



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

# The 2014 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR

Edited by:

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Wharton County Junior College

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March 7-9, 2014

*The Year 2014 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*

*The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion*

*Presents*

*The Year 2014  
Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*

*Edited by:*

*Jon K. Loessin and*

*Scott Stripling*

*Dallas, Texas: ASSR  
March 7-9, 2014*

**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 2014 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 is still free of charge and all we ask in return is your support and participation in our yearly sessions and helping to make them successful by writing and presenting papers, chairing sessions, purchasing a copy of 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.

I would also like to take this opportunity also to acknowledge the officers of the ASSR for this past year. These are the people who, along with our presenters, truly made the Year 2014 meetings possible.

I hope all of you have a good year and the ASSR will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2014-2015. Be sure to visit us online at: [www.assronline.org](http://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, 2013-14 ASSR President*

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## **Let Us Bow Our Heads and Pay: Consumer Culture, Contemporary Religion, and the Search for Theoretical Meaning**

*J.B. Watson, Jr.  
Stephen F. Austin State University*

*If the role of religion is to offer a sense of identity, purpose, meaning and community, then it can be said that consumerism fulfills all these criteria (Hirsch, 2008:107).*

### **Introduction**

This paper will propose a conceptual framework regarding the commodification of religion in the U.S. context, with evangelical religious practice as a type of sociological case study. This exploratory effort will delineate relevant theoretical concepts and propose relevant questions for scholars regarding the analysis of the commodification of religion. There is a paucity of theoretical frameworks available to religious studies scholars who may wish to study the undervalued social impact of consumer-based economic activity, with its corresponding consumer culture, at the ever-changing intersection with contemporary religion. The proposed conceptual framework may also be applied to other forms of contemporary religious patterns outside of the Evangelical (Protestant) realm.

Clearly, while traditional Christian denominational organizational structures are declining in influence, some religious practices are stable or expanding in American culture. For example, (De Chant, 2002, 2003) reported that the pervasive power of Christmas holiday ritual of gift-giving and receiving in American culture serves as a form of religious observation even though it may be largely sustained by the influence of modern consumer culture. De Chant suggested that consumerism might emerge as a new American quasi-religion or implicit religion. Similarly, Bellah (1986) proposed the concept of civil religion, a uniquely American phenomena attributing special veneration and reverence for the nation's founders, the celebration of democracy and republicanism, and the sanctification of iconic spaces and symbols. The commodification of religion is a longstanding concern in religious contexts. The Biblical account of Jesus removing the moneychangers from the temple and the development of Protestantism are but two examples among many. The Protestant notion of predestination and "intraworldly" asceticism encouraged a strong work ethic, worldly success, and frugality as a marker of divine blessing and personal salvation. A sociological consequence of these developments (and related ones) was a religious validation of some forms of secular activity, especially those connected to work. The paradoxical influence of Protestantism on secularization, and perhaps also on the commodification of religion is highlighted by De Chant (2002):

By validating the secular world, Protestantism also devalued the world of religious meaning. In one sense, this tactic was theologically cunning, for by challenging the Catholic assumption that life's ultimate meaning could be found only through the church, the Protestant impulse to legitimate the

secular world served to delegitimize the Catholic religion. In a more profound sense, this tactic was a colossal blunder because the recognition of the viability of a secular society was a de facto recognition of the autonomy of secular society apart from any religious affirmation, Catholic or Protestant. To combat Catholic claims of religious ultimacy, Protestantism aligned itself with forces outside the religious sphere.... Thus what makes the Reformation different from the ancient situation [i.e., the first phase of secularization] is that in the Reformation, religion itself affirmed the legitimacy of a nonreligious (secular) world (De Chant, 2002:111-112).

The commodification of religion in contemporary western societies, then, has longstanding historical roots.

The modern self is influenced by the notion of unlimited consumption (Borst, 2006). The late Catholic scholar Richard John Neuhaus defined consumerism as "living in a manner that is measured by having rather than being" (Neuhaus, 1992:52-53). Opportunities for discretionary consumption of food, clothing, and entertainment present opportunities to define the evolving and malleable modern self (Turner, 2009). Consumerism may be a functional substitute for religion, especially in the sense that consumer goods are sought to meet perceived emotional and physical needs. Individuals may utilize consumer products as a way become to socially construct or reconstruct a particular sense of self. A particular status or image may be associated with a consumer product via marketing (advertising), and the associated image or status may be perceived as attainable to individuals by using that particular product. Consumer products thus contribute to the social construction of the modern self, and may compete with other potential sources of meaning and purpose, including religious belief systems. Few scholars disagree that production and consumption are fundamental to human society. The preeminence of a consumer culture that redefines the value of individuals in terms of material success, status, and branded products represents a new form of capitalism qualitatively different from earlier forms (Lury, 2011).

### **Consumer Culture and Religion**

Both consumer culture and religion are forms of social behavior that have been highly impacted by rapid social change due to both globalization and new communications technologies (Gauthier and Martikainen, 2013). The commodification of religion has also been influenced by other social changes in recent decades. For example, sociologist François Gauthier (2009) made the following observations about religion in European societies that has relevance for the North American religious context as well:

First, there are good reasons to believe that the last half of the twentieth century saw an important shift occurring as regards religion; second, that the rupture that occurred in the post-Second World War decades is linked to the coming of age and power of the baby boom generation; third, that the situation today can be explained and systematized. The baby boom generation inaugurated an era of spiritualizing religion, of religion without

religious institutions. And, if by respect for their children's liberty and freedom of choice, they did not hand down traditional Christian religion, they did transmit an ideal of self-realization, which we find massively in our societies today. Therefore the baby boom generation is an exception and not a rule. We find much less differences between generations if we look at boomers and their forebears than if we look at boomers and their descendents (Gauthier, 2009:2).

The process of religious commodification thus transcends generational differences in religious beliefs and practices.

The concept of a new form of "spiritualized religion" no longer tethered to traditional religious institutional structures been widely noted by scholars of religion (e.g., Turner and Kitiarsa, 2010; Aldridge, 2013). These observations are also similar to those of many long-time religion scholars such as Peter Berger and Robert Bellah. In *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* published in 1970, Bellah noted the "wide-open chaos of the post-Protestant, postmodern era" (Bellah, 1970:xviii). Bellah (1986) identified a new modern form of religion, Sheilaism, a hyper-privatized and individualized form of modern religion (self-constructed religion), with less emphasis on common moral understandings learned from one's faith community and greater emphasis on subjective feelings (Bellah, 1986). Similarly, Miller (2005), in his book, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, analyzed the significant impact of consumerist ideology on contemporary religious doctrines, beliefs, and practices. He described a form of consumerist spirituality marked by an extreme emphasis on individualism, coupled with as socially constructed hybrid of self-help ideology, and a market or consumer-based mindset, resulting in increased opportunity to "select-your-own" personalized religious belief system. This new approach to a consumer culture-inflected form of lived religious experience is enhanced by the structure of "new paradigm" churches, the church growth movement, and megachurches (Watson and Scalen, 2008).

Furthermore, in this new social milieu where religion becomes something to be personalized to suit the individual consumer, religious tradition often becomes out-of-date, serving as a reminder of doctrinal fads from earlier generations (Miller, 2005). Wuthnow (2000) described a general shift from allegiance to a tradition congregation (faith community) to a greater allegiance to personal individualized spiritually-focused seeking, paralleling the emergence of this new "consumer religion." The religious experiences of "seeker" individuals become "repositories of insights and practices that they appropriate for their own personal synthesis" (Miller, 2005:90). This dominance by consumer culture influences has radically altered and transformed the pre-existing social process of individuation; traditional cultural reference points may be obscured or co-opted in the growing preeminence of consumer capitalism. Miller further asserted that this "shift in marketing fundamentally changed consumption by transforming commodities into symbolic markers as potential sources of personal fulfillment (2005:87). As personal spirituality becomes detached from doctrinal creeds, traditional religious rituals, symbols, and historical faith communities, modern spiritual formation becomes a

process of conforming "to the default assumptions and practices of the dominant culture" (Miller, 2005:91). The decline of "religious monopolies" has further accelerated this process of religious commodification.

Advertising scholar James Twitchell, in his book, *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went From in Your Heart to in Your Face* (2008) argued for a reciprocal relationship between modern religion and consumerism - American religion has played a role in shaping of American consumerism and consumerism has shaped modern religion. The mutual interaction of religion and popular culture, however, has changed dramatically in recent decades. Twitchell visited numerous churches and interviewed pastors and local church attendees to discover what churches are currently "selling" and what religious consumers are currently 'buying.'" Twitchell highlighted the growing intersection of popular culture and American religion in which popular culture influences religion to a greater extent than the other causal direction. In earlier decades, celebrities rarely revealed their religious beliefs; in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, celebrities openly discuss both traditional and non-traditional religious beliefs. Prominent examples include Mel Gibson's Catholicism, George W. Bush and Hillary Clinton's Methodism, Tom Cruise's Scientology, and Richard Gere's Buddhism. Religion also has been resurgent in the mass media. Most Americans are familiar with religious-themed epics such as *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*. During the 1990s, *Touched by an Angel* was one of the most popular shows on television. Television news programs frequently air special features on some aspect of religion. In 2004, Americans spent \$3.7 billion on Christian books and related merchandise (Twitchell, 2007). More recent high-profile faith-based films, documentary television programs, and cable reality programs also mirror this trend.

### **McDonaldization and Starbuckization**

The work of sociologist George Ritzer on McDonaldization also 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, 2006, 2008). 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, 2008).

According to Ritzer (2008), 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 still devotes an entire chapter to "The Starbuckization of Society" in the fifth edition of his noted book, *The McDonaldization of Society* (2008).

### **An Exploratory Look at Relevant Concepts for the Analysis of Religious Commodification**

Conceptually, religious commodification, also termed "consumer religion," involves a hybrid of both consumer culture based and religiously based elements - the social construction of a new set of religious beliefs, commitment, practices, and faith communities along consumerist lines. Religious commodification occurs on both the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, the personalization of consumer religion, with its emphasis on "designer religion" is central (Borst, 2006). Self-help ideology may delimit traditional theological doctrines in the individuation process of individuals associated with faith communities. For example, Smith and Denton (2005) noted the predominance of moralistic therapeutic deism among religiously active U.S. adolescents whereby they believed in several generalized moral principles common to many religions. These principles included: (1) achieving happiness and good self-esteem is a central life goal; (2) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem; (3) God wants people to be courteous and fair with each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions (Smith and Denton, 2005). Moralistic theistic deism is but one example of the personalization process of religious commodification.

The McDonaldization concepts of hot versus cool commitments and thin versus thick commitments have particular relevance to the analysis of the commodification of religion at the macro-level (Turner, 2003). These aspects of McDonaldization are quite similar to Max Weber's analysis to the process of rationalization and may provide "a vehicle for demonstrating the validity and importance of Max Weber's work" (Turner 1994: 325). In particular, hybrid cultural constructs are becoming more common due to what Turner (2003) terms liquid differentiation due to McDonaldization. New social space is created for individualization of all forms of social interaction with the increasingly pervasive public values of detachment (disenchantment) and coolness. Turner (2003) argued that eating at McDonalds parallels the social forms that are at the basis of a functioning multicultural social and political system. Turner utilized Marshall McLuhan's distinction between hot and cool community loyalty, and Benjamin Barber's distinction between thick and thin democracy formulate a dual dichotomy for each of the two concepts. Hot loyalty and thick solidarity are social patterns common in traditional societies, while cool commitment and thin solidarity are characteristic of the McDonaldized or rationalized modern world (Turner, 2009).

Thick solidarity, for example, may be characteristically expressed in religious festivals where common bonds of solidarity and community are emphasized. Thick solidarity is more closely associated with pre-modern societies; social relations were “hot” in that participants were personally and publicly committed to shared social values. Turner (2009) noted that a fundamental feature of thick solidarity is that beliefs and practices are not routinely questioned, reevaluated, or challenged. In contrast, modern societies are organized around a marketplace composed of highly mobile and unconnected strangers. In McDonalds, as well as in modern McDonaldized society, social interaction is characterized by thin solidarity and cool commitments. Thin solidarity and cool commitments, then, represent two additional concepts for the analysis of religious commodification.

The work of Thornburg and Knottnerus (2007) on the application of Structural Ritualization Theory to the qualitative analyses of congregational life is also informative on religious commodification at the macro level. Their study of specific congregations emphasizes three components: (1) religion as brand name; (2) religion as a spectacle; (3) religion as a rationalized provider of services. Not all elements of contemporary religious practice intersect with each of these arenas of “hybridized religion.” Consequently, this trifocal conceptual framework could be applied to identify forms of religious organization involving brand name, spectacle, and rationalized service provision. In turn, this framework might assist religious studies scholars in identifying “what’s left” outside of this proposed rubric, e.g., traditional (historical) religious doctrines or practices not subsumed by new forms of consumer religion. An additional question associated with this framework is the extent to which “non-commodified” aspects of religion are emphasized to religious adherents. Finally, can “commodified religion” and traditional religion co-exist in the same social sphere?

Basic principles of consumer economics may also be applied in this context. The concept of consumption bundles, a set of good or services a consumer considers purchasing, suggests that religious commodification may be advanced by effectively bundling the three components identified by Thornburg and Knottnerus (2007) in a group (congregational) context. The megachurch model of church organization, with its emphasis on entertainment, technology, and age-based programming that meets the needs of families exemplifies this approach. Secondly, for most goods, “more is better than less.” Third, the concept of marginal utility focuses on the additional utility a consumer receives from an additional unit of a good or service, and minimize the expenditure necessary for them to reach a given level of utility (Goolsbee, Levitt, and Syverson, 2012). These ideas from consumer economics point to the deep and potentially sustainable impact of religious commodification. The transactional nature of symbolic religious goods and beliefs, reinforced by its utilitarian consumer value may explain the attraction of consumer religion, even though religious traditionalists may see it as “Christianity Lite.”

### **Conclusions and Implications**

British Protestant Theologian John Drane, in his book, *The McDonaldization of the Church* (2001) noted a fundamental shift in many western churches towards a form of religious authority based on “personal individual experience” and “a pre-

packaged McDonaldized religious product” (Drane, 2001:208-209). Interestingly, a cursory examination of recently published books by the largest evangelical publishers, and monthly trade publications for ministers such as *Christianity Today* suggests that there is little debate or attention given to this major shift in American religion to a hybrid form of religion, consumer religion. This modest exploratory discussion of possible theoretical concepts and guiding ideas on religious commodification has attempted to delineate a few additional touchstones for future inquiry by scholars of religious studies.

There are a number of research questions on the commodification of religion, and only three will be highlighted here. There are few scholarly studies on the primary influences of the melding of consumer culture and religion within some groups but not others. For example, some charismatic groups have embraced religious commodification and formed megachurches, while others have not. Second, are there specific causal mechanisms accelerating the impact of consumer culture on U.S. religious life, such as Internet-based communications technologies (Scalen and Watson, 2008; Roberts and Yamane, 2012)? The potential usefulness of such research efforts was well-articulated by Mark Chaves in a discussion of contemporary trends in American religion: “...people who do not care about American religious institutions for their own sake still might be concerned about the hollowing out of religious beliefs and practices...Despite continuing high levels of religious belief... religious institutions may or not find ways for people to express their religiosity...to the same extent as in the past” (Chaves, 2011:112-113). Finally, the extent to which consumerist forms of religion may reduce the social capital historically associated with religious institutions is also an important empirical question for researchers (Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

## Biographical Note

**J.B. Watson Jr., Ph.D.** serves as Associate Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of the William J. Brophy Sophomore Scholars Program at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas. His research interests include religion and consumer culture, contemporary U.S. evangelicals, spirituality and aging, and “invisible” Texans - unheralded noteworthy minority groups, women, and older adults). He was the recipient of the First Annual ASSR Frank Forwood Award for Academic Excellence in Presented Research in 2008. He currently serves as ASSR Vice-President for Organizational Development. His undergraduate mentor, the late Harry Hale, Jr. (University of Louisiana-Monroe) was a co-founder of ASSR.

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## **Existential Anthropology and the Rise and Similarities of Religion and the Arts**

*Patrick Scott Smith  
Independent Scholar*

*What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. --Buddha*

### **Introduction**

The social forming elements to the existential situation provide basis from which springs all things human, where seemingly disparate functions within the social dynamic, in this instance, art and religion, find common genesis.

An aspect of the existential situation is the development of more complete memory and awareness because of Homo-vulneare's state of physical vulnerability. In the following essay, starting with remembrance we will see how the existential complex itself helps to form notions of art and religion; how impediment-to-will and exertion become important elements to the formulation of religious ritual and fashion; and finally we will take a look at the part worship itself plays in the performing arts.

### ***The existential situation, remembrance and the animation of life***

Because of the diminution of survival capabilities memory necessarily replaces instinct. Every task therefore, every endeavor, every motion is reliant on remembrance and vicarious-use, which itself is a mnemonic task. The construction of clothes, tools, weapons, traps, snares, nets, etc., involves complete recollection as to proper technique and sequence of assembly. All these things have to be remembered to be performed, taught and passed on. The hunt itself will involve techniques that have to be remembered. So not to get lost, directional cues, the lay of the land, landmarks and cardinal points of direction will have to be stored and referred to. For increased chance of success, cues to predict weather; knowledge about animal behavior, eating habits, habits of predation and escape, the interrelationship between weather and animal behavior; the use of camouflage, scent, the right bait; the making and use of poison; the use and training of dogs to assist in the hunt; all these things have to be recalled to be successfully performed. Thus in the first instance, because of the state of vulnerability humans devolved to, a complex process of recollection became manifest. Because of the human circumstance of vulnerability to the elements, mnemonic development becomes essential to existence and survival. It is from this developed ability of event-retention that awareness about and consideration of the existential situation begins. The same mnemonic dynamic which makes for affinity between humans and the objects they create make for the creation of fashion and art and for the idea of afterlife. As

demonstrated the process begins with the existential situation, requiring more complete memory which leads to self-awareness about meaninglessness and monotony, the effects of which spurs the creative animation of life through the idea of spirit at one end of the existential spectrum to the use of color, adornment and art on the other.

### **Remembrance and the afterlife**

Because of our complete memory, when mates leave us we do not forget it. The memory of that mate 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 funerary ritual.

In the Lower Paleolithic period of the Neanderthal there appears to have been a sense of afterlife when skulls were placed in a circle of rocks as one of the so called "skull burials" in a cave at Monte Circeo in Italy. Or when at Technik Tach in Turkestan, a child was caringly buried within a surround of five pairs of mountain goat horns.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is the total awareness of discontinuation combined with complete memory which desires continuity. As Smith and Dale relate about the Ba-lla 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.<sup>2</sup>

As Freud relevantly states about death, demons and the soul,

Whenever I have succeeded in penetrating the mystery, I have found that the expected disaster was death. Schopenhauer has said that the problem of death stands at the outset of every philosophy; and we have already seen that the origin of the belief in souls and in demons, which is the essence of animism, goes back to the impression which is made upon men by death.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore where does the idea of spirit come from? It starts with the acute awareness of one's mortality, the remembrance of the death of others and the

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<sup>1</sup> Åke Hultrantz, "Religion Before History", *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982) 24.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (New York: W.W. Norton) 109.

extreme abhorrence of it.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is the full awareness of death which gives cognition to a concept about overcoming it.

The forensic evidence of the earliest primary peoples, who cared for a contributing male after a serious injury, which probably put that individual in a physically non-contributing position, shows a concern and affinity for company as basic to the human mind-set.<sup>5</sup> Because of greater memory, which the circumstances of existence require, humans remember death and because company is cherished, death is abhorred and because it is abhorred death is shunned. Thus the idea of and desire for continuation becomes a tool--like everything else human--leveraged against death.

In the Canaanite or Phoenician religion, death is killed when Anath the goddess of love and war, in revenge for killing her brother Baal, kills Mot the prince of death. Baal, the god of vegetation, as a result revives and causes the earth to bloom. The psychological abhorrence about death is revealed when Anath does not just kill Mot, but winnows him, burns him and grinds him into dust.<sup>6</sup> The rationale of victory over death is manifested when Baal revives and provides the earth with an abundance of life.



**Anath, Semite war-goddess, 1200 BC**

(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

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<sup>4</sup> 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, much like Freud’s idea of wishful thinking, primary people came to the same conclusion about spirit that we do today, it is something amorphous and non-physical. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1992) 51.

<sup>5</sup> See K.A. Dettwyler “Can Paleopathology Provide Evidence for Compassion?” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (vol. 84, Issue 4, 1991) 375-384.

The fact early Egyptians mummified their domestic animals indicates a care and desire for even the company of pets in the afterlife.

Rodríguez shows that the Saladoids in the Antilles buried their dogs in squatting positions, “suggesting the same ritual and reverence given to humans.” Miguel Rodríguez, “Religious Beliefs of the Saladoid People,” in *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*, ed. Samuel M. Wilson (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997) 85.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russel, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988) 16.



So the creation of the idea of an afterlife is not only, as Freud would have it, the realization of a wish<sup>7</sup>, but is a rationalized extrapolation which comes out of the existential situation. In other words, while life is evident in the existential situation, it is also evident it is overcome by death and since death comes inevitably and is a thing not wanted it can only be overcome with life after it.



(Source: Google Images)

The idea of spirit comes because no one has returned from death in a physical way. Once the hope of continuation is concretized into an idea of “afterlife” and others “leave” and do not physically come back, then the state of being after death is not physical, but must be something else. It is therefore spirit. Thus ideas which serve as the basis for much religious ritual and theology develop at the instigation of the existential situation and the key component of more complete and sophisticated memory.

### **Remembrance and art**

Similarly the existential situation, which makes essential more complete memory, assists the development of aesthetic interest. Because of a more complete remembering of the cessation of others and the emotional connection to those others due to the necessary interdependence required to survive as Homo-vulneare, there is greater consciousness about the finiteness and meaninglessness of existence. This awareness combined with awareness about the absolute monotony to animal existence gives incentive for the creation of reminders about the things that are meaningful: a successful hunt, a successful battle, pictures of loved ones, the use of color, the depiction of scenery.

According to Anderson, one of James Cook’s officers, New Zealanders were so communal, when a loved one or friend died in battle or otherwise, they wailed dolefully and cut gashes in their foreheads and cheeks until blood flowed freely. Anderson claims they did the same on the joyful return of a friend absent only a

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<sup>7</sup> Freud, *Totem*, 104.

short time (though one would have to believe not to the same extreme). Their equivalent to our photographs as reminders, they also carved figurines from a “green stone” with pearl shell eyes which they hung around their neck “as a memorial of those whom they held most dear.”<sup>8</sup>

An example of artistic propensity of primary peoples comes when, Hernando D’Escalante Fontaneda, who dwelt 17 years with the mound-building estuarial Calusa and other tribes of Southwest Florida, writing in 1575, says the Canogacola, besides being numerous and great warriors were “great painters” and that “whatever they see they paint.”<sup>9</sup>

Cave art were also early examples of art used as meaningful reminders, triggering the reliving of the past to create a more constant animation against the reality of the animal existence we are conscious of.



(Source: Google Images)

This is why today we adorn our homes with pictures or photos of loved ones and/or pictures or photos of memorable experiences involving friends, loved ones, or pets, or pictures or photos depicting the glorification of historical events or panoramic scenes of nature filled with color and beauty and why when we leave our homes we adorn our offices with the same, and why banks, hotels, museums, public areas also offer such reminders of meaning. Art thus becomes our constant companion providing a more constant flow of meaning, providing security against the insecurities we have about the realities of animal life. In my own experience I have found another useful layer of meaning through the use of the coffee cup. Whenever we travel to other places there are always coffee cups for sale at gift shops with scenes on them for the intended purpose: that the buyer will remember the good experience of the vacation taken. Before heading out to meet the stress of the day it

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<sup>8</sup> James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, vol. 3, (Anderson’s journal) ed. J. C. Beaglehole (Published for the Hakluyt Society; London: Cambridge University Press, 1961) 815.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Wilkinson, *Fontaneda’s Memoir*, trans. Buckingham Smith, 1854 (keyhistory.org Retrieved 11/ 9/2013).

is nice to reach into the cabinet and pick a cup from one of our trips. Memories do flow back providing a level of peace and satisfaction. Art and photography in the same way becomes human-kind's constant companion providing meaning through recollection.

### ***Exertion and religious ritual***

As counteraction to the existential situation--one of monotony, meaninglessness and uncertain existence--the human mind creates an animated landscape of opposing powers and though they may fear or greatly respect a spirit, and while the spirit world has its own will and desire and impresses the individual with that will (sacral-determinism), the primary person believes he or she can, through ritual, which invokes a magical power, project and influence a control of their own (tele-determinism). This same determinism can be applied to others as well, in the lifting of taboo, or applying a curse, or in the making of a blessing on oneself or others.

Sorcery, then, is essentially the art of influencing spirits by treating them in the same way as one would treat men in like circumstances: Appeasing them, making amends to them, propitiating them, intimidating them, robbing them of their power, subduing them to one's own will—by the same methods that have proven effective with living men.<sup>10</sup>

The primary mind plainly thinks it can, through mental projection and magical assistance, influence the course of history, even the course and form of the universe. To the primary person there is a projection of will through ritual. If, for example, a dead ancestor, who is now a spirit and thus more powerful, is causing trouble, how does one counter? This concern is exemplified in the Isoma ritual of the Ndembu of Zambia, whose complex formulations are all purposed to lift the curse of a "shade" or ancestral spirit.<sup>11</sup> Among the Bergdama, an ancient people who lived in remote parts of South West Africa, if it was believed an illness was sent by the all-powerful and influential deity, Camab, then that person was left to die by starvation. If, on the other hand, the illness was sent by a dead relative, then the malady can be massaged, burned, or sucked out.<sup>12</sup> The psychological determinism played out in the ritual conditions of conflict and control is amply revealed in other instances. As Katz points out, the Kung, a former gathering and hunting society living in the Kalahari Desert, saw hunting, because of its high risk and unpredictability, as an activity "subject to magic control."<sup>13</sup> When it comes to healing, while the Kung apply medicinal herbs in a practical way they also practice a deterministic healing.

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<sup>10</sup> Freud, *Totem*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine De Gruyer, 1969) 18-37.

<sup>12</sup> Jens Bjerre, *Kalahari* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960) 56-61.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy: Community Healing Among the Kalahari Kung* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982) 19.

The healing massage involves forceful manipulation of large areas of the body, concentrating on the shoulders, back and stomach. The massagers rub their sweat onto the one being healed and periodically shake their hands into space, expelling the patient's sickness.<sup>14</sup>

Epistemologically then, in the face of existence, the primary person has himself, his thoughts, his ability to speak, his ability to do things with his hands, which physical nature necessitates be done according to formula, from building in the round to better withstanding wind and rain, to tool and weapon making, to irrigation systems. But the individual and his thoughts, like all things apparent to the eyes, have a power or *mana*. The projection of *mana* is illustrated with many ancient societies belief that the sharing of power can either be projected onto or received from a weapon. For example, Kalahari Bushmen, as well as Australian aborigines, places, in a ritualized way, this power onto their arrows to assist the projectile in finding its target.

In regard to impediment to will, be it another individual or spirit, if that power is projected and is assisted with physical manipulation of things and words according to a repeated formula, then one can effectively counter with one's own magic and influence. Though at times an individual may exert one's will, the assistance of a shaman, whose power is greater and connections more direct, is often sought. The repetition in the action comes from psychological determinism itself. A positive outcome is entertained, and when that outcome is perceived to be fulfilled, the sayings and actions contained in the ritual were right and will therefore be repeated. Here we have an important social institution, religious ritual, resulting from a concern for power and control manifesting itself through the exercise of will in exertion against impediment to will.

### ***Exertion in fashion***

Like the meaning gained from the involvement of human exertion in a spirit world of powers and opposing forces exertion also provides meaning when it comes to fashion and the performing arts.

For most of its history fashion is not a matter of simple adornment, but becomes socially important when pain and exertion are incorporated. Examples of torturous conformity are when Inuit bored holes in their cheeks to insert stone studs.<sup>15</sup> Others include Ubangi lip stretching, African neck stretching, Sumatran teeth-filing<sup>16</sup> and head deformation by Mayan and North American tribes.<sup>17</sup> Kotzebue relates how the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>15</sup> John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1872) 43.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Hollander, *Feeding the Eye* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999) 118.

<sup>17</sup> According to Brain, head deformation was also practiced in pre-Neolithic Jericho, in high-born Greek and Romans families, in Africa, and in Europe. The popular shape was an elongated skull using either cradle boards or tight banding. In Germany it was believed the process improved memory capacity. Robert Brain, *The Decorated Body* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) 89-92.

Sitka Islanders also practiced head deformation on their infants<sup>18</sup> and lip stretching by their women.<sup>19</sup>



**Neck-stretching: Ndebele, South Africa**

(Permission: Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, "Faces of Africa", National Geographic)

Another form of exertion against pain is the use of the corset and tight lacing in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and was, according to Hollander,

most likely to occur among upwardly mobile young women trying to assert themselves, escape maternal stereotype, and gain power in the world, if only through erotic expression . . . Extreme practitioners laced themselves gradually smaller and smaller, patiently training their figures to the absolute minimum that could be borne, measuring themselves constantly, taking pleasure in the accomplishment, in the triumph over pain, and ultimately in the sensation itself.<sup>20</sup>

But, along with very tight neckwear and waistcoats, corsets were also worn by male officers during the rise of military dandyism throughout Europe after the Napoleonic wars. Many Regency dandies were upstarts, not landed gentry and therefore expressed themselves with such fashionable statements to confirm their own self-worth and gain the social status they were not born with.<sup>21</sup>

Waste-compression was also practiced by the Melanesians.<sup>22</sup> Cook describes waste constriction on the island of Malakula, Vanuatu:

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<sup>18</sup> Otto von Kotzebue, *A New Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1823, 24, 25, and 26*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, Richard Bentley, 1830) 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: Corsets, Tight-Lacing, and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 2004) 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 287.

They wrap a piece of cloth or leaf round the yard which they tie up to the belly to a cord or bandage which they wear round the waist just under the short ribs and over the belly and so tight that it was a wonder to us how they could endure it.<sup>23</sup>



**Waist Compression**

(Source: Google Images)

Another form of body constriction was Chinese foot-binding. Like the European constriction practice it too was culturally ingrained and despite criticism difficult to extirpate.<sup>24</sup> Other forms of painful fashion come with what is known as scarification or cicatrization, a scarring process causing the skin to lump or protrude in the form of dots and lines with the usual purpose of creating patterns to adorn the body. In South Africa the Nyambanas produce a row of warts about the size of a pea extending from forehead to nose. Of the Bachapin Kaffirs, those who distinguish themselves in battle were allowed to incise their thigh creating a long scar appearing bluish from rubbing ashes into the fresh wound. The African Bunns made their painful tribal mark by removing three thin vertical sections of flesh from the forehead to the mouth. The ridges were made more pronounced by rubbing in palm oil and ash. The Bornouese in Central Africa, with extreme pain on account of the heat and flies, embellish their bodies with 91 cuts: twenty cuts on each side of the face, one at the forehead, six on each arm, six on each leg, four on each breast and nine on each side, just above the hips. The inhabitants of Formosa painfully impress their bodies making figures of plants, animals and trees. The leading men of Guinea have their skin flowered like damask while the women of Decan have flowers cut into their forehead, arms and breasts, the scars of which are then painted in noticeable fashion.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cook, *Journals*, vol. 2, 465.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 287-288.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 43-44.



**Scarification: Nuer, Sudan**

(Permission: Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, "Faces of Africa", National Geographic)

Another category of indelible body art would be tattooing and body piercing, both finding a degree of favor in modern times. Involving a degree of pain, ritual and sacrifice of time, tattooing was practiced throughout Europe and ranged from the Americas to Africa; that it was prevalent in the East, Asia and Oceania makes the list much shorter where it was rare. Cook describes Tahitian tattooing as painful enough it was never practiced on anyone younger than twelve.<sup>26</sup> Using the process known as *Moko* (characterized by spirals, circles and curved lines) the Maori, incised the skin with a fine chisel and light mallet. *Moko* was a highly ritualized process: it was taboo for the person being tattooed to communicate with anyone but those involved in the process or to be touched by anyone but the artist.

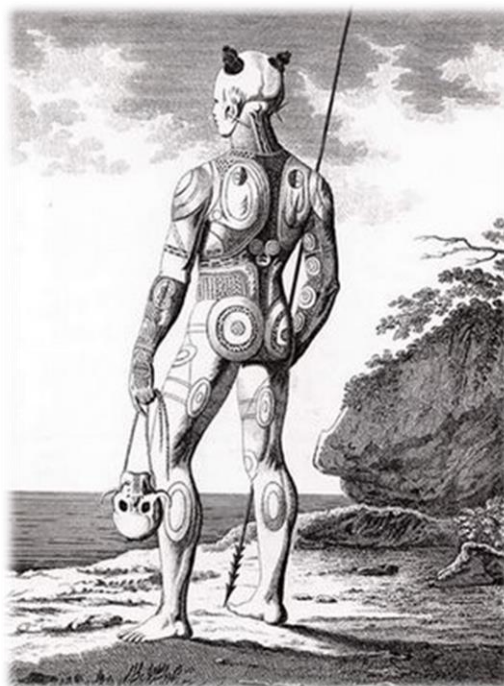


**Moari Curvilinear Design**

(Source: Google Images)

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<sup>26</sup> Cook, *Journals*, Vol. 1, 125.



