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ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

The 2022 Annual Proceedings
of the ASSR

Edited by:
Jon K. Loessin
Wharton County Junior College

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2022 Annual Meeting
March 4-6, 2022

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion

Presents

The Year 2022 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR

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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 editor for *The Year 2022 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 talents who bring with them new styles and topics. In addition to our professional academic papers, the ASSR also includes student papers in the *Proceedings* as submitted and presented at the annual meeting, and in addition to the Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research for professional papers, two student awards are now available—the Harry Hale Prize for Graduate and Undergraduate Research.

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 is has been, what it is, and what it hopes to become. Joining the ASSR only costs $20.00 yearly (or a one-time $100 lifetime membership) and your support and participation in our yearly sessions and helping to make them successful by writing and presenting papers, chairing sessions, contributing to the *Proceedings,* and attending the presentations of others. It is important for our future that every member of the ASSR not only encourages new membership at every opportunity but solicits scholars throughout the colleges, universities, and organizations at which you reside to become involved in our group through chairing sessions, writing and submitting papers, or serving as an officer.

I hope all of you have a good year and the ASSR will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2022-2023. Be sure to visit us online at: www.assronline.org, complete with online publications of papers from past meetings (see the **Archives** on the site). Hopefully you will share this site with colleagues and students alike. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Jon K. Loessin, 2021-2022 ASSR President/Editor

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"Persons" Living with Dementia:
Toward a *Christian* Ethic of Care

Ben D. Craver
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Recent research[1] indicates that higher levels of religiosity among persons living with dementia seem to correlate with a slower cognitive and behavioral decline, and a corresponding significant reduction of the caregiver's burden. As part of a caregiving team, I will argue that Christian ministers have a moral obligation to establish a caring domain that includes not only pastoral care, but also an acknowledgment of the benefits of religion and spirituality. To do so, I will take as a starting point, Nel Noddings' ethic of care. I will propose a new application of the ethic of care in the context of a Christian caring ministry, referring to it as a *Christian ethic of care*. I will conclude by applying this ethic to dementia, viewing the minister as the face of a comprehensive Christian ethic of care.

The research on religiosity and dementia

Researchers have found that dementia patients who engage in private religious activities in the discipline of spirituality demonstrate a "slower cognitive decline"[2] than those who do not. Coin et al. identify the research issue with a single question which forms the title of their article: "Does religiosity protect against cognitive and behavioral decline in Alzheimer's dementia?"[3] The answer is a guarded, but confident yes.

Kaufman et al. made use of the *Duke University Religion Index*, a sociological tool intended to gage both organizational and private religious and spiritual practices. The *Duke Index* has a trio of subscales: attendance at religious events; regular private religious practices; and self-stated, core religious beliefs and practices.[4]

The study excluded two of the Duke subscales since they were linked to the patient's physical well-being—attendance at religious events and self-stated core religious beliefs and practices. Attendance was excluded since dementia patients, especially the elderly and those in late-stage dementia, will typically be unable to attend public religious services and events due to mobility difficulties. Self-rated religiosity, like attendance, was excluded due to the fact that religiosity is frequently linked to one's capacity to attend public religious events. Since dementia patients,

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[1] A. Coin, E. Perissinotto, M. Najjar, A. Girardi, E.M. Inelmen, G. Enzi, E. Manzato, G. Sergi, "Does Religiosity Protect Against Cognitive and Behavioral Decline in Alzheimers Dementia?" *Current Alzheimer Research* 7:5 (July, 2010): 445-52. DOI: 10.2174/156720510791383886; and Yakir Kaufman, David Anaki, Malcolm Binns, and Morris Freedman, "Cognitive decline in Alzheimer disease: Impact of spirituality, religiosity, and QOL," *Neurology* 68 (2007): 1509-1514.

[2] Kaufman et al., 1511. Their tests and results are "consistent with studies that show the impact of spirituality/religiosity on other disease states." Further, they note that "increased participation in private religious activities was associated with health status such as longer survival, better health behaviors, and lower blood pressure."

[3] Coin et al., 445.

[4] Kaufman et al., 1510.

often frail and elderly, are unable to attend religious events, they typically rate their religiosity lower than younger, more mobile dementia patients.[5]

Only one subscale remains—regular private religious practices. In older, infirmed, and/or cognitively impaired dementia patients, religiosity or spirituality is likely "better expressed through private religious activities"[6] which, as noted above, may result in slower cognitive decline. This means that personal religious activities function as rationally assessable correctives affecting in positive ways the health and well-being of dementia patients and, as a result, an easing of the burdens of their caregivers. The research points to the "cognitive penetrability of religious experience."[7] Further, the research underscores a valid reason for encouraging continuation of personal religious experiences in dementia patients and still others facing debilitating diseases.

To follow-up on this insight, I will propose a framework for a distinctively Christian ethic of care formulated around Noddings' secular ethic of care. My position is not new, but rather a new *application* of an ethic of care. A Christian ethic of care still acknowledges the validity of Noddings' "motivational displacement" theory:

> When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for. This does not mean that I will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead him or her to a *better set of values*, but I must take into account the feelings and desires that are actually there and respond as positively as *my values and*
> *capacities* allow.[8]

A Christian ethic of care will indeed guide and influence the caregiver to care for the needs and wants of a particular person or patient. Further, the minister or other Christian caregiver will consistently strive to respond out of their particular set of values and guide the person or patient toward those values. Before defining the specific values of a Christian ethic of care, I will turn to a brief assessment of Noddings' ethic of care.

Noddings' Ethic of Care

What is an ethic of care? I will begin this section of the paper by identifying some key features of the ethic of care developed by Noddings, and subsequently evaluate and critique them in light of a distinctively Christian ethic. There are similarities, but there is also a significant foundational gap between the two.

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[5] Kaufman et al., 1511.

[6] Kaufman et al., 1511. Coin et al., 445, concede that "little is known about religiosity in Alzheimers disease and the progression of its cognitive, behavioral and functional symptoms." The study by Kaufman et al. provides a significant advance of knowledge. However, they, too, recognize that much remains to be studied, including: studying a larger sample size, adding more variables to the study (socioeconomic status, social support, medications, etc.), studies over time, and quality of life (see 1512).

[7] For this descriptive term, I am in debt to the insights of Hamid Vahid, "Religious Diversity: The Cognitive Penetrability of Religious Perception," *Faith and Philosophy* 35:2 (April 2018), 219.

[8] Nel Noddings, "Caring in Education," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (2005). URL: www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm. Emphases are mine.

According to Noddings, an ethic of care derives from the ethical ideal. It is grounded in an ethical dualism—that is, from the *caregiver's* own ethical ideal and from the *caring community* which shares in some measure those ideals.[9]

Noddings identifies a second dualism in the caring relationship—the *one-caring* and the *cared-for.*[10] In an ideal caring situation, Noddings recognizes that one human person (the *cared-for)* should have a longing to receive care while, at the same time, another human person (the *one-caring)* responds positively to the request for help and comfort. Noddings explains: "In caring, we accept the natural impulse to act on behalf of the present other. We are engrossed in the other."[11]

Noddings labels this the "I must" of an ethic of care. The "I must" is a "feeling"[12] or, as she explains, it is "our best picture of ourselves caring and being cared for."[13] For Noddings, an ethic of care emerges within a community. It is from within a particular community that persons begin to form an identity and develop societal connections with others. In an ethic of care, then, caring for a community of persons with whom we have formed relationships grounds the ethic.[14] "I must" care because, in the community, I know have *experienced* care. Despite the "musts," Noddings concedes that caring can be accepted or rejected.[15]

The care that Noddings delineates may be understood regrettably as privatized caring, in distinction from a care of the general public. That is, the care which she describes takes place within a community of persons with whom a caregiver has a personal relationship. It is grounded not in a Kantian duty, but in attentiveness, as persons are "engrossed in the other." It is not consequentialist focusing on "how things turn out" as others extend care. Rather, Noddings evaluates the integrity of an ethic of care "in an examination of what I considered, how fully I received the other, and whether the free pursuit of his projects is partly a result of the completion of my caring in him."[16]

There is much more to an ethic of care than this brief overview provides. While Noddings may justly be criticized for a privatized ethic of care, the kinships between her approach and a Christian ethic of care are close, as might be expected. There is, in fact, an increasing applicability of care ethics to a variety of human relationships and disciplines. Care ethics today ranges "from the moral to the political realm, from

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[9] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 101.

[10] Noddings, *Caring*, 78.

[11] Noddings, *Caring*, 83; for Noddings, "engrossed" refers to attentiveness.

[12] Noddings, *Caring*, 79.

[13] Noddings, *Caring,* 80.

[14] Louis J. Pojman and James Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 9th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017), 184.

[15] Noddings, *Caring*, 83.

[16] Noddings, *Caring*, 80-81.

personal to public relationships, from the local to the global, from feminine to feminist virtues and values, and from issues of gender to issues of power and oppression more generally."[17] It would seem that still another application of an ethic of care emphasizing a modest shift from the secular to the religious is valid. The fundamental question with which I must grapple is whether (or not) Noddings' ethic of care can be reasonably maintained in the context of a Christian interpretation; i.e., a Christian ethic of care.

A *Christian* Ethic of Care

As noted above (p. 3), a Christian ethic of care will, following Noddings' lead, guide and influence the Christian caregiver to care for the needs and wants of a particular person or patient. Further, Christian caregivers will relentlessly strive to respond out of their particular set of values and guide the person or patient toward those values.

What are the significant aspects and values of a Christian ethic of care? To answer this question is to sketch out guiding principles that form philosophical prolegomena aligned with basics of Christian faith. In keeping with Noddings' proposals, first, a Christian ethic of care includes the one-caring and the one(s) cared-for. Second, the community of like-minded persons crucial for experiencing an understanding of care is located in the Christian church. The church has a universal presence, but most caring environments are composed of residents who comprise a local, concrete organization. Social organizations like the church are then seedbeds for maturing healthy relationships. Third, Christian care is grounded in the "love ethic of God"[18] as identified in the Christian Scriptures.

That does not suggest, however, that a Christian ethic of care is restricted to a particular community or offered to persons with whom one has an existing relationship; rather, Christian caring may be offered to any person. The biblical account of the Good Samaritan teaches that anyone experiencing personal tragedy should be counted as a "neighbor" or community member and given appropriate care (cf. Luke 10:25-37).

An important question that such external cases pose is what sort of epistemic stimulus provides one with the essential "community experience" so critical in Noddings' thinking? The driving force in a Christian ethic of care is revelational and focused on Christ. The teachings of Christ and of those who subsequently interpreted his words and actions provide the grist for a universal ethic of care. However, revelation, or Scripture, was not given primarily to terrify people into obeying a body of unachievable commandments or practicing universally agreed-upon ethical principles. Instead, Scripture draws people to God and, ethically, to each other forming a community and personal identity.

Christian ethicist Stan Grenz explains: "The precepts and moral principles found within the pages of Scripture serve the Bible's central purpose, namely, to

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[17] Christine Koggel and Joan Orme, "Care Ethics: New Theories and Applications," *Ethics and Social Welfare* 4:2 (July 2010), 109-114. DOI: 10.1080/17496535.2010.484255.

