the time of Creation using Biblical dating as Sunday, October 23, 4004 B.C. Five days later, God created Adam (and presumably Eve) and granted them freedom to "eat from any tree" in the Garden of Eden *except* the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. "Free will" did not serve Eden well, as on Monday, November 10 of the same year (again calculated by Ussher), Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise for having exerted too much “free will” and disobeying God’s dictum. According to this account of history, in a mere *nineteen days* of “free will”, this God-given human freedom resulted in sin being introduced into the world forever.

Fyodor Dostoevsky writing in *The Brothers Karamazov*, recognized this Biblical parable turned paradox:

The world says: "You have needs--satisfy them. You have as much right as the rich and the mighty. Don't hesitate to satisfy your needs; indeed, expand your needs and demand more." This is the worldly doctrine of today. And they believe that this is freedom. The result for the rich is isolation and suicide, for the poor, envy and murder.

Dostoevsky’s vision concerning both faith and freedom is best expressed in what some have considered the greatest chapter (*Chapter 5: The Grand Inquisitor*) in the greatest novel of all time (*The Brothers Karamazov*). When Jesus is tempted by Satan to turn stones into loaves of bread with the promise that people will follow the miracle worker like sheep and forever and happily submit to become His slaves, Jesus refuses. The second

temptation involves throwing Himself from the temple roof in Jerusalem where armies of angels will save him from a certain death, creating an aura of mystery that will enthrall people to eternal devotion. Jesus again refuses. The third temptation by Satan is the promise of worldly authority being ceded to Jesus in exchange for His allegiance. Again, Jesus refuses. In refusing Satan's temptation, Jesus denies the three forces that might be used to gain the submission of all people: *miracle, mystery, and authority*.

In the 16th century, during the time of the Inquisition, Jesus appears and is immediately recognized by the people who weep with joy and throw flowers at His feet. The imminent cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor sees what is transpiring and immediately silences the crowd with the power and fear he commands. He has Jesus arrested and taken to prison, promising to burn Him at the stake, and asking Him in time, "Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us?" Jesus says nothing.

The Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus that He was responsible for bringing freedom into the world (a freedom the Inquisitor had never personally been able to realize) and that for 1500 years, with which Christians have been struggling. With the imprisonment of Jesus, the Inquisitor declares freedom vanquished and it has been done precisely to provide for the *happiness* of humankind.

The Inquisitor declares:

I repeat to Thee, man has no greater anxiety in life than to find some one to whom he can make over that gift of freedom with which the unfortunate creature is born... Liberty, Freedom of Thought and Conscience, and Science will lead them into such impassable chasms, place them face to face before such wonders and insoluble mysteries, that some of them--more rebellious and ferocious than the rest--will destroy themselves; others--rebellious but weak--will destroy each other; while the remainder, weak, helpless and miserable, will crawl back to our feet and cry: "Yes; right were ye, oh Fathers of Jesus; ye alone are in possession of His mystery, and we return to you, praying that ye save us from ourselves!... Yes; we will make them work like slaves, but during their recreation hours they shall have an innocent child-like life, full of play and merry laughter. We will even permit them sin, for, weak and helpless, they will feel the more love for us for permitting them to indulge in it. We will tell them that every kind of sin will be remitted to them, so long as it is done with our permission...and they will submit most joyfully to us the most agonizing secrets of their souls--all, all will they lay down at our feet, and we will authorize and remit them all in Thy name, and they will believe us and accept our mediation with rapture, as it will deliver them from their greatest anxiety and torture--that of having to decide freely for themselves. And all will be happy...

The Inquisitor has accepted the temptations of Satan (those that Jesus refused) not for ill or selfish reasons but as an act of love for humanity. It is preferable to create an illusion of happiness for the masses than to condemn them to a life of freedom and misery. The holy leaders know the truth and have sacrificed their souls for all. The greatest

happiness for the greatest number is what matters and the Inquisitor must sacrifice his soul to Satan for his utilitarian vision—a crucifixion of sorts that rivals that of Christ which is why the Inquisitor declares Jesus must be burned at the stake the next morning—to save humankind from itself. Though he eventually frees Christ, the Inquisitor has sworn to provide freedom to all precisely by seizing freedom from all.

Nietzsche and the Myth of Free Will

In Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, he concludes that the concept of free will (or freedom) cannot exist. Humans do not have control over many of our own actions as our decisions and lot in life are determined by others and the plethora of social forces that exert influence and affect our choices and decisions. As a result we cannot be termed so-called "free agents" (or actors).

Another argument Nietzsche makes denying the existence of freedom is the possibility that *fate* is the master of all things (as both the ancient Greeks and later evolutionists surmised). If fate (or nature) determines everything, no one is free.

A final exercise Nietzsche offers concerning the concept of *free will* come in the form of a rhetorical question: "Does a Christian want to sin?" He concludes that no true Christian would *want* to commit a sin and therefore was never free to do whatever was wished from the beginning. In the case of Adam and Eve, for example, they were originally forbidden from eating the fruit in the Garden (which denied them that freedom) and though they were granted "free will," a paradox was thus created between being free but restricted (echoing shades of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's [1712-1788] declaration in *The Social Contract* [1762] that "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One man thinks of himself as the master of others, but remains more of a slave than they are.")

Nietzsche does offer a definition of freedom, however. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he claims that, "Freedom is the will to be responsible for ourselves. It is to preserve the distance which separates us from other men. To grow more indifferent to hardship, to severity, to privation, and even to life itself."

On the other hand, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he seems to conclude that *freedom* is a myth, manifesting itself as a romantic inclination to achieve the impossible but one with a specific function:

The desire for "freedom of will" in the superlative, metaphysical sense, such as still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated, the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society therefrom... daring, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.

Bonald, Menendez y Pelayo, LeBon and the Freedom to Submit

A different view on the paradox of freedom comes from the orthodox Catholic, counterrevolutionary perspectives of Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo and his predecessors and contemporaries in Spain and France in the latter part of the 19th century. These figures

viewed Reason, Reformation, Revolution, and Enlightenment with contempt and longed for a return to a prior Golden Age of king, Church, and feudal hierarchy which in its day had offered people the maximum freedoms they would ever achieve—the freedom to submit to hierarchy and authority. (This view is not altogether unlike that of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor but lacks the sinister and calculated elements of a conspiratorial Catholic plot to kill Jesus and enslave the masses by allowing them to behave like children to win their adoration while fulfilling their hedonistic desires toward happiness.) Menendez y Pelayo's view was instead pious and reasoned.

Earlier counterrevolutionary thinkers like Louis de Bonald (who had concluded that humankind was far worse off in the new industrial age than prior to it) argued that the agrarian family could feed and nourish itself and was not dependent on others for its continued well-being and existence, while industrialization isolated and exploited individuals and made them dependent on factory owners and market vicissitudes. Agrarianism had preserved family unity while industrialization fractured the most basic of social institutions. The pre-bourgeois era therefore offered much greater freedom to individuals, far less temptation for material desires, and far less dependence on others. Industry, he argued, introduced a new artificial, and thus, un-Godly method of providing for human needs and pleasures...and while a perceived *happiness* and so-called *higher standard of living* might result, the price is sacrifice—of one's dignity, faith, and the freedom to submit to righteousness.

Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo, Spanish literary critic and historian touted golden age *conservatism* as the only logical alternative to *classical liberalism*. Rather than the new progressive ideas of individual rights and liberties, Menendez y Pelayo shunned the idea of a forward-looking future for humanity for the certainty of a rearward-admiring ideology that had, to him, demonstrated that feudalism, monarchy, and Catholic authoritarianism had produced a golden age of Spanish dominance--politically, economically, and culturally. It was the collective sacrifice and selfless denial of independent assertion of all citizens that had unified and made Spain a great power and could certainly do so again. The great works of literature (like Cervantes' *Don Quixote* [1605/1615]) and art (like the paintings of el Greco) were produced during the pre-Enlightenment era and those seeking to expand human individual freedoms were eroding the doctrines of greatness and power. Freedom and power were actually contradictory elements, for individual freedoms isolate and divide humanity into small controllable entities whereby collective spirit and submission to authority unified a culture and produced a nationalistic *espíritu de la época*.

Gustave LeBon, best known for his classical psychological work on collective behavior, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895), was convinced that *reason* was too new a concept for humanity and too imperfect to reveal all the laws of the unconscious. A leading theorist of irrationalism, LeBon stressed instinct and intuition as the primary driving forces of behavior, explaining the too-often observed conflicts between human nature and rational action. The phenomenon of collective behavior indicates the willingness of ordinary people to sacrifice their individuality and submit to the will of the collective. LeBon's theories explain the power of charismatic authority (and the so-called "cults of personality") and the behavior of mobs, in his words, where "the individual mind becomes the collective mind." Freedom is thus willfully and voluntarily sacrificed to the collective

regularly and demonstrates how unnecessary it truly is as a human right, as the responsibility of possessing freedom is simply too burdensome to be entrusted to the masses. In short, freedom ultimately enslaves and causes human misery.

Cioran and the Price of Freedom--Tyranny

The paradox of freedom is probably nowhere better expressed in contemporary Western thought than through the Romanian-turned-French philosopher of despair, Emile Cioran. In his work, *History and Utopia*, Cioran builds a poignant argument that *liberty* is a virus that infects society and gives rise to the very tyranny that *freedom* has displaced or avoided in the first place. And why would it not always have this *splendid ending*? Every human being has a quest for power and control, and such becomes an admired quality in the self as well as the charismatic others. The admiration of tyrants (and other populist political figures) is proof positive that human nature is geared toward individual and collective submission. Some of Cioran's best commentaries regarding these ideas are best left unedited. Here are some examples:

A marvel that has nothing to offer, democracy is at once a nation's paradise and its tomb.

Every political experiment, however "advanced," is performed at the people's expense, is carried out against the people; the people bear the stigmata of slavery by divine or diabolic decree.

No head of state, no conqueror fails to scorn the people; but the people accept this scorn and live on it. Were they to cease being victimized, were they to disappoint their destiny, society would collapse, and with it history itself.

He who aspires to total freedom achieves it only to return to his point of departure, to his initial servitude.

Tragic paradox of freedom: the mediocre men who alone make its exercise possible cannot guarantee its duration. We owe everything to their insignificance, and we lose everything by it.

This is so because tyranny is just what one can develop a taste for, since it so happens that man prefers to wallow in fear rather than face the anguish of being himself.

Therefore, freedom to Cioran involves, in his words, "the dual possibility of saving or destroying us." When humans feel free, opportunities are envisioned--but so too are the dangers of being alone and isolated in a world like a sheep without its shepherd protecting it from the wolves. The idea of freedom is not only a daunting one—it is realistically an

impossible proposition with no chance of success but one that delivers a tiny dividend of romantic inclination—called hope—which explains why (again in Cioran’s words), “this world is no more than a mediocre slaughterhouse and a fictive paradise.” He concludes thus, that freedom is nothing more than an “*ethical* principle of *demonic* essence.”

Conclusion

The definitive postmodernist summation on the paradox of freedom should also come from Cioran, who wrote:

What we want is not freedom but its appearances. It is for these simulacra that man has always striven. And since freedom, as has been said, is no more than a sensation, what difference is there between being free and believing ourselves free?

Perhaps the old adage that states, "The truth shall set you free" is correct in a sense—Adam and Eve were originally "freed" from Paradise when they defied God's order and ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, demonstrating indeed that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing". Or as Herman Melville wrote in *Moby Dick*, "If the truth shall set you free, then it is a difficult freedom." Such is the paradoxical concept of freedom. Without substantive truth, there can be no freedom, and with the truth, freedom is a difficult albeit impossible journey. To the postmodernist, as there is no truth, freedom is (and has never been) more than the illusion it was originally designed to be—but designed by whom?

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Spiritualism Revisited: A Research Study on the Status of Spiritualist Camps throughout the United States

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Introduction

The concept of evangelizing and spreading the gospel by means of a “camp meeting” became widespread around the United States in the early 19th century as a way to bring “religion” to those living rurally on the frontier. As the United States grew, both demographically and geographically, camp meetings quickly gained favor amongst established religions as a way to minister directly to a larger number of souls in the shortest amount of time. Camp meetings grew out of the religious tradition of “revivals” which gained in popularity during the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830)—an evangelical movement that was largely advanced by the Protestant religions of Methodism, Baptism, and Presbyterianism. The Western frontier offered much opportunity economically to early settlers, but it often meant people lived a life isolated from the civilized world. The Methodists were the first to create a system of “circuit riding”¹ that enabled people to have some sort of religious life, if even fleetingly, when the circuit riding minister would visit their cabin on his normal rounds.

Circuit riders had to be young, in good health, and single (since marriage and a family forced preachers to settle in one area and leave the traveling ministry). Unlike their counterparts in other denominations, Methodist circuit riders did not have to have formal education. Leaders of the new church wanted educated, trained circuit riders, but they wanted even more to spread their ministry to people on the frontier who needed Christian guidance. (Jordan, 1998)

Formal church buildings were quite scarce in the frontier regions with only larger cities with thriving communities being able to establish such churches. In order to combat this deficiency in the rural-religious “churchdom” of the wilderness, gradually a trend developed that incorporated the use of a large tent or crude structure which served as the center of a unique form of worship known as the “camp meeting.” Usually held in a central location, camp meetings allowed adherents from miles around to congregate and worship together. This changed the fabric of the American religious landscape profoundly. Suddenly people had an opportunity to attend one of these meetings that not only offered them good, old-

¹ It was the first Methodist Bishop in America, Reverend Francis Asbury, who came up with a solution to the perennial problem of getting ministers to the people who were scattered far and wide around the vast frontier. Reverend Asbury personally had travelled hundreds of thousands of miles ministering to people so naturally he developed the system called “circuit riding” where he dispatched men (whom he had ordained) to a predetermined circuit or territory. Often times it took weeks for a minister to make it to all the cabins in his assigned region, but along the way he would do the things that an ordained minister had to do: offer Christian burials to those who died, perform the sacrament of marriage to those who wanted to be married, baptize any recent converts, conduct services, and preach the gospel to families who were socially isolated from having any contact or opportunity to have any religious instruction. (Fleet, 1987)

fashioned Bible-thumping religion, but also a chance to socialize with others. These revival-like meetings were often emotionally charged affairs with sentimental appeals to God to be saved, resulting in the congregants flailing themselves around and to the ground as if possessed, asking for forgiveness with the promise of living a righteous life from that day forward.² Tens of thousands of people would attend these meetings over the period of weeks, with attendees staying anywhere from a few days to a week or more. Dozens of preachers would be moving about the throngs of people gathered, preaching and offering salvation to all those willing souls. (Fleet, 1987)



[Illustration 1: Watercolor by J. Maze Burbank, circa 1839; public domain]

Not far off women were already beginning to find their places on the rude plank seats in front of the “stage.” They were leaving vacant a few seats in front. Those were the “anxious benches.” Here the “convicted” [those whom God had chosen for conversion] would come to be prayed for when the preacher issued the invitation for “mourners.” The only covering over the arbor sheltered the pulpit. On the stage was a knot of men solemnly shaking hands and conversing. On all sides of the arbor, row after row of vehicles [horse drawn wagons] crowded one another. Men were standing everywhere. The music struck up, quavering; mostly female voices singing two lines at a time as the deacon read them off. After another hymn, a preacher arose and the men came filing in, taking their seats on the opposite side of the arbor if the women had not filled them all; or crowding into the aisles and back of the seats occupied by their women folk. The minister, an ordinary looking man, dragged out an ordinary address while whispered conversations hummed louder and louder. Infants wailed fretfully. A dog fight started somewhere among the wagons.

² See Illustration 1.

At length the evangelist arose. At once the congregation was electrified. "And what come ye out into the wilderness for to see?" he asked, fixing his eyes upon the congregation. His voice rose powerfully, "Ayr! Ye are come as a holiday pageant, bedecked in tinsel and costly raiment. I see before me the pride of beauty and youth; the middle-aged...the hoary hairs and decrepit limbs of age; —all trampling—hustling each other in your haste—on the beaten road—the way to death and judgment! Oh! Fools and blind! Slow-worms, battenning upon the damps and filth of this vile earth! Hugging your muck rakes while the Glorious One proffers you the Crown of Life!" Women were in tears. "That's preaching!" shouted a gray-haired man. "Lord have mercy!" another besought. (Johnson, 392)

It was from this tradition of Methodist-based camp meetings that the Spiritualist movement borrowed the basic concepts, and adopted certain components, to create its own version of a mass gathering of the faithful in order to experience and share in the belief system. A major and key difference, however, involved the giving of messages from the departed to the living. A Spiritualist camp meeting basically functioned in a similar fashion, but instead of fire and brimstone sermons, people were regaled with short lectures (often based on scripture) and a "message service" where mediums would stand on a raised platform in order to give to those in attendance mediumistic messages from friends and loved ones in Spirit.

The Beginnings of the Spiritualist Movement in the United States³

In order to understand more concretely how the Spiritualist movement began which eventually led to the adaptation of camp meeting-style services, it is important to revisit briefly its colorful history and unique beginnings. March 31, 2016 marks the 168th anniversary of the advent of the American-made religion of Modern Spiritualism.⁴ More than a date on a calendar, it is a surprising testimonial of endurance and perseverance for a movement that seemingly began as an accident with quite humble, if not obscure, beginnings. It was on March 31, 1848, when two young sisters—Katie and Maggie Fox—began to receive intelligent responses from an unknown entity that had been vexing the Fox family since moving into their new home. The modest, two-story cottage⁵ in Hydesville, New

³ Some of the information contained in this section has been adapted, in part, from an earlier paper entitled "Women of Substance: The Fox Sisters—Influential Voices of the Spiritualist Movement in 19th Century America" (pp.81-85).

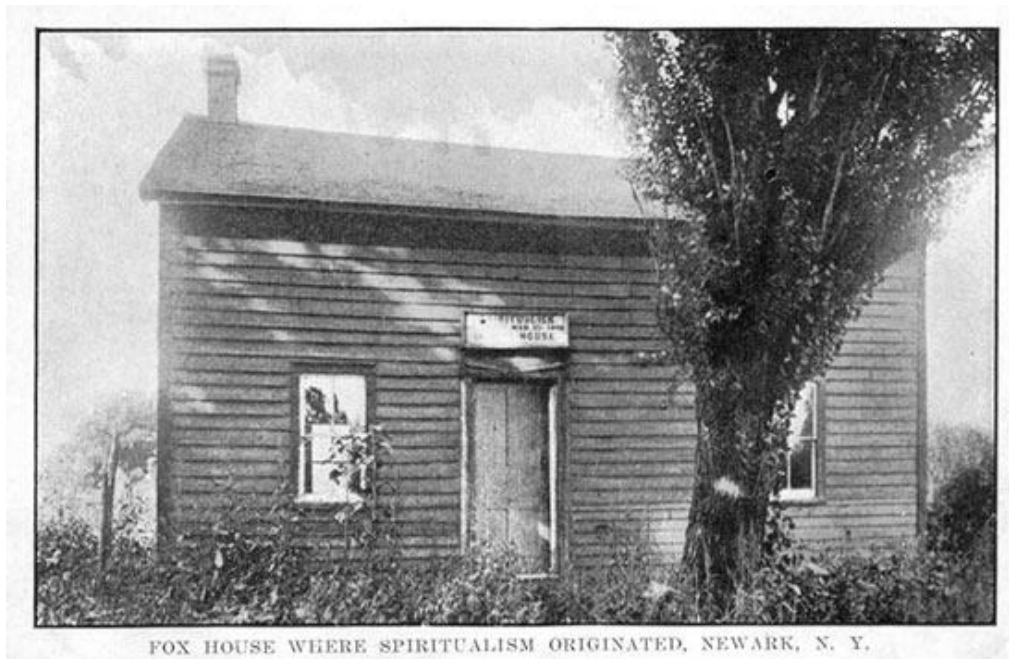
⁴ The date of March 31st was adopted as the official anniversary of the advent of Modern Spiritualism in 1870 at the national convention for Spiritualism in the form of a resolution which read: "Whereas Spiritualism has become a power in the land and may be deemed the great growing religious idea of the country; and, It is well to revert to the time of small beginnings and hold in remembrance the first pioneers in this Spiritual movement; therefore, 'Resolved, that this convention recommend to all State conventions and local societies to make the time of the appearance of the Hydesville rappings an anniversary day, the services of that day to be conducted in each locality as may be deemed most practical.'" (History of Spiritualism", *National Spiritualist Association of Churches Official Website*, retrieved on January 7, 2016.) Hence, March 31st is generally accepted as the anniversary of the movement which eventually became the religion, philosophy and science of Spiritualism.

⁵ The original cottage no longer exists. The original foundation in Hydesville, New York (now called Newark, New York) is now a shrine dedicated to the birthplace of Modern Spiritualism called "Hydesville Memorial Park." It consists of an outer building featuring large windows to view the stones that made up the cottage's original foundation. In 1915 the cottage was moved from Wayne County (in upstate New York) to Lily Dale (the headquarters for the *National Spiritualist Association of*

York had been plagued by a series of rappings that were especially noticeable at night, causing the family to become quite fatigued and weary from a lack of sleep. (Goldsmith, 28) It was on this night, however, the eve of “April Fool’s Day,” that the girls decided to test the disincarnate spirit by commanding the entity to mimic their actions.

Ostensibly, with a bit of effort and ingenuity, Katie and Maggie conversed with the entity by developing a simple code using handclapping that corresponded to “yes” and “no” questions and numbers.

Together, Mrs. Fox and her daughters began to ask questions. Mrs. Fox first asked the mystery rapper to count to ten—it did. She then asked the spirit to reveal the ages of her daughters—it gave a rap for each of the girl’s age correctly. She asked if it was a human being making these rapping noises—there was no answer. She then asked it to make two raps if it was a spirit—it did. She continued by asking if the spirit had been injured in their home—this question followed with two raps. (Leonard, 27)



FOX HOUSE WHERE SPIRITUALISM ORIGINATED, NEWARK, N. Y.

[Illustration 2: Original Fox Cottage, Hydesville, New York; public domain.]

Affectionately, the two sisters began calling the unknown spirit “Mr. Split-foot.”⁶ (Melton, 94) Not nearly as enamored with this unwanted visitor as her daughters, an alarmed Mrs. Margaret Fox asked her husband to come witness what was transpiring. The always pragmatic and rational Mr. John Fox initially felt that a simple explanation would solve the mystery, but after being taunted by the raps that seemed to originate in all corners of the room, the ceiling, and from the floor, he, too, was bewildered and stumped to find any logical reason for the rappings.

Churches (NSAC)) where it remained for nearly forty years until it burned down under suspicious circumstances on September 21, 1955. [See Illustrations 2-4.]

⁶ This nickname most likely is in reference to the Devil, as Satan is often depicted as a creature with “hoofed” or “split” feet. This was a common Victorian reference to the Devil during this time period.

Determined to get to the bottom of the supernatural conundrum plaguing her family, Mrs. Fox then summoned friends and neighbors to enter their home to serve as witnesses to the otherworldly occurrence that had all of them not only nervous wrecks, but bewitched by what it could mean. With the help of their concerned neighbors, the Foxes eventually developed a code that matched the number of raps to letters in the alphabet. Albeit time-consuming, they were able to discern that the spirit's name was Charles B. Rosna and that he had been murdered in that house some years previously and his remains were buried in the cellar.⁷ (Jackson, 4)



[Illustration 3: Hydesville Memorial Park, Newark, New York; photo taken June 2015.]

Several far-reaching features emerged from those initial rappings: 1) it was proven that communication that was intelligible could be made with spirits; 2) certain people, like the Fox sisters, were naturally gifted with the ability to make this communication; and 3) communication could be facilitated by means of a code. The events on this night started a movement of the likes the world had never seen before. Soon, people from all over were flocking to the Fox cottage to witness this supernatural phenomenon. The birth of [modern] psychic mediumship, and some time later, the religion known as Spiritualism, had begun. (Leonard, 28)

Literally overnight, word of the "Hydesville Rappings" spread far and wide, with the news eventually reaching Katie and Maggie's older sister, Mrs. Leah Fish, in Rochester, New York in May of 1848. She immediately returned to Hydesville upon learning about the manifestations in her parents' home. Leah was very quick to appreciate that the story and the surrounding publicity it generated had great potential for profit. In short order, Leah turned her sisters' abilities to talk with the dead into a stage act. She soon became the

⁷ It was purported, and subsequently became a part of historical record, that when the Fox cottage's cellar was eventually excavated, indeed human teeth, hair, and bones were discovered there. It was not until some fifty-six years later, however, that the further discovery of a complete human skeleton was found in the cellar of the cottage that seemed to prove the story of a peddler being murdered in the house. These collaborating facts were reported in the *Boston Journal* (a non-Spiritualistic newspaper) on November 23, 1904. (Doyle, 73; Stuart, 17)

raison d'être for what would become a new religious movement, managing the girls rigidly, forcing them to give non-stop readings, requiring them to hold public demonstrations, and, of course, pressuring them to lead séances. Mrs. Fish soon realized that she, too, had the “gift” and was quite anxious to get in on the act.

Before long, after news of the Fox sisters’ mediumship ability became well-known, a number of “intuitives” began to claim similar abilities. In a few short years, millions of people claimed to be adherents of the new religion of Spiritualism.

...in 1854, the New England Spiritualists Association estimated the number of spiritualists⁸ in the United States as 2 million, and the *North American Review* gave its opinion that that figure was reasonable. *The Spiritual Register*, a popular annual serial compiled by spiritualists, estimated the number of spiritualists in 1860 as 1,600,000 but suggested that the number of nominal believers was 5 million.⁹ (Buescher, x)



[Illustration 4: Original foundation of the Fox Cottage; photo taken June 2015.]

Spiritualism, unlike most religions that have a prescribed belief system to which their followers adhere and practice faithfully, was more experiential in that one was regarded as a Spiritualist “simply by trying the spirits and being encouraged by the results.” (Buescher, xi)

⁸ Some authors and researchers denote Spiritualism and Spiritualists in the lower-case. As a religion, however, similar to Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, it is the opinion of this researcher that these terms should be capitalized; even denominations within a religion (*i.e.* Christianity—such as Presbyterian, Baptist or Episcopalian) consistently regard these as proper nouns and are hence capitalized. For the purposes of this study, unless directly quoted from another source, the words Spiritualism and Spiritualist will be capitalized.

⁹ The term “nominal believers” refers to those who may have not fully embraced Spiritualism as a religion, but were quite happy to attend Spiritualist camp meetings, séances, and to receive readings from Spiritualist mediums. Historically, it has been difficult to ascertain an exact number of adherents to Spiritualism at any given time because many people throughout its history have publicly embraced a more mainstream, traditional religion, but practiced Spiritualism as a secondary religion (often secretly) due to the turmoil association to Spiritualism would cause them personally from family, friends, and the community. This bias is still true today among many Spiritualists.

Of course, Spiritualism (as a religion) offered an alternative to the stodgy belief systems that were prevalent at the time. In particular, it advocated the redemption of all souls (no matter how sinful the person was in life); the negation of heaven and hell as locations (maintaining that they are merely conditions, and both can be earthbound); the denial of original sin (children have enough opportunity in life to stray from a moral path, without being tainted from the moment they are born due to the actions of Adam and Eve); the rejection of the belief in vicarious atonement (preferring to believe that each person has a personal responsibility to atone for sins committed, rather than depending upon salvation through the death on the cross of Jesus); the belief that Jesus, The Christ, was a gifted healer, teacher and psychic (but was no more divine or the son of God than any other avatar or living person); the interpretation of the Resurrection of Jesus as being in spirit-form (and not of the physical body); and the belief that women are as capable of doing God's work as men.

In a relatively short amount of time, then, the Spiritualist movement began to attract a large number of adherents and without proper churches or gathering places in those early years, the idea of "camp meetings" took hold and groups of like-minded people began to gather to share Spiritualist ideas and to allow mediums an opportunity to meet and give messages to a larger number of people at one time.

The first 50-year cycle continued bearing the weight of establishing a strong foundation for the new movement. Mediumship as displayed by the Fox Sisters became popular throughout the country. The leaders of the day recognized Spiritualism as a philosophy that could change the world. In fact, it was taken to England just four years after its inception. From there, its journey around the world began. Meanwhile, meetings were held in halls in many major cities of the northeastern United States. The philosophers drew large crowds who listened to their oratories. Soon, they could no longer find halls large enough to house the crowds. The answer to the dilemma was to begin open-air grove meetings. (2 Awtry, p. 7)

[The ex-Methodists] suggested to the Spiritualists that it would be a way to serve the multitude that steadily increased in number. The leadership of Spiritualism [initially] looked at this grove meeting idea with deep suspicion. After much thought, they decided to implement it as an all day camp meeting. They expounded on how this new camp meeting should be different than the old Methodist grove meetings. Apart from the séance or picnics, it was based loosely on the lyceum movement. At first the speakers were quite comfortable with the Bible preaching. They treated Spiritualism as a kind of purified Christianity. At this time, the Spiritualists were religionist, liberals, and rationalists. This camp meeting style gave birth to the first Spiritualist Camp at Pierpont Grove, Malden, Massachusetts, in 1866; named after John Pierpont. In 1870, another camp was founded at Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts. Soon camps began to sprout up throughout New England, New York, Wisconsin, Iowa, Florida and westward to the Pacific coast. (2 Awtry, pp. 23-24)¹⁰

Initially, many camp meetings were held on the land of people sympathetic to the movement who offered the use of their property. The widespread popularity of these camp meetings

¹⁰ Three of the earliest Spiritualist camps in the United States were established in Maine: Camp Etna (1876), Madison Camp (1879), and Temple Heights Spiritualist Association (1882).

eventually necessitated the purchase of land to construct a permanent campground for Spiritualists to use during high season (June through September, usually). As these camps began to take shape around the nation, associations were formed that allowed attendees to become members.

In the very beginning, canvas tents were used at these camp meetings by the mediums and attendees; hay for horses had to be brought by the people as well as firewood to cook. (Harrison, et al. p. 19) As these gatherings became more and more popular, actual land needed to be purchased in order to accommodate the thousands of people who came from far and wide to attend a Spiritualist camp meeting. Mediums sometimes made a wooden floor in their tents to make it sturdier, which eventually led to walls being added, making the structure a rustic shack. Gradually, these crude dwellings became more permanent and the shanty was born which allowed mediums a more permanent place to hold séances and to live during the camp season.

In the ensuing years after the first Spiritualist camp was founded, dozens and dozens of Spiritualist camps sprang up all over the United States. Largely summer gatherings, these camps maintained a vibrant following and were quite active—especially during and after major wars—throughout the twentieth century. A number of these grew to a size where they became year-round camps, sponsoring churches and services throughout the calendar year with many activities and events organized for members and regular attendees. Today, there are roughly only 20 camps around the United States (with a number of these inactive as of the writing of this paper). [See Appendix 1 for a listing of active Spiritualist camps in the US.]

During the summer of 2015, I traveled all over the United States visiting Spiritualist camps in order to survey the status of the religion and physical conditions of many of the remaining camps in order to obtain a clearer idea of how they have fared over the past 100-plus years. The Spiritualist camps highlighted in this paper include: Lily Dale Assembly (New York), Camp Chesterfield (Indiana), Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp (Florida), Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association (California), Western Wisconsin Camp Association (Wisconsin), Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association (Iowa), Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp (Illinois), and Wooley Park Ashley Spiritualist Camp (Ohio).

A Review of Spiritualist Camps Today

Lily Dale Assembly: Founded in 1879

Located in southwestern New York State, Lily Dale Assembly was first founded in 1879. Originally it was called “Cassadaga Lake Free Association” where Spiritualists and free-thinkers met to discuss topics and issues of the day. In 1903 the camp’s name was changed to “City of Light,” and in 1906 it was changed yet again to “Lily Dale Assembly” which is what it is called today. Locals and residents affectionately refer to Lily Dale simply as “The Dale.”

Although it is a year-round camp where a goodly number of residents reside all year, and where events are held throughout the year, its primary season begins in June and ends in September. Tens of thousands of visitors come through the gates each year to learn about Spiritualism, attend church, message, and/or healing services, and to receive private readings from the certified mediums which reside on the grounds. There are approximately 160 cottages/homes on the grounds. Lily Dale also features a full-service hotel called the “Maplewood Hotel,” as well as a number of privately owned guesthouses where visitors can stay. Just outside the main gate is another Lily Dale hotel where visitors and guests stay called “The Leolyn.”



The front gate and sign to Lily Dale Assembly



Maplewood Hotel

The Lily Dale Auditorium is at the center of the grounds and this is where church services, message services—any large gathering consisting of hundreds of people—are conducted. The “Lakeside Assembly Hall” is smaller but also doubles as a meeting or workshop venue and it has guest rooms on the second floor for invited speakers and guests. There is a “Healing Temple” that is enclosed where people may attend regularly scheduled healing services, and the “Forest Temple,” which has a covered platform-area for the clergy and mediums to use, but the attendees sit in the open air below large trees that offer shade. There is a fully functioning library called the “Marion H. Skidmore Library,” as well as a museum that houses art, artifacts and documents about Spiritualism and Lily Dale. There is a volunteer fire department and US Post Office on the grounds, in addition to several eating establishments, bookstores and gift shops. The *National Spiritualist Association of Churches* (NSAC) has its national headquarters on the grounds of Lily Dale. The “Andrew Jackson Davis Lyceum” building is used to teach classes and workshops and is located on

the edge of the grounds next to a camping area for visitors who wish to stay in campers or tents.



Historical cottages on “Cottage Row”

Lily Dale is by far the largest Spiritualist camp in active use today (followed by Camp Chesterfield in Indiana) and it is the best maintained. With the exception of a few residences that are in need of preservation, the majority of structures are well-kept and in good condition. The grounds have a number of displays where visitors may sit to enjoy the surroundings, as well as having a lovely beach with a dock that overlooks Lake Cassadaga. “Inspiration Stump” can be accessed by walking deep into an old-growth forest, past a quaint “Pet Cemetery”; a number of wooden benches capable of seating several hundred people are arranged around an historic stump where mediums stand to give messages to those in attendance.¹¹

Camp Chesterfield: Founded in 1891

The *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* (IAOS), the parent association of Camp Chesterfield, was founded in 1886. The grounds where Camp Chesterfield is located in Chesterfield, Indiana were first used in 1890 for a camp meeting/picnic, but were officially purchased to be made into a Spiritualist camp in 1891.

Today, Camp Chesterfield is a thriving Spiritualist community that supports a number of buildings that are historically significant. Upon entering its gates, the visitor to Camp Chesterfield is greeted by a nostalgic old hotel called “The Sunflower.” Currently not in use, the non-profit organization, *Friends of Camp Chesterfield Foundation* (FCCF) plans to raise funds in order to restore it to its original beauty. Another hotel on the grounds, The Western, built in the style of a 1940s roadhouse, is unique because of its authentic exterior and charming interior. This hotel is actively used throughout the spring, summer, and autumn seasons. Both of these historic hotels offer the visitor an opportunity to go back in time, imagining how guests would sit idly on the shaded porches, chatting to one another about the messages they received from their loved ones. There are approximately 52 cottages

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for a map of Lily Dale.

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and homes where mediums live on the grounds. About half of the mediums use the homes as their primary residences and live on grounds year-round. The camp season is from June through October with workshops offered weekly throughout the season. Special events, activities, as well as weekly message, healing and church services are offered throughout the year.



The front gate and sign to the entrance of Historic Camp Chesterfield



The Western Hotel

The IAOS has a seminary program where students study and develop their mediumship formally for certification; a healing certification program; and an ordination program for aspiring ministers. The School of Metaphysics, an offshoot of the seminary program, offers students classes and certificates of achievement upon completion.