### Marquesan Head-to-toe Geometric Design

(Source: Google Images)

In conjunction with the painful indelible processes of cicatrization and tattooing, tedious procedures themselves, temporary adornment could also involve complex drawn out processes.

Besides copiously adorning themselves with studs and jewelry, the Felatah women of Central Africa spent several hours a day on their appearance beginning the night before by wrapping their toes and fingers in henna leaves to produce a purple effect. They stained their teeth blue, yellow and purple leaving some teeth their natural color for a contrasting effect; and with particular care they penciled their eyelids with antimony trisulphide, creating a silver-white slightly blue lustrous effect.<sup>27</sup>

According to Hollander, European missionaries in South America were offended at the long hours the Indians spent in cossetting, oiling and painting their bodies when they could have been fishing, farming and hunting. The Nuba of southern Sudan also spend much effort grooming and tending their bodies. After much washing, depilating, oiling and exercising, they painted elegant designs contoured to enhance the body's structure and shape of the face. The result as Hollander states "is dazzling to the eye and quite satisfying to our sense of how one might celebrate physical perfection."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Lubbock, *Origins*, 42. (According to Lubbock, in Laird's *Expedition*, vol. 2, 94.)

<sup>28</sup> Hollander, *Feeding the Eye*, 117. Robert Brain, *Decorated Body*, 42-44.



Melville recounts the time consuming process the Marquesan women take in dressing their hair,

The long luxuriant and glossy tresses of the Typee<sup>29</sup> damsels often attracted my admiration. A fine head of hair is the pride and joy of every woman's heart! Whether, against the express will of Providence, it is twisted up on the crown of the head and there coiled always like a rope on a ship's deck; whether it be struck behind the ears and hangs down like a swag of a small window-curtain; or whether it be permitted to flow over the shoulders in natural ringlets, it is always the pride of the owner, and the glory of the toilette. The Typee girls devote much of their time to the dressing of their fair and redundant locks. After bathing, as they sometimes do five or six times every day, the hair is carefully dried, and if they have been in the sea invariably washed in fresh water, and anointed with a highly scented oil extracted from the meat of the cocoa-nut.<sup>30</sup>

In another location in the South Pacific the Fijian chiefs, with their own hair dressers, consumed hours contouring into different shapes and dying into different color their hair. Black was favored, but white, yellow and red were also used. The hair, up to three feet in circumference (one was noted to be nearly five feet) required them to sleep, surely uncomfortably, on wooden neck rests.<sup>31</sup> As Thomas Williams recounts,

On one head all the hair is of a uniform height; but one-third in front is ashy or sandy, and the rest black, a sharply defined separation dividing the two colors. One has a large knot of fiery hair on his crown, all the rest of his head being bald. Another has the most of his hair cut away, leaving three or four rows of small clusters, as if his head were planted with small paint-brushes. A third has his head bare except where a large patch projects over each temple. One, two, or three cords of twisted hair often fall from the right temple, a foot or eighteen inches long. Some men wear a number of these braids so as to form a curtain in the back of the neck, reaching from one ear to the other. A mode that requires great care has the hair wrought into distinct locks radiating from the head. Each lock is a perfect cone about seven inches long, having the base outwards; so that the surface of the hair is marked out into a great number of small

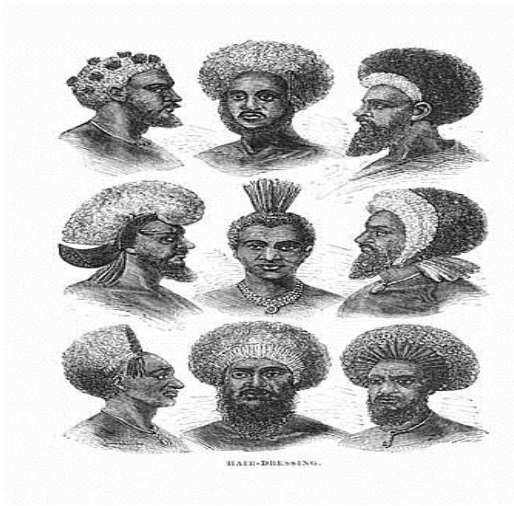
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<sup>29</sup> The Typee, as Melville called them, lived in the Tai Pi Vai valley on the island of Nuku Hiva, one of the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific.

<sup>30</sup> Hermann Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (New York: Library of Congress, 1982) 267.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians: The Islands and Their Inhabitants*, vol. 1. ed. George Stringer Rowe (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858) 158.

circles, the ends being turned in each lock, towards the center of the cone.<sup>32</sup>



### Fijian Coiffure

(Thomas Williams, *Fijians*)

One might wonder at the reason for the extreme lengths primary people went--from head deformation to the painful process of scarification--to make their fashion statements. But, as with many primary religious ceremonies the extremities involved in the ritual (complex movements, elaborate costume, time, often taking days, the practice of sacrifice and/or self-torture) the involvement of pain and sacrifice of time in personal adornment also increases meaning. Even the Australians, who went naked much of the time, spent great effort for religious ceremony to crown conveyers with complex headdresses of feathers and down, while the bodies of participants and/or initiates were decorated with paint and/or lines and dots of down.



### Australian Ceremonial Dress

(Spencer and Gillan, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*)

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 158.

Thus when it comes to fashion, at the microcosmic psychological level--which simultaneously involves the macrocosmic aspects of rank, social approval and identity--a similar level of accomplishment is accessible to all who can--without status, lifelong sacrifice or level of ability achieve, through sacrifice of time and pain, a sense of accomplishment obtained and confirmed by the approval of others in agreement as to what is beautiful or fashionable.

### ***Exertion and worship in the performing arts***

In the performing arts applause and encore serves the purpose of glorification and confirmation. The audience experiences vicariously what the performer is doing. The difficulty imbedded in the performance is appreciated and designed to assemble meaning through approval. Applause itself is a self-confirming conviction that a given performance is exciting. Thus where individual affirmation might lag, at any given moment during a performance it is suddenly uplifted in conformity to the excitement the majority of the audience displays. So when individual doubt lingers it is momentary when a consensus of approval is earned by the performer where the known criteria of beauty, form and difficulty are met and the showering of approval, through applause, is the gift of wages earned. Thus excitement and involvement is brought to self-confirming and continuously sustaining levels, which the encore doubly confirms.

Similar to the complexity and extreme requirements involved in sports, we see at the highest level of achievement for the performing artist a multitude of obstacles. Dance can be roughly categorized into the genres of Tap, Hip-hop, Modern, Swing, Contra, Belly, Country/Western, Flamenco, Latin, Folk and Ballet. Each can take years of training with specific requirements of form to achieve a modicum level of expertise. In ballet for example though there are five basic positions there are hundreds of moves, all difficult and some achievable only with extreme difficulty and skill.<sup>33</sup>

By way of comparison, in sports, children today play with a level of competence exceeded by the seriousness and involvement displayed by parents. Few of these neophytes go on to achieve a level of distinction in high school. Fewer go on to play at college level, let alone achieve distinction. Even fewer participate in the professionals and rarely achieve a high degree of accomplishment there. All the while all of this effort is channeled and structured through a system of tournaments and playoffs. After a grueling season, years of dedication, practice, physical sacrifice, thousands of hours honing skills, expectation and anticipation is brought to a level of extreme animation shared by supporters and participants alike, the winner who, along with supporters, celebrates a glorious victory because of the knowledge of a great accomplishment defined by obstacles overcome along the way.

Similarly after years of practice and refinement the degree of excitement for modern dance and ballet is determined by the level of difficulty in the performance as impediment-to-will which itself is designed to add layers of meaning to the

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<sup>33</sup> Gail Grant, *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* (New York: Dover Publications, 1982).

existential situation. Like Tongan dancers, who received intervals of applause from fellow onlookers for their highly complex choreographed performance<sup>34</sup>, meaning for the modern performer is confirmed in fulfilled purpose and the performance is confirmed in the minds of the audience with showering of accolades of applause and encore. Thus one reason adoration reaches a level of worship is it identifiably attaches the fan to a destiny wrapped up in purpose played out as impediment-to-will. Another has to do with the psychology of separation sought by the performing artist where the choreography of motion, designed to impart grace and sublimity, anticipates a move, which appears beyond human ability because of the level of difficulty that when accomplished sets the performer apart from all others creating waves of accolade for the performer. So when a skater attempts and achieves with perfection the triple axel or the ballet dancer performs 32 consecutive fouettés or leaps that defy gravity the evident level of difficulty separates the performer from audience and other less able performers creating a persona of specialness to be rewarded and adored.

Thus impediment-to-will is manifested in obstacles artificially placed before performer that, through the process of overcoming, success is achieved. Like the exhausting, painful and complex features to ceremonial ritual, the obstacles to overcome in sports are records to be broken and opponents overcome. In dance and theatrical performance impediment is set with clearly defined difficult to achieve standards of performance. Even fashion and personal adornment are made difficult with complex, time-consuming and sometime torturous procedure. But while the reason for competition and impediment is to acquire meaning and animate life, the source of definition comes from the existential situation, that life itself is a struggle, an overcoming, and a competition against time and circumstance.

### Biographical Note

**Patrick Scott Smith** is an independent scholar and writer with past presentations for the AAR, ASOR, and SBL in the Central, Southwest and Southeast regions with recent presentations for the ASSR and Missouri Academy of Science. With emphasis on psychological/anthropological perspective to social formation and religious institution his present works are incorporated into a manuscript with copyright pending.

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<sup>34</sup> Cook, *Journals*, vol. 3, 109.

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## **The Risk of the Protestant Ethic to Peace and Social Order**

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The “Protestant Ethic” accompanies desensitization to both direct forms of violence in the name of “expansionism” and broad and subtle forms of violence through its contribution towards manufactured scarcity and deprivation. This proposed paper explores the relationship between Max Weber’s concept of “the Protestant Ethic”, habits of consumption, and global sustainability. Although, Weber was not able to foresee the consequences of the proliferation of insatiable greed as a necessity for capitalism to flourish, the greater problem lies in the relative finitude of resources available for prolonged exploitation and potential environmental crisis. Nevertheless, the greatest problem lies in the fact that in order for Western habits of consumption to continue, it requires for the majority of the population to ignore critical facts about the environment, such as mass soil infertility, loss of habitat, and diminished abilities to consume food and freshwater. However, if such facts continue to be ignored then peace and basis social order becomes highly at risk on a global level.

### **The Globalization of Anomie: A Culture of Climate Change Denial and Victim Discounting**

Among the most profound unanticipated consequences of the globalization of capitalism lay in its effects upon influencing human behavior. In light of the economic rewards for population sectors who have the status as beneficiaries of fierce competition over scarce resources, the tendency to withdraw from the greater ecological society increases. The greater challenge for humanity lies when anomic tendencies of ecological isolation becomes normative and furthermore globalized. The effects of the profit-driven motive embed itself into the cultural fabrics of the most industrialized nations as standard bearers for the remaining global majority. The proliferation of a culture of climate change denial derives from material and ideological barriers which serve as safeguards against its eminent threat to individual standards of living, fundamental awareness of the wellness of co-inhabitants, and social and ecological order.

### **Anomie absence of mutual accountability**

Resulting from the globalization of anomie entails the absence of a sense of collective mutual accountability. Climate change denial implies having the vantage point of a position of power and privilege which exempts self from its immediate and direct consequences such as loss of habitat, famine, pestilence, and the threat of internal and external strife over essential and scarce resources for survival.

Genocide commonly refers to the systemic attempt to destroy and eliminate a distinct human population. Furthermore, such a term typically refers solely events from the twentieth century and forward. Nevertheless, living populations also includes non-human ecological cohabitants. The active and latent practice of

climate change denial produces the effect of negligent destruction of life on a macro-level. Such practices become increasingly enabled due to the idea that the harm appears in broad and subtle forms with gradual impacts on its victims who tend to experience a discounting of their victimhood.

Despite the trend of the demise of the “socially integrated” individual and society, globalization and modernity advance local and global interdependence. Classical sociological theorist Emile Durkheim’s previous description of the society as in a state of “organic solidarity” acknowledges that the present and future world order as on a pathway to increased complexity and interconnectedness. Although, Durkheim and other like theorists focus has been on labor in the wake of the growth and expansion of industrialism and the expansion of commerce, as information and knowledge reaches both scientists and laypersons, the potential of awareness of the role non-human creatures and species in terms of the facilitation of mutual survival. Skeptic ideology equates “climate change” to a mere by-product of propaganda. Such a twofold problem, denies the reality of those populations which face immediate impact, further it prevents the incentive for powerful states to address such matters legislatively. The overall effect of such manipulation of scientifically based ideas and information further empowers laissez-faire governance and the deregulation of free-market capitalism without regard for its consequences.

### **The Problem of Hard Work**

The “Protestant Ethic” entails that a rational and calculated work ethic has been embedded in the fabric of society. Nevertheless, there lies the problem of the scarcity of work as society increasingly industrializes. On the macro-level such efficiency has resulted in a new economic order that threatens the post-industrial way of life. The rationalized post-industrial economic order embraces the belief in the ideal of yielding the maximum amount of production from as few producers as possible, for the lowest possible wage, as efficiently as possible. The scarcity of work due to increased efficiency becomes a risk factor. On the macro-level, basic social order becomes endangered due to insufficient mechanisms in place in order to absorb the masses without sufficient access to work, active economic participation. If work and employment continues on such a trajectory, then the social order would suffer from a large scale waste of human potential, while the domestic and global economic order would lack sufficient active participants in the industrialized world to sustain the GDP of its interrelated nations.

Minimum wage benefits privileged consumers such that low labor cost keeps products and services low, while owners have an increased probability of increasing their profit margin with lower overheads. However, minimum waged workers annual income based on a forty-hour work week is below the poverty line and may not be regarded as a liveable wage. For example, as standard practice renters are required to have proof of monthly income that exceeds three times the rent or the lease allocated by month. Furthermore, a liveable wage does not necessarily equate to a family wage, which refers to a sufficient income in order sustain dependents.

## **The Problem of Frugality**

The danger of frugality lies when it encourages withhold essential resources from those who have the greatest need and lack the power to solve their individual or collective problems of deprivation. Although frugality has been associated with “the Protestant ethic” virtue of self-discipline, deferred gratification, and constraint, such rationalized practice assumes the vantage point of privilege. The ability to accumulate surplus implies relative peace and freedom from desperation. “Indeed, globalization is accompanied by increasing gaps, in many respects between the rich and the poor” (Keohane and Nye, 106). Although at the surface globalization gives the false illusion to privileged societies that they are globally integrated with the developing and underdeveloped world, such phenomena accomplishes desensitization to the extreme and often taken for granted high levels of exploitation and human suffering. Approximately 70 per cent of the worlds population live in an under developed nation. Therefore, much of the world lacks the ability of thrift. Whereas the United States for example is only 4 per cent of the world’s population and consumes roughly forty percent of the world’s resources.

To a large degree, scarcity has been aristocratically constructed. With this in mind only the powerful can remedy such conditions which tend to be ignoreable to remoteness, and a culturally based lack of “collective responsibility” which is easily purged with religious morality as solely based on individual piety. Materialistic charity, despite its manifold beneficiaries, allows individuals and groups to avoid contact with suffering through susained remoteness, remain psychologically disconnected, and an exemption from making any significant consumption adjustments, mental habits, or practices of waste, relative excess and ecological destruction.

## **The Problem of Consumption**

The “Protestant ethic” has produced a culture such that its members have been socialized to consume significantly more than is actually used (definition of waste), and have been deeply embedded in the fabric of the habits of the mind. As a result, mass exploitation of human and non-human creatures has led to the proliferation of a predatory ethic as an automatic response. Nevertheless, the predatory lifestyle is unsustainable. Although the ecological threat has empowered the scientific community, such authority faces an ideological challenge which has permeated political culture, religious culture, the privilege of denial in the existence of climate change, food shortages, soil erosion, global warming.

Indigenous societies continue to suffer from a loss of control of their way of life to a social-Darwinist and often incompassionate culture.

Future unborn generations are forced to cope with the legacy in which present generations leave as inheritance. Beyond resources, coping mechanism for lack of resources and the presence of rival groups within close proximity.



## The Migration Challenge

When the effects of climate change contribute to the loss of habitat, then human and non-human creatures become forced to relocate for survival. Yet, such forms of coerced population transfer may entail resettling in unwelcoming territory. The “Protestant ethic” poses a threat to peace and basic social order due to its tendency to ignore the effects of industry on climate change. Climate change can cause migration patterns, such that incompatible groups would be forced to co-exist within the same national boundaries for the sake of survival. “North African emigration to Europe much of it is illegal is already a major regional dynamic and will only become more so as a consequence of climate change (Population Council, 409).

During monsoon season much of Bangladesh becomes uninhabitable due to flooding “There is already a large-scale movement of people from Nepal and Bangladesh into India for economic reasons, and climate change will most likely result in a significant increase in migration” (Population Council, 411) Salt water entering the Ganges River delta causes water problems and effects farming and crop cultivation which also contributes to migration for survival. Mass movement of illegal immigrants accompanies the heightened risk of state sponsored expulsion.

If left unappeased, new rival groups become increasingly prone to adopt violent tendencies which lead to mass killings such as in the case of Rwanda in the 1990s. The inter-ethnic clash had six significant motives including: fear, revenge, obedience, opportunism, and aristocratically constructed prejudices (see Uvin 263-264). Least industrialized nations collectively have fewer resources or mechanisms for adapting to climate change, but have minimal stake in the global economic or political order other than providing raw materials and cheap labor under the guise of rational economics and efficiency. “The emissions of greenhouse gases are predominately from high-income countries while the negative effects of climate change are predominately in low income countries” (Tol, 36). Although, at the surface such patterns receive greater favorability than direct combat, in the long run the violence thus becomes indirect, broad and subtle with a significant number of casualties.

## Biographical Note

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## **Separating Wheat from Chaff in the Concept of American *Exceptionalism***

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Americans have always seen themselves in exceptional terms. The specific term “exceptionalism” has not always been used to describe the stark uniqueness of America as a land and a nation. The idea that Americans are a people specially chosen by God and given a destiny to fulfill by Him has endured since colonial days. From John Winthrop to the Revolutionary period at the end of the eighteenth century; from the Young America movement to the trauma of the Civil War; from Theodore Roosevelt’s concept of “True Americanism” to Woodrow Wilson’s messianic vision of America; from the Manichaeism of World War II, the Cold War, and the War on Terror—Americans have traditionally self-identified in exceptionalist terms.

This paper is about American exceptionalism as an aspect of the civil religion of America. The topic interests me because I am a patriotic American—I love my country and am thankful to God that America is my home. I am also thankful to those who have sacrificed their lives, and to those whose loved ones’ lives were lost, so that I may enjoy the blessings of America. But as a Christian, I affirm that any nation that uses God-talk to self-identify must be prepared to accept scrutiny.

What is the meaning of American exceptionalism? What are the origins of the term? Does the idea entail theological commitments? If so, what are they, and how do they relate to the Christian faith? Does the concept of American exceptionalism conflict with the gospel at any point? Can a Christian adopt the concept of American exceptionalism? Is the American church faithful to Christ as its first love (Rev 2:4) if it embraces American exceptionalism? Or is the idea of American exceptionalism free from any religious commitments?

I will argue that providential American exceptionalism is an aspect of civil religion, and at significant points, is at odds with the Christian gospel. American civil religion does not necessarily come into conflict with Christianity. But exceptionalism, as understood in providential terms, involves certain theological themes imported from Christian theology and applied to America, among them chosen nation and divine commission. When these themes are applied to America, they are in conflict with the Christian gospel, and are to be rejected because they potentially make America an object of worship. Under this conception, the nation itself looks to take on a transcendent status playing an unequalled role in history that goes beyond the limits of Scripture. Simply put, providential American exceptionalism tends toward idolatry.

However, American exceptionalism does not have to carry providential meaning, even though it still ought to be considered as an aspect of civil religion. American exceptionalism can mean that America uniquely strives to serve as a communal paragon of justice, freedom, and equality among nations. Civil religion, and American exceptionalism by extension, have the potential to serve as a beacon pointing to justice, natural rights, and the ethical well being of the nation and the world. In short, when American exceptionalism calls for God-ordained empire, then it leads to idolatry. When it points to moral and civil example, then exceptionalism leads to compassion, justice, and human flourishing. I am referring to the former as high American exceptionalism and the latter as low American exceptionalism.

I intend to show that American exceptionalism is not a monolithic concept. It is not a signpost with only one side. As an aspect of civil religion, exceptionalism is a coin with two sides. High exceptionalism, as one side of the coin, must be faced down to avoid idolatry; low exceptionalism must be faced up to encourage human flourishing. High exceptionalism is exclusive; low exceptionalism is inclusive. High exceptionalism limits freedom to some; low exceptionalism expands it to all. High exceptionalism is self-satisfied, because it is based on determinism. Low exceptionalism is never satisfied, because it is reaching for an ideal based on natural law and rights theory. High exceptionalism denies America can do wrong; low exceptionalism acknowledges America's flaws and endeavors toward improvement. The Christian gospel chastens high exceptionalism, to keep the nation from becoming an object of worship. Low exceptionalism chastens sectarianism, encouraging the growth of the church while simultaneously supporting religious liberty for adherents of all faith systems.

Both high and low forms of exceptionalism are aspects of American civil religion. Civil religion is a set of theological beliefs and symbols distinct from traditional religion, yet providing a transcendent paradigm around which the citizenry can unite. The notion of a civil religion was introduced to the Western mind by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> but Robert Bellah's 1967 seminal essay, "Civil Religion in America," provides the paradigmatic understanding of civil religion for my purposes. Bellah looked at John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address, noting that the President made several references to America's special relationship and responsibility to God. Bellah also noted that Kennedy's references were not in conflict with his Catholic Christianity—he made no references to Jesus Christ, the Bible, or to church tradition. Kennedy was appealing to his religiously diverse audience to unify around certain religious affirmations as members of the same political community. Bellah said that when Kennedy spoke, "his only reference was to the concept of God, a word that almost all Americans can accept" and "there are . . . certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share."<sup>2</sup> In other words, there are definite religious themes that have

existed in the American mind that have continuously formed American culture, identity, and engagement with the world since the inception of the nation at its founding in the eighteenth century, and also of the proto-nation at the planting of the colonies in the seventeenth century. Bellah said of these themes, that they “still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life”<sup>3</sup> and although he wrote over forty years ago, Bellah’s thesis still holds today. Furthermore, Bellah continues to be correct in his assertion that civil religion is so elemental in America that its sources, beliefs, symbols, and practices must be understood as much as those of any traditional religion.

While not everyone has agreed with Bellah’s particular conception of civil religion, it is rare to find anyone who denies that some form of American civil religion exists. Civil religion is not a system of strict dogmas, but is malleable, shaped by the circumstances of the times and the conceptions of America’s leaders.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, civil religion abides. Even in America, where church and state are supposed to remain separate spheres of authority, Americans share a unifying body of transcendent affirmations and traditions that animate their conceptions of themselves. Rather than being a hindrance to civil religion, religious freedom and disestablishment actually form fertile ground for the growth of a civil religion. Since there is no state church, a civil religion arises to fill the role that a state church might have played in society.

The beliefs of civil religion find articulation in an authoritative canon, a collection of “scriptures” that define what is transcendent about the American nation and character. Bellah wrote that the Revolution is the historical framework of one set of scriptures, and the Civil War is another framework, one that succeeds and completes those scriptures of the Revolution. The scriptures of the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, express the original beliefs of the civil religion, in addition to serving as the national founding documents. Thus, in the revolutionary period, America became what Gordon Wood called “an ideological people.”<sup>5</sup> The Revolution, according to Bellah, serves as something akin to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and George Washington is analogous to Moses leading the people out of slavery. Bellah wrote, “Europe is Egypt; America, the promised land. God has led his people to establish a new sort of social order that shall be a light unto all the nations.”<sup>6</sup>

The Civil War serves as the central turning point in the history of the nation and in the nation’s civil religion. Bellah regarded Abraham Lincoln, the great president who saved the Union and freed the slaves, as “our greatest, perhaps our only, civil theologian.”<sup>7</sup> Through the speeches of Lincoln, the notion of the rebirth of the nation after the trauma of the Civil War became inculcated into the civil religion. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address serve as a sort of “New Testament” to the “Old Testament” of the Declaration and the Constitution. As

Bellaah described it, “the earlier symbolism of the civil religion has been the Hebraic without in any specific sense being Jewish. The Gettysburg symbolism (‘. . . those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live’) is Christian without having anything to do with the Christian church.”<sup>8</sup> So there is an apparent parallel in the American scriptures with the Bible in civil religion, but the civil religion is distinct from Christianity.

Civil religion can go in one of two ways—it can move toward deifying the nation, or it can present a just model of civil government and community for which to strive. In deifying the nation, civil religion misappropriates Christian theological assertions for its own uses. America then engages its citizens and the world as though it can do no wrong. But another aspect of civil religion, is what Seymour Martin Lipset called “the American creed.”<sup>9</sup> According to Lipset, there are five aspects of this creed, and together they make America exceptional—“liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire.”<sup>10</sup> Richard Hughes located the essence of the American creed in words of the Declaration of Independence—“we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. . . .”<sup>11</sup> Both Lipset and Hughes pointed to a set of beliefs in natural rights, individual freedom, and equality rooted in belief in God. This way of conceiving of civil religion is preferable to the other.

This discussion on civil religion leads us directly to laying out the contours of exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is part of the civil religious belief system. And as an aspect of civil religion, exceptionalism can deify the nation or present a just political model to emulate. High American exceptionalism serves to deify the nation. Low American exceptionalism serves to present a worthy example for the nation to pursue.

The origins of the term “exceptionalism” are fascinating in their diversity. Alexis de Tocqueville is the first person to use the term in reference to America. Tocqueville wrote, “The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.”<sup>12</sup> According to Tocqueville, Americans find their origins in part in Puritan theology, they built a civilization from scratch in the wilderness, and their pursuits are directed more toward making the most of life here on earth rather than on religious or philosophical speculation or on the arts and sciences. Thus, the Englishmen who settled in America will be focused on taming the wilderness and building civilization in North America, while the portion that remains in the old country will devote their time to more intellectual and artistic pursuits. Moreover, because of the physical conditions in which the American nation was planted, no society on earth can be compared to it, no matter how free, because no society shared the same circumstances of origin and geography that Americans had. As a result, no people

were as interested in that which was useful—and less interested in speculative or aesthetic intellectual pursuits for their own sake—than Americans. For those reasons, Americans were an exceptional people.

So, the term “exceptionalism,” when applied to America, originated in the writings of Tocqueville. Then in the 1920s, the term was used again in reference to America, this time by the Comintern of Soviet Russia. Marxist philosophy of history, drawing from that of German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, taught that history was in process of moving from feudalism to capitalism and finally to communism. The forces of capital would inevitably be displaced by the proletariat in violent revolution. This had taken place in Russia, and would ultimately take place in every corner of the world. But in America, the world movement toward communism was apparently somewhat stymied by the blazing success of capitalism. The American Communist party under the leadership of Jay Lovestone faced obstacles in organizing during the economic boom experienced in America prior to 1929. Daniel Rodgers wrote that the American party leaders were “branded with the heresy of ‘exceptionalism,’ . . . [and] were ejected from the party and a rival cadre installed in their place.”<sup>13</sup> To Stalin, Lovestone and his colleagues were making excuses for their failures to organize a strong Communist party in America by asserting that economic conditions there were not yet ripe for revolution. Thus, the appellation of “exceptionalism” was used by Stalin and others in the Soviet Union to describe America in a Marxist historical context.

While the concept behind the term “exceptionalism” is old, the term itself has not been used in nationalistic or providential ways until recently. James Ceasar noted that in the past few years, “exceptionalism has gone viral.”<sup>14</sup> In his essay defining the term, Ceasar distinguished between two forms of exceptionalism: “different” and “special.”<sup>15</sup> Exceptionalism as “difference” refers to comparison between America and other countries, and certainly America is sharply distinguished from other countries. “America on many important features (including size of government, the number per capita of voluntary associations, rates of private philanthropic activity, and commitment to personal freedom) is a statistical outlier.”<sup>16</sup> So, Ceasar’s exceptionalism as “difference” appears to mean something close to what Tocqueville meant. That is, America is exceptional but not necessarily in any normative way, or even by any qualitative standard (superior, better, in other words).

But for Ceasar, exceptionalism can also take the meaning of “special.” Exceptionalism as “special” is a reference not only to America as an outlier, but as an outlier because it has a normative, or transcendent, status. America is special because a higher power has bestowed on it a particular task. “The task is not undertaken for enjoyment or profit, but to fulfill a larger purpose on the stage of world history.”<sup>17</sup> This form of exceptionalism goes beyond a social scientific meaning. Exceptionalism as “special” implies divine chosenness.

Hugh Heclo asserted that exceptionalism should be understood in three contexts, that of condition, mission, and character.<sup>18</sup> Heclo's exceptionalism as condition is similar to Ceasar's exceptionalism as "difference." American geography is the obvious physical feature setting the nation apart from others, especially the fact of its isolation from Europe and Asia and the bounty of its yield in natural resources. The historical timing of the American founding is unique, America being the only country founded before the Industrial Revolution, but after the Enlightenment. Heclo suggested that this had something to do with the failure of communism to take firm hold in America. Then there are the socio-political aspects of equality, pluralism, and voluntarism that exist uniquely in America. But each of these distinctions, while noteworthy, do not point to any transcendent purpose or identity.

That is where exceptionalism as mission enters the discourse. Providentialism is a salient feature of exceptionalism as mission. The nation's mission takes on four manifestations, according to Heclo: divine favor, divine judgment, moral example, and world redeemer. This last element in exceptionalism as mission is particularly dangerous, because "it denotes a faith in human perfectability that is undermined by the stark reality that every advance in human achievement at any level always brings with it the possibility of both greater good *and* greater evil."<sup>19</sup>

Lastly for Heclo, there is exceptionalism of character. He described this aspect of exceptionalism as "what Americans are like when they are most being themselves."<sup>20</sup> In other words, Americans are individualistic, practical and optimistic, principled when it comes to freedom and equality, communal, and theistically moral. These features of the American nation set it apart from other nations qualitatively. And though Heclo acknowledged that exceptionalism as character may be somewhat subjective, nevertheless, this is the meaning that is most important.

The ways in which Ceasar and Heclo analyzed and defined exceptionalism are most helpful. What both of these scholars' studies demonstrate is that exceptionalism is two sided. High exceptionalism is unchristian because it locates life's ultimate purpose and meaning in America itself as the millennial fulfillment of the human experience. Heclo wrote, "the Christian view holds that the ultimate meaning of history has been divinely revealed from outside history."<sup>21</sup> But low exceptionalism finds its expression in the American Creed of individual freedom, natural rights, justice, and equality.

In his final speech before his assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, All we say to America is, 'Be true to what you said on paper.' If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand some of these illegal injunctions. Maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to



that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on.<sup>22</sup>

King was pointing to the high example of justice and equality that America professed to be in its civil religious canon. In low exceptionalism, America presents itself to the world as a beacon of hope to the oppressed. Admittedly, America is not a perfect model, but the conception of liberty and equality expressed in its Creed are seen as an ideal to be strived toward and ultimately achieved. Low exceptionalism thus acknowledges Lipset's conception of exceptionalism as a "two-edged phenomenon."<sup>23</sup> While America may be the most future-oriented, optimistic, and freedom loving nation, it is also has one of the highest rates of crime and incarceration and wealth is more unevenly distributed in the developed world. Lipset wrote, "the positive and negative are frequently opposite sides of the same coin."<sup>24</sup> But this acknowledgement of both strengths and weaknesses, virtues and flaws, does not reveal weakness but strength. The realism in low exceptionalism is part of what makes it an authentic form of patriotism.

How, then, is exceptionalism an aspect of civil religion and why is it important? Civil religion is the theological paradigm that brings meaning to the American nation, situates America in relationship to God, and unifies the nation around a moral and metaphysical vision. Exceptionalism is a central tenet of American civil religion. And like civil religion, exceptionalism is at once dangerous and valuable depending on its particular trajectory. Civil religion has the tendency to make the nation out to be God, just as high exceptionalism has the same tendency by misappropriating theological assertions from Christianity. But civil religion also has the great value of unifying the nation around a transcendent ideal, as low exceptionalism does the same.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that exceptionalism is an aspect of civil religion in order that Christianity not be asked to pay for the sins of high exceptionalism. In other words, high exceptionalism is not an aspect of Christianity, because Christianity does not teach that nation-states are the expressions of God's kingdom. Also, low exceptionalism is not an aspect of Christianity, at least not directly. Christianity does not articulate a developed doctrine of natural rights, equality of opportunity, or individual freedom. These ideas, as applied in America, developed from within a broad Christian/Western intellectual and cultural framework, but they are largely part of the secular, and mostly English, Enlightenment.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, these ideas are largely consistent with Christian teaching in the Bible

on the dignity and value of the individual person before God and within community. But low exceptionalism does not favor one particular faith system over another. Inherent in low American exceptionalism is the right of freedom of religion, that the individual answers only to God for the content of her faith, and the state has no authority to compel in matters of religious faith and practice. Again, when either high or low brands of exceptionalism are at issue, it cannot be overemphasized that neither of these is an aspect of Christianity. Both conceptions of exceptionalism are aspects of civil religion.