[18] D. Leslie Hollon, Christian pastor, interview by the author, San Antonio, TX, November 14, 2019.

facilitate fellowship or community."[19] Scripture is foundational to a Christian ethic of caring. Noddings, however, develops the ethic of care from a purely humanistic perspective devoid of any need for God. Any act of caring points to the morality of the person caring. And, while noting similarities between an ethic of care and Christian ethics, Noddings' ethic of care requires only "human love and human caring."[20] A Christian ethic of care requires the love of God, universal application of care, the community of the church, and relationships both internal and external to the church.

Pastoral Ministry to Persons with Dementia:
Toward a Christian Ethic of Care

I deliberately chose the term "pastoral" for this part of the paper, since the minister or pastor is typically the face of a corporate Christian ethic of care. Of course, the ministry could be completed by anyone within the Christian community at any time. The irony is that there is a theologically compelling relationship between persons living with dementia and those providing Christian care. David Keck labels Alzheimer's as "the theological disease," and chides Christians in particular for the "surprising lack of sustained theological engagement" with associated dementia diseases.[21] So, what does this mean for a person living with dementia (the *cared*-for), and for the Christian caregiver (the one-*caring*)?

I will now describe a Christian ethic of care from two perspectives: a *theological* perspective which grounds the Christian caring of persons, and a *practical* perspective which sets forth a Christian ethical model for caring for persons with dementia. Here, "persons" means more than a generic term; it has epistemic significance. "Persons" have identity, even if they no longer recall who they are. Lack of recall does not suggest that somehow, they are no longer "persons" in a body and possessing an identity. Someone knows them even if they cannot recall. More to the point for Christian caring, God knows them and will not abandon them (cf. Hebrews 13:5).

Theological Reflections

If, as I advocate, persons living with dementia are still "persons," what does that mean, and how does our understanding of a person affect the way we care? A theological understanding of "persons" originates in the Hebrew Scripture and, in particular, Genesis 1:26-27. In these verses, God is said to create persons and invest them with the "image of God." Whatever else that phrase means, persons have an

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[19] Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 245. Grenz believes that the aim of Noddings' proposals was to "develop a type of virtue ethic" (192), although he admits that Noddings' focus was formulated around an "impulse to care" and to "live in the context of caring relationships" (193). For her part, Noddings concedes that caring has affinities to virtue. However, she connects virtue to discussions of the ethical ideal. However, she wants nothing to do with the dissipation of virtue to the point of "abstract categories" (80). Rather, for Noddings, all efforts to describe the ethical ideal of caring depends upon relationships. See Noddings, *Caring*, 80-81.

[20] Noddings, *Caring*, 29.
[21] David Keck, *Forgetting Whose We Are: Alzheimer's Disease and the Love of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 13, 41.

ontological primacy to other elements in the created order. Despite the figurative transcendent distance between the Creator and the created, persons are valued, loved, and brought close to God through the "image of God." It is this that gives persons their "inalienable identity."[22]

As those of great value to God, it is implausible to think of persons living with dementia as mere "patients" or residents in a care facility. They do not exist for the sake of future medical advances nor to acquire information for the sole benefit of probing physicians. Above all, persons living with dementia must not become "the basis for endless documentation of [their] deficits."[23]

Quite the opposite; in theological terms, a person living with dementia, the cared-*for*, enjoys the same "image of God" as the one-*caring*. Thus, in creation, God instituted the dual relationship between himself and persons, and persons to other persons. As bearers of the "image of God," Christian caregivers are relationally bound to seek the best for others. Is it possible to see in a person living with dementia the possibility of a better life, one which has pleasure? A person who possesses an inherent dignity?[24] Offering a distinctively Christian ethic of care emerges from a recognition of the dignity "persons" retain as bearers of the "image of God." What do we find in a Christian ethic of care?

Person-al Caring

Persons living with dementia are like every other person; they are living a journey that will eventually culminate in death. Those persons living with dementia, even those in advanced stages, need care that exhibits the love of God. Christian love cannot be delivered by therapy or pharmaceuticals. A Christian ethic of care originates through *personal* ("persons") relationships formed and maintained until death by a Christian caregiver.

As noted above, in Christian churches, the face of care is most often the pastor, although there is typically no shortage of persons willing to make periodic visits to persons living with dementia.[25] The shortcoming is that periodic visits fail to establish the vital relationship necessary in providing faithful Christian care. Often, these kinds of visits are little more than fulfilling a religious duty or a job. What, then, can a Christian ethic of care pick out that linguistically defines the adjectival "Christian," as well as, the nominal "ethic of care"? Can Noddings move us forward in our quest?

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[22] Walter Brueggemann, "Genesis," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 31.

[23] Rosalie Evelyn Hudson, "God's Faithfulness and Dementia: Christian Theology in Context," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 28:1-2 (2016), 53. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2015.1041669.

[24] See Hudson, 54-55, who explains, "Dignity, in the framework of Christian contextual theology being argued here, is not dependent on persons' autonomous decision-making capacity; neither is it dependent on their ability to communicate their suffering or their rationality . . ." as in Kant. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 41.

[25] Methodist Bishop Will Willimon highlights the mutual responsibility of Christian communal caring, gently reminding pastors "not to rob the laity of their call to care." See William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 106.

A Christian ethic of care exists within a discernably different caring domain. Noddings' ethic of care was defined by "deep psychological structures"[26] with no need for divine intervention.[27] In a distinctively Christian ethic of care, however, the domain shifts from psychological to pastoral[28], from a superfluous God to an indispensable and gracious God whose love is expressed in caring, long-term relationships. In other words, a Christian ethic of care is contextualized in a vibrant pastoral theology.

What are the significant components of a Christian ethic of care? To state these components in action-oriented verbs, I propose four: care, relate, love, teach.[29] Unpacking these verbs and relating them to Noddings' ethic of care is not, however, as facile as it appears. I will begin with what I trust is a normative view of caring in a Christian theological context.[30]

First, pastoral caregivers must witness to God's continuing faithfulness to persons living with dementia and their families. God has not abandoned either of them, although at times it may certainly appear so. Pastoral caregiving consists of open and honest discussion about dementia, of what can be expected throughout the course of the disease, and in defining the support available for them.

Second, offer more than mere acquaintance. Pastoral caregivers work to establish strong relationships; they "get to know" both the person with dementia, their family members, and the caregiving team. Pastoral caregivers have a distinctive role that others within the caring circle do not have. They offer more than a cursory glance at external deficiencies; they look deeply within the person, scanning their souls and being the visible presence of the Holy.

Third, tackle the heart-breaking task of end-of-life discussions, often neglected by medical staff.[31] Pastors are, once again, in a unique position to care. Death goes hand-in-hand with life, and dementia is a disease that ends with death. There is, barring a miracle, no escape. However, in demonstrating God's continuing

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[26] Noddings, *Caring*, 40.

[27] Noddings, *Caring*, 28-29.

[28] Alexander Schmemann, *Church, World, Mission: Reflection on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 122. Schmemann explains the significance of pastoral care: "i.e., identified with the Church and her life, attentive to [=Noddings' "engrossment"] the real needs of man, when, putting aside the academic 'straining at a gnat' which has never prevented anyone from 'swallowing a camel,' it accepts, in humility and with courage, its proper function in the Church."

[29] Joan C. Tronto, espousing an ethic of care, identifies "four moral elements of care": attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness, all of which must be "integrated into an appropriate whole." See Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 136. Her assessment of required elements roughly parallel the Christian ethic of care, *sans* one notable feature—love. Love, it seems to me, is indispensable for any ethic of care. Noddings values love in the caring relationship, but notes that caring "is not necessarily accompanied by love." (*Caring*, 40).

[30] I credit Hudson's work for the concepts provided here; see Hudson, 64.

[31] Hudson, 64, remarks that: "According to this (UK) report there was little evidence from people with dementia or their families, of end-of-life issues being discussed by health professionals."

faithfulness, the pastor must face the dialectic of looming certainty mixed with copious amounts of care. Stan Grenz notes that death, in the Christian tradition, has "lost its ultimacy" and can now "carry positive significance."[32] While I agree wholeheartedly with that assessment, it belongs in the halls of academia, not in a caring context. Dementia grasps both the person with dementia and the family in a stranglehold of impenetrable darkness.[33] Offering a distinctive Christian ethic of care means shining light into the room through faithful, caring conversations based on love and deep relationships. In the Christian tradition, that light is the caring Christ.

Having provided a theological context for care, what specifically does that mean when Christian pastors enter the room? Referring to my earlier statements, I offer the following essentially connected person-al actions:

1. *Care.* Care or caring is an act, not a spiritual commodity. To care is, at heart, to provide companionship to another. It means to be present in timely and consistent ways. It is, as noted above, being the presence of God in and to a person who may no longer recognize the God he or she once loved, trusted, and served.

2. *Relate.* Noddings insists that relatedness is prerequisite to caring: "faithfulness to the fundamental relatedness . . . induces caring."[34] Christian caring moves in a similar manner. Christians enjoy a relatedness both to God and to others. For those who share in the Christian faith, their fellows are often called "brother" and "sister" signifying their membership in a vibrant family. Beyond that, however, Christian caregivers have no reluctance offering care to anyone (witness the lesson of the Good Samaritan). Ethnicity, gender, social or economic status are not determinants of a Christian ethic of care. What matters is an existential experience of *faith* and an eschatological confidence of *hope* in the God who never forgets.[35]

3. *Love.* While Noddings writes of love in a caring relationship, her depiction of love falls short of the universal nature of love in Christian caring. She admits that "universal love is illusion."[36] With her ethic of care based in purely human relations,

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[32] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 582.

[33] The darkness that dementia produces is metaphorically, but aptly described in Psalm 88:
> 3 My life is full of troubles,
>   and I am nearly dead.
> 4 They think I am on the way to my grave.
>   I am like a man with no strength.
> 5 I have been left as dead,
>   like a body lying in a grave
> whom you don't remember anymore,
>   cut off from your care.
> . . . .
> 18 Darkness is my only friend.

[34] Noddings, *Caring*, 56.

[35] For a concise, yet meaningful exposition of the role of hope in dementia, see Stephen Sapp, "Hope: The Community Looks Forward," in *God Never Forgets: Faith, Hope, and Alzheimer's Disease*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 87-104.

[36] Noddings, *Caring*, 90.

Noddings adds: "All the love and goodness commanded by such a God can be generated from the love and goodness found in the warmest and best human relations."[37] A Christian ethic of care, however, grounds care in the universal love of God. Hudson's explanation is both succinct and eloquent: "The first word and the final word relating God's faithfulness to dementia,
grounded in contextual theology and dementia, is love."[38]

4. *Teach.* On this we can agree. Noddings states: "To teach involves a giving of self and a receiving of other. . . . I must explain, question, doubt, explore, revise, discover, err, and correct, but I must also receive, reflect, and act."[39] A significant part of the Christian minister's call to care is wrapped up in didactic. That includes not only the Sunday (or other day) corporate worship service, but countless other avenues, including ministry to persons living with dementia and other diseases.