Thanks to the work and dedication of a longtime secretary of the association, Mabel Riffle (secretary from 1909-1961), Camp Chesterfield boasts a stone cathedral, a quaint chapel in the woods, a library, and a museum with an extensive collection of Spiritualist

artifacts including locks of hair from the original Fox Sisters. As well, a number of “spirit” portraits done by the nationally acclaimed “Bangs Sisters” are featured in exhibits throughout the museum. The portraits were precipitated by spirit during church services led by the sisters, revealing the likenesses of attendees’ loved ones.



Native American Memorial, Totem Pole, Christian Cross, Stone Pyramid

The grounds also offer visitors a full-service cafeteria and a well-stocked bookstore. Camp Chesterfield is listed in the National Park Service’s “National Register of Historic Places,” firmly cementing it as a unique, historical and cultural asset for the State of Indiana. Visitors to Camp Chesterfield can stroll through its meticulously maintained grounds, enjoying abundant nature and unique spiritual displays like the “Trail of Religions”,¹² “The Garden of Prayer”,¹³ The “Toadstools”,¹⁴ “Mother Mary”, “Native American Memorial”, “Totem Pole”, “Christian Cross”, “Stone Pyramid” and a “Memory Garden” (which features a fountain and graveyard for Camp Chesterfield members, mediums and residents). The grounds have an energy that is welcoming, allowing visitors from a variety of religious traditions to find a peace and quiet that is rare in the modern world. [See Appendix 3]

¹² The “Trail of Religions” is a religious display that features Indiana limestone busts of leaders and founders from the world’s great religions. Arranged in a semi-circle, with the eyes of all the busts looking forward toward a bust of Jesus, the display is carved into the side of a hill that has brick flooring to allow visitors to get close to see each bust individually.

¹³ The “Garden of Prayer” consists of two rooms and is constructed into the side of a hill; made out of river rock and mortar, it is designed in the style of a European grotto. There are two large statues of Jesus, one in each room, with benches for visitors to sit to prayer and/or meditate. It also has a stained glass window featuring a “Star of David” motif.

¹⁴ The “Toadstools” are a unique folk display that originally served an important role in the early years of the camp. This display consists of more than a dozen small round tables with single benches (one on each side) that allowed mediums to give messages to visitors in the summer as they are located outdoors. Made from Indiana limestone, these were carved by stone masons and arranged under large shade trees as an early version of a “psychic fair.”

Cassadaga Lake Free Association: Founded in 1895

The *Cassadaga Lake Free Association* was incorporated as a non-profit stockholder corporation on December 18, 1894 and 35 acres of land was deeded to the association in 1895. In 1897, a 400 seat auditorium was dedicated. By 1902, an additional 20 acres had been added giving the camp 55 acres in total (1 Awtry, 55, 61) and in the same year Brigham Hall was constructed, which still stands today. Colby Temple was constructed in 1923 and it still offers message and church services to visitors. Originally developed to be a sister camp to the then Cassadaga Free Assembly (now Lily Dale). Many of the mediums used the Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp as a place to winter during the harsh upstate New York winters.



Sign at the entrance into the area where Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp is located



Colby Memorial Temple

Unlike most Spiritualist camps that are completely self-contained in a gated area, Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp is spread out with the association's buildings and mediums'

homes intermixed with non-Spiritualist residents and businesses. There is a general area that comprises much of the camp facilities, but not all buildings and homes are a part of the actual Cassadaga Lake Free Association. Today, the camp boasts a meeting hall called the “Andrew Jackson Davis Building” that includes a kitchen for dinners, as well as a large meeting hall, and a fully-stocked bookstore that includes gifts and jewelry, a healing center, and the “Colby Memorial Temple”—which is the heart of Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp and it is where many events, activities, and services take place on a regular basis.

The camp itself is quaint and inviting. Strolling along the streets, lined with vintage buildings and cottages, shaded by palm trees, offers the visitor a glimpse into the past. A crowning piece of architecture is the Cassadaga Hotel (which is now privately owned and not a part of the actual association). It is on the site of a much older hotel that was built in 1903 based on the design of the Maplewood Hotel at Lily Dale, but was sadly destroyed by fire in 1926. The rebuilt hotel is a Mediterranean-style, two-story stucco design that resembles a time when elegance and class reigned supreme in such establishments. The lobby is preserved nicely with many vintage details and it has a large restaurant/bar area on the first floor where visitors can enjoy gourmet food prepared by an actual chef and be entertained with live music.



The Cassadaga Hotel

Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association: Founded in 1896

“The Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association is located on 13 acres in a beautiful oak tree grove a few miles west of Escondido. The association was formed and incorporated in 1896 to further the teaching of Spiritualism as a religion, philosophy and science. At a 'Home Circle' through the mediumship of Mary James Even, daughter of Sylvanus and Mary Nulton, the attendants were instructed to organize a Camp meeting. The first such meeting was held July 4th, 1896. In 1897 Mr. Nulton leased to the association a 3 acre portion of his ranch now occupied by the Fellowship Hall and Medium's cabin. At that time the only way to get to the camp was traveling along a trail that followed the southeast bank of the Escondido Creek. Naturally a corral and long hitching post were provided for the many visitors.” (Rhae, R. 2016)

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Harmony Grove Spiritualist Camp after the wildfires of May 2014



The church bell is all that remains of the church/assembly hall



Mediums' cottages for readings that were spared from the wildfires

In May of 2014, wildfires raged through the hills and area surrounding Harmony Grove and the camp was not spared. Nearly 80% of the buildings and structures were consumed by the flames. Charred remnants of the fires still remain, but the members and residents who remain are planning to rebuild the camp. The church was lost, as was the bookstore and many mediums' homes. Located in the hills outside Escondido, California, the property is geographically unique with great natural beauty. The unpredictable path of the fires left some structures unscathed while others were burned to the ground. Two caretakers currently live in the camp, but due to insurance liability the public is not allowed to visit unless for special events and services. Gradually, more and more of the regularly scheduled activities are being introduced and funds are being raised to rebuild the structures and displays that were lost.

Western Wisconsin Camp Association: Founded in 1874

The *Western Wisconsin Camp Association* was founded in 1874 and incorporated in 1901. Perched on a bluff, high above the small town of Wonewoc, Wisconsin, this Spiritualist camp maintains the look and feel of a bygone era. The 37-acre property has around 36 mediums' cabins arranged in a large circle around the perimeter of the camp; a dining hall that now doubles as a church and meeting/workshop space because the chapel was badly damaged when a tree fell onto the building some years ago; and an administration office where visitors go to arrange for readings and to sign up for workshops and classes. A small bookstore is run out of the main office. A rather newish hotel greets visitors as they arrive to the parking area at the front of the camp. It is small but quite modern in appearance. The townsfolk refer to the camp as "Spook Hill."



The main office and bookstore of the Wonewoc Spiritualist Camp

"Some of the cottages are one-room; others have multiple rooms and screened porches. Some bear dedications to those who have passed on. The largest, the two-story Andrew Jackson Davis house, named after the founder of spiritualism [sic], has guest rooms upstairs and a larger meeting space to host workshops." (Falkenstein, 2007) There is a public restroom and bathhouse for in-resident mediums to use during the high season. The camp closes completely at the end of summer because of the large amount of snowfall that accumulates making it nearly impossible to access the grounds during the winter months.



Mediums' cabins on the grounds

Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association: Founded in 1882

“Back in 1882 when this same land was incorporated by a group of Spiritualists, it was intended to be a Spiritual ‘summertime refresher/vacation’ for those interested in Spiritualism. Admission to the grounds was charged and very large tents (including some with stove pipes) were rented to families and individuals so they could camp on the grounds. Mediums did readings out of their tents. Many nationally known lecturers scheduled speaking events here because of the size of the pavilion [they] once had. In addition many activities including classes, dances, ladies’ teas, were just right for the times.” (Chase, 2013)



The main office of the association which doubles as a small guesthouse for overnight events

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Upon arrival at the entrance, I was greeted with a “No Trespassing” sign and cameras. It seems that teen-vandals have entered the camp on dares and on occasion have destroyed and damaged property. Until the camp is stabilized, the President of the association decided to post the signs and install cameras. At this time, the public is not allowed access except for specific events or functions. As I walked up the hill near the entrance, in the distance, I heard a man working so I called over to him. I explained I was doing research and he said the President of the camp would be arriving soon, but that I could go ahead and walk the grounds.



The main building that is used as the office and guesthouse

The camp is in very bad condition with only a few buildings being utilized to any degree. There are only two cottages that are being inhabited, with an assembly building that serves as a gathering place, office and mini-hotel for weekend workshops and development classes. An adjacent building serves as a séance room and a place to hold church services and development classes. The grounds are lovely, but terribly overgrown and in need of attention. The camp is perched high on a hill and at one time comprised dozens of acres, but it is now much smaller in size and scope than it once was in its prime. The President of the camp is nearly single-handedly trying to keep it solvent by working diligently to keep it afloat financially and physically. The majority of the cottages have been abandoned and left to deteriorate.



Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp: Founded in 1925

“The Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp Inc. is a member of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches and the Illinois State Spiritualist Association of Churches.



The idea for a Spiritualist Camp started on May 13, 1925 by a group of Spiritualists from Rockford, IL. The original name was the “Winnebago Spiritualist Camp Meeting” and they held there summer meetings five miles north of Rockford near Harlem on Dr. and Mrs. Hammond's farm. Meetings were held in a large tent. Individual tents for camping were also encouraged. A ladies’ auxiliary was formed and preparation of awesome dinners took place.

In the spring of 1926 bylaws were formulated and chartered to the Illinois State Spiritualist Association. The name was changed to “The First Spiritualist Camp Association” at Rockford and this appeared on the original charter. In the early development, tent meetings were held along the old Blackhawk Trail and the Kishwaukee River near Cherry Valley.

In July of 1949, Mr. James Jeffery, a member, reported on seven acres of land available in Cherry Valley, Illinois. He suggested that he only needed one acre and was willing to sell six acres to the camp. In September of 1949 the land was purchased by the camp. It contained two buildings. One was used for a hotel/ restaurant and the other for a meeting hall.

On August 14, 1955 the camp’s name was changed to the “Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp Association Inc.” In October of 1959 the State of Illinois purchased about three acres of the land to make room for the new US highway 20.” (<http://www.cvsc.me/home.html>)



The church and meeting hall for the Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp



A spiritual display on the grounds of the camp

Wooley Park Ashley Spiritualist Camp: Founded in 1892



The sign at the entrance to Ashley Spiritualist Camp

Wooley Park Ashley Spiritualist Camp, founded in 1892, is centrally located in Ashley, Ohio. The grounds are expansive and well-kept as the lawn was mowed when I visited and several religious displays appeared to be cared for and tended to on a regular basis. However, the camp is seemingly inactive currently as there were no posted events or services anywhere on the grounds. I tried to make contact with someone who could give me a tour and to explain the status of the association today, but all contact numbers related to the camp were no longer in use and when I visited the actual site, there was no one around to speak to about the current state of the camp or association. Even though the camp still has mediums' cottages around the periphery of the property, only a handful of homes looked to be lived in and cared for on a regular basis. The design of the grounds is typical of the style of camp meetings popularized in the 1800s. According to the website "NonProfitFacts.com" it is still listed as a religious organization, but has not filed taxes since 2012 where they reported \$0 income and \$0 in assets.



The main Assembly Hall for Ashley Spiritualist Camp. It is currently not in use.

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A view of the grounds



A cottage on the grounds of Ashley Spiritualist Camp

Conclusion

The notion of a camp meeting that was borrowed from other more mainstream religions of the nineteenth century proved very useful and important to the Spiritualist movement. Allowing large groups of like-minded adherents to meet served and prospered the religion well into the current century. During Spiritualism's heyday, thousands of curious souls clamored to get to one of several dozen camp meetings that sprang up around the United States from around 1866 through the mid-1920s. The yearning of people to commune with spirits on the other side of the veil at a time when Spiritualist churches were few and far between, allowed adherents to meet other Spiritualists and to learn about the religion, science and philosophy of this American-made religion. Although only around twenty Spiritualist Camps remain today, with only a handful of these truly active, the history and culture of the camps continue on in the same way they did over one hundred years ago.

The necessity of a camp meeting certainly is not the same as it was in the nineteenth century, but the same reasons for meeting and learning have not changed. Lily Dale, Camp Chesterfield, Cassadaga, Harmony Grove and Wonewoc continue to serve those who seek solace and confirmation about loved ones who have passed over to the other side. Even though these camps are remnants from a largely bygone era, they continue to serve an important purpose—to prove the continuity of life after death to the bereaved.

This research project has revealed that many of the existing camps are either in serious or desperate trouble financially due to a lack of interest, members and finances, or are barely subsisting for the same reasons. Not one of the camps is free of financial strain or trouble—even Lily Dale which has the most attendance of all the camps is in need of funds to preserve the assets and structures they currently have. The strength of any religious organization is only as strong as its members and adherents. Only time will tell what the future holds, but for some of these wonderfully unique camps that are filled with history and religious culture, it may already be too late. The next decade will prove vital to the survival of many of the camps outlined in this paper and it is hoped that a change will occur that will allow these beautiful old camps to thrive once more.

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Appendix 1: Currently Active Spiritualist Camps

Camp Chesterfield- Chesterfield, IN

Camp Edgewood- Milton, WA

Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp- Cassadaga, FL

Chain Lakes Spiritualist Camp- South Branch, MI

Cherry Valley Spiritualist Camp- Cherry Valley, IL

Etna Spiritualist Camp-Etna, ME

Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association-San Diego, CA

Lake Pleasant Camp- Franklin County, MA

Lily Dale Assembly- Lily Dale, NY

Madison Spiritualist Camp- Raymond, ME

Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association- Clinton, IA

National Spiritual Alliance- Franklin County, MA

Northern Lake Michigan Spiritualist Camp- Charlevoix, MI

On-I-Set Wigwam Spiritualist Camp- Onset, MA

Pine Grove Spiritualist Camp- Niantic, CT

Sun Spiritualist Camp- Tonopah, AZ

Sunset Spiritualist Camp- Wells, KS

Snowflake Spiritualist Camp- Central Lake, MI

Temple Heights Spiritual Camp- Northport, ME

Western Wisconsin Camp Association- Wonewoc, WI

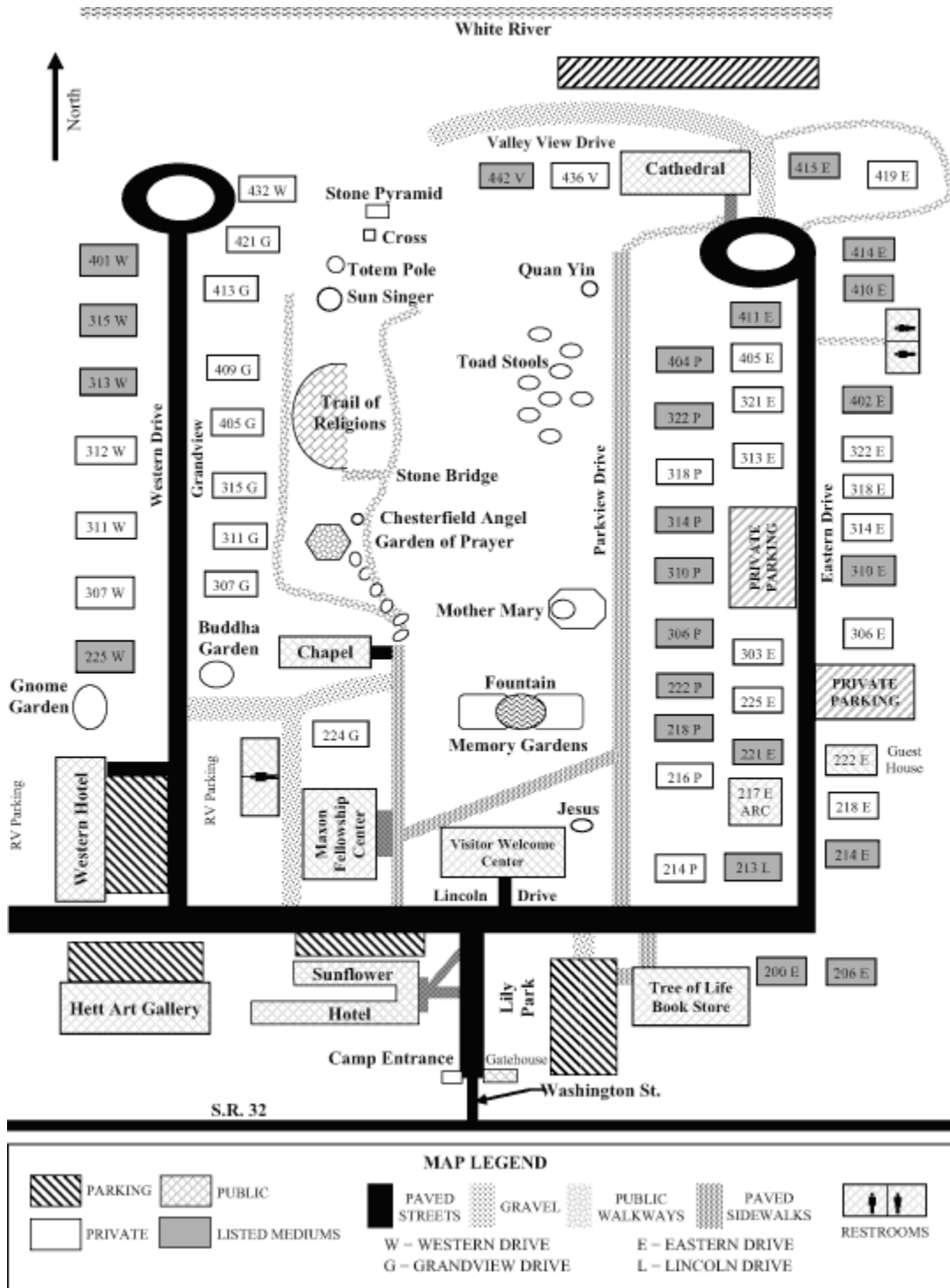
Wooley Park Ashley Spiritualist Camp-Ashley, Ohio

[Partial Source: *Sunset Spiritualist Church*; "Directory of Spiritualist Camps"; <http://sunsetcamp.org/church/spiritualist-camps.html> retrieved on February 15, 2016]

Appendix 2: Map of Lily Dale



Appendix 3: Map of Camp Chesterfield



The Substance of the Matter: Was Origen a Dualist?

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Introduction

This paper is a continuation of one I presented to ASSR in 2015¹ concerning Origen's (185 – 254) thinking on the persistence of the soul. The great Alexandrian is generally regarded as the first person to construct a system of Christian theology. His *On First Principles*² appeared about the year 218 and is structured around “particular points clearly delivered in the teaching of the apostles.”³ Despite his good intentions, Origen's thinking and theological legacy epitomize a dialectical tension between faith and philosophy. Indeed, this tension is “the most astonishing sign of contradiction in the history of Christian thought.”⁴

This tension is nowhere more evident than in his complex, and to some extent, rambling teaching on the soul and its relationship to the human body, particularly his notions of persistence and personal identity. Origen examines and explains this relationship primarily in Books 2 and 3 of *On First Principles*.⁵ Perhaps

¹ Ben D. Craver, “Souljourner: Origen on the Development and Persistence of the Soul,” in *The 2015 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*, eds. Jon K. Loessin and Scott Stripling (Dallas: ASSR, 2015), 89-105; online at http://media.wix.com/ugd/24c0b5_9148e211f5014402b00a13d53db2a5ac.pdf.

² Origen's systematic work is known variously as *On First Principles*, *De Principiis* and *Peri Archon*. In the *Peri Archon*, Origen, who entitled his work as such, transferred the middle-Platonic theory of first principles into his thinking on the Trinity; but, the emphasis behind it would be more appropriately entitled *Peri Triados*. So, Charles Kannengiesser, “Divine Trinity and the Structure of the *Peri Archon*,” in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen, eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 247. References here follow the edition of A. Cleveland Coxe, *Fathers of the Third Century*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), and cited as Orig. *Princ.*

³ Orig. *Princ.*, Pref 4 (ANF 4:240).

⁴ Henri Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), xi. William Placher heads up the chapter about Origen in his book, *A History of Christian Theology*, as “An Alliance with Philosophy.” See Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1983).

⁵ Origen's stated purpose focuses on apostolically-delivered doctrine; he contends that the apostles “merely stated the fact that things were so, keeping silence as to the manner or origin of their existence.” See Orig. *Princ.*, Pref 3 (ANF 4:239). They left it up to their theological successors to “investigate or explain the reasons or bases of these doctrines.” Cf. Antonia Tripolitis, *The Doctrine of*

it would be helpful to summarize the pertinent findings from the previous paper on this point.

God's first act of creation was a divinely limited number of rational, incorporeal creatures which Origen called *logika* (λογικά).⁶ As God's initial act, these creatures pre-existed the creation of the material world, were undifferentiated and, at least to begin with, lived in harmony with their Creator.⁷ As rational beings, the *logika* were created with freedom of choice. God desired that they would voluntarily choose the good. The *logika*, however, had other notions. Indolence, laziness, and neglect led them to fall away from sustaining the good and instead became the origination point on a journey away from God and the good.⁸

In their alienation from God, they became souls. Origen uses the Greek word *psyche* (ψυχή) for souls, a term he appropriated from the verb ψύχεσθαι, which commonly refers to making cold or cool.⁹ The process of cooling suggests that the fallen *logika* drifted away from the natural warmth of God's presence.¹⁰ No longer equal and alike,¹¹ they suffer tiered penalties for their transgressions.¹² The *super-celestial* fell or defected only a short distance from God. They exist as angelic beings, the sun, moon, and stars (cf. 1 Cor 15:41). The *earthly* fell farther away from God and were embodied—effectively entombed—as human beings subject to physical death. The pronounced inequities between human beings politically, socially, economically, and personally, are part and parcel of human misery. The *invisible* rejected God outright, turning completely against Him and became demonic or evil spirits. Embodiment in the corporeal world comes *after*, not before, the fall.

the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen (Roslyn Heights, NY: Libra Publishers, 1978), 89. Origen's work is to provide his investigation and explanation.

⁶ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.9.1 (ANF 4:289). This aspect of Origen's theology "has long been regarded as one of the most disagreeable features of his theology." See Peter W. Martens, "Origen's doctrine of pre-existence and the opening chapters of Genesis," *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 16:3 (January 2012): 516.

⁷ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.9.6 (ANF 4:292); for Origen, God's wisdom has an eternal quality; it has always existed. Such being the case, the "outline of all created beings" has also existed in eternity. They were merely waiting for "actualization" by the Wisdom, or Logos, the intermediary known as the Son.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.9.2 (ANF 4:290).

⁹ *Ibid.* The designation owes to Plato and Aristotle.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.8.3 (ANF 4:288).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *On First Principles*, 2.9.6 (ANF 4:292).

¹² The information is summarized from, *Ibid.*, 2.9.2-3 (ANF 4:289-90); see also Tripolitis, 97.

The only rational creature to avoid the fall and persist as incorporeal with God is the soul of Christ.¹³ God created bodies for the remainder of the *logika* as a contingent consequence of their fall away from him. Since then, Origen insists that the fallen *logika* “never have lived nor do live without it [= a body]; for an incorporeal life will rightly be considered a prerogative of the Trinity alone.”¹⁴

For our consideration, it is the *earthly logika* who occupy center stage. They became, as previously noted, human beings clothed with flesh and subject to physical death. They were consigned to the material world as resident students in a cosmic academy for educating, chastening, and above all rehabilitating their souls. Once rehabilitated, souls will depart their material home on a journey that eventually returns them to an immaterial or incorporeal state of perfection and bliss.

Given the process outlined above, one question remains: *how* is it that a presumably rehabilitated, resurrected, incorporeal body might be numerically identical to the corporeal body of the person who died?¹⁵

Are you my father?

For a practical question, take Origen’s father, Leonides, who was martyred for his faith during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Septimus Severus in 202. Estimates place Origen at around seventeen years of age when his father was martyred. The event traumatized Origen on several levels: economically—since, as the eldest son, he bore the financial well-being of the entire family; emotionally—since his father was first imprisoned, then beheaded; and spiritually—because he desired to follow and honor his father as a martyr for the faith.¹⁶

The question I am chasing then is how Origen will be able to identify his beloved and martyred father as one of those incorporeal souls rehabilitated from dust. In Origen’s thinking, the question of personal identity is resolved by forging . . .

¹³ Edward Moore, “Origen of Alexandria,” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. ISSN 2161-0002; <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>. Origen explains: “That the nature, indeed, of His soul was the same as that of all others cannot be doubted, otherwise it could not be called a soul were it not truly one. But since the power of choosing good and evil is within the reach of all, this soul which belonged to Christ elected to love righteousness, so that in proportion to the immensity of its love it clung to it unchangeably and inseparably . . .” (Orig. *Princ.*, 2.6.5 [ANF 4:283]).

¹⁴ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.2; 2.1.4 (ANF 4:271; 268).

¹⁵ It is difficult to know for certain what Origen believed about post-mortem personal identity. The reason is that the major work containing those views, *On First Principles*, has been preserved only in a Latin translation from an Origenist disciple named Rufinus who was determined to defend Origen’s seedy reputation in the 5th century Christian church; see Orig. *Princ.*, Prologue of Rufinus (ANF 4:237). Cf. John Anthony McGlucken, “The Life of Origen,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. John Anthony McGlucken (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 2-3. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 6.1.

¹⁶ McGlucken, 2; Eusebius 6.2.

. . . a remarkable synthesis between an imaginative, scholarly exegesis of the Christian Scriptures and a set of convictions about God and the human person shaped by the church's rule of faith, interpreted with the help of Middle Platonic philosophy.¹⁷
Identity, the Body, and Flux

For the sake of argument, I am reordering the sequence of elements from the previous quote beginning instead with Origen's allegiance to "Middle Platonic philosophy." Origen followed Plato watchfully in many of his theological assertions, but felt free to amend Platonic tradition, as noted above, in light of Scripture. He especially embraced Plato's dualistic anthropology in which the human person is made up of "two kinds of existences, one visible, the other invisible . . . of two parts, body and soul."¹⁸ From Origen's perspective, "*bodily nature . . . bears the lives and contains the movements of spiritual and rational minds . . .*"¹⁹

In addition, and taking his cue once more from Plato, Origen was committed to the doctrine that God created persons as incorporeal souls prior to their corporeal or bodily existence, and were ordained to return to God as incorporeal bodies subsequent to their purification.²⁰ He believes that . . .

. . . the necessity of logical reasoning compels us to understand that rational natures were indeed created at the beginning, but that material substance was separated from them only in thought and understanding, and appears to have been formed for them, or after them, and that they never have lived nor do live without it.²¹

The physical body does not define the person; persons are incorporeal souls who are simply making use of a body. The body is a physical instrument in service

¹⁷ Brian E. Daley, "Eschatology," *Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 95. Origen's detractors often accuse him of taking Platonism to the extreme, especially the Platonic doctrine of the preexistence of souls. See Plato *Phaed.* 76e, in Plato: *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev., John M. Cooper, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002), cited hereafter as *Phaed.*; cf. Raymond Martin & John Barresi, *The Rise and Fall of the Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 64.

¹⁸ *Phaed.* 79ab.

¹⁹ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.2.1 [emphasis mine] (*ANF* 4:270).

²⁰ *Phaed.* 76de. The critical lines read: "If, as we are always saying, the beautiful exists, and the good, and every essence of that kind, and if we refer all our sensations to these, which we find existed previously and are now ours, and compare our sensations with these, is it not a necessary inference that just as these abstractions exist, *so our souls existed before we were born*; and if these abstractions do not exist, our argument is of no force? Is this the case, and is it equally certain that provided these things exist *our souls also existed before we were born*, and that if these do not exist, neither did our souls?" [Emphasis mine]; see also David Runia, "Philosophy," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 174; Martin and Barresi, 62.

²¹ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.2.2 (*ANF* 4:270).

both to God and to the soul—a “fixer-upper” so to speak.²² God rehabilitates-educates the soul in a physical environment according to the “deserts” or merits of the person as the soul makes its journey back to God. Because bodies are subject to change, and particularly a change into resurrected bodies that are substantially different, Origen concludes:

. . . so also, with respect to the state of the body, we are to hold that this very body which now, on account of its service to the soul, is styled an animal body, will, by means of a certain progress, when the soul, united to God, shall have been made one spirit with Him (the body even then ministering, as it were, to the spirit), attain to a spiritual condition and quality, especially since, as we have often pointed out, bodily nature was so formed by the Creator, as to pass easily into whatever condition he should wish, or the nature of the case demand.²³

Origen did not, however, disparage bodily existence, although he clearly considers the body as substandard to the soul, even to the point of apparent disgust.²⁴ For example, bodily functions are normal physical processes that regularly occur, but he considers the process of digestion “embarrassing,” not to mention, the conception, birth, and rearing of children which to him create a “sense of shame.”²⁵

When he comes to a discussion of the body and personal identity, Origen ignores Platonism and turns instead to the primacy of the Christian Scriptures. In particular, he refers to Mt 10:28 and Rom 8:11,²⁶ arguing that, after physical death, the resurrected physical body now “shines in the splendour of celestial bodies, and adorns . . . the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a *spiritual body* . . .”²⁷ The substance of the spiritual or “celestial” body differs in composition from the earthly body.

Once again, Origen parts ways with Plato. Rather than an evil mass of *soma* imprisoning the soul, Origen viewed the body from both redemptive (see above) and philosophical perspectives. Epistemologically, the body delimits each soul to a

²² In Orig. *Cels.*, 8.30, Origen insists: “. . . we believe that the respect paid to the body redounds to the honour of the person who received from God *a soul which has nobly employed the organs of the body in which it resided*” [emphasis mine].

²³ Orig. *Princ.*, 3.6.6 (ANF 4:347).

²⁴ Benjamin P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen's Doctrine of the Soul* (Washington DC: Catholic University of American Press, 2012), 48.

²⁵ Orig. *Comm. Rom.*, Books 6-10; 7.4.10; in *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, ed. Joel Kalvesmaki (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2002), 70.

²⁶ Mt 10:28: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (NASB); Rom 8:11: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (NASB).

²⁷ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270) [emphasis mine].

“unique identity.”²⁸ This is a critical point; Origen’s thinking here is decidedly more than a personal epistemological bias. As noted above, God operates a “cosmic academy” in which each soul, based on its own individually distinctive abilities, determines the way it gains knowledge. Instead . . .

We may say, then, that the uniqueness of the soul’s body is an image of its *uniqueness of mind*. This is the first inkling of the development of the concept of the person and personality in the history of Western thought.²⁹

All of this is to say that, for Origen, the body is in a state of constant flux. Prior to a person’s physical death, the material from which each physical body is held together is in constant change. Here, too, Origen refers to digestion, including “. . . something such as food into it from without and as this food is eliminated . . .” The result is that “no body ever has the same material substratum.”³⁰ In fact, Origen believes that “river” is an apt description of the body since “. . . strictly speaking, the first substratum in our bodies is scarcely the same for two days. . .”³¹

Identity, the Body, and Form

Origen insists that “the *form* which identifies the body is the same, just as the features which characterize Peter’s or Paul’s bodies remain the same—characteristics <like> childhood scars, and such peculiarities <as> moles, and any others besides.”³² As the person makes its journey back to God, it is always looking to the time of resurrection when the soul will reshape it “by whatever matter then exists” into a new body.³³ Accordingly, if Leonides’ celestial body is radically and substantively different, how will Origen be able to identify his martyred father?

To answer that question, Origen returns to Plato. Origen asserts that the soul impresses, as it were, on the body a distinctive and distinguishable “form” (*eidōs*).³⁴

²⁸ Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*, [emphasis mine].

³⁰ Orig., *Fr. Ps.*, cited in Epiphanius, “Against Origen, also called Adamantius,” in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Sects 47-80, De Fide*, trans. Frank Williams (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 1994), 142. See also 64.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, [emphasis mine].

³³ Briane E. Daley, “Resurrection,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 184.

³⁴ In the *Symp.* 210b, the word appears in a quest for physical beauty, the beauty that can be pursued and thus seen: διώκειν τὸ ἐπ’ εἶδει καλόν. In *Phaed.* 102b, the word appears in a way denoting the existence of abstract qualities, perhaps the idea of a thing: καὶ ὡμολογεῖτο εἶναι τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν. In *Hi. I.* 289d, the word appears as a person to whom a form (perhaps a beautiful one) is attached: ἐπειδὴν προσγένηται ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος. The word’s primary meaning, however, is “form” or “outward appearance.” See Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 221.

The form enables human features to remain perceptible despite advances in age and physical growth, and the incapacitating effects of disease.³⁵ When the resurrection occurs, the soul will produce—perhaps “attach”—this distinctive *eidos* anew with the result that the new body, as noted above, “shines” like celestial bodies and provides the resurrected with wardrobes fitting the spiritual body and suitable to its new heavenly environs.³⁶

All of that is well and good; but, does the form then account for sustained identity despite all of the river-like washings that the human body undergoes prior to physical death? According to Origen, the soul impresses the form upon the body, regardless of whether the “body” is a physical body or the celestial body:

This form, the bodily, which constitutes Peter and Paul, encloses the soul once more at the resurrection, changed for the better—but surely not this extension which underlay it at first. For as the form is <the same> from infancy until old age though the features appear to undergo considerable change, so we must suppose that, though its change for the better will be very great, our present form will be the same in the world to come.³⁷

Persons age, wrinkles appear, hair turns gray or disappears, bones weaken, disease occurs, and the body dies. Change is inevitable and that includes changes arising in the transition from physical life to the afterlife. Bodies in the afterlife will be different. Origen makes his point through an ichthyological illustration. Suppose, says he, that we were to become fish. We would need gills and additional fish features in order to survive in the sea. In heaven, a superior and much-to-be-preferred place, we will need features appropriate for residing in the heavenly environs.

The body, however, does not “vanish.” Origen recalls the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:2-9) explaining that the “forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were not different from what they had been.”³⁸ In other words, regardless of transfigurations and transformations, the body will retain its previous form and, in it, personal identity:³⁹ “. . . it will be flesh no longer, but whatever was once characteristic of the flesh will be characteristic of the spiritual body.”⁴⁰ Origen will be able to identify Leonides by virtue of his form which provides him with substantial continuity.

³⁵ Daley, 184; Brandon Morgan, “‘We Will All Be Changed’: Materiality, Resurrection and Reaping Spiritual Bodies in Origen’s *Peri Archon*.” *American Theological Inquiry* 7:2 (Aug 2014), 15.

³⁶ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270).

³⁷ Orig., *Fr. Ps.*, 142-3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Martin and Barresi, 62; Bynum, 66.

⁴⁰ Orig., *Fr. Ps.*, 143.

Was Origen a dualist?

It would appear that Origen was indeed a dualist. But, dualism as a philosophical concept is not as simple to define as it might appear. Fundamentally, dualism contrasts the incorporeal part of the human person, usually identified as the mind, with the corporeal part, usually identified with body.

Classical dualism originated in Plato's *Phaedo*.⁴¹ There, Plato argues strongly for the immortality of the soul: “. . . the soul is most like the divine and immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and ever unchanging . . .” But, the intellectual is equally immaterial and invisible, accessible only by reason and morality. His line of questioning leads only to one conclusion: “Well then,” said Socrates, “are we not made up of two parts, body and soul?”⁴²

Substance Dualism

The *cause célèbre* for dualism came with René Descartes' 17th century philosophical masterpiece *Meditations on First Philosophy*.⁴³ It contained the metaphysical nucleus of what came to be called Cartesian dualism. Descartes believed that there were two kinds of substances: 1) spatially extended, divisible **matter** and 2) non-spatial, unextended, indivisible thinking **mind**.

For Descartes, only the thinking mind emerged unscathed from his method of subjecting every physical object around him to a torrent of doubt. Who knows, he pondered, whether we are merely dreaming that a mountain and its accompanying valley appears in the distance, lush and green in the lower elevations and covered with glistening white snow at its peak? Or, perhaps, we have been deceived by a malicious demon? After all, the senses can be deceiving: “What then will be true? Perhaps the single fact that nothing is certain.”⁴⁴ After all of his doubts, only one certainty emerged:

Thus, after everything has been most carefully weighed, it must finally be established that this pronouncement “I am, I exist” is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind.⁴⁵

⁴¹ One of the most widely read of Plato's dialogues, *Phaedo* claims to recount the final day of the life of Plato's teacher, Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), before he was executed.