Sidney Mead, in writing on the American civil religion, spoke of the symbiotic role of Christianity and civil religion in the life of the nation. He asserted that Christianity, as a traditional religion, reminds the civil religion that the nation is not a god. Civil religion, on the other hand, stresses the need for religious pluralism and liberty of conscience against the tendencies of traditional religion to factionalize and curtail religious freedom. He wrote, "Our final concern, then, is to assure ourselves that our attitude toward the nation does not become idolatrous; that the state does not become God. . . . All men, and all sects, must understand 'that they correct one another, and that a limit under the sun, shall curb them all. Each tells the other that he is not God.'"<sup>26</sup> While Mead was referring to civil religion and traditional religious sects, the same could be applied to exceptionalism. The Christian gospel chastens high exceptionalism, to keep the nation from becoming an object of worship. And low exceptionalism chastens the sectarian tendencies of the Christian tradition (or any religion, for that matter), to prevent the curtailment of religious freedom. So while a patriotic American can love her country and be devoted to it above all others, she can remain a faithful and authentic Christian by not ascribing to her country that which is not its due. And while a faithful Christian can hold her conviction that Christ is the Truth and the gospel is the power of salvation, she can remember that salvation is not up to her, and in America, it is acknowledged that ultimately everyone is responsible to God for what they accept or reject concerning his spoken word.

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<sup>1</sup> See Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, The Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, no. 38 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bellah N. "Civil Religion in America," in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 170–71.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>4</sup> See Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988) and Raymond Haberski, Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 320.

<sup>6</sup> Bellah, "Civil Religion," 175.

<sup>7</sup> Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," in *Varieties of Civil Religion*, ed. Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Bellah, "Civil Religion," 178.

<sup>9</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1996), 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> See Richard Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, with a foreword by Robert N. Bellah (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, with an introduction by Alan Ryan (New York: Knopf, 1994), II.ix.36.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, "Exceptionalism," in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 23.

<sup>14</sup> James W. Ceasar, "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism," in *American Exceptionalism: The Origins, History, and Future of the Nation's Greatest Strength*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Hugh Hecllo, "Varieties of American Exceptionalism," in *American Exceptionalism: The Origins, History, and Future of the Nation's Greatest Strength*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. Emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountaintop," *American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches*, April 3, 1968, accessed November 14, 2013,

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> See John D. Wilsey, *One Nation Under God?: An Evangelical Critique of Christian America* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011) for a full discussion on this assertion.

<sup>26</sup> Sidney E. Mead, "Nation With the Soul of a Church," *Church History* 36, no. 3 (September 1967): 283.

## **Historic Camp Chesterfield: A Hoosier Spiritualist Camp Since 1886**

*Todd Jay Leonard*

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### **Introduction: A History of the Spiritualist Movement and How it Spread**

Modern Spiritualism's seemingly inauspicious beginnings began when two young country girls, Maggie and Katie Fox,<sup>1</sup> purportedly made contact with an incarnate spirit that had been haunting the farmhouse they had recently, but temporarily, moved into while their family's permanent house was being built on their brother's land. These manifestations had been occurring for several weeks when the girls (as a sort of game) decided to respond in kind. By this time, the nightly "raps" were so pervasive throughout the small, two-story farmhouse that the entire family had become sleep deprived. To the young girls' dismay, and quite unexpectedly, an intelligent response came forth from something not of the earthly world, but from the other side of the veil, replying intelligently to their commands and questions with intelligible and an appropriate number of raps.

What initially began as a childish game devised as a way to consort with the spirits, soon took a turn that was quite *simon pure* in its intent. In fact, this sudden manifestation actually frightened them and their parents<sup>2</sup> terribly, to the point of calling upon neighbors and friends to come and witness this other worldly event. This simple interaction made between the human world and the spirit realm on that fateful night on March 31, 1848, started a movement of the likes the world had never before witnessed. Soon people from all over—simply by word of mouth—came to the small hamlet of Hydesville, New York, deep in the countryside to that uninspiring saltbox-styled farmhouse, to investigate and see for themselves these girls who could "talk to the dead." Although curious and fascinated with the prospect of spirit communication, there were a fair number of curiosity seekers who felt the girls were

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1.

Figure 1.



The Fox Family, from upper left to right: Katie, Leah, Maggie, Mr. and Mrs. John D. Fox  
[Photo courtesy of the Hett Art Museum and Gallery, Camp Chesterfield]

agents of the Devil himself and wanted to do bodily harm to them. Nearly overnight, these young girls' lives changed so drastically that they were eventually whisked off to stay with their elder sister, Leah,<sup>3</sup> in nearby Rochester in the hopes that by separating them from the location where the spirit contact occurred would cease the paranormal activity; the rapping followed them, hence the beginning of the Modern Spiritualist Movement.

Soon, mediums who allegedly could speak to spirits began to appear everywhere around the United States, with impromptu séances being conducted in living rooms all across America. Not many years following the Fox Sisters initial contact, an organized religion began to form based on spirit communication called "Spiritualism." Gradually, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the movement was firmly established as a veritable religion with clergy and churches having been formed. In addition, in the style of the Methodist tradition of "camp revivals," Spiritualist camps began to pop up around the country where mediums could do platform work<sup>4</sup> during high season (June through September).<sup>5</sup> These served to allow likeminded people

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 1. At first, only Maggie went to stay with her sister, Leah, then shortly afterwards, Mrs. Fox and Katie travelled to where Leah lived to stay with her and Maggie, as well.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase "platform work" refers to the raised stage (platform) where mediums traditionally stood in order to give messages to those in attendance.

<sup>5</sup> "The national vogue for church 'camp meetings' sprang from the popular grove meetings of the Quaker Association. Spiritualism owes a vast debt of thanks to both the Quakers and the Shakers, who, from at least 1800, had been experiencing the rappings, the visions and the trances...." (Harrison, *et al*, p. 9)

to gather and worship together, offering spiritual healing to the attending multitudes of people who would come by horse and buggy to receive readings, attend church services and message services, and to sit in séances in the hopes of receiving some sort of message from a loved one who had passed away.

Figure 2.



The Fox cottage, originally located in Hydesville, New York was eventually moved to Lily Dale, New York, home of the Lily Dale Assembly. It burned to the ground under suspicious circumstances in 1955.<sup>6</sup> [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*.]

With the advent of Modern Spiritualism which is widely considered to have begun in 1848 when Maggie and Katie Fox first made intelligible contact with that initial spirit that had been haunting their home, started a movement that literally changed the way many people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century viewed life and death. Through a sensitive called a “medium,” people were given an opportunity to communicate with those who passed onto the other side of the veil.

Within two decades of the start of Modern Spiritualism, it has been estimated by historians that there were literally millions of adherents to this belief system. This is

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<sup>6</sup> “The original Fox Cottage in Hydesville, N.Y. was purchased by B.F. Bartlett of Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania and it was moved to Camp Lily Dale in upstate New York, the headquarters of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches. This occurred in 1916, almost seventy years after the first rappings were heard inside the house by the Fox sisters, Katie and Maggie, and their parents.” (Leonard, 243)

all the more amazing considering how sparsely populated the United States was in the mid-to-late 1800s.<sup>7</sup> Some of the most well-known people of the time converted to Spiritualism after attending a séance or upon receiving a message from a loved one who had passed away.<sup>8</sup> Séances were purportedly held in the Lincoln White House<sup>9</sup>. The Fox Sisters became so well-known that their notoriety would be akin to that of current celebrities like Lady Gaga and Angelina Jolie...including the rumors and gossip about their love lives.

Spiritualism was not without its critics and skeptics. Traditional churches were mortified at how quickly people were embracing the new-fangled religion. They began to fight back by accusing adherents of consorting with the devil. Ignorance breeds fear; people who did not believe in ghostly apparitions or who had not experienced spirit-communication personally, often harshly denounced the religion without knowing the facts. For the record, it is a God-based religion that accepts the truth from all religious traditions, including Christianity, and in no way is connected to black magic or satanic worship. Spiritualism in many ways is no different than any other religion except its adherents believe in the continuity of life after death which is proven through spirit-communication.

Since multitudes of people began to flock to Spiritualist mediums, it was only within a few years of the Fox sisters' discovery that regular church meetings gradually organized around "camps" where visitors could attend services and have personal readings by the mediums. One such Spiritualist Camp is located in the small town of Chesterfield in Indiana. Since 1886, the Spiritualist church camp of the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* (IAOS)—affectionately called "Camp Chesterfield" by the locals—has been offering visitors spiritual reprieve and comfort for over 128 years.

Since the year 1886, the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* has been meeting regularly, eventually settling permanently on the banks of the White River near Anderson in Chesterfield, Indiana in 1890. Initially, Camp Chesterfield was only a tent-based church similar to the old-style revival tents that itinerant ministers used to

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<sup>7</sup> Buescher, p. xi.

<sup>8</sup> Similar to modern trends where celebrities dabble in different religions and spiritual traditions, so it was when Spiritualism came onto the scene. The spirit communication aspect of the religion was a source of fascination within circles including the country's intelligentsia, literary figures, actors and actresses, high society, wealthy politicians and industrialists. Mark Twain, Abraham and Mary Todd-Lincoln, Horace Greeley, and Cornelius Vanderbilt were a few of the well-known people who attended séances and who were at least sympathetic to the ideals of Spiritualism. For a humorous commentary on Spiritualism, see Mark Twain (1866) where he detailed in his usual witty style his experiences attending Spiritualist séances.

<sup>9</sup> See Austin, B.F.; Fitzgerrell, J.J.; and most importantly, Colburn-Maynard, Nettie.

preach to the masses across the Midwest. The “high” season had the largest volume of visitors who would “camp” out by the river, attend services and séances, and receive readings. Visitors were required to bring hay for their horses and their own utensils and food to cook their meals by campfire.<sup>10</sup> Camp Chesterfield lore maintains that Harry Houdini, the most outspoken critic of his day, often tried to sneak into séances and message services at Camp Chesterfield to try to debunk the mediums; he was never successful, even though it is believed that he was quite persistent!<sup>11</sup> Houdini, an ardent critic of Spiritualism and an avowed skeptic of mediumship had an on-going battle of words with perhaps the most famous Spiritualist of all time, Sir Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes.<sup>12</sup> Doyle gave up writing stories about the famous detective to devote his life to writing about and documenting the history of Spiritualism.<sup>13</sup>

Today, Camp Chesterfield is a flourishing Spiritualist community equipped with a full-service cafeteria, a spacious cathedral, a modern bookstore and library, an art gallery and museum of Spiritualist artifacts, and a quaint little chapel in the woods. In addition, it boasts the first fire-proof building in the state of Indiana,<sup>14</sup> a nostalgic hotel that allows visitors to step back in time upon entering its front doors. During the summer, visitors sit in the old-style gliders on the front porch chatting and exchanging messages they received from loved ones. Camp Chesterfield is historically significant for Indiana, being listed on the National Park Service’s “National Register of Historic Places” as a historic district. Camp Chesterfield has served as a spiritual center of light for generations of Hoosiers, contributing greatly to the unique religious fabric that makes up Indiana’s unique religious history.

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<sup>10</sup> Harrison, *et al*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> I spent many hours, days and weeks scouring the official archives of the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* (IAOS) in the Hett Art Museum and Gallery at Camp Chesterfield, but I never came across any documentation to confirm this idea that Houdini had actually entered the front gates to try to sneak into a séance. This story, however, is well-known amongst the resident mediums and they insist that it is true, having been passed down verbally from teacher to student over the years.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed look at the relationship between Doyle and Houdini, please see Massimo Polidoro’s book entitled *Final Séance: The Strange Friendship between Houdini and Doyle* (published by Prometheus, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> See Doyle’s *The History of Spiritualism: Volume One & Two* for a detailed account of the Spiritualist movement in its early years.

<sup>14</sup> Hattaway, M. (2008) Personal conversation. Camp Chesterfield, Indiana.



## **The IAOS and Camp Chesterfield: *The Early Years***

Once Spiritualism became prominent around the country, Spiritualist camps became the ideal and preferred meeting places for those who were avowed Spiritualists, aspiring Spiritualists, or merely curiosity seekers wanting to be entertained.<sup>15</sup> Traditionally, Spiritualists—due to the negative attitude many people and society had towards the movement in its early years (and still do to this day)—often had a “Sunday” church they attended regularly, but would supplement their spiritual needs with visits to a medium to receive a reading or to attend a séance; attend church and message services; or visit a Spiritualist camp during the high season. This hesitation to be dedicated Spiritualists was a form of self-preservation from ridicule that they might endure from family, friends, and neighbors. Hence, many attended services at their mainstream church on Sunday morning, but would then attend a Spiritualist service in the afternoon. To this day, Camp Chesterfield’s main Sunday service begins in the afternoon in order to accommodate those who may have other services they want or need to attend in the morning. This is indeed a throwback to the time when such an arrangement was needed and necessary in order to accommodate its worshipers.

Hoosier Spiritualists, initially, were forced to travel out of state in order to visit a Spiritualist Camp during the high season. Many Hoosiers went west, some went east, but a goodly number from the Anderson, Indiana area travelled north to Michigan. After visiting a Spiritualist camp in Michigan, John and Mary Ellen Bussel-Westerfield of Muncie, Indiana, decided that Indiana needed its own association and set out to find a suitable location for a homegrown Spiritualist camp.

A popular Spiritualist gathering which took place every summer at Frazer’s Grove Camp, near Vicksburg, Michigan, was the closest and easiest Spiritualist camp in proximity to Indiana. Indeed, well before the Spiritualist movement had taken root in Indiana so firmly, the Westerfields were interested in esoteric subjects and were firmly established in the intelligentsia movement in the Anderson area, hosting gatherings above Dr. Westerfield’s pharmacy in downtown Anderson.

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<sup>15</sup> “After the Civil War, Camp meetings proper were being held regularly by Spiritualists, the very first having been at Pierpont Grove, Malden, Massachusetts in 1860. By the early 1880s at least seventeen camps had sprung up all over the nation.” (Harrison, *et al*, p. 9.)

Figure 3:



A photograph of an early camp meeting at Camp Chesterfield circa 1890s [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's Hett Art Gallery Archives.]

It was in the year 1883, however, that the Westerfields were on one of their trips to Vicksburg, Michigan that the idea to found a Spiritualist association in Indiana was first proposed:

There were six people in attendance from Indiana and these, including Mrs. Annie M. Stewart, the internationally known Pence Hall Materialization medium of Terre Haute [Indiana], were Samuel Connors, County Commissioner of Vigo County; Ben Hayden and wife of Clinton County, and the Westerfields of Madison County. All had gravitated together between services for a little Indiana-style socializing and were happily listening as Dr. Westerfield, resplendent in shaped grey mustache and beard, declared: "If the Spiritualists of Michigan can successfully operate three or four camp meetings, why can't Indiana sustain at least one camp of her own, if properly located near the central part of the state, where all her people could attend?" (Harrison, *et al*, p. 10)

This was the beginning of the formation of what is now the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists*. It took Dr. Westerfield three years to get organized and to contact interested Spiritualists, but by the autumn of 1886, he was ready to call a mass meeting of Hoosier Spiritualists to begin the process to secure a camp for the about

to be formed association. Over two hundred interested people attended that first meeting, electing a president (Dr. George Hilligoss); a secretary (Caroline Hilligoss, wife of George); and a treasurer (Carroll Bronnenberg). (Harrison, *et al*, p. 11)

After meeting for more than three years in Westerfield's hall above his pharmacy, it was November 5, 1887 that a constitution and by-laws were made to incorporate their informal gatherings into an officially sanctioned society, "legally qualified to transact all business pertaining to the organization and religion of Spiritualism." (Harrison, *et al*, p. 14) The annual convention of 1890 was held as a church picnic on property owned by Carroll and Emily Bronnenberg near the banks of the White River, which became the future spiritual home of the IAOS, nicknamed "Camp Chesterfield."<sup>16</sup>

Figure 4.



An early photograph of the mediums' shanties with visitors' tents. [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*.]

By 1900, the camp had begun to take shape with a number of buildings being erected around the main grounds: medium cottages, séance rooms, a dining hall, an auditorium, a lodging house, a small store called "The Bazaar", along with more makeshift structures in the form of tents and shanties.<sup>17</sup> By the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Camp

<sup>16</sup> "Dr. and Mary Westerfield were greatly instrumental in the ongoing negotiations for the grounds, and on August 12, 1892, the 34 acres of land was purchased from Carroll and Emily Bronnenburg for \$3,225.00. The Westerfields and Carroll Bronnenberg each gave large donations to the Association enabling this purchase." (Harrison, *et al*, p. 16) See Figure 3.

<sup>17</sup> See Figure 4.

Meeting, Camp Chesterfield was no longer merely a campground but a thriving Spiritualist community. Hoosiers from all over the state were flocking to this quaint little retreat, causing many growing pains for the leaders of the IAOS—horses needed to be stabled, visitors needed places to stay and eat, and mediums needed housing. The camp grew exponentially in the short years it was founded, and by 1909 it was about to welcome a new person who would take charge and develop its structures and religious programs even more, strengthening the association and Camp Chesterfield to become a leader in Spiritualism for not only Indiana, but for the entire United States and beyond.

**Rev. Mable Riffle and Camp Chesterfield: *The Heady Years*<sup>18</sup>**

Singularly, the most important person to walk through the gates of Camp Chesterfield in the early 1900s was an unassuming school teacher from nearby Anderson, Indiana. The impact this woman would have on Camp Chesterfield and the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists*, as well as the religion of Spiritualism as a whole, is nothing short of prodigious. From around 1909 until her death in 1961, Reverend Mable Riffle steered Camp Chesterfield with a strong hand as Secretary of the association. Rev. Riffle's resounding mantra during her long years of service to the IAOS and Spiritualism was a simple question: Is it good for Camp?<sup>19</sup> This was her response to any proposal, idea or change that the Board of Trustees, mediums, residents, or members would endeavor to implement. If the answer were "no" then it would go no further. Her lifelong dedication to the "good" of Camp Chesterfield is evident in the huge growth that occurred under her watchful guidance.

Thanks to the work and dedication of this longtime secretary of the association, Camp Chesterfield expanded its physical composition tremendously during her tenure, replacing dilapidated wooden buildings with modern structures that would endure into the current era. Under her tutelage, Camp Chesterfield constructed a stone cathedral, a quaint chapel in the woods, a modern cafeteria, hotels, and a museum with an extensive collection of Spiritualist artifacts including the cornerstone of the original Fox Cottage and locks of hair from the Fox Sisters.

Rev. Riffle, however, was not free from ridicule, disparagement and even the

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<sup>18</sup> This section on Rev. Mable Riffle is adapted from an earlier paper I wrote entitled "A Spiritualist Center of Light Since 1886—The Spiritualist Community that Talks to the Dead—Historic Camp Chesterfield" published in the *Association for the Scientific Study of Religion Southwest (ASSR-SW)*, ASSR-SW Annual Proceedings 2010, Dallas, Texas, pp. 7-10.

<sup>19</sup> Richey, Lynda, personal interview, 2009.

occasional piece of bad press. Perhaps being the “face” of Camp Chesterfield for so many years—coupled with her stalwart manner of running the administrative arm of the association—made her an easy target. A number of newspaper accounts<sup>20</sup> throughout her many successive terms as secretary detailed numerous charges of humbuggery, fraud and conspiracy regarding her mediumship. Banned from giving readings in parts of Indiana and Ohio, Rev. Riffle defiantly appealed court convictions and paid fines throughout her tumultuous reign as the all-powerful secretary.

**Fake Medium Won’t Appeal—Mrs. Mabel [*sic*] Riffle  
Pays \$25 Fine for Humbuggery**

Mrs. Mabel Riffle, fake medium, who was convicted, fined and sentenced in Police Court for practicing her humbuggery in Cleveland, Friday decided to pay her fine and court costs and get out of the state [of Ohio].

Henry A. Gillis, attorney for the medium, told Judge Charles Selzer that she had decided not to demand a new trial.

When the clairvoyant was convicted it was given out that rather than submit to the 30-day workhouse sentence and the \$25 fine, the case would be “appealed to the highest court in the land.”

Immediately after Mrs. Riffle received her sentence, her attorneys appealed for a new trial, claiming that “discrepancies” appeared in the testimony of the prosecution witnesses.

Hearing on the new trial motion was set for last Monday, but Mrs. Riffle did not appear.

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<sup>20</sup> The Hett Art Gallery and Museum at Camp Chesterfield has a plethora of archived documents from a wide variety of sources—some handwritten accounts, others published newspaper stories, as well as hotel registers, official correspondence and documents from the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* day-to-day operations. Unfortunately, much of the information is not in any order (chronological or otherwise); the majority of newspaper accounts have no date or reference as to which newspaper originally published the article; due to humidity where the historical documents are stored, many documents are disintegrating. Even with these caveats in mind, the archives can still be regarded as a treasure trove of historical record, offering the researcher and scholar of Spiritualism ample clues as to how the Camp functioned and who were the principle participants in Camp Chesterfield’s long and colorful history.

Her attorney said she would be produced in court Friday. Gillis appeared Friday and paid the fine and court costs.

Mrs. Riffle, secretary of the Indiana State Spiritualists Association [*sic*], is active head of a camp at Andersonville [*sic*], and refused to come to Cleveland and make a personal appearance before Judge Selzer.

Payment of the fine and costs precludes an appeal.

Judge Selzer suspended her workhouse sentence on condition that she quit practicing her fakery in the county. (Archived newspaper account, publisher and date unknown)

Love her or hate her, Mable Riffle was a powerful force who—despite continued attacks from her detractors—did much for the betterment of Camp Chesterfield and the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists*. For every critical article that appeared in newspapers condemning Spiritualism, mediumship, or Camp Chesterfield, she made it a point to have numerous positive articles appear detailing the commendable work being done at Camp Chesterfield on behalf of the religion and its members. Rev. Riffle was (in modern terms) a master at “spin,” always counteracting any negative press with a favorable account of the many functions being held at Camp Chesterfield.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> While gathering materials for this paper in the archives at Camp Chesterfield, I was amazed at the sheer number of newspaper articles detailing every possible activity that was taking place on the grounds during the time she was secretary. Whether it was Rev. Riffle’s mother’s birthday (who lived to be 100-years-old—upon her death, a number of newspapers ran her obituary); a workshop or class being offered in its seminary; a visiting lecturer speaking on spiritually-based topics; a guest-medium giving messages; or the dedication of one of the many new structures she had a hand in constructing—all were covered in the newspapers around the central Indiana area. This constant barrage of good press surely counterpoised any negative publicity that occasionally plagued her and the other mediums working closely with her. Fraud and trickery within mediumship are well documented throughout Spiritualism’s tumultuous history—and Camp Chesterfield is no exception, having weathered many storms that threatened to force it to close its gates. Today, strict guidelines are enforced at Camp Chesterfield to preclude any fakery by its staff mediums, with swift punishment being applied to any who might attempt such trickery with expulsion from the association and mediumship’ papers promptly rescinded. Not surprisingly, the IAOS is in its 128<sup>th</sup> year, serving as testimony of its allure and appeal for generations of Hoosiers.

Figure 5:



Reverend Mable Riffle, the longtime secretary of the Indiana Association of Spiritualists, circa 1930. [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*.]

Upon Mable Riffle's death in 1961, the association and Camp Chesterfield continued to thrive largely due to her hard work and dedication over the prior half century of service to the IAOS, Camp Chesterfield and Spiritualism. Interestingly, Mable Riffle never became president, preferring to work as secretary, an office that allowed her to not only run the day-to-day functions of the camp, but also to be privy to all that was occurring within its gates.

**The Bangs Sisters: *Precipitated Spirit Portrait Artists***

The Bangs Sisters, Elizabeth S. and May E. Bangs,<sup>22</sup> of Chicago, Illinois were frequently featured as guest mediums at Camp Chesterfield in the early 1900s. They often summered at Camp Chesterfield during the high season, living in the cottage located at 421 Grandview Drive.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Figure 6.

<sup>23</sup> See Figure 7.

Figure 6:



The Bangs Sisters, Lizzie and May  
[Photo courtesy of the *Hett Art Museum Archives*, circa 1900]

Figure 7:



The medium cottage at 421 Grandview Drive where the Bangs Sisters summured at Camp Chesterfield in 1909-1910 [Photo courtesy of *Hett Art Gallery Archives*, circa 1950]

The spiritual gift for which the Bangs Sisters became most renowned was what is referred to as “precipitated” portraits—spirit portraits that appear seemingly without the aid of human intervention other than being physically present for the spirit to access and draw energy from the medium(s).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Figures 8, 9, and 10.



Although the Bangs Sisters are said to have been mediums since birth, the gift of precipitation did not begin until the autumn of 1894. During the early periods of this gift's development, it was necessary to cover the canvas with a curtain to enclose it in a dark chamber, and several sittings were required to finish a single portrait. As the gift developed, the sisters were able to demonstrate precipitated portraits in full light, many times sitting on their porch in full sunlight, with the complete portrait finished in twenty to forty minutes. (Harrison, *et al*, p 55)

The paintings were reportedly done on large canvas-mountings that were held on either side by the sisters. At some point during the sitting, without any paints or brushes being used, a faint image would begin to appear, gradually becoming more prominent and darker. The following is an excerpt from *Chimes Magazine* (August 1963) by Ralph Hicock describing a painting of a spirit loved one done by the Bangs Sisters:

Mr. Ripley securely sealed the picture of his friend, Jim, in a heavy manila envelope, placed it safely in an inside pocket, then with Judge Mock journeyed over to the cottage of the Bangs Sisters. The Judge selected a canvas from a large pile, one of the sisters sat on either side of an ordinary table supporting the mounted canvas with one hand while bright sunlight shone through the open window. Mr. Ripley and Judge Mock sat directly in front of it about four feet from the canvas.

First the outline appeared, then disappeared. Then it came again and continued to grow brighter, with lifelike features filling in. The eyes were closed, but to their surprise, suddenly they opened, giving an expression to the face that made one feel it was about to speak. Up to this time, neither of the Bangs Sisters had seen the photo Mr. Ripley had concealed in his pocket, but upon bringing it out for comparison, it proved to be an exact copy. (Hicock, 19)

Figure 8:



Precipitation spirit portrait of "Daisy,"<sup>25</sup> a spirit guide of Dr. Grumbine, by the Bangs Sisters in 1893 in Chicago, Illinois] [Photos in Figures 8, 9 & 10 courtesy of *Hett Art Gallery Archives*]

Figure 9:



Dr. Daugherty attended the Science Church of Spiritualism in Richmond, Indiana in the early 1920's. He sat for the portrait of his wife, Lizzie, and she appeared. He asked why the twins, Mary and Christina, could not come, and they then appeared. Dr. Daugherty was not in spirit, but was sitting for the portrait.

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<sup>25</sup> "[This] Spirit portrait received through Elizabeth Bangs in a private séance at the height of her power in the production of these portraits. The same evening this one was made, this lovely spirit appeared and identified herself as the ministering spirit associated with Dr. Grumbine, giving her name and explaining the significance of the coronet she wore in the portrait." (Hicock, 19)

Figure 10:



A life-sized precipitation spirit portrait of Mrs. Emily Carson for her husband during a sitting with the Bangs Sisters in 1894 [Photo courtesy of *Hett Art Gallery Archives*]

The precipitated portrait work of the Bangs Sisters began around 1894, with the sittings often occurring in broad daylight, under strict test conditions, before the clients. When the sisters first began to develop this spiritual gift, they often used a locked cabinet or a curtained off space and several sittings were needed to complete the portrait. This was believed to have been done initially in this manner because the sisters had yet to develop fully their gift and needed much energy to manifest or precipitate a portrait, causing them to tire easily. After they became proficient with their precipitated portraits, the images would often materialize in less than an hour.

The portraits were produced as follows: two identical paper mounted canvases in wooden frames were held up face to face against the window with the lower half resting upon a table, and the sides [were] held by the sisters with one hand. A short curtain was hung on either side, and an opaque blind was drawn over the canvases. The light streamed from behind the canvases which were translucent, after a

quarter of an hour, the outline of shadows began to appear and disappear as the invisible artist made a preliminary sketch, then the picture at a feverish rate. When the pictures were separated, the portrait was found on the surface of the canvas next to the sitter. The paint was greasy, and stuck to the fingers when touched, it left no stain on the paper which covered closely the other canvas. (Hett Art Gallery)

The sitters, who were often relatives of the deceased, would report later that the portraits would sometimes change in appearance after taking them to their homes. "The hair on some would be altered to look as it had when the subject was on earth. A few blouses and dresses changed to seem more familiar, and in several cases the eyes would open and close. In one portrait of a spirit guide, pearls appeared around the neck a few days later when the sitter said the girl always wore them." (Hett Art Gallery)

The Bangs Sisters were not without their critics and the occasional scandal. Over the years while they were actively working as clairvoyant mediums and precipitation mediums, a number of attempts were made to expose them as frauds. Although many skeptics tried diligently to expose fraud connected to their precipitated spirit portraits, none were entirely successful. Men of great learning were employed to try to figure out how the Bangs Sisters were able to reproduce such stunning and unique portraits:

The Bangs Sisters of Chicago were carefully studied by Vice-Admiral W. Osborne Moore, and he received convincing proof, under ideal test conditions, that portraits of deceased persons could be rapidly painted by "spirit forces" in the sisters' presence. Osborne Moore, who began his study totally skeptical, stated in his book, *Glimpses of the Next State* (London: Watts & Co. 1911), that fraud or collusion could be absolutely excluded as an explanation for the Bangs sisters' precipitated portraits, given his stringent precautions in place during the creation of the artwork. (Buckley, 2011)

The paintings, of which twenty-five are on public display in the *Hett Art Gallery and Museum* at Camp Chesterfield, Indiana, are remarkable in their detail and quality. True believers point to the firsthand accounts of eye-witnesses as proof that the

paintings were not produced by human hands, but by some unseen spiritual force that painted the images of deceased loved ones for those sitters on the earth plane as a “spiritual gift” to assist them in their grief and loss. Whether spirits were actually responsible for these extraordinary paintings, or merely the yet undiscovered cunning trickery of two very clever sisters, will never be known definitively. What is known, however, is that the precipitated portraits that are on display represent a significant and tangible glimpse into the history of Spiritualism and precipitated spirit art, of which Camp Chesterfield and the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* have the singular duty as the primary custodians to preserve and protect these works as it is an unparalleled collection and is the world’s largest repository of precipitated spirit art.

**Conclusion: *The Later Years Until Today***

Historically, after major wars, Spiritualism tended to rise in stature and scope, prompting bereaved relatives to search for some sort of sign or message from those whom they lost so tragically. These anguished times were actually heady days for the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield, with crowds of people clamoring to get through its gates. The ongoing need for improving and constructing new public facilities to accommodate the hordes of people was an area in which Rev. Mable Riffle had much vision and forethought. She also was very adept at fundraising, which allowed Camp Chesterfield to prosper. After her death, this momentum continued for some time, allowing Camp Chesterfield to continue growing through the 1970s and 1980s.

Today, Camp Chesterfield continues to flourish as a Spiritualist camp, church, and seminary. Generations of Hoosiers have walked through its gates, basking in its meditative peace and spiritual harmony it offers. Although there are no mediums today like the Bangs Sisters who are able to do the extraordinary mediumistic gifts of precipitated spirit art, mediums at Camp Chesterfield still do offer those who visit personal confirmation of the continuity of life, and they abundantly dispense hope to those who are seeking solace and comfort that their loved ones are indeed well and in a better place.

For 128 years, the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield has served as a beacon of light for those seeking spiritual guidance and it is likely that this Indiana religious landmark will continue on for another 128 years. With each generation of Hoosiers who come through its gates, continuing to seek their own personal spiritual truth and

wishing to make contact with those who have departed from this earth plane, Camp Chesterfield will serve those in need of spiritual guidance and healing.

The seminary arm of the association has become well-known and quite renowned, attracting students from all over the United States, and beyond, in the study of Spiritualism, New Age Spirituality, and Metaphysics. Being one of a few Spiritualist organizations that offer formal certification in mediumship, healing, and the ministry sets Camp Chesterfield apart from other similar associations which primarily rely upon affiliated churches to train and develop mediums and offer classes toward ordination. Camp Chesterfield has gained a reputation for educating, training and developing Spiritualist mediums that are sought after for their intuitive abilities by not only Spiritualists, but also by non-Spiritualists alike. Camp Chesterfield's mediums are endearingly referred to as "name callers" because when a spirit comes through, it is most often by name, which offers confirmation to the person receiving the message.