I will discuss only one: end-of-life instruction for persons living with dementia and, in particular, their families. Noddings is not only an ethicist, she is a teacher; how much more should a Christian ethic of care employ teaching? As for teaching and dementia, the quest begins in the early stages of dementia. Persons diagnosed with dementia will receive, more than likely, medicalized teaching from their physicians and the caregiving team. Ministers, however, should initiate a teaching conversation long before the person with dementia comes to a non-cognitive state.

Martina Kane expresses the task gently and honestly: "There should be greater recognition of dementia as a terminal illness, and of the fact that end of life care in dementia would improve with increased formal and informal advance care planning."[40] Kane's article elaborates on the following issues concerning end-of-life care for families dealing with dementia: care planning and proxy decision making; personal dignity, including person-centered care; pain management; when to withhold and withdraw medical treatment, emotional and spiritual matters; and determining a place to die.[41]

When the world of dementia seems utterly hopeless; a Christian ethic of care renews the essence of hope as ministers consistently care, relate, love, and teach, in the name of the God who loves all.

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[37] Noddings, *Caring*, 97.

[38] Hudson, 65.

[39] Noddings, *Caring*, 113.

[40] Martina Kane, "My life until the end: Dying well with dementia," (London: Alzheimer's Society, 2012), v. Kane uses the phrase "formal and informal advance care planning" three times in this brief booklet. Each time represents a clarion call to education of which ministers should take advantage.
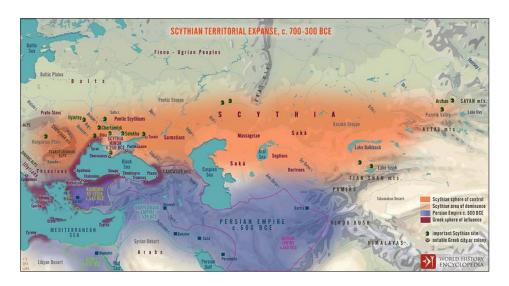
[41] Kane, 7-33.

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Scythian Culture and Religion

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Essentially leading a nomadic warrior-way of life - riding horses, tending herds, and living in covered wagons - Scythian tribes are often mentioned in ancient sources. While their ascendancy spanned between the 7th and 3rd Centuries BCE,[1] in areas around the Black and Caspian Seas, the extent of their territory ranged from the Hungarian Plains in the west, across the steppe of Central Asia, to the Altai Mountains in the east.[2] This covers an area around 3000 miles (4000 km) in length.[3] The geography of the open plains steppe, desert steppe, and forest-steppe expanses over which they ranged was conducive to herding animals, and travel by horse than a settled way of life involving agricultural production. Hence, their fewer urban centers, and nomadic lifestyle.[4]

Origins

While there is much debate about Scythian origins, "Herodotus claims, and most modern scholars agree: they moved from Asia into Europe by way of the great steppe corridor."[5] In the 1st century BCE the Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus states the first Scythians moved north from the Araxes river of Armenia to the northern Black Sea

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[1] E. V. Chernenko, *The Scythians: 700-300 BC* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1983) 3.

[2] Barry Cunliffe, *The Scythians: Nomad Warriors of the Steppe* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2019) 50-51.

[3] The Scythians roamed and ruled over an astonishing 1.5 million mi[2.] See Patrick Scott Smith, "Scythian Territorial Expanse." Scythian Territorial Expanse - World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved 11.20.21.

[4] Cunliffe, 61-73.

[5] A. Yu Alexeyev, "The Scythians in Eurasia" in *Scythians: Warriors of Ancient Siberia*, edited by St John Simpson and Svetlana Pankova (London: Thames and Hudson in collaboration with the British Museum, 2007) 23.

area.[6]   A modern traditional view is, they were "descendants from the Scrubnaya culture who, between the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. and the end of the 7th century B.C., moved [south] in several waves from the Volga-Ural steppes into the north Black Sea."[7]   Writing in the 5th century BCE, Herodotus also shows the Sarmatians, splitting from the Black Sea Scythians, moving east. Then recent archaeological discovery at Tuva in the Altai mountains, which dates Scythian settlement to the 9th century BCE, suggests early origins in the east. Ultimately though, as 1st century Chinese chroniclers speak of their red hair and blue eyes, Scythian Caucasian features and Indo-European language support earlier bronze age origins in the west, likely from the Celts. Considering the fluidity of movement the Central Asian steppe allows, it is not surprising multiple back-and-forth movements and multi-directional migrations makes pinpointing origins difficult. Finally, it is altogether possible, after an early pervasive expansion from the west, there were in fact subsequent migrations from all directions. While their origin is debated, a general consensus identifies Scythian cultures to be comprised of four main groups: the Pontic Scythians, around the Black Sea; the Sarmatians, from the northern Caspian Sea and Don and Volga River areas, in present-day Russia; then east of there, in the desert steppe of Central Asia, dwelt the Massagetae and Sakā.[8]

Scythian Warfare

If the Scythians were anything they were first and foremost, warriors. Besides their fame as adroit horse-archers their military ware included a wide array of weapons. They used battle axes, maces, lances, swords, shields, and for personal protection, scale armor and helmets.   Because of their collective ability to stay on the move and with nimble cavalry, Herodotus says the Scythians were "invincible and impossible to approach."[9] With such weapons and tactical ability, it is not surprising different nations often solicited Scythian military services.

In 490 BCE, Sakā mounted archers assisted the Persians against the Greeks at the battle of Marathon and again at Plataea in 479 BCE. Scythian warriors were similarly among the roll call joining Darius III (r. 336-330 BCE) against Alexander the Great at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE.[10] Appian, the Roman historian, shows "Scythian princes" from the Black Sea, instrumental in Pompey's (106-48 BCE) defeat of Mithridates VI (r. 120-63 BCE) in 63 BCE.[11] Moreover, as cousins and neighbors of the Parthians, the Scythians came to Parthia's aid, when after dynastic trouble, the Parthian king Sinatruces I (r. c. 75 - 69 BCE) was installed to the throne with Scythian help. And according to Cassius Dio, the Scythians played a key role in helping Artabanus II (r. 12-38/41 CE), himself half Scythian, secure Armenia for Parthia.[12]

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[6]Ibid., 23.

[7] A. I. Melyukova, "The Scythians and Sarmatians" in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia,* edited by Denis Sinor, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 99.

[8] Cunliffe, *Scythians*, 48-51,

[9] Herodotus, "Histories," in *The Complete Works of Herodotus* (Delphi Classics, 2013) 4.46.

[10] Cunliffe, 175.

[11] Appian, *Mithridatic Wars,* in *The Complete Works of Appian* (Delphi Classics, 2016) 17.119.

[12] Cassius Dio, *The Complete Works of Cassius Dio* (Delphi Classics, 2014) 57.26.

Tacitus supports Cassius Dio's claim showing Artabanus "collecting auxiliaries in Scythia" before joining battle.[13]

But the Scythians were not just kingmakers or potent allies. They had spectacular wins of their own. Even during their nadir, they won two battles against the mighty Parthians - apparently over a dispute of payment. Initially, the Parthians agreed to pay the Scythians to help secure Syria from the Seleucid ruler Antiochus VII (r. 138-129 BCE). But when the Parthians jumped the gun and won without them then refused to pay, this sparked a Scythian revolt, ending in the death of king Phraates II (r. 132-127 BCE), which emboldened Scythian tribes in the east to defeat and kill Artabanus I (r. 127-124 BCE).[14] But perhaps Scythia's most spectacular victory was against the Persian Empire. With a strategy of attrition - in leading the enemy deep into friendly territory, stretching supply lines, then with hit and run and ambush tactics finishing their opponent off with their most formidable asset, the bow and arrows shot from horseback - the Scythians thwarted Darius I's (r. 522-486 BCE) incursion into Scythian territory. That gave them the reputation of being invincible.[15] Adding to that success, Ateas, king of the Pontic Scythians, expanded Scythian interest into Thrace, establishing Scythia's westernmost reach from the Don to the Danube. But after Ateas' defeat and death at the hands of Phillip II (r. 359-336 BCE) in 339 BCE then getting caught in a trap at the river Jaxartes by Alexander the Great (r. 336-323 BCE), the Scythians would never again recover their reputation as unconquerable.[16] More blows came when the Scythians tried to take over the Greeks' Black Sea trade monopoly by attacking their colonies. Coming to the Greek's rescue at the end of the 2nd century BCE, Mithridates VI dealt the Scythians a devastating defeat, as would the Romans in 63 CE when the Scythians again attacked the Chersonese.[17] Finally, during the 4th century CE, the Scythians would completely disappear from the historical record when they were devasted by the Huns[18] and assimilated by the Goths.[19]

Scythian Governance

While Herodotus refers to Scythian "kings" and some by name, like most tribal people, Scythian governance was more a confederation of tribes and chiefs, a common form of social organization in Central Asia. Scythia's confederated tribal structure is disclosed in Herodotus' account of Persia's invasion of Scythia when Darius I taunted Scythia's high king, Idanthyrsus, to stand and fight "or come to terms with your master." Idanthyrsus answered, saying (with taunts of his own) that was not Scythia's way of war; they would fight on their own terms. But when other "Scythian kings" heard Darius' threat, they were apoplectic.[20] These kings immediately implemented hit and

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[13] Tacitus, "The Annals" in *The Complete Works of Tacitus* (Delphi Classics, 2014) 6.44.1
[14] George Rawlinson, *History of Parthian Empire*, (e-artnow, ISBN 978-80-268-9251-9, 2018) Chapters 7 and 8; pp 63, 65, 70-71, 75-78.
[15] Herodotus, 4.83-142.
[16] James R. Ashley, *The Macedonian Empire: The Era of Warfare Under Phillip II and Alexander the Great, 359-323 B.C.* (London: McFarland and Company, 1998) 148-49, 303-305.
[17] A. I. Melyukova, "Scythians and Sarmatians," 108.
[18] Ibid., 112.
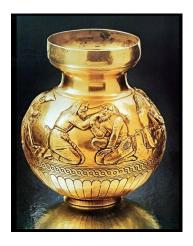[19] Cunliffe, 325.
[20] Herodotus, 4.126-128.1.

run tactics. They then called for the destruction of the bridge the Persians would use to make their escape.[21] They also would send a taunting esoteric message of their own before Darius decided to retreat.[22] Though the Scythians were unsuccessful in destroying the bridge, the kings call for action caused Darius' withdrawal.[23] Ultimately Herodotus' account reveals that while a high king or chief represented the Scythian nation in the messaging between notables, other sub-chiefs also voiced their opinion and had a significant say in implementing action.

But just as important as their tribal structure, their military's communal organization would have been an unsung part of Scythia's success. A golden beaker manufactured in the 4th Century BCE from the Kul'-Oba kurgan in Crimea shows bivouacked soldiers. While two, with spears and bows at the ready, appear to contemplate their fate in upcoming action, one demonstrates how to string a bow; another removes his comrade's tooth, while another bandages a fellow's hurt leg.[24]

The Kul'-Oba gold beaker

Another artifact in gold relief from the same kurgan demonstrates a common ritual where two warriors drink together from a horn.[25] Such depictions reveal ways of life intended to instill a shared purpose and camaraderie among soldiers where individuals fighting for friends against foe create a united, more resilient front. Nevertheless, while Scythian loyalty between soldiers was indeed robust, group loyalty was to their tribe and chief.