⁴² *Phaed.* 80b, 79ab.

⁴³ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed., trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), cited hereafter as either *Discourse* or *Meditation* number section.

⁴⁴ Descartes, *Meditation* 2.24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.25. The famous “I think, therefore I am” appears specifically in Descartes' *Discourse* 4.32.

From this pronouncement, Descartes proceeded to construct an entire system of knowledge: the mind or incorporeal, and the matter or corporeal. At the center of his epistemic system is God: “But granted I can no more think of God as not existing than I can think of a mountain without a valley . . .”⁴⁶ With a divine *a priori*, Descartes resumed his task of achieving “full and certain knowledge about countless things, both about God and other intellectual matters, as well as about the entirety of that corporeal nature which is the object of pure mathematics.”⁴⁷

The theory known as substance or Cartesian dualism rests on the distinction between mind (or soul) and the body. Because Descartes concluded that his essence or nature, the “I” that he is, is nothing more than a thinking *substance*, he was able to say that he “has no need of any place nor depends on any material thing [for his existence].”⁴⁸ To further refine his concept of mind (or soul) and its self-sufficient, ontological status, Descartes explained:

Thus this “I,” that is to say, the soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body, and even if there were no body at all, it would not cease to be all that is it.

That philosophers continue to struggle with the relationship of the mind to the body is a tribute to Descartes’ nuanced judgement of the human person centuries ago. Descartes’ substance dualism was the first step on a metaphysical journey toward the “ultimate test case for that all-embracing model of scientific understanding.”⁴⁹

Origen, Substance Dualism, and the Identity Problem

If Origen was some kind of dualist, can it be conclusively determined that he was a *substance dualist*? He believed that the human persons are embodied in material, corporeal bodies⁵⁰ and, as one of the *logika* who fell away from God’s love and goodness, cooled off to the point they became immaterial souls.⁵¹ The existence of an immaterial soul permanent associated with a material body would at least nominate him for a Cartesian-kind of substance dualist.⁵²

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.66.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.71.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.33.

⁴⁹ John Cottingham, “René Descartes,” in *The Oxford Guide to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 205.

⁵⁰ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.9.2-3 (ANF 4:289-90).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.9.2 (ANF 4:290); see also 2.8.3 (ANF 4:288).

⁵² Martin and Barresi, 64.

The question then is *how* Origen's substance dualism will assist him in identifying his father, Leonides, in heaven? He has already acknowledged that the substratum of one's physical body is like a constantly flowing river which, being in a state of flux, is never the same from one day to the next. Further, Origen believes that the soul has a proprietary right and preference over the body. Indeed, ". . . it is the reasonable soul alone that we honour, and we commit its bodily organs with due honours to the grave."⁵³ If the body is consigned to the grave, how will Origen or anyone recognize a loved one?

The answer lies in the "anticipated blessed and perfect resurrection."⁵⁴ For Origen, the soul never exists without a body.⁵⁵ The resurrection body, however, is not the same as the body consigned to a grave. The resurrection body "shines in the splendour of celestial bodies, and . . . the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a spiritual body . . ."⁵⁶ As a spiritual body, the resurrection body will be more ethereal or "celestial" in nature and thus suitable to its new heavenly environs.⁵⁷ The outer layer of cells, the corporeal part of the person, does not survive and simply returns to the earth.⁵⁸

A soul *sans* its body does not mean that souls lose their distinctive or characteristic form. Souls and their bodies will, in the resurrection, be entirely transformed into a celestial or "spiritual body." But even then, it is not the spiritual body which enables persons to persist; rather, persistence is anchored in the soul due to its eternal nature and linkage with God.⁵⁹ Regardless of the difference between the physical and spiritual (celestial) bodies, Origen is careful to maintain the identity between the two; he explains:

⁵³ Orig. *Cels.*, 8.31 (ANF 4:667); ". . . we believe that the respect paid to the body redounds to the honour of the person who received from God a soul which has nobly employed the organs of the body in which it resided."

⁵⁴ Orig. *Comm. Jo.* 10.232; in Thomas P. Halton, ed. *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 80, *Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 306; see Blosser, 249.

⁵⁵ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.2; 2.1.4 (ANF 4:271; 268), ". . . for an incorporeal life will rightly be considered a prerogative of the Trinity alone."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270). Blosser, 249, explains: "the body, to be glorified, must be entirely submitted to the spirit or *pneuma*, and this requires the stripping away of the body's present covering of 'flesh' that would seem to present an obstacle to this end."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, see Blosser, 124.

⁵⁸ Blosser, 249, who remarks: "This is how Origen interprets St. Paul's statement in I Corinthians 15:50, 'Flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.' Consequently, in the resurrection, there will be no fleshly passions."

⁵⁹ Daley, 184.

When, therefore, all rational souls shall have been restored to a condition of this kind, then the nature of this body of ours will undergo a change into the glory of a spiritual body. . . . so also are we to consider, with respect to the nature of the body, that the one which we now make use of in a state of meanness, and corruption, and weakness, is not a different body from that which we shall possess in incorruption, and in power, and in glory; but that the same body, when it has cast away the infirmities in which it is now entangled, shall be transmuted into a condition of glory, being rendered spiritual, so that what was a vessel of dishonour may, when cleansed, become a vessel unto honour, and an abode of blessedness.⁶⁰

Origen thus recognizes the qualitative difference between the physical and the spiritual bodies, without forfeiting the singular connection between them which sustains their identities.

How? Origen argues that if physical bodies do indeed rise, “they undoubtedly rise to be coverings for us; and if it is necessary for us to be invested with bodies, as it is certainly necessary, we ought *to be invested with no other than our own*.”⁶¹ The spiritual body will be recognizable through its given form (*eidos*) which is, Origen explains, “fashioned according to some shape.”⁶² The means of bodily identity, of knowing Leonides, is the “form.” The form is the consistent, unchanging incorporeal substance that not only assures the identity of the person for the period of its constantly changing bodily existence, but also “guarantees the identity of the earthly body with the resurrected body.”⁶³

What will the resurrected, glorified, spiritual body look like? For all of his garrulity, Origen failed to clarify exactly how he envisaged this final bodily form, and how the exact identity of Leonides will be determined. It is clear that he regards all of the spatial world, the planets included, as being transfigured into a “degree of perfection”⁶⁴ with the result that “the just will find their abiding peace with God and with each other.”⁶⁵ And while he maintains, at least theoretically, continuity of the person via one’s unchanging form (*eidos*), he sacrifices corporeal or material continuity for the sake of personal identity, and does so without success. Rather than providing a stellar Origenist interpretation, he lets “each one of our readers determine for himself, with care and diligence, whether any one of them can be approved and adopted.”⁶⁶ The question remains how will he know Leonides? How will any of us know another?

⁶⁰ Orig. *Princ.*, 3.6.6 (ANF 4:347).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.10.1 (ANF 4:293).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.10.2 (ANF 4:294).

⁶³ Blosser, 252.

⁶⁴ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.7 (ANF 4:275).

⁶⁵ Daley, 185.

⁶⁶ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.7 (ANF 4:275).

Body language

In his influential monograph, *Naming and Necessity*,⁶⁷ Saul Kripke argued in favor of two different sorts of designators. A designator is a term referring to something. Kripke distinguishes between what he called “rigid designators” and “non-rigid designators.”

For the sake of illustration, consider the United States presidential election of 2000, in which George Bush opposed Al Gore. In a hotly contested race, Bush eventually was declared the winner. A phrase such as “the President of the United States in September 2001” refers to a uniquely identifying description. But, it is a *non-rigid designator*. Because, the President of the United States in September 2001, *could* have been Al Gore. At least it is possible to imagine such a scenario.

On the other hand, Kripke mentions *rigid designators*. These are phrases like “George Bush” or “Al Gore” which directly (rigidly) designate a particular person. *Rigid designators* designate the very same person in every imaginable world⁶⁸ in which he or she exists. The words “George Bush,” for example, designate George Bush in every world in which George Bush could exist.⁶⁹

Designators and identity

So, the sentence “George Bush was the President of the United States in September 2011” expresses a *contingent identity* because although “George Bush” is a rigid designator, the phrase “President of the United States in September 2011” is a non-rigid designator. All that means is that the sentence (“George Bush was the President of the United States in September 2011”) can be true in *this* world, yet false in *other* worlds. Its truth is *contingent*: the identity it expresses holds true in this world, but not necessarily in other worlds. If, on the other hand, the identity is between two rigid designators, this identity will be *necessary*; it will hold in every world in which these designators refer.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 18, 276; a possible world is the way that a world might have been. It refers to “the descriptive conditions we associate with it.” We have all imagined different worlds for ourselves from time to time, certain things about ourselves. Imagine that you are back in high school, or a famous musician, or artist. Imagine that you lived in ancient times or was on the first lunar excursion. These are the “worlds” to which Kripke has reference. In fact, **you** might have been President of the United States in September 2001!

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 48, where Kripke explains that, a designator is considered to be rigid “if in every possible world it designates the same object.” I used the example of Bush and Gore; Kripke makes use of Richard Nixon’s presidency in his explanations.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 269-70.

If two words both designate the same referent in every imaginable world and, if in this world, the two words designate the same referent, then they must designate the same referent in every world; since, as a matter of logical necessity, everything is identical to itself. Thus, if “George Bush” and “the President of the United States in September 2001” are both *rigid designators*, then if we insist that “George Bush” is, in this world, identical to “the President of the United States,” we must insist that “George Bush” is identical to “the President of the United States” in every imaginable world. The identity will have to be *necessary*.⁷¹

Kripke explains the idea of a *rigid designator* as follows: When we imagine some other world, and imagine or ask ourselves the question, “Could Al Gore have been President of the United States in September 2001?” how do we know that we are imagining the same Al Gore as the one who lost the presidential race in 2000? Kripke simply *stipulates*⁷² that it is the same Al Gore to which we refer in this world.

*Every personal name is a rigid designator.*⁷³ Even if 100 persons are named Al Gore, the name of each of those 100 persons is a rigid designator of that very person and not of anyone else with the name. How might Kripke’s thinking assist Origen? Utilizing a Cartesian reference, he explains:

Let “Descartes” be a name, or rigid designator, of a certain person, and let “B” be a rigid designator of his body. Then if Descartes were indeed identical to B, the supposed identity, being an identity between two rigid designators, would be necessary, and Descartes could not exist without B and B could not exist without Descartes.⁷⁴

If then, as Kripke argues, rigid designators identify people like Descartes and track them across imaginable worlds, then it is *possible* that the identity of Leonides’ physical body would be the same as his glorified, spiritual body; it is, a necessary truth. It holds true in every imaginable world including the one in which we now live, as well as, a future heavenly one. Using the argument of rigid designator, for Origen, means:

Leonides in the *physical body* = **Leonides** in the *spiritual body*

Kripke’s theory and my [hopefully accurate] appropriation of it here is dependent upon an initial “baptism” (not in the religious sense) by which an

. . . object may be named by ostension, or reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is ‘passed from link to link,’ the receiver of the name must, I

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 267.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from who he heard it.⁷⁵

Plainly, Kripke is not discussing empirical data. He is not, for example, suggesting that science will never discover correlations between rigid and non-rigid designators. There is no reason or empirical evidence to either affirm or deny the possibility of one kind of Leonides being the same as another kind of Leonides. Kripke can only conclude that some propositions are *necessarily true* but knowable only *a posteriori*.⁷⁶

From a theological perspective, the answer is much the same. If and when a theological proposition becomes “knowable,” it will come via eschatological verification. Neither theological nor philosophical inquiry will decide. When it comes to interpreting the thinking of Origen—or Kripke’s theories—philosophy has something to say.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35, 140; Kripke’s thinking is notoriously complex and piercingly intense. If the information presented above seems confusing, it is because Kripke’s work contributed significantly to the decline of the theory that philosophy is fundamentally the *logical analysis* of language. This brief paper is clearly not the place for a cogent appraisal of Kripke’s work. For a helpful introduction to Kripke’s thinking, see G. W. Fitch, *Saul Kripke* (New York: Routledge, 2014); a solid analysis of Kripke’s essays is available in Alan Berger, ed. *Saul Kripke* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).

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Stormfront Goes to War With the Book of Esther

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This paper focuses on racial rhetoric surrounding the *Book of Esther* that was expressed by a group of discussants in *Stormfront.org*, an online site for white nationalists. Racism and anti-Semitism are closely related especially given the fact that Jews were historically referred to as swarthy and/or black and suffering from choleric and melancholic temperaments. During the 1940s and 1950s, Wesley Swift and his mentor and fellow Christian Identity minister, Gerald L.K. Smith, indoctrinated their congregations with sermons about the racial inferiority of Jews as a people. This trend continues today in contemporary Christian Identity churches and in online sites such exemplified by *Stormfront.org*. Data for this article is contained in two discussions posted in the Christian Identity forum listed under the category Theology (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/f84/>). The discussions were selected because of their content about the *Book of Esther* in the *Bible*. Analysis of these discussions reveals demonization of Jews and the reinterpretation of Biblical scripture to suit racist religious belief systems espoused by a sample of people who engage in discussions on *Stormfront.org*.

INTRODUCTION

Extremist racial identity ideology is fixated on “whiteness” and its importance as an in-group signifier. Some whites are overtly racist and affiliate with groups that reflect their belief system. Their opinions about immigration, black on white crime, and white genocide permeate racialist discourse within these groups and on Internet Web sites. This paper focuses on racial rhetoric surrounding the *Book of Esther* that was expressed by a group of discussants in *Stormfront.org*, an online site for white nationalists. Even though the terms white supremacy/white nationalist and white supremacist movement/white nationalist movement are used by many scholars interchangeably, I use the label white nationalist as a descriptor for the group profiled in this paper. The designation of *Stormfront.org* as a community of, by, and for people who self-identify in this way reveals a tendency for contemporary white racial activists to adopt this label as their own.

Most researchers agree that the white nationalist movement is home to a confusing array of ideologies and loosely organized groups (Barkun, 1990; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; and Ezekiel, 1995). With advancements in technology and social media, mobilization continues and much of the rhetoric spurring white nationalists forward is directly connected to race and their collective belief in the fragility of and ultimate decline of white culture (<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/active-hate-groups-united-states-2014>). This study seeks to increase a general understanding about how overtly racist individuals evaluate and discuss religious perspectives in their online community. These discussions provide insights into the mindset of a segment of the white community

that position themselves against the tenets of traditional Christianity in favor of extreme religious views and overt anti-Semitism.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: AN EXTREMIST RELIGION

Christian Identity ministers and their followers reinterpret the Bible in an attempt to justify their racist beliefs. Blatant racial pride and denigration of non-whites and other designated out-groups is a key distinguishing factor between whites who belong to racist groups and whites who do not. In an attempt to soften racist undertones, the term 'racialist' is often used by leaders such as David Duke¹ and Thom Robb² to describe whites who express love and admiration for their group. Racial consciousness, buttressed by racially oriented religious perspectives, is important as a means to recruit members to groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Christian Identity sects. Contemporary Arkansas Identity minister, Thom Robb, hopes that creation of a collective racial consciousness will unify the white supremacist movement socially and politically (Dentice, 2014; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997). Using the Identity pulpit as a rallying point is part of that strategy along with educational strategies such as The Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute which is located on Robb's compound in the Ozarks region of North Central Arkansas.

Christian Identity contains no central orthodoxy and Identity ministers offer widely divergent doctrines that are all based on an individualistic approach to interpretation of the *Bible* (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997). In his pamphlet *God's Call to Race*, Christian Identity minister Wesley Swift, predicted that the return of Jesus would occur before the 1000 year epoch. Subsequent pre-millennialist Identity preachers who were influenced by Swift's teachings count on the final battle (in the guise of a race war) to be waged right here in North America. According to this worldview, God's chosen people are whites whose rightful legacy was stolen with the seduction of Eve and the birth of Cain. Swift claimed to have found the true heritage and covenants of the white race. His teachings warned that mainstream Christian churches were degenerating into Babylonian Judaism with ministers acting as false prophets who delivered covenants of the true Israel to enemies of Christ. Books and tapes authored by Swift still inform Christian Identity ministries such as those pastored by Thom Robb and also filter into *Stormfront.org* through the Christian Identity forum in the Theology section of the site.

Demonization of Jews

Racism and anti-Semitism are closely related especially given the fact that Jews were historically referred to as swarthy and/or black and suffering from "choleric and melancholic temperaments" (Pritchard, 1973). By the mid-nineteenth century, all races were described in terms of being either beautiful (white) or ugly (dark). Being black, Jewish, diseased, and ugly became linked and pathologized in the literature of the day (Knox, 1850). By the latter half of the nineteenth century,

¹ David Duke is a former neo-Nazi and Klansman who still has a strong presence on Stormfront.org.

² Thom Robb is a Christian Identity member and Klansman who is head of the Knights Party in Zinc, Arkansas.

Western European Jews were virtually indistinguishable from other people with regard to language, dress, and general appearance although they were still considered a separate and distinct race (Mosse, 1975). The history of racial Jewishness encompasses the many ways that both Jews and non-Jews have defined what it is to be a Jew. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally not Jewish blood that set them apart but rather religion.

In Nazi ideology, words contained biologic components or subliminal meanings especially when referencing Jewish people. Propagandists for the Third Reich portrayed Germany as a living organism infested by the Jewish disease that threatened to cause the death of the nation (Raffles, 2007). Extermination would stop infestation of poisonous parasites once and for all. When Nazi policy made news in the 1930s and 1940s, there was a scientific shift in thinking about the race concept in general although racial Jewishness did not vanish completely. As Christian Identity emerged as a right wing alternative to traditional Christianity for extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Jewish physical traits and religious beliefs were highlighted in sermons, speeches, and literature of the time. Wesley Swift and his mentor and fellow Christian Identity minister, Gerald L.K. Smith, indoctrinated their congregations with sermons about the racial inferiority of Jews as a people. Additionally, Jews were demonized in a Henry Ford sponsored editorial column in the *Dearborn Journal* which was published in pamphlet form, *The International Jew*, and distributed by Hitler in Germany (Ridgeway, 1990). This trend continues today in contemporary Identity churches (Dentice, 2014).

OVERVIEW: THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The *Book of Esther* is one of only two books in the *Bible* named for women. The other is the *Book of Ruth*. Esther's story profiles a beautiful young Jewess who lived in ancient Persia about 100 years after the Babylonian captivity. Many Jews still remained in Persia as part of the diaspora or scattering of exiles across nations. Although they were free to return to Jerusalem by an earlier decree from King Cyrus, many were comfortable living in Persia and did not wish to risk the dangerous journey back to their homeland. Esther's family was among the Jews who stayed behind. When her parents died, she was adopted and raised by an older cousin named Mordecai. Her story began in the third year of King Ahasuerus' (also known as Xerxes) reign. As was typical of royalty, Xerxes often threw lavish parties. After one of these parties, he called for his reigning queen, Vashti, to come before his guests. She refused for some reason that is still debated by religious scholars and which led to her deposition and subsequent search for a new queen (Pratte, 2013).

Xerxes initiated a search featuring young maidens from throughout his kingdom who were known for their beauty and grace. Esther's cousin and adopted father, Mordecai, was anxious to have her named queen. He advised her not to disclose her ethnicity since Jews were not highly regarded in Persia at the time. She quickly became a favorite of the King's eunuch who helped her in preparations to meet Xerxes. The story goes that the king immediately fell in love with her and asked her to become his queen.

After the couple were married, Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther about the conspiracy and she reported it to Xerxes. The plot was thwarted and Mordecai's act of bravery was preserved in the chronicles of the king. At this same time, the king's highest official was a man named Haman who hated the Jews. He especially hated Mordecai who had refused to bow down to him at the gates of the king's palace. Haman devised a scheme to have every Jew in Persia killed. The king agreed to annihilate the Jewish people; still not knowing his queen was a Jewess and the adopted daughter of Mordecai.

Meanwhile, Mordecai shared the king's written decree with Esther, challenging her to appeal to him on behalf of her people. Mordecai knew that Esther, after five years of marriage, was in a position to influence the king. After realizing how dire the situation, she urged all of the Jews to fast and pray for deliverance. Before making her request for clemency of the Jews to Xerxes, she began a fast which signified her commitment to the cause. At the end of her fast, she approached the king stating that she wanted to prepare a banquet. She requested that both Xerxes and Haman attend. Haman was convinced he had achieved the highest favors from both the king and queen. Little did he know that Esther was planning to expose him and his plot to kill Mordecai and all the Jewish people residing in Persia.

When she appeared before King Xerxes she revealed her true identity and then pleaded for her own life and the lives of her people. The King became enraged with Haman and had him and his sons hanged. He reversed his previous order to have the Jewish people destroyed and he gave Jews the right to assemble and protect themselves. Mordecai then received a place of honor in the King's palace as second in rank and encouraged all Jews to participate in Purim, a celebration of feasting and joy in remembrance of this great turn of events. The author of Esther is unknown. Some scholars have suggested that Mordecai (see Esther 9:20-22 and Esther 9:29-31) is the most probable author of the book. Others have proposed Ezra or possibly Nehemiah because the books share similar literary styles (Pratte, 2013).

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from a sample of discussion forums posted on *Stormfront.org*, an Internet site for self-identified white nationalists that was established by former Klansman, Don Black, in March 1995. According to site statistics, there is an average of 40,000 people who visit within each 24 hour period. Users can become members at different levels and those who want to gain access to private polls and discussions are encouraged to pay a small fee. Some users have been members since 1995, the year the site officially came online.

Stormfront.org data for this article is contained in two discussions posted in the Christian Identity forum listed under the Theology category (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/f84/>). The discussions were selected because of their content about the *Book of Esther*. The titles of the discussions selected for this paper include:

1) A Jewess is uneasy with Purim
(<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t305561/>)

2) The book of Esther (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t431798/>)

In the first discussion there were a total of 10 posts by 8 discussants that began on June 27, 2006 and ended on November 2, 2007. It should be noted that a discussant with the pseudonym Celto_Saxon posted the entire *Book of Esther* along with a critique written by a pastor he did not acknowledge by name. The second discussion contained 9 posts by 6 discussants that began on October 25, 2007 and ended on October 28, 2007. Several of these discussants participated in the first discussion that began in June, 2006. Members of the *Stormfront.org* site post in discussions, start their own threads, and set up polls on various topics. Analysis of the Stormfront data began on September 10, 2015 and ended on September 21, 2015.

Limitations

It should be noted that data downloaded from *Stormfront.org* is limited in its focus due to the nature of convenience sampling. Additionally, because of the small sample size and the inability to verify the identity of *Stormfront.org* participants, these findings cannot be generalized or considered directly representative of the broader population of people who identify in some way with the American white nationalist movement.

FINDINGS

The Internet is a rich source of data for social research. *Stormfront.org* is one the most highly developed and stable sites for discussions and blogs among people who are affiliated with the white supremacist/nationalist movement. Each of the selected blogs dealt with commentary about the *Book of Esther*. The statements and/or questions that started each blog were followed by a sample of responses³. A discussant called Son of Italy began with a post on June 27, 2006 stating that a Jewess is uneasy with Purim (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t305561/>), a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman during the ancient Persian Empire. His post was followed by a response from a discussant called Spartan_WhiteKnight:

Most Whites, including most Christians unfortunately haven't a clue about the Hate Holidays which are only fitting for the (*scratches "God's chosen"*) sons of satan, jews.

Celto_Saxon follows with this response:

The book of Esther is an absolute lie. I have a great study that blows holes through this. Not even Jesus Christ ever acknowledged Esther, nor has any Christian apostle ever celebrated, nor mentioned that feast time known as "Purim". It is not a legal feast day, and God did not give the name. Even Mordecai himself said that "Esther and I wrote the book". The study I have is long but very interesting and will post it if anyone wants to read it.

³ All citations from Stormfront.org are in their original form that includes misspellings and other grammatical errors.

A discussant named KLANSMAN asked for a copy of the study, portions of which follow.

God's name is not mentioned anywhere in the manuscripts of Esther, but it is hidden five times, and that is why we can go along with the book being called, "Ishtar, the Hidden". God Himself allowed the Book of Esther to be brought forth so the People would know that His hand was upon it. Then what are we to learn for the Book of Esther? One simple fact. The People that worshipped this holy day, their holy day and not our people, but they are Kenites. This day of "Purim" was never worshipped by Christians, nor did Christ, any of the prophets or the disciples of Christ ever suggest that we do so. The Kenites are Mordecai's people, the "Kenite".

Now let's look at the historical value of the book of Esther. It can be seen from the last paragraph, the one above, that considerable doubt has been thrown upon the case of the history of Esther. Some will deny that the story has any historical background, and regard it merely as a transformed pagan myth. While others are prepared to maintain that there may be some historical event underlining the story. If it is, where is that event in history, it just doesn't exist. It has been greatly overplayed by the romantic imaginations of the writer.

Attempts have been made to defend its full historical accuracy, but they are not successful in establishing Esther to any time in history. The book abounds in probabilities and stretching the truth and it bears the stamp of an imaginative romance. The writer of the book of Esther knew Persia sufficiently well to give the story the complete Persian coloring that it does have. This is why you must remove Ezra as the author. However secular history knows nothing of the heroes Mordecai and Esther. Nor is there any Queen in History of any nation named Vashti.

If Mordecai was one of the exiles carried to Babylon, in 597 B.C., which the record records that he was, He would have been one hundred and twenty years old in the reign of Xerxes, and this would make our beautiful Queen also between one hundred and a hundred and twenty years old. Her child bearing years came later, and the formula just won't work. There are huge holes in the story, but I suppose that the holes were left so big, because these Kenite scribes thought most Christians to be quick to conclusion and so slow in seeing the truth.

Now with this background in mind, let us see if we can make sense of what the Father would have us retrieve, or learn from this fairy-tale of the book of Esther. Our heavenly Father definitely

intended this book to be in the Bible, whereby we can brand our enemy the liar, and spot that Kenite even down to His feast days throughout all times. Even to this day.

He then quotes scripture from throughout the *Book of Esther* and also from the *Book of Daniel* in an attempt to discredit Esther and Mordecai.

A discussant named Coldstar responds:

Ester is a very important book and holds the keys to what Judaism is all about. The book is OCCULT.

Germanic777 ends the blog with the following question:

So it's in the Bible so we can get an inside glimpse of the jews workings?

The second forum is simply titled "The book of Esther" (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t531798/>) and was started by a discussant named Grove Guardian on October 25, 2007:

Greetings. I have heard people say many different things about the book of Esther, some say it should be taken out of the bible, others that Esther and Mordecai were Jewish murders and that they were actual Jews (Edomites). Would any of you be able to give me some good info? Thank you.

A reply is posted by Coldstar who was involved in the previous forum:

Esther shows the full depravity of Jews. God is never mentioned in that book. Esther and Ishtar are sound related. The book is probably some occult tale hoax which was used to brainwash Jews into aggressive anti-nonjew thinking. This results in statements like this:

"Saddam Hussein thought he was a reincarnated Babylonian king; his evil plan to kill the Jews ended with another Purim miracle." Missiles, Masks and Miracles, Leviathan Press

Esther was written by somebody who was satanic and made a case for the killing of the "goyim" by Jews. Purim is Jewry's blood-lust fun holiday. (The story of Purim is told in the Book of Esther).

The killing Traditions of the Elders of Satan start in the Book of Esther. The myth of the mass killing of Jews is represented as a historic reality and used as an excuse for aggressive Jewish behavior and perpetual lying cries of holocausts. Being in the Bible, the Book of Esther, acts as a powerful brainwashing manual of non-Jews who tend to become docile when they read Esther, feeling sorry for Jews and help them fight their self-induced fabled anti-semitism. It works like a powerful spell. But one can wake up from a spell, and it appears that this is happening. Many people are waking up to the tricks of Judaism and they can finally

see those enemies for who they are. Purim, when they drink themselves silly, is the best time to defeat this evil lot.

The "Judeo-Christians" are not Christian but are Judeo, and the blood of all the people who died because of bloody Esther Jewry is on their hands also. They are neither going to see Heaven nor shall they be raptured to salvation.

A discussant called golfball ends the discussion with the following tirade:

Thank you, and yes, Esther did not appear to look like a Jewess and the conniving Jew Mordecai employed this to do his damage.

Jews are truly a CURSE.

They make the ideal parasite by using their skin color to blend in with whites and strike unexpectedly. Our natural compassionate nature is a grave weakness exploited by Jews even today.

Jews exploit whites wherever and whenever they can. Jews are the destroyers and have nearly destroyed our race (albeit not yet completely).

As long as the Klan exists, their victory cannot be total. Although they have most of the white race under their heel already, Jews will not be satisfied until every last vestige of white resistance is obliterated.

I can safely state that Jews even have supporters here at Stormfront that endorse, support or allow open Klan bashing and other staged character attacks upon the final defenders of White civilization.

Klan bashing at Stormfront is a pinnacle of Jewish pleasure in this online environment. Of ALL things that Jews HATE, Jews HATE White Christians most of all. Jews and their supporters have found a stronghold for their "tale-bearing" at Stormfront.

DISCUSSION

It makes sense that the critique of the *Book of Esther* would occur in two discussions located in the Christian Identity forum of *Stormfront.org*. Christian Identists have been notoriously anti-Semitic since British Israelism was coopted by Wesley Swift to suit his racist, right wing agenda beginning in the 1940s postwar era. It is difficult to tell if the discussants in the two forums are Identists although it is fairly obvious they are extremely anti-Semitic. Again, this is not unusual since Judaism as a religious perspective has been a target for prejudice and stereotyping since the early days of Jewish immigration into the United States. In 1913, Jewish business man Leo Frank was accused of murdering a non-Jewish teenager who worked in his Atlanta factory. Frank was eventually lynched by a mob of Georgia citizens who believed the words of their governor, Tom Watson that Jews were "scum and dregs

of the Parasite Race” (Feagin and Feagin, 2012: 115). No group in history has experienced a broader range of negative stereotypes for a longer period of time than the Jews.

The *Stormfront.org* site contains thousands of posts from discussants from all over the world. Much of the rhetoric employed by discussants surrounds their perception that the media is controlled by Jews along with politicians in the United States and abroad. White supremacy ideology is still influenced by Swift’s message that Jesus was not a Jew and that whites have a racial rather than a religious destiny (Barkun, 1990: 122; Zeskind, 1986: 19). In Celto_Saxon’s post contained in “A Jewess is uneasy with Purim” (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t305561/>), he⁴ states that Jesus never acknowledged Esther and that Purim is not a legal feast day sanctioned by God. He goes on to claim that Esther’s story has no historical background and is nothing more than a pagan myth.

In the second forum titled “The Book of Esther” (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t431798/>), Coldstar, who also participated in the first forum a year earlier, responds to the first post by discussant, Grove Guardian, that whoever actually wrote the *Book of Esther* was satanic and out to kill all non-Jews. He⁵ goes on to state that because Esther is contained in the *Bible* her words are taken as fact. He warns that non-Jews continue to be brainwashed about the evils of Jews and the myth of the Holocaust. The final discussant in the forum uses the pseudonym of golfball. He points out that Jews are a cursed race and they have used their skin color to intermarry and blend with whites. He suggests that the Klan is an important tool for staving off the powerful and sadistic nature of Jewish people who hate white Christians more than any other group.

CONCLUSION

Christian Identity emerged as a racist pseudo-religious movement in direct opposition to Judeo-Christian and religious revivalism that occurred in the United States following the war effort and subsequent defeat of Adolf Hitler. The years immediately following World War II are often seen as an age of religious enthusiasm that diminished longstanding theological and racial divides and helped to secure social harmony – at least for a while. Wuthnow (1988) suggests that the appeal of religion served as an antidote from wartime violence and social turbulence during the years prior to the civil rights movement. Images of Nazi death camps, among other things, broke down some of the entrenched barriers between Christians and non-Christians that had been a problem since the middle years of the 19th century when migration patterns changed with an influx of less desirable immigrants such as Jews, the Irish, and Italians.

Following the war years came the Communist threat of the 1950s. Mainstream American religious leaders urged their congregations to see faith as a way to defend against godless Communists and their political sympathizers. Anti-Communist fervor gave Wesley Swift, one of the American founders of Christian

⁴ The author is assuming the discussant is male.

⁵ Again, from my years spent analyzing *Stormfront.org* posts, I am assuming the discussants in this forum are all male.

Identity, a rallying cry and opened doors for him to attract some unwitting mainstream followers. With his claims that Judaism and Communism were inextricably linked, Swift connected with many Americans in the immediate postwar years who were hesitant to believe media reports surrounding the Holocaust (Milwicki, 2014/2015). Swift argued that the Holocaust had been manufactured by a coalition of Zionist leaders and Communists. Coupled with his hellfire and brimstone preaching style, Christian Identity became the ideology of choice for many right wing groups.

Although the promotion of religious tolerance may have been popular among mainstream religious leaders of the time, opinion polls indicate that popular sentiments among the general population may not have been so positive. Anti-Semitic attitudes, racism and nativism, unfounded fears of Communism, and Swift's rhetorical fusion of Judaism and Communism, created an atmosphere in which Christian Identity not only emerged but had staying power. According to its founder, both anti-Semitism and American racism and nativism were biblically justified. Within such a climate the peaceful goals of religious revival and the success of the Judeo-Christian tradition were not as compatible as many historians have suggested. Christian Identity presented itself as a spiritually inspired alternative for people who were still not convinced that Jews were either trustworthy or deserving of the same salvation that Christians expected. The tradition continues in Christian Identity sects such as the one pastored by Thom Robb in Arkansas and as a standalone discussion forum in *Stormfront.org*. The belief system reinforces the hatred of Jews and other out-groups and encourages adherents to reinterpret the *Bible* to suit their own racist agenda.

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An Inclination Toward the Above and the Architecture of the Ancients

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Introduction

With support from archaeological finds and ethnological record, this work will propose a basis for the ancient's inclination to build toward the above. Like all things human, a complex of circumstances comes into play for a particular endeavor, and the architecture of the ancients—like their ritual behavior—was a result of the existential condition and the elements of reason, remembrance, the need to know and what is not known which lead to a desire for and belief in continuation. The existential state of vulnerability which led to vicarious-use required a cognitive capacity of complete event-retention. This same aptitude for remembrance led to the concept of spirit beings when significant ones died, did not come back, but were still remembered. Since they were placed in the superlative “above,” a logical desire developed to connect to them and because of the unknown to build toward them. A foundational aspect for understanding the purpose of such structures and the probable rituals associated with them, is they were not just symbolic, but were an assumptive reality centrally and magically used as part of ritual procedure to connect to celestial gods dwelling in the above. Given the inclination toward the above and the element of the unknown that enabled it, at this juncture the subconscious mirror of physical certainty, and the association of similitude and exertion play important roles in the design and intended purpose of Neolithic and primary structures, to connect to the beyond and the above.