As with many denominations that experienced a crisis in membership, the 1990s and 2000s laid witness to a drop in overall church attendance at Camp Chesterfield; a decrease in monetary donations; and fewer students opting to matriculate into the educational programs which offer certification as healers, mediums and associate ministers, as well as eventual ordination into the Spiritualist ministry. This trend has changed in recent years with higher attendance and an increase in students wishing to develop their mediumship.

Often, people initially seek out a Spiritualist medium due to a tragedy with which they need to find solace and closure. Once this occurs, many adherents move on to other spiritual endeavors—or return to their mainstream church from which they initially came. The original problem the person encountered which prompted him/her to seek out a Spiritualist medium is resolved (on some level) and interest in the religion then sometimes wanes. To Spiritualists, this is "divine order" and is as it is supposed to be in the larger spiritual picture. The practical, fiscal side of the religion, however, needs active adherents who do not view the religion or camp only as a spiritual Disneyland where one can get a reading, attend a séance, or take a class on how to see auras, but rather what is needed are dedicated members who will continue to support the church and its activities for the duration.

Spiritualism historically is not a missionary or evangelical-based religion, instead preferring adherents to come to the religion by their own volition (*i.e.* "Those who are meant to come will find it on their own"). Generally, Spiritualism has been

very slow and hesitant to accept modern technology in spreading its message, preferring to take a spiritual attitude toward such endeavors. Spiritualism's peer religions, Mormonism and Christian Science, have been much more successful in maintaining their religions by proselytizing and conforming more rapidly to technological changes in modern society.

Today, Camp Chesterfield continues to exist due in large part to the original vision of its founding members and the commitment of its longtime secretary, Mable Riffle. The current dilemma facing the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield, and many other churches, too will pass. Historically, Spiritualism has regularly endured times of great prosperity and times of near extinction. Camp Chesterfield, as it modernizes its appeal to a new generation of spiritual seekers, will continue to offer confirmation of life after death to those who come through its gates. Although the number of visitors and members may not be the same as in its heyday, as interest in the paranormal and communication with the so-called dead heightens, so will interest in this "Old Age" religion. For well-over one-hundred and twenty-eight years, Camp Chesterfield has been a "spiritual center of light" to many generations of Hoosiers, offering comfort and healing to all those who enter upon its grounds.

### **Biographical Note**

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# A Postmodern Pilgrimage: Theology and Deconstruction in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*

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*"For passion, like crime, does not sit well with the sure order and even course of everyday life; it welcomes every loosening of the social fabric, every confusion and affliction visited upon the world, for passion sees in such disorder a vague hope of finding an advantage for itself. Thus Aschenbach felt a dark satisfaction over the official cover-up of events in the dirty alleys of Venice."*<sup>1</sup>

--Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1912)

## Introduction

Just two years after Thomas Mann (1875-1955) composed *Death in Venice*,<sup>2</sup> Reverend J. M. Thompson of Magdalen College, Oxford University published an article entitled, "Post-Modernism" (1914)<sup>3</sup> in which he stated that in theology, "Modernism was an attempt to live in two worlds, and think in two ways at once...[and]...within the last few years [emphases added], these two lines of development...have finally converged."<sup>4</sup>

Thompson continued to describe the "post-modern" as being similar to "post-impressionism" is art where, "...our power of reproducing nature, and even our power of seeing it as it is, has been perverted by conventional methods of expression... a scheme of forms which shall express the real and directly felt values of spiritual things."<sup>5</sup>

Such is the case with Gustav von Aschenbach, the central figure of *Death in Venice*, a widowed fifty-three year-old German writer of great renown who resides in the city of Munich and whose father had possessed a pedigree of paternal ancestors who led "upright lives of austere decency"<sup>6</sup>—a pattern of tradition Aschenbach himself had always maintained. His Bohemian mother's side of the family was however, more "impetuous and sensuous,"<sup>7</sup> musical, and some of his own features conveyed foreign traits. His parentage had been a cross between "sober

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<sup>1</sup> Mann, Thomas. *Death in Venice*. [1912] (Norton Critical Edition) Trans. and Ed. Clayton Koelb. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994). This quote is indicative of Mann's Gnostic tendencies, especially that people are imperfect and reside in an imperfect world intentionally created by a creator god (not the true God) to be imperfect and where dualism dominates the cosmos.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, J. M., Rev. "Post-Modernism." *The Hibbert Journal*. Volume XII, 1914. pp. 733-45. This article is reported to have been the first time that the term "postmodernism" had been discussed in an academic paper.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 741.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 745-6.

<sup>6</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p.7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

conscientiousness devoted to service” and “darker, more fiery impulses” that produced the dedicated artist that he was.<sup>8</sup>

While taking a walking break from a period of difficult writing, Aschenbach encounters a foreign-looking stranger at a mortuary chapel, with whom his eyes meet briefly, prompting an immediate and uncharacteristic urge to travel--a sojourn that would result in a journey to Venice from which he would never return.

Upon Aschenbach’s eventual arrival in Venice, the writer who has lived his entire life as a realist, and one who “was no lover of pleasure”<sup>9</sup>, becomes infatuated and eventually obsessed by the beauty of a Polish boy of “about fourteen”<sup>10</sup> named Tadzio, who he describes as aesthetic perfection of form (though he appears to be unwell and with several physical imperfections). Infected by this initial and overwhelming wave of romantic inclination, Aschenbach witnesses his moods shifting by the sight or absence of Tadzio, eventually placing himself where the boy would likely be, then following him wherever he went, eventually succumbing to Tadzio’s power to “lead” the aging writer wherever the boy wished to take him, even to eternity, all in the midst of a growing epidemic of Asiatic cholera that had befallen the city of Venice.

It is no surprise that even before Aschenbach makes his trek, a dualistic premonition of doom permeates the writer’s thoughts when he mentally surmises: “For meeting one’s fate with dignity, grace under pressure of pain, is not simply a matter of sufferance; it is an active achievement, a positive triumph, and the figure of St. Sebastian is thus the most beautiful image...”<sup>11</sup>

Mann’s obsession with dualism (usually in contradictions) coupled with a main protagonist who has lived his life in a fine and upstanding manner until “visually-coerced” to travel by a glance from a foreign-looking stranger is a demonstration of how the entirety of existence has been a flawed creation where all humans have the capacity for irrationality and where external forces may serve as the catalyst to uncharacteristic human actions, even the taboo and the perverse.

But what is “irrationality?” If all humans are flawed beings in a flawed universe, irrationality is actually anticipated and thus, rational—and any description of a world in which every element can be described or defined paradoxically, is a postmodern existence—a world where everything is right and wrong at the same time, where there is a “devaluation of all values” (to use Nietzsche’s<sup>12</sup> phrase), where individuality (even selfishness) reigns supreme, where uncertainty and insecurity thrive, where perceptions, images, and depictions of reality become truth,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p.21.

<sup>11</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 9. St. Sebastian was an early Christian martyr, frequently depicted in Renaissance paintings, and is considered the patron of plague sufferers and was reported to be successful of curing many with various diseases.

<sup>12</sup> Frederich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philologist, philosopher, composer, and cultural critic who among many accomplishments, questioned modern Christianity and the objectivity of truth and explored the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy. He deeply influenced Thomas Mann’s perspectives and writings and still is influential in many philosophical circles, especially the postmodernist movement. His religious perspective closely resembles Buddhism but in writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, revealed his Gnostic tendencies.

where institutions, morals, and even religions are reformulated and reevaluated into diverse, competing points of view, and where the deconstruction (or the breakdown) of everything into merely the minutiae of conscious experience and its interpretation flourishes.

Thomas Mann is generally considered in most academic circles a literary modernist, a philosopher, and an essayist. There is much evidence to suggest however, that not only are Mann's works, in general, reflective of only his philosophy, but of his theology—and *Death in Venice* particularly displays the features not just of modernist literature, but contains all of the elements of the postmodern period, though well in advance of its day. What Mann creates in his novella of a mere sixty-one pages<sup>13</sup> containing only five chapters is a work of immense literary depth and profound intellectual richness that he well may have written, in part, to methodically and cryptically convey insights, observations, and even mystical and cosmic revelations regarding the nature, structure, and ordering of the universe.

It should be understood however, that to adequately understand, explain, and interpret this endlessly complex work, it should be read over and over again for years, critically researched likewise, and then deconstructed thoroughly, and at that point, one may just begin to recognize the depths of Mann's almost incomprehensible gnosis<sup>14</sup>. What follows herein merely attempts to illuminate but a tiny dark corner within Mann's masterpiece.

### **Mann's Theology in *Death in Venice***

In Gary Astrachan's 1990 article entitled, "Dionysos in Thomas Mann's Novella, *Death in Venice*,"<sup>15</sup> he states:

What continues to make this [*Death in Venice*] a vital and psychologically important manifestation of this god for our own time is not *only* the fact that this prophetically brilliant and jewel-like piece of literature encapsulated the entire Romantic tradition which preceded its publication, while at the time foreshadowing two world wars and the fate of Germany and Europe for the twentieth century, but even more significantly for our purposes, that it reveals in its manifold archetypal resonances, the eternal fate of the individual attempting to come to terms with both the ideal and demonic poles of human existence. *Death in Venice* is, in fact, the unsettling story of deeply disturbed Western culture, portrayed by the main protagonist, caught in its soul-rending conflict, torn between the opposites, and consequently falling

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<sup>13</sup> This pagination refers specifically to the Norton Critical Edition of Mann's *Death in Venice*, previously cited.

<sup>14</sup> Defined as "the experiential, practical knowledge of science, art, philosophy, and religion that guides us to our full potential and innate happiness." *Discover Gnosis* <<http://www.gnosticteachings.org>>. Accessed Feb. 15, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Astrachan, Gary. "Dionysos in Thomas Mann's Novella, *Death in Venice*" *Journal of Analytic Psychology* (Vol. 35, 59-78). p. 59.

prey to the extreme poles of non-human or inhuman behavior, brutality, and the denigration of all values.

This astute analysis of *Death in Venice* is in full congruence with Carl Jung's<sup>16</sup> concept of *individuation* in psychology—which refers to the spiritual purposes of life beyond material goals where central to every person's life is the quest to recognize, nurture, and realize their full inherent potential. Defined as the psychological process of integrating opposites (such as the conscious and unconscious) while still maintaining each's autonomy, Jung believed that not only was *individuation* the core process of human development, it was also at the heart of mysticism and all religious experience. Interestingly, the common factor between Jung and Mann was not so much the concept of *individuation*, but the concept's Gnostic origins.

Modernist Gnosticism is quite prevalent in European literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and found in the works of Nietzsche, Mann, Dostoevsky<sup>17</sup> (about whom Mann composed an analytical essay), Kafka,<sup>18</sup> Melville,<sup>19</sup> and Yeats,<sup>20</sup> among others. Their literature, in part, was a:

“...revolt against modernity itself as a ruined work that parallels on the historical plane the Gnostic revolt against the cosmos. Moreover, the ancient Gnostic salvation through *gnosis* reappears in the *l'art pour l'art*<sup>21</sup> ideal of an autonomous aesthetic utopia of absolute art as a medium for absolute reality and an escape from the social world and the perceived horrors of modernity.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist known for founding the field of analytical psychology. He was a like-minded contemporary of Thomas Mann and his middle name Gustav may have also been influential of the naming of Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* as was for certain the late composer's, Gustav Mahler.

<sup>17</sup> Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was a prolific Russian writer who explored human psychology during the troubled social, political, and spiritual epoch of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. He influenced Nietzsche and Kafka among others and as a Christian, questioned the conventional belief of salvation from sin, adopting a position of earthly suffering for atonement with elements of Islam and Buddhism inherent in his spiritual beliefs. His major works include *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*.

<sup>18</sup> Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a Czech-born German writer who composed existential works focusing on alienation of the individual, physical and psychological brutality, family dysfunction, terrifying journeys, bureaucratic quagmires, and mystical/symbolic transformations. Know best for his works, *The Trial* and his novella, *The Metamorphosis*.

<sup>19</sup> Herman Melville (1819-1891) was an American writer who is well known for his works *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd, Sailor*. His male-dominated works are littered with homoerotic and other sexual references and domination and control of the individual by authoritarian figures as well as society itself. He also explores the varieties of sexual and religious alternatives in his poem, *Clarel*.

<sup>20</sup> William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was an Irish poet, mystic, and leading English-language literary figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose works often incorporated physical and spiritual masks and cyclic history.

<sup>21</sup> Early 19<sup>th</sup> century French artistic movement translating to “art for art's sake” that rejected having purpose for an artistic achievement, focusing only on individual expression, aesthetic value, and the rejection of restraint.

<sup>22</sup> Grimstad, Kirstin J. *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus*. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2002. p. 4.

Mann's biography reveals that his father (like Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*) was a Lutheran, while his Brazilian-born Creole mother was Roman Catholic, but he was baptized into his father's faith. He married Katia Pringsheim (with whom he had six children), the daughter of a secular Jewish industrialist, and she converted to Lutheranism after their marriage. This evidence suggests that while Mann's Protestant Christianity was at least minimally important to him and his family, if only for social purposes, it also reveals that he was not a devout or orthodox parishioner. In fact, Mann struggled his entire life with homosexual and bisexual predispositions, including pederastic tendencies that may have resulted in actual relationships and other fantasized ones including his apparent admission of having been sexually attracted to his own son of thirteen.<sup>23</sup> Still, he was deeply troubled by these thoughts and openly discussed them with his wife expressing his disgust, weakness, and guilt about them through his character Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*.

It is also obvious that a plethora of unorthodox and sometimes esoteric references and beliefs coupled with definitive Gnostic tendencies are evident in Mann's major works, especially *Death in Venice*. The characteristics of Gnosticism<sup>24</sup> include:

1. An extreme religious sensibility that developed during the Greco-Roman era, perhaps originating in India in pre-Christian times
2. A radically pessimistic view of life combined with a radically optimistic belief that the human spirit is in itself divine but exists in a hostile world ruled by an evil deity
3. The created world is deeply flawed and resulted from a divine catastrophe
4. Salvation from the emptiness of the human condition can be achieved through *gnosis*—a moment flooded with the remembrance of the divine spirit within and its true home in the heavenly fullness that lies beyond this world—a dualistic view (body/spirit, Apollonian/Dionysian, conscious/unconscious) that makes existence possible and is the essence of the cosmos
5. Radiant hymns of ecstasy emerge from feelings of dire pessimism indicating fulfillment of the inner spirit
6. Radical dreams develop of ultimate liberation from all things temporal or material
7. No compromises with the status quo are considered (it is a principled retreat or rebellion from the world as it exists)

As Roland Champagne writes in his article entitled, *An Ethical Model in a Postmodern Faust: The Daemonic Parody of the Politics of Friendship in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus*:

“[Mann] ...represents ethics and aesthetics as the true dichotomous desires that cannot be reconciled...In *Death in Venice* (1912), when

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<sup>23</sup> Tobin, Robert. *Why is Tadzio a Boy?* In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. [1912] (Norton Critical Edition) Trans. and Ed. Clayton Koelb. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994). (pp. 207-32), p.215.

<sup>24</sup> Grimstad, *op cit*, p. 2-3.

Aschenbach's homoerotic attraction to boys is drowned in Venice's cholera epidemic, Mann exemplifies how the blends of one's ethical and aesthetic judgments is absorbed by the politics of a society that feared disease more than it condoned the promotion of the ethical good of an individual..."<sup>25</sup>

And regarding Mann's thoughts on religion (which were centered around the goal of human dignity) reflect his beliefs surrounding *gnosis*:

"For Mann, religion is seen in the wink of an eye that does not provide a safety net for the one who risks...Mann himself proposed a 'new humanism' whereby 'in the idea of human dignity, in the value of the individual soul, humanism transcends into the religious'"<sup>26</sup>

### **Mann's Images of Faith in *Death in Venice***

In contrast to conventional Christianity, Gnosticism presents a far more individualized, internalized, psychological, and even cosmic spirituality. In *Death in Venice*, Mann's treatment of conventionality in faith is constantly challenged, deconstructed, and at times, reformulated as the rebirth of (or in some ways, as a return to) the Gnostic tradition. As David Luke states in his essay entitled, *Thomas Mann's 'Iridescent Interweaving'*: "In Mann's presentation of the Aschenbach experience, the reader is constantly invited to take two opposite views simultaneously...one of them positive...and the other negative...reflect[ing] *ambivalence* (in the sense of emotional conflict) in Mann himself."<sup>27</sup>

Here are some examples (by no means a complete account) of how Mann depicts and contrasts both conventional and gnostic religious images and ideas throughout *Death in Venice* through his proxy, Aschenbach:

1. Chapter 3: Upon seeing Tazio and his family for the first time at the hotel lobby he sees the beautiful, smartly-dressed, stylish boy sitting next to his non-descript sisters, all dressed identically in "uniformly habitlike half-length dresses, sober and slate gray in color, tailored as if to be deliberately unflattering...their faces seem to be nunnishly vacant..."<sup>28</sup>
2. Chapter 3: Tazio glances at Aschenbach and their eyes meet for the first time at breakfast just as Aschenbach was preparing to leave Venice early due to the oppressive air and generally bad weather which had made him ill on a previous trip. After the glance, Aschenbach whispers under his breath, "Blessings on you." Conveniently thereafter, his luggage is sent to

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<sup>25</sup> Champagne, Roland A., *An Ethical Model in a Postmodern Faust: The Daemonic Parody of the Politics of Friendship in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus*. *Style*. Vol. 34, No. 3, Fall 2000. (pp. 444-457). p. 447-8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 453.

<sup>27</sup> Luke, David. "Thomas Mann's 'Iridescent Interweaving'" In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. [1912] (Norton Critical Edition) Trans. and Ed. Clayton Koelb. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994). (pp. 195-207), p.201.

<sup>28</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 22.

the wrong terminal and he is now happily forced to return to his hotel and complete his vacation.<sup>29</sup>

3. Chapter 4: Now happy and determined to “stay indefinitely” at the hotel, spending mornings at the beach, and dressing nicely for the evening meal, all in an effort to observe Tadzio at every juncture, “[t]he benevolent regularity of this existence had at once drawn him into its power.”<sup>30</sup>
4. Chapter 4: To Aschenbach, Tadzio represented the perfect aesthetic form, “a form he had seen with his spiritual eye and that he presented to mortal men as image and mirror of spiritual beauty...his gaze was grasping beauty itself, the pure form of divine thought, the universal and pure perfection that lives in the spirit...and presented itself for worship...”<sup>31</sup>
5. Chapter 4: One evening, Tadzio and his family were not in the dining room. Alarmed, Aschenbach begins to search for them and in front of the hotel “he suddenly saw appear in the light of the arc lamps the nunlike sisters and their attendant, with Tadzio four steps behind.” They had taken their dinner in town for some reason but Tadzio was dressed beautifully as usual.<sup>32</sup>

Several more depictions of faith by Mann in *Death in Venice* involve more than just symbolic and connotative word choices and phrases and require a more thorough examination to display their depth of meaning, significance to the work, symbolic value, and allusive qualities. The first involves the purpose of Aschenbach’s journey.

Notwithstanding the odd circumstances that prompted Aschenbach to travel to Venice, he believes he is making his “pilgrimage” to Venice to experience “renewal” of his spirit and health and with rest, regain his ability to think and write clearly once again. During his stay in Venice, Aschenbach visits one of the holiest places of Christianity, the Basilica di San Marco (St. Mark’s Basilica)—but he does so not for religious reasons, but to stay in sight of Tadzio while he and his Polish family attends Sunday services. It is in the church where Aschenbach, sitting in the rear, has his stare again returned by Tadzio who turns around from his position near the front of the church to allow their eyes to meet, revealing that the boy, (or as Aschenbach describes him in his thoughts, the “psychagogue,”<sup>33</sup>) fully knows he is being followed by the “lovesick traveler”<sup>34</sup> and now, just as the stranger in Munich who compelled Aschenbach to travel to Venice through the meeting of their eyes, without doubt will have the aging author under his complete control.<sup>35</sup>

Just as Aschenbach’s journey to Venice might be characterized a “pilgrimage” similar to Muslims who journey to Mecca for the *hajj*<sup>36</sup>, his visit to the

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<sup>29</sup> Mann, *op cit.* pp. 31-33.

<sup>30</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> Leader of souls to the underworld; also, a title of the Greek god Hermes.

<sup>34</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 45,59.

<sup>35</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> The pilgrimage to Mecca which every Muslim is required to make at least once in his lifetime—it is the fifth of the Pillars of Islam



holiest place in Venice is likely no coincidence and serves as a parallel setting to Mecca which allows the weaving together of multiple elements in the storyline of *Death in Venice*.

As Mann would have known, the Basilica di San Marco has a history of deceit and deception of its own. In the year 828, Venetian merchants stole the relics of St. Mark the Evangelist from Alexandria, Egypt, hiding them in a barrel under layers of pork to sneak them past the Muslim guards. The relics were brought to the present site of the Basilica and housed in a substantial church before it was destroyed by fire in 976. An extant 13<sup>th</sup> century mosaic in Basilica di San Marco still depicts the intrigue surrounding the theft of St. Mark's relics and there is also a significant collection of plunder and other icons and relics seized by the Crusaders' in the Tesoro (or treasury) of the church.<sup>37</sup>

When Aschenbach follows Tadzio to the church, he is intent on stealing not only his glance but his entire person—he is Aschenbach's icon of perfection, his object of worship. By this time, Aschenbach already knows that an Asiatic cholera epidemic is spreading across the city but the authorities are denying (i.e. covering-up) the rumors. Aschenbach first considers telling Tadzio's mother of the epidemic and to take her family and leave Venice, but reconsiders with the absurd hope that the disease will prove fatal to everyone in Venice except Tadzio and himself.

It is significant to understand at this point why Mann chooses Asiatic cholera as the infection used to parallel and further the decay and decline of Aschenbach's sensibilities and ultimately his life. The reason is perhaps threefold: First, Asiatic cholera had been a fairly common epidemic in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa since early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second, foreigners were often blamed for the spread of the disease. Thirdly, Asiatic cholera had just killed more than 20,000 Muslim pilgrims during the *hajj* of 1907-08, just before *Death in Venice* was written and the association of the disease with Muslims in North Africa parallels the diplomatic crises that were taking their toll on European unity during the same period of time, namely the Agadir Crisis (also known as the Moroccan Crisis of 1911 or in Germany, the *Panthersprung*). During the crisis which began with a Muslim insurrection in April, 1911 against the Sultan of Morocco, France mobilized and sent troops to put down the rebellion under the pretext of protecting French citizens and property. The Spanish soon followed with like reasoning, then Germany sent a gunboat, the *Panther* to the port of Agadir under the guise of protecting German trade interests causing Britain concern that the Germans were going to establish an Atlantic naval base just south of British-controlled Gibraltar. These ill-winds of potential war prompted Mann to begin the plot of *Death in Venice* in precisely in April of 1911 with the comment that it was “a year that for months glowered threateningly over our continent...,”<sup>38</sup> and brings into Venice the concept of this ill-wind, the Saharan Sirocco, which was thought also to be a source of the disease, as it caused hot temperatures and extremely high tides in Venice which aided in the contamination of water and fostered the growth and spread of epidemics.

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<sup>37</sup> “St.Marks Basilica, Venice” *Sacred Destinations*. < <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/venice-san-marco>>. Accessed February 15, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 3.

## Final Observations

Thomas Mann begins his application of theology in *Death in Venice* with the appearance of strangers who have an exotic or foreign look, protruding Adam's apples, and furrowed brows. He repeatedly makes reference to Hades and those who help guide souls there. He has Aschenbach eat fully ripe and then overripe strawberries, also a potential source of cholera infection, but a fruit commonly known as "the devil's fruit." The night before Aschenbach expires, he sips pomegranate juice in a garden while considering his "passion" for Tadzio—a fruit widely believed to be the original forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden (rather than an apple) and one associated with Hades in mythology.

Mann's use of the word "passion" throughout *Death in Venice* refers both to suffering and romance (another dualism) and is another parallel reference—this time to the last twelve hours of Jesus' life beginning with the Agony in the garden. Aschenbach encountered a moody Tadzio in the hotel garden on the night before his death, and standing separately, they together watched a crude singer who smelled of disinfectant perform vulgar songs in the advancement of a somewhat dark and comedic last supper, crucifixion, and resurrection parody.

Thereafter, Aschenbach, a great man with a sterling public reputation, is led to the afterlife by an image of his own youth in Tadzio and every stranger he encounters along his fateful journey from Munich to his demise, is no more than an image of himself. Even though Aschenbach visited the hotel barber who "restored" his youth with cheek rouge, dyed hair, and other measures, after telling him he deserved to be young again, he was still the Aschenbach who fantasized about a boy named Tadzio who brought to mind the myth of Narcissus—a beautiful boy who was promised a long life as long as he never recognized himself. Aschenbach finally did experience his own reflection—in seeing his mirror image, Tadzio, and through his insatiable inner quest for passion. He had indeed, until the end, been a stranger to himself. Still, the next day "a respectfully shaken world received the news of his death"<sup>39</sup>—his outward reputation still intact, his shattered inner dignity, extinguished.



**NOTE:** [See appended tables entitled, *The Seven Levels of Thomas Mann's Death in Venice*, and *Characteristics of Postmodern Literature and Thomas Mann's Death in Venice* for some insights to aid in the study *Death in Venice*]

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<sup>39</sup> Mann, *op cit.* p. 63

## The Seven Levels of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*

LEVEL	PARALLEL SUBLEVELS (ALL CONGRUENT AND SYSTEMIC)	DESCRIPTIONS AND EXAMPLES FROM THOMAS MANN'S <i>DEATH IN VENICE</i>
<b>MACRO</b>        	SPIRITUAL/MYTHOLOGICAL	Constant references to figures, mythologies, and history of Classical Civilization, the underworld, cycles of history, and Gnostic theology
	PHILOSOPHICAL	Attempt at a resolution to questions about romantic and realist modes of life, spiritual experiences, the nature of art and artist, and the qualities of aesthetic forms
	HISTORICAL/ALLEGORICAL	Allegory of Aschenbach's journey to Venice with German political/military interventions into north Africa/Saharan lands coupled with European crises/instability culminating in WWI which Mann presumably predicts in <i>Death in Venice</i> ; accurate descriptions of Munich and Venice (including locales, Grand Hôtel des Bains and the Piazza de San Marco among others, each with significance to the exposition of <i>Death in Venice</i> )
<b>MEDIAN</b>	LITERAL	The surface plot and action of the tale—Mann's modernist mode of writing but with technique, style, and the general attributes of postmodern literature
        <b>MICRO</b>	BIOGRAPHICAL	Mann's own self-reflection, personal experiences, ancestry, thoughts, feelings, predispositions, his 1911 trip to Venice where he met an 11-year old Polish boy, Wladyslaw Moes (the real-life model for Tadzio) as well as his acquaintance with then recently deceased composer Gustav Mahler (the real-life model for Aschenbach)
	SYMBOLIC	Situations, allusions, and objects reflecting meaning of the inner, emotional, or physical state or the lending of context to other characters or situations, the deconstruction of elements (fragmentation), and paradoxes; Examples include: the strangers, Venice as underworld, Aschenbach's "baggage," the mortuary chapel, disease/disinfectant/decay, pomegranates, the ripeness of strawberries, and Tadzio as a multifaceted symbol
	PSYCHOLOGICAL	The presence and analysis of emotions, values, disturbances, imbalances, feelings (love, infatuation, obsession, sensuality, and sexuality) and aesthetic senses as they are revealed through actions and words, and the reflection of contemporary theories of self, ego, narcissism, guilt, sensuality, moral/ethical choices, and through the understanding of romantic and realist personalities

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## Characteristics of Postmodern Literature and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*

POSTMODERN LITERARY TECHNIQUES/CHARACTERISTICS	DESCRIPTIONS AND EXAMPLES FROM THOMAS MANN'S <i>DEATH IN VENICE</i>
Fragmentation/Deconstruction	Disintegration and questioning of rationality; Breakdown of conventional religious images; Aschenbach's life dissected into parts and examined; Reevaluation of values/morals/aesthetics
Loss	Aschenbach's loss of his wife and absence of his daughter, loss of his rationality, fear of losing Tadzio, and eventually, his own life
Lack of Objective Reality/Universal Truths Including Ambiguity/Contradiction/Uncertainty/Lack of Finality	Aschenbach's fears of the future; Romantic/realist perspectives conflicted; Nature of aesthetics unclear; Aschenbach's life reenacted through Tadzio; "Image and mirror!" segment—what is reality?; Irrationality being rationalized throughout; No public knowledge of Aschenbach's inner emotions or desires upon his death; No reconciliation of Apollonian/Dionysian duality
Splintered Family Unit	Aschenbach is a widower with absent daughter; The young people from Pola associating with the aged fop; Tadzio's father is not present
Distrust/Untrustworthiness of Authority	The gondolier's attitude; Hotel sending baggage ahead of Aschenbach without permission; Local authorities in Venice covering-up the cholera epidemic by spreading falsehoods; the Basilica di San Marco being a place of historic deception and plunder
Movement from Conventional Religion	Mythological images and references, pagan gods and rituals, and Gnostic principles throughout
Imperfection/Flawed Existence	Uncooperative weather; Aschenbach's poor traveling experience; Realist/Romantic argument; Aesthetic debates; The beauty of Tadzio who is imperfect; the "follower" becomes the "led"
Role Reversals	Father figure becomes infatuated with young boy (homoeroticism/pederasty); The follower (Aschenbach) becomes led by the object of his attraction
Allegorical or Symbolic Settings	Venice as an underworld; the Ganges Delta of India as exotic but infectious; Piazza de San Marco as religious place, but with a history of deception, thievery, and plunder; Phallic symbols throughout
Improper or Innovative Grammatical Conventions	Mann's frequent use of contradictory descriptors: Examples include: "monstrous joy," "charming apparition," "embarrassed eloquence," and "happy accidents"
Expressions of Overt Sexuality	Venice as a Romantic city with "Aschenbach's dream; Feelings for Tadzio
Intertextuality (Allusion, Quotation, Pastiche, etc.)	Countless allusions to other works and histories; Name Gustav taken from Mahler; Aschenbach means "stream of ashes"; Quotes from mythology throughout; Mann/Aschenbach celebrate the works and accomplishment of others and makes comparisons to their own successes; Philosophical soliloquies inserted throughout plot
First Person or Stream of Consciousness Utilized	While not written in first person, Aschenbach's psychology is dissected and the reader experiences the detail of his emotions, thoughts, and perceptions; The dream sequence is a "stream of consciousness"

## **J. Carroll Chadwick: A Study in East Texas Church Leadership and Ministry**

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**Abstract:** This religious biographical study deals with the life, work and ministry of Dr. J. Carroll Chadwick as pastor of First Baptist Church of Center, Texas; a denominational leader, serving committees, elected positions and special services in local associations, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention. The study will focus on Chadwick's early training, extensive pastoral experience and unique personality as he worked with individuals, groups, church, associations and conventions.

East Texas has produced a number of important, respected and successful church leaders. One of those leaders was J. Carroll Chadwick, who contributed much to the religious and social life of East Texas, particularly Center and Shelby County. For many years he was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Center, but also a mentor and friend to many East Texas pastors and churches. He preached for meetings and special events often and in numerous communities. For a time when pastor of First Baptist in the mid-forties, he served as an unofficial pastor-leader of Clever Creek Baptist Church and would serve other small, struggling churches in a similar fashion through the years. He was looked upon with respect by many from other churches and communities. He was loved by many Methodists and was sometimes thought of as the Baptist bishop of East Texas.

This is an effort to describe the leadership and contributions of J. Carroll Chadwick, focusing particularly on his work as a religious leader in East Texas churches, associations and institutions. The influence and commitment of such a leader as Pastor Chadwick resulted in many good things for a community and for churches.

### **Chadwick's Early Life, Education and Calling**

J. Carroll Chadwick was the sixth son of William S. and Martha Ingram Chadwick of Carthage, Texas, born January 10, 1915. He attended Carthage High School, played football, was a member of the debate team and the newspaper staff. Upon his conversion he joined the Baptist church at the age of twelve and surrendered to preach at the age of eighteen. J. Carroll attended and graduated from the College of Marshall, Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His first full-time pastorate was at Leonard, Texas from 1940 to 1942. He accepted the call to Center's First Baptist Church in early 1942. Chadwick asked the church for "time to do some courting." He was married to Marleta Todd on February 22, 1942. Marleta was from Greenville, Texas, one of two children born to Marvin and Leta Henslee Todd. She graduated from Celeste High School and attended East Texas State College.