Scythian Nomadism and Architecture

While the Scythians are not known for their infrastructure, that does not mean they lacked architectural types to suit their needs. Though it is widely believed they were

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[21] Ibid., 4.128.2-3, 4.133.1-3, 4.134.3, 4.136.1-4.

[22] Ibid., 4.131-132.

[23] Ibid., 4.128-142.

[24] Ann Farkas, Et. Al. *From the Lands of the Scythians: Ancient Treasures from the Museums of the U.S.S.R. 3000 B.C. – 100 B.C.* (Metropolitan Museum of Art and Los Angeles County Museum of Art: distributed by New York Graphic Society, 1975) plates 17, 18.

[25] Ibid., plate 14.

wholly nomadic,[26] Herodotus mentions two other types of Scythians: the "Royal" and the "farming" kind.[27] More than subsistent cultivators, some farmers, in fact, "sold" or exported their products.[28] Not only would these have built permanent homes, since their efforts were likely cooperative, they also would have developed settlements. North of the Black Sea in today's Dnieper River vicinity, Herodotus mentions farmers inhabiting a land "three days journey" wide and "eleven days voyage" long.[29] The size of this district reflects a significant demand for grain products. Architecturally, such enterprises would also require a system of warehouses for storage and roads to points of transfer.

As to the Royal Scythians, while we have the architecture of their burial mounds called kurgans of carefully padded earthworks and catacombs,[30] it appears they also resided with a degree of permanency in fortified settlements. The size of the earthworks of the Bel'sk fortification in the Dneiper river valley in Ukraine not only reflects the surmount of a significant superstructure (20 miles or 33 km in circumference)[31] indications are it was a center of crafts, wealth, and widespread trade.[32] Even so, as ancient sources attest and as their military organization indicates, the Scythians were mostly nomadic. More than one source mentions their houses on wheels. But these covered wagons were not the American pioneer type to get to a settled place. Pulled by teams of oxen, some house-wagons could have two or three rooms. Depending on the rank of the dweller, floors and walls could be opulently adorned. Moreover, when gathered, the house-wagons would have the appearance of a city.[33]

Scythian Art, Music, and Dress

Much of what is learned about Scythian culture comes from recent kurgan finds north of the Black Sea. While ancient written sources focus on their nomadic warlike character, Scythian burial goods add another layer of understanding to their remarkable cultural sophistication and social vibrancy. But unique to the Scythian finds is not just the level of intricate craftsmanship in glittering gold but that so many pieces tell a life story. And so a comb is not just a comb but is crafted to show warriors in fierce combat. Or a pectoral or gorget, from the Tolstaya Mogila kurgan, that shows in the upper register, with exquisite segmented detail, scenes from daily life: the milking of a ewe, two men sewing a shirt, calf and colts nursing. In contrast, the lower register displays dramatic prey/predator scenes of cats taking down a stag and griffins biting and clawing at horses. Then in choice places toward the neck are miniature goats, rabbits, dogs, grasshoppers, and birds.

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[26] Herodotus, 4.46.
[27] Ibid., 4.17-20.
[28] Ibid., 4.17.2.
[29] Ibid., 4.18.2.
[30] Cunliffe, 139.
[31] Ibid., 46, 132-34.
[32] Renate Rolle, "The Scythians: Between Mobility, Tomb Architecture, and Early Urban Structures" in *The Barbarians of Ancient Europe: Realities and Interactions,* edited by Larissa Bonfante (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 124-28.
[33] Ibid., 121-24.

Solokha tomb comb and Scythian gorget from the Tolstaya Mogila kurgan

Thus the Black Sea artifacts offer unique, sometimes dramatic, snapshots of Scythian fashion, interests, beliefs, habits, and daily life-visuals like few burial goods do. Many, like the gorget, have prey/predator themes. Other common themes are of recumbent cats or reclining stags. But unique too, akin to modern tastes, was the Scythian penchant that swung between the remarkably realistic capturing of subject matter in mid-action - to the abstract rendering of reality. Thus a stag or cat could be accurately portrayed or uniquely stylized.[34]

Scythian stylized rendition of stag and cat

But equal to their imaginative taste in gold, "the frozen tombs of the Altai provide an incomparable vision of the sheer exuberance of nomad dress: the love of bright, contrasting colors and intricate decorations formed by stitching, embroidery, and the attachment of leather cut-outs."[35] Dress items include intricately embellished shoes, leggings, sleeves, and a ladies cape with a fur border. Likewise, the sophistication of their garments was equally matched by an affinity for tattoos. Tattoo connoisseurs today would appreciate the shoulder-to-hand length of artistry displayed on the arms

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[34] Farkas, *Lands*, plates 3, 4, 5, 15, 30, 31.
[35] Cunliffe, 207.

of one individual at Pazyrk. Indelibly tattooed are abstract images of curled cats, stags rams, antelope, and goats.[36]

Additionally, while the Black Sea discoveries also reveal the practical choice of trousers and tunic for horse people in a cold climate, they also show Scythia's love of music and dance. Some items show erotic dancers (again expertly captured in mid-action) swaying to the music.[37] Found at the Sachnovka kurgan is a golden headband showing a man playing the lyre. Pan pipes made from bird bones were found at kurgan 5 at Skatovka. In several tombs at Pazyryk, ox-horn drums were unearthed. But at kurgan 2, an amazing find was made. Discovered was a harp-like instrument that had at least four strings. Barry Cunliffe describes it as "made from a single hollowed-out wooden resonator, the middle part of the body was covered by a wooden sounding board, while sounding membranes were stretched over the open part of the body."[38] The tones issued forth from this instrument by a skilled musician must have been remarkable.

One of the unique differences of Scythian art is the plethora of animal art compared to human depiction. In contrast, Greek art puts great emphasis on the human subject.[39] Who the expert craftspeople were for the Scythians is still debated. Greek colonists on the northern Black Sea shore are considered likely candidates.[40] But, that Scythian art has its own identifying markers, which lends support tribes as far afield as Siberia might be Scythian,[41] suggests at the least, close collaboration over design, if not production, between creator and client.[42] Nonetheless, the remarkable level of sophistication in manufacture, depiction, style, and vibrancy of Scythian art is peerless.

Scythia's Warrior-Women

Finally, an amazing aspect in the study of Scythia is the eminent role women played in the military and political life of their people. Unprecedented until modern times, it appears some gained - as a group - social status equal to their men. While the telling of the Amazons finds its way into modern lore (Wonder Woman), the reality of their history has long been debated. Herodotus' account tells the story of a foreign race of warrior-women coming to the shores of Scythia. As a group they maintained their independence but eventually intermingled with a band of young Scythian men sent to them by Scythian elders. Though they spoke different languages, the two groups journeyed east to make their own tribe. Herodotus claims the Sarmatians were the result of this union and spoke a hybrid Scythian tongue. Moreover, these warrior-women maintained their independence by following their ancient ways, often hunting

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[36] Ibid., 204-9. Even species specific to Central Asia can be identified, such as the Saiga antelope with its snub nose or the Caucasian tur goat.
[37] Farkas, plate 9.
[38] Cunliffe, 226-27.
[39] John Boardman, "Greek Art and Architecture" in *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World,* edited by John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
[40] Ibid., 35-39.
[41] Ibid., 16-20.
[42] Renate Rolle, "The Scythians," 119.

on their own and warring alongside their men. They also forbade their daughters from marrying until they had killed a man in combat.[43]

Whether Herodotus' account is wholly or partly true, Appian validates the sovereign/warrior status of Scythian women. When describing Pompey's triumph for defeating Mithridates VI, he includes among the procession of captured kings and generals, "female rulers of Scythia."[44] The fact Appian mentions female rulers, plural and contemporary, indicates a broad, shared, common and cooperative status of rulership. Additionally, Herodotus' reference of Tomyris, the Scythian warrior-queen, defeating Cyrus the Great (c. 600-530 BCE) in battle centuries earlier, again suggests a tradition of female sovereignty.[45]

The archaeological record as well indicates broad warrior, if not sovereign status, for Scythian women. In 1993, in the easternmost reaches of the Scythian confederation at Ak-Alakha on the Ukok plateau in the Altai mountains, excavators found a burial site of a rich Scythian female. That she was a central figure at the site, buried with objects of status, surrounded by six saddled horses, makes it likely she was at the least one of the principal elites of her people.[46] Finally, according to Cunliffe, in Sarmatian territory, "one-fifth of the excavated warrior burials dating from the fifth to fourth centuries are female, while in Scythian territory more than forty female warrior burials are known."[47]

Scythian Religion

Including priestly functions, it appears Scythian religion was a transitional amalgam of belief in a pantheon of gods grafted to more ancient animal reverence and shamanistic practice. Like many primary cultures who identified with animals, even

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[43] Herodotus 4.110-117

[44] Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, 17.116-117.

[45] Herodotus, 1.205-214.

[46] Cunliffe, 187. See also, Siberian princess reveals her 2,500 year old tattoos (siberiantimes.com)

[47] Cunliffe, 219.

claiming origins from them (known as totemism),[48] the Scythians, according to their burial finds, also appear to have had a deep affinity, if not camaraderie, with the animals with which they were familiar. Thus, in their burial chambers, images of cats and deer abound. In one kurgan, the clothes of the two principals interred were covered with thousands of tiny gold panthers. Of their deities, though Herodotus speaks of a Scythian pantheon similar to the Greeks - perhaps residual of the primal mother-earth concept - the overwhelming number of images found are of a goddess.

Scythian Deities

Because no known ancient source or collection of sources delves systematically into the Scythian belief system - how it worked from top to bottom - reconstructing a satisfying facsimile is not without its shortcoming. Though Herodotus provides some basis, some of his observations compared to archaeological discovery spurs questions. For example, while the finds from the kurgan burial mounds leave no doubt about Scythian religiosity - since the interred were left with a bounty of goods to be enjoyed in the afterlife - as alluded, there is little evidence about the pantheon of gods in whom they were to have believed. Nevertheless, when Herodotus wrote his *Histories* in 430 BCE, Greek colonists were already well established around the Black Sea, home of the Pontic Scythians.[49] Thus, in their trade and interactions with the Greeks, the Scythians would become acquainted with their gods, and some would have particular appeal.