Why the Above? The Existential Factors

It is certainly recognized the larger edifices primary people built were for the purpose of making a connection to—and instilling a belief in—the spiritual world. The realization of such structures begins with the desire for continuation. As Gabriel Cooney relates concerning Neolithic structures, “We should think of both burial and ancestral rites as strategies by the living for coping with the concept and meaning of death.”¹ From where does the concern for continuation come? It begins with the existential situation and psychological reaction to it, the complex of which is comprised of a state of physical vulnerability and vicarious-use that results in increased cognitive capacity and event retention. Because of our complete memory, we do not forget significant others when they leave us; the memory of them is still fully alive, and the consternation of separation is therefore channeled into constructive release. This is why we have memorials, pictures of remembrance, and

¹ Gabriel Cooney, *Landscapes of Neolithic Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2000) 90.

funerary ritual. Thus it is the total awareness of discontinuation combined with complete memory which desires continuity. As Smith and Dale relate about the Ba-ila of South Africa,

Unlike other peoples, they do not say that every death is unnatural and caused by witchcraft, for, as we have seen they ascribe sickness and death to other and some natural causes. But they look back to the beginning of things and speak of a time when death was not. . . With reference to these statements about men passing away and not returning, we must explain that they do not mean that at death a person is utterly extinct. It is the resurrection of the body that is denied. The person himself lives on.²

So the idea of an afterlife is a rationalized extrapolation that derives from the existential situation. But where does the idea of spirit come from? Malinowski mentions belief in spirit is the result of the belief in immortality, and the substance of spirits are the “full-blooded passion and desire for life, rather than the shadowy stuff which haunts his dreams and illusions.” But rather than a superimposition of an emotional impulse, like Freud’s idea of wishful thinking,³ primary people came to the same conclusion about spirit that we do today: it is something amorphous and non-physical.⁴ Once the hope of continuation is concretized into an idea of an “afterlife,” and others “leave” and do not physically come back, then the state of being after death must be something other than physical. Therefore, it is “spirit.” This is why spirit is amorphously depicted as breath, shadow, or water.

Once the idea of an afterlife is established as a certainty, its composition is recognized as spiritual and becomes a part of all things. This is known as animism. A primary part also resides elsewhere, in—as Otto would describe—an “otherworldly”⁵ place, the origin of which comes from “the above.”

Starting with the state of physicality it follows, from the perspective of task accomplishment alone, that a discernment would be made between the “here” and the “there”. Given that much of what is visible and impactful comes from the sky—the sun, rain, moon and stars—it is natural the “above there” is considered transcendently important and becomes the abode of the gods. Thus, with the spatial connotation of “the above” denoting a superiority of being, there is a natural association of the gods with celestial bodies and an inclination, reflected in the edifices built by primary people, toward the above. We see this inclination when Montezuma I celebrates the installation of an expansive flower garden by raising his

² Edwin W. Smith and Andrew Murray Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, vol. 2 (New Hyde, New York: University Books, 1968) 100, 103.

³ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950) 104.

⁴ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1992) 51.

⁵ Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958) 25-30, 36, 49, 59, 65, 70, 72, 80, 82, 141, 167.

hands to the heavens and thanking the Lord of all Created Things. He, along with his brother, thought the success of it a special favor from the “Lord of the Heights.”⁶

A State of Not Knowing and Proximity to the Above

While a reason for the inclination toward the above is given, the element that gives rise to much of the primary person’s rationalized explanations, without which would be considered incomprehensible superstitions, is the element of what is not known.

While today we sit in material comfort, with scientific answers satisfying our need to know, people in the past without abundant physical knowledge at their disposal also needed to know. This combined with the factor of not-knowing drove assumptions about the self and the environment that found expression in practice and behavior. Thus we see the factor of not-knowing in the production of religious related infrastructure in ancient civilizations. Without knowing how distant the moon and stars are, they appear close, as a Kaffir native indicates with these questions: “Who has touched the stars with his hands? On what pillars do they rest?”⁷ In fact, as Levy-Bruhl relates,

As a rule, primitives imagine the sky as a dome which rests upon the earth on the horizon, and even at the zenith is not very far removed. Many of the myths tell us that originally the sky touched the earth everywhere, but it was one day separated, and raised to some distance above it. Like their sky, the superstructure of primitives’ “religious” ideas is a low one. The world of spirits, of unseen, supernatural beings, has remained close to the world of men.⁸

Since the ancients construed a connection between celestial bodies and beings, a physical closeness would be advantageous.⁹ By building up to them, one could gain privileged access. Plutarch mentions that even in Roman times, “The geometricians say that no mountain has a height, and no sea a depth, of more than ten furlongs,”¹⁰ or 1.25 miles. The Egyptians, in fact, believed the sky, and the celestial bodies within it, were quite close to the ground. Thus, because the distance to celestial bodies was not known, an attempt to get closer to the gods was made by building elevated mound structures and pyramids.

⁶ Fray Diego Durán, *The Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. Doris Heyden and Fernando Horcasitas (New York: Orion Press, 1964) 150.

⁷ John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878) 114.

⁸ Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *Primitives and the Supernatural* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973) 36.

⁹ The Osage Indians dressed their dead warriors in full battle array and placed them at higher elevation to assure proper ascent of the spirit. In an upright sitting position, the warrior would now be exposed to the views of the deity Sun, who would approve his ascent. If the warrior was not recognized and his ascent not approved, his spirit would enter a screech owl, whose hooting indicated the warrior’s displeasure. Elmo Engenthron, *Indians of the Ozark Plateau* (Branson, Missouri: The Ozarks Mountaineer, 1983) 79.

¹⁰ Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus*, 15.11.

It is understood the Egyptian pyramids were tombs, built as reminders of the greatness of those entombed while chronicling their celestial connection. A. Rosalie David expounds further:

The Egyptian word for a pyramid was 'Mer'. This has tentatively been translated as 'Place of Ascension' and some scholars suggest that the pyramid was regarded as a means of access for the king to climb to heaven where he joined his father the sun-god. In the religious texts which were inscribed in the later pyramids and which are known today as the 'Pyramid Texts', spells occur which refer to a 'staircase . . . provided for the king's ascent to heaven' and this may be a description of the purpose and supposed function of the pyramid.¹¹

Similar assumption is found among the Ba-ila, in what is now Zambia in South Africa, in the legend of their Supreme Being, Leza, and an old woman. When the woman was a child, Leza stretched out his hand against her family and killed her parents. As she grew older, all those connected with her died, even her children and grandchildren. Just as she was about to be taken by old age, she grew young again, and in her perplexity and indignation sought to find Leza and ask him the meaning of it all. Prior to traveling through many countries, to find where the earth meets the sky where she thought she would find a road to lead her to Leza, she built a structure:

Somewhere up there in the sky must be His dwelling: if only she could reach it! She began to cut down trees, immense trees and tall, joining them together and so planting a structure that would reach to heaven. It grew and grew, but as it was getting to be as she wanted it, the lowest timbers rotted and it fell. She fell with it, but without being killed or breaking a bone. She set to work again and reared the structure, but once again the foundations rotted and it fell. She gave up in despair, but not her intention of finding God.¹²

But not only is the celestial realm close, it was fashioned as a weaver might manufacture cloth: "The Man stretches the warp and draws the weft; the Man has spread it out upon the dome of the sky. These are the pegs that are fastened in place; they made the melodies into the shuttles for weaving."¹³

Among the ancient Chinese, physical proximity to heaven and celestial beings was also assumed as indicated in the practice of sending messages to the gods by way of kites.

As late as the mid 1800's, among the Fijians on the island of Koro, Thomas Williams speaks of a site the natives point to near Na Savnu Vanua Levu, where legend has it men of former ages, eager for astronomical information and curious if the moon was inhabited, built a tower of timber on a mound. When their dream was

¹¹ A. Rosalie David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 59.

¹² Smith and Dale, *Ila-Speaking Peoples*, 197-98.

¹³ *Ibid*, 10.130.2, Doniger, 33.

close to being fulfilled, the structure fell, and with great calamity scattered the builders all over Fiji.¹⁴

Evidence of this same thinking can be found in the Hebrew text, from the ingrained practice of worshipping in high places common among the Canaanites before the emergence of the Israelites. It had its allure and persisted in spite of attempts to abolish it, which is seen when kings who, despite being overall compliant to monotheistic conduct, failed to give it up. We see this reluctance when, Solomon showed his dedication for the Lord by “walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places” (1 Kings 3:3).

In 1 Kings 15:11-14 and Chronicles 15:16, Asa, like David, did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He removed the idols his predecessors had built, and even removed his grandmother, Maachah, from being queen for making an image of Asherah, which he destroyed and burned by the brook Kidron. But the high places he did not remove.

In 1 Kings 22:41-43, like his father, Asa (2 Chronicles 15:17), Jehoshaphat king of Judah, did “what was right in the eyes of the lord,” except he did not take away the high places where sacrifices and incense were offered. This can be seen again in 2 Kings 12:3, where Jehoash, king in Jerusalem, “did what was right in the sight of the Lord,” except he did not take away the high places, and again with Azariah, king of Judah (2 Kings 15: 3-4), and with Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-35).

In a multitude of instances, the persistent desire to worship in high places in spite of directive against it is shown through continual attempts to abolish it. In 1 Kings 13:2, the priests of the high places themselves are sacrificed. In 2 Kings 18:4, King Hezekiah removes the high places as well as altars and images associated with them, but his son, Manasseh, rebuilds them (2 Kings 21:1-3). Josiah, in 2 Kings 23:5, 19-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:3, restores worship of the one god by destroying altars and removing and executing the priests of the high places in Judah and Samaria. Jeremiah excoriates Israel and Judah for their abomination of making their sons and daughters pass through the fire to Molech on the high places of Baal (Jeremiah 19:5-6; 32:32-35). And finally, in Ezekiel 6:1-8, God warns the people of Israel that, because they abandoned the laws and decrees of the one true God (5:5-6), He would first destroy the high places and altars associated with them. Then, in front of the idols they had turned to, he would slay all but a remnant of people.

The picture we get from these scenarios shows the difficulty in replacing a rational association configured because of what is not known based on what is assumed to be known. Like the Egyptians, Canaanites, and the later Mississippians, South, and Central American peoples, the Israelites did not know the extreme distances between earth and celestial bodies. Because the conclusion persisted that beings were in the air and sky, it became an ingrained idea to get to a higher place to be close to them. In the case of the Israelites, this ran counter to an omnipresent single god.

Building Toward the Above

¹⁴ Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians: The Islands and Their Inhabitants* (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858) ed. George Stringer Rowe, vol. 1, 252-53.

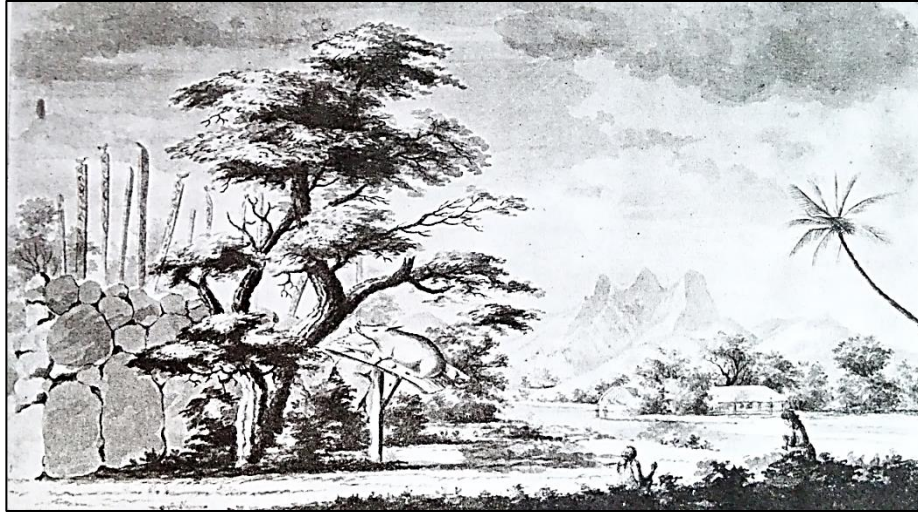
The association between burial, elevated edifice and connection to the above is suggested in the late 1700's by James Cook in his description of the ritual function of the Tahitian *Marae*. Cook describes the *Maraes* as pyramidal. He depicts one rising in stepped fashion to 44 feet, on which stood figures of a wooden bird and a fish fashioned from stone. At first Cook and his party thought the *Maraes* were burial places for the dead, but found they served worship and ceremonial functions, the purpose at least in one instance was to get the dead on their way to the afterlife. Within the *Marae* grounds were erected platforms set on posts 8 to 12 feet high. On these altars were set hogs, dogs, fish or fruit as offerings to *Eatua*. Within vicinity of the *Maraes* and altars, were burial places.¹⁵

The Mories which we at first thought were berrying places are wholly built for places of worship and for the performing of religious ceremonies in. The Viands are laid upon Altars erected 8, 10 or 12 feet high by stout posts . . . their Mories as well as the tombs of the dead they seem to hold sacred . . . The Viands laid near the tombs of the dead are from what I can learn not for the deceased but as an offering to the *Eatua* made upon that occasion, who if not would destroy the body and not except of the Soul for they believe of a future state of rewards and punishments.¹⁶

So here we have, in spatial and cognitive proximity, a burial place, structures of elevation, and a ceremony with the intended purpose of helping the deceased reach the afterlife. We see the inclination towards elevation in the raised altar as obeisant appeal to deity, who must come from above to retrieve the offering based on the physical aspect of the altar itself. The *Marae* structure reveals an appeal to the above, where deity resides. Sidney Parkinson shows raised poles within the *Marae* grounds with figures of birds on top of them. The bird on top of the *Marae* and the ones on top of the poles also signify an appeal to the above and a means of getting there. All of these motifs: birds, raised platforms, elevated structures in spatial relation to a place of burial, and the cognitive proximity of ceremony concerning death, suggest the motifs of elevation, as assumptive reality, was thought to assist, with *Eatua's* acceptance, the deceased to the afterlife.

¹⁵ James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Endeavor 1768-1771*, vol. 1, ed. J. C. Beaglehole (Published for the Hakluyt Society, Cambridge University Press, 1955) 111-13, 134-35.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 135.



**Tahitian *Marae* at Raiatea with offering to the Eatua, by Sidney Parkinson
James Cook's Voyage of Discovery, 1768-1771**

Another example of building toward the above would be when the Aztecs placed their temples on top of a truncated pyramid. This inclination towards the above was confirmed and accentuated when Montezuma ordered a large concave sacrificial stone to be carved in the likeness of the sun. As if the temple grounds on the pyramid were not close enough to the celestial sphere, the stone was placed on top of a platform “as tall as a man” with four staircases “pointing in the four cardinal directions” leading up to the stone. After ascending the staircases, four priests would tie down the victim by the arms and legs, while one would cut the chest open and extract the heart. The heart was then given to the king, who held it high towards the sun and sprinkled the victim’s blood in the direction of the sun.¹⁷



¹⁷ Durán, *The Aztecs*, 120-21.

Given the proclivity toward the above and the element of the unknown that enabled it, at this juncture the subconscious mirror of physical certainty and the association of similitude and exertion play important roles in the design and intended purpose of Neolithic and primary structures. But a foundational aspect for understanding the purpose for which such structures served, and the probable rituals associated with them, is they were not just symbolic—as is often assumed about the material behavior of primary people—but were an assumptive reality.

Symbolism Only?

While the designation that the ritual function associated with primary architecture served the purpose of promulgating a specific belief system while maintaining political structure is pertinent, it is consequent to the task accomplishment of connecting to the world above. Like Egyptian funerary rituals were thought to help the deceased realize the afterlife, or the false doors of ancient Egypt and Cambodia signifying real spiritual presence behind the door, many of the ancient's ritualistic procedures and edifices associated with them were not just symbolic, but were thought to accomplish real tasks.

A symbol is an object or idea that brings to mind past events or mythical accomplishments to create communal purpose that an individual will identify with through emotive conceptualization. The cross and crescent are symbols that hold special meaning for Christians and Muslims. The symbol of an eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus devouring a snake told a story of origin for the Aztecs. The Roman standard and fasces held special meaning and purpose for the Roman people, as did the *Churinga* for the Australian aborigine, the sacred bundles for the American Indian, and totem objects for many primary people. While the symbol itself is an inert representation and involves passive conceptualization, this certainly is not to be confused with the intended purpose of many rituals, and their associated objects and edifices, which is to actively accomplish a real task while holding an assumptive reality for the participants in addition to their symbolic meaning.

An example of assumptive reality in action is when Persius and the Macedonians and Aemilius and the Romans bedded down near Mount Olympus for the night before battle, when the next day an eclipse occurred and caused much consternation in both camps. According to custom, the Romans tried to induce the moon's return by clashing bronze utensils and holding up blazing firebrands and torches towards the heavens.¹⁸ Another example is the use of blood: Since it was considered to have magical properties, its ubiquitous ritual use—from helping crops to grow, to assisting the deceased's journey to the afterlife, to satiating a god's thirst—would have been a natural choice to accomplish tasks. Therefore, blood was not just symbolic, but was assumed to produce real results. The practice of sacrifice was itself a means of controlling destiny to gain favorable outcomes in battle, at harvest, and in other ways

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus*, 16.7-8.

to ensure a nation's prosperity. The verbal formulations, physical gesticulations, and sometimes extremely complex and time consuming (sometimes days long) choreography involved in ritual song and dance, would have had specific purposes serving communal or ruler's interests. Among the Hopi, a song itself could have power to accomplish a thing,¹⁹ and words alone, among the Greeks and Romans, could have the magical ability to curse or bless.²⁰

In studying the structures of some ancient people, such as the Neolithic, when there is no historical witness concerning their purpose the reluctance to assess more than symbolic value is understandable, but at the same time this discounts the superabundance of material and ethnographic evidence that primary people lived very much in a magical world and were surrounded and affected by spiritual powers who themselves were counter-influenced by humans with magical affect. While the ancients certainly knew and used the value of a symbol, ritual manipulation was also used to control circumstances beyond control. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume, in the absence of historical witness (though there are certainly markers in the case of many Neolithic structures indicating otherworldly inclination), the primary purpose, for the edifices of the Neolithic, like the Egyptian, South Pacific and Mesoamerican ones, was to connect with, or reach, the powers above.

The Subconscious Mirror of Relative Certainty and the Religious Edifice as a Central Object of Ritual

As hubs of ceremony, the temples of the ancients were objects themselves employed as an integral part of ritual procedure. It is helpful therefore, to understand the reason and rationale for the primary person's inclination toward the superstitious practice of ritual ceremony.

One way of characterizing superstition would be to see it as a form of actionable reassurance. Due to the existential condition of physical vulnerability, with greater memory, awareness, and personal dependence, humans have a deep-seated need to control the uncertainties of life: the known against the unknown. Ritual procedure therefore provides reassurance to the soldier for victory in combat; to the athlete, victory in sports; to the pious believer, victory in death. And the origin of the actions involved in ceremony start with the actions involved in everyday life, from threading a needle to the process of planting, harvesting, weaving or building—all are actions of survival providing a level of predictability and certainty. When a spear or farming tool is fashioned, or a gun assembled, the manufacturing process itself is predictable and certain; the use of such implements provides an intended level of comfort, control, and dependability. When it comes to the origin and production of superstitious procedure, these actions are subconsciously hearkened to when other aspects of uncertainty in life present themselves. Superstitious impulses therefore mirror

¹⁹ Edmund Nequatewa, *Truth of a Hopi* (Radford, Virginia: Wilder Publications, 2007) 8-22 and Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977) 4-5, 39, 156.

²⁰ J. H. M. Strubbe, "Cursed Be He That Moves My Bones" in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 39-42.

successful survival strategies in the mind's subconscious effort to increase control. As Max Weber alludes,

“Religiously and magically motivated behavior is relatively rational behavior . . . it follows rules of experience . . . rubbing will elicit sparks from pieces of wood, and in like fashion the simulative actions of a magician will evoke rain from the heavens. . . thus, religious or magical behavior or thinking must not be set apart from the range of everyday purposive conduct.”²¹

That ritual procedure follows a strict order of events, and any diversion from the prescribed procedure creates an expectation of failure, is testament that superstitious ritual is a mirror of the experiential template.²² The making of any weapon or implement demands specific order of procedure to achieve practical results. The fletching on an arrow, if misaligned, will cause it to veer from the intended mark. A net constructed without consistent repeatable procedure will at some point fail. A pot constructed without the proper medium, construction, or tempering will fail in carrying the intended load. Therefore, it is practical for humans to mimic real life experiences in the construction of superstitious ritual requiring specific procedures that follow prescribed recipes for obtaining success in an attempt to control things beyond control. In other words, the important existential template to which the subconscious mind hearkens is the procedural string of relatively certain events. Building shelters requires specific procedures, which provide relatively certain results. The making and wearing of clothing requires a specific process, which, if followed, produces predictable outcomes. At one extreme, the Arctic Inuit must make and wear clothing with specific procedure, the deviation from which can produce tragic results. In other instances, the dictates of job, weather, sport, hunting, fishing, and fashion also require specific procedures in order to obtain relatively certain results.

Thus, as humans, we create a world of certainty as a means of survival through the formulated and procedural vicarious-use of material things. Yet, every day is filled with serendipitous instances. And this serendipity is the very foundation for superstition. This is why, when the prospect of uncertainty presents itself, there is an immediate impulse to control future outcome to make it favorable and certain with the physical manipulation of things, a process which mirrors the physical reality of task accomplishment. So, with the elements of the unknown and the uncertain, and the creation of a spirit world, the ceremonial edifices primary people built were themselves objects, manipulated on a grand scale, to achieve beneficial ends for the community by influencing and connecting to the powers above.

The Association of Similitude and the Role of Exertion: Neolithic Structures

²¹ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1922) 1.

²² For the complexities and precise formulae to the ritual of animal sacrifice in Roman religion, see Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 36.

While the subconscious mirroring of physical reality reveals the reason for and elucidates the procedural makeup of ritual practice, the association of similitude was an often implemented means of controlling things beyond control and became part of the process itself.

Concerning associative reasoning and the use of magic among primary peoples, James Frazer identified “imitative magic” as “a mistaken association of similar ideas” and “contagious magic” as “a mistaken association of contiguous ideas,” where one event or ritual can act on another event in a contagious way, even if the two events are separated by time and distance.²³

But the idea of like-kind associations and the expectation of like effects come from the identification of similarity within existence. As one observes one’s image in water, the actions of the body are perfectly mirrored. On a lake or a pond, the image of a bird flying on the surface of the water would exactly mirror the flying bird itself. The mirroring of likeness is all around. The behaviors of animals within the same genus and species are similar in their movements and appearance as opposed to others. One bird’s actions are similar to other birds’ actions—they fly, they look alike and they don’t crawl or climb. One alligator looks and behaves like other alligators. Considering primary people had little meteorological, biological, or physical knowledge about the cause of things, much assumption about cause and effect had to be based on appearances and the rational conclusion that likeness equals likeness; therefore, there had to be a causal link to things that appear similar. This rationalization combined with the need to control things beyond control lent itself to many of the associative assumptions and resulting manipulations in the primary person’s world of existence. Thus, ochre, because of its similar appearance, was used as a real substitute for blood. It had the same magical properties and could be used like blood with the same results: to heal, bind, purify, or insure life after death, which is why so many burial areas are covered with it.

We see the association of likeness thinking among the ancient Egyptians. As Herodotus relates,

More portents have been discovered by them than by all other peoples; when a portent occurs, they take note of the outcome and write it down; and if something of like kind happens again, they think it will have a like result.²⁴

The Cherokee of the America Southwest had their pregnant women drink a concoction which included slippery elm bark and spotted touch-me-not stems. One of the ingredients was to ensure a smooth delivery, and the other to frighten the fetus to “jump down” at the appropriate time. Certain foods were forbidden, such as squirrel meat, because the animal, when startled, goes up a tree, which might influence the fetus to go up rather than down; speckled trout, because it might cause birthmarks; salt, because it makes meat swell, complicating delivery; rabbit, because it might cause the baby to have unusually large eyes. The expectant mother was

²³ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, vol. 1, (New York: Macmillan, 1922) 12-15, 43, 57.

²⁴ *Herodotus*, 2.82.2.

also warned against lingering in doorways, which might prolong delivery, and against wearing handkerchiefs, lest the umbilical cord get wrapped around the child's neck.²⁵

Among the Omaha Indians of North America, when rain is needed, members of the Sacred Buffalo society fill a large jar and dance four times around it. Then, one of them fills his mouth with some of the water, spits it back out into the air, and turns the jar over; others follow his example, and this ultimately saves the corn crop.²⁶ Such examples of the desire to control circumstances like the weather are multitudinous and invariably involve like-kind associations: water to control rain, air to control the wind, and heat to create drought or control the sun.²⁷

Codrington describes the *mendeka* wizard of the Santa Cruz people of the Solomon Islands:

To get sunshine he puts up some burnt wood into a tree; to get rain he throws down water at the foot of the Tinota, an ancient *duka*; to make wind he waves the branch of the tree which has this power; in each case he chants the appropriate charm. The same things were done and similar methods followed in the Bank's Islands with the *mana* songs and *mana* stones. The art is the same in the New Hebrides. To get rain the Aurora *gismana* puts a tuft of leaves which has *mana* into the hollow of a stone and on this crushed methysticum; to these he adds one of his collection of stones which has *mana* for rain; all is done with the singing of charms with Tagaro's name . . . The mass ferments, and steam charged with *mana* goes up and makes clouds and rain. It will not do to pound the pepper too hard, lest the wind should blow too strong.²⁸

The other means by which a ritual was thought to accomplish the intended result is the element of exertion. Human excitement has much to do with exertion against counter forces. In that sense, excitement is an extreme form of relief that transforms itself into elation. The danger and struggle involved in bringing down mammoth by early hunters, or killing whale by early fishermen, would be an instant source of glory and gratification memorialized through story and elaboration. Modern fishermen feel the same satisfaction when reeling in giant marlin or sailfish.

Today, in the world of sports, the dynamic of exertion against counter force is instantly set in motion when two opposing teams or individuals are placed in competition. Excitement and involvement for the players and spectators are heightened with rewards, honors, medals, pageantry, differentiating and sometimes

²⁵ *America's Fascinating Indian Heritage*, ed. James A. Maxwell (Pleasantville, New York: Reader's Digest Association, 1978) 97.

²⁶ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 73.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72-96.

²⁸ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folklore* (New Haven, Connecticut: Hraf Press, 1957) 201.

elaborate costume, and the keeping of records.²⁹ Records serve to maintain exhilaration because they, themselves, are an opposing force. Not only are competitors to be overcome, but so are records. When a record is “broken,” this is cause for celebration, glorification, and immortalization for the record breaker.

Exertion also played an important role in infusing meaning and purpose to the ceremonial process of primary people. In the Altaic horse sacrifice, only after much invocation, fumigation, drum beating, and a celestial journey to the abode of Bai Ulgan (a celestial prince) by the shaman alone, are predictions given concerning the weather and upcoming harvest.³⁰ Many of the extremely complex and drawn out ceremonies of the Australians involved a great deal of movement from one place to another; in this process, the wanderings and actions of their *Alcheringa* ancestors were mirrored and memorialized.³¹ Like the Australians, the American Quapaw also had complex rituals often lasting days.³² In 1689, Henri de Tonty, Italian fellow soldier/explorer with the Frenchmen Cavalier La Salle, relates how a particular elaborate welcoming ceremony, involving much feasting, drumming and “masquerading,” lasted for four days.³³ Among the Kalahari Bushmen, during a period of drought, a deity is influenced to provide rain only after an extended duration of rhythmic song and dance leading the practitioners into death-like trances.³⁴ Like the Kalahari one, with many rituals there is a progression of exertion toward an altered state of mind and emotion serving the purpose for which the ritual exists: to convince all of its effectiveness in getting a thing done.

In Fiji, strangers wanting to consult a god come to the *bure*, or temple, with a whale’s tooth as payment. Williams recounts that the priest sat next to a white cloth, while those making the entreaty were made to sit on the other end of the *bure*. After a prolonged period of silence, the priest began to make movements, first with slight

²⁹ The perception of accomplishment, which exceeds reality when compared with the feats of other species (the speed of deer, antelope, cheetah, sailfish, tuna, etc.), when exerted against the impediment of opposition, feeds the need for meaning and exhilaration through exaltation.

³⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Essential Sacred Writings From Around the World* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins Publishing, 1967) 211-16.

³¹ The days long *Intichiuma* ceremony of the Witchetty Grub people, which guarantees the increase of the totem animal, involved fourteen or more distinct ceremonial movements. Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968) 170-178. The *Intichiuma* of the Honey-Ant totem also involved various journeying, 186-89.

³² Read also Helen Roundtree’s account of the divining and rain-making rituals of the Powhatan, with all their passionate gestures, songs, dances, and incantations: Helen C. Roundtree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) 132-33. When Englishman John Smith was captured in the winter of 1607-08 and held for several days, the Powhatans tried to divine why he was there and how many of his kind would follow. Over several days, the ritual involved singing and the laying down of small piles of corn. Finally, a cycle of songs came for dividing the piles of corn accompanied “with such strange stretching of their armes, and violent passions & gestures” that Smith feared for his life.

³³ Morris S. Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and the Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000) 1. Again, it is interesting how disparate cultures create similar and common answers to the existential situation. In this instance, in answer to the monotony of life, with the creation of ceremony and feasting, the length of time and complexity involved in the ceremony is intended to suppress the monotony of life, not only during, but after the ceremony, with meaningful remembrance.

³⁴ Jens Bjerre, *Kalahari* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960) 170-72.

contortions of the face and then twitching movements of the limbs. With murmurs and sobs, the motion would quicken with a crescendo, and with enlarged veins, bulging eyes, and convulsing body, the god announced his arrival with a cry from the priest, "It is !! It is !!" While giving the answer, frenzied convulsions continued, sweat poured forth, and tears fell from strained eyes. After the answer was given, the priest's symptoms gradually subsided; with a vacant stare, the god announced, "I depart," and violently threw the priest to the mat. Finally, the god's return to the spirit world was announced with the blowing of a conch shell or the firing of a musket.³⁵

During times of drought in Zambia South Africa, the Ba-ila first looked to a *musonzhi*, or diviner, to tell them the cause. If a certain *mizhimo*—beings who were once men—caused it, they were instructed to make an offering. If the *mizhimo* was not the perpetrator, they were at a loss, and another functionary appeared: the *mushinshimi*, or prophet or prophetess. With everyone kneeling in a circle around the prophet and clapping their hands, the prophet first worked himself into an ecstasy before delivering the message of more droughts, famine, or of delayed rains. He then ordered them to build two prayer huts, to pray, and then to go through the rain-making ceremony.³⁶

As to the rite of sacrifice, a degree of physical frenzy is accompanied with incantation and invocation through a combination of drums, and/or singing, and/or and dancing.³⁷ But what is most apparent is the end-purpose involves a process in which

the effects of the rite are made certain in the minds of the practitioners and witnesses.

With some rituals, starting with an affinity for the victim and the deeply held appreciation of the known sacrificial law that "for someone to live, someone must die,"³⁸ the elements of incantations, music and dance, a diet to bring the sacrificer to "a state of nervous excitement when he is then fit to sacrifice."³⁹ the process of elevating the status of the practitioners, and the climax to which the rite is brought, all are designed to psychologically animate the whole process, which then resonates with greater meaning and impresses the mind as to the vitality of the event itself, therefore as to the certainty of the event's effect.

When it comes to ceremony associated with megalithic structures, it is certainly possible similar emotive processes were incorporated with their ongoing rituals and were likely applied during the construction process as well. The exertion involved in the moving and assembling of the massive stones to build some of these

³⁵ Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians: The Islands and Their Inhabitants* (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858) ed. George Stringer Rowe, vol. 2, 224-25.

³⁶ Smith and Dale, *Ila-Speaking Peoples*, vol. 1, 208-9.

³⁷ In the Orisha religion today, the elements of bodily animation, which is considered a manifestation of spirit possession accompanied with singing, drums, and animal sacrifice are an integral part of that religion's liturgy. See James T. Houk, *Spirits, Blood, and Drums: The Orisha Religion in Trinidad* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1995) 3-8, 107-24.

³⁸ Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 30-31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21. In the case of the Hindu Vedic animal sacrifice the milk diet of the sacrificer was months long.

structures would alone have held meaning for those involved in the construction process, but, like Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Hittite priests who performed elaborate rituals to ensure divine presence when “ritually activating” a new statue to add to their collection of cult images,⁴⁰ a deeper impression would likely have been made with the application of a ritual process designed to make magical effect certain. After the finished product, the massive elegance of such structures themselves would be a reminder and statement as to the exertion involved in their assemblage, while their massive presence would mystically emanate a power that would be significant to later mythology and central to their role in ritual practice.

In conjunction with the facet of exertion as part of the existential complex, the like equals like association of similitude so often used by primary people to magically affect circumstances beyond control seems impressively evident in some Neolithic structures. The morphology of wedge tombs is such that the mouth of the antechamber, which usually faces west, is wider at the opening, while the walls and roof of the gallery narrow toward the back burial area. This gives the roof an elevated slant.⁴¹ That the mouth faces the setting sun and the shape of the structure funnels toward the deceased within suggests an orientation toward the sky. Similar inclination is certainly represented by some dolmens, which consist of single, often-slanted capstones, supported by two or more megaliths. The world’s largest concentration of dolmens is found in Korea at the Gochang, Hwasun, and Ganghwa sites. One of the most famous, Poulnabrone, is found in Ireland.



Poulnabrone Dolmen, the Burren, Ireland

In the instance of the upright pillars of stone called menhirs (placed singly, in rows, circles, semi-circles or ellipses), proposals for their purpose have varied from

⁴⁰ Michael B. Hundley, *Gods In Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013) 364-5.

⁴¹ Elisabeth Twohig, *Irish Megalithic Tombs: Shire Archaeology* (Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom: Buckinghamshire Publications, 1990) 53.

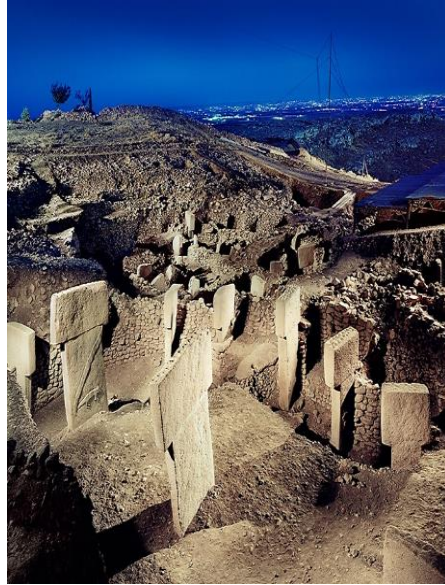
boundary markers, to early calendars, to sites of sacrifice. But similar to the Egyptian obelisk symbolizing the sun god Ra, their elongated form more probably suggests similar orientation toward the above.

Other Neolithic structures reveal a “pushing-up” orientation with double or single stone posts holding up a horizontal length of stone block. Stonehenge in England is famous for its trilithons, while Spain’s Balearic Island of Minorca in the Mediterranean is known for its numerous taula structures.



Stonehenge Trilithons and Taula in Minorca

In Turkey, taula construction is also evident at the Göbekli Tepe site (10,000-8,000 BC) where some of the structures, which are arranged in circles, are 20 feet high and weigh up to 20 tons. Smaller ones are also found at the early Neolithic site of Nevalı Cori in Turkey



Göbekli Tepe, Southeastern Turkey

The purpose of such structures? The Göbekli Tepe site is thought to have served as a central location for a cult of the dead (Klaus Schmidt). Similarly, Neolithic sites in general are thought to have served as places of ancestral rites (Gabriel Cooney). But the trilithons and taulas, with their aspect of pushing up, may instead have served as a magical template, wherein the simulation of their monumentality and orientation combined with ritual exertion made connection to the above possible. The structural orientation of wedge tombs, dolmens, and menhirs, on the other hand, certainly suggests an emphasis toward the above as an important consideration for the Neolithic cognitive palate.

Conclusion

In the case of the Neolithic structures, the desire to limit assumption about their purpose to material evidence is understandable. This allows the scientific approach to take precedence over unsubstantiated conjecture. The problem with the Neolithic panorama of material discovery is there is no cultural voice or historical witness explaining it. But the delimitation of theory to material evidence can, by its own limits, create misleading assumptions. As Cooney and Twohig point out, assuming a structure is a tomb because burial remains are found there creates its own problems.⁴² Considering that few single or pit burials are found from the Neolithic period, the remains at Poul nabrone, Newgrange, and other structures are rare compared to the probable population at large. This indicates they, along with the structures themselves, were instead placed to serve a key role in ritual ceremony.⁴³ While the correlation to burial remains has led to an assumption of ancestor worship, this, too, may be

⁴² Cooney, *Landscapes*, 87-8.