## Chadwick's Ministry at Center

J. Carroll Chadwick came to Center on February 4, 1942, as a young, unmarried, relatively unknown preacher "in view of a call" to be pastor of First Baptist Church. The church elected him to become pastor and his ministry would extend over 32 years at the church. The pulpit committee consisted of F. L. Moffett (chairman), T. J. Warr, Will Rogers, J. M. Terry and W. C. McLendon. Chadwick preached for the church on February 1, 1942 in view of being called as pastor. The Pulpit Committee unanimously recommended him to the church in a conference on February 4, 1942. Chairman Moffett submitted this written recommendation to the church in conference, saying, "your committee by unanimous opinion and consent, believe that Rev. J. Carroll Chadwick, Leonard, Texas, is the one whom the Master would have to lead our church, and therefore, we recommend that you call him as your pastor. Respectfully submitted: F. L. Moffett, chairman, T. J. Warr, Will Rogers, J. M. Terry and W. C. McLendon."<sup>1</sup> Upon an unanimous vote calling Chadwick, the Pulpit Committee was dismissed having completed its work..<sup>2</sup>

Chadwick accepted the call to Center's First Baptist and asked the church for "time to do some courting." He was married to Marleta Todd on February 22, 1942. Marleta was from Greenville, Texas. She was one of two children born to Marvin and Leta Henslee Todd. She graduated from Celeste High School and attended East Texas State College. The minutes of the church indicate that Brother and Mrs. Carroll Chadwick were received into the fellowship of the church March 8, 1942.<sup>3</sup>

The leadership of Center's First Baptist Church placed Chadwick in a key regional church with a broad influence. Center was a growing community with influential leaders, significant financial resources, and many commercial activities. As the county seat of Shelby County the community attracted numerous businesses, commercial interests and financial investments. Center was the focal point for agricultural and farm-related businesses, a city with strong banking interests. As one of the largest and strongest churches in the community Chadwick was positioned to lead. His personality and friendliness naturally attracted many people. His church grew from the very beginning and continued to grow and prosper during his long ministry.

As a pastor Carroll Chadwick worked hard to gain and maintain the confidence of laymen and fellow preachers. He often recommended bi-vocational pastors to small churches and was a popular revival preacher through the years. He often opened his church to these small churches for baptisms and other special services. Several lay preachers found their inspiration in the life and ministry of J. Carroll Chadwick, including such men as Gene Kirkley, Jimmy Jones and a number of other lay leaders and preachers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes*, First Baptist Church, Center, Texas, February 4, 1942. All references to *Minutes* after this will refer to First Baptist Church, Center, Texas, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes*, March 8, 1942.

<sup>4</sup> *Minutes*, February 4, 1942; March 8, 1942.

During the mid-forties Chadwick served as the quasi-pastor of Clever Creek. He led the church through the turbulent years of the Second World War, holding the people together and encouraging them. He is counted as one of the most loved and respected of that small church's pastors and members.<sup>5</sup>

The First Baptist Church of Center under Chadwick's leadership contributed substantially and regularly to the local Shelby-Doches Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Southern Baptist Convention. In addition, the church regularly contributed financially to the College of Marshall and would continue to do so in the years following as the college grew into East Texas Baptist College, and later into East Texas Baptist University.<sup>6</sup> Chadwick served on the board of East Texas Baptist beginning in 1949 several terms and in 1968 would be named as a Lifetime Member (a Trustee Emeritus) to the board. As a graduate of the College of Marshall, he maintained a strong interest in and support of the college.<sup>7</sup> In addition to Dr. Chadwick, F. L. Moffett also served as a member of East Texas Baptist College board of trustees.<sup>8</sup>

In the very beginning of his ministry at Center, Chadwick became active at all levels of the Baptist work. The church elected Reverend and Mrs. Chadwick as messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in San Antonio in 1942 and regularly did so each year thereafter.<sup>9</sup>

Pastor Chadwick was active in the local Shelby-Doches Baptist Association and the church contributed significantly to the financial affairs of this group of churches. It was often noted in the minutes of the church usually in the October conference of the church that the pastor was attending the BGCT meeting wherever it was held. Often it was noted that his wife was accompanying him and that all his expenses was to be covered by the church.<sup>10</sup>

Chadwick held numerous revival meetings across Texas and in other states. He held meetings in Alto, Nacogdoches, Houston, Dallas, Commerce, Waco, Shreveport, Louisiana (Summer Grove Baptist Church), Tatum, Honey Grove, Chireno, Kirbyville, Texas, Tyler, Texas, Silsbee, Diboll, North Texas, Miami, Florida, Hoya Hills in Nacogdoches, De Quincy, Louisiana. Chadwick was a popular and much sought after evangelist and revival preacher. His work as the pastor of FBC, Center, and the success he had leading people and bringing people into membership easily drew fellow pastors to ask him to come work with them. Such meetings were important to Chadwick's reputation and growing influence as a leader in both the region and the state. His friendly, gracious spirit endeared him to both church members and pastors alike.<sup>11</sup>

As a successful and well-respected pastor, Chadwick was often invited to speak to special meetings in other churches. For example, he was invited to preach for the dedication of First Baptist Church, Leonard, Texas May 15, 1955

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<sup>5</sup> *Minutes*, Clever Creek Baptist Church, dealing with the 1940s.

<sup>6</sup> *Minutes*, September 8, 1943.

<sup>7</sup> *East Texas Baptist College Catalogs*, Email Message from Gaye Christy, Administrative Assistant to the President of East Texas Baptist University, September 9, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Check the *Texas Baptist Annuals* dealing with measures and reports for this time period.

<sup>9</sup> *Minutes*, May 17, 1942, May 8, 1946, May 14, 1947.

<sup>10</sup> *Minutes*, October, 1948; November, 1947.

<sup>11</sup> *Minutes* of FBC, Center, regarding Chadwick's ministry.

and was given permission in the Center's First Baptist Church's business meeting in March of 1955 to participate in this meeting.<sup>12</sup> This was the church where he had served as pastor in the early 1940s, just before being called to serve Center's First Baptist. Chadwick's church supported him in his broader ministry, giving him permission to be gone and providing him with supply speakers to fill the pulpit. They were always glad to have him back from his revivals and other meetings.

Not only was Pastor Chadwick active in local associational and state convention activities. He also was active in the Southern Baptist Convention activities and beyond. In the spring of 1960 First Baptist Church of Center voted to send Chadwick and his wife to the Baptist World Alliance in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of that organization convening June 26, 1960. Chadwick was gone from Center from about June 24, 1960 to July 10, 1960.<sup>13</sup> The BWA meetings were only every five years. Churches, associations, conventions and other entities were encouraged to participate in this important global gathering. Center's First Baptist Church in sending their pastor, his wife and another member of the church was represented at this historic and important meeting of Baptists from all over the world. This was another accomplishment for Chadwick that would contribute to his reputation, public image and religious influence in both East Texas and the state of Texas.

As minister and pastor of one of the important regional churches in East Texas, Chadwick was recognized and given opportunity to serve in important positions in the Baptist General Convention of Texas. He served for a term on The State Missions Commission in the BGCT, finishing his term in 1964. In this capacity he became familiar with and made contact with a broad segment of Baptist leaders and institutions in the state—the work of associations, evangelism, church services, Sunday School, Taining Union, Church Music, Brotherhood, and several other specific divisions of this large commission of the convention.<sup>14</sup> He also served as a vice president of the BGCT that further broadened his experience and reputation.<sup>15</sup>

For a time Chadwick was chairman (president) of the BGCT Executive Board, working closely with T. A. Patterson, executive secretary of the Convention. He reported to the BGCT in session on Tuesday evening that opened the state convention, October 26, 1965. W. Fred Swank was the chair of the State Missions Commission, Charles McLaughlin was the secretary of the commission meaning that Chadwick came to work closely with these leaders and would gain their support and friendship in his own work and activities. The time slot for the two reports dealing with the Executive Board and the State Missions Commission was 8 p.m. and would include an address by W. A. Criswell. Abner V. McCall was the president of the BGCT and was scheduled after the opening exercises of the convention to give the president's address at 9 p.m.<sup>16</sup> The importance of these

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<sup>12</sup> *Minutes*, March, 1955.

<sup>13</sup> *Minutes*, April 1960.

<sup>14</sup> *Texas Baptist Annual* (of the Baptist General Convention of Texas held at Corpus Christi, Texas, November 3-5, 1964, Proceedings of the 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Session), p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> *Texas Baptist Annual*, check appropriate dates and events for references.

<sup>16</sup> *Baptist Standard*, Oct. 20, 1965, p. 13.



relationships and contacts would prove productive in Chadwick's future. They would provide him with the opportunity to exercise leadership in the BGCT.

In the Wednesday morning, October 27, 1965, session of the BGCT, E. Hermond Westmoreland, pastor of South Main Baptist Church of Houston, nominated Chadwick for president of the Convention and W. Morris Ford nominated Lester L. Morriss. There were 3,162 messengers registered up to this session of the Convention. Ford was chair of the Church-State Relations Committee of the Executive Board composed of 14 other leaders from across Texas Baptist life. Morriss served on the Cooperative Program Study Committee and was pastor of the large First Baptist Church of Midland.<sup>17</sup> In this 1965 presidential vote Chadwick was chosen by the convention to be president of the BGCT. He would serve for two terms during a very turbulent and challenging time for Baptists in the state. Upon election to the presidency of the BGCT, Chadwick had to step aside as president of the Executive Board. He was replaced by W. M. (Bill) Shamburger, pastor of Tyler's FBC.<sup>18</sup> Chadwick brought to the office of convention president his skills as an experienced pastor in a strong East Texas church and a network of close friends and pastors across Texas. Controversy had arisen over the role of federal funds and money in Baptist hospitals and schools. It was a very challenging time to be leading the convention.

As controversy continued to simmer in the state among Baptists over the issue of federal funding and related matters, as the newly elected Convention President Chadwick stressed that Texas Baptists needed to "magnify the power they have with God rather than magnifying problems." He said, "We don't need to be critical of each other. We need to be loving, and warm, and sympathetic." This was an obvious reference to the church-state discussions and the insuing crisis. He added, "In times of crisis we need to be drawn down the road together to walk together."<sup>19</sup>

As president of the BGCT, Chadwick was included in many events such as the presentation of a church donation to Mrs. M. B. Carroll who was in the hospital recovering from an automobile accident. The donation was from First Church, Henderson and presented by Fuller Mason, Chair of deacons. Standing with him in the hospital room was J. Carroll Chadwick, president of the convention and with them was Hugh Smith, pastor, and a church member Homer Bryce a member of the church. Bryce was a very wealthy man. M. B. Carroll was at one time pastor of the Henderson church.<sup>20</sup>

The single most important thing in Chadwick's two-year presidency of the BGCT was the appointment and work with the Committee of One Hundred dealing with the state of the Convention and what should be done to include more laymen in the management and ministry of the Convention, as well as deal with the controversial issues affecting the work of the convention and its agencies. In keeping with his leadership, he made the appointments of this important committee

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<sup>17</sup> *Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas held at Houston, Texas, October 26-28, 1965 containing the Proceedings of the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Session*, pp. 16, 371.

<sup>18</sup> *Baptist Standard*, Dec. 8, 1965, front cover, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Baptist Standard*, Dec. 15, 1965, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Baptist Standard*, May 24, 1967, p. 14.

in consultation with the convention vice presidents Bruce McIver and Gordon Clinard. He served on the committee in an ex officio capacity as president of the Convention. Several prominent and influential pastors were named to the committee, including J. P. Allen, James Coggin, Marion Harris, Landrum Leavell, D. L. Lowrie, Lloyd Elder, Ed Schmeltekopf, Ralph Smith, Fred Swank, Jack Taylor, E. Hermond Westmoreland and W. R. White. Among the laymen were several wealthy and prominent individuals, including Jarman Bass and Fred Hale.<sup>21</sup>

The committee's assignment was two-fold: First, they were to study and evaluate all the work of the Texas Convention, including boards, agencies, commissions, committees and institutions as to their effectiveness; second, the committee was to "explore ways and means of enlisting the total resources of Texas Baptists in the implementation of the Great Commission through our churches and convention." In addition to these two objectives, the committee was also to seek ways for more laymen to be involved in the work of the BGCT.<sup>22</sup> In referring to this aspect of the committee's work, Chadwick said, "We don't want to be a preacher-dominated convention."<sup>23</sup>

The report of the Committee of One Hundred to the 1967 convention in Lubbock proved controversial with most of its recommendations being debated and rejected. The proposal to establish the Brotherhood as a separation organization was adopted with some discussion and disagreement. The men's group had been a minor department of the Church Services Division of the State Missions Commission, but now would become Texas Baptist Men, a stand alone auxiliary of the BGCT.<sup>24</sup>

Although the committee report created controversy and was unable to realize most of its recommendations it contributed significantly to opening the way for lay involvement, particularly in future leadership and missions. This was gratifying to Pastor Chadwick who recognized the value and importance of lay leadership, witness and work. In fact, his success in the local church was largely due to his faithfulness and commitment to the laymen and laywomen who served with him in Center's First Baptist Church.

After serving as president of the BGCT Chadwick continued his work in the denomination at all levels. At the 1967 SBC in Miami, Florida, Chadwick was nominated and elected, along with John S. Tanner, to the Committee on Committees to nominate Texans for the 1968 convention to serve on SBC boards and commissions. Tanner was a Dallas layman. They were nominated by the Committee on Committees where state members make nominations tantamount to election. Franklin Paschall had named Fred Hale, a Henderson layman, and Billy Hilbun, minister of music and education at East Grand Church in Dallas.<sup>25</sup>

The positions and leadership exercised by Chadwick from the local church through the Southern Baptist Convention demonstrate his earnest and dedicated

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<sup>21</sup> *Texas Baptist Annual*, 1966; *Texas Baptist Annual*, 1967, pp.56-63.

<sup>22</sup> *Baptist Standard*, January 25, 1967, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> McBeth, *Texas Baptists*, p. 317.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>25</sup> *Baptist Standard*, June 7, 1967, p. 11; *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, appropriate references in dates covered.

service to the cause of Christ and the churches. His network of friendships and collegial relationships demonstrate the importance and value which he placed on personal and professional associations. He modeled this in his local church, association, state convention and in the national convention.

Dr. Chadwick in his thirty-second year as pastor of Center's First Baptist Church suffered a fatal heart attack. The 1973 Texas Baptist Annual Report was dedicated to J. Carroll Chadwick and his friend Gordon Clinard who also died in 1973. Clinard had followed Dr. Chadwick as president of the BGCT in 1967. In the dedication, along with his picture, Chadwick's leadership was highlighted with these words of commendation:

"A preacher with abundant energy, he was often cited as one who never forgot a name and very probably knew more Baptists across the nation, and especially in Texas, by name than any other minister of his time. His service for the Lord was punctuated by abounding love, a genuine concern for everyone, and a continuing response to people's needs."<sup>26</sup>

That masterful summation of Dr. Chadwick's life and ministry has remained and shall always remain a true statement, a commendation of an important and much respected leader in East Texas religious and social life.

### **Some Conclusions**

The leadership of J. Carroll Chadwick is marked by a number of significant accomplishments and blessings. His long and successful leadership of a key East Texas church was his most noteworthy accomplishment. The love and devotion of the people to his leadership and ministry testify to his genius and determination as a leader. The respect and loyalty of an extended community and state mark his leadership and work; not only as a minister but also as a businessman and friend. Chadwick was consistent and committed. He related well to all groups of people and was loved by most of the people, both in his local church and community.

He led with humility, graciousness and determination in very trying times in the BGCT. The respect and admiration of all who worked with him testify to his spirit and commitment as a leader and pastor. His priority was to strengthen the local church, but also to maintain and manage a strong relationship and respect between and among the churches and the different associations—local, state and national entities.

One of the most important things that Chadwick did was to include key community leaders and people in his circle of influence. He sought the contribution of these leaders and workers, taking their advice and suggestions seriously. In the same fashion, Chadwick gained and retained a broad circle of friends as he worked in various capacities from the local church to the Southern Baptist Convention. Concluding the dedication of the 1973 Texas Baptist Annual are the words that appropriately summarize his life, "Dr. Chadwick served his Lord and Texas Baptists faithfully and effectively in a time of unusual need. The gift of his

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<sup>26</sup> *Annual of the BGCT*, 1973, dedication page in the front.

spiritual inheritance will continue to add joy, strength and challenge to Baptists throughout the years."<sup>27</sup>

### **Biographical Note**

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<sup>27</sup> *Texas Baptist Annual*, 1973, dedication pages.

## **The Role of the Supernatural in Eastern Medicine**

*Lamar Halford*

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Within the context of medicine, different views exist in relation to treatment and healing. In modern societies, the first course of treatment may involve a visit to a physician or medical clinic with the expectation that current technologies (e.g., MRI) be used as part of the treatment. However, other treatment options, such as alternative therapy or holistic healing practices, are also available to patients. When reflecting on modern medicine, historical elements of healing may be overlooked; however, these elements are still part of medical practices around the world today. Further, an analysis of traditional medicine highlights the role of supernatural forces in medicine; such supernatural forces can influence healing and impact the practitioner's role.

Biomedicine refers to a system that originates in a particular place and time and that includes specific features or characteristics that stem from the culture of origin (Wiley & Allen, 2013). Eastern medicine systems, including Chinese traditional medicine and traditional Tibetan medicine, are examples of biomedicine that are shaped by the supernatural. Supernatural forces and beliefs are those that “transcend the normal world of cause and effect” (Stein & Stein, 2010, p. 15). The supernatural can impact healing and the role of the healer/practitioner; for instance, “irrational” aspects of healing, such as the Chinese elements of yin and yang or *qi* relate not to scientific aspects of healing but instead to alignment with elements of the universe.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) involves a group of medical practices developed in and practiced in China. The origin of TCM is ancient China and has been linked to Taoism; it is believed that this traditional medical system is over 5,000 years old (NIH, 2010). During the Shang Dynasty, traditional Chinese medicine was related to shamanism and associated healing rituals (Sacred Lotus Arts, 2013). During the Shang Dynasty, acupuncture may have been used as a treatment; stone and bone needles discovered in ancient Chinese tombs provide support for the history of this practice as part of TCM (Lu & Needham, 1980). Additionally, the origin of TCM is associated with Confucianism and Buddhism, in addition to Taoism (Sacred Lotus Arts, 2013). A work called the “Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon” was created during the first century BC and includes information about symptoms of various illnesses and potential treatments (Sivin, 1993).

While TCM originated in China, its use has spread to other locales. The practice of acupuncture, for example, is used in Europe and the United States. Since the 1960s, the French Academy of Medical Sciences has considered acupuncture a form of treatment (World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, 2009). In America, many aspects of TCM have become part of the health system, including

the use of medical herbs (Feng, 2002). Typically, medical practitioners in the United States view TCM as part of complementary and alternative medicine (NIH, 2010).

Examples of traditional Chinese medicine used in China as well as other parts of the world include the following: moxibustion, cupping, massage, mind-body therapy, and dietary therapy (NIH, 2010). Moxibustion often goes along with acupuncture and involves burning the mugwort plant near the skin at each acupuncture point. Cupping is a type of massage associated with TCM. During this procedure, a lit match is placed inside a glass cup and then removed before the glass is placed against a person's skin. The hot air inside the cup cools when the cup is placed on the skin, and suction occurs.

The underlying framework for TCM is based on several different ideas. One idea is that of yin-yang, meaning that two opposite forces shape life. Yin-yang serves as a basis for diet therapy – individuals practicing TCM believe that eating the right foods in the correct combinations leads to balance (Feng, 2002). Another part of the TCM framework is qi, which refers to a life energy (NIH, 2010). Qi comes from genetics, food/drink choices, and from the air (Feng, 2002; NIH, 2010). Tai chi is a practice that serves the purpose of balancing qi (Feng, 2002). TCM also involves eight principles and five elements. The eight principles are: cold/heat, interior/exterior, excess/deficiency, and yin/yang (NIH, 2010); these principals are used to analyze a person's symptoms. The five elements are fire, earth, metal, water, and wood (NIH, 2010). These elements are thought to align with particular organs in the body and serve to explain body functions.

In considering the role of the supernatural in Eastern medicine, one early example stems from shamanism in China. As early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese nobility turned to shamans not only as healers but also as diviners (Wong, 1997). According to Chinese legend, a revered chief named Yü was born not from a mother but directly from his father, Kun. Yü was able to shape-shift into a bear and was not considered a mortal. A thousand years after this legend originated, Chinese shaman wore bearskins to honor Yü. Other aspects of the legend of Yü include his ability to understand and communicate with animals, which is aligned with Eliade's (1964) features of shamanic experience. Eliade's work ascribes to shamanism not only the power to communicate with animals but also power over the elements, knowledge and use of plants, and the ability to heal. From early on in Chinese society, shamans were considered not only healers (i.e., medical providers) but also were expected to respond/react to elements of the supernatural, including "inviting the spirits, interpreting dreams, reading omens, rainmaking, healing, and celestial divination" (Wong, 1997, p. 14). It is clear from the history of shamanism in China that supernatural forces are intertwined with medical practices and that practitioners, including shaman such as Yü, are expected to interact with the supernatural and to harness supernatural forces to impact healing.

It is also clear that the supernatural impacts medicine within Eastern religion. Shamanic practices incorporated into Taoism during the Han dynasty included the

use of incantations and talismans as part of healing practices (Wong, 1997). Even modern-day Taoist magic involves elements originally attributed to ancient shamanistic practices, such as the use of water to ward off evil forces (Wong, 1997). Within Taoism, Mystical Taoism connects religion with elements of the supernatural and healing. Mystical Taoism refers to a Chinese spiritual tradition involving both a belief in the unity of all things and actions inducing and/or resulting from mystical experiences (Wong, 1997). Mysticism unites cosmic forces with daily experience; shamanism views cosmic powers as part of an external world. Through a shaman's connection with the cosmos, healing power can be passed along to ailing individuals being treated by the shaman.

Another example of the connection between supernatural forces and the practitioner's role in Eastern medicine comes from the Bhil religion of India. One aspect of the Bhil religion is the concept of the High God, who is omnipotent and is honored through the rite of Nortan; interestingly, the Badwo, which as a priest and medicine man, is responsible for officiating the ritual (Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2004). One of the goddesses in the Bhil religion, Sitla Mata, is thought to appear in the form of chicken pox; during a chicken pox outbreak, "treatment" involves clan members singing devotions to appease the goddess. Another god, Kankaryo Kundlayo Dev, is the god of sickness and death (Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2004). In this society, the individual serving as priest and medicine man is tasked with dual charges – recognizing the role of the dieties while also providing support to ill members of the clan. Based even upon the roles of priest and medicine man being ascribed to not two but rather one sole member of the clan, it is evident that elements of religion, and in the case of the Bhil religion the supernatural, impact medicine and influence the medical provider's actions. The Bhils know little of anatomy or functioning of the human body (Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2004); instead, their medical providers rely on knowledge of the supernatural when practicing medicine.

Biomedicine and traditional medicine can be viewed as two separate aspects of healing (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). Biomedicine leads practitioners to focus on "scientific" causes of disease related to human anatomy and physiology and to provide treatment directly related to observable ailments, such as providing a cast for a broken arm. While traditional medicine also can treat observable ailments, it tends to follow a more holistic approach; traditional medicine views the patient as a person with background and experiences (such as religious beliefs) that may transcend empirical observations of biomedicine. Biomedicine addresses palliative effects (Csordas & Lewston, 1998) without considering psychological or other underlying causes; little attention is given to the patient's overall well-being (Wiley & Allen, 2013). Traditional medicine, such as that stemming from ancient Eastern tradition, considers not only visible ailments but "unseen" forces such as the

supernatural. Modern doctors tend to ignore factors such as whether a patient has broken a moral principle when providing treatment; practitioners of Eastern medicine, however, begin treatment by assessing spiritual factors and view such factors as leading contributors to and causes of ailments experienced by patients (Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2004). While some ancient treatment techniques may no longer be used in practice, elements of “psychic, magical, and religious treatment of disease” (Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2004, p. 296) persist in modern society, underscoring continued belief in the role of the supernatural in medicine.

### Biographical Note

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## **A (Not So) Tender History: Systematic Theology since Origen**

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### **Introduction**

Theology<sup>1</sup> has a history. It is “as old as the proclamation, explication, and application of the Scriptures as the word of God.”<sup>2</sup> However, the separation of theological scholarship into the specific divisions which we have come to know—biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, philosophical theology—is, as we shall explain, a much later development.

Systematic theology began as a post-apostolic endeavor.<sup>3</sup> While the writers of the NT regularly employed sophisticated and sometimes complex<sup>4</sup> literary arguments in the course of articulating the character of the Christian gospel, they were not driven to offer a comprehensive and orderly presentation of the message. That which unified their writings was the common theme of salvation in Jesus Christ, rather than a modest theological unity.<sup>5</sup>

Common use of the term “systematic theology” emerged in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to “describe the task of offering a comprehensive and coherent presentation of Christian teaching.”<sup>6</sup> In 1727, the German Lutheran theologian Johann Franz Buddeus (1667-1729) reasoned that a theological proposition may be called “systematic” if: 1) it addressed the subject matter in a comprehensive manner, and 2) it explained, proved, and confirmed its content in detail.<sup>7</sup> The systematic

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<sup>1</sup> Emil Brunner explains: “Theology as a comprehensive term covering various intellectual studies connected with the Bible, and in the service of the church, is a modern idea. The earliest use of the term occurs in Greek philosophy where *θεολογία* [*theologia* = theology] is used primarily of the speech of poets about divine things.” See Brunner, *Dogmatics: The Christian Doctrine of God* (trans. Olive Wyon; 3 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), 1:89.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Systematic Theology,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 774.

<sup>3</sup> John Webster, “Introduction: Systematic Theology,” *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John B. Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3; see also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new combined ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 76.

<sup>4</sup> The author of the Petrine epistles remarks that some of Paul’s writings are difficult to understand: “just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand . . .” (2 Pet 3:15b-16a, NASB).

<sup>5</sup> Webster, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:18; citing J. F. Buddeus, *Isagoge historico-theologica ad theologiam universam singulasque eius partes* (Leipzig, 1727), 303.

presentation of Christian teaching (didactics) provided a critical service to the proclamation of the gospel—it explained, proved and confirmed the truth of its message. The concept of systematic theology may have appeared even earlier than that in the work of another German Lutheran theologian Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688) who employed it as “an alternative term for his preferred *theologia didactica*.”<sup>8</sup> Materially, systematic theology emerged centuries before the term came into common use.<sup>9</sup>

## The Church Fathers

The earliest interpretations of Christian doctrine sprang from the need to instruct new converts or battle emerging heresies. Most were expository in nature, but still evidenced a roughly thematic organization.<sup>10</sup> Even Irenaeus’ (c. 175-c. 195) *Against Heresies*, while clearly apologetic in tone, followed a basic expositional approach.<sup>11</sup>

### Origen

The Alexandrian theologian Origen (c. 185-c. 254) is generally regarded as “the first to construct something like a system of theology.”<sup>12</sup> *On First Principles (De Principiis)* appeared around the year 218. Origen structured his work around “particular points clearly delivered in the teaching of the apostles,”<sup>13</sup> although he has been charged with “a tendency to sacrifice theology to philosophy.”<sup>14</sup> Book I follows a sequence of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the falling away, rational natures, the consummation, incorporeal and corporeal beings, and angels. Book II carries on with the world, the nature of the body, the human soul, resurrection, and other topics.<sup>15</sup> John of Damascus

The work of the Greek theologian, John of Damascus (c. 675-c. 749), is “by far the most important attempt in the Eastern church to give a systematic exposition of dogmatic theology, at once speculative and ecclesiastical.”<sup>16</sup> There is, however,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., note 30. See also Bengt Häggglund, *History of Theology* (trans. Gene J. Lund; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 305, citing Quenstedt’s *Theologia didactico-polemica* (1685).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>10</sup> Webster, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.1 (ANF 1:315). “Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, “minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.]

<sup>12</sup> Berkhof, 76.

<sup>13</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface 4 (ANF 4:240).

<sup>14</sup> Berkhof, 76.

<sup>15</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface 4 (ANF 4:240).

<sup>16</sup> Berkhof, 76.

considerable dissent among scholars concerning by whom John patterned his work, *On the Orthodox Faith (De Fide Orthodoxa)*. Did John follow the basic structure and order of Origen?<sup>17</sup> Or did he follow Theodoret in his *Epitome of Divine Dogmas* or Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian)? Regardless, John is recognized as “the first to compose a volume packed with the sentences of catholic teachers.”<sup>18</sup> His book followed an order of God and the Trinity, creation and the ages, the two natures of Christ, and the post-resurrection ministry of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

## The Ecumenical Creeds

Outside these early theological treatises, one of the most important theological advances in the early church was the development of the ecumenical creeds.<sup>20</sup> The creeds were not sacred texts, but sought to encapsulate the essence of “the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1 NASB). In doing so, the creeds established universal boundaries for an orthodox “faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.”<sup>21</sup>

The Nicene (325) and Chalcedonian (451) creeds in particular “helped to solidify the ancient Rule of Faith.”<sup>22</sup> The creeds were produced despite divergent theological perspectives: in the west, Tertullian, a lawyer, devoted his legal knowledge by means of categories drawn from Roman law to “explicating and defending the orthodox Christian faith.”<sup>23</sup> In the east, Origen was shaped more by Platonic and Hellenistic philosophies, concentrating on metaphysical concepts such as the *Logos* rather than moral principles found in Scripture.<sup>24</sup>

## The Middle Ages

Following John of Damascus, Christian theology witnessed significant dialectical activity. Peter Abelard “posited propositions from the Christian tradition, to which he appended other statements, also drawn from Christian sources, which appeared to contradict them. He then proceeded to reconcile these opposed points of view.”<sup>25</sup> By the close of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the church, like the world, was experiencing “a new flowering of intellectual reflection on God and salvation . . .”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Webster, 4.

<sup>18</sup> S. D. F. Salmond, “Prologue,” in John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 9:vii)*.

<sup>19</sup> John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 9:iiib)*.

<sup>20</sup> Vanhoozer, 774.

<sup>21</sup> Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory*, II.6 (*NPNF<sup>2</sup> 11:132*).

<sup>22</sup> Vanhoozer, 774.

<sup>23</sup> Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1999), 90-91.

<sup>24</sup> Vanhoozer, 774.

<sup>25</sup> Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology* (trans. Gene J. Lund; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966)167.

<sup>26</sup> Olson, 311.

The times were a complicated mixture of theological methods, from which scholasticism emerged in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

### Anselm of Canterbury

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), one time Archbishop of Canterbury, was the first of the great Scholastics and arguably “the most original thinker the Church had seen since the days of Augustine.”<sup>28</sup> While serving as Abbot of the monastery at Bec, France, Anselm authored his famed books of philosophical theology: the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*. In them, he developed his famous ontological proof God’s existence: “God cannot be conceived not to exist.—God is that, than which nothing greater can be conceived.—That which can be conceived not to exist is not God.”<sup>29</sup>

His most important theological work, however, remains *Cur Deus Homo?* (*Why God Became A Man?*)<sup>30</sup> in which he developed what has become the standard exposition of the satisfactory theory of the atonement. The essay presents a discussion between Anselm and a companion named Boso, first a monk, then later (1124-1136) the abbot of Bec and who spent a considerable number of years with Anselm at Canterbury.<sup>31</sup>

By Anselm’s time, the feudal system had supplanted Roman law to become the legal basis by which feudal lords maintained control over the lower classes of peasants and serfs. Violations of the law were violations against the feudal lord. In keeping with the forensic mood of the day, various forms of satisfaction might be substituted for any punishment due.<sup>32</sup> Theologically, Anselm sought to defend the

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<sup>27</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2006), 5:455-56; of the scholastics (or Schoolmen) Schaff explains: “It was not their concern to search in the Scriptures for new truth or in any sense to reopen the investigation of the Scriptures. The task they undertook was to confirm what they had inherited. For this reason they made no original contributions to exegesis and biblical theology. They did not pretend to have discovered any new dogmas. They were purveyors of the dogma they had inherited from the Fathers.” Berkhof noted that over time, Scholasticism came to be dominated by philosophical inquiry and, as a result, theology “gradually degenerated into a philosophical system” (Berkhof, 78).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:464.

<sup>29</sup> Anselm, *Proslogion*, III.

<sup>30</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, Preface. Anselm divided the document into two short books. It is in Book II that he sets forth the ransom theory of Christ’s atonement. He explained: “In the same way, as if nothing were known of Christ, it is show in the second book, by equally clear reasoning and truth, that human nature was created in order that hereafter the whole man, body and soul, should enjoy a blessed immortality. It is proved that it is necessary for this purpose for which man was made to be achieved, but only through a Man-God, and so that all the things we believe concerning Christ must necessarily take place.”