Like all ancient cultures, worship and symbolism of the elements would have been an integral part of the Scythian belief system. With the flat expanse of the steppe over which they trod, a prominent characteristic in daily life would have been the sky as it met the earth at the horizon. Another manifest feature from which the steppe offers little escape would have been the sun. Then there was that of fire. Providing security against wild beasts at night and everyday practical utility in cooking and metallurgy, fire in ancient times was essential and held considerable symbolic sway. It is not surprising then that the earth, sky, sun, and fire came to have particular theological value for the Scythians. And not surprising, in his rebut to Darius Ⅰ (r. 522-486 BCE), when the Persians invaded Scythia, that the Scythian chieftain, Idanthyrsus, would claim Hestia (goddess of fire) and Zeus (god of the sky) were the only gods to which he would bow.[50]

Understanding the Scythian belief system from his perspective of the Greek pantheon though Herodotus says, except to Ares, they made no "images, altars, or shrines", he relates eight deities the Scythians worshiped. Besides Hestia and Zeus, known by the Scythians as Tabitha and Papaeus, was Api (mother-earth), Goetosyrus (Apollo), and Argimpasa (Aphrodite). And though Herodotus omits their Scythian names, he also mentions Hercules, Ares, and Poseidon.[51] Besides Hercules - the

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[48] Diana Ferguson, *Native American Myths* (London: Collins and Brown, 2001) 31-34. Herbert Spencer, *Principals of Sociology,* vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897) 344-45. James George Frazer, The *Golden Bough*: *A Study in Magic and Religion* (Old Saybrook, Connecticut: Konecky and Konecky) 663, 665.
[49] Cunliffe, 35-39.
[50] Herodotus, 4.127.4.
[51] Ibid., 4.59.

ultimate ancestor claimed by many ancient peoples - these gods represented elements with which the Scythians were familiar: Ares with war, Apollo with the sun. The earth-meets-sky visual expressed itself in the belief, when the sky god, Papaeus, made union with Mother-Earth, all other gods were born. Moreover, essential to all cultures - successful crops and herds - would be blessings the goddess of fertility bestowed. While little is known about her, it is believed the Scythian equivalent to Aphrodite was Argimpasa, cognate of Arti, the Iranian goddess of material abundance. Regarding the images of a deity in the Scythian kurgans being a goddess, whether she was Api, as mother-earth, or Argimpasa as Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility, her connection to fertility is apparent. Thus, for the same reason the mother-earth concept was of primary importance to the ancients since it is from the earth and from women that life depends, the residual goddess of fertility would have a similar place of importance for the Scythians.[52]

Finally, concerning an essential element of their military success, the horse, Herodotus mentions Thagimasadas as his equivalent to Poseidon. But Thagimasadas was important to the Scythians not because he was a god of the sea but because he was a patron of the horse, an animal essential to Scythian ways of life.[53]

Animal Reverence

One of the unique aspects of Scythian culture is the plethora and predominance of their animal images. In their kurgans, images of goddesses and daily life are found - men at war, women dancing, people at their daily tasks - but in a big way, the Scythians surrounded and covered themselves with images of animals.

One theme is that of predation. Examples include the famous Tolstaya pectoral, where in the upper register are bucolic scenes of daily life but in the lower register, cats and mythical griffins bite and claw at deer and horses.[54] Then from the Bratoliubivskyi kurgan, in the Khersonska region, a gold plate shows a snow leopard attacking a stag. In the Altai Mountains at Pazyryk, leather cut-outs from saddle covers reveal cats and a griffin taking down deer.[55] Such common penchant for singular depictions of violent predation may reflect, for the Scythians, the violence prevalent in their own lives as a warrior race. Perhaps too, as they identified and imagined a parallel purpose with the images they created, they envisioned themselves, with similar ferocity, taking down their enemies.

However, in other ways, it appears the Scythians interwove their destiny in more benign and beneficial ways. On the finials of priestly pole-tops are deer and birds.[56] Found at Pazyryk, are horse bridles used during times of ceremony showing images of rams, mythical eagles, and deer.[57] Of their famous headdresses, the ones at Pazyryk and other Altai sites were typically crested with deer silhouettes then also

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[52] Cunliffe, 274-82.
[53] Herodotus, 4.59.
[54] Farkas, plate 31.
[55] Cunliffe, 267.
[56] Ibid., 274.
[57] Ibid., 236-37.

decorated with bird figures and hair-pins of silver and gold-leafed deer.[58] At Ak-Alakha, a noblewomen's headdress was covered with feline figures of gold.[59] Then, as we will see, at another site, bodies of the deceased elite were covered with gold panthers. But not only did the Scythians dress themselves with animals, they tattooed their bodies with them. On the body of a male principal at Pazyryk are the mentioned abstract images of curled cats, stags, rams, antelope, and goats, while at another site, a female popularly known as the Siberian Princess also had tattoos of similar design and coverage.[60]

While such display is known as Scythian' animal art' and might be considered solely as fashion statements, considering the substantial admixture of religious creed to the daily life of the ancients, one has to wonder what part such images played in that belief system. Since they surrounded themselves with them in such prolific ways, it appears they figured their destiny was intertwined, and as such, their animal images provided real fortune and protection.

Priestly Function

Of priests, though Herodotus does not mention them per se, archeologically, there is a plethora of evidence supporting priestly function. In the Tuva region of Russia, at the Arzhan-1 burial site, a massive conical kurgan dating to the late 9th century BCE was excavated between 1971 and 1974. Measuring 394 feet (120 meters) across and 13 feet (4 meters) high, its construction consisted of a precise segmented radiating substructure of log compartments overlaid with stone slabs. Radiating from the central 26-foot (8 meters) square burial chamber were 70 additional chambers.[61] The final touch at Arzhan-1 would likely have been the erection of a stone stelae on the mound's summit.[62] While Arzhan-1 was thoroughly robbed of

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[58] E.V. Stepanova and S.V. Pankova, "Personal Appearance" in *Scythians: Warriors of Ancient Siberia*, edited by St John Simpson and Svetlana Pankova (London: Thames and Hudson in collaboration with the British Museum, 2007) 112, 116, 118.
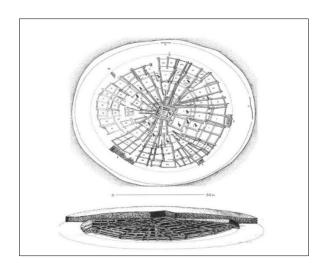
[59] Cunliffe, 205-7.

[60] Ibid., 208-9. (Even species specific to Central Asia can be identified, such as the Saiga antelope with its snub nose or the Caucasian tur goat.) See also, Stepanova, Pankova, 95-97, 108-9, and Siberian princess reveals her 2,500 year old tattoos (siberiantimes.com)

[61] K.V. Chugunov, "Early Nomads of Central Asia and Southern Siberia" in *Scythians: Warriors of Ancient Siberia*, edited by St John Simpson and Svetlana Pankova (London: Thames and Hudson in collaboration with the British Museum, 2007) 78-79.

[62] Cunliffe, 90, 94, 104, 309, 381. Chugunov, 82-83.

most of its grave goods, at the smaller Arzhan-2 site (dating to the 7th century BCE), 9,300 objects were found, 5,600 of them were gold, mostly tiny animal appliqués. Amazingly, 5000 of the gold appliqués were gold panthers worn equally by the 'king' and 'queen.'[63] Such care and construction reflect a considerable investment of time and labor by a community who, by outward appearances, loved and honored their leaders as they sought their happiness in the afterlife. As such, the kurgans were not just tombs but religious affairs. As the purpose of a priest was to intercede for community with deity, the kurgans themselves suggest priestly blessings. Additionally, since sacrifices were part of the process, if ancient custom was the norm, kurgan construction, arrangements, and sacrifices would not only have been blessed, but ritually orchestrated. At Arzhan-1, within the central grave area, were eight of the chief's attendants. In the surrounding chambers were groups of horses, some with their trainers.[64] At Arzhan-2, as the mound is surrounded by 200 "burnt offering" pits,[65] there is ample evidence of human and horse sacrifice.[66] Herodotus similarly describes of one Scythian burial, how "the king's concubine, his cupbearer, his cook, his groom, his squire, and his messenger"[67] were sacrificed and buried with him; fifty horses with their warrior-riders were also sacrificed and preserved; stood up on stakes and placed around the "great barrow" they were made ready to ride at the instant of their magical resurrection.[68] Supporting Herodotus account, between 1981 and 1986, a Russian/German expedition at Chertomlÿk found the remains of horses and human bones scattered around the mound.[69] Such finds are so common they become a way excavators discern royal status. "In the tombs regarded as royal, human sacrifice vary between three and eleven and the number of horses placed within the central burial, between four and sixteen."[70] Finally, considering the kurgans as religious affairs with

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[63] John Man, *Empire of Horses: The First Nomadic Civilization and the Making of China* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2020) 20.

[64] Cunliffe, 95.

[65] Chugunov, 81.

[66] Ibid., 81.

[67] Herodotus, 4.71.4.

[68] Ibid., 4.72.

[69] Cunliffe, 21.

[70] Ibid., 136.

ritual processes, Herodotus mentions a similar Scythian ritual involving their worship of Ares. Including sacrifice - of sheep, goats, and horses - they built square two-tiered stepped structures of brushwood. Finalizing the process, like the stelae at the summit of their kurgans, they placed a single sword at the top.[71] While the ritual process involving these Ares-edifices and the kurgans is not in doubt, who performed the rites is still a question. Were they a priestly class, or diviner class, like the shamans?

Traditionally, while ancient priests directed and blessed communal activity through ritual sacrifice, the shaman's primary role was one of healer. Though their talent of divination was an attribute given by the gods, shamans could fall out of favor with the elite. This is remindful of the biblical account of king Saul, expelling diviners from the land (though he went in disguise to a medium to bring up the spirit of Samuel.)[72] It appears a similar attitude toward their shamans was operational in Scythia. According to Herodotus, if a shaman's revelation was found to be false, they could be burned by the king. Bound, then put in a kindle-filled wagon that was set on fire and its oxen stampeded, this dramatic scene of conflagration - with wagon yokes sometimes burning in two and oxen consumed - would have been a poignant reminder to diviners and audience alike who was in charge.[73] Contrariwise, in most societies, where the priestly class was well defined, the relationship between the ruling elite and priests was usually cooperative. Sometimes kings could be priests conducting ritual; or they might initiate ritual. Some, like the ancient Hawaiian kings co-officiated with the high priest, and even owned the temple.[74] Or, as with the Romans, they might be drawn from the ruling class. Ultimately though, with the Scythians - though there is ample evidence of priestly ritual - who performed them is still a best guess. But what is more certain, is the tasks and responsibilities of their diviner class - the shamans.

Shamans

As with all ancient peoples, help from the spirit world was an expected part of everyday activity. When it came to individual healing, the shaman's function was to intercede between the individual needing help and the spirit world they wanted to importune. To prove his credentials, the shaman had to show evidence of his influence which was achieved in two ways: ecstatic song and dance meant to impress and convince that his connections to the spirit world were real, combined with medicinal prescription that had a sufficient rate of success. This cinched for the shaman his credibility as a healer. While the modern study of shamanism started with a focus on Siberian tribes in southern Russia[75] (areas that were once Scythia's backyard), common features to shamanic rituals have been practiced throughout the world. In

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[71] Herodotus, 4.62.

[72] 1 Samuel 28:3-25.

[73] Herodotus, 4.68-69.

[74] Valerio Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 49, 104, 127, 136-37, 140-41, 185, 187, 240.