⁴³ Twohig, *Tombs*, 60-61.

misleading and incomplete. We do not know who they were, where they came from, if they were part of the community that buried them, what social rank they may have held, or if they were venerated while living or worshipped after death. But, besides what is not addressed, the problem with such limited correlations is they become working definitions that are perpetuated when there is little basis for it: thus the correlation of Göbekli Tepe to a cult of the dead, the taulas of which were supposed to protect the dead.

This is where an anthropological consideration based on ethnographic observation, historical record, and the archaeological finds of art and edifice might provide a fuller picture. We have only art and edifice from the Neolithic period. But what we do know about people who lived after them is they believed in spirit beings who lived in the above and were associated with the celestial bodies (the sun, moon and stars) and that it was important to connect to them. This understanding in light of what the Neolithic structures themselves seem to be indicating reveals a far more complex, vibrant, and sophisticated form of cosmology. In the case of Göbekli Tepe, the taulas pushing up orientation and depictions of sculpted animals suggests a celebration of totem identification conjoined with celestial connection.



This is similar in understanding to the aboriginal Australians or the Hopi of America Southwest. For the Central Australians, important totemic initiation ceremonies are bound up with the *Alcheringa*, who were semi-human totemic ancestral creatures endowed with powers not possessed by humans. They could travel on, above, or beneath the ground, and had the ability to flood whole tracts of land by opening a vein in the arm; they could cause pools of water to well up, or make gorges and gaps in the geography of the land.⁴⁴ The history of the tribe commences with two *Alcheringa* beings who dwelt in the western sky. They were *Ungambikula*, which means “out of nothing,” or “self-existing.” They took knives to the *Inapertwa*, pre-human totemic forms that had no distinct limbs or organs, and

⁴⁴ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 512-13, 316, 424, 437.

carved them into human form.⁴⁵ The natives of the Alice Springs area believed the evening star was an *Alcheringa* ancestor who, when she went into the earth, left her *Churinga* and her spirit part at a large white stone west of Alice Springs; they believed the star, every night, went down into the stone.⁴⁶

The Hopi Soyal renewal ceremony basically begins when the three stars of Orion “hangs down in the sky,” and *Mui’ingwa*, a plant deity, comes to offer his assistance. To the beat of a drum, he moves to one cardinal point and throws cornmeal to the Above and Below so the Six-Point Cloud People may send rain from all directions. At the next point, he tells about the reestablishment of life, and dances again. At the third point, he reaffirms the power of the ceremony. At the fourth, he dances, hands his crook to the Soyal Chief, and says, “May Mother Earth bless all your people and all life throughout the world, and may all seed come back for renewal.” The chief then directs a hawk maiden into the kiva where she is to sit on a mat of seeds and *pahos*. In times past, she was chosen from the chief’s family and was actually sacrificed. The *pahos* and the seeds, which are now magically germinated, are gathered in proper sequence by the clan members; first the Bear, then the Tobacco, Corn, and Coyote members, who carry them home to plant the *pahos* in the beams of the house and sprinkle the seeds over stacks of corn. The Soyal Chief then takes down the symbol of the sun from the north wall of the Kiva. *Mui’ingwa* takes the shield and, to the beat of drum and song, spins it and dances towards the four compass directions with ever increasing tempo; the single purpose is to help turn the sun back on its trail so all life may begin anew.⁴⁷ In both of these accounts from totem cultures, an inclination toward the above is revealed. For the Australians, supernatural beings originating from the sky (one is a star) play important parts in ceremonial ritual and origin story. For the Hopi, stars and a symbol of the sun, ritual gestures toward the above, and a being from the sky are all integral parts of their ceremony of renewal.

In the case of Neolithic structures in general, many evidently reveal orientation skyward. Newgrange is oriented toward the rising sun at winter solstice, while many wedge tombs face west toward the setting sun.⁴⁸ Many dolmens and menhirs point to the sky, while the trilithons and taulas seem to push up toward it. In light of the almost universal appeal toward the above by known cultures and that edifices were a real part of the ritual process to connect there, the selective burial remains associated with these structures make them a real part of the ritual process to unite to the above, not the main object of worship.⁴⁹ What their part was is unknown, but what is known from subsequent cultures is that ancestors, by their being imbued with spiritual status, either enabled connection or were the objects of connection. In other instances, victims of sacrifice played a part in gaining favor from above and could be made extraordinary to

⁴⁵ Ibid., 388-89.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 565.

⁴⁷ Waters, *Hopi*, 160-61.

⁴⁸ Twohig, *Tombs*, 61.

⁴⁹ As Twohig points out, the defleshing of human remains before their inhumation at Poul nabrone shows evidence of ritual practice. *Tombs*, 61. Other sites (Newgrange, Bryn Celli Ddu and Dooney’s Cairn for example) show signs of cremation.

better accomplish that.⁵⁰ The Meriah youths of the Kandhs in India were set aside, and, after much ritual deference, “the body of the Meriah [was] ascribed a direct or intrinsic power”⁵¹ to bring rain and help crops grow.⁵² With the evidence of the defleshing of bones and cremation at different sites, sacrifice was certainly possible by the Neolithic; but, regardless of how human remains at Neolithic sites were looked upon or utilized, the indication is they and the structures themselves were a dynamic part of a ritual complex involving magical effect generated by humans from below to gain favor from above. Thus, like all human enterprises, the Neolithic endeavors, in relation to the complex structures they built, involved the establishment of a complex compliment of psychological reaction to existential conditions and personal physical attribute. The existential state of vulnerability that led to vicarious-use required a cognitive capacity of complete event-retention. This same aptitude for remembrance led to the concept of spirit and spirit beings when significant ones died and did not come back, but were still remembered. Since spirit beings were placed in the superlative “above,” the desire to connect to them became logical and, because of what was not known, feasible to build toward them. Given the spiritually infused state of being and the desire to control things beyond control through ritual manipulation (mirroring task accomplishment in everyday life) the exertion manifest in their construction and the ritual exertion applied during and after their assemblage, combined with their orientation pointing up, made many edifices of the ancients not just symbols, but an assumptive reality. As objects central to magical ritual they thus served, because of the like equals like rationale, as magical templates making possible a connection to the above.

Biographical Note

Patrick Scott Smith is a business owner, writer and independent scholar. He has been working on the facet of psychology in religion from an anthropological/existential point of view and has been presenting material for the AAR, ASOR and ASSR in the Central, Southwest and Southeast regions. He is also a member of the Missouri Academy of Science and presents his social-scientific views to that association as well. At present he is working on a manuscript (copyright, 2014) relevant to the anthropological religious interests mentioned.

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⁵⁰ Or they were extraordinary by way of association because of their connection to someone of rank, as in the instance of the chief's daughter in the Soyal ceremony who, in former times, would have been sacrificed.

⁵¹ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 510.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 503-7.

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The “Divine” Conspiracy or Dining With the Devil: Emerging Countermovements to Consumer Religion Among Evangelicals

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Introduction

This paper will describe and examine the changing religious landscape due to the commodification of religion (consumer religion) and the social transformation of U.S. evangelical faith communities, especially at the local congregation level. The transformation of evangelical congregation life via the commodification of religion represents one of the most undervalued trends in U.S. religion over the last four decades or so. The assertion that the church growth movement and megachurches have produced “Christianity Lite” has fueled countermovements attempting to recapture a “genuine” Christian spirituality in the diverse organizational and doctrinal milieu of U.S. evangelical churches. The perceived presence of “alternative gospels” such as the therapeutic gospel and the prosperity gospel are often seen as one manifestation of false ideas by critics who are concerned with restoring “true” evangelical faith in the face of perceived excessive cultural accommodation. In this paper, it is suggested that the commodification of religion and the church growth movement have directly impacted the structure and content of evangelical congregational life. As a result, it is essential to examine the impact of consumer culture within a sociological framework. Structural shifts and emergent beliefs associated with the commodification of religion among evangelicals as well as the concept of post-partisan political realism impacting evangelicals also be discussed.

In the modern North American context, sociologists of religion have detailed the rise of consumer religion in American society in recent decades, as traditional religious practices and consumer capitalism become melded together. The growing influence of the church growth movement, church marketing, megachurches, the “therapeutic” gospel, and the “prosperity” gospel reflect the growing influence of consumerist ideology within modern evangelical churches. Historian Kathryn Lofton argued that modern spirituality - both inside and outside of the institutional church context - is increasingly a product of the “prescriptive compulsion of spiritual capitalism” (Lofton, 2006:599). An unexplored question related to these developments is: has there been a reduction in the “value added” by evangelical religious institutions to civil society institutions at the community level as consumer religion has become predominant in modern evangelical congregations?

The Church Growth Movement as an Outcome of the Commodification of Religion

The church growth movement represents a modern religious movement within U.S. evangelical churches that has been little analyzed by scholars of religion (Watson and Scalen, 2008). Many contemporary evangelical churches have embraced the church growth movement as a model for a new paradigm of church

organization, with little analysis and public debate about the movement's potential long-term impact on the social order of evangelical church life. This effort will involve some analysis of the ideas of the leading advocates of the church growth movement such as Rick Warren and Bill Hybels. While the commonly cited arguments in support of the church growth movement and megachurches are well-known via various evangelical periodicals. Major oppositional arguments articulated by such critics as Os Guinness and Martin Marty will also be detailed. Finally, we will also consider several sociological concepts to understand the impact of the church growth movement in modern evangelicalism.

The church growth movement and its seeker-sensitive church model and the multi-campus megachurch offshoots represent a virtual revolution in American evangelicalism, perhaps beginning with McGavaran (1955). The church growth movement entered the national spotlight through the successful efforts of Bill Hybels and Willowcreek Church in suburban Chicago, and Saddleback Church in southern California led by Rick Warren. Certainly, there are other historical examples of major religious groups altering their doctrines and practices over extended periods of time in response to societal changes. It is argued, however, that one would look in vain to find any contemporary evangelical movement that rivals the church growth movement, and its current purpose driven and seeker-sensitive church models (Watson and Scalen, 2008; Roberts and Yamane, 2016).

A cursory assessment of church growth movement and its origins

Comprehensive treatments of the history of the church growth movement are available elsewhere (e.g., McIntosh and Engle, 2004). An examination of a few dimensions of this movement's history is important, however, to more fully understand its recent success and appeal. The roots of the modern church growth movement can be found in the work and writings of evangelical missionary Donald McGavaran. In 1955, McGavaran published a book entitled *The Bridges of God* in which he introduced his concept of cultural contextualism. He observed that new church buildings constructed by foreign missionaries in Africa were typically designed to reflect the architecture of their home countries, and did not adequately reflect the culture of local residents. For McGavaran, such practices presented a serious problem for the advancement of missionary work. He proposed that some measure of local cultural accommodation should become an essential part of the missionary initiatives, in order to better connect with local populations. He also emphasized practicality in church organization, and the development of numerical measures of success such as periodic reports on the number of new converts. The development of standardized indicators of church growth was seen as essential to the long-term success of evangelical mission work. In 1965, McGavaran was invited to join the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California to establish the School of World Missions. In 1970, McGavaran and Peter Wagner wrote *Understanding Church Growth*, a classic in the church growth movement literature, as reflected in its numerous revised editions. The modern church growth movement, then, has its roots in McGavaran's ideas, formulated during both his experiences as an evangelical missionary and as a seminary professor. While some analysts suggest that the techniques advocated by the modern church growth movement

predated the 1950's, the impetus for the growth of the movement stems principally from the pioneering work of Donald McGavaran.

The essential principles of the church growth movement center on four factors. First, there is an emphasis on the use of quantitative measures of success such as worship attendance, increases in cash receipts, and number of new converts. Secondly, the emphasis on contextualization, whereby a church delivers its message in the context of the culture, is the hallmark principle of the church growth movement. Thirdly, the application of modern marketing techniques utilizing the latest technology is necessary for success in a competitive religious marketplace. Finally, the value of networking with like-minded churches and church leaders allows church leaders to learn from veterans of the movement. While there is some variation in how these principles are applied in practice, they represent what is common in the church growth movement model (McIntosh and Engle, 2004).

MaGavaran's ideas about church growth have been updated by Warren, Hybels, and others to generate increased interest from contemporary evangelical churches. Central to the church growth movement is the "seeker-sensitive" or "purpose-driven" system. According to this concept, churches must fully recognize the importance of contextualization - meticulous attention should be paid to the cultural context of each population subgroup in a community where a church is located. (Scalen and Watson, 2008). In practice, however, observers have noted a number of standardized features in churches who have embraced the church growth movement: a coffee bar, a plastic pulpit, a corporate-like logo, drama teams, contemporary music, and the ever-present silk plants. Other common ingredients include participation in "The Forty Days of Purpose," program designed by Rick Warren, and a strong focus on "market-based" services that church members find attractive - coffee bars, children's programs, youth activities, and modern recreational facilities. One evangelical commentator observed that instead of local flavor in the neighborhood evangelical church, one is increasingly more likely to find a McDonalds-like uniformity, as large numbers of churches adopt the church growth movement model of organization (Scalen and Watson, 2008).

A Scholarly Critique of the Church Growth Movement

It is worth noting that two leading Religious Studies scholars have made similar observations regarding the CGM. Alan Wolfe is Director of the Boston College Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. He is the author of several books, including *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith*. Wolfe observed that cultural accommodation by religious congregations has become a dominant model of religious life; it represents a generational shift, perhaps due to the changing cultural role of religion as ascribed in earlier generations to a more achieved, experiential focus in younger generations. Martin Marty has served for thirty-five years as Professor of Religious History at University of Chicago. In an article entitled, "Will Success Spoil Evangelicalism," Marty reminded his readers that, in 1927, Richard Niebuhr described American Protestant Christianity as the "religion of the disinherited." (Marty, 2000). As lavish megachurches spring up in the U.S. at the current rate of approximately one every two days, Niebuhr's quote may no longer be entirely accurate especially in terms of

evangelical congregations (Symonds, Grow, and Cady, 2005). Marty claims that modern evangelicalism is “nonascetic,” that the movement has shifted from “otherworldliness to this worldliness.” He calls modern evangelicals, “some of the worldliest citizens around.” According to Marty, this is only one of the “many 180 degree turns, flip-flops and about-faces in the evangelical cohort during the time of its prosperity” (Marty, 2000:758).

Furthermore, in the middle of the 20th century, culturally beleaguered evangelicals often made the claim that they represented “the truth” because they were “little and despised.” According to Marty, evangelicals now assert a new success ethic: “numbers and prosperity as the test of truth” (Marty, 2000:759). He also observed that evangelical churches have become less inclined to advocate a high standard of conduct and are more inclined to do whatever is necessary to attract prospective adherents: “prospering megachurches” do not lead their people “out of the world,” but offer an endless array of entertainments and services. In the new consumer culture, “those who offer, not those who demand, prosper in market-era religion” (Marty, 2000:760). Marty further asserted that evangelicals once disapproved of the popular culture; now they largely embrace it and imitate it. Paradoxically, Marty observed that evangelicals, by and large, have normalized several previously prohibited behaviors. For example, drinking and gambling are rare topics for congregational sermons. He reflected that “when the president of your denomination, the members of your family, and your favorite evangelical celebrates divorce at the same rate as their liberal and secular counterparts, you are far more likely to treat the subject as a tragedy than as a sin” (Marty, 2000:761). Marty thus implied that the “consumer sentiment” was a transformational influence on modern evangelical congregations, perhaps supplanting other evangelical ideas that might have served as a voice for social reform or marshaling evangelicals to address current social problems.

Alan Wolfe (2003), in his book, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* set forth a similar view of the “paradigm shift” occurring in evangelical churches and other forms of American religion. Wolfe, an ethnic Jew, who describes himself as “not very religious,” is nonetheless alarmed at the degree to which modern evangelicalism is strongly embracing corporate business culture, pop psychology, and pop culture in general. Essentially, Wolfe claimed that evangelical churches are turning away from historical religious ideals and moving toward a kind of pragmatic materialism. In other words, there is little that distinguishes evangelicals from their cultural counterparts. In a *Forbes* article entitled, “Christian Capitalism: Megachurches, Megabusinesses,” writer Luisa Kroll (2003) observed, “Maybe churches aren’t so different from corporations” where pastors often function as chief executive and use implicit business to grow their congregations. She concluded that “this entrepreneurial approach has contributed to explosive growth...in our society growth equals success,” and megachurches are all about both cultural goals” (Kroll, 2003:1-2).

A Tentative Typology of Outcomes from the Church Growth Movement in the Evangelical Congregational Context

After a review of books, journalistic accounts, internet resources, a tentative

summary of doctrinal/theological problems and organizational issues associated with the impact of consumerism on evangelical churches is presented below. It is acknowledged that this typology is likely incomplete and may also oversimplify complex social phenomena associated with the commodification of religion within evangelicalism. It is hoped, however, that this typology might inspire similar attempts focused on the sociological analysis of this undervalued structural change, not only in the evangelical context, but also Protestant, Catholic, and other religious groups (both Western and non-Western in origin):

1. **Ichabod, the Glory has Departed** - The belief that consumer culture has supplanted an emphasis on traditional Christian doctrines, thus changing the core message of the church - "another gospel is no gospel" (MacArthur, 2001);
2. **The Prosperity Gospel Revisited** -The belief that consumerism promotes new forms of the prosperity gospel (Olsen, 2006);
3. **Growth Idolatry** - The belief that "bigger is better" and that continual growth in church membership is a sign of spiritual favor (McIntosh and Engle, 2004; Mancini, 2008);
4. **New Paradigm Transition** -The belief that the influence of consumerism and the CGM has contributed to a wholesale transformation of churches to a new paradigm based essentially on a corporate business model (Scalen and Watson, 2008);
5. **Consumer Religion** - The belief that the dominance of a consumer-based economy has generated a new form of contemporary religion - consumer religion - whereby congregants are target-marketed based on their perceived needs, with a growing emphasis on commercialism, consumerism, and materialism in evangelical churches (Miller, 2005; Watson and Scalen, 2008);
6. **The Primacy of Pragmatism in Church Practice** - The belief that pragmatism and "felt" religion, with its emphasis on a form of therapeutic gospel (e.g., relationship and personal improvement) are more important than orthodox doctrinal and theological belief systems in determining church organization (Ellingson, 2007);
7. **Deliberate Cultural Diffusion** -The belief that the preeminence of consumer culture at the local congregation level accelerates unique forms of secularization in churches that implement CGM principles. The McDonaldization of evangelical congregations is thus accelerated as consumer culture engulfs and completely reshapes evangelical faith communities according to contemporary norms, values, and beliefs of the surrounding secular culture. Many scholars pointing out this new social reality in local congregations from outside evangelicalism, such as church historian Marty and political scientist Wolfe (Watson and Scalen, 2008).
8. **Minimization of the Relevance of Church History** - The commodification of religion has contributed to a "contemporary fallacy" whereby there is a reduced focus on Christianity as a religious tradition

that embodies a culture in and of itself that should be preserved in each generation. Instead of the traditional emphasis on the notion that Christianity's historic claims to ultimate truth can be either accepted or rejected, the focus is on melding orthodox doctrinal belief systems with the ethos of contemporary consumer culture (Marty, 2000; Scalen and Watson, 2008).

McDonaldization and Starbuckization: Additional Explanatory Concepts on the Commodification of Religion

Over the last twenty-five years, the influence of the CGM has accelerated the McDonaldization of numerous evangelical churches. Sociologist George Ritzer defines McDonaldization as “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world.” McDonaldization has extended the process of rationalization to the realm of social interaction and individual identity, and impacted major social institutions, including religion. In some cases, this process has occurred in a literal fashion; several churches in the Southern U.S. have added McDonald’s restaurants and similar retail food establishments to their facilities, complete with drive-through windows. Food courts, bookstores, cafes, boutiques, and even banks are now part of the worship experience. These developments are best viewed, however, as the byproduct of a fundamental paradigm shift in religious organization among evangelicals - churches restructuring themselves according to a corporate business model.

The work of sociologist George Ritzer on McDonaldization provides a conceptual framework for examining the social forces influencing modern religion. Ritzer defines McDonaldization as “the process by which the principles of McDonald's are affecting more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world” (Ritzer, 2008:1). The basic principles of McDonaldization are efficiency, simplification of the product and predictability. Ritzer’s model is based on the process of rationalization delineated by Max Weber, who used the bureaucracy of a large-scale organization as his prototype. Ritzer argued that McDonaldization represented a contemporary application of the principle of rationalization (Ritzer, 2004). More recently, Ritzer has emphasized the pivotal role of predictability as the prime mover in accelerating McDonaldization in other social realms, such as the Internet, the criminal justice system, museums, sports, education, and religion (Ritzer, 2007).

Borrowing from the Dramaturgical Model of social interaction, Ritzer (2007) further observed that Starbucks has created a variant of McDonaldization by adding a "show" element to its marketing of coffee and related products. While 90 percent of Starbucks customers typically step buy their drinks and leave, 10 percent who are "free performers" in the show who sit in chairs, use their laptops, and perhaps read the *New York Times*. This feature conveys the sense to those in line that they are welcome to stay at Starbucks as long as they want, unlike McDonald's, which encourages customers to leave as soon as possible. This is considered a "show" because logistical realities dictate that not all their customers can sit in the shop and linger, because Starbucks needs most customers to enter and leave the store

quickly (or use the drive-through in order to generate maximal revenue). Ritzer suggests that “Starbuckization” is a significant new business model, but at its core, it represents the McDonaldization of the coffee shop business. Despite this conclusion, Ritzer devotes an entire chapter to “The Starbuckization of Society” in the fifth edition of his noted book, *The McDonaldization of Society* (2007).

The Relativization of Tradition and Revitalization Movements: Outcomes of the Commodification of Religion

Campbell (2005) argued that the “relativization of tradition” is an important explanation of contemporary religious change in modern societies increasingly impacted by globalization. Relativization of tradition, defined as “individuals experiencing a sense of threat and insecurity about their own traditions when confronted with other traditions” creates a number of important impacts at the cultural level (Campbell, 2004:2). Campbell (2005) further describes the relativization of tradition in this manner: “the generation, in a confrontation with an alien tradition, of a sense of threat and of insecurity about the assumptions people use to make sense of the world and of the self, calling into question such things as the definitions, boundaries, categories and conclusions through which they have understood the world and established their identity; this insecurity, in turn, generates secondary effects such as intellectual disorientation, bewilderment, doubt, and fear” (Campbell 2005:54). The relativization of tradition provides one possible explanation of the widespread adoption of CGM principles by many evangelical churches. The perception of the CGM as a modern set of ideas that can effectively update traditional church practices and organization and lead to growth has enormous appeal to evangelical leaders. As modern evangelicalism has sought models for revitalization in recent decades, CGM has been readily available and marketed to fit the bill while also suggesting that churches that apply CGM principles can maintain their “essence.” Relativization of tradition can also fuel significant motivation by producing anxiety, confusion, and fear among leaders of being “left at the station” as a new trend develops (Campbell, 2005).

The concept of a revitalization movement, a term first proposed by Anthropologist Anthony Wallace (1956) also has some relevance to our discussion of the church growth movement. Examples of revitalization movements include nativistic movements, millenarian movements, reformative movements, and cargo cults, all of which emerge in response to similar cultural processes (Harkin, 2004). In particular, Wallace (1956) argued that these social movements constitute preconceived efforts by individuals to create a more satisfying culture. Glazier (1998) summarized the essentials of revitalization movements as seeking “to undermine existing institutions with the intention of bringing about a new and meaningful integration through manipulation of the world. Wallace asserted that all religions come into existence as parts of revitalization movements and that whenever conditions of individual or social stress exist, a prophet emerges with a new cultural paradigm that, if accepted, becomes the basis for a new social reality or new social order. He delineated the sequence of development in revitalization movements as follows: (1) a steady state of culture, (2) a period of individual stress, (3) a period of cultural distortion, (4) a revitalization, and (5) the establishment of new steady state

of culture” (Glazier, 1998:1). Clearly, the concept a revitalization movement deserves further exploration for its utility in enhancing our understanding commodification within evangelicalism (Watson and Scalen, 2008).

Conclusions and Implications

This paper has attempted to identify a few major issues in American society that evangelical churches must address in the ever-changing maelstrom of an increasingly global consumer society. Clearly, the undervalued social impact of the economic substructure of a consumer economy is central to the “lived religion” (McGuire, 2008) of evangelical congregations and their continued “search for significance” in the larger culture. Sociologist Charles Lemert, in an insightful 2002 essay on religion and social theory, provided some unique insight on the increasingly dominant role of a consumer-based U.S. economic system and its overarching consumer culture in relation to religion. He argued that political realism, broadly defined, influences all forms of religion including implicit religions, and secular groups in modern society. Political realism addresses fundamental “nonpartisan” questions: “What is humanity? What is a nontrivial social difference? What is a fair share? What is fair? Who owns the goods? Who has a right to the goods?” (Lemert, 2002:8). Lemert (2002) also went one step further and suggested that religion must provide some type of answer to political realism in its holistic sense as part of a specific religious group’s belief system and practices: “...religion may promise something of value. If, as (Charles) Taylor says, the current dilemma has to do with an arrogant unwillingness to accept ‘our own limited part in the whole human story,’ then must we not be political realists about the limitations of the human story itself? Religion, as understood by the Greek supplements to Durkheim...may well be the most important source of political realism. Religion, thus, and most elementally, is the form of social life in which people together, whatever their differences, understand themselves as doubly finite. As individuals, we cannot transcend the social relations that form us. As members with all others, we cannot escape the limitations of our humanity” (Lemert, 2002:8).

Australian evangelical writer Mark Sayers (2016: 16-17) noted that “sometime in the night a revolution happened and we did not notice it” and a new political landscape had emerged in the West emphasizing (1) that the highest good was associated with individual freedom, happiness, and self-expression; (2) traditions, religious beliefs, received wisdom and social ties that restrict individual freedom must be reshaped, deconstructed or destroyed; (3) the world will improve as individual improvement grows; (4) the primary social ethic is tolerance for each individual’s self-defined quest for individual freedom/expression; (5) humans are inherently good; (6) large-scale structures/institutions are ineffective at best and evil at worst; (7) forms of external authority are to be rejected and personal authenticity is highly valued (Sayers, 2016:17).

If both Lemert (2002) and Sayers (2016) are correct in their analysis, new church models aimed at revitalizing evangelicalism, must find ways to address this new emerging political realism in their doctrinal statement of faith, their core organizational model, and their connection to the larger community. The avoidance this political realism in an increasingly global consumer economy may risk further

perceived irrelevance in the larger culture characterized by rapid social change. This issue may also reframe the longstanding debate about a “Social Gospel” versus “Evangelical Gospel” in North American religious groups, including evangelical churches (Taylor, 2014). A fruitful line of future inquiry for scholars in Religious Studies is to examine attempts to respond to political realism in emerging church models, new church “plants”, and the ideas advocated leaders in the church planting movement. Given the changing national political landscape, including among evangelicals, the exact form that future church models may take to counter the social realities detailed in this paper will be interesting to observe and study empirically. A genuinely post-partisan political realism in a congregational context may be especially significant for attracting millennials and “nones” (Pelz and Smidt, 2015).

Finally, what will be the general response of evangelical leaders to the growth and dominance of consumer religion? Clearly, some aspects of consumer religion have been embraced by leaders in an attempt to modernize and contextualize evangelical faith - to make it more appealing, and to make it more acceptable to the modern and post-modern mind. On the other hand, what revitalization movements will emerge or expand to attempt to combat consumer religion in evangelical settings? In any case, descriptions by critics as “dining with the devil” (Guinness, 1993) or creating “Jesus at Disneyland” (2000) may give some evangelical leaders pause. Evangelical scholar Os Guinness perhaps best summarized a central concern from within evangelicalism: “we should therefore keep in mind Peter Berger’s contemporary warning that they who sup with the devil better have long spoons. By all means, dine freely at the table of modernity, but in God’s name, keep your spoons long” (Guinness, 1993:90).

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Jihad: For the Qur'an Tells Me So. The Mystical Journey of Jihad al-Akbar.

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Jihad has long been a discussion on the international stage since the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers. Yet, while Jihad is nothing new to the world community, it seems to have been distorted and used for purposes that were not originally intended. It is true that Jihad represents a holy war, but it is so much more than that alone. There are in fact two forms of Jihad, the highest of this being *Jihad al-Akbar*, or a holy war against oneself. So, then, why is it that cross culturally Jihad receives a negative connotation when many people from many religions are striving for the same thing?

Perhaps it is because Jihad in and of itself is misunderstood and vilified by extremists who use the term to advance their personal goals. It has long been that mystics across various customs and religions believe in the extinction of Earthly desires in order to become one with God, and Sufis are no exception to this. By seeking *tazkiyat an-nafs*, the purification of the soul/self, one can become closer to God and in essence become one with Him. This can only be achieved through the practice of *Jihad al-Akbar*. So, rather than relating Jihad to destructive extremist behavior, one instead might consider the more righteous path of this practice as a crusade against oneself.

Throughout this paper it is the intention to argue that Jihad will continue to remain a stigma until the veil is lifted to reveal the true form of the higher Jihad; *Jihad al-Akbar*.

The Middle East receives a lot of undue criticism stemming from misunderstandings or a simple lack of information about their practices and way of life. Most of the international community brands these nations as being backwards and ill-intended, when many of these people practice a faith very similar to several Western and non-Western traditions. The belief of Sufism is one of deep spiritual devotion to God and the path to clearing oneself of our egos or *nafs*. This belief is indeed quite similar to that of Buddhism and Christianity. World religions share a common theme in that they strive to extinguish all forms of greed and self-want while continuously moving toward their ultimate goal. Yet, somehow when the word Jihad is mentioned the conversation shifts dramatically from one about religious devotion to quite another subject entirely.

Jihad al-Akbar is simply defined as “the personal struggle against one’s *nafs*; the lower self or ego, wherein a person strives to overcome temptations, carnal desires and the devil’s whisperings; striving also to internalize the Islamic teachings through acts of worship and devotion: like prayer, fasting, dhikr and almsgiving.” (muslimmatters.org) No act of aggression is associated with this practice and its realization is centered around the individual and introspection. The Qur’an extols a group of verses regarding this personal struggle: “By the soul and Him that formed it, then inspired it with its wickedness and God-fearingness. He is indeed successful

who purifies it, and he is indeed ruined who corrupts it". (muslimmatters.org) This idea of self-extinction is very prevalent throughout the Sufi faith.

In order to succeed in *Jihad al-Akbar* one must first diminish all Earthly desires and effectively extinguish his or her identity to become one with God. Ibn al-'Arabi believed in the oneness or unity of being, *wahdat al-wujud*, and that "All is He" meaning God is the only reality. 'Arabi proclaimed that religions were purely names and that all paths ultimately lead to Him. Only through contemplation can there be self-annihilation, *fana*, in which God makes Himself known through an external process of self-disclosure. All these things will advance one's journey towards becoming inexplicably linked to God until there is no distinction between man and Him. 'Arabi also believed that God created the universe out of love and He is not vengeful, man has a reciprocal relationship with Him since man needs Him as much as He needs man. So consequently, in order to become one with God, He must also be seeking a relationship with oneself.

All of these beliefs ring true with many other similar religions. Christianity for example seeks a more intimate relationship with God through prayer and reflection. Christians state that God loves all of His creation and longs to have a relationship with all, just as one would with Him. Christians pray daily for the transgressions of their sins and work continuously to become better, more pure people, just like members of the Sufi community. By eliminating the essence of oneself and devoting one's life to Him you are indeed committing oneself to the higher form of Jihad; *Jihad al-Akbar*.

Many other Sufis have proclaimed ways in which to become closer to God. Whether it be through dreams, prayer, music, or dance they all strive for the same thing. Diversity is teeming among the multitude of Sufi orders yet the objective still remains unchanged. Sufis typically stay away from innovation within their practices and focus more on knowledge that has eluded jurists and scholars, such as repentance, piety, and passing away. Since Sufis believe in the eventual oneness of their being with God, they do not fear death as many in the mainstream Islamic belief community do. Instead, they view death as the ultimate reunion and something that is to be celebrated and even looked forward to. Death is a natural and inescapable part of life and being reunited with the Creator is the greatest gift one could receive.

Sufism is not a sect of Islam, rather it is a multi-faceted side of Islamic piety. Many Muslims have issues with the Sufi faith because it is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. However, the word *nafs* is mentioned 300 times in the Qur'an and the fight against said *nafs* is the primary practice of Sufi orders. A famous Sufi poet known as Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī made an analogy to help people better understand Sufism and how it can coexist with Islam. He said that if one were to put 100 blind men in a room with an elephant, each one would touch a different part of the animal and describe it differently, but it is still an elephant. Much is the same with God and Islam, everyone experiences faith differently but in the end the same being is revered.

It is for these reasons *Jihad al-Akbar* is a practice that is so much more than a dirty word. Religions, people, and spiritualists are all seeking similar things through their faith. Basically every good person is striving to better him or herself by cutting

out the negative influences in their life. Buddhists seek nirvana, Christians seek absolution of sins and salvation, and Sufis seek absolute unity with God. In many ways all religions practice the higher form of Jihad even if it is called by another name. By educating oneself about the diversity amongst each other, one can move past words and into a better understanding of humankind on a deeper level.

“B.C. Muslim Association president Usman Ali takes this one step further and says that “the real jihad is for people to respect and accept each other's cultural differences.” It is much harder, he maintains, to come to an agreement with someone than to fight it out with them on the battlefield - “not just in the Middle East, but here too.” (Ditmars) Many claim that the lesser Jihad, *Jihad al-Asghar*, is committed in the name of the Prophet Muhammad. While this is partially true, it is often overlooked that when Muhammad returned from his first military campaign against the polytheists he said “We are coming from the smaller fight to the bigger one. Now we must fight our own egos.” (Ditmars) This statement shows that Muhammad saw the gravity in the extinction of oneself and proclaimed it to be of high priority, perhaps even more so than that of a holy war against those attempting to diminish Islam. Even so, this struggle must be made in defense because the Qur’an says “And fight in the way of God, with those who fight you, but aggress not. God loves not the aggressors’.” (The Statesman) The West portrays this lesser form of Jihad as a kind of reverse Crusade, but this is incorrect. “This is contrary to Islamic teachings that affirm it is not for man, but for God alone, to judge and punish unbelief and that compulsion (or coercion) in religious matters is strictly forbidden.” (Elmasry)

In order to fully understand the beliefs and rituals of *Jihad al-Akbar* one must understand the history of Sufism itself. This facet of Islamic piety spans back to the very inception and deliverance of Islam to Muhammad. In fact, some of the earliest Sufi spiritual leaders were women who played significant roles in the life of the Prophet. Two of them being Fatima, the youngest daughter of Muhammad and Khadija, and ‘A’isha, one of Muhammad’s wives. Fatima is highly regarded amongst Sufis and is deemed by some to be the first spiritual head of the Sufi fellowship. (Helminksi) Muhammad himself regarded her as one of the four most exemplary women in history, ranked alongside the Virgin Mary. (Helminksi) ‘A’isha is known for her contributions to Islam in general. She is said to have laid down the fundamental rules of Arab-Islamic Ethics by which all Muslims abide, even now. (Helminksi)

One of the first known Sufis was Abu Dhar Ghiffari, who died twenty years after the Prophet. It is said “He stayed far away from people, renouncing their preoccupation with worldly goods and holding on to the legacy of the Prophet and his companions in seeking the everlasting abode of the Hereafter in preference to this transitory world”. (sunah.org) In committing himself to such pious practice he paved the way for the realization of *Jihad al-Akbar*. Perhaps one of the most influential Sufis in the early period was Mansur al-Hallaj. He is considered one of the first Sufi saints and a martyr who died for his utterances in 922 AD. People claim he was in an ecstatic state that was incomprehensible to a layperson when he claimed “*ana’l-haqq*”, meaning I am the Truth. (huffingtonpost.com) To him, this was the ultimate union of himself with God, the entire goal of *Jihad al-Akbar*. To extinguish the idea of oneself and become entirely one with God is what Sufis strive for everyday through

prayer and reflection. Hallaj was murdered for his revelations, primarily his teachings that if one could not afford the Hajj one could build a model in one's home instead. However, despite all these things he is still highly revered by the Sufi community today.