<sup>31</sup> Eugene R. Fairweather, ed. trans., *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (vol. 10 of The Library of Christian Classics; eds. John Baillie, John T. McNeill, Henry P. Van Dusen; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 102, n. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 797.

atonement in ways that would explain why Jesus had to be both human and divine.<sup>33</sup> His theory portrayed God “as a feudal overlord who, to maintain his honor, insists that there be adequate satisfaction for any encroachment on it.”<sup>34</sup>

Anselm contends: “Thus to sin is the same thing as not to render his due to God. . . . So, then, everyone who sins must repay to God the honor that he has taken away, and this is the satisfaction that every sinner ought to make to God.”<sup>35</sup> But, Anselm insisted that it was not “fitting” that God forgive sins purely by mercy. It was not in God’s “freedom or kindness or will to forgive unpunished the sinner who does not repay to God what he took away.”<sup>36</sup> The theological dilemma Anselm develops is that no one but God can make the satisfaction; yet only a human being ought to make the satisfaction. He resolved the dilemma with the God-man:

If then, as is certain, that celestial city must be completed from among men, and this cannot happen unless the aforesaid satisfaction is made, while no one save God can make it and no one save man ought to make, *it is necessary for a God-Man to make it.*<sup>37</sup>

The satisfaction theory thus demands that the divine and human nature “meet in one person, . . . and that obviously this is more fittingly done in the person of the Word [i.e., Jesus Christ] than in the other persons . . .”<sup>38</sup>  
Peter Lombard

The organization of Christian teaching into a more recognizable system of theological topics belongs to Peter Lombard’s (1100-1160/64) *The Book of Sentences*.<sup>39</sup> The first major systematic effort of the Scholastic Period, *The Sentences* consisted of four parts or books: the Trinitarian God, creation and human sin, the incarnation and redemption, and the sacraments with questions related to eschatology.<sup>40</sup> Lombard, in true Scholastic fashion, sought to state the doctrine taught by the Church, confirm it from the Scripture, then to set forth the opinions of the Fathers and, if they appeared to be at variance, reconcile them.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Aquinas

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<sup>33</sup> Olson, 323.

<sup>34</sup> Erickson, 797; Olson, 323-324, remarks that Anselm’s work proceeds in “typical scholastic fashion . . . almost painfully gradually with many tangents and possible objections discussed along the way. . . . [and which] pictures Christ’s death on the cross as an objective transaction between God the Father and the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in his humanity.”

<sup>35</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1, XI.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, XII.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.VI, emphasis mine.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.IX.

<sup>39</sup> Webster, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Berkhof, 78.

<sup>41</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5:490.

The most prominent of Scholastic theologians was Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). Among Roman Catholic theologians, it is impossible to overemphasize Aquinas' importance.<sup>42</sup> The *Summa Theologica* was his *magnum opus* and remains a basic theological text for Catholic theological students even today.<sup>43</sup> The *Summa* consisted of three parts: in Part I, Aquinas dealt with doctrine, the Trinity, and creation. Part II addressed human activities, passions and habits, virtues and graces, and the seven sins (or vices). Part III addressed the incarnation and sacraments but was left incomplete when Aquinas died in 1274. The remainder of the *Summa* was known as a Supplement to the Third Part. Their contents were drawn from Aquinas' commentary on Book IV of Lombard's *Sentences*.<sup>44</sup>

Steeped in philosophy as much as theology, Aquinas was a thoroughly scholastic theologian; theology and philosophy were inseparable:

On the contrary, it is written (2 Tim. 3:16): "All Scripture, inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice." Now Scripture, inspired of God, is no part of philosophical science, which has been built up by human reason. Therefore it is useful that besides philosophical science, there should be other knowledge, i.e. inspired of God.<sup>45</sup>

Aquinas' goal was "to synthesize the two disciplines without losing theology in philosophy. Theology was to become the 'Queen of Sciences' and philosophy was to be her necessary servant, or handmaid."<sup>46</sup> And while the *Summa* differed from earlier theological treatises owing to its vigorous application of Aristotelian philosophy,<sup>47</sup> it would be incorrect to conclude that Aquinas' work was purely speculative and philosophical; rather: "The great theological–philosophical synthesis he attempted to construct like a massive medieval cathedral of ideas had at its very heart the altar of Christ's broken body and the grace of redemption found upon it. Getting to that altar past the flying buttresses and elaborate vestibules of natural theology is a task, and many never make it there. But for those who persevere, there can be no doubt that Aquinas . . . cared deeply about the mysteries of salvation . . ."<sup>48</sup>

## The Beginnings of the University

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<sup>42</sup> Olson, 331; Aquinas' theology had been the unofficial view of most Catholics for centuries. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII made it the norm for Catholic theology in his Papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. It remains the standard Roman Catholic theology even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While not every Catholic theologian will agree completely with all of Aquinas' propositions, it is generally expected that all Catholic theologians will understand and interact with his thinking. Olson remarks: "To disagree openly with them may result in some measure of censure from the Vatican's theological watchdogs."

<sup>43</sup> Hägglund, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Berkhof, 79.

<sup>45</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, 1.1.1.

<sup>46</sup> Olson, 332.

<sup>47</sup> Webster, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Olson, 332.

The rise of a distinctive systematic theology owes to the beginnings of the university, “where the hitherto informal reading of Scripture (*lectio*) was transformed into a formal method of argumentation on the basis of Scripture (*disputatio*).”<sup>49</sup> In the medieval universities, Latin was the common language, but the categories were distinctly Aristotelian. The dual categories of *substance* and *accidents* emerged as the universal system of classification. Aristotle defined *substance* as “not . . . to be more or less than which it is.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, *substance* defined a thing’s essential nature. An *accident* was “a temporary or relative property”<sup>51</sup> of a thing; that is, a non-essential characteristic of a thing’s existence. Scholastic theologians made use of these metaphysical categories in describing the God of Scripture. The major difference was that theology had recourse to biblical revelation, but philosophy did not.<sup>52</sup>

## The Reformers

The period of the Reformers was, in some way, a return to the earliest interpretations of Irenaeus and the early church fathers. The Reformers followed a basic expositional approach with “extensive biblical commentary”<sup>53</sup> characterized by a distinctive status given to “the absolute normative authority of Scripture.”<sup>54</sup> Martin Luther (1483-1546) appeared to be more concerned about matters of practical theology than formal presentations of doctrine. Luther’s only systematic work was *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), which contained a “clear exposition of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.”<sup>55</sup> Three principle works of systematic importance were produced by the Reformers.

### Philipp Melanchthon

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) produced the first Protestant book in dogmatics,<sup>56</sup> the *Loci Communes* (1521). The first edition contained a dialectical focus on Law and Gospel, sin and grace<sup>57</sup> following the order of the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>58</sup> Although Melanchthon was well-read in philosophical matters, he avoided metaphysical questions in the *Loci* and concentrated instead on matters of redemptive significance. Luther praised the initial edition of the *Loci*, since, as his close associate, Melanchthon concurred with Luther’s positions on the freedom of the will and divine determinism. Subsequent editions departed from Luther at several points, including the Law, predestination, and justification. Melanchthon laid the

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<sup>49</sup> Van Hoozer, 774.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*, 1.5.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.5.

<sup>52</sup> Van Hoozer, 774.

<sup>53</sup> Webster, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Berkhof, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:17.

<sup>57</sup> Hägglund, 249.

<sup>58</sup> Berkhof, 79.

foundation for systematic theology, insisting that “the theologian, like the scientist, must employ method and order and strive for a clear disposition of the material he is working with.”<sup>59</sup>

## Ulrich Zwingli

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a Swiss pastor, patriot, theologian and politician.<sup>60</sup> Zwingli’s most important work was the *Commentary on True and False Religion*. It was a strong statement of his opposition to the false faith and religion of the Roman Pope, and “completes his theological opposition to the papacy.”<sup>61</sup> But, while it covered the essential truths of Reformation theology, it fell short of being “a well-rounded, systematic whole.”<sup>62</sup> At least part of the reason was that Zwingli composed all of his works in less than ten years<sup>63</sup> beyond that, Zwingli’s works were noticeably directed toward practical and political matters.<sup>64</sup>

In the *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Zwingli’s massive expertise in biblical studies and philosophy was brought to bear against the false religion of the Catholic Church and demonstrated that the true religion had been recovered by the reformers.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to Luther, Zwingli emphasized the unqualified dependence of human beings upon a sovereign God.<sup>66</sup> His robust view of divine sovereignty resulted in a meticulous view of God’s providential activity: “But we ought to recognize Providence as so broad of scope and so complete that, if there were anything which escaped Its notice or could evade It, the Deity would either not be supreme intelligence or not be supreme power.”<sup>67</sup>

Zwingli also parted company with Luther over the Lord’s Supper. Whereas Luther advocated a real presence of Christ in the supper, Zwingli argued that if the sacrament were to be spiritually profitable, it must be spiritual and not real; further, if Christ’s body ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, it could not be present anywhere else.<sup>68</sup> Thus: “To eat the body of Christ spiritually is nothing else than to trust in spirit and heart upon the mercy and goodness of God through Christ, that is, to be sure with unshaken faith that God is going to give us pardon for our

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<sup>59</sup> Hägglund, 249-52.

<sup>60</sup> Timothy George, *The Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1999), 111.

<sup>61</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:67. Schaff explains that Zwingli’s *Commentary* was “the first systematic exposition of the Reformed faith, as Melancthon’s *Loci* was the first system of Lutheran theology.”

<sup>62</sup> Berkhof, 79.

<sup>63</sup> George, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Hägglund, 257.

<sup>65</sup> Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 73-4.

<sup>66</sup> Berkhof, 79.

<sup>67</sup> Huldreich Zwingli, “On the Divine Providence,” in *The Latin Works of Huldreich Zwingli*, vol. 2 (trans. Samuel M. Jackson, ed. William John Hinke; Philadelphia: The Heidelberg Press, 1922), 226. The Internet Archive. Online: <https://archive.org/details/latinworkscorres02zwin>.

<sup>68</sup> González, 84.



sins and the joy of everlasting blessedness on account of His Son, who was made wholly ours, was offered for us, and reconciled the divine righteousness to us.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Zwingli was “overshadowed during his lifetime by the great Luther and succeeded by the more effective Calvin”,<sup>70</sup> it would not be incorrect to say that Calvin’s magnificent writings and work were forged in the crucible of the earlier work of Zwingli and Luther.<sup>71</sup>

John Calvin

The most important theological work of the Reformation belonged to the French theologian and pastor John Calvin (1509-1564), “the great theologian, organizer, and disciplinarian of the Reformed Church.”<sup>72</sup> Calvin founded and consolidated providentially, it would seem, the Reformed Church in France and in French-speaking parts of Switzerland. But, his influence extended beyond France and Switzerland to Reformed Churches across Europe and into America.<sup>73</sup>

Calvin’s *magnum opus*, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, consisted of four books, generally following a Trinitarian order. Book I addressed “The Knowledge of God the Creator.” Book II followed with a focus on “The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ.” Book III was concerned with “The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ,” with attention on “the secret working of the Spirit.” Book IV focuses on “The External Means or Aids by Which God Invites us into the Society of Christ and Holds Us Therein,” a commentary on the nature of the “true church,” the Roman papacy, church discipline, and the sacraments.<sup>74</sup>

That which meticulously drove the *Institutes* was Calvin’s unrelenting emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God. Divine sovereignty worked itself out in both Calvin’s doctrinal and ethical statements, with a resulting influence on the practical side of the Christian life.<sup>75</sup> Calvin’s theology was constructed upon a thoroughly biblical foundation. He replaced scholastic philosophical proofing with a “freshness of enthusiastic devotion to the truths of God’s Word.”<sup>76</sup>

Yet, Calvin was a skilled logician and dialectician with an exceptional faculty for developing vigorous theological statements. The opening statement in Book I

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<sup>69</sup> Huldreich Zwingli, “A Short and Clear Exposition of the Christian Faith,” in *The Latin Works of Huldreich Zwingli*, vol. 2 (trans. Samuel M. Jackson, ed. William John Hinke; Philadelphia: The Heidelberg Press, 1922), 252. The Internet Archive. Online: <https://archive.org/details/latinworkscorres02zwin>.

<sup>70</sup> George, 119.

<sup>71</sup> Olson, 399.

<sup>72</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:13.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:227.

<sup>74</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (trans. Ford Lewis Battles; ed. John T. McNeill; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960) 1:xi-xvii.

<sup>75</sup> Berkhof, 80.

<sup>76</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:230.

demonstrated his enormous skill at melding theology with philosophy in true dialectical fashion: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”<sup>77</sup> Calvin insisted that all glory belongs to God; both the elect and the wicked accomplish God’s will. For Calvin, “while acting wickedly, [the wicked] serve his righteous ordination, since in his boundless wisdom he well knows how to use bad instruments for good purposes.”<sup>78</sup> Closely related to the glory of God was Calvin’s notion of God’s providence, which he defined as “that determinative principle of all things, from which flows nothing but right, although the reasons have been hidden from us.”<sup>79</sup>

The central tenet of Calvin’s theology, however, was the concept of predestination. As the entire world hinges on God’s providence, so also human salvation depends on the

. . . predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death. . . . We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.<sup>80</sup>

Calvin described a double predestination for human beings determined by God long before creation: some for eternal damnation, others for eternal life. This double manifestation guaranteed that God’s redemptive action was due to his mercy alone.<sup>81</sup>

The “body of doctrines” he formulated is still known by his name today—Calvinism—and remains “one of the great dogmatic systems of the Church” especially as promulgated in principal Reformed Confessions of Faith.<sup>82</sup> It was, however, Calvin’s disciples who propagated a faithful Calvinist tradition. In particular, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), his successor, bolstered the doctrine of predestination, while Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) perpetuated and defended the most rigid forms of Calvinism.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:35.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:188.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:214.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:926.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:927-31.

<sup>82</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:230.

<sup>83</sup> Hägglund, *History of Theology*, 268-9. The famed TULIP is an acronym used to summarize the Five Points of Calvinism, which were codified in the Canons of Dort by the Synod of Dort which met in Dordrecht, Netherlands (1618-19) to address the growing opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of double predestination, led by Jacob Arminius.

## The Modern Period

Post-Reformation theology emerged from 200 years of tumult among Protestants. The great Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer—were absorbed with the restoration of the “one true orthodox and catholic church of the apostles and church fathers.”<sup>84</sup> But, their common goal shattered into shards of theological conflict. Zwingli and Calvin greatly disagreed on predestination. The followers of Arminius parted from both Zwingli and Calvin to form a new branch of Reformed theology—Arminianism. Rejecting the doctrinal dryness of orthodox Lutheran theology, Pietism developed in areas of Germany and Scandinavia. Anglicans and Puritans clashed in England culminating with the departure of John Wesley’s followers to form the Methodist movement.<sup>85</sup>

Beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and continuing into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Enlightenment generated “a profound scientific and cultural transformation . . . which completely altered the conditions under which theological activity was carried on.”<sup>86</sup> One name and one dogmatics stands supreme during this period.

### Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was one of the most celebrated Protestant theologians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born into the world of the Enlightenment, Schleiermacher lived and worked in a culture which forced theologians to come to terms with the rationale and method of their discipline. The anti-dogmatic mood of the day challenged both the credibility of and the necessity for a Christian interpretation of the world and humanity.<sup>87</sup> Simply stated, the problem became: “How is theology possible?”<sup>88</sup>

Schleiermacher was among those European theologians who articulated one of the most creative solutions to the problem.<sup>89</sup> Regarded by many as the “father of modern theology,” Schleiermacher was among the first of those theologians to

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<sup>84</sup> Olson, 452.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 451-52.

<sup>86</sup> Hägglund, 335, who explains: “This new understanding of the world ushered in the confidence that human reason possessed the intellectual capacities to produce a systematic knowledge of nature leading to regulation of the environment. Learning was finally emancipated from its long-standing obeisance to the theology and philosophy of the medieval world-view and was based instead on scientific observation and rational principles” (337).

<sup>87</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln & James P. Pettegrove; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 161.

<sup>88</sup> Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century: Volume 1: 1799-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 59.

<sup>89</sup> B. D. Craver, “The Divine Government of the World: Providence in the Theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994), 4.

“rethink Christian thought in direct response to [Immanuel] Kant.”<sup>90</sup> The early distinctive in Schleiermacher’s theology was that “Religion . . . is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling.”<sup>91</sup>

Schleiermacher’s mature theology was expounded in *The Christian Faith*, which, in the opinion of some, “is with the exception of Calvin’s *Institutes*, the most important work covering the whole field of doctrine to which Protestant theology can point.”<sup>92</sup> He saw no harm in scientific analysis of religion and the church to determine the proper place of Christian faith and the church in society; after all, Christian concerns “are material for scientific knowledge.”<sup>93</sup>

Schleiermacher utilized a fundamental Kantian starting point when he identified “feeling” in terms of “immediate self-consciousness.” Piety, the heart of religious life, “is feeling.”<sup>94</sup> For Schleiermacher, to talk about God meant that human beings must talk about how they know or experience God. Feeling is more than emotional response or passing moods. It was a response of the entire person to that which was experienced. It was a “more than rational response of the whole person to something beyond them, that gives the person knowledge of that ‘something-beyond-them’.”<sup>95</sup> It is at this point that Schleiermacher diverged from Kant. Whereas Kant looked to morality and reason as the core of religious knowledge, Schleiermacher grounded his in the knowledge of God and its application to human existence; that is, “the self-identical essence of piety is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”<sup>96</sup>

*The Christian Faith* built on the philosophical principles of the earlier *Speeches*. The major difference appeared in Schleiermacher’s more mature understanding of feeling as a complete dependence on God, or a God-consciousness.<sup>97</sup> His mature dogmatic presentation opened with the definition and method of dogmatics; in that section, Schleiermacher explicated the basics of feeling, absolute dependence on God, piety, and his reliance upon “borrowed propositions” from scientific studies such as ethics, philosophy of religion, and apologetics.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Rachel Muers and Mike Higton, *Modern Theology: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012), 60.

<sup>91</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (trans. John Oman; New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 36. Craver, “Providence in the Theology of Schleiermacher,” 4, explains that, for Schleiermacher, the epistemological center of religion was no longer to be discovered in external manifestations; rather, it was internal, located in the human psyche.

<sup>92</sup> Editor’s comments in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (trans. and eds. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1928), v.

<sup>93</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Muers and Higton, 65; Craver, “Providence in the Theology of Schleiermacher,” 5-6.

<sup>96</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Berkhof, 85; Olson, 544.

<sup>98</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 5.

Following the introductory matter, *The Christian Faith* was divided into two major parts. The first part covered the development of human self-consciousness and the doctrines of creation and preservation, followed by the divine attributes of God that relate to self-consciousness in relation to God and the world. The second part of Schleiermacher's system focused on the consciousness of sin and grace, including the person and work of Christ, redemption, the church, election and predestination, Holy Scripture, the sacraments, and consummation of the church.<sup>99</sup>

It must be reemphasized that, in *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher was concerned only with those elements which provided a direct expression of or to the devout self-consciousness of the Christian person. That explains why Schleiermacher only obliquely touched on the doctrine of the Trinity, a mere thirteen pages in his almost 800 pages of doctrine. It further explains why his dogmatics has a noticeably minor connection with the Bible. Schleiermacher intended to author a dogmatics that related to religious experience; if the Bible addressed the consciousness of human faith, it was allowed to speak.<sup>100</sup> His legacy and impact on theology has been impressive:

Schleiermacher's theological system represents a thorough transformation of traditional dogmatics. It was an attempt to lay a new foundation for the science of theology. As a result of Schleiermacher's efforts, theology came to be looked upon as a science, on the same level as the secular branches of learning.<sup>101</sup>

## Twentieth Century Systematic Theology

When looking back at twentieth century theologians, one name rises to the top of the list: Karl Barth.<sup>102</sup> Barth's massive *Church Dogmatics* remains one of the most studied, debated, and dissected systematics ever. But, his effort to produce a systematic theology began long before the *Dogmatics*.

### Karl Barth

Twentieth century theology began when Barth (1886-1968) published his *Epistle to the Romans*, a ground-breaking theological commentary on the Pauline epistle. The commentary "exploded like a bombshell on the playground of the theologians and theologically inaugurated the twentieth century."<sup>103</sup> In it, Barth made a radical break from the liberal anthropocentric theology of the nineteenth century pronouncing what would be a major theme for his future theology: "The Gospel is not a religious message to inform mankind of their divinity or to tell them how they may

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., ix-xii.

<sup>100</sup> Hägglund, 358-9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>102</sup> Stanley Grenz & Roger Olson, *20th Century Theology* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1993), 65. Webster, 5, insists that much of the theology of the century was shaped by "Barth's early repudiation of neo-Protestantism and his attempt to reconceive the systematic theological task."

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 387.

become divine. The Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from Him, because they are, as men, incapable of knowing Him, and because they have no right to claim anything from Him.<sup>104</sup> The God of the Bible is wholly other, sovereign, and unapproachable except by the revelation He has provided in Jesus Christ and the Bible.

While teaching at Basel (1935-1962), Barth produced the substance of what would eventually become the *Church Dogmatics*, a twelve-volume set that addressed four basic theological topics: the Word of God, the Doctrine of God, Creation, and Reconciliation. Barth died before adding the fifth topic of Eschatology. For Barth, dogmatics is a “theological discipline. But theology is a function of the Church.”<sup>105</sup> The church confesses its faith in God as it converses about God; the act of doing so produces theology. The *Dogmatics* covers the major themes in Barth’s theology: the transcendence of God, the humanity of God in Jesus Christ, human sin and its utter dependence on God, his famous rejection of natural theology (*contra* Brunner; see below), the supremacy of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Yet, “one idea towers above the rest: Barth’s Christocentric doctrine of election.”<sup>106</sup> For Barth, Christian theology is dominated beginning to end with the biblical teaching about Jesus Christ, since in Him “we have to do with the electing God.”<sup>107</sup> Jesus Christ is both the Elected human being and the Elector or the electing God: “It is in Him that the eternal election becomes immediately and directly the promise of our own election as it is enacted in time . . .”<sup>108</sup>

Barth’s christocentric method involved constructing a vigorous theology of the Word. As his thinking on election demonstrated, Jesus Christ is the supreme Word of God; the Scripture is also the Word of God, but in a secondary sense: “Understanding the Word of God not as proclamation and Scripture alone but as God’s revelation in proclamation and Scripture, we must understand it in its identity with God Himself. God’s revelation is Jesus Christ, the son of God.”<sup>109</sup> The Bible witnesses to the divine revelation but not in a way that is identical to that which it witnesses, in the same way that a witness to an automobile accident is not the accident itself. Rather “if we have really listened to the biblical words in all their humanity, we have accepted them as witness, we have obviously not only heard of the lordship of the triune God, but by this means it has become for us an actual presence and event.”<sup>110</sup> For Barth, the Bible is the answer to the human question

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<sup>104</sup> Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 28.

<sup>105</sup> Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (vol. 1, part 1 of *Church Dogmatics*; trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 3.

<sup>106</sup> Grenz and Olson, 388.

<sup>107</sup> Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God* (vol. 2, part 2 of *Church Dogmatics*; trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 54.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.2.105-6.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1.137.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.463.

about Jesus Christ, God's revelation. The biblical word *becomes* God's Word only through the proclamation of the church.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the gnawing fear of losing the Scripture in liberalism was averted as Barth restored the centrality of the Reformed emphasis on *sola scriptura*.<sup>112</sup>

### Emil Brunner

Brunner (1889-1966) rejected both liberalism and orthodoxy as being "wide of the mark."<sup>113</sup> Liberalism's anthropocentric approach subjected the mystery of God to human reason, resulting in human religiosity rather than Christian faith. On the other hand, Brunner believed that Protestant orthodoxy failed to distinguish God's Word from the recognizable "human character" found in the Bible. Brunner proposed a mediating alternative focused on recognizing the Bible as God's revelation in and through human agents.

Among many other theological writings, Brunner's *magnum opus* was his three-volume *Dogmatics*. The first volume, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, focuses on the attributes and names of God and the doctrine of election. The second volume, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, makes use of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" philosophy, not in an effort to restate it theologically, but rather to rescue Christian thought from an unyielding orthodoxy and set it on a path toward a productive shaping of Christian doctrine. This volume covers creation, human life, human sinfulness, providence, and Christology. The final volume, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation*, addresses the Holy Spirit, the church from its primitive beginnings to its advance into Europe, the role of faith in Christian conversion, including the misunderstanding of faith, justifying faith, the certainty of faith, sanctification, and eschatology.

Like Barth, Brunner insisted that Jesus Christ is God's self-disclosure to man. The Bible expresses humanity's hope for and witness to that disclosure. Brunner contends: "We are not required to believe the Scriptures because they are the Scriptures; but because Christ, whom I am convinced in my conscience is the Truth, meets me in the Scriptures—therefore I believe."<sup>114</sup>

However, Brunner refuses to embrace arcane Scripture as the basis for doctrine.<sup>115</sup> The meaning of doctrine is determined by the church's critical reflection on the biblical testimony. Since critical reflection will never yield unanimous

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 1.1.117.

<sup>112</sup> Grenz & Olson, 388.

<sup>113</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 14-18.

<sup>114</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (vol. 1 of *Dogmatics*; trans. Olive Wyon; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), 110.

<sup>115</sup> B. D. Craver, "Heinrich Emil Brunner (1889-1966)," n.p. *The Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology*; ed. Wesley Wildman. Online: <http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/brunner.htm> (16 November 2013).

outcomes, Brunner concludes that “all Christian doctrine is, and remains, a venture of faith.”<sup>116</sup>

As Brunner examined the NT writings, he became convinced that the earliest Christians contemplated Christ first in his action or work, then in his person. In his christology-from-below approach, Brunner argues that Christ’s person is discernible from his work, especially since “the ‘achievement’ of Christ is always in the foreground, while the mystery of the Person is in the background.”<sup>117</sup> For Brunner, revelation, atonement, and Lordship are a trio of aspects describing the same reality—that which God in Jesus Christ has done and continues to do for his creatures<sup>118</sup> and on a distinctively personal basis. Thus, Brunner’s theology was unwaveringly christocentric.

### Wolfhart Pannenberg

The theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928- ) emerged following the deaths of many of the titans of German theology, including Brunner (d. 1966), and Barth (d. 1968). He contends that “Christian doctrine is from first to last a historical construct. Its content rests on the historical revelation of God in the historical figure of Jesus Christ and on the precise evaluation, but historical interpretation alone, of the testimony that early Christian proclamation gives to this figure.”<sup>119</sup> History is the arena in which God works but history must be unified.

For Pannenberg, there can be no division between the world’s history and the history of salvation. The flow of time in history has no effect on theological truth. But, to be meaningful and universal, history must embrace “the reality of the world from its creation to its eschatological consummation.”<sup>120</sup> The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the eschatological event that enables Christians to affirm authentic meaning and significance to human history.<sup>121</sup>

Until the *eschaton*, truth will always be incomplete; this “Not Yet of the Christian life” signifies that, for Christians, existential doubt remains a constant companion.<sup>122</sup> Only at Christ’s return will the “debate concerning the reality of the Easter event be at an end and will that reality definitely and publicly come into force, for the resurrection of Jesus is a proleptic manifestation of the reality of the new, eschatological life of salvation in Jesus himself.”<sup>123</sup> A proleptically understood

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<sup>116</sup> Brunner, *Dogmatics*, 1.49.

<sup>117</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (vol. 2 of *Dogmatics*, trans. Olive Wyon; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), 271.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.305.

<sup>119</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:x.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. Grenz and Olson, 396, explain that, for Pannenberg, theological truth is both “historically conditioned” yet “ultimately eschatological.”

<sup>121</sup> González, *History of Christian Thought*, 3:449.

<sup>122</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:250.

<sup>123</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 627.



christology means: “Only in the future will we know the past for certain.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, Pannenberg’s theology instilled a new “appreciation for eschatological realism in mainstream Christian theology” that avoided both the liberal emphasis on the human social order and the fundamentalist emphasis on the tribulation and antichrist.<sup>125</sup>

Pannenberg’s universal, eschatologically-focused theology means that the

. . . world, humanity, and history are dealt with in the light of their positive determination by God. The uniqueness of the concept of God prescribes this. But, it does not rule out dogmatic consideration of the questioning of the Christian revelation and the reality of God by the ‘world.’ The fact that the reality and revelation of God are debatable is part of the reality of the world which dogmatics has to consider as God’s world.<sup>126</sup>

In other words, to speak convincingly of God means that God must be related to the world he created and subject to its inquiries. Whatever is true of God must be consistent with all other truth, “so that truth is only one, but all-embracing, closely related to the concept of the one God.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, his comprehensive, rational account of a reality in which all knowledge may reside, required that Pannenberg author this weighty systematic theology.<sup>128</sup> Volume 1 focuses on truth and systematic theology; God and truth; God and world religions; revelation and the Trinity; and the unity and attributes of God. Volume 2 takes up the act of creation; humanity; anthropology and christology; the deity of Christ; and reconciliation. Volume 3 completes Pannenberg’s project with a focus on the Spirit and Kingdom of God; the life, worship, and ministry of the Church; election and history; and the consummation of creation in the Kingdom of God.

Carl F. H. Henry

Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003) “made it his life's work to present biblical Christianity as intellectually credible and historically true. . . . [shaping] the defenses of evangelicalism with two goals in mind: preserving truth and attracting nonbelievers.”<sup>129</sup> Henry entered the theological fray at a time when “no fact of contemporary western life is more evident than its growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word.”<sup>130</sup> One of the so-called neo-

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<sup>124</sup> Ted Peters, “From Easter to Parousia,” in *Who Is Jesus Christ for Us Today?: Pathways to Contemporary Christology, In Honor of Michael Welker* (eds. Andreas Schuele and Guenter Thomas. Louisville, KY: Westminster-John Knox, 2009), 247.

<sup>125</sup> Olson, 606.

<sup>126</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:49.

<sup>127</sup> Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 6.

<sup>128</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:xi-xii. Pannenberg elevates the systematic argument above the selection/analysis of historical facts.

<sup>129</sup> Beth Spring, “Carl F.H. Henry, Theologian and First Editor of *Christianity Today*, Dies at 90,” n.p. *Christianity Today*. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/decemberweb-only/12-8-14.0.html?paging=off> (20 November 2013).

<sup>130</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God Who Speaks and Shows* (vol. 1 of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1976), 17.

evangelicals, Henry emphasized both reason and supernatural revelation,<sup>131</sup> and “engaged critically with contemporary theological currents.”<sup>132</sup>

Henry’s systematic theology is explicated in his six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*, published from 1976-1983. Henry divides his work into two major parts: *God Who Speaks and Shows* (vols. 1-4) and *God Who Stands and Stays* (vols. 5-6). In the first part, Henry offers an explanation of the Christian understanding of truth and the worth of life. Specifically, he asks about religious knowledge: “Do religious assertions rest on authority, intuition, experience, speculation, or personal preference and prejudice?”<sup>133</sup> In the second part of his work, Henry turns to address the nature of God, describing God as real, objective, and living. God is “the God who *is*, not a god who *may be*, or a god who *was*, or is yet *to be*.” The reality of this God “is not suspended upon the existential decision of finite creatures; rather he thrusts upon humans the inescapability of individual personal response to his claims upon them.”<sup>134</sup> Henry’s God is One who speaks, shows, stands, and stays with his creature in redemptive hope for his eternal purposes.

While Henry’s initial work represented a “postfundamentalist evangelicalism,” he eventually turned toward “a narrow, almost fundamentalistic mentality” that caused the significance of his work to diminish.<sup>135</sup> Yet, upon granting Henry the Mark O. Hatfield Leadership Award from the Christian Council of Colleges and Universities in 2000, Union University President David S. Dockery said, “Few people in the twentieth century have done more to articulate the importance of a coherent Christian world and life view than Carl F.H. Henry.”<sup>136</sup>

## Concluding Thoughts

This survey only scratches the surface of the great systematic theologians of history. Many of them have been omitted for the sake of time. The reader will do well to investigate the works of: Albrecht Ritschl (*The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, 1874, ET 1900); Paul Tillich and his erudite method of correlation (*Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., 1951); Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and cosmic history (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 1955, ET

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<sup>131</sup> Derek Michaud, “Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003),” n.p. *The Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology*, ed. Wesley Wildman. Online: <http://people.bu.edu/wildman/bce/henry.htm> (23 November 2013).

<sup>132</sup> Grenz and Olson, 402. Olson, notes that, Henry, a Baptist, was selected by the eminent evangelist Billy Graham “to give intellectual and theological shape to the new movement as it struggled to define itself over against fundamentalism and liberal theology.” cf. *Story of Christian Theology*, 595.

<sup>133</sup> Henry, *God Who Speaks and Shows*, 70.

<sup>134</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God Who Stands and Stays* (vol. 5, part 1 of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1982), 21.

<sup>135</sup> Olson, 595.

<sup>136</sup> Spring, n.p.

1959); Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian realism (*The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 2 vols., 1964); Jürgen Moltmann did not author a systematic theology but emphasized a theology of hope and a means for bringing the cross into the divine life in several volumes (*Theology of Hope*, 1965, ET 1967; *The Crucified God*, 1973, ET 1974); and John B. Cobb, Jr. and process theology (*Process Theology*, with David Ray Griffin, 1976).

Oppression theologies appeared in the works of James Cone and black theology (*Black Theology and Black Power*, 1969; *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1970); Gustavo Gutierrez and liberation theology (*A Theology of Liberation*, 1971, ET 1988); Rosemary Radford Ruether and feminist theology (*Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 1983).

A resurgence of traditional, evangelical systematic theologies appeared in the considerable works of Donald Bloesch (*Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 2 vols., 1982); Millard Erickson (*Christian Theology*, 3 vols., 1983); Stanley Grenz (*Theology for the Community of God*, 1994); Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 1995); and the fresh volume by John M. Frame (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, 2013).