[75] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) 4-5.
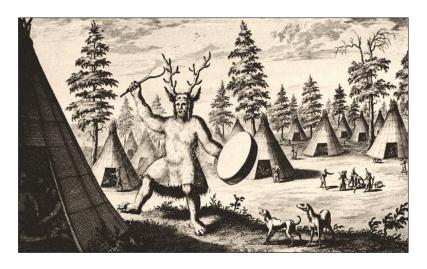
Illustration of a Siberian shaman produced by Nicolaes Witsen in the late 17ᵗʰ century

convincing their audience, they should be the go-to people in times of need; ecstatic performance has, for the shaman, always been essential. Even with a leg up, since the audience believed in supernatural powers, the shaman's task was not an easy one. After dawning exaggerated dress and headdress (to resemble a bird, stag, or bear[76]), then establishing ritual space around an altar,[77] the shaman's first task was to battle evil spirits. Then, with the aid of helping spirits (usually animal or ancestral), the invocation of celestial ones could begin.[78] Since it is believed sickness is a spiritual malady - a consequence of the soul leaving the body - the soul must therefore be restored. In Siberia, this often involves the superhuman feat of magical flight only the shaman can achieve through ecstatic trance. Risking losing his own soul on a hazardous journey to the underworld or to celestial spheres, the shaman brings back and restores the patient's soul.[79] Such a restorative process is essential to the shaman's healing abilities. During their hours-long production, a ritual of rhythmic songs, dance, and feverous incantations are performed. Moreover, symbolic objects such as fire, smoke, branches, or feathers serve as props to enhance focus. While bells attached to the shaman accentuate the shaman's animated, even frenzied gestures and motions, fire, smoke, and incense could also be used to heighten the senses - all designed so the audience is swept up in waves of emotion. What is more, in some parts of the world, hallucinogens would have been ingested by the shaman and audience alike to widen the perceptual door of imagination as to the psychological reality being constructed.[80] Ultimately though, while varying combinations of these elements have been used to certify the shaman's ability to conjure helping spirits, the drum is the most universal and effective device. Perhaps because of its impactful resonating sounds, the drum, as Mircea Eliade explains,

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[76] Ibid., 156.

[77] H. Sidky, *The Origins of Shamanism, Spirit Beliefs and Religiosity: A Cognitive Anthropological Perspective* (New York: Lexington Books, 2017) 183-85.
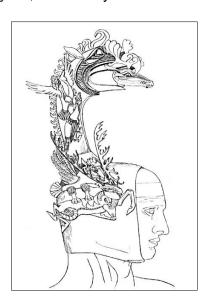
[78] Sidky, 185-86.

[79] Eliade, 9, 88-95, 216.

[80] Ancient medicinal plants of South America | PNAS, retrieved 10-21-21.

has a role of first importance in shamanic ceremonies. Its symbolism is complete, its magical functions many and various. It is indispensable in conducting the shamanic séance, whether it enables him to fly through the air or to summon the spirits . . . the drumming enables the shaman to contact the spiritual world through which he is preparing to travel.[81]

Concerning dress, drums, bells, and ecstasy: comparing objects discovered at two major burial sites and some in the Minusinsk Valley to two petroglyphs of the Tagar period can perhaps shed light on Scythian shamanism.[82] At Ak-Alakha and Pazyryk in the Altai Tuva region, elaborate stylized headdresses were found. Discovered at Ak-Alakha-3 was an exaggeratedly tall female headdress.[83] One at Pazyryk-2, belonging to a chief, consisted of a 14-inch-high (34.5 cm) mythic eagle holding the head of a deer in its beak.[84] At Pazyryk-1, even a stylized antler headdress for a horse was un-

earthed.[85] Other items include rattles and drums. Discovered in the Minusinsk Valley (and throughout all Scythia) were pole-tops with bronze rattles and bells.[86] Finally, while the elaborate headdress at Pazyryk-2 suggests ceremonial value, as does the horse headdress, the pole-tops certainly suggests processional activity.[87] Such objects would have been known to the shamans. In fact, the Tagar-period petroglyph from Georgievskaya shows a shaman, with exaggerated headdress, holding a rattle (or drumstick) in one hand, and in the other, a hand-drum with bells attached. Then, the petroglyph from the Minusinsk Valley reveals two important facets to shaman ritual: delineation of the ritual space and the achievement of ecstasy. This petroglyph

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81 Eliade, 168.
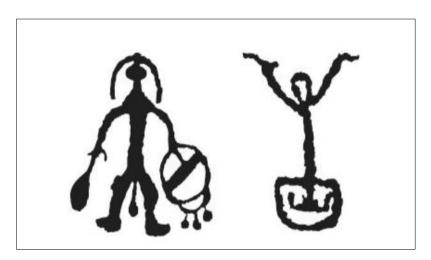82 Ibid., 90, 93.
83 Stepanova, Pankova, 95, 116, 118.
84 Ibid., 112.
85 Cunliffe, 273.
86 Ibid., 274-75.
87 Ibid., 274. Cunliffe thinks the pole-tops were carried by shamans, fig. 10.3.

appears to show a shaman having achieved ecstasy, standing behind an altar in a circle of delineated space.

Scythian shaman petroglyphs from Georgievskaya and Minusinsk Valley

Ultimately though, while the lion's share of inquiry into shamanism focuses on the ecstatic element, medicinal prescription - as evidenced especially by the Scythian shamans - would not only have been supplemental but essential. Whereas basic pharmacological knowledge and the treatment of specific maladies with certain elements or recipes were well known to the ancients and indigenous people (like the Amazon shamans[88] or American Indians),[89] evidence shows the Scythian shamans certainly garnered their own body of knowledge to further ensure their credibility as healers.

An example of general pharmacological knowledge among the Scythians comes with their alleged use of certain plants for advantage in times of war. The story begins when, according to Plutarch, the Scythian ruler Ateas (429-339 BCE) wrote Phillip II of Macedon (r. 359-336 BCE) the cryptic message, "You reign over the Macedonians, men that have learned fighting, but I over the Scythians, who can fight with hunger and thirst."[90] Phillip must have wondered, knowing the necessity of food and water before a vigorous engagement, what advantage could the Scythians have? Interestingly, two plants - according to Pliny, first discovered by the Scythians - *scythice* and *hippace*, abates hunger and thirst. Also thought to help cure asthma, "if a person keeps [*scythice*] in his mouth he will never experience hunger or thirst." *Hippace* - important for the Scythians since they were horse-archers - was also reputed to have similar effect on horses. Pliny reiterates the legend that, "by the aid of these two plants, the Scythians could endure hunger and thirst for twelve days."[91] Another instance of Scythian expertise in the use of plants was their utilization of cannabis to alleviate pain.

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[88] Rhett A. Butler, *How Rainforest Shamans Treat Disease*, How rainforest shamans treat disease (mongabay.com) retrieved 10-21-21.

[89] Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Ethnobotany* (Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 1998).

[90] Plutarch, "Moralia: Ateas" in *The Complete Works of Plutarch* (Delphi Classics, 2013) 3.174

[91] Pliny the Elder, *"Natural History"* in *The Complete Works of Pliny the Elder* (Delphi Classics, 2015) 25.43-44.

In 1993, in the easternmost reaches of the Scythian confederation at Ak-Alakha on the Ukok plateau in the Altai mountains, excavators found a burial site of a rich Scythian female. That she was the central figure at the site, buried with objects of status, surrounded by six saddled horses, makes it likely she was a principal elite of her people. As mentioned, though known as the Siberian Princess, she may herself have been a shaman or healer. In her 20's, having died young, it is now believed she suffered and expired from cancer. With a pouch of cannabis found at her side, the pain-relieving effects of cannabis may have given her a degree of relief.[92] But of Scythian shamans themselves, their medicinal acumen is revealed when Mithridates VI (r. 120-63 BCE) hired them to be part of his retinue. Ruler of the Hellenistic kingdom of Pontus in northern Anatolia, Mithridates was, at that time, Rome's most dangerous nemesis. It took three wars to defeat him. Also known as the poison king, Mithridates ingested low levels of poisons as an antidote to assassination. While the process of healing with poisons originated in India[93] because Mithridates was the first westerner to develop them extensively, such *theriac* recipes were later called *mithridatium*.[94] Ultimately though it was "a team of Scythian shaman-doctors, called the Agari, who accompanied Mithridates at all times"[95] who were the most expert. Appian of Alexandria shares after being gravely wounded in the Third Mithridatic War at the Battle of Zela in 67 BCE, by a dart below his eye, and in the knee by a stone,

> Mithridates was cured by the Agari who make use of the poison of serpents as remedies. Some of this tribe always accompanied the king as physicians.[96]

That Mithridates allowed the Scythians a constant place within his inner circle reflects a high degree of trust and influence. At the time they were at his court Mithridates was performing extensive toxicology research impressive enough Pompey (106-48 BCE) sent his notes to Rome to be translated into Latin, and about whom Pliny would later portray as "a zealous promoter of discoveries for the benefit of mankind, more than any of his predecessors."[97] Since Mithridates, an expert himself, would trust the Scythians to personally heal him certainly reflects the shaman's own level of competence in pharmacology. Of course, the Scythian's use of snake poison as an antidote would not have been their only specialty. Experiment and discovery of the psychotropic and healing properties of plants had already had a long history in the Far East, Asia, the Mediterranean, and for that matter, throughout the world. Scythia's own knowledge of plants and their effects is indicated when Herodotus speaks of their use of cannabis for exhilaration. As part of their celebration after the burial of a principal elite (perhaps in the knowledge their leader was to go to an exalted place), the

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[92] [Iconic 2,500 year old Siberian princess 'died from breast cancer', reveals MRI scan (siberiantimes.com)](#) retrieved 10-21-21.

[93] Guido Majno, *The Healing Hand: Man and Wound in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 374-78. Adrienne Mayor, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World,* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2003) 149.

[94] Mayor, 148-53.

[95] Ibid., 148.

[96] Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, 13.88. Mayor, 148.

[97] Pliny, 25.3.

Scythians would erect a portable sauna shaped like a teepee; red hot rocks were placed in a pit in the middle of the teepee. After anointing their bodies with an ointment made from pounded cypress, cedar, and frankincense wood, they would enter the sauna and throw hemp onto the red-hot rocks and "howl in their joy at the vapor-bath."[98] Construing shamanic elements to this ritual Eliade says of the Scythians, "One fact, at least is certain: shamanism and ecstatic intoxication produced by hemp smoke were known to the Scythians."[99]

Another shamanic characteristic given by Herodotus was of the Enaree's practice of divination. Perhaps to set themselves apart to enhance their reputation for their other-worldly connections,[100] the Enarees, like shamans of other cultures, were gender-crossing. According to Herodotus, they were reputed to have been punished by Aphrodite with the 'female sickness' for plundering her temple in Ascalon.[101] Yet the Enaree claimed Aphrodite bestowed them the talent of divination.[102] Pseudo-Hippocrates also describes the effeminate behavior of eunuchs among the Scythians: who "perform female work and speak like women . . . The Scythians attribute the cause of their impotence to god, and venerates and worship such persons, everyone dreading that a similar fate might befall them."[103] Barry Cunliffe thus aptly states,

> Both Herodotus and Pseudo-Hippocrates, then agree that the desire
> of some Scythian males to take on the female role was induced by the
> gods and that such people had supernatural powers enabling them to
> become diviners and shamans.[104]

While divination was often a tool in the shaman's toolbox, the one thing ancient divination and shamanism have in common is they depend on a connection to the spirit world to help them achieve their tasks. One of the Enarees main talents was in fact divination. Though Herodotus makes no mention of added accouterments, it is hard to imagine, as Cunliffe points out, their productions would not have included such items as drums, the Scythian rattling pole-tops, or exaggerated adornment like the antler headdresses of Siberian shamans of recent past.[105] Reminiscent of the common shamanic practice employing rhythmic techniques to induce altered states of mind whereby other-worldly connections are made, certain Scythian diviners, unnamed by Herodotus, would take a bundle of sticks, and as they laid the sticks down one by one they would prophesy. After gathering up the bundle, they would do it again. The Enaree's ritual, presumably with Aphrodite in mind, involved taking inner strips of bark from the linden tree, then after dividing them into three strips, they would braid and unbraid the strips with their fingers as they prophesied.[106]

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[98] Herodotus, 4.73-75.
[99] Eliade, 394-96.
[100] Cunliffe, 273.
[101] Herodotus, 1.105.2,4.
[102] Ibid., 4.67.
[103] Cunliffe, 219.
[104] Ibid., 220.
[105] Ibid., 272-74.
[106] Herodotus, 4.67.