Hallaj also told an intriguing story about Iblis or Satan. In short, God ordered all the angels to bow down before his new creation, Adam. "For Hallaj, Iblis was a "true monotheist," so how could he worship God and still bow down before Adam in prostration?" (huffingtonpost.com) According to the Qur'an Iblis refused to do so and blamed God for misleading him then made a promise to cause man to stray from the right path. "The explanation Hallaj gives," said Professor Ernst, "was that God had given secret hint (*ishara*) to Iblis that he should not bow down and so he disobeyed, but internally he was the most loyal servant and willing to suffer punishment of being estranged from God and being punished by God in order to demonstrate his loyalty." (huffingtonpost.com)

This idea of absolute loyalty is common throughout the Islamic community but can be seen as especially strong within the Sufi practice. Ibrahim Adham, who died in 777 AD, had a revelation that one cannot reach God in a well-decorated room. Rather, by living in the bare minimum one could focus on the straight path and worship Allah without worldly distractions. Adham's pupil Shaiq Balkhi took this idea of simplistic living to another level. He established the *Adab al-'ibadat* (The Comportment of Worshippers). This comportment contained four way stations: *Zuhd* (asceticism), *Khawf* (fear), *Shawq* (desire), and *Mahabba* (love). This asceticism was characterized by Balkhi limiting his food intake to only two meals a day while leaving two-thirds of his stomach empty for breath. He also believed that *khawf* involved remembering death until one is softened, or cries a lot and sleeps very little. Next, *shawq* manifested itself in an intense desire to gain entry into paradise, so much so that one forgot fear. Finally, *mahabba* was the belief that once the heart is purified of sins one can forget desire and fear. These two early Sufis voluntarily chose to lead a life of poverty in search for extreme purity. They were a radical aversion to mainstream beliefs and chose to live on the fringes of town. However, even though their practices seem extreme in light of current Sufi beliefs, their goal was the same, *Jihad al-Akbar*.

"The word Jihad (from the Arabic root Ga-Ha-Da) is a noun, meaning the action of exerting an effort, expounding an energy, striving, working to improve, struggling, doing one's best and the act itself." (Elmasry) The Qur'an explicitly states that those who perform outward Jihad must also perform the inward and more difficult type, *Jihad al-Akbar*. It is called "The Greatest Jihad" in the Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmed. (Elmasry) One cannot practice the lower form of Jihad without being completely at peace with oneself. This goes to show that *Jihad al-Asghar* is inextricably linked with *Jihad al-Akbar*; one simply cannot practice it without the other. "It is in this sense that Islam has stressed the positive aspect of combativeness: that is, peace belongs to those who are inwardly (spiritually) at peace, while outwardly at war with the forces of injustice." (Elmasry) Additionally, even though the lesser Jihad is a war against aggressors it is important to point out that God mentions in the Qur'an that he protects non-Muslims as well. Allah said "Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled-down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name

of God is commemorated in abundant measure." (Elmasry)

"Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1059-1111), probably the most important figure in Islam's development after the prophet, describes the body as a city, governed by the soul, and besieged by the lower self. Withdrawal from the world to mystical pursuits constitutes an advance in the greater jihad." (Streusand) Sufism became the dominant form of Islamic spirituality by the eleventh century and it is for this reason that many Muslims today still consider Jihad to be an internal struggle rather than an external one. (Streusand) Even though Sufis are credited with practicing this form of internal spiritual struggle it is perhaps more correct to say that all Muslims, Sufi or not are practicing this spiritual right. Following the straight path, obeying all of the laws outlined in the Qur'an, praying, and fasting could all be seen as *Jihad al-Akbar*. Muslims practice these beliefs in order to become closer to Allah and maintain the faith. In essence, Sufis are doing the exact same thing by another name.

There is a saying that "He who knows himself knows the Lord". This saying rings true throughout Sufi beliefs and could be said to be the foundation upon which *Jihad al-Akbar* lies. By extinguishing all forms of one's own identity there will be no room left for anything other than God. No self-want, no Earthly desires, no hate for another will cloud one's judgment other than an extreme desire to be one with Allah. In order to accomplish this one must realize that while we all have one soul, also called *nafs*, and within it is three potentials. The first of these, and the lowest, is called *nafs al-ammārah bi'l-sū*, this is the soul that incites evil. (Sharif) "This unweaned soul is the abode of a multitude of incessant cravings and desires: be it for wealth, fame, power, physical gratification, exploitation of others - in short, anything that deflects one away from Allah and towards the lower, bestial possibilities of the human condition." (Sharif) Sufi's use *Jihad al-Akbar* to purify their soul and slowly replace these negative cravings with *nafs al-jawwāmah*, the reproachful soul. (Sharif) One's soul is said to be his conscience and through greater introspection and purification this reproachful soul will fade into *nafs al-muṭma'innah*, the soul at peace or tranquil soul. Here, there is no opposition to Allah's Will and Sacred Law. (Sharif) "In all this, four factors are crucial in a person's seeking to purify his soul: innate or inborn disposition; upbringing; spiritual striving (*mujaāhadah*) and self-discipline (*riyādah*) in adulthood; and of course, Allah's *tawfīq*, or enabling grace." (Sharif)

For some, Jihad is referred to as an Islamic peacebuilding tool rather than the idea of a destructive force that is commonly conjured up today. "Conflict tends to demand a physical response from individuals. Understanding the nature and significance of one's existence however, is an empowering knowledge that forces one to rethink engaging in offensive violence as a response to conflict. When one is incapable of peacefully bringing about justice, instead of resorting to violence (which may itself result in another injustice), one might decide to instead observe patience. In observing patience, one might pray for the other party's return to peace or seek God's intervention to serve justice in the hereafter." (Islamic Insights) To become at peace with oneself is inevitably a greater feat than to attack one's enemies.

Perhaps, by waging war against oneself in the ultimate quest for inner realization, one will come to the conclusion that other's differences and aggressions do not merit a physical response in the end. By seeking this inner peace one may view the world differently, instead of immediately resulting to violence and defense one may attempt to be patient and gain more understanding, thus ending the conflict through more peaceful means such as diplomacy and dialogue. "In Islam, seeking self-improvement and closeness to God are not mutually exclusive but actually the same journey. The Qur'an says: "And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him, and We are nearer to him than his life-vein." (50:16)" (Islamic Insights)

This could be taken farther to say that only someone who knows himself can truly know a situation. "The same is true for helping others achieve peace. It is important for the peacebuilder to actively engage in trying to achieve peace within him-/herself first before trying to bring it about for others. The most successful peacebuilders are those who have achieved internal peace and a raised consciousness." (Islamic Insights) In order to bring peace to oneself, one must first appreciate one's own dignity. Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law, once said ""Take over the possession of your self through continuous struggle." And by struggle, he means the great inner-struggle – Jihad. Through Jihad, one can regain control of one's self and effectively fend off negative energy, which in conflict tends to instigate violent action." (Islamic Insights) All of the actions one takes after self-recognition and inner peace will result in compassion for all, not for a love of oneself but rather, for a love of Allah. (Islamic Insights)

It is important not to reduce the term Jihad to simply an armed struggle because it is clearly so much more than that. "Virtually all instances of the root j-h-d speak primarily to the question of true intention and devotion." (Heck) Seeing as Jihad can relate to two different struggles differentiating between the two is critical to understanding the higher form. "The term in its various forms signifies a divine test (Q 47:31) to distinguish the lukewarm believers (Q 4:95; 9:81, 86) from those who desire God's satisfaction (Q 60:1) and strive body and soul in His way (Q 9:41, 88)." (Heck) Jihad regardless of the form is a means by which to differentiate between the true believer and the infidel. (Heck) Through devote spiritualism and extinction of one's self the higher form of Jihad manifests itself naturally. Searching for God endlessly is a righteous goal pursued by many religions, especially Sufis. "In short, jihad in the Qur'an implies a total devotion to God through a consecration, dedication and even oblation of oneself to His way." (Heck)

Jihad, in the end, is a means of redeeming oneself before God. Therefore, by following this straight path of self-devotion solely to Allah, in the end one will be rewarded and united with the Creator. "The qur'anic description of jihad was developed early on by the ascetically and mystically minded who saw jihad - against the backdrop of an increasingly affluent and comfortable Islamic order - as a struggle not to preserve the Islamic message against non-Muslim hostility but to direct one's own soul away from worldly attachments." (Heck) Jihad in the beginning was intended to be a spiritual experience and exercise and "references to it abound in early and classical Islamic literature." (Heck) This form of Jihad was intended to cleanse one soul, which is a necessary step for union with God. This is not to say that the lower

form of war-like Jihad is not necessary. Instead, *Jihad al-Akbar* is considered a precondition to being able to successfully wage *Jihad al-Asghar* against aggressive non-believers, or infidels.

“There is, however, a very important distinction to be drawn between the ascetic mystic and the ascetic warrior.” (Heck) Both believed that turning away from this world’s luxury and materialistic excess were necessary to identify with the Prophet Muhammad, however they went about said identification in very different ways. The ascetic sought to imitate His closeness with God while the warrior sought to imitate the militant exploits of the Prophet. “Thus, the mystic might view military jihad as a worldly activity pursued by those lacking knowledge of the only true reality, knowledge of which was acquired by union with God.” (Heck) To the mystic this waging of war was seen as a failure of the greater Jihad, hence the connotation of lesser Jihad. Even though the warrior views this form of Jihad as a way to eventually earn a martyr’s crown, the same can be said about the mystic. Even though the mystic may not literally give his life in the name of Islam, spiritually he does. Islamic mystics, or Sufis, so wholeheartedly devote themselves to God that they extinguish all recognition of the person they once were in order for total union with God. This, in essence, is also self-martyrdom and can be considered equally righteous if not even more so to *Jihad al-Asghar*.

“It is clear from the foregoing that jihad as a struggle for a godly cause has been diversely interwoven into Islamic history. Most significantly, the conception of jihad has been shown to vary according to the conception of Islamic self-understanding: mystical, eschatological, legal, philosophical and imperial as well as ritual and communal.” (Heck) Depending on one’s view of how Jihad should be undertaken will consequently dictate whether or not one takes on the higher or lower form. It seems to be that a lack of education and understanding of the true form of Jihad, *Jihad al-Akbar* is what drives people to the warlike lower form. In order to successfully embark on a war against the non-believers one must internally be at peace and understand that they are one with the Lord. Consequently, more options become available and war may not be the only course of action one sees. So, perhaps the radical extremists in the Middle East and abroad today could benefit from the intense spiritual intro-flection that *Jihad al-Akbar* offers.

“[J]ihad and terrorism are often conflated, and the image of Islam is distorted into something which has terrorism at its core.” (Turner) Many Muslim apologists have made it very clear that jihadists were not and simply still are not terrorists. Radical Islamist groups use their offensive attacks under the umbrella term of Jihad without acknowledging that this is not how Jihad is portrayed anywhere in Qur’an and is not to be carried out in an offensive manner. *Jihad al-Asghar* was only ever used as a last resort defense mechanism in order to protect the Islamic faith from infidels who were encroaching on their spiritual sovereignty. “If jihad at heart has always had a fundamental relation to the question of moral order, then other notions of jihad which were meaningful to a particular historical moment may no longer be meaningful. It is in anticipation of such a discussion that jihad can be rescued from its atavistic use by terrorists and from the terror with which it is so commonly associated by non-Muslims.” (Heck) Perhaps it is because so many do not know the history behind *Jihad al-Asghar* and do not know that a higher more worthy form of Jihad even exists that

people are quick to associate the term with terrorism and Muslims in general. Only education of the Islamic faith and the peaceful foundations on which it is rooted will one day enlighten the general public about the truth of this great world religion.

Turkish Muslim scholar Bediüzzaman Said Nursi led an incredible movement of *'manêvî jihad*, "jihad of the word," and he encouraged that his followers avoid any use of violence or disruptive action. (Turner) He eventually wrote the *Risale-i-Nur* in which he claimed the real enemy in society was not science but instead was atheism and materialism. His writings and preachings are essentially *Jihad al-Akbar* although not formally known under this name. "For Nursi, the way to salvation consists solely in choosing the Other over the self, and it is in the dynamics of this choice that the key to an understanding of Nursi's view of spirituality and the human being's place in the cosmos may be found." (Turner) "Nursi believed that the present age demands from each individual a form of struggle with the soul known as *jihad al-akbar* (the greater jihad), for, he asserted, it is only through the creation of a collective Islamic personality growing out of such struggles that the forces of misguidance and unbelief can be challenged successfully." (Turner) Nursi firmly believed that the best way to spread the peaceful and true nature of Islam was by practicing the faith oneself and then being and ambassador of Islam to the world. "According to alKattani, Nursi's jihad was always to enjoin the good and to counsel against evil, and to serve religion by calling others to believe in God." (Turner) Scholars and Muslim apologists will forever argue about whether or not *Jihad al-Asghar* was historically appropriate and was on the defensive end, offensive end, or both. "Nursi turns this on its head by proscribing military jihad altogether, and saying that Islam is not to be defended by the sword—since it is no longer identifiable as a geographical as well as a religious entity—but by the force of reason, progress and civilization." (Turner)

Jihad al-Akbar will always be the true path to reunion with God for Sufis. However, not all Sufis follow the same paths to reach this extinction of one's self. Even though the number of Sufis today is relatively low, there are still numerous Sufi *tariqas*, or orders of Sufism. One of the most well-known in today's society is the Mevlevi order, also commonly called the Whirling Dervishes. Adherents to the Mevlevi order practice a ritual known as *Sema* during which the spin around the room in order to become closer to God. This ritual began and was influenced by Rumi, a great and famous Sufi man who lived from 1207-1273 AD. When posed with the question as to why they spin or twirl around the room they give an interesting answer. "It is scientifically recognized that the fundamental condition of our existence is to revolve. There is no being or object which does not revolve, because all beings are comprised of revolving electrons, protons, and neutrons in atoms. Everything revolves, and the human being lives by means of the revolution of these particles, by the revolution of the blood in his body, and by the revolution of the stages of his life, by his coming from the earth and his returning to it." (whirlingdervishes.org)

The dance or revolutions themselves are extremely important to the ritual but the clothing worn by these dervishes are also equally important to this unique practice of *Jihad al-Akbar*. One who adheres to this ritual wears a camel's hair hat known as a *sikke*, which represents the tombstone of his ego; a wide white skirt, which represents the ego's shroud; and when one removes the black cloak they are then known to be spiritually reborn to the truth. (whirlingdervishes.org) "At the beginning

of the *Sema*, by holding his arms crosswise, the *semazen* appears to represent the number one, thus testifying to God's unity. While whirling, his arms are open: his right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence; his left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth." (whirlingdervishes.org)

This dance performed by the dervishes is completed in several stages each with different meanings. The phase of *Naat-i Sherif* comes first and it is a eulogy to all the Prophets and the Messenger of Islam and it is accompanied by a drumbeat symbolizing the divine command "Be". The second phase is known as *Taksim* and it is accompanied by an improvisation on a reed flute which symbolizes the divine breath, giving life to everything. "Then follows the Sultan *Veled* procession or *Devr-i Veled*, accompanied by *peshrev* music; this is a circular, anticlockwise, procession three times around the turning space. The greetings of the *semazen*, or whirling dervishes, during the procession represent the three stages of knowledge: *ilm-al yaqin* (received knowledge, gained from others or through study), *ayn-al yaqin* (knowing by seeing or observing for oneself) and *haqq-al yakin* (knowledge gained through direct experience, gnosis)." (whirlingdervishes.org) During this ritual dance there are four *selams*, which are musical movements and each have a distinct rhythm. The first of these represents one's birth to truth and it represents one's complete acceptance of one's condition as a creature created by God. The second represents the absolute rapture of one witnessing the splendor of creation in the face of God. "The *Third Selam* is the rapture of dissolving into love and the sacrifice of the mind to love. It is complete submission, unity, and the annihilation of self in the Beloved. This is the state that is known as *nirvana* in Buddhism and *fana fillah* in Islam. The next stage in Islamic belief is the state of servanthood represented by the Prophet, who is called God's servant foremost and subsequently His 'Messenger.' The aim of *Sema* is not uncontrolled ecstasy and loss of consciousness, but the realization of submission to God." (whirlingdervishes.org) The final *selam* represents the Sufi returning from his spiritual journey back to Earth and his servanthood. After these *selams* the *Sura* chapter of the Qur'an on the birth of Jesus is read aloud. This ceremony is ended with a prayer for the peace of all the souls of the Prophets and believers. (whirlingdervishes.org)

In addition to numerous Sufi orders spreading the practice of *Jihad al-Akbar* there are also several schools, which strive to spread the word of Sufism. A few of these are the Islamic Studies and Research Association, the Naqshbandi Foundation for Islamic Education, and the Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education. Sufism can be found all over the world, just in Islamic Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, Sufism is not solely rooted in the Islamic faith, in fact there are many Sufi orders that do not adhere to Islam but do in fact practice *Jihad al-Akbar*. This proves that love, compassion, and self-discipline transcend religious boundaries and people from many different backgrounds can relate to the practice of *Jihad al-Akbar*. It is important to note that not all Sufis are practicing the religion of Islam. There are Christian Sufis, Buddhist Sufis, and even Hindi Sufis. So, it seems to be that no matter what religion you practice or God you worship, there is always room for self-improvement and the abandonment of material attachment. Virtually all agree that when one inevitably comes to the end of life and dies, one cannot take

their possessions, their money, or their relationships with them. To this extent, *Jihad al-Akbar* essentially prepares one for this transition. Sufis do not fear death but rather embrace it and look forward to their joyous reunion with God. By giving up all identity of oneself and all attachment to Earthly pleasures and goods, one can look forward to meeting the Creator and be joyous about the return home.

Imam Khomeini once said, "In the world the extent of one's toils, sufferings and acts of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation is commensurate with the loftiness and worthwhile sublimity of his goal. What you rose for, what you pursue, what you sacrifice your lives and your means for is the noblest of all goals since the creation of the universe till eternity." (al-islam.org) The life one chooses to live is how one will be remembered, which is why *Jihad al-Akbar* is so important in the Sufi community. Khomeini spoke of veils of man, saying that as one came to greater self-revelation one would begin to remove the dark veils and see the light. "Attention to other than God covers man with veils of darkness and light. If any worldly affair is a cause for man's attention to be directed toward the world and to neglect God, the Exalted, it raises dark veils. All of the corporeal worlds are dark veils. If the world is a means of directing attention to the Truth and for arriving at the abode of the Hereafter, which is the "abode of honor," then the dark veils are transformed into veils of light." (al-islam.org) Once one has mastered turning away from Earthly desires and reveals only light veils then the final process of becoming one with God can occur. "Hence, in this intimate devotion (*munajat*) there is a request to God, the Exalted, for vision and brightness of the heart so one may tear the veils of light and reach the source of greatness: "Until the vision of the heart tears through the veils of light, so that there is union with the source of greatness." However, one who has not yet torn the veils of darkness, one who directs all of his attention to the natural world and, God forbid, becomes deviated from Allah, and one who is basically unaware of the world beyond and the spiritual worlds, and has retrogressed to a state of nature, who has never decided to refine himself, to set into motion his spiritual powers, to push aside the curtains of darkness which are a cloud over his heart. He is lodged in "the deepest of the depths' [of hell] which is the ultimate veil." (al-islam.org)

Imam Khomeini also warns that if one does not deny Earthly pleasures and seek solely for God then one will be corrupt forever. He says that repeat offenses of these wicked deeds may eventually lead one into the hell of eternal fire. (al-islam.org) He also offers some insight into why man suffers. He says "God does not want man to be afflicted with illnesses unaccompanied by pain, for when an illness is accompanied by pain, it forces man to seek a cure, to consult a doctor or go to hospital, but an unfelt illness without pain is more dangerous. By the time one becomes aware of it, it is too late. If mental illnesses were accompanied by pain, this would be something for which to be thankful. Ultimately, man would be forced to find a cure or a remedy." (al-islam.org) Khomeini is basically saying that if one does not suffer from something there will be no drive for humankind to find a remedy. Perhaps this is why mental illnesses and other issues, which do not manifest physical symptoms, have taken society so long to accept as legitimate sources of pain and discomfort. As a follower of *Jihad al-Akbar* one should commit to an intense desire to

leave off of these Earthly afflictions behind and focus solely on one's union with God through self-abandonment.

Overall, Jihad is so much more than a negative term Westerners associate with violence, bloodshed, and above all terrorism. September 11, 2001 is a date, which will live in infamy for the entire world, especially Americans. However, one cannot let this evil act of terror define the way we see and treat an entire world religion. The Jihad one sees portrayed and spoken about on television is a far cry from the Jihad spoken about in the Qur'an. Education and dialogue is a necessity in today's society and through advocacy the general view of Islam can change. Diversity is something that should be cherished and encouraged amongst all religions and peoples.

Jihad al-Akbar is a common practice whether or not the general community chooses to call it by this name. Buddhism and Christianity both strive to abandon Earthly materialistic ways and become more in-tune with one's self. It is far past time to quit vilifying Jihad and reveal the true and higher nature of what it really stands for, *Jihad al-Akbar*. It is not an offensive crusade against infidels, but rather a peaceful crusade against oneself. Sufism is a mystical, wonderful tradition that can serve all religions and backgrounds if one will open their eyes to the idea that a word is just a word until someone gives it meaning.

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The Relationship Prayer has on Quality of Life in Later Adulthood

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Abstract

Prayer often involves the petition, offerings of gratitude, concession, and recognition to what is considered to be known as God, The Divine, or a higher power. Prayer can involve private meditation, small group activity and public worship. This paper will present an analysis of types of individual prayer and how ways of praying when alone influence quality of life in later adulthood. A research question "*how does prayer influence quality of life for older adults in the United States?*" is asked. The sample is drawn from the Religion, Aging, and Health Survey of 2001 [Wave I] and is comprised of older white and black adults (aged 65 and over) living in the United States. Linear regression analysis was done to determine the effect that types of individual prayer have on quality of life and depression from a sample of respondents at the .05 level of significance. Results show praying for God's will holds a significant effect on one's life satisfaction. For each level increase in praying for God's will, self-reported life satisfaction increases. Older adults who pray were found to have experienced a greater degree of self-reported life satisfaction. This implies a higher sense of connectedness within themselves and their environments. By understanding the ways in which prayer influences life satisfaction, feelings of connectedness and reported levels of depression, more holistic interventions can be developed that include prayer as a treatment component

Keywords: prayer, quality of life, life satisfaction, depression, aging, elderly

Problem

As people age, life satisfaction involves an individual's perception of quality of life, biological well-being, psychological adjustment and levels of social interaction with others. Spirituality and prayer have been examined as a way to achieve optimal quality of life and bio-psychosocial health. Spirituality and prayer are noted to be relevant topics when examining aging later in life. These topics are beginning to re-emerge as an area of research interest with gerontologists and aging specialists (Sulmsay, 2002). Each provides a focus to one's quality of life, development over the lifespan, and psychological adjustment to aging. When a person is connected, or engages in connectedness through prayer, a relationship begins to develop between one's life satisfaction and quality of life (Salsman, Brown, Brechting, & Carlson, 2005). Using prayer as a coping mechanism provides a direct form of communication with God about personal issues by making a sincere plea, petition, or request from God.

Prayer is known to have an effect on one's psychological well-being and mood, which in turn influences health. In a study which consisted of a sample of 50 elders, Dunn & Horgas (2000) found that more than 90% of the sample of older adults lived in home based community settings reported using prayer as a coping mechanism. This example of prayer being used as a coping mechanism can extend to the relationship that exists between

prayer and healing the negative effects of stress. As spiritual prayer is used, there is positive coping, and improved healing as seen by improved health outcomes. Certain aspects of expressed religious devotion may pose as a predictor for risk of death. When controlling for one's wealth, mental health, and other demographic factors, Ardel (2000) found that men and women have a higher relationship between their personal religious struggle and mortality.

Aging in Modern Society

The US Census Bureau notes that elder individuals comprise about 12% of the population. This number is high in part to the baby boomer generation coming into their 60s beginning in 2006. Demographers and social science researchers report that by 2030 individuals age 65 and older will comprise 20% of the population, which will be reported at approximately 72 million. Society uses the term elderly as a descriptor of individuals who are age 65 and older. A noted concern is that individuals in this age bracket may be vulnerable to exploitation and in need of social service programs due to increases in isolation, health problems, and issues of daily functional living. Gerontologists and care providers who work with older adults often discuss strategies for enhancing the quality of life as part of successful interventions. Identification of specific issues that define the term 'quality of life' is sometimes ambiguous and vague. Researchers are continually making attempts to quantify and assess criteria for measuring quality of life for older adults. One's quality of life is thought to be associated with or equal to life satisfaction, which many assert as a direct indicator of one's good health and well-being in life (Hooyman and Kiyak, 2008).

As global populations continue to rapidly age, simultaneous advances in technology have led to health improvements and extended life expectancy (Rajkumar & Kumar, 1996). Looking at one's health and well-being is of concern as the population continues to age and become older. Older age brings along with it health complications such as diabetes, heart disease, and memory loss as well as social issues such as financial need, alienation, and loss of friends and family. Examples of other health problems in later adulthood are associated with joints and pain, arthritis, the decline of mobility and strength, which in turn may influence issues of balance, safety and functionality of daily living.

Gaining knowledge concerning quality of life and life satisfaction is seen as a way to examine the well-being of older adults in the context of medicalization and patient care planning. The focus of this paper is on how one's spirituality, when expressed in the context of prayer, influences life satisfaction and other health measures such as depression in later adulthood. The intent is to examine the influence of prayer on life satisfaction of older adults so as to determine its potential usefulness in holistic interventions.

Literature Review

Differentiation of Spirituality and Prayer

Looking at spirituality as expressed through prayer provides a way to examine positive health in later adulthood more holistically. Watkins (2003) explains that spirituality is the pronouncement of one's life with the relationship towards God, one's self, and the whole community. Prayer is seen as an intercessory means to bringing before the Divine one's personal needs, the needs of others, and the circumstances of the community at large (Kaldor, Francis, & Fisher, 2002). Being that a majority of Americans pray, what is noted is that prayer contributes to the "soul and essence of religion" and provides a means of unity among people with similar values (Whittington & Scher 2010, p. 59). As explained in Whittington and Scher (2010), researchers Laird, Snyder, Rapoff, and Green identified several types of prayer used in their Prayer Scale. Prayers of adoration are acts focused on the worship of God; prayers of thanksgiving are expressions of gratitude towards God;

prayers of supplication are seen as requests of intervention; prayers of confession are the acknowledgement of negative behaviors and request of forgiveness; and prayers of reception are requests of guidance and wisdom in making a decision.

This helps create variables for measuring prayer and also provides variables of religious satisfaction that can be used to assess one's life satisfaction. As people age, they often have a harder time adapting to technological advancements, and turning towards spirituality and prayer can become a means of coping with a rapidly changing world. One's spiritual beliefs have been studied and seen not only as part of a person's concept of self but also as a way of coping with life. Strategies for examining this further are employed in the characteristics of being optimistic, counting on one's self, exuding comfort towards others, and providing support as way to increase one's well-being (Dunn & Horgas, 2000).

Examining spirituality and prayer could provide a means to assess for anxiety and other health related issues in older adulthood. Examining the lack of social support could provide a way to combat low life satisfaction and health related conditions. There is research that substantiates the claim that social support networks and spiritual support networks may reduce and help to improve physical and psychiatric conditions. This can be achieved by providing a means to reduce the stress of aging. Social support has been studied as a way of being connected or an indicator of connectedness, which affects quality of life and well-being. Register and Scharer (2010) explain that older adults who have a spiritual sense and are able to contribute and maintain meaningful lives experience higher levels of connectedness with others. This situation can also extend toward one's mood, stressors, heart disease, and brain related functioning. Overall, having connectedness is related to being optimistic and positively influences one's well-being and outlook on life.

Life Satisfaction

Salamon (1988) finds life satisfaction to be a universally based construct used to measure subjective life experiences for older individuals. One's self reported health and life satisfaction are associated with predictors of death. It was found that older individuals who report declining health are three times more likely to die than those who report higher ability functioning and better health (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). When examining the concept of life satisfaction it is usually associated with adjustment, coping, being apt within one's social environment and managing one's social resources and support mechanisms in the context of quality of life. One's life satisfaction is a predictor of a longer life, lower rates of death and overall sense of health (Zhang, Howell, & Stolarski, 2012).

Zhang and Liu (2007) note, in a study with elder adults who were childless, that there were reported feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and even moments of uselessness, which resulted in a lower life satisfaction. Additionally it was found that adult children were also sources of support and care for their aging parents. Childless parents were also found to be in need of social networks and to have reported overall lower levels of life satisfaction. The implications of having a lack of social support or absence of a spiritual support network for those who are childless also extend to other socio-cultures. Being connected in terms of having 'a sense of connectedness' impacts one's health and well-being particularly in regards to someone being happier, having a positive self-worth, and having appreciation of the world in which they live (Zhang, Howell, & Stolarski, 2012).

Examining the relationship between elders living in a residential care facility versus those residing in a community based setting provides a way to look at the impact of familial and social support on life satisfaction and well-being among the elderly population. There are some social factors which affect medical and daily functioning (i.e. transportation, visits to the doctor and tasks of personal self-care). Overall family and friends are significant contributors in improving life satisfaction (Ho et al. 2003). Loneliness and other negative mood symptoms, such as sadness and depression, were shown to be higher for those with

mental impairments. Both depression and loneliness was found to have an effect on well-being. The more physical impairment an elderly individual has, the higher the risk for depression and poor quality of life (Holmen et al. 1999).

Veenhooven (2009) finds life satisfaction to be related to chronic medical impairments for the aging population. In other words, when an elder has a chronic medical condition, they report lower levels of life satisfaction. This result contributes to a need for more involved and integrated social support groups which could improve life satisfaction or well-being (Stephens, Alpass, Towers, and Stevenson, 2011). In examining the medical aspect of health, mental health is also a focus in the case of life satisfaction. The reason being is that if an individual reports lower life satisfaction, this can be explored through assessment or other forms of preventative services such as health screenings, health planning or health education. Chen, Gill and Prigerson (2005) note that when examining factors related to health, if an individual has a consistent exercise routine, they are more likely to monitor their diet and keep a regular sleep pattern. This in turn has a positive effect on personal health and well-being especially for a grieving elder who may experience frequent losses of friends and family later in life. Having a lower life satisfaction could be remedied with a strong social support of family and friends, as well as not allowing one's self to be socially isolated. These networks contribute to higher life satisfaction reports (Stephens, Alpass, Towers, & Stevenson, 2011).

Depression

Being depressed and/or having the clinical diagnosis of depression are seen as both medical and psychiatric conditions. This is because of the affects depression can have on a person's well-being, reasoning, and emotional state. Having symptoms of depression may affect how a person thinks, feels, and reacts to certain situations differently. It can be short term, may affect a person their whole life, or may arise as a result of a traumatic event. As people get older, the case of depression may become more physiological due to the experience of age related physical changes that may influence mood, behavior, and rational mindset. Older people are likely to report depression as a result of a decline in life and physical ability. Examples of health conditions that impact physical ability are experiencing chest pain (angina), inflammation of joints (arthritis), having trouble breathing (asthma), and an imbalance in blood sugar levels (diabetes). Thus, when these health conditions are present and a person is also diagnosed with depression, their health is likely to be negatively reported (Moussavi et al. 2007).

The relationship that exists between depression and being religious has been examined interchangeably. Studies have found that older adults who experience depression and are also religious (or having religiousness) had increased rates in which their conditions were improved. Engaging in religious activities such as prayer, public worship and bible study may contribute to lower incidences of depressive symptom for people who have high religious involvement. Thus, prayer may impact the extent to which depression affects the aging population (Smith, McCullough & Poll 2003).

Conceptual Framework

Continuity theory (CT) and ecological systems theory (EST) are used to conceptually frame this study. Continuity theory was selected because of its focus on social processes and social change as a way to adapt to one's social world (Atchley, 1999). An assumption is that changes occur and individuals must adapt to changes in their environment and personal identity in order to thrive. This theory poses the question, how do individuals adapt to or acclimate to situations in order to get their essential needs met? Experiencing significant life events such as marriage, birth of a child, divorce or death of a loved one may cause a person to change or modify their values, morals, attitudes, and identity. Continuity theory

explains how this phenomenon often leads to social changes of adaptation and levels of continuity in the developmental process of aging (Markeson, 2003).

Another noted aspect is that CT sees old age as continuous measure even though personality has constructs that remain constant throughout the developmental lifespan. Having personal values, beliefs, and attitudes toward life provides a way to get through changes in the external world. Individual value base is thought to be fully developed by the time of early adulthood which impacts later personal development in older adulthood. Having structural and cultural interruptions in life leads aging adults to deal with stressors by using adaptive coping strategies (Kelly and Lazarus, 2015). Being able to assess and adapt to stressors helps individuals deal with advancements and changes in life. Overall, this theory is best suited for understanding adaptation and the activities associated with aging lifespan development.

EST looks at how people are a part of and also able to join the various social systems in the environment around them. From a systems perspective, Payne (2005) notes that the level of connection a person has with the various environmental networks around them is directly related to their ability to cope. Implications from this theory assert that there is a connection between how people and groups relate towards one another in their social environment and in the ecology of life (Dale, Smith, Norlin and Chess, 2009).

Furthermore, EST examines human development based on Bronfenbrenner's person within the environment perspective which encompasses both the ecological principles and all of the systems within an environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). An individual and their social environment are seen as multifaceted, collaborative, and works together in a way that is interactive (Weiss-Gal, 2008). Overall, EST examines how a person and the networks must strengthen and maintain in order to sustain overall functioning (Trask, Hepp, Settles & Shabo, 2009). Networks are the individual (micro), middle base (mezzo), and structural (macro) systems within the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Furthermore, EST explains how a person interacts with their social environment and how the networks of micro, mezzo and macro support environmental functioning. Thus, EST makes sense for this study as it provides concepts necessary to assess individual based prayer and health that is associated with life satisfaction for older adults.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is "prayer improves quality of life for those in older adulthood." The hypothesis of this study supports the research that asserts positive life satisfaction can affect older adulthood in a positive manner. Additionally, this hypothesis will determine if prayer really does in fact influence life satisfaction in a positive manner because people who pray and report life satisfaction may feel a greater sense of connectedness to the world around them.

Research Methodology

Data Source

The data for this project is drawn from the work of Krause (2001) in the Religion, Aging, and Health Survey of 2001 [Wave I]. This data set focuses on the religious affiliation, health status, including mental health issues, and well-being of older white and African Americans in the US. The dataset is made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Analysis Sample

The sample includes Caucasian and Black adults aged 65-101 years old that live in the US. The survey in 2001 included questions regarding religious affiliation, beliefs among

persons who are Christian and those who have been associated with any religious affiliation in their lifetime. Additionally, demographic variables are made available. This study includes 1335 older adults who answered the questions of interest (Krause, 2001).

Variables

The dependent variable is self-reported life satisfaction that is measured by the question: *Now please, think about your life as a whole, how satisfied are you with it?* It has 5 categories that range from completely satisfied to not satisfied at all. It was reverse coded so the lowest category would be first in the range.