As the twentieth century came to a close, Stanley Grenz noted that some theologians were losing heart and despairing of the task, even to the point of calling for a “demise of the discipline.”<sup>137</sup> Frame, linking theology with the Scriptures, insists, however, that Scripture “commends to us a kind of teaching that has people’s needs in mind.”<sup>138</sup> Students of theology today may rest assured that systematic theology still has a future, as long as Scripture remains, the eschaton delays, and humanity exists.

### Biographical Note

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<sup>137</sup> Grenz & Olson, 404.

<sup>138</sup> John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 7.

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## A Psychology of Atheism: Can Merit be Found in the “Defective Father Hypothesis”?

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### Introduction

What causes atheism? For that matter, what causes theism? We believe what we believe for a variety of reasons. It would seem that all people have some initial belief in the supernatural<sup>1</sup> or the metaphysical<sup>2</sup> (Barrett, 2012). At some point in life, however, up to 15% of the population of the USA become “the irreligious, the unreligious, the anti-religious, and the anti-clerical” (Kosmin et al., 2009, p. i). Of this 15%, only 7%—a mere 2% of the general population—self-identify as atheist (Kosmin et al., 2009, p. 11). The remainder is distributed among agnostics, deists, and theists. So it can be readily seen that the term *atheist*<sup>3</sup> is applicable to only a very small portion of the population.<sup>4</sup>

Seltzer (2013) suggests two divisions in atheism, the “dogmatic atheist” and the “non-dogmatic atheist.” Dogmatic atheism “borders on an arrogance comparable to that of their fundamentalist-believing counterparts.” He also notes that atheists of the dogmatic variety are often seen by theists at “militant.” Roy (2009) categorizes atheism into three branches: “revolutionary,” “intellectual,” and “frustrated” (pp. 37-38). The revolutionary atheist seeks independence, to break away from “organized moral systems.” The intellectual atheist has made his or her choice based on “certain social beliefs or beliefs in certain principles such as in science.” The frustrated atheist seeks to replace “the father or God or any authority with rational individualistic or self-oriented explanations.” This latter type, according to Roy, “hates the father or any social authority” and “is frustrated at home or in personal and professional life and from the personal frustration, there arises a need for self-sufficiency instead of dependence on God or fate.” Being a subset of atheists in the general population, the frustrated atheists likely comprise significantly less than a full percentage point of the population at large.

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1 “of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe; *especially*: of or relating to God or a god, demigod, spirit, or devil” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supernatural>)

2 “of or relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphysical>)

3 “one who believes that there is no deity” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atheist>)

4 As such, atheists are likely underrepresented in the demographics of statistical sampling in surveys. This fact is taken into consideration by the author when analyzing the available data sets.

As early as 1988, Vitz suggested that there may be a connection between poor father images and the rejection of God—the ultimate in father rejection. In 2000, he published *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*. While the use of the definite article<sup>5</sup> in the subtitle would suggest a comprehensive look at atheist psychology, the tome is actually a historical review of certain select biographies of specific notable atheists, agnostics, and theists. Vitz (2000) focuses on what he calls “intense atheism” (p. 3ff). In the context of Seltzer's and Roy's categories, Vitz is looking at the dogmatic, frustrated atheist model.

Within this subset of atheists, the *intense atheists*,<sup>6</sup> Vitz purports an explanation for their choices to reject God: the defective father hypothesis.<sup>7</sup> As such, some atheism is explained by the “claim that once a child or youth is disappointed in and loses his or her respect for their [sic] earthly father, then belief in their [sic] heavenly Father becomes impossible” (Vitz, 2010, p. 150). A defective father is defined by Vitz as follows:

1. He can be present but obviously weak, cowardly, and unworthy of respect—even if otherwise pleasant or “nice.”
2. He can be present but physically, sexually, or psychologically abusive.
3. He can be absent through death or by abandoning or leaving the family. (Vitz, 2010, p. 150)

With all this in mind, and with access to tools such as the General Social Survey database online, a question remains. Can merit be found in the defective father hypothesis? This question can, at least in part, be answered by careful review and analysis of extant data sets.

## Background

Vitz is not the first researcher to address the issues of psychology as an influence in the choice for atheism. As early as 1932, we find published research seeking to discern personality patterns that can lead to choosing atheism. Vetter and Green (1932) sent 600 questionnaires to members of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, of which 350 replies were received. They analyzed the 325 received from men<sup>8</sup> and found these subjects had better relations with their

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5 Vitz's use of the definite article is the very reason why this paper uses the indefinite article in the title, which is intended as a partial homage to the earlier work.

6 As Vitz coined the term, *intense atheist*, and the focus of this paper is on his hypothesis, the term will continue to be used, and should be understood to represent only the atheists that can be considered dogmatic, frustrated atheists according to the Seltzer and Roy definitions. This is effectively synonymous with *militant atheist*, *New Atheist*, and other terms sometimes found in popular Christian Apologetics literature. In the context of this paper, it should not be taken as a pejorative.

7 Also known as *The Theory of the Defective Father* (Vitz, 2010)

8 “A study of the few returns obtained from women seems to indicate a preponderance of rather

mothers than with their fathers by a factor of nearly three to one (p. 187). Half of them had lost one or both parents in their youth, a rate “at least twice the normal mortality rate for that age group.” 90% reported church attendance prior to age 15, but in these cases, “[35%] report attending because they were forced to, 25[%] went willingly and devoutly while the remaining 40[%] aimed only to please parents or to be with friends, more giving the former reason” (p. 188). When asked about the reasons for becoming atheists, in order of frequency, they responded: reading on history/science/religion, influence by an author/book, socialist materialism, college education, study of science, and so forth. Few mentioned emotional factors, “[y]et, it is just such emotional factors as revealed in questions 16 and 28 that seem to bear a causal relation ...” (pp. 193-194). This fairly early data would seem to support Vitz's ideas.

Caoplovitz and Sherrow (1977) used National Opinion Research Center data to analyze apostasy trends among college graduates. Based on their research, the subjects showed a negative correlation between rates of apostasy and good relationships with parents (pp. 135-137). In short, the worse the relationship with parents, the greater the likelihood the subject would reject his or her childhood faith.<sup>9</sup> As a longitudinal study, this data also showed that those who rejected their faiths were more likely to stay apostate at a later age if the relationships with the parents were poor, while those with good relationships were more likely to return to the faith of their families. Although these studies<sup>10</sup> did not differentiate between paternal and maternal relationship issues, they do tend to confirm Vitz's hypothesis.

The end of the Second Millennium and the beginning of the Third seem to have brought renewed interest in the study of atheism and health. Looking at a broader perspective, McCullough et al. (2000) looked at mortality rates among the religious and the non-religious, finding that religious people have significantly lower mortality rates. In fact, “the meta-analysis indicated that the odds of survival for people who scored higher on such measures of religious involvement (after statistical control) were 129% of the odds of survival of people who scored lower on such measures” (p. 219). While this is not specifically a psychological analysis, the authors conclude that some of the mechanisms for greater survival among the religious could stem from “reductions in risky behaviors such as smoking, drug use, alcohol use, obesity, and unsafe sexual practices” (p. 220). Affirming these factors, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) also note that “[r]eligious youths tend to have higher grade point averages and standardized test scores than do their less religious counterparts” and that “married religious adults are more likely to stay married over time and have higher levels of marital satisfaction and marital commitment” (p. 70). While religious taboos against divorce could play a part in choices to remain married,

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intense and unfortunate emotional experiences on the part of these women with organized religion.” (Vetter & Green, 1932, p. 184)

9 The study was limited to Jews, Protestants, and Catholics.

10 Volume 44 in the *Sage Library of Social Research*.



such taboos and associated stigmas would not have a similar effect on satisfaction and commitment. These factors definitely relate to psychological issues, and thus provide a potential—though not conclusive—corroboration with Vitz.

Looking specifically at a psychological issue, Dervic et al. (2004) found that “[r]eligious affiliation is associated with less suicidal behavior in depressed inpatients” (p. 2303). They found fewer suicide attempts and less suicide ideation among the religious, “despite comparable severity of depression, number of adverse life events, and severity of hopelessness” (p. 2306). Interestingly, they note that suicidal behaviors are related to anger issues, aggression, and impulsiveness, and that religiosity “is associated with lower hostility, less anger, and less aggressiveness” (pp. 2306-2307). Hostility, anger, and aggressiveness are traits typically found in those with multiple adverse childhood experiences<sup>11</sup> and are also associated with child abuse and neglect. Again, this study does not look at the details of why the non-religious are more hostile, angrier, and more aggressive, but any childhood factors in such cases would align well with Vitz's proposal.

[Dervic et al. also note that in spite of the fact that psychiatrists are much less likely to be religious than the population at large, “support of the patient's spirituality has been deemed an ethical imperative, ... [in] the patient's best interest” (p.2307). This was substantiated by Delaney et al. In 2007, when they found that while 91% of members of the American Psychological Association do not believe in God, 82% say that being religious is “[b]eneficial to mental health” (p. 97).<sup>12</sup>]

In 2009, Kosmin et al. gleaned some fascinating data from the infamous American Religious Identification Survey 2008.<sup>13</sup> Among these data, they found that “the majority of Nones,<sup>14</sup> 66%, are first-generation or '(de) converts' to non-religion. Only 32% are second generation or longer” (p. 8). In other words, the overwhelming majority of non-religious are those who have left a type of faith in the supernatural or metaphysical. Therefore, the number of atheists is not increasing because loving fathers are tending to teach atheism to their children. While, again, there is no specific correlation to defective fathers, there is a pattern of abandonment and/or rejection of God that is unmistakable.

Also in 2009, Koenig presents a review of research “on Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health” (p. 283). In this review, he points out some of the history of mental health care. Initially, a large number of mental hospitals were run by priests

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11 of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study*, <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>

12 11% said it is irrelevant and only 7% said that being religious is harmful.

13 This was the report that prompted Newsweek and other prominent news outlets to raise a media storm about the decline of American Christianity.

14 Those who answered “No Religion” on the survey.

at monasteries, and, “[w]ith some exceptions, these religious institutions often treated patients with far more compassion than state-run facilities prior to 19th-century mental health reforms (reforms often led by religious people...)” (pp. 283-284). Things changed with Sigmund Freud and his mentor, Jean Charcot. “This created a deep divide that would separate religion from mental health care for the next century...” (p. 284). As noted in the earlier studies cited, this was an egregious error, as religious faith is helpful to the patient. In fact, Koenig also noticed “that religious-based psychological interventions resulted in faster symptom improvement, compared with secular-based therapy with control subjects” (p. 285). He does not always paint a perfectly rosy picture of religiosity, pointing out that if someone is from a religious tradition that promotes complete abstinence from alcohol and drugs, when they do later experiment, “substance use can become severe and recalcitrant” (p. 289). This does fit well with the idea that overly strict fathers who enforce rules with an iron fist can drive their children away from God and into unhealthy lifestyles. In spite of these occasional issues, he does conclude that “religious involvement is related to better coping with stress and less depression, suicide, anxiety, and substance abuse” and that “[w]hile religious delusions may be common among people with psychotic disorders, healthy normative religious beliefs and practices appear to be stabilizing...” (p. 289). Of course, none of this proves a causality. It is merely more circumstantial evidence.

Hunter (2010) recognized an important fact, that “[s]ociological research on atheists is fairly uncommon, despite the growing visibility of atheism” (p. 3), echoing some of the sentiments of Kosmin et al. when discussing the issue of the Nones, with so many categorized simply as non-religious rather than specifying what point on the spectrum of non-religion is germane. In this particular study, Hunter was testing Bainbridge's “compensatory theory in which the lack of social obligations allows more freedom for individuals to espouse atheism” (p. 4). Bainbridge had reported that atheists are less likely to want family reunions, more likely to report that “it is not fair to bring children into this world,” and also more likely to report their relationships as “slightly lower in quality” (p. 7). Hunter analyzed responses from over 38,000 subjects—over 45,000 in one sampling—and found no support for Bainbridge's “secondary compensator model.” However, he did discover that “social and psychological factors affect atheist identification” (p. 32). There is the distinct possibility that the reason atheists have poor relationships is because they prefer to avoid family gatherings “in which their religious views (or lack thereof) might be attacked” (p. 33). This brings up a *Which came first... ?* situation. Do some people become atheists because their family relationships cause them to reject God, or do some people have poor relationships because their families reject them for having rejected God? Hunter's findings do not dispute Vitz, but neither do they necessarily support Vitz.

With all the newer research on these issues coming available, Galen and Kloet (2011) were able to do some better analyses of these types of studies. When they controlled for the intensity of one's beliefs, they found a curvilinear relationship: the higher level of one's certainty about either the existence of or the non-existence

of God, the better one's mental health and well-being (p. 673). The group with the lowest levels of life satisfaction and emotional stability were those in the middle who were "[n]ot sure whether God does or does not exist" (p. 683). Breaking the Nones category up into more segments begins to show psychological differences between the true atheists and the agnostics, and it most certainly differentiates atheists from other non-religious groups like deists and spiritualists. This would seem to indicate that psychological problems are not specifically associated with atheists, but with the broader group of those who simply do not practice some form of religion or organized worship in their faith. This might be taken as a point against Vitz.

Later, Smith (2011) attempted to determine how and why people become atheists. Like many others before, he notes the dearth of research in this area (p. 216).<sup>15</sup> He finds that atheism is a "rejection identity ... constructed through articulating what it is one does *not* believe" [emphasis in original] rather than an affirmation of a belief (p. 233). In the interviews, the atheist subjects used phrases like "There is nothing magical" and "No spooks here" and "great sky fairy" to describe their rationales. "This language is telling because it indicates a strong rejection and distancing from what the participants view as the ideas of theists" (p. 228). These were not just college students stretching their wings and seeking independence, but included "atheists ranging in age from 18 to 92 years old" (p. 219). As such, short-term issues like teenage angst, early adulthood development, and identity-seeking behaviors are muted. While this study did not determine specifics about what or who was being rejected, it does align with the overall idea that Vitz proposes with father rejection.

Weber et al. (2012) did another review of psychological issues among the non-religious. While their findings corroborated that which has been previously noted, they did discover significant indicators that psychological distress among the non-religious is, in part, caused by their status in society (p. 72). While there was some mixed data, one of the causes of distress not related to was an inability to forgive God (p. 75).<sup>16</sup> Low participation rates by atheists and mixed samples vexed the researchers, but they did find corroboration with the curvilinear ideas aforementioned (p. 82). Strength of faith matters, whether it be absolute faith that there is no God or complete certainty there is. Yet still, within the group of self-identified atheists, there is a subset with anger and forgiveness issues. This subset could be affected to the ideas proposed by Vitz.

Naturally, many who are asked about the cause of their atheism answer that science convinced them there is no God. Some even built a fallacious appeal to authority case for atheism, noting high rates of atheism among scientists. Curry

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15 With a rather limited sample base of 40 subjects, this study must be taken in its context as preliminary, at best.

16 This seems paradoxical, to have one who professes that there is no God to be angry with Him, but the study included questions about a hypothetical God.

(2013) pointed out that rather than science leading people to atheism, the atheists are attracted to science. “[D]isproportionately many people who embrace atheism for nonscientific reasons (generally in their youth) subsequently enter scientific fields of study and therefore atheism comes to be statistically overrepresented in the sciences” and “far from being pushed to atheism by science, atheists scientists generally arrive at their atheism for reasons *unrelated* to their science, and then persist in their atheism *despite* their science” [emphasis in original] (p. 77). This seems quite reasonable, as Weber et al. (2012) did note that “[a]lthough most nonbelievers have jettisoned traditional beliefs about God, many still struggle to find meaning in life” (p. 84). This point may seem out of place, but it should be noted that self-reporting of psychological issues can be rather unreliable, especially in men. Vitz (2000) himself describes the situation of atheist Albert Ellis, who claimed that the defective father hypothesis did not apply in his case, as he had a good relationship with his father. Vitz later had occasion to talk to a biographer of Ellis who had discovered that Ellis suffered from parental neglect and illness throughout his childhood. So taken with previously referenced studies, it seems that while self-reporting science as a reason for denying God may be high, the reality of the situation may actually support Vitz.

Obviously, it would be impractical to do an in-depth biographical review of a statistically valid sample of atheists to determine if parental, especially paternal, issues could have a causal relationship to their choice of atheism. Instead, correlation of the freely available Global Social Survey data from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago can be used to make some sorts of determinations, or, at least, indications.

### **Global Social Survey Analysis**

Data gathered from the Global Social Survey provides some interesting correlations between a person's confidence in the existence of God and a variety of other factors. Following are several tabulations from the Global Social Survey.<sup>17</sup>

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17 For the purpose of the discussions here, only the “Don't Believe” and “Know God Exists” columns will be considered, as those data sets are analogous to Dr. Vitz's study and to the studies confirming a curvilinear relationship between certainty on the two ends of the theism-atheism spectrum.

RS CONFIDENCE IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD	DONT BELIEVE	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	SOME HIGHER POWER	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	KNOW GOD EXISTS	Total
LIVING WITH PARENTS WHEN 16 YRS OLD							
Other	4.5	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.6
Both own mother and father	65.8	72.7	69.0	69.7	72.3	70.9	70.9
Father and stepmother	2.6	2.2	2.9	1.7	2.7	2.0	2.2
Mother and stepfather	5.6	7.0	6.1	5.4	6.3	5.2	5.6
Father only	0.7	1.8	2.9	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2
Mother only	16.7	10.6	12.4	15.3	11.9	12.9	12.8
Some other male relative (No female head)	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.3
Some other female relative (No male head)	0.7	1.5	1.6	2.0	0.8	1.7	1.5
Other arrangement with relatives (e.g., uncle and aunt, grand-parents)	3.0	1.3	2.2	1.1	1.3	2.1	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N=	269	454	965	459	1,804	7,041	10,992

Table 1. Respondent's Confidence in the Existence of God versus Family Status at Age 16.

When correlating the living conditions at age 16 of respondents to current status of faith in God,<sup>18</sup> strong correlations are noticeable in areas relating to the status of the father of the respondent. Those from nuclear families were somewhat less likely to become atheists, but the large variances stand out in the other living situations. Children of broken homes were much more likely to become atheists.

Children raised by a single mother were 25% more likely to become atheists and those raised by another female relative with no male head of household present were 2.5 times more likely to become atheists, whereas children raised in a two-parent blended family—father and stepmother or mother and stepfather—were only slightly more likely to reject God, as were those raised by another male relative with no female head of household. Those with other arrangements with relatives and with other arrangements outside of family were 42% and 80%—respectively—more likely to become atheists. This last point may speak not only of the importance of healthy relationships with fathers but of the importance of family altogether.

Naturally, parental issues are not the only concerns people have, so general satisfaction data is correlated here as well. This data is based on self-reporting, so care must be taken to recognize that there may be idealization taking place on the part of people at the extremes of the spectrum.

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18 At the time of the surveys.

RS CONFIDENCE IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD	DONT BELIEVE	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	SOME HIGHER POWER	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	KNOW GOD EXISTS	Total
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL CONDITION							
VERY GREAT DEAL	18.5	21.4	20.0	21.2	20.7	25.0	23.3
GREAT DEAL	32.3	34.9	34.6	28.0	36.0	32.7	33.4
QUITE A BIT	27.7	18.3	19.6	13.6	19.2	16.1	17.2
A FAIR AMOUNT	13.8	19.0	15.8	16.9	14.7	15.7	15.7
SOME	4.6	2.4	3.8	6.8	4.1	3.8	3.9
A LITTLE	3.1	3.2	4.2	12.7	3.7	4.6	4.6
NONE	0.0	0.8	2.1	0.8	1.6	1.9	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N=	65	126	240	118	516	1,796	2,861

Table 2, Respondent's Confidence in the Existence of God versus Level of Satisfaction with Health and Physical Condition.

At first glance, it might seem that strong theists tend to feel better about their health and physical condition, but then it would also be noteworthy that they have higher rates of little or no satisfaction with their health. When aggregated, the “quite a bit,” “great deal,” and “very great deal” categories even out, with the atheists having a slight edge in satisfaction.

RS CONFIDENCE IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD	DONT BELIEVE	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	SOME HIGHER POWER	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	KNOW GOD EXISTS	Total
FRIENDSHIPS							
VERY GREAT DEAL	32.3	26.8	28.7	28.6	28.7	31.9	30.7
GREAT DEAL	35.4	37.8	44.6	31.1	35.3	39.4	38.6
QUITE A BIT	12.3	16.5	14.2	16.0	19.4	13.2	14.6
A FAIR AMOUNT	10.8	15.0	6.7	10.9	10.9	9.1	9.6
SOME	6.2	1.6	2.9	6.7	3.9	2.9	3.2
A LITTLE	3.1	2.4	2.1	6.7	1.7	2.8	2.7
NONE	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N=	65	127	240	119	516	1,800	2,867

Table 3, Respondent's Confidence in the Existence of God versus Level of Satisfaction with Friendships.

Likewise, the level of satisfaction with friendships seems to play little role in determining if one is more or less likely to be a strong theist or strong atheist. Theists have a small percentage greater likelihood to have satisfying friendships.

RS CONFIDENCE IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD	DONT BELIEVE	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	SOME HIGHER POWER	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	KNOW GOD EXISTS	Total
<b>FAMILY LIFE</b>							
VERY GREAT DEAL	35.9	28.6	36.4	30.3	40.2	45.6	42.2
GREAT DEAL	34.4	30.2	34.7	35.3	36.5	33.4	34.0
QUITE A BIT	4.7	14.3	9.7	11.8	10.3	8.2	9.0
A FAIR AMOUNT	10.9	11.9	8.5	5.9	9.1	6.4	7.4
SOME	6.2	7.9	3.4	5.9	1.6	2.5	2.9
A LITTLE	4.7	4.0	3.4	5.9	1.0	2.6	2.6
NONE	3.1	3.2	3.8	5.0	1.4	1.4	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N=	64	126	236	119	515	1,798	2,858

Table 4, Respondent's Confidence in the Existence of God versus Level of Satisfaction with Family Life.

Still in the overall satisfaction category, but back to family issues again, the differences between strong theists and strong atheists appear again. Theists are 23% more likely to be satisfied with family life, and atheists are over twice as likely to be dissatisfied. Given these associations and those comparing family situations at age 16, strong support for Vitz's hypothesis is quite visible. While the current emotional or psychological situation of any given atheist may have more to do with societal rejection, the origins of the atheism of some is most certainly tied to childhood issues with family, especially with parents, and specifically with fathers.

### Limitations

While the study that included data on the living situations at age 16 had 10,992 participants, with 269 being strong atheists, the satisfaction level data included, at best, 2,867 respondents, with only 65 being strong atheists. The smaller sample set should be taken as potentially indicative, not as conclusive, as a change in answers by merely one atheist would therefore change that data by more than a full percentage point—a very significant amount when taken in light of the fact that the largest percentage in the satisfaction scores was 35.9% (for “Don't Believe” and “Very Great Deal” of satisfaction with family life).

### Conclusion

Atheism is a controversial subject. Atheists comprise a very small percentage of the population at large, and intense atheists are a subset of that. There are many reasons one might choose atheism, and among those reasons are psychological ones. Subsequent to the publication of Vitz's book, many other studies have examined the issues, and many researchers have been frustrated by small sample sizes and poor levels of participation by atheists. In said light, this review and correlation can only be viewed as preliminary, not as conclusive.

With that said, there is compelling evidence that the most intense form of atheism—that of famous authors such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens,

and Sam Harris—comes more from psychological issues related to childhood experiences and less from historical or scientific evidences. The short answer to the question “Can merit be found in the 'defective father hypothesis'?” is “Yes.” The longer, more complete answer will require larger sample sizes than are currently available in the GSS, and will need to rely on careful survey crafting to avoid self-reporting errors on the part of those who are suffering or have suffered distress that could relate to their choices of faiths.

### Biographical Note

**Stephen J. Padilla** teaches physics at Southwest High School in San Antonio, TX, and is certified to teach all sciences. He graduated from Wayland Baptist University's Master of Christian Ministry program after earning a Bachelor of Applied Science—also from WBU—in Scientific Analysis Technology (a non-traditional degree based on his Associate of Applied Science in same from the Community College of the Air Force). He is a member of Mensa and a life member of the Alpha Chi National College Honor Society. A 25-year military veteran, he is also a life member of both the Air Force Association and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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## Appendix

### A Critical Review of Faith of the Fatherless by Paul C. Vitz

#### Biographical Sketch

Paul C. Vitz is a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at New York University, and also a Senior Scholar and Professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences, a Catholic graduate school of psychology. He formerly taught at Pomona College and Claremont Graduate School. He has also served as an adjunct professor at the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family. He graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Michigan in 1957 and with a Ph.D. in Psychology from Stanford University in 1962. He is on the editorial board of *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, and is also a contributing editor to *Edification: The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology*.

Dr. Vitz specializes in the integration of Christian theology with psychology. He presently focuses on the psychology of hatred and forgiveness, the psychology of the virtues, the psychological importance of fathers, and the positive relevance of psychology for the priesthood. His books include Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship, Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious, Modern Art and Modern Science: The Parallel Analysis of Vision, and The Self: Beyond the Post-modern Crisis. He is married to Dr. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Professor of French, Affiliated Professor of Comparative Literature, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and Religious Studies, also at New York University.

## **Summary of Contents**

Faith of the Fatherless is a survey of several historical figures through biographical research. Vitz states that he seeks to explain why atheism has become as prevalent as it is, becoming respectable even in academic circles around 1870. He notes that atheism has been a rarity throughout history, and thus chose to investigate the origins of a movement that led to this: "God has been banished from public discourse so thoroughly that in today's high schools we teach about condoms and masturbation, but are legally prohibited from making reference to the Deity."

First, he gives us a brief history of what he calls intense atheism, which is sometimes called militant atheism, strident atheism, or New Atheism by other authors. In this, he notes the origins in the modern period with the beginnings of psychology. The luminary Sigmund Freud, for all his findings and flaws, also came up with the projection theory of God, claiming that belief in God is actually a projection of infantile desires for an all-loving, all-protecting superior being who cares about us. Freud himself admitted that this projection theory was not based on his research in psychoanalysis and had no basis in scientific or clinical research or findings. Vitz also notes that Freud got this idea from Ludwig Feuerbach, though he denied it in spite of being well known for idolizing Feuerbach.

Vitz takes the reader through a lesson on psychoanalysis and Freud's ideas, then shows how the projection theory can be applied to the atheists themselves, especially in light of Freud's ideas about Oedipus complex and such. Based on the well-known history of Freud, and other prominent atheists in history such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, and Jean-Paul Sartre, Vitz began to consider another possibility. After a disclaimer about the "limited acceptance to Freud's Oedipal theory," he goes on to describe the defective father hypothesis. That is, children whose fathers were absent, abusive, or otherwise defective in parenting may become atheists as a result: rejection of God as the ultimate form of father rejection.

Next, Vitz gives a series of brief biographical sketches about the early family lives of several noteworthy personages. First, he discusses Nietzsche, who famously said, "God is dead," and whose father died a few months before the younger Nietzsche turned five years old. Interestingly, the father had been a pastor and had suffered for a year from a brain disease before passing. Likewise, philosopher David Hume lost his father at a very young age. Though little else is known of his childhood, his father died when Hume was only two. Bertrand Russell is famous for his anti-Christian atheism, and his father died when he was four. Additionally, his mother died two years earlier. Bereft of both parents, his paternal grandparents took him, but his grandfather died two years after. Jean-Paul Sartre may not even have any clear memories of his father, as he died when Sartre was only 15 months old. His mother raised him alone until she remarried when he was 12 years old, and he strongly rejected his stepfather. A scant one year later, he decided God does not exist. Albert Camus lost his father at one year old. Arthur

Schopenhauer's father was frequently absent due to business trips, then apparently committed suicide when Schopenhauer was 17.

Following these whose father's died comes a section about abusive and weak fathers. Thomas Hobbes had a hostile father who was a vicar, and who skipped town after starting a fistfight with another parson. Jean Meslier became a priest because his father forced him to, and he subsequently wrote anti-Christian works as a priest. Voltaire (François -Marie Arouet) "wrote extensively about his father, [and] said virtually nothing in his favor." He despised his father so much he changed his name. Jean d'Alembert was born of a tryst, abandoned as an infant, and raised by a surrogate. He had only one visit with his biological father and none with his mother. Baron d'Holbach was raised by a maternal uncle and took said uncle's name, rejecting his birth father for being of low social status. Ludwig Feuerbach's father began openly having an affair with another woman when Feuerbach was nine, only moving back to live with his wife and family after his lover's death nine years later. Samuel Butler's father was violent and abusive, and a clergyman at that. Sigmund Freud's father was an embarrassment to Freud for his Jewish heritage and behavior, and Freud wrote that he was a "sexual pervert and that [his] own children suffered as a result" (small wonder that so much of Freud's ideas revolve around sexuality). H. G. Wells was distant from his father and held him in contempt, angry for his father's business failures. Some "minor atheists" are described next, John Toland, Richard Carlile, Robert Taylor, and some contemporary atheists, Madalyn Murray O'Hair and Albert Ellis, and their defective fathers are described.

Vitz then gives a review of prominent theists from the same time periods as the atheists examined. All 21 had positive relationships with their fathers or with a father figure. The contrast is sharp against the background of the previous chapters.

He briefly deals with the "substitute father" issue and talks about "political atheists" like Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Mao Zedong. He also gives treatment to the positive influences that fathers who are atheists have, and how a positive relationship with an atheist father can lead one to be an atheist. In this section, titled "Extensions and Qualifications," he also discusses the differences between men and women who have defective fathers, going into a rather strange discussion of radical feminists and lesbians, adding an additional note about other possible causes of atheism, such as powerfully negative experiences with clergy or churches.

Just before wrapping up the book with a conclusion, Vitz gives us some autobiographical information, explaining his former atheism and the reasons behind it. He categorizes his atheism and similar cases as "superficial atheism," based on social issues or personal issues rather than rejection of a father.

After spending 145 pages describing his defective father hypothesis, the biographical information that led him to such an idea, and some miscellany, he concludes with some words wrapping up the overall idea and exhorting the reader not to "forget or oversimplify the pain and the complex causes that lie behind

individual cases."

## **Critical Evaluation**

I first heard of this book in an article, "Unreasonable Doubt," in the magazine, *Christianity Today*.<sup>19</sup> Fascinated by the premise, and having previously read "Saved by an Atheist"<sup>20</sup> in the same magazine a few months prior, I determined I would one day read this book.

Upon locating the now-out-of-print book on Amazon.com, I was stunned to see a book originally listed at \$12.95 to be selling for \$20 and more. Secondly, I was struck by the fact that it seems to be a "love it or hate it" book, judging by a glance at the reviews. It averages three stars with a scant 45 reviews<sup>21</sup>, with 15 being five-star and 16 being one-star. Perusing the critical reviews<sup>22</sup> shows a group of angry and bitter individuals who fit the profile of intense atheist, mostly making straw man arguments about the premise of the book, then knocking down said straw man. Most of them seem entirely unaware of Dr. Vitz's standing in the academic community and specializations, and re-frame his arguments in fashions that do not accurately synopsise his directly stated intentions. That a minor (based on the number of reviews) volume such as this should provoke such vitriol from such a small percentage of the population is, in itself, fascinating.

Atheism has likely existed nearly as long as theism. In my years of reading a variety of Christian apologetics works, I have seen subject matter experts note that atheism is usually caused either by a traumatic incident that leads one to reject God as a proxy for rejecting certain people who claim to follow Him, or by a strong desire to escape accountability for libertine lifestyles. Other than being aware of Nietzsche's infamous "God is dead" quip, I had little awareness of the early origins of the New Atheist movement, where people go from simply lacking faith in the supernatural to actively opposing same. I had presumed it to be a natural outgrowth of the Enlightenment and pseudoscience like neo-Darwinism (not to be confused with legitimate scientific study of evolutionary ideas).

Similarly, I was unaware of the Vetter-Green (1932) and Caplovitz-Sherrow (1977) studies referenced in the textbook *Psychology of Religion* (Wulff, 1997) until I used said textbook in a Psychology of Religion course in my graduate studies. It would seem to me that Vitz built on a history of similar findings, though his failure to

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19 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/january/35.48.html>

20 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/august/28.40.html>

21 As of 2/15/2014.

22 In Amazon.com's parlance, "critical review" is a negative criticism, not "critical" in the sense of academic criticism, such as "the art of evaluating or analyzing works of art or literature" or "the scientific investigation of literary documents." (Merriam-Webster, 2012)

reference the earlier studies could indicate a lack of awareness of said. Given the dearth of material available on the subject of the causes of atheism, it is not entirely surprising that Vitz mentions nothing of earlier studies. In these aforementioned studies, it was discovered that members of an atheism advocacy group had "exceptionally prevalent ... [d]isturbances in childhood and adolescence" and that an increasingly poor relationship with one's parents correlates directly with increasing tendencies to reject religion. These findings, coupled with those in Faith of the Fatherless, match a statement made by a psychiatrist of my acquaintance: "Rejection of God is the ultimate father rejection."