Conclusion

Known to the ancient sources as an able warring people, the Scythians roamed and ruled over a vast territorial expanse. While the same sources speak of elevated status for their warrior women, even serving as rulers, archaeological finds confirm those accounts. A similar degree of egalitarian proclivity is reflected in their social structure and governance as a nomadic people. As a confederation of tribes, no one ruler exercised suzerainty over others. Yet because of individual devotion to the tribe and tribal commitment to maintaining common cultural characteristics known as 'Scythian,' the duration of their culture over a wide expanse of time and territory is remarkable. Even though the ancient sources do not tell, archaeological finds reveal a surprising level of cultural sophistication. Though they had few urban centers of wealth, they were rich and responsible for intricate workmanship in gold. While their everyday dress was practical, of trousers and tunics, they, for occasion, surrounded and adorned themselves with animals of silver and gold. Dawning brightly colored clothing, elaborate in make and design, they wore exaggeratedly tall headdresses crested with animal figures. Moreover, while appreciative of dance and entertainment, their art objects, most often in gold, show a refinement of realistic depiction matched by a modern-like taste for the abstract. Same with their penchant for tattoos. Their stylized depiction of curled animals indelibly etched undoubtedly has a modern flair.

About their belief system, one way to characterize Scythian religion is an amalgamation of beliefs. While in contact with cultures having more anthropomorphized systems, they held on to nature-type worship centered on a residual of the mother-earth goddess in the form of Argimpassa. Hence, while their kurgan finds reveal identity with their animal world and a fertility goddess that held a primary place of importance, they also inculcated anthropomorphized notions of the life-visuals with which they were familiar. For example, their gods of the sky, sun, fire, war, and horse were, according to Herodotus, Scythia's equivalence of the Greek gods Zeus, Apollo, Hestia, Ares, and Poseidon. Concerning social activity, though the Scythians had no temples, there is ample evidence of priestly function to their kurgans and Ares-edifices in the way of goods, construction, and associated sacrifices. Finally, even as diviners, their shamans, through ecstatic production and medicinal prescription, certainly played important roles when it came to individual healing.

Biographical Note

Patrick Scott Smith is a business owner, writer and independent scholar. Besides his anthropologically based studies, he has presented research on the Herod's Harbor project at different venues for the ASOR and ASSR in the Central, Southwest, and Southeast regions. A member of the ASSR and Missouri Academy of Science with presented social-scientific views to those associations, he also writes for the World History Encyclopedia online.

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A Brief History of Camp Chesterfield: An Influential and Pioneering Force in the Movement of Modern Spiritualism since 1886

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Introduction

Modern Spiritualism's seemingly inauspicious beginnings began when two young country girls, Maggie and Katie Fox, purportedly made contact with an incarnate spirit that had been plaguing their family in a small farmhouse they were renting in Hydesville, New York on March 31, 1848. Alerting their mother to the "raps" that were emanating out of thin air around their room, the source was impossible to ascertain, so Mrs. Fox called for her pragmatic and extremely rational husband to try and figure out what was occurring. He was stumped, as well, so next they summoned neighbors to come to witness this seemingly otherworldly phenomena. No one could give a logical, earthly explanation as to how or why this was happening.[1]

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

At some point Katie commanded the spirit to do as she does, and affectionately referred to the entity as "Mr. Splitfoot" (a common reference at the time to the devil who was believed to have hoofed feet). Soon it was suggested that they make some sort of code for "yes" and "no" using the raps, then an elaborate alphabet-based

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[1] In 1888, Katie and Maggie claimed it was all a hoax and fraud, but soon after recanted this confession, which was too late for critics. True believers never took their claim of fraud seriously and basically looked at them with pity, because, by this time, they were financially in dire straits and both battled with alcohol addiction, and it was believed they made their claims of fraud for financial gain rather than based upon truth of their mediumship.

system using raps. After trial and error, the group of weary "ghost hunters" came up with the name Charles B. Rosma…who had been a travelling peddler and met his demise at the hands of a previous occupant. The Spirit maintained his physical body was buried in the root cellar.

FOX COTTAGE.   LILY DALE, N. Y.

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. "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) [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*.]

This event, that started out as a simple inquiry by a perplexed family trying to figure out where the seemingly intelligent rappings were coming from, soon became known as the Rochester Rappings and it thrust these two young girls into a sudden whirlwind of celebrity, both positive and negative. Quickly, word got out about the rappings and soon throngs of people were clamoring to meet them…some to witness their spiritual gifts for themselves and to make contact with departed loved ones, others to tar and feather them, accusing them of being Satanic witches.

As their experience was being reported widely, their older sister, Leah, read a blurb about it in a periodical and immediately realized it was her family and sisters. She set off from her home to return to the hamlet to see what was going on. The fervor over her sisters kept growing and it was decided the girls needed to be taken away, not only for their own safety from the growing crowds, but also as a way to separate them to see if this spirit contact would dissipate and end. Katie went to her sister Leah's

home, and Maggie went to her brother, David's, but the raps followed them and didn't stop. A well-known Quaker couple in Rochester, Isaac and Amy Post, heard about the sisters and wanted to meet them. Quakers were very progressive thinkers, taking up social causes of the day like abolition, temperance, and suffrage for women. After witnessing the raps for themselves, they were convinced of the genuineness of the Fox sisters and started spreading the word throughout the Quaker community of the sisters' Spiritual gifts.

On November 14, 1849, the first public demonstration for a paying public of mediumship was conducted at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York. This began a movement the likes the world had never seen before. By 1850, all three of the Fox Sisters had become sought after celebrities in their own right, conducting séances for the wealthy and elite of New York City's high society. Their fame soon spread overseas and suddenly people all over the world claimed mediumistic abilities and séances were being conducted in living rooms everywhere. Of course, nearly from the beginning, this meant that there was a goodly number of "fake" mediums who were trying to capitalize on the financial potential of claiming to be able to commune with the dead. Anytime you have the authentic, there will be those who will try to exploit and imitate it for personal gain.

By the 1880s, then, the Spiritualist movement was in full-swing and attracting interest from all levels of society. It is no surprise, then, that interest in this movement made its way to the Midwest and beyond, even to Indiana:

> Spiritualism was already in the air in 1886. The fires lit by Andrew Jackson Davis, the revolutionary "Poughkeepsie Seer" and acknowledged Father of Modern Spiritualism in the United States had spread westward. Entire families became adherents of Spiritualism and established religious groups contributed not only converts but also that amount of philosophy deemed acceptable by the far-ranging, but very narrow Spiritualism of the day.

> 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, the trances; and in 1830 a major spiritual contact was recoded that told of an approaching "spiritual crisis" when a world-wide out-pouring of spiritual gifts would occur, together with an extraordinary discovery of material wealth. The date set forth was 1848—the date the Rochester Rappings via the Fox Sisters, and the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in California. (Harrison, *et al*, p. 9)

The Founding of Camp Chesterfield by the Westerfields[2]

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[2] For a detailed Timeline of the founding and implementation of Camp Chesterfield, please see Appendix A.

The Spiritualist movement had spread to Michigan, Ohio and Illinois, with "camp meetings" being held in these places, with actual camps being created. One Hoosier, in particular, had been actively involved in hosting gatherings of likeminded people to discuss topics related to free and progressive thought, which included Spiritualism. Dr. J.W. Westerfield, and his wife Mary, were instrumental in being the impetus to develop a Spiritualist camp in Indiana. Since 1883, they had hosted lectures in a hall they built above his pharmacy in the city of Anderson. It proved to be a popular endeavor with many of the intelligentsia of central Indiana gathering there to discuss and debate lofty topics of the day— a safe place where they could meet and discuss philosophical topics that occupied people's minds at the time. This, naturally, included Spiritualism and through their meetings, they introduced a number of people in the area to this new movement and emerging religion, science, and philosophy. People's interest was piqued!

> The couple also travelled to other areas interested in Spiritualism and in the summer of 1883 we find them visiting Michigan where at least three Camps were already in active operation. It was at Frazier's Grove Camp, near Vicksburg, on the 17th day of July 1883 that the conception of an Indiana Spiritualist meeting ground occurred. (Harrison, *et al*, p. 10)

The Westerfields met by chance a number of other Hoosiers who were attending the same camp in Michigan, and together, they decided that Indiana needed its own Spiritualist Camp, and so the seed to start an Indiana association and to have a permanent camp was sown.

This endeavor was easier said than done. It was decided quickly that Dr. Westerfield would be in charge of organizing the details since he had the means and time to do so. He spent the next three years networking with other Spiritualists, floating the idea of founding a Spiritualist association and camp in Indiana and in the fall of 1886, in his hall in Anderson, he held the first mass meeting of this proposed Spiritualist association. (Harrison, *et al*, p. 11)

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 association of the *Indiana*

Association of Spiritualists (IAOS) was formally inaugurated. On November 5, 1887, a constitution and by-laws were drawn up and adopted, making the association an incorporated organization. In 1890, the annual convention was held in the form of a "church picnic" on riverside property owned by members, Carroll and Emily Bronnenburg. In 1891, through a generous donation by the Bronennburgs, the 34 acre parcel of land was formally purchased to become a Spiritualist Camp for the IAOS. In 1891, the first convention was held officially on the grounds, affectionately called "Camp Chesterfield" by the locals—and it has been offering visitors spiritual reprieve and comfort ever since. (Leonard, WRSP, 2019)

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 1891. Initially, Camp Chesterfield was only a tent-based church similar to the old-style revival tents that itinerant ministers used to 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. (Harrison, *et al*, p. 19)

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! [Nota bene: As a researcher, 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 or deny 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 old-time resident mediums and they insisted that it was true, having been passed down verbally from teacher to student over the years.] 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. [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)] Doyle gave up writing stories about the famous detective to devote his life to writing about and documenting the history of Spiritualism. [See Doyle's *The History of Spiritualism: Volume One & Two* for a detailed account of the Spiritualist movement in its early years.]

In 1855, Dr. J.W. Westefield became a Spiritualist and went on to build Westerfield Hall in 1869 in Anderson, Indiana. Westerfield Hall would be where the movement would grow in popularity. Nationally, Spiritualism became so popular that it crossed the Atlantic to become all the rage in Europe. The movement gained its well-known advocate, Sir Conan Doyle, in the 1880s, when he was a doctor in Portsmouth, England. "Doyle had weighed the evidence for years. He had been impressed by the accounts of scientific men who believed. Sir William Crookes, who discovered thallium, had worked with D.D. Home and a medium named Florence Cook and pronounced them genuine.