The independent variable in this study is called prayer which is based on the questions that discuss the type of prayer. The questions include: *How often do you pray by yourself? (called Prayer1); When you are by yourself, how often do you pray that God's will be done? (called Prayer2); When you are by yourself, how often do you offer prayers of thanksgiving? (called Prayer3); When you are by yourself, how often do you pray for guidance? (called Prayer4); and When you are by yourself, how often do you pray for your own health? (called Prayer5)*"

Prayer1 was coded as 1= several times a day, 2= once a day; 3= a few times a week, 4= once a week, 5= a few times a month, 6= once a month, 7= less than once a month and 8= never. *Prayer1* was recoded to reflect the coding of the other 4 prayer variables so now 1= very often [category 1 and 2 recoded for *Prayer1*], 2= fairly often [category 3, and 4 recoded for *Prayer1*] 3= once in a while [category 5, 6 and 7 recoded for *Prayer1*] and 4= never [category 8 recoded for *Prayer1*]. All the prayer variables will be reverse coded so the never category is on the left and the very often category is on the right.

Control variables.

Demographics for age, gender, race. Marital status and level of education were also included in this study. An added control variable is self-reported depression status.

1. Age is the number of years old a respondent reported at their last birthday.
2. Gender was coded as Male so all men in the sample are coded as 1 and all females as 0.
3. Race is coded as White so all respondents that identified as White/Caucasian were coded as 1, and all persons who did not identify as White/Caucasian are coded as 0.
4. Marital status is coded as Married so all respondents who are currently married are coded as 1 and all other responses as 0.
5. Level of education is coded as College so all respondents who are college graduates are coded as 1 and all other responses as 0.
6. Self-reported depression status was an ordinal variable coded as 1= rarely or none of the time, 2= some or little of the time, 3= occasionally of a moderate amount of time and 4= most or all of the time.

All these control variables were selected based on review of the literature on aging and health in older adults. Self-reported depression status was selected based on the exploration of how prayer and religiousness affect one's mental health.

Preliminary Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all the variables used in the analyses. At least half of our respondents report not being satisfied with their lives (4=not satisfied with life). Over half of the respondents in the sample were over the age of 70. Approximately 41% of the sample is men. About half of the sample is currently married and only 14% completed college.

Linear regression was done to examine the effects the type of prayer has on life satisfaction. Two models were included. The first model only includes the type of prayer and

the second model adds the control variables of the study in addition to the type of prayer. Model 2 is the best-fit model because it has a larger value for the coefficient of determinism (R^2) than Model 1. The findings indicate there is a significant effect between prayer and self-reported life satisfaction. Particularly, praying for God's will has a significant effect on life satisfaction ($B=0.151$, $p<0.001$). There are no significant differences seen when looking at other types of prayer and self-reported life satisfaction.

When controlling for all other variables in the model, for every level increase in praying for God's will, a person's self-reported life satisfaction increases by 0.151. Married older adults report 0.934 lower self-reported life satisfactions than non-married older adults. As depression decreases, the respondents life satisfaction increases ($B=-.176$, $p<0.001$).

Discussion

One's well-being can affect their relationship with others, their environment and even their relationship with a higher power. These particular types of prayer were selected because of their relationship toward life satisfaction in a way that promotes a sense of connectedness and belief in one's self. The current research on this particular topic is not extensive; however, it is a good example of how social scientists and gerontologists can apply their research in practice toward helping to ensure older adults receive the care necessary to be happy and healthy.

This study was designed to gather knowledge and understanding of how spirituality expressed through prayer with older adults contributes to coping and overall functioning. The theories utilized in this paper, continuity theory (CT) and ecological systems theory (EST) complement each other as they focus on adaptability and integration throughout the life course. These criteria allow aging specialists and other social scientists an avenue to produce knowledge to help influence practice, policy and interventions that better serve the aging population.

Both theories highlight changes in one's life. This is where a person's spirituality and their connectedness are associated with innate knowledge and understanding that comprise CT and EST. The ecological perspective stresses that aging is a natural occurrence that we must accept. This concept is vital to gerontology because of the relationship between one's life and one's experiences. Prayer arises as a result of one's spirituality and can produce positive health outcomes (Edenfield & Saeed, 2012). As a result, the wisdom and spirituality that is gained through the process of aging can also influence the maturity of our immediate social networks (Ardelt, 2000).

Conclusion

Prayer is a tool that can reduce stress, anxiety and depression (Dunn & Horgas, 2000). Previous research has indicated that older adults report turning to God's will to help cope with problems more often later in life. Moreover, they also report a higher sense of connection to the collective and report a higher sense of overall happiness, peace, and serenity (Register & Scharer, 2010). These results reaffirm the research hypothesis that older adults who pray will report a higher sense of life satisfaction. This satisfaction is a form of connection that produces an overall sense of connectedness to the environment around them.

More research is needed to explore how spirituality, when expressed through prayer, plays a role in life satisfaction for older adults. Only by understanding how prayer relates to life satisfaction can we determine more holistic interventions that could have a positive impact on life satisfaction for older adults. Qualitative based studies are the best means to explore the lived experiences of older adults through reminiscence and storytelling. Additionally, quantitative studies can be used to validate the hypotheses that are produced from exploratory studies through the analysis of numeric data.

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Appendices

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Analyses of Life Satisfaction, 2001 [Wave I] Religion, Aging, and Health Survey

Predictors	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable		
Self-Reported Life Satisfaction	4a	4b
Independent Variables		
Prayer1	4a	3b
Prayer2	4a	3b
Prayer3	4a	3b
Prayer4	4a	3b
Prayer5	4a	3b
Control Variables		
Age	74.69	6.54
Male	0.41	0.49
White	0.49	0.50
Married	0.50	0.50
College	0.14	0.35
Self-reported Depression	1a	3b

a Median

b Range

Table 2. Linear Regression Estimated Predicting Self-Reported Life Satisfaction in Older U.S. Adults in 2001.

Predictor	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>	
	B	β	B	B
Constant	3.257 ^{***} (0.153)		3.315 ^{***} (0.313)	
Prayer 1	-0.021 (0.047)	-0.014	-0.040 (0.047)	-0.027
Prayer 2	0.147 ^{***} (0.038)	0.147	0.151 ^{***} (0.038)	0.153
Prayer 3	0.026 (0.042)	0.25	0.015 (0.042)	0.014
Prayer 4	0.056 (0.039)	0.056	0.053 (0.039)	0.053
Prayer 5	-0.010 (0.031)	-0.011	0.025 (0.031)	0.027
Age			0.001 (0.003)	0.12
Male			0.009 (0.049)	0.005
White			0.056 (0.051)	0.027
Married			0.109 [*] (0.049)	0.066
College			0.114 (0.066)	0.047
Self-reported Depression			-0.176 ^{***} (0.027)	-0.176
Adjusted R ²	0.033		0.071	
N	1335		1285	

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis.

Source: The 2001 [Wave I] Religion, Aging, and Health Survey.

“Gypsy” Religious Marginalization in the United States

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Abstract

Over one million "gypsy," or Roma, people currently reside in the United States. Just as their kin in Europe do, many hide their true identities and religious beliefs from their friends and coworkers for fear of persecution. This paper is a personal narrative and ethnographic description of Roma attempts to find a place in American religious structures. The goals of the paper are to 1) provide insight into Roma beliefs and practices, 2) highlight marginalization of “gypsies” in the US, and 3) describe strategies used to try to “fit in” with mainstream US culture. The author, himself Rom, uses participant observation, auto ethnography, and literature review for his data and interpretation of what it is to be “gypsy” and religious in the US.

Introduction

Over one million "Gypsy or Rom people currently reside in the United States (Hancock 2010). From personal experience as one of the Rom, I've grown up knowing that just as their kin in Europe, many Rom hide their true identities and religious beliefs from their friends and coworkers for fear of persecution. Throughout the U.S. they attempt to practice their varied cultural and religious beliefs without fear of persecution; though often attempts to do so are met with strong resistance by the surrounding communities (Hancock 2010). Rom religious practices are conducted with family members or small groups of like-minded people and are not conducted like mainstream U.S. religions (Hancock 2010). As a result, the Rom attempts to attend other local churches to fit in with their communities (Hancock 2010). As “gypsies,” they have difficulty fitting in and suffer from discrimination (Voice of America Staff2006). Many Rom do not attend a "home" church weekly (Hancock 2010). Instead, they often attend large Rom gatherings a few days a year for major religious events. The Rom will often attempt to assimilate themselves into the local religion and adopt their beliefs and viewpoints in an attempt to fit in regardless of their own personal beliefs (Hancock 2010). In the U.S., there has been a recent movement to incorporate beliefs of the Rom into mainstream churches such as the one in Fort Worth, Texas, but this has caused conflict for those that hold more traditional beliefs, such as arranged marriages, dowries, and fortune telling. (Hancock 2010)

Background: Who is the Rom?

The Roma people originate from India approximately 1500 years ago and migrated to Europe during the middle ages and had reached all of the western and northern countries by 1500AD (Hancock 2010). This migration required the Gypsy people to integrate with the other populations while attempting to retain their own beliefs and viewpoints of the world (Hancock 2010). This need for integration lead to a great deal of persecution in the past such as slavery even after slavery was abolished in the Americas (Hancock 2010). The immigration of Gypsies into the Americas began

as early as Christopher Columbus who took three Gypsies with him on his voyage to the Americas (Hancock 2010). During the colonial period of Europe, the countries dealt with the “Gypsy problem” by sending large numbers of Gypsies overseas to a number of colonies one of which was the Americas where many Gypsies found that slavery and indentured servitude was the norm (Hancock 2010). Many of today’s American Gypsies are descendants of those original colonists where others are immigrants from major events such as the world wars and other major immigration events of the Americas (Hancock 2010).

Gypsy vs. Rom: What is the difference?

There are a number of distinct differences between names and terms that are still used to refer to the Rom people (Heimlich 2010). The main difference that needs to be addressed is the derogatory term of “gypsy” (Heimlich 2010). This term is used to refer to the Rom people in the same way that many terms for other ethnic groups are used today (Heimlich 2010). This term goes back to the origins of the Gypsy people where they were originally thought to come from Egypt instead of India (Heimlich 2010). This term is still used today and even within the Rom, community to denote themselves, but it is more often than not used in a hateful sense (Heimlich 2010). On the other hand, the term of Roma or Rom is more often used by academics and even more so within the communities in an attempt to tear down and destroy the derogatory term of “gypsy” (Heimlich 2010). Overall, these two terms are not seen as overly bad but the term of gypsy can be used as a hateful term (Heimlich 2010). This term is even used today when someone says another has gyped him or her (Google 2015). This goes back to the belief that gypsy people are always out to con or get the better of someone outside their community (Hancock 2010).

The Rom people in the United States are still largely unnoticed or seen as outsiders by non-Rom people (Hancock 2010). Normally other ethnic group such as Hispanic, Native American, or Asian would be able to seek assistance from government organizations to combat these issues (Heimlich 2010). This is not entirely the case with the Rom people, in some cases it is even impossible (Heimlich 2010). Most often the Rom people are unwilling to seek outside help due to being raised most often to not reveal themselves to outsiders or “gaje” because of past persecutions and the unwillingness by many Rom to trust them. (Webley 2010) This is based almost entirely on issues that have arisen in the past such as the Holocaust, Rom slavery in both the United States and elsewhere in the world, and the current persecution and racial profiling done by police and governments throughout the world (Heimlich 2010). There are even “task forces” in police forces across America built around the entire idea of defeating con artists but often target Rom people due to the stereotype that “gypsies” are the masters of the con. (Becerra 2006) Due to being seen as outsiders there is little that they are able to do to prevent this persecution and there are largely no representation for them outside of their own communities (Heimlich 2010).

Rom Traditions and Practices:

Rom tradition holds many laws and rules on the treatment of others both inside and outside their communities but most outsiders only see them as lawless wanderers

who will take and steal from you as they please (Heimlich 2010). Many Rom are capable and willing to police their own even holding “gypsy courts” to settle arguments, disputes, and civil cases but none of this is recognized by any other group or organization as a valid form of law (Hancock 2010).

Religion and the Rom:

This poses a huge issue, where would a group that is mostly persecuted and pushed out be able to worship their own particular religion (Heimlich 2010). Rom people worship a number of different religions including Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and many others including many of the other denominations of those major religions (Heimlich 2010). Of fifty Vlax Romani interviewed in Texas, 38 declared themselves to be Eastern Orthodox Catholic while nine declared themselves to be Baptist and only three to be non-denominational protestant. (See Figure 1.) This is unique compared to the overall composition of religions in Texas. (See Table 2). Worship of these services is often integrated into their own traditional beliefs but sometimes there is full conversion to these religions and the loss of their traditional beliefs (Heimlich 2010). Often worship services are held at home or in a small group of like-minded individuals usually in secrecy where they can feel safe and supported, but some have found that if they assimilate into the communities around them they are able to use mainstream worship services as their own and some do find this to be an acceptable if not ideal way of dealing with the issue of how and where to worship without being seen as abnormal either by their family whom accept them in some cases or those in the outside communities (Heimlich 2010). More traditional families on the other hand are entirely unwilling to assimilate into the local communities and as such find themselves only able to worship in their homes or sometimes in public areas such as parks, fields and pastures and as such are open to persecution by those that do not or are unwilling to understand the Rom people (Hancock 2010).

Religious Persecution and Marginalization:

The persecution of the Rom people is a major issue for those traditional families due to their inability to worship (Voice of America Staff 2006). Without their ability to worship and the inability to form churches in the United States that do not have to be permanently attended on a regular basis they are unable to continue their traditional way of lifestyle (Voice of America Staff 2006). This inability to continue their lifestyle causes a great deal of instability in the core family groups that are most important to their culture (Hancock 2010). This instability grows to further cause instability in their overall way of life such as inability to continue traveling, working in traditional family businesses, and eventually the collapse of their cultural beliefs (Hancock 2010). Due to the legal requirements in the United States for the formation of a church many Rom have decided to enter into mainstream religious services or in some cases attempt to form their own churches but this is often met with difficulties of their own (Heimlich 2010). One such example is the Pentecost movement that is spreading throughout European and American Rom communities to which many Rom have converted to from their own religions (Hancock 2006). The Pentecost movement was started in France and England and has spread quickly throughout

much of Europe and America on the basis that Rom are no different than others and that they are able to be forgiven and loved regardless of their past (Hancock 2010). Many traditional families consider this to be a personal attack against their traditional way of life since one major aspect is the removal of arranged marriages and one of the most prominent ways for women to earn their own income, fortune telling (Hancock 2010). The difficulties Rom face when attempting to find solutions include many of the same hurdles as before, but most notably is the issue pertaining to the Rom people being forced to settle down which for many traditional families is tantamount to death (Heimlich 2010). These traditional families see being forced to settle similar in many cases to slavery and as such are extremely unwilling to resign their fate (Hancock 2010). Due to this and many other reasons, many Rom feel that they have no way out and no solution for the issues and as such suicide rates have increased in the last few years. (Clifton 2013)

Solutions to alleviate Marginalization of the Rom:

There are a number of things that the United States and other countries housing large numbers of Roma people could do to help alleviate this problem and help to maintain this rich culture and history of the people. First off, countries such as the United States that are very vague about what they consider religious and ethnic minorities should accept the fact that the Roma people have and always will exist and have been persecuted for generations and apply the appropriate legal protections given to any other minority in that country. Secondly, recognize the Rom people's ability to self-police. Most Rom communities have little to no violent crime rates and what many consider domestic abuse in the outside world is considered legal within Rom community law. These case are often corporal punishment for children and wives striking their husbands when they step out of line which is rare if not almost nonexistent. The combined idea of recognizing the ethnic and cultural individuality of the Rom people and the various sub groups within it and their own ability to self-govern just as most Native American Reservations are in the United States and elsewhere would give the Rom people much of what is needed to resolve many of the issues. Unlike other ethnic and cultural groups the Rom have and always will separate themselves from outsiders due to tradition and culture alone and as such separating them from others like the Amish, Native Americans, and Mormons have done in the past and present will actually allow the Rom people the freedom to travel, the ability to self-govern, and the ability to build worship centers that in most cases will only be visited a few times a year in large mass numbers. Finally the overall solution to issues such as these is the breakdown and destruction of stereotypes and negative connotations placed on the Rom people. To do this, education is the key, currently in the United States the University of Texas at Austin as well as the Smithsonian is the only two places attempting to break down these ideas and educate the populations of the United States about the realities of the Rom people. Currently the Holocaust museum at the Smithsonian hosts a section on the Rom Holocaust or the "Devouring". The University of Texas with the help of Dr. Ian Hancock houses the Romani Archives and Documentation center as well as a full range of classes and is currently the only university in the United States that regularly conducts classes on the Romani language. These two places reach many

people, but there are still a huge number of people that never know anything other than the stereotypical singing, dancing, scarf clad idea that many hold about “gypsy” people. There must be a larger program of education that reaches a much larger audience if there is going to be change or else we might lose this diverse and beautiful culture forever.

Figure 1. Number of religions of fifty Vlax Romani in Texas. (Hancock 2010)

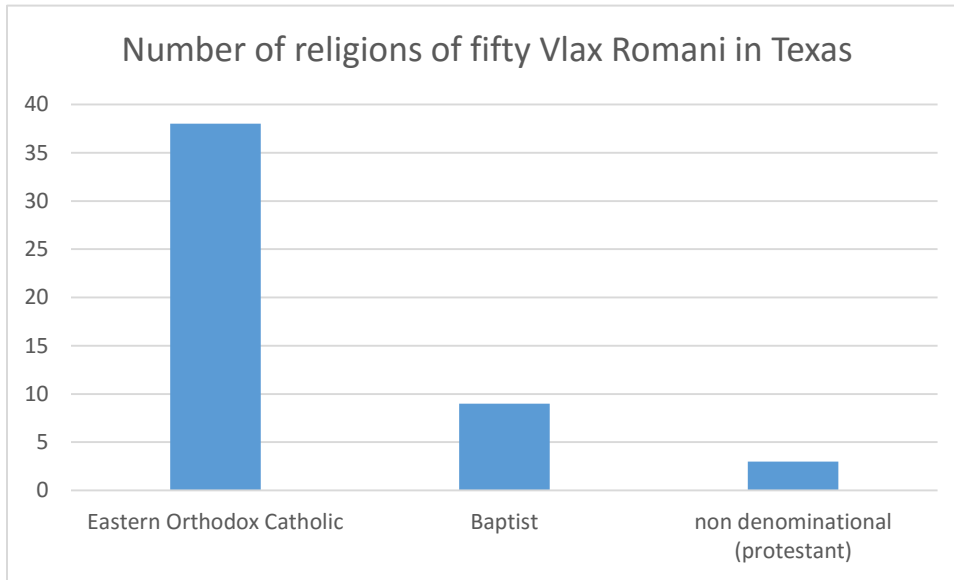


Table 1. Table reproduced from Texas Almanac, Texas Sate Historical Association (2010). Religions and Adherents in Texas by Percent of Population.

Religious Body	Adherents		Percent of Population	
	Year	2010	2010	2000
1. Catholic Church		4,673,500	18.59	20.95
2. Southern Baptist Convention		3,722,194	14.80	16.88
3. Non-Denominational Christian		1,546,542	6.15	—
4. United Methodist Church		1,122,736	4.46	4.90
5. Muslim estimate		421,972	1.68	0.55
6. Church of Christ		351,129	1.40	1.81
7. LDS (Mormons)		296,141	1.18	0.75
8. Assembly of God		275,565	1.10	1.09
9. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)		155,046	0.62	0.86
10. Episcopal Church		148,439	0.59	0.85
11. Lutheran—Missouri Synod		132,508	0.53	0.67
12. Lutheran—E.L.C.A.		111,647	0.44	0.74
<i>Unclaimed by any faith</i>		<i>10,103,455</i>	<i>40.18</i>	<i>38.25</i>

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Human Mastery Over Nature

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This paper provides aims to present the advantages and unintended consequences of human creature's newfound potential in shaping the natural environment and its impact of present and future generations. Scientific and technological breakthroughs produce the paradox of challenging prior theological assumptions with the discovery of new levels of human potential, while exposing human limitations and frailties. As the ability to prolong human life increases, human's self-destructive capabilities further increase. First, this paper aims to discuss recent social changes that have occurred as a result of human's quest for "mastery over nature". Such effects include: environmental challenges, strained environmental resources, the normalization of conspicuous consumption and waste, and conflicts from attempting to regulate human behavior. Second, this paper will critique the findings of like scholars such as E.O. Wilson, Andrew Greeley, Conrad Kanagy, and Laurel Kearns with respect to the relationship between religion, ideology, and how they shape beliefs about human responsibility. Third, the paper provides an analysis of progressive eco-theologies with regard to human mastery over nature. Finally, the paper will draw from globalization theories and theological arguments to return to fundamental questions about humankind's relationship with God, natural processes, and fellow human and non-human creatures.

The Role of Religion

Religion provides the cognitive and spiritual framework to describe the relationship between human creatures and nature in light of the will of the Divine or some equivalent concept of the Supernatural. Due to the plurality of religious systems, there lies a dispute between whether or not the purpose of the world's existence is to meet human needs, an interdependent relationship between the world and human creatures, or human creatures and nature share a sense of relative equality such that nature both living and nonliving have rights worthy of respect and protection as that of humans.

A general terms traditional Native American spirituality refers to earth as "mother" because it functions as the source in which human life derives. In addition, the earth receives a higher degree of reverence than the most senior member of the family. The emergences of environmental problems that have been attributed to social changes have been interpreted as an assault on the sacred. The structural changes include the following: (1) shortages of environmental resources due to industrialization which forced workers to migrate to cities causing increased population concentration in cities, (2) capitalism and

its impact on human habits of consumption and waste, and (3) democracy which has caused populations to disperse making the regulation of human behavior increasingly difficult. From a Western perspective, democracy has been deemed as the most humane of the various forms of government; however, yet to be perfected.

Typically, Christian fundamentalism entails the belief in Biblical literalism and rejects the impact of modernism and the use of literary or redaction criticism of the Bible. As a result of the widespread embrace of Biblical literalism, the Creation account that describes human creatures as carrying the image of God has served as a means to justify an anthropocentric perspective in which human creatures have a sense of superiority over all other members of the co-creation. Such a perspective can function as a means to justify environmental exploitation. Furthermore, the typical Christian fundamentalist has a relatively conservative eschatological perspective which entails a belief in an imminent catastrophe as a climatic event in the near end times. Which such a belief, there is no need to become concerned with environmental preservation for the sake of life on earth for future generations. According to E.O. Wilson Christian fundamentalist culture more so than its doctrine has succeeded in impacting cultural values and attitudes that disregards the values of environmentalists. However, Andrew Greeley argues that political conservatism more so than theological conservatism has played a greater impact in shaping public opinion about environmentalism as low in terms of legislation priority.

Based on the findings of scholars Conrad Kanagy and Hart Nelson, there is no strong relationship between religion as a variable and anti-environmentalism. Social scientists collectively who have done research on the effects religion has on attitudes about the environment, Christian fundamentalism has a negative association with environmentalism. However, Christian fundamentalism and environmentalism have been found to be unrelated when controlled for political conservatism (see Emerson).

From Capitalism to Socialism

During the twentieth and early twenty-first century, the West has experienced the effects of human mastery over the economic order through the proliferation of the globalization of capitalism and the experimentation of socialism in their various forms. Capitalism entails a belief in the ideal of yielding the maximum production, from the least number of producers, for the lowest possible wage, as efficiently as possible. However, technological advances for the sake of maximizing production and eliminating waste. Such trends contribute to the potential undermining of human ingenuity which functions as a significant feature of human nature in exchange for dismantling obsolete divisions of labor through the aristocratically construction of dehumanized alienation. Automation functions as a means for corporations to reduce overhead cost; however, it produces the following effects: the deskilling of human labor, increases the need for skill upgrading at a faster rate than increasing the capacity to place such skilled workers in such emerging industry, and a waste in human potential. If the trend

continues, then it will become possible for machines and technology to eventually replace human labor.

If labor itself were to disappear, then the state would by default become increasingly likely to resort to a more socialist means of distributing resources unlike it has ever seen to date.

Capitalism's difficulty in abandoning the division of labor characteristic of the manufacturing stage is construed by Marx as evidence that the capitalist form of social organization has outlived its usefulness and has become a barrier to the development of society's productivity. (Adler, p. 785)

Neither a purely capitalist or socialist economic order can effectively incentivize human creatures to exercise sufficient personal restraint for the benefit of the common good, nor solving the problem of the rapid increase of the rate of new industry formation and old industry destruction. The paradox of human ingenuity in terms of technological advances thrives on the benefits of how such progress is cumulative and self-corrective, yet it cannot contain the unanticipated consequences that such progress has structural changes or human creature's inability to adapt to such changes.

Self-Mastery and Power

Human mastery over nature derives from perceptions about the role of power. The meaning for individuals to exercise power over others entails three aspects which includes "the extent that (1) they have the capacity to interfere (2) with impunity and at will (3) in certain choices that the other is in position to make" (Pettit, p. 578). The powerful on rare occasions become willing to share their power with the less privileged, but only as last resort. Second, when the powerful accept their position as the norm, then over time there lies a tendency for them to grow less sensitive to the harm and deprivation endured by less defensible creatures. Last, the powerful are prone to lack consciousness of their vantage point.

Human creatures have the free will to choose to prevent others from exercising their divinely given wills through just and unjust means. To some extent, the individual will require sanctions to contain and suppress individual wills to act in destructive ways. A significant aspect of self-mastery capabilities requires boundaries in order to prevent individual and collective anomic derangement.

Natural Order

Ethical approaches and political ideologies regarding human mastery over nature depends on the subjectivity of religion more so than on the supposedly objectivity of science. There lies some Biblical implications with regards to the role

of human creatures within the context of nature. Among the earliest commandments given to humankind based on Genesis 1 is for human creatures to have “dominion”. The etymology of the word dominion resembles the expression to “lord over” or to “dominate”. The implications from the text include the following: (1) dominion over nature, and (2) no indication of humans exercising dominion over other human creatures. A literal interpretation of dominion provides little qualitative information on the relationship between human creatures and nature, because exercising dominion can range from the benevolent forms of protective caregiving to an unyielding human-centered exploitation of nature. Nevertheless, the context of the term dominion in Genesis 1 implies that human creatures have at least relative equality among each other.

As a consequence of postmodernity, Western society has become increasingly more subject to ambivalence and the effects of plurality. Due to such factors there lies no consensus on what can be regarded as the natural order. Any absolute claims of a natural order can expect scrutiny and widespread skepticism in response. In order to resolve the disputes between a multitude of claims of what can be regarded as the natural order entails a presumed ideologically and value neutral scientific investigation. “Science analyzes the world in terms of space and time. It can do so because space and time exist as real relationships” (Rothman, 222). Discovering conclusive evidence of a natural order through science has two major shortcomings. First, raw scientific data requires interpretation, and the interpretation relies not only on an element of subjectivity in its analysis, but becomes prone to human error through the interpretive process. Second, science has the potential to solve life mysteries, but science cannot answer questions about the purpose and meaning of life. Only religion can answer such questions. Religion provides an explanation of how the world functions. Religion functions as the sole institution that can explain the purpose of human existence and the relationship between human creatures and other aspects of nature in light of such a purpose. However, not all religions agree on the answer to such questions.

Social scientists of the post-Marxist tradition, have collectively theorized that the natural order has been deterred through alienation by way of aristocratically constructed deprivation, and conflict embedded in social structures and its accompanying institutions. Such theorists have concluded that eradicating scarcity would serve as a requisite for society to embrace the appropriate consciousness to usher in an era of human creature’s realization of the natural order. The main critique of Marx in terms of the issue of human mastery over nature is that labor and economics functions as one of many factors rather than the sole factor that hinders human potential and their proper relationship with other humans and the remaining natural world.

Involvement and Detachment

Laurel Kearns has acknowledged the conservative approach towards environmentalism which entails individual stewardship needs to be supplemented by addressing structural concerns such as environmental racism, and the U.S.

federal government's responses to trade and globalization. Ultimately, human habits of involvement and detachment from nature exists in part as a response to public policy. "The range of individual variations in detachment, in other words is limited by the public standards of detachment embodied in modes of thinking and speaking about nature and in the widely institutionalized use of natural forces for human ends" (Elias, p. 228).

Conclusion

When assessing the concept of human mastery over nature, it becomes imperative to investigate the relationship between religion and environmentalism. Like religion, environmentalism contains a unique belief system, a set of values, and Emile Durkheim's concept of a moral community through a compilation of social movements. Within such a belief system, care for the environment becomes a moral imperative. Furthermore, environmentalism embraces the necessity for behavioral modifications such that human creatures minimize their impact on the ecosystem and eliminate unnecessary waste.

Curtailing destruction, harm, and unwarranted suffering ranks as a core value among environmentalist. However, environmentalism faces the innate challenge of maintaining such protective precepts while causing suffering among communities whose local economies depend on industries that extract from nature. Furthermore, environmentalism comes with the risk of excessive governmental restrictions despite the immanent need to exercise caution with regards to the potential ecological crisis and its irreversible consequences without human creatures exercise restraint.

The ethical argument that supports human mastery over nature rests in the manifold benefits for human creatures which include: modern transportation, regulated heating and cooling which protects human and non-human creatures from extreme temperatures. Additional benefits include the discovery of antibiotics for treating and curing ailments, the ability to access filtered water from a reservoir, and a food selection beside wild berries (see Emerson).

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The Rise and Fall of Mother-Father God

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Abstract

This paper traces the decline of matriarchal societies and religions as they were consumed by patriarchal social order and religions. Despite the dominance of patriarchy through the ages, matriarchy – women’s personal and social power and patterns – maintained an undercurrent of influence and has been making a spotty, yet steady rise toward its rightful place in restoring harmony of spirit, nature, and human thought.

After centuries of worldwide patriarchal dominance in leadership, religion, business, economics, politics, technological design, we are hearing much about “the return of the feminine” and “the rise of the feminine.” We are seeing more women CEOs, more women running for public office and for president, holding high-level military positions and rising in the clergy, traditionally male occupations. The balance of matriarchal and patriarchal influence has shifted before, related to physiological function, food availability and practices, social development, and technology. The increasing speed and intensity in the trend toward matriarchal/feminine patterns of awareness, thought, expression, and influence is being driven in part by a decline in the appropriateness and effectiveness of patriarchy and, surprisingly, by the skyrocketing visual and auditory dominance of communication technology.

Where once matriarchal societies were predominant, patriarchal structures, practices and philosophies swallowed them whole. Patriarchy has dominated and controlled cultures for centuries. That position is shifting. It is not that *women* per se are coming into political, social, and spiritual power and dominance; but that the qualities and characteristics of the feminine are gaining new ground.

The ideal is a harmony, balance, and collaboration of male and female strengths and characteristics in which all people thrive and prosper and have their own sovereignty. These desirable social and personal conditions are inherent aspects of the feminine.

This paper is derived in large part from the work of Dr. Leonard Schlain, specifically, from *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*¹, which examines in detail the factors that contributed to the development and dominance of patriarchy and the recurrent rising of the matriarchal. Dr. Schlain is a surgeon, researcher, author and speaker. His MO is to track human social development through the physiological functions of the human body, and the historical, social, technological and perceptual changes and shifts that have moved us from caves to castles to condos.

¹ Schlain’s key ideas are presented in a lecture delivered in November 2006 at Pepperdine University and posted on YouTube in 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QQuD62RxrU>. Portions of this paper are taken from that lecture.

Matriarchy and Patriarchy²

Matriarchy: A social system in which females hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property at the specific exclusion of men, at least to a large degree.³

A contributing factor to matriarchal societies is a connection with Mother Earth as the origins of everything, and the lands themselves. Matrilineal societies in which women are the landowners are tied to this concept.

Patriarchy: A social structural phenomenon in which males have the privilege of dominance over females, both visibly and subliminally.⁴ (The arenas of power described in matriarchy apply to patriarchy.)

Social Structures^{5, 6}

Matriarchy: Feminine Characteristics	Patriarchy: Masculine Characteristics
Women have slightly more power than men; many have shared power and leadership in clearly defined arenas	Men have much more power than women in all or almost all arenas
Absence of power structures and institutionalized hierarchies	Power structures and hierarchies
Characterized by non-violent, collaborative, shared resources, “No signs of violence and warlike activities are evident during pre-patriarchal times”	Characterized by fight, competition, hierarchy, authority, power, growth, development; control of natural resources, rational justification of control and domination of others through the possession of the truth are significant.
The means of production are commonly owned and sets of rules prevent the accumulation of possessions or power. ⁷	The means of production are owned by individuals, primarily male, and by groups or institutions led primarily by males
Decisions concerning every area of life are made by consensus including all genders and generations.	Decisions are made by governing individuals or bodies that are primarily male, even if the titular leader is female.

² Patrilineity and matrilineity (families or social structures in which titles, money, assets, ownership and power are passed from parent to same-gender child) are not considered in this discussion.

³ Wikipedia Encyclopedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matriarchy>

⁴ Oxford Dictionary, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/patriarchy.

⁵ Hannelore Vonier “Description of Matriarchy.” About the Nonviolent Society: Matriarchy. http://matriarchy.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103&Itemid=136 . This is an E-course in Matriarchy. Comments on patriarchy originate from that source and also from a variety of sources on patriarchal patterns.

⁶ See Appendix A for comments on matriarchal societies still existing today.

⁷ See Appendix B for an example of the rules and spiritual and religious practices from the ancient Atland matriarchal society.

Social Structures, continued

Matriarchy: Feminine Characteristics	Patriarchy: Masculine Characteristics
Spiritual practices and religious ceremony are flexible and frequently created anew; celebrated by all members of the community, including children. Calendar references nature and natural cycles and principles. One concept: "The center is everywhere, the circumstance is nowhere."	Spiritual practices and religious ceremony are fixed and static, led by officials at the top of the hierarchy; women and children may be excluded. Religion focuses on one God, male, in a hierarchical structure; calendar referenced by events such birth and death of Christ, saints, etc.
Wealth is shared and means of redistribution are created	Wealth is the province of a few and the flow of wealth is primarily among the wealthy. Even where women own property and have wealth, she and her assets are under the domination of males.
Egalitarian consensus democracy: Both genders participate in decision making, even if the females have slightly more power. Social equilibrium is constantly renewed by consensus decision making, the aim of which is to come to unanimity.	Where democracy exists, only parts of the citizenry are represented, either by direct vote (for most of history by men only); or by representatives of the majority; minority preferences are not included.

The Brain and Feminine/Masculine Dominance

Schlain sees the developing functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain as major influences in the female-male dominance shifts. The right hemisphere directs the actions of the left side of the body and the left hemisphere directs the actions of the right side of the body. Hemispheric dominance directs handedness; use of the hands stimulates activity and strengthening of the associated hemisphere. As men and women increased and decreased dominant handedness, brain dominance shifted.

Gender-specific Characteristics as Functions of Brain Dominance⁸

Right Brain Dominance Feminine Characteristics	Left Brain Dominance: Masculine Characteristics
Generally right hemisphere of the brain is dominant. Women reach for and hold babies with their left hands, gather with their right hands and place/carry the plants in containers in their left hands.	Generally the left hemisphere is dominant. Men pick up and use weapons and tools and carry with their right hands. The left hand carries the shield.
Gatherer and nurturer	Hunter and killer
Aligned with Nature and natural cycles	Aligned with mechanical processes and linear progressions
Holistic and gestalt thinking	Dualistic and part-to-whole thinking
Emotional dominance and depth, required for raising children	Emotional detachment, required for hunting and killing
Aligned with right-brain functions: creativity, visual images, listening and talking, dreaming; metaphorical language that expresses emotions, feeling states; myth, religious symbols and parables; response to music is an <i>all-at-once</i> harmonious feeling state.	Aligned with left-brain functions: Analysis, reducing the components into separate parts; logic: <i>if-then</i> thinking; reading and writing. Linear thinking is a requirement for the development of speech.
Listens to and interprets the <i>forms</i> of speech: inflection, nuance, integrates into interpretation the speaker's posture, facial and gestural expressions. ⁹	Deciphers the content of speech. Useful for factual, legal, scientific, economic and academic topics.
Stronger in perceiving space, judging balance and harmony; the composition of gestalts, enabling women to distinguish between ugly and beautiful: Dance is its province.	Stronger in focused vision, focused thought; sequencing, "time, "; ability to shut out feelings and to act.
Processes input <i>as-a-whole</i> instantaneously	Processes input using time and sequence: <i>one-at-a-time</i> and <i>what was, what is, what's next?</i>
SUMMARY	
Women: Being, images, holism, and music	Men: Doing, speech, abstraction, numbers.