But what to do with all this information? One might be tempted to pedantically declare atheism to be a symptom of some sort of mental illness. Indeed, it may be so at times, but we also have plenty of examples of mentally ill who not only believe in God but believe they are Jesus or Moses. With that said, one might be tempted to surmise that extreme positions, like atheism or delusions of being Jesus, could indicate a tendency in mental illness to gravitate toward something related to the supernatural, either in extremes of affirmation or rejection. Likewise, though, that would be needlessly speculative.

So, again, what good is this information? I think the author puts it best when he says:

Since both believers and nonbelievers in God have psychological reasons for their positions, one important conclusion is that in any debate as to the truth of the existence of God, psychology should be irrelevant. A genuine search for evidence supporting, or opposing, the existence of God should be based on the evidence and arguments found in philosophy, theology, science, history, and other relevant disciplines.

In the cases where psychological disturbances have led to atheism, I again defer to the author's words:

[W]e must not forget or oversimplify the pain and the complex causes that lie behind individual cases. And for those whose atheism was conditioned by a father who rejected, or denied, or hated, or manipulated, or physically or sexually abused, or abandoned them, there must be understanding and compassion.

I believe it would be safe to say that while this book is an important analysis of the historical bases for the New Atheist movement, and while it demonstrates how a father's influence on his children has far-reaching consequences, we should not dismiss atheism out of hand as nothing more than a mental disorder, or a symptom of a disorder.

## **The Negative Portrayal of Pagans in TV's *Supernatural* Series**

*Jessica Garza*

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According to Merriam-Webster online, a pagan is “a follower of a polytheistic religion.” Like most of the world however, Merriam-Webster online is not able to resist the distortion spread around by Christianity. Merriam-Webster online gives two definitions, the first one is straight-forward and more or less accurate, but the second one not only contradicts the first, but portrays pagans in a negative light. The second definition states that a pagan is “one who has little or no religion and who delights in sensual pleasures and material goods.” A large portion of the population, except for maybe asexual people, monks, and nuns, delights in sensual pleasures and material goods. Merriam-Webster online is just one example in many of the negative portrayal of pagans and wiccans in the world today.

People today don't really understand what a pagan is because of the Catholic Church. If someone were to gather five pagans and ask each of them individually what a pagan is, they would each say something different. Because of this fact and the Christian distortion of the truth, pagans are often portrayed negatively in modern media and pop culture. If the religion itself isn't portrayed as evil, then the people who practice it are portrayed as bad people. The best example of this negative portrayal of Paganism and those who practice it is CW's hit television series *Supernatural*, which not only portrays some benevolent gods as evil but insinuates that those who worship pagan gods are just as evil as vampires, windigos, and werewolves.

In essence, a pagan is a person who recognizes and worships many gods and goddesses, they worship the earth and forces of nature, and they celebrate Sabbaths that mark certain important times in the year, such as the solstices and equinoxes. There are many different kinds of pagans, which is why one would get five different definitions from five different pagans. There are those who worship in a coven, a group of fellow practitioners, then there are others who worship and practice on their own. They worship different deities from different cultures, some may mix and match. The most well-known pagan path is Wicca. Wiccans typically will pick one god and one goddess to worship above all the others, these are their patron god and goddess, but the Wiccan can still call on or seek favor from other gods. Wiccans celebrate the eight Sabbaths on the Wheel of the Year and generally follow three principles. The first is the Wiccan Rede which states, “An ye harm none, do as ye will.” This basically means a Wiccan can whatever she wants to as long as it doesn't hurt her or anyone else. The second is the Threefold Law which states that whatever a Wiccan sends out into the world returns to her threefold. This principle discourages sending curses to people or raising negative energy because it'll come back around to the original caster and it'll be worse. The last principle is the golden rule: treat others the way you want to be treated. These principles basically require a Wiccan to be benevolent. So then why are they portrayed as bloodthirsty, evil beings in *Supernatural*?

When Christians first came on the scene in Rome, they were persecuted and killed. This mostly happened because they refused to worship the emperor. Romans

worshiped the emperor as a God but the Christian faith doesn't allow a follower to worship "false gods." They would calmly refuse, then be put to death. It didn't bother them to die because they were dying martyrs which means they were automatically going to heaven. They *wanted* to die to prove their love for their God. The Roman citizens saw their devotion to their faith and became curious. Some of the Romans started converting but it was causing problems in Rome, it was causing a division. Emperor Constantine, being an intelligent man, sought to reunify his empire. He passed the Edict of Milan, outlawing persecution of Christians. Conversion rates grew and Constantine eventually just named Christianity the religion of Rome.

In order to help the existing pagans convert more easily to Christianity, the church adopted a lot of pagan holidays, rituals and symbols. The winter solstice celebration called Yule became Christmas and a celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. The Christmas tree, which is used today much more than it was when Christianity first started, is a leftover ritual of Paganism. The Tree symbolized that life would continue on even in the harsh winter months and was decorated to please the Horned God or Oak King. The colors of Christmas, red and green are pagan too. Red to bring the return of the warming sun and green to turn the earth green and fruitful again. Ostara or Eostre, the celebration of the spring equinox named for a Goddess of Dawn and Fertility of the same name, became the holiday of Easter. This holiday also kept a lot of the symbolism and rituals associated with the pagan holiday such as rabbits and the painting and hiding of eggs. There were still pagans throughout Europe after Constantine converted Rome, even though the different regions had different Gods and Goddesses, they all pretty much worshiped the same thing.

After a while, the church became powerful enough to turn the tide and start persecuting the Pagans. The Church took symbols and deities and said they were evil and connected with the Devil. They took certain holidays, particularly Beltane and Samhain, and said those were evil too. Samhain was the precursor to Halloween, and there are still churches today that put up billboards advertising "a safe alternative to Halloween" party. Because the church was burning pagans whenever they got the chance, a lot of them went underground or converted and gave up paganism. This means that everything we know now about pagans comes from scarce few resources and this is why there are so many forms of paganism. So much knowledge was lost and what remained was passed down in secret from mother to daughter. Paganism thrived secretly in families and not every family does things the same way. Not very many pagans could read or write and whatever books they had were burned by the church as well. This lack of information and church distortion makes it easier to understand why modern media depicts pagans and wiccans in a negative light, but given that this religion has made a resurgence and has many followers now, one would think the media would be more sensitive at how they portray this religion and its followers. Try finding a popular tv show that depicts Christians as ritual cannibals. It's impossible, no show like that exists. However, there are many shows that portray pagans and witches as evil murderers that will sacrifice a baby to ensure a good crop. There were some gods in the middle ages that demanded blood to be appeased but there are no modern pagans today that would even contemplate infanticide for the sake of a tomato plant.

Supernatural is a tv show that started in 2005 on the CW. This show follows two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester, as they drive across America saving people and hunting things because it's the family business. The Winchester's mother was killed by the yellow-eyed demon, Azazel, when Sam was six months old. Azazel stuck her to the ceiling and set her on fire, bringing down the Winchester's whole house. Their father became a hunter to avenge his wife. John Winchester raised his young sons, on the road and in seedy hotels, to be hunters. Before the start of season one, Sam has left his family to go to college and live a regular life. Most dads would be proud but John and Dean just felt betrayed. So far there have been eight complete seasons, the show is currently in its ninth season and has just been confirmed for season ten. In order to understand why the show portrays pagans and wiccans as bad people, one needs to understand the plot of the show.

Long story short, Sam and Dean end up causing the apocalypse when Sam accidentally frees Lucifer from his cage in hell. It's a huge war between angels and demons, and Sam and Dean are caught in the middle of it. Angels and demons have to possess people in order to appear on earth and this war is supposed to come down to an epic battle between the arch angel Michael and the fallen angel Lucifer. Michael and Lucifer both need vessels and those vessels happen to be Dean and Sam respectively. In the bible, Michael and Lucifer were brothers, just as close as the Winchesters, but they had a falling out because Michael wanted to obey God's (their father's) orders but Lucifer wanted to rebel. This pattern repeats itself in Sam and Dean. Dean will do anything their dad commands without question, he's been raised to be a good little soldier. Sam, however, rebels and questions and pushes his dad and eventually just goes his own way and attends college. The demons have been preparing Sam to be Lucifer's vessel since he was a baby. The demon who killed his mother infected Sam with demon blood which gave him certain powers later in life. Sam and Dean refuse to be vessels though because they don't want to kill each other. Eventually Sam says yes to Lucifer because the Winchesters find a way to reopen Lucifer's cage and Sam thinks he can trick Lucifer back into it. This is the basic plot line of seasons one through five.

Seasons six through eight expound more on the apocalypse and how it affected heaven and hell, talks a bit about purgatory, and introduces tablets and prophets that are supposed to be the words of God. The angels in heaven were all set to follow Michael into war and the demons in hell were all set to follow Lucifer into war, but because Sam trapped both Michael and Lucifer in Lucifer's cage, heaven and hell are leaderless. Crowley takes command of hell but there is a war going on in heaven with Castiel (an angel introduced in season four, friend of the Winchesters) on one side and Raphael on the other. Castiel needs something powerful in order to defeat Raphael and he enlists Crowley's help in finding Purgatory. Purgatory is full of souls and souls are powerful enough to help Cas. They find purgatory and open it and in doing so they release the very monsters that purgatory was built to contain. Season seven has Sam and Dean hunting down the monsters that Cas and Crowley inadvertently released. These creatures are called Leviathans and feed on human flesh, they're trying to turn the world into their own personal food plant. Sam and Dean's method of killing them is to behead them and then keep the head far away from the body lest it reform. They find a tablet that Cas



says is the word of God and the prophet Kevin, who became a prophet when the tablet was unearthed, tells them how to kill the Leviathans. Sam and Dean gather the ingredients and Dean kills the head Leviathan but he and Cas get sucked into purgatory with the Leviathan leader. Season eight introduces another tablet that shows the brothers a way to close the gates of hell permanently through the completion of three trials. At the same time, Castiel has met up with Metatron, the scribe of God, who convinces Cas to help him seal all the angels in heaven so they can sort out their problems. Sam and Dean complete two of three trials when Dean learns that if Sam is successful and closes the gate of Hell, he will die. Dean stops him in time but Sam is seriously injured, his internal organs are burned beyond compare and he goes into a coma. Meanwhile, Cas hears that Metatron has been tricking him and goes to confront him. Metatron subdues Cas and steals his grace, thus making Cas human and completing his own heaven trials. Metatron had said he wanted to lock the angels in heaven but his spell actually ends up expelling them all from heaven and locking the pearly gates, which had been his plan all along.

The story lines of the seasons of this show are very bible oriented. Seasons one through five were basically the book of Revelations. Lilith, the first demon created by Lucifer, had to break 66 seals in order to free Lucifer. Dean broke the first seal when he went to hell at the end of season three and Sam broke the last seal and released Lucifer when he was tricked into killing Lilith. The showdown between Michael and Lucifer is from the bible, as are the four horsemen. Sam and Dean defeat three of the four horsemen in order to get the key to Lucifer's cage. In the Supernatural universe, the bible, God, the devil, angels, and demons are all very real. Everything that came before Christianity is real too, pagan gods and the monster parents told their children about at night, all of these things are real and some are not very nice at all. Also, the bible and the church say that those who keep multiple gods and practice witchcraft are evil. So if the show depicts the bible as real then it stands to reason that everything in the bible is true, even though there is a resurgence of pagans and wiccans and they are mostly not evil. This shows portrayal of witches and pagans as bad people can make it hard for young people to come out of the broom closet.

The show has featured a few gods from pagan religions in some of the episodes but the show made them vengeful. Before Christianity, these gods were receiving regular tributes and gifts, and then, after everyone converted, these gods were forgotten but they were still in existence. Supernatural shows them killing people in order to survive. There are three distinct episodes that feature gods: Scarecrow in season one which features one of the Vanir, Fallen Idols in season five which features a Leshii, and Hammer of the Gods in season five which features a whole council of various gods.

In Scarecrow, a god from the old order of the Vanir in Norse mythology is taking one male and one female sacrifice each year in the town of Burkittsville, Indiana. The god takes the sacrifices in exchange for giving the town a good crop and keeping it safe. The townspeople know what is going on and willingly lure travelers into the farm where the god lives. Sam and Dean have split for this episode so Dean is working this case alone and he finds that the town had been settled by Scandinavians who brought over their gods and an apple tree, the oldest tree in the

Scarecrow's orchid. Dean figures that if he burns this tree then the god will die so he burns the tree. This episode actually represented the God accurately. The Vanir were a race of fertility and nature gods in Norse mythology who blessed their worshippers with good crops and protection in exchange for one male and female sacrifice each year. In Old Norse times, this sacrifice makes sense. The ancients' lives depended on their crops during the winter and the sacrifices decreased the number of mouths that needed feeding in their villages. In modern times, however, one farm isn't going to make or break a town. These townspeople were completely ok with killing other human beings so they could have some apples. So even though this episode portrays the god accurately, it makes it seem as though modern pagans are horrible people who would be ok with murder.

In *Fallen Idols*, Leshii, a pagan forest god who had been used to getting regular sacrifices, started killing people in Canton, Ohio by taking the form of whoever the victim admired most. Given the testament of witnesses, Sam and Dean believed they were hunting spirits. One victim's housekeeper saw him killed by Abraham Lincoln so it wasn't until they got word that Paris Hilton had killed a teenage girl that they realized they were not dealing with a spirit. According to myth, Leshii was a forest spirit that lured weary travelers into the woods and killed them. They were a story told to warn travelers against traveling while tired or straying into a dangerous area where they could be attacked by wild life, it also warned them not to deal with strangers on the road. Leshii were not worshipped as gods. The episode claimed that Leshii were given human sacrifices to ensure a good harvest but they were never given sacrifices because they just took what they wanted and they didn't give anything in return. They were seen as evil forest spirits. This is as inaccurate as a TV show in the future saying Americans gave sacrifices to Sasquatch in exchange for beef jerky.

In *Hammer of the Gods*, Sam and Dean's Impala breaks down outside of a motel in the middle of a storm. They decide to wait out the storm in the hotel but soon find out that something fishy is going on when the couple in the room next to theirs disappears. They then discover a large group of people, presumably hotel guests, in a room in the kitchen along with a human eyeball soup simmering on the stove. Apparently, a bunch of pagan gods from a bunch of different cultures called a meeting to discuss the Judeo-Christian apocalypse that is happening. These gods are Kali, Baldur, Odin, Mercury, Ganesh, Zao Shen and Baron Samedi. Gabriel, an archangel that's been hiding from heaven, shows up to the council as well under the disguise of Loki. This episode shows pagan gods in a somewhat good light in that they are concerned enough about the fate of the world to call a meeting to discuss how they will handle the apocalypse, but the episode also shows them catching and eating people which is bad and, in some cases, completely inaccurate. Zao Shen is a Chinese kitchen god and is shown cooking the people into food but myth states that he didn't consume human flesh, he preferred sweet flavors, like candy. Mercury and the Roman gods also detest the consumption of human flesh, going so far as to curse humans that practice cannibalism or who presume to serve human flesh to a God, so this episode can be seen as hugely inaccurate because Mercury would not sit by and allow others to consume human flesh in his presence. Also, it's unlikely that these Gods would even cooperate. Odin and Baldur are from the same

pantheon, but most Gods have strong, alpha type personalities. It just seems unlikely that any of them would peacefully reach a decision on anything. At the end of the episode, Lucifer comes in and kills everyone, subtly showing that Christianity is better than paganism.

In *Supernatural*, witches are seen to be monsters right up there with vampires and werewolves. Witches perform spells and rituals in order to harm others or benefit themselves. It's interesting to note that the Winchester brothers themselves are often seen performing spells and rituals as well but do not consider themselves evil monsters. In modern Wicca, practitioners call themselves witches and perform spells and rituals in order to benefit themselves and help others. *Supernatural* states that a witch gets his or her powers by making a deal with a demon, they're power comes directly from the devil. However, a majority of modern witches try to distance themselves from anything having to do with the devil because paganism doesn't have a devil or a hell. Magic is a force that is accessible to any human, some humans are good and some are bad, but Pagans don't believe in a supernatural force that causes or embodies evil like Christians do. However, the bible says pagans are bad so *Supernatural* says pagans are bad. Only one episode so far has almost managed to depict wiccans properly and that episode is *Malleus Maleficarum*, while two other episodes (It's the Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester and The Curious Case of Dean Winchester) have depicted witches as literally evil monsters.

In *Malleus Maleficarum*, a woman dies and Sam and Dean find a hex bag (used by witches as a sort of death curse) in her house. They know a witch is involved but later find the witch dead in her living room. At first they think its suicide but then Sam discovers a hex bag in her coffee table. Dean is all set to leave the town because he believes that the coven must be benevolent because it took out the rogue murderous witch. Sam, however wants to kill the coven because they are still witches and they did kill someone. They investigate and find the coven. After some digging they discover that the women in the coven have had recent streaks of good fortune, showing that some witches just use their power to better their own lives, but they also discover that a demon has infiltrated the coven. Sam goes to kill the demon and confronts the coven who claim to have never hurt anyone. The women honestly thought that the other witch had committed suicide out of guilt for having committed murder. The demon that infiltrated the coven ended up killing the other coven members and then was killed by Dean. This episode portrays witches accurately in that they were legitimately peaceful and were working spells to improve their home and business life, not spells to harm anyone. Also, when the witch at the beginning dies, one can argue that the threefold law took effect because she used her magic to kill someone and ended up being killed herself. What is inaccurate about this episode is how they show the witches worshipping and where the show claims they got their power. Towards the middle of the episode, the coven is seen kneeling around an old book on a coffee table and chanting about worshipping the book of shadows. A book of shadows is usually written by the coven or solitary witch, it's a sort of journal cataloguing the witch's or coven's journey through witchcraft so no two Book of Shadows are the same. The book of shadows can include spells the coven has worked, information they think might be important, or

something as mundane as a dream journal entry; it's not some god that witches pray to and it is not the source of any sort of power. The demon also reveals that witches obtain their magical powers through a pact with a demon. She says that witches practically sell their souls to a demon in exchange for power. The women in the coven remember speaking the words and calling on dark powers but they thought it was just words. As stated before, this is just not accurate at all because pagans don't have a devil. In this episode, the real monster was the demon that infiltrated the peaceful coven, but all the witches in the coven were killed anyways.

There are two more distinct episodes that feature witches and one of those is It's The Great Pumpkin, Sam Winchester. In this episode, a brother and sister witch team are trying to raise the demon-god of Halloween, Samhain, who, once risen, can bring forth more monsters from hell. Success would mean another of the 66 seals of the apocalypse being broken. They need three blood sacrifices in order to raise him and, by the time the Winchester's show up, they have two of three. Sam and Dean bust in right as the brother is about to sacrifice the sister, so Sam shoots him, but the sister just keeps going with her spell. Thanks to Sam, she now has her three blood sacrifices and Samhain rises. Sam and Dean rush to kill him but Dean get delayed by some zombies in a crypt. Sam continues on alone and ends up exorcising Samhain using his demon-blood powers. In this episode, the witch brother and sister team want to seriously harm the world. Modern witches worship nature and these witches in Supernatural just wanted to see everything burn. Also, Samhain is not a demon or a god, it's a Sabbath. It's the pagan new year, when the light half of the year ends and the dark half begins, it signifies that days are going to get darker and colder because winter is coming. The only thing this episode gets right is that the ancients believed that this was the time of the year when the veil between the living and the dead was at its thinnest. This Sabbath is kind of like Dia de los Muertos in Mexico, people celebrated the lives those who had passed that year so it was a time of remembrance. Also, again, this witch team had no problem killing innocent people just to serve their own agenda.

In The Curious Case of Dean Winchester, Sam and Dean are investigating strange deaths. Middle aged victims are dying of old age, and one old man has disappeared. Sam and Dean find the old man, who is now a young man, at a seedy motel. They find out that all these people played poker with an Irish fellow at a pub, only they weren't betting with money, they were betting with time. Specifically, years of life, with each player generally getting twenty five chips, or years of their life. Bobby, Sam and Dean's older family friend, ends up playing with the witch and ages twenty five years. Dean, fearing that Bobby's going to die now, plays the game, but asks for fifty chips and immediately gives twenty five to Bobby. He ends up losing and aging twenty five years. Sam has to play and distract the witch so Bobby and Dean can work a spell, given to them by the witch's wife, that will reverse every spell the man has cast in the town but Sam ends up winning and returning Dean to normal. The witch in this episode isn't necessarily bad. He purposely lost a hand and gave a man thirteen years of life so the man would be able to see his granddaughter's bar mitzvah. The witch man is unnecessarily cruel to the Winchester's though. He gives Sam magical gonorrhoea and refuses to let Dean try to play for his life back. He says he doesn't want to be a killer and points out that if

Dean played and lost, he would die. However, the first victim that Sam and Dean investigate had been 24 and had died of old age, meaning that the witch did not mind killing people. At each game, the witch hands out twenty five chips, so he must have let that one person play at least two games. This episodes show the witches as neutral beings that like to mess with the balance of things. Everyone has a certain time that they are supposed to die but he was extending and shortening lives which is not good. This witch was playing god. He had extended his wife's life a great deal, which caused her to be depressed because she had watched her daughter grow up and die.

In conclusion, modern pagans and wiccans are peaceful, nature loving people. Because of the Christian church, pagans and wiccans have a negative reputation that gets displayed a lot in media. The TV show *Supernatural* is one of the TV shows that seems to prefer the negative portrayal of Witches that has been spread around by the church. This show portrays not only witches, wiccans and pagans as inherently evil people bent on world destruction, but claims that all the Gods and Goddesses that were worshipped by ancient humanity were evil as well. The show's portrayal of pagans and wiccans is understandable because their plot line follows biblical myth, but this portrayal can make life difficult for young pagans and wiccans.

### Biographical Note

**Jessica Garza** is a History major and Anthropology minor in her senior year at Stephen F. Austin State University. She is both pagan and a huge fan of the television show *Supernatural*, hence this paper. She is interested in learning about British history, ancient history, and about other cultures and religions throughout the world. She hopes to move to England after she finishes college and become an anthropologist or historian like her aunt.

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## **Smoke and Mirrors: The Delphic Oracle's Place in the Religion of Ancient and Classical Greece**

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### **Introduction**

Throughout history, human beings have always sought to know their fates. The future, that great unknowable, calls us all like a siren out of legend, especially to those of faith. The methods used to untangle it, however disparate they may be, all seek the same thing: knowledge and hope about what needs to be done or what cannot be stopped. One such method of divination was not really divination at all, but a priestess who spoke with the voice of a god- in a word, an oracle. And in the ancient world, there was one who ruled them all from a tripod stool at the foot of a mountain.

The Oracle of Delphi, "the most popular of the Greek oracles"<sup>1</sup>, held her court at the Temple of Apollo in the city she was named for, on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. Her title, given by Apollo and named for a dragon, became synonymous with wisdom and divine guidance for the entirety of Greece until the beginning of the Christian era<sup>2</sup>. What this article will investigate is the influence and place of the Oracle in the myths, beliefs, and practices of Ancient and Classical Greece. However, to get to that point, it is necessary to understand her place in the stories that formed the backbone of Hellenistic faith.

### **The Mythological Approach**

While not known to history, Greek myth knows very well how the Oracle was born. As might be imagined, it begins with the god Apollo, new to the world and seeking a place to build his temple. Eventually, after walking over all of Greece, he comes to the foot of Mount Parnassus, and declared,

"In this place I am minded to build a glorious temple to be an oracle for men, and here they will always bring perfect hecatombs, both they who dwell in rich Peloponnesus and the men of Europe and from all the wave-washed isles, coming to question me. And I will deliver to them all counsel that cannot fail, answering them in my rich temple."<sup>3</sup>

But he was not the first of immortal blood to make his home in the shadow of Parnassus. Before Apollo, there was Python.

Python, a she-dragon and a daughter of Gaia, set as a protector of the Navel-stone, the center of the world, had long lived in a nearby cave next to a spring and fed on the local human population. Angry at Apollo for his trespass into her territory, she attacked him, only to be slain by Apollo's silver arrows. However, he had polluted himself with this act, the slaying of a child of the Earth. In recompense and

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1 Fontenrose, 1978, p. 1

2 *ibid*, p. 5

3 Homer, n.d., ln. 287-293

an attempt at purification, he established his oracle in her name, calling the temple-ground Pytho and the oracle herself Pythia<sup>4</sup>. Her bones became the foundations of the temple, and in some versions of the story, her corpse emanated the vapors that triggered the Oracle's visions (more on that later) via decomposition, or *πύθειν* (pythein, to rot), thus the name Python in the stories, and possibly why Homer refers to her as Typhaeon instead, while later authors used this name<sup>5</sup>. As an interesting etymological sidenote, the verb *πύθειν* contains the Greek root *πύθ* (pyth-), which is associated with learning and information, connecting it with *πνευθο*, meaning news. This connection is interesting, as it links decomposition (of the dragon) to knowledge given by the Oracle<sup>6</sup>

The Oracle's role in the mythos of Greek culture is both glaringly obvious and largely unspoken. Most of the myths involving the Oracle use the gods themselves in a distant, uncommunicative manner, though there are exceptions, most notably in the story of Herakles. Therefore, she acts as a mouthpiece of the gods, giving various noble and common characters assistance, advice, and knowledge of the future, without the need for direct divine intervention.

Oedipus famously visited the Pythia once, and sent his brother-in-law/uncle another. Herakles consulted the Oracle (rather disruptively) for the rites of purification after his murder of Megara and his children. Orestes sought the means by which he could end the curse on his family, and later, end the madness that had haunted him since. Even Perseus, protected as he was by Hermes and Athena, went to Delphi, admittedly only to find the Pythia of little aid due to more direct divine intervention<sup>7</sup>.

Her words are not always believed, and indeed, are sometimes flagrantly ignored to the seeker's own peril. Indeed, at times she seems to bear the same curse as the Trojan princess Cassandra, able to see but never be believed or understood. Oedipus flatly rejects her call for him not to return to his homeland, because he would kill his father and marry his mother. He refused to believe that he would ever do such a thing, and yet did so in the course of the story, completely unknowingly. Such is the power of the Oracle's sight, and the danger of ignoring her warnings.

### **The Historical Approach**

The factual origin of the Oracle, and indeed, the city of Delphi itself, has been lost to history. There is some archaeological evidence to put its origins in the Mycenaean period, around the eighth or seventh century B.C.E.<sup>8</sup>, but it's more likely that the Greeks simply adopted a pre-existing religious locale and rededicated it to Apollo<sup>9</sup>. There, at the temple, a young priestess given the title Pythia began to dispense advice and prophesy as if from the lips of the gods themselves.

How she was able to do this is ultimately unknown, but many classical

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4 Littleton, 1986, p. 87

5 Homer, n.d.

6 Dr. O. Smith, personal communication, 11 February 2014

7 Hamilton, 1942

8 Fontenrose, 1978, p. 4

9 Littleton, 1986, p. 77

historians and modern-day scholars have attributed this to "the presence of a *pneuma enthusiastikon*, or 'inspirational exhalation'"<sup>10</sup>. This smoke or vapor, emanating from cracks in the rock beneath her tripod stool, was said to induce what is called a mantic, or prophetic, state. After inhaling, the Pythia would speak in an altered state, delivering the answer to the question presented to her. The precise identity of this smoke is as mysterious as the Oracle's origin. Some have speculated geological phenomena, others a hidden brazier with burning henbane seeds or opium. Littleton suspects marijuana, available in the Near East and Mediterranean at the time, was the agent in question<sup>11</sup>. However, little archaeological or geological evidence supports any conclusion, as tectonic activity in the centuries since seems to have shifted any possible shafts, cracks, or theorized subterranean hollows where priests burn herbs to induce this effect, if any such things ever existed<sup>12</sup>. Joseph Fontenrose, the premier scholar to research the Oracle of Delphi, suspected simply a ruse in the vein of modern fortune-telling, and that the *pneuma* was simply a fanciful addition to history<sup>13</sup>.

Another source of contention and confusion is the exact practices at play. Vandenberg describes a long series of purification rites and a possible procedure of question and response, some parts of which is taken out of Plutarch, others inferred from gaps in the historical record<sup>14</sup>. However, those gaps cannot be ignored. Both Vandenberg and Fontenrose mention the use of priests as intermediaries between the Oracle and the questioner<sup>15</sup>. But this idea seems to take power out of the hands of the Oracle and into the hands of her attendant priests, even though "every ancient source without exception or modification presents the *Pythia* as issuing oracular responses"<sup>16</sup>. However, so much remains unknown or unremembered about the historical context and active practice that birthed the Pythia's prophecies.

No matter the source of the prophecies, it is clear that the Oracle's influence on Greece, and later Rome, was incredible. She was consulted by cities and kings, armies and thinkers, and everyone in between. Such names as Xenophon, Agesipolis, Philip of Macedon, and Athens as a whole can be found in lists of the supplicants to this mouthpiece of the gods<sup>17</sup>. From this, it becomes obvious that she was seen as a voice of wisdom and authority, someone to be listened to- a powerful position for anyone, and especially for a young unmarried woman of the day. However, with the spread of Christianity came the distrust of pagan religious practices, and the Roman emperor Theodosius ordained all such practices illegal in 391 C.E., rendering the Oracle at Delphi defunct and her temple left to ruin. Today, the city of Delphi is a tourist destination, hearkening back to its ancient heritage, a time when Delphi was the center of pilgrimage for the pious and the questioning.

## The Functional Approach

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10 *ibid*, p. 77

11 *ibid*, p. 78-82

12 Dempsey, 1918, p. 59

13 1978, p. 6

14 1982, p. 128-132

15 Vandenberg, 1982, p. 146-147; Fontenrose, 1978, p. 6)

16 Marizio, 1995, p. 72

17 Fontenrose, 1978, p. 248-252



Despite all we have learned, the question still remains of the role the Oracle played in the religious tradition of Ancient Greece and in the cultural fabric as a whole. It takes little interpretation to see the death of Python and the subsequent founding of a temple to Apollo as a metaphor for the transition between older primeval religions and the Greek pantheon of classical antiquity. Python certainly fits the mold of a cthonic deity, having been born from the Earth and making her home in a cave near a spring. And it is easy to see the Oracle as a final holdout from the old shamanic traditions, given the emphasis on purification presented in many of the myths involving the Oracle<sup>18</sup>. But the Pythia was no mere plot device or metaphor; she legitimately changed the face of the world, as "the oracular pronouncements once guided battles and thereby made world history"<sup>19</sup>. She existed for so long and had so much influence for one reason: her existence fulfilled a need.

The actual mechanics of the Oracle straddle the line among several anthropological "specialist" roles. The use of trance states and direct contact with the spirit world would mark her as a shaman, but as a representative of humanity to the gods, and vice versa, the Pythia acts as a priestess. Her ability to predict the future through ritualistic means would make her a diviner, but she was a mouthpiece of the gods, as is the role of the prophet<sup>20</sup>. This unique position makes it near-impossible to easily classify the Oracle in any standard ethnographic terms, as she fulfilled many roles in a fragmented but still somewhat united semi-tribalistic imperial civilization.

But none of this answers that central need, the Oracle's *raison d'être*. No scholar researched for this article answers this question, or even tries, preferring history or comparative mythology to the function of such a person, without descending into demeaning terminology such as "primitive" or "fraudulent". Herbert Parke, according to one source, claims that either the Oracle was a charlatan, or she was deceived by her own psychotic states<sup>21</sup>. This seems needlessly fraught with cultural imperialism, and denies any possibility that Greek religion sought the same thing as all religions: explanation of the natural, and validation of human consciousness. Some use animistic spirits, some use nature gods, some rely on an omnipotent deity, but all have that same function. With that in mind, it becomes necessary to actually identify the function of the Oracle at Delphi, and the other Oracles in Greek religion, such as the ones at Dydima, Acheron, and Dodoma.

So, this author shall try: The Oracle, the mouthpiece of Apollo, existed for one reason: to ensure humanity of the existence and guidance of divine affairs on human affairs- in short, proving that there was a future for people, and that Almighty Zeus had *moira*, destiny, well in hand. She was proof that the gods watched, and served as a way to answer the impossible questions of "should I" or "what must I", in a way they could understand; in essence, she held divinity's mirror on humanity. This peace of mind, this icon of guidance and destiny, changed the world and was an inextricable part of the Greek fabric of religion for nearly a millennium and possibly more.

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18 Littleton, 1986, p. 87

19 Vandenberg, 1982, p. 214

20 Stein & Stein, 2011, p. 119-132

21 Vandenberg, 1982, p. 143

## Conclusion

The Pythia, the Oracle at Delphi, was a central figure in both the historical religion and the literary and mythological traditions of Greece. She was the mouthpiece of divine Olympus, though she held court at a lesser hill. Her visions, sometimes vague and couched in riddles, sometimes clear and unambiguous, gave men hope that the gods watched and aided, and that their lives had purpose and could be made better. The presence of the Oracle was tangible and unassailable proof that the world of men was part of something grander and more complex than they could bring to imagine, though imagine they did. This cornerstone of faith became a central guidance figure in the stories they were raised on, and passed down to the modern age. That, beyond all her words and unknown history, is a legacy for the ages, and one that will end only when humanity forgets the tales of our past, which, in this age, has become increasingly unlikely. Therefore, the spirits of the Pythiai can all rest easily, knowing their words shall inspire and instruct for generations to come.

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