⁸ Leonard Schlain, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image*, "Right Brain/Left Brain" pp 17-27

⁹ Given the option of trusting language/words or nonverbal cues, humans and animals interacting with humans will instinctively trust the nonverbal cues.

Schlain notes in *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*: “Each hemisphere of the brain executes the tasks for which it is best suited. To ensure versatility in case of injury, each hemisphere has some capacity to perform the other side’s functions. So, too, can each sex of the human species assume the other’s principal labors. Women not burdened with small children could and did hunt: they, too, could kill quarry dispassionately. And mere were resourceful gatherers; they, too, could love. Nevertheless, in general, the majority of men excelled at hunting and killing and the majority of women excelled at gathering and nurturing.” (23)

Every source we’ve studied maintains that *all* societies for tens of thousands of years were founded in and operated in the matriarchal pattern: The women were the mothers, societal leaders, spiritual leaders, healers, and nurturers, complimented by and engaged with the men and children of the tribes and villages. In the mythology of all these societies we have studied, the women appeared first, emerging from a cave or from under the ground. They developed their own rituals and spirituality, and in many cases, their architecture.

So what happened to change all of this? Leonard Schlain says that in order to understand this shift, we have to go back 50,000 years ago to the African savannah. It was at this point that men started developing tools such as hammers, chisels, and spears. Women started developing rituals and spirituality. 30,000 years ago the women were making bread, beer and wine.¹⁰ Many of these groups still lived in caves and made cave paintings. We personally believe that some, or even many, of these paintings were made by women. We will elaborate on that later.

Changes in the brain

When the people moved out of caves, women built shelters very similar to the caves they had been living in. The men and women developed in different ways. While the men hunted, the women took care of the young, which required constant attention for many years. They developed language, social skills, and behavioral patterns. These are right-brained activities. The right brain can understand things in an all-at-once gestalt. The left brain is sequential and arrives at understandings in a certain type of logical progression.

Men’s and women’s eyes developed differently. The men had more cones in the retina, while the women had more rods.¹¹ The dominance of cones enabled the men to see a great distance, but within a narrow breadth. The dominance of rods enabled the women to see better in the dark, to see more colors and see more of the immediate surrounding area. This activated the right brain.

¹⁰ A. Revedin, et al. (2010) "Thirty thousand-year-old evidence of plant food processing". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* **107** (44): 18815–18819. Bibcode:2010PNAS..10718815R. doi:10.1073/pnas.1006993107. PMC 2973873. PMID 20956317.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of the rod and cone functions, see Schlain, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, p. 24-26.

Terrance McKenna as well as Stephen Herod Buhner, researchers in altered states of consciousness and human evolution¹², estimate that about 40,000 years ago in southeastern Algeria (but not limited to that area), men hunted the zebu cattle. Psilocybin mushrooms sprouted in the cow dung and the men ate them. *Psilocybin cubensis* mushrooms affect perception and consciousness. After consuming the mushrooms, the men's vision became more acute: They saw more colors and patterns, which increased their right-brain activity. This enhanced vision improved their success in hunting.

They took mushrooms back to their camp and gave them to the women, who were also bee keepers. They put the psilocybin mushrooms in the honey, which extracted the psychoactive compounds. Then the women made a wine with the psychoactive honey and smilax berries and added plants with aphrodisiac and hallucinogenic properties. This wine was an important element in the sexual and spiritual life and activities of the group.¹³

Spiritual beliefs at this time, 40,000 to 8,000 years ago, were polytheistic. Approximately 8,000 years ago, agriculture appeared; and more slowly, the domestication of animals and animal production. For women, taking care of animals was very similar to raising their own young. Schlain maintains that through observing and experiencing the processes of agricultural and livestock care, the idea of the One God slowly evolved.

This One God was female.

How did this female goddess disappear and become replaced by a male god?

There was a period of henotheism, a polytheism that assigns to one god of the pantheon superiority over the rest. We can consider this henotheism as a transitional stage between the polytheism and One God, and between the goddess and the god.

Matriarchal societies that we have studied and those that Leonard Schlain describes developed and used picture-writing, a right-brain activity. The ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Chinese, Mongolian, Native American, Pre-Columbian peoples and the Picts wrote in pictographs, small standardized images that stand for concepts or ideas and used as a mode of communication.

"To write in pictures," Schlain says, "you had to be an artist/scribe." He went on to say, "Somehow the alphabet came to the Greeks¹⁴, and suddenly the world changed." The alphabet was the pivot point that gave patriarchy the power to diminish matriarchy.

¹² Terrance McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge, a Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution* and Stephen Herod Buhner, *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: The Secrets of Ancient Fermentation*.

¹³ Women made the beer and wine for thousands of years until the Catholic monks took it over as patriarchy gained its foothold. The men removed the aphrodisiacs and hallucinogens.

¹⁴ In our 2015 ASSR paper, "The Ancient Atlanders and their Influence on Modern Religions and Cultures", we brought out the point that the Atlanders gave writing to the Greeks.

Reading and Writing: Left-brain activities
Looking at Art and Imagery: Right-brain activities¹⁵

Writing is a left-brain activity. According to Schlain, “Most people are right handed and the hand that writes with a pen is the same hand that throws the spear.” He says there is a prejudice against left-handed people across cultures.

We suggest that at one time humans were ambidextrous, as monkeys are today. If you give a monkey a banana, he will grab it with either hand. We have lost that capacity to our detriment, as one-handedness led to limitations as we developed brain-hemisphere dominance.

“One of the first books written was the Old Testament, written by males. At this point, pictures, the right-brain, feminine form of communication, became obsolete.” Schlain claims that “the point at which writing became dominant, women started losing power.”

By the time of Jesus, patriarchy was well established in religious and social structures, particularly in cultures of the Middle East.

“In the original Ten Commandments, the first commandment does not actually say that God was male,” Schlain continues in his lecture, “but the words surrounding it imply that God was a man. In this patriarchal thinking, there is only one way to do things. Never before had any culture thought that man alone could have created the World/Universe.”

The second commandment was “thou shalt have no graven images.” Reading further, it says, “no drawings of birds in the sky, things that move on the ground or things that swim in the ocean.” In other words, no art.

Schlain discusses that with the loss of art and image, the right brain became inactivated, creating a further dominance of the masculine and patriarchal over the feminine and matriarchal. The Arabs took the idea of “no images” to mean “no representational art.” “Consequently,” he says, “their decorative patterns were essentially linear, sequential and repetitive – left brained, and much like writing. The society shifted heavily toward the masculine and the patriarchal.”

The Catholic Church had no art until Pope Gregory. The populous was largely illiterate, and the church had no way to educate and keep the people mindful of God’s creation, power and love. Schlain explains, Pope Gregory “decided to disobey the Second Commandment and commissioned artists to paint pictures of Mother Mary and Jesus. No one knew what Jesus, Mother Mary, Abraham, or Moses looked like. Was Jesus short or tall, black, white or brown or possibly yellow? How old was Mary, what did she look like?”

We suspect that these shared images and impressions of the iconic Biblical characters created unity, strengthened identity within groups of worshippers, and possibly struggles for dominance.

Schlain says in his lecture,

¹⁵ EEG monitoring shows that the left hemisphere of the brain lights up while reading and the right hemisphere lights up while talking and looking.

Then there was the problem of the Holy Ghost, translated as 'Spirit, Breath, Life,' which came from the Aramaic. The word is *Bhra*, which is feminine. In the process of being translated into various languages and finally into Greek, the Holy Ghost became male.

"An all-male trinity of 'father, son and Holy Ghost' had never happened before. The now-patriarchal Christian culture spread from the Middle East to Western cultures. The predominance of male spiritual and social influence and the diminishment of the feminine were the exact opposite of what Jesus was teaching."

Jesus' teachings were aligned with the feminine. Schlain: "He didn't teach from a book, he taught orally. It was a *practice* to love your neighbor as yourself. This was not a philosophy but a practice to be put into action. Women flocked to this religion. Jesus taught that all people were important and of value. He spoke of love, fairness and helping one another rather than dominating one another, and of compassion. These are values of the feminine."

In Schlain's interpretation then, Jesus' teachings were written down in a book and as Marshall McLuhan said, "the medium became the message."

None of our great teachers read from a book. They taught from arguing it out, memorizing, then putting the teachings into practice. Socrates, Confucius, Zoroaster, Jesus, The Buddha, Lao Tsu, for example, did not teach from books. Schlain says, "When we communicate orally and in person, we talk, look, and listen, activating the right brain. We get information about our companion, reading his or her body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.

Plato and Aristotle studied and taught from books, shifting information processing from the gestalt of sensing and observation to the static, fixed messages of written text. Plato and Aristotle also thought and perpetuated the notion that women were inferior; whereas Socrates, who wrote, taught and argued verbally, using poetry and imagery, did not. (Lecture)

Literacy and the Fall of the Feminine

As Athens became more literate, women became increasingly inferior. In Sparta, by comparison, where learning grew from engaging in conversation rather than from reading, women retained status and respect, and were held high in Spartan society. Women could own land, and they served as military soldiers and generals.

According to Schlain, in all countries that were literate, women suffered greatly. In countries that were illiterate, such as Russia, Bosnia, and Ireland, illiteracy reigned and women retained their power.

When Rome fell in 395 AD, the world became illiterate again. Women suddenly rose to power as leaders in the churches – clergy, abbots, and heads of monasteries. Churches and cathedrals were named after Notre Dame and women saints. Women were now honored and highly respected in the countries where they had been considered of lower caste. Men sang love songs to women. Ironically,

Schlain notes, "This period was known as The Dark Ages."

The Celtic Church played an important role in restoring Christianity to Western Europe following the Fall of Rome. In Celtic Christianity, abbesses could preside over houses containing both monks and nuns, a practice brought to continental Europe by Celtic missionaries. As Europe was entering the Medieval Age, the abbess Brigit of Kildare was founding monasteries across Ireland.

Then around 1400 ADE, the Renaissance brought great advances in literature, the arts and the sciences. With the Gutenberg printing press, around 1445, there began a tremendous increase in the use of the left brain and a decline in right-brain stimulation. In Europe, where the Bible had been forbidden, men rushed to read it. There was a return to duality: The men read from a book that was printed in black and white and they dressed in black and white clothing. With the easy availability of the Holy Text, came the decline of women's status and the value of their lives.

The Protestant Reformation followed in 1517. Across Europe, particularly in Germany, France, northern Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, women were seen as witches and burned at the stake. Stories abound of villages where *all* the women and female children were put to death.

According to Brian A. Pavlac in his book, *Witch Hunts in the Western World: Persecution and Punishment from the Inquisition through the Salem Trials* "Tens of thousands of people in Europe and European colonies died," and 'millions of others suffered torture, arrest, interrogation, hate, guilt, or fear."¹⁶

During the Reformation, Protestant men stormed Catholic churches and cathedrals and destroyed the paintings, especially those of Mother Mary. Prior to the Reformation, during times of war and in the seizing of land and resources, men killed men from other villages and captured their women. Schlain notes, "Never before in history had men turned on their own women and killed them in great numbers." Schlain added sardonically, "You can find this time period under The Age of Reason."

"Only in Russia, Bosnia, and Ireland and a few other eastern European countries were women safe from the madness of this time period (1637 to 1800)." In Ireland, there was never a witch burning because the Irish protected their women.

Technology and the Rise of the Feminine

In 1822 photography was invented. The right brain enjoyed greater stimulation and activation. Photographs became a part of life and the record of family histories. If someone's house caught fire, the mother no longer grabbed up the Bible; but saved the family photos.

According to Schlain,

"The next step forward in the reappearance of the feminine, right-brain social change came with the typewriter, invented in 1714, and coming into popular use in the 1860s-70s. Writing was a one-handed process that in most cases stimulated the left brain only. With typing, the women used both hands,

¹⁶ From a website on witch hunts, www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/g201405/european-witch-hunts/. See Appendix C for more information on the witch trials.

stimulating both hemispheres of the brain. Because typing was a woman's job, women began developing different neural processes than they had had before." (Lecture)

Then came movies, about 1890. Schlain notes that "Six years later, movie attendance outdistanced church attendance and has continued to do so... Then television, computers, and cell phones...and women started becoming ministers again in most churches, except the most conservative churches; and that will change soon."

The rise of the feminine is increasingly obvious in today's world. We see agricultural colleges and universities experiencing a rise in women's participation. A growing number of research and start-up grants support women in agriculture. The fastest growing spiritual practice is Buddhism. Women monks are the fastest growing teachers in that movement. Spiritualism, derived from Quakerism (a feminine practice) and Unitarianism (a "logical" philosophical religion), is on the rise as people, especially women, are "awakening" to accept intuitive information and to communicate with "the unseen." Holistic medicine and energy healing are discovering and presenting new techniques, products and processes. The field of alternative medicine is growing rapidly as people are turning away from the patriarchal rigidity of allopathic medicine and turning toward more natural healing and health practices.

The inimitable Dr. Mehmet Oz commented talked about the future of health and well-being on *Oprah Winfrey Show*: "Energy medicine is the future of all medicine. As we get better at understanding how little we know about the body, we begin to realize that the next big frontier in medicine is energy medicine. It's not the mechanistic part of the joints moving. It's not the chemistry of the body. It's understanding for the first time how energy influences how we feel."

Conclusion

We anticipate that the feminine will continue its rise and encroachment into existing patriarchal systems and structures. We also anticipate that the increasing expression of those characteristics, thought patterns and behaviors, on their own terms, will help move us away from duality and toward wholeness.

Mātā Amṛitānandamaya, known as the Hugging Saint and Amma, or "Mother," is a world renowned spiritual leader. We heard her speak of the need for balance between the masculine and feminine. Paraphrasing her message during the 2009 US Tour, she described how a one-winged bird cannot lift itself off the ground. She said, "A bird cannot fly with one wing. To fly, it must have two wings, equally strong."

We foresee that the trends of waning patriarchy, rising femininity and expanding feminine spirituality will continue. Women are mastering the skills of politics, medicine, law, and economics; and to all endeavors they can apply their natural skills and intuitive strengths: inclusive leadership, broad focus, flexibility, inclusion, nurturing and collaboration. They are restoring their influence as protectors of the natural world and its resources.

In increasing numbers men are seeking activities that are more creative and flexible. They are learning and enjoying skills long associated with women's roles.

Moving away from the pattern of father as provider and disciplinarian, we are seeing a burgeoning emphasis on parenting partnerships and men who are learning to love being dads.

With the rise of the feminine and the decline of patriarchy, human development may move forward physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually toward a balanced world society, one in which we all fly with two wings, equally strong.

Appendix A

Comments on Ancient and Modern Matriarchal Societies

Visiting China in 2013 and again in 2014, we noticed that the Chinese take very good care of and honor their indigenous cultures, some of which have their roots in ancient matriarchal societies.

In 2014 we visited Banpo Museum outside of the city of Xian. Banpo is a re-constructed archeological museum featuring artifacts from a Neolithic matriarchal society on a site located outside of Xian. The agricultural village ruins date back 5600-6700 years and cover 50,000 square meters. In the museum was a map showing, by Doug's estimate, 10 to 12 matriarchal societies from the northern part of China to the southern.

Matriarchal societies still existing today

The Mosuo (Maw-swaw) community is a small ethnic group living in Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces in China, close to the border with Tibet. It is believed to be the last matriarchal society in China. Men are allowed in this town during the day and by invitation at night and can live there only if they are born there. The village attracts tourists because men can spend the night if they are selected by one of the women. The only men allowed to live in the village are the males who are born there. More information: *The Women's Kingdom* is a video about the group, available on YouTube:

<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=ancient+matriarchal+societies+in+china&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001>

Matriarchal and matrilineal societies existing today include the Trobriand Islanders, off the coast of New Guinea. The Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia, is the largest known matrilineal society today. In Meghalaya, India, the women own the land and property. Tradition dictates that the youngest daughter in the family inherits all the property as well as acting as caretaker of aged parents and unmarried siblings. The Akan people are a majority in Ghana. The Akan social organization is fundamentally built around the matriclan, wherein one's identity, inheritance, wealth, and politics are all determined. The Bribri are a small indigenous group living on a reserve in the Talamanca canton in the Limón province of Costa Rica, and the Nagovisi live in South Bougainville, an island west of New Guinea.

See also: Six Modern Societies Where Women Literally Rule

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/31274/6-modern-societies-where-women-literally-rule>.

Alpine Village, Alpine, Alabama, is one of approximately 100 off-the-grid female-only colonies, Womyn's Lands, where men are forbidden. These largely lesbian communities began in the 1970s. One of the largest, Alpine Village hosts 13 women (most aged between 50 and 80). See more at www.alapine.org

Appendix B

Examples of the Spiritual and Religious Practices and Laws from the Ancient Atland Matriarchal Society.

The civic and spiritual leader of Atland was Freya, who set and kept the law, or Tex. A few samples of Freya's Tex follow, taken from the online version of *The Oera Linda Book* (p. 23ff).

Frya's Tex began with spiritual Laws and essential social laws. This first section included personal and community relationship with the One God, Wr-alda; treating others fairly; keeping peace with neighbors, as Wr-alda protects all; allowing one's children to marry whom they love; helping those who ask for help, and if they rob you, swift retribution should follow, "then fall upon them with fire and sword." (24) In this section Frya describes the choosing of the Eremoeder, the Mother or governing priestess of the citadel for a community. No actions of kings or governors could take place without the Eremoeder's permission.

One section is "Laws Established for the Government of the Citadels." The citadel was the religious and governing center of the individual communities or districts. The Tex covered the selection and organization of the Maidens and those who would attend them. It listed the required members of the community such as farmers and defenders; local governing bodies such as our equivalent of mayors and decision-making councils and their relationships to the Maidens. This section included as well directions for handling situations in which Maidens or citizens could not or would not serve.

The section "Universal Law" covers freedom, equality and provision for all; the right of all persons to select a husband or wife whom they love; housing and land provisions for those who fulfill their responsibilities to the community; private and public lands and their care and conservation, including the management and protection of trees. These laws addressed the trade: fairness, quality control, fair pricing, honest reporting of business transactions and fair distribution of the wealth to those who serve the community; no usury.

Additional laws and regulations outlined training for boys in weapons and the service owed to their country. Frya wrote laws governing war and fighting, treatment of prisoners, and provisions for the injured and families of the dead. The Tex included the rights of the mothers and the kings; laws for navigators; and more.

The Laws for the Security of all Friesians included wisdom for our times: "Whenever new laws are made or new regulations established, they must be for the common good, and not for individual advantage;" and "If [prisoners] are afterwards set free, it must be done with kindness by the Maidens, in order that we may make them comrades and friends, instead of haters and enemies."

For more extensive information, refer to "The Ancient Atlanders and their Influence on Modern Religions and Cultures", James Douglass and Sandra Williams at SWCRS/ASSR Conference 2015.

Appendix C

A Brief Comment on Witch Trials

On December 5, 1484, Pope Innocent VIII issued a papal bull that condemned witchcraft. He authorized inquisitors Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer to combat the problem. They wrote a book entitled *Malleus Maleficarum*, (*The Hammer of Witches*). Both Catholics and Protestants accepted it as the authority on witchcraft. The work contained imaginative stories about witches based on folklore, presented theological and legal arguments against witchcraft, and provided guidelines on how to identify and eliminate witches. *The Hammer of Witches* has been described as “the most vicious and . . . the most damaging book in all of world literature.”

Accusations of witchcraft required no evidence of guilt. The book *Hexen und Hexenprozesse (Witches and Witch Trials)* states that trials were “intended only to produce a confession by the accused, by means of persuasion, pressure, or force.” Torture was common. An example: In Eastern Europe, a woman who gave birth to a developmentally incapacitated child was believed to have had relations with wolves, making her a werewolf. She and the child were destroyed.

In response to *The Hammer of Witches* and the papal bull issued by Pope Innocent VIII, major witch hunts broke out in Europe. Moreover, these were aided by a new technology, the printing press, which helped to spread the mania, across the Atlantic to America.

Source: [The European Witch Hunts, Awake! (magazine of The Jehovah’s Witnesses) May 2014, no author cited. Website:

[www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/g201405/european-witch-hunts/#?insight\[search_id\]=f78f19db-f6c6-4a38-8259-b32646c3152c&insight\[search_result_index\]=0](http://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/g201405/european-witch-hunts/#?insight[search_id]=f78f19db-f6c6-4a38-8259-b32646c3152c&insight[search_result_index]=0)

Biographical Note

James Douglass (Doug) Williams studies ancient migrations, cultures and religions. He is a shiitake mushroom farmer, a stone mason, has two degrees in art, plays the piano and sings.

Sandra Dutreau Williams has a Ph.D. in Theatre Communication, the application of communication research to the theatre process, from Bowling Green State University (Ohio), and an MA in Speech Communication from Oklahoma University. She has been a technical writer since 1978. Her instructional materials, essays, poems, and scripts have won national and international awards. A theatre director and teacher, she has been an Artist in Residence with the Oklahoma Arts Council since 1984. She does healing work and metaphysical counseling.

The Williams' own and operate Lost Creek Mushroom Farm in Perkins, OK, growing shiitake mushrooms on logs and selling shiitake mushroom log kits. They have traveled to Africa, China, and India to teach and learn about mushroom production and medicinal mushrooms. www.shiitakemushroomlog.com

A portion of Lost Creek Mushroom Farm sales goes to their Mushrooms in Ghana Project, working with small-scale oyster mushroom farmers, helping to increase production and profits. The project has brought two Ghanaian farmers to the US to study mushroom farming and is helping to build a spawn (mushroom seed material) laboratory in Ghana, West Africa. www.mushroomsinghana.org,
Mushrooms Change Lives in Africa:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bjw6GGwMGiE>

In 2014 they started Mushrooms for Well Being Foundation, a non-profit organization to raise funding for projects that promote mushroom consumption and production worldwide and educate consumers about the health and medicinal benefits of mushrooms.

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Indian Spiritual Life in Louis L'Amour's Works

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Abstract

Native American religious faith and life find expression in the novels and stories of Louis L'Amour in a variety of ways. Native Americans traditionally identified spiritual power and expression in individuals, physical symbols, personal experiences and physical places. L'Amour took these ideas and expressed them in associations, actions, geography and places frequented by Native Americans. This study is an analysis of various novels and stories by L'Amour expressing these experiences and realities.

One of the characteristics of early human beings was the ability to experience and express stories. The story is an important "art form" for early man. It is intimately linked to ancient man's sense of history and heritage. It was part of his religious experience and of his religious expression. Before the development of written language there was the use of the oral history of individuals, families and groups in human society and the expression of religious and adventure experiences. This was adventure history and religious experience in its most primitive and basic form. Early man learned by acquiring and telling stories. In this way history and religious experience was preserved and shared over time. Such stories are still shared and still shape the heritage of many people, modern and primitive.¹

We still gain and retain information by the use of stories. What we know by our experiences or by exposure to the experiences of others, we more readily value through the development of stories and the telling of these stories over and over. In fact, retelling stories stimulates our memory and enables us to more readily communicate what we have learned and experienced. Reflecting on stories, expanding and enriching our stories, deepens our insight and enriches our experience as human beings. Gaining lots of stories to use builds our intelligence and our ability to communicate what we know. As we gain a collection of good stories we can learn how to apply our stories to new situations. Such knowledge as to how and when to use stories reveals the importance of wisdom. This is one of the things that marks all the great teachers in history, their ability to relate and employ the stories they have learned.

Stories are all around us. They are valuable and vital to our thinking. Stories make history easier to remember and more obviously of value. There are stories that need to be read and remembered. Many of these stories find root in tragedies that tore the fabric of past societies. The background story in *The Californios* is the

¹ John Schmalzbauer, "Telling Catholic and Evangelical Stories in American Journalism: The Impact of the Religious Imagination," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 20 (Spring, 2002), pp. 25-44.

devastation of an ancient people and city in the desert where one can still find walls, roads and other buildings pointing to an ancient reality with only the material remains and stories hinting at the truth of that earlier time. These stories are worth hearing, reading, remembering and retelling. Such stories are examples of “story power” at its best.

Through history stories have been used to preserve important events and experiences for future generations. In later years those stories have been used to develop literature, including short stories and novels. Many of these literary pieces have contributed significantly to society. One of the important novels that communicated important facts and experiences is L’Amour’s *The Lonesome Gods*. L’Amour upheld the value of all human beings, especially those who are poor and without a voice. He courageously tells the stories of ancient peoples and migrants who could not speak for themselves. L’Amour often deals with Indian spiritual life in his novels and stories. In three books he presents his drama in spiritual reality—*The Lonesome Gods*, *The Californios* and *The Haunted Mesa*. While these will be the primary focus of our study, I will refer to other novels or stories in which L’Amour deals with Indian spirituality. In the stories L’Amour presents he stresses the power of spiritual life and creatures. In *The Lonesome Gods* he emphasizes the power of prophetic vision, the unique gift given to some individuals to see beyond the present and the past. In *Jubal Sackett* he stresses this prophetic vision in the experience of Barnabas Sackett, his son Jubal and in their friend Lila. Jubal says at the beginning of his story, “My father, Lila, and I have the Gift. Some call it second sight, but we three often have pre-visions of what is to be, sometimes with stark clarity, often only fleeting glimpses as through the fog or shadows. All our family have the Gift to some degree, but me most of all. Yet I have never sought to use it, nor wished to see what is to be.”²

Louis L’Amour’s novels are valuable historical studies. L’Amour studied maps, documents, historical records and biographies as he developed his novels and stories. He based his novels and stories on the lives of real people and real places. The stories are fiction, but the people he portrayed in the stories are firmly rooted in the experiences and expressions of living people. He produced over a hundred novels and stories about the West and others areas in the world. One of his novels *Last of the Breed* is set in the Siberian wilderness in Russia.³ It is a challenging story and realistic adventure experience which brings to life the Russian wilderness and the rugged, demanding terrain of the vastness of Russia.

Not only does L’Amour present the reality of the Siberian landscape, the severity of the weather and the many dangers associated with that formidable territory; he also presents the reality of the political and governmental system in Russia at the time he writes about in the mid-twentieth century. He also gives some insights into the culture of Native Indian life in America, as compared to the Native Indians in the Soviet Union at that time. Such an adventure story can be

² Louis L’Amour, *Jubal Sackett* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985), p. 4.

³ Louis L’Amour, *Last of the Breed* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).

used as a platform to discuss the nature of Russian life, how to survive in the rugged wilderness and how to understand the people. L'Amour compares two men who have similar life-philosophies—Joe Mack the American Air Force officer who was an Indian and Alekhin his Russian counterpart who understood the mentality of the primitive Indians from whom Joe Mack was descended. There is drama in such struggles that depict the larger, long-term implications of the evolutionary survival of the fittest.

Usually such novels as these being considered fall in the category of fun reading. However, such novels often convey powerful religious and social themes, explosive and disruptive ideas. The novels of Albert Camu, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dan Brown, Frederick Buechner, Judge Ben Grant, Norman Mailer, Michael Crichton, H. G. Wells, Louis L'Amour, and many other modern writers have had significant and long-term impact on our society. Their themes have often been deeply religious, factually historical, and transforming spiritually.

Often these writers become more powerful than philosophers in shaping popular culture and thinking. Louis L'Amour, among such writers, has had a very strong influence on popular culture. His western stories⁴ and many of his novels⁵ consistently portray powerful themes and have contributed significant movies for popular viewing. The three novels we are considering also portray such historical and religious themes in good taste and good prose. In fact, L'Amour intentionally portrayed Indian spiritual themes in his novels. He explained in Jubal Sackett the mystical Gift in the words of an old Cherokee warrior in conversation with Jubal, "We of the Cherokee hear much of He Who Tells of Tomorrow. We hear of your great medicine." So the gift was not exclusive to one person or a single people. It was known from the highlands of Ireland to the mountains of the American lands, both east and west.⁶ From the writing of L'Amour we can gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual experience and how we should relate to things in that "unseen" realm.

In his books L'Amour strives to emphasize the reality and redemptive grace present in one's daily life. L'Amour has been described as one of the great novelists and writers in American literary history. *Hondo* (1950) was his first popularly acclaimed novel that would ultimately be expressed on the movie screen. L'Amour authored more than 100 novels in his thirty year career that have sold hundreds of millions of copies. He wrote numerous short stories and poems. He was the subject of hundreds of articles, interviews, essays, documentaries and newspaper columns. In all of these one can find the impact and influence of the deeply spiritual influences

⁴ L'Amour's short stories and short novels have been collected in a series of volumes.

⁵ L'Amour authored the Sackett novels with the intention of producing forty volumes. Before his death he completed 18 volumes of the family history that was to cover the expansion of the American frontier. In Louis L'Amour's *Education of a Wandering Man* he tells the story of his life and writing. Louis L'Amour, *Education of a Wandering Man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

⁶ Jubal Sackett, p. 44.

that his characters represented in his stories and novels. Many of these books and stories are considered in Halbert W. Hall's excellent work *Louis L'Amour: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide*.⁷ This extensive study and listing of L'Amour's works have many insights into this writer's insights and inspirations dealing with both the good and the bad in Indian and pioneer life. Thus L'Amour deals with both good and bad in native American life.

L'Amour shows how powerful evil is. It works not just in individual lives, but in groups, societies, nations, corporations, and companies. Evil draws allies and forces for attack from all areas of life, even churches. This was clearly seen as Germany developed in the 1920s and 1930s as Hitler and his colleagues took over one of the most advanced and modern European nations. In the same time frame there was another leader and others who took over Russia and other nations in the world. It is easy to ignore such things as evil. Many still see the Soviet Union as one of the great advances in modern nationhood, but they do so ignoring the many tragedies of that period. Reading L'Amour's novel *The Last of the Breed* gives some insight into the reality of evil and how those unseen forces ensnare and entangle many people in a web of intrigue and ignorance.

That is a question that will likely be answered psychologically, but not much will be considered regarding the spiritual motivations. The nature of evil will not likely be investigated or considered in dealing with the motivations driving such individuals. In a real sense there is a "spiritual warfare" that one engages in through such experiences. This individual did not need to do what he did, but he did it. He was "driven" by things that he thought and by forces that he yielded to beyond himself. We cannot know for sure what he was thinking or feeling, but we can see what he did, deliberately, viciously and tragically. We should in this kind of situation take the spiritual message to L'Amour's hero in *The Californios*, Juan had to face the power and deadly force of an unseen world of evil, yet he also depended upon the good forces coming from that unseen world to his aid. This is what we must do likewise in the face of unseen evil and destructive hate. We need more than just psychological explanations and criminal investigations. It is in the power of story that we can come to understand and contend with such evil in ourselves and in others. It is in understanding the story historically that we can find ourselves, our past, our present and the future. It is in this way that we can engage students, encourage students and enrich students to enable them to practically deal with issues that are still with us.

CONCLUSION

Stories and novels are far more than casual entertainment. They can be used to promote and proclaim a message, present a particular viewpoint. They are the

⁷ Halbert W. Hall, *Louis L'Amour: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003).

product of a worldview that gives them a background, an intellectual underpinning and a means of propulsion. The works discussed in this paper have underpinning them some specific and serious assumptions, propositions framing their message and composing their basic content.

Those who write want to do so creatively, effectively, powerfully and persuasively. Of course, they want to do so particularly if they believe they are communicating what is true. That statement raises the question about truth and whether it is possible to know and express what is really “true,” as compared to what is fiction such as a novel. I happen to believe that there is Truth (I capitalize it because I want to distinguish it from individual elements of truth, sometimes what we think, but actually sometimes what we think to be true might not necessarily be true). Along with this is the idea that truth is relative, that is, it can change and it can depend on who expresses it and how many people express it.

Whether authors are writing what is true or writing fiction (what isn’t factually true, but perhaps maybe based on true events and true personages in the past, or even in the present) they use words. In the use of words authors want to use them in the best possible way so as to express what is really true, expressing their thoughts in creative and persuasive ways. Any individual who uses words in teaching, preaching, speaking, judging, editorializing or reporting should want to do so effectively, powerfully, clearly, and creatively.

Norman Mailer’s subtitle of his literary work *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History* makes the point appropriately for us as we conclude this discussion of using fiction, particularly novels, as a vehicle for learning, discussing and teaching history, particularly the history of religious faith.⁸ Historian Anthony Winner in his article in *The Kenyon Review* argues that many times the evidence used by historians to make points in their narratives is often unsubstantiated and sometimes even suspect. This is an important point to be made using novels and short stories to teach history. A novel can sometimes arouse great emotion and communicate more meaningfully than sterile facts and dates. The story has enormous power to move people. This was the experience that I recently had in watching the movie *The Great Debaters* about the experiences of Wiley College faculty member Melvin Tolson and his debaters in Marshall, Texas, in the 1930s. There was a moving story in that film’s portrayal of those days in East Texas.

The importance of individual and corporate story is vital to our lives and to our cultures. This is what Winner means when he insists that the use of stories in teaching history has to do with “a lesson in a grand curriculum of moral meaning.”⁹ This is what makes L’Amour’s *The Californios* such a great part of teaching the conquest and progress in settlement of the Great West in America. In his Sackett series L’Amour brings together the dynamic story of both Native Americans and the

⁸ Anthony Winner, “Story’s Gamble with History,” *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, Vol. 19 (Spring, 1997), p. 149-150. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4337535>

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

European explorers and settlers, opening in such stories the sacrifice and tragedy of that long-ago era when so many people gained a new home and future or lost their belongings, their homes, their families and sometimes even their lives.

We have considered Louis L'Amour's story as an author. He has produced a large number of best-sellers and creatively-written books and stories. Throughout many of these stories and novels one can find glimpses into the spiritual and cultural life of Native Americans and how that life has been expressed.

Such life stories are important because they represent real people, even in the setting of a novel or short story. Each person has a story. Even the most mundane story is interesting because it represents an individual and the family matrix associated with that person's drama. Family connections are important. Stories are not just about people and families, they are about places and communities. Physical places are important and give identity and location to each person's story and personal family life. There are physical places that relate to these personal and family stories. Sometimes all that remain of a person is a tombstone with names, birth dates and death dates, and perhaps some epitaph or saying.

Some of the most interesting and inspiring stories are about reclaiming and restoring relationships, families, memories, heritages and respect. It is a remarkable social, spiritual and generational adventure to reclaim family heritages and physical places. In reading and discussing such stories one can learn, as well as teach, both history and religion. Such stories deserve to be known, recorded, remembered, preserved, and shared.

Think of the many stories, experiences and lives that will never be known by future generations because they have passed into "history" without anyone marking them or identifying who they are. There is sadness in that loss which cannot be relieved by merely making a burial ground of nameless, unknown people known. The stories, lessons, lives are lost to future generations. The drama and inspiration of such stories communicate and intensify the good of religious experiences and physical places associated with them. Such stories as *The Lonesome Gods* (both the short story and the novel), *The Californios*, *The Haunted Mesa*, *The Last of the Breed*, and *Jubal Sackett* in different ways preserve for all of us the value and virtue of historical, religious, community, and redemptive work.

Biographical Note

Jerry Hopkins, Ph.D., is Professor of History at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. He is active in the Southern Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Conference on Faith and History, the East Texas Historical Association, the American Studies Association, the Baptist History and Heritage Society, the African Studies Association, and other professional organizations. He also cooperates with the Harrison County Historical Museum and the Shelby County Historical Society and Museum. Hopkins has traveled extensively in the Middle East, Europe and Asia for research, business and professional meetings. The focus of his research has been on the history and present state of evangelicalism, revivalism, racism and conservative reform movements. He also writes a weekly column on history, social and political issues for newspapers and magazines.