Physicist Sir Oliver Lodge had written a book, titled Raymond, about his dead son. If these men of science believed, Doyle reasoned, who was he to argue?" (*Smithsonian*, September 1997, p. 108) This convergence of scientific rationalism and religious belief was what many people of the time felt to be an understandable way to meld their religious beliefs with conflicting concepts such as Darwinism and other scientific discoveries that seemed to be attacks on long held beliefs.   The Spiritualism movement had become a factor in mainstream areas of society, both locally, nationally, and internationally affecting the lives of many people. (National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, *Statement of Significance*, Section 8, p. 35, 1998)

"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 all the more amazing considering how sparsely populated the United States was in the mid-to-late 1800s. (Buescher, p. xi.) 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. 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. In fact, Mark Twain offered a humorous commentary on Spiritualism in 1866, where he detailed in his usual witty style his experiences attending Spiritualist séances. In addition, séances were purportedly held in the Lincoln White House (see Austin, B.F.; Fitzgerrell, J.J.; and most importantly, Colburn-Maynard, Nettie). 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." (Leonard WRSP, 2020.)

The Stalwart and Unflappable Mable Riffle[3]

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? (Richey, 2009) 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

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[3] 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.

"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[4] 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 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 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.

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

In 1960, she agreed to take part in a demonstration of physical phenomena that was to be filmed using infrared film in an attempt to prove once and for all the authenticity of spirit communication and physical phenomena. Sadly, it proved the opposite as the film caught her red-handed perpetrating fraud during a séance. This

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[4] See Appendix B of a map of the buildings and grounds of Camp Chesterfield.

entire episode is meticulously covered in the 2022 BBC Radio Series, Fake Medium, by Vicky Baker. This tarnished Mabel Riffle's stellar reputation and ultimately stained her legacy, but all of the good she did for Camp Chesterfield in the way of fundraising and building structures and infrastructure can never be denied or forgotten.

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. Below is a sample of an article that features Mabel Riffle and her untiring stamina to persevere.

Fake Medium Won't Appeal—Mrs. Mabel 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.

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, Mabel 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.

While researching materials 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 Mabel Riffle 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 still functioning since 1886, serving as testimony of its allure and appeal for generations of Hoosiers.

Upon Mabel 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, Mabel 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, 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, renting for the years of 1908 and 1909.

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

The medium cottage at 421 Grandview Drive where the Bangs Sisters summered 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)." (Leonard, WRSP, 2019)

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 their 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." (Leonard, WRSP, 2019) 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)

"[This] Spirit portrait [of Daisy] was 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)

Precipitation spirit portrait of "Daisy," a spirit guide of Dr. Grumbine, by the Bangs Sisters in 1893 in Chicago, Illinois] [Photos courtesy of *Hett Art Gallery Archives*]

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. Daughtery was not in spirit, but was sitting for the portrait. (Photo courtesy of the Hett Art Gallery and Museum, Camp Chesterfield) (Leonard, WRSP, 2019)

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. Usborne 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. Usborne 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." (Leonard, WRSP, 2019)

The Friends of Camp Chesterfield Foundation (FCCF)

In order to be considered for certain government grants and monies not usually available to religious entities, it was decided that a non-profit group needed to be created in order to apply for such grants. In 2013, the *Friends of Camp Chesterfield Foundation* (FCCF) was formed as a non-profit to promote and encourage the preservation of Camp Chesterfield's historic buildings and landscape displays and architecture, by raising funds and applying for government and private grants to preserve its aging structures and landscape displays on the grounds. The brainchild of Todd Jay Leonard, Suzanne Stanis, and J.P. Hall, the first official board consisted of the following members: Rev. Michael Taylor, President; JP Hall, Vice President; Normandi Ellis, Secretary; Mary Beth Hattaway, Treasurer; Rev. Glenda Cadarette,

Trustee; Gail Snow, Trustee; Suzanne Stanis, ex-officio member; Rev. Vicki Corkell, ex-officio member; and Rev. Todd Jay Leonard, ex-officio member.

The FCCF has accomplished much in the past ten years, applying for and receiving numerous grants including projects funded by outside monies. Some of these projects include the procurement and setting of a bronze plaque signifying Camp Chesterfield's entry on the US National Register of Historic Places; creating a walking tour brochure, along with interpretive signage that was placed throughout the grounds for visitors to learn about the history of the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield; the digitization of much of the archival material in the Hett Art Gallery and Museum that is now in the permanent collection at IUPUI University's Center for Digital Scholarship; an oral history project that allowed for video-taped interviews of camp mediums to be created and uploaded onto the Camp Chesterfield website and to YouTube for visitors to peruse; new tile flooring in the Hett Art gallery and Museum, replacing carpet that had become worn and moldy over the years, in all three galleries; a feasibility study for the Sunflower hotel; the stabilization of the Sunflower Hotel (repairing the roof, shoring up places where animals were accessing entry, and boarding up windows as a way to mothball the building until proper renovation can occur); exterior rehabilitation of the Koch Cottage, including a new roof, new windows, painting and overall repair; an engineering study for the Maxon Cafeteria. Grants and donations toward the preservation of structures and landscape displays at historic Camp Chesterfield generated by the FCCF have totaled over $130,000 since 2013.

A vintage photo of the Sunflower Hotel in its prime. [Photo courtesy of *Hett Art Gallery Archives*]

Conclusion: Camp Chesterfield Today

Today, Camp Chesterfield is a flourishing Spiritualist community equipped with a full-service cafeteria, a spacious cathedral, two hotels, a modern bookstore and library, an art gallery and museum of Spiritualist artifacts, and a quaint little chapel in the woods.[5] In addition, it allegedly boasts the first fire-proof building in the state of Indiana, (Hattaway, M. 2008) a nostalgic hotel called the "Western" 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 (as mentioned previously) 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.

In the year 2020, along with the rest of the world, Camp Chesterfield found itself in the midst of the worldwide Covid Pandemic, forcing it to adapt, change, and integrate new policies and to create events to ensure the safety of its residents, staff, and members. Quickly, mediums and residents were able to incorporate activities and events remotely using the Internet including, seminary classes, message services, church services, and lectures, which allowed Camp Chesterfield to function largely undeterred by the spreading pandemic occurring outside its gates. No doubt, a silver lining to the pandemic was the push to bring Camp Chesterfield up to date technologically and into the 21st century by offering many of its programs and services to members, residents, and visitors via Zoom sessions. While it is still doing many activities remotely, slowly face-to-face activities are beginning to happen once again. Once the dust and fallout of several years of the pandemic settles, no doubt people will once again seek the comfort and solace of spirit communication with certified mediums to make contact with loved ones who sadly passed during the past several years.

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[5] Please see Appendix B for a detailed map of Camp Chesterfield today.

Biographical Note

Todd Jay Leonard is a full-professor at the University of Teacher Education Fukuoka, Japan, where he is a faculty member in the Department of Education, in the English Education Section. He is also currently the Department Head for the English Section for the graduate program. He is the author of numerous academic articles and 25 books on topics ranging from American religious history, cross-cultural studies, English as a Foreign Language, and spirituality. Originally from Indiana, he has lived in Japan for 33 years and now calls Kyushu Japan home, where he lives, writes, and teaches.

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Appendix A: CAMP CHESTERFIELD TIMELINE

1883: Dr. J.W. and Mrs. Mary Westerfield first entertained the idea of founding a Spiritualist association in Indiana after visiting the Frazer's Grove Spiritualist Camp near Vicksburg, Michigan on July 17, 1883, and meeting several other Hoosiers who had traveled to Michigan to attend services.

1883-1886: Dr. Westerfield worked diligently to contact Hoosier Spiritualists all over the state to garner widespread interest to form an association and build a camp dedicated to Hoosier Spiritualists.

1886: Dr. Westerfield called a mass meeting in Anderson, Indiana with around 200 Hoosier Spiritualists in attendance. The group met regularly at a space above Dr. Westerfield's pharmacy in downtown Anderson, Indiana.

1887 (November 5): The officers and members adopted a Constitution and Bylaws, forming a legally sanctioned association as an incorporated body, allowing the organization to perform transactions on behalf of the association.

1888 (October 22): The group was officially incorporated as the Indiana Association of Spiritualists (IAOS), under the direction of the newly elected president, Dr. J.W. Westerfield.

1889 (September 26): At the annual convention for the association, Dr. L.M. Blackledge was elected as the association's third president.

1890: The annual convention, held as a church picnic, elected Dr. J.W. Westerfield as the fourth president of the IAOS. The event took place on the riverside property in Chesterfield, Indiana of Carroll and Emily Bronnenberg.

1891: Without formal purchase of the property being completed, a "gentleman's agreement" had been made with workers hired to clear part of the land to make space for the annual camp meeting in 1891. A large tent-auditorium was erected to seat 500 attendees.

1892: On August 12, the thirty-four acres of land were purchased in the amount of $3,225 from Carroll and Emily Bronnenberg. Both the Westerfields and Bronnenbergs made sizable donations to the IAOS to enable the land's purchase.

1895-1900: The fifth president of the association, George W. Parkinson, served the association from 1895-1898. Many mediums began the custom of "advertising" their gifts around this time.

1903: The large tent-auditorium was replaced by a wood-framed auditorium, equipped with a free-standing stage at one end which allowed for sermons and mediums to give "platform" messages to the congregation.

1909: Rev. Mable Riffle became Secretary of the IAOS and continued in this capacity for the rest of her life.

1914: The "Sunflower Hotel" was built at a construction cost of $6,887, with seventy rooms available to guests.

1916: A flower garden and fountain was built on the site of the Old Boarding House after it was moved and attached to the Sunflower Hotel as an addition to the newly built hotel.

1918: A new dining hall was built that featured stand-alone brick ovens to bake bread and pastries.

1922: The Lily Hotel was built as a twin hotel of the Sunflower Hotel, each facing one another as guests entered the front gate to the camp.

1922-1924: The Sunflower Hotel was expanded with the addition of forty rooms; the old Lodging House was moved and attached to the back in 1916, in the west section of the existing hotel.

1930: The Garden of Prayer was built into the side of a small hill in the center of the grounds from river rock found in the White River that borders the property.

1936: The "Lyceum Building" was constructed for the educational arm of the IAOS. The name was later changed to the "Chapel in the Woods," and this structure hosts platform message services, galas, church services, weddings, and funerals.

1940: The Trail of Religions statue grouping was constructed to honor religious figures from the world's great religions; in addition, a memorial to Native American Indians and their religious beliefs was built on the grounds.

1945: The construction of the Western Hotel, in "American roadside architecture" was authorized and later built as a modern hotel.

1950: A Native American Totem Pole was donated to the IAOS by Bruno Cieslak, and it was erected next to the Native American Memorial.

1953-1954: The second auditorium, built in 1903, was razed to build the "Cathedral of the Woods," which was dedicated on June 26, 1954.

1958: The Hett Art Gallery and Museum was constructed to house the many archived documents, Spiritualist artifacts, and spiritual works of art related to the IAOS and history of Camp Chesterfield.

1974: The Julia Urbanic Memorial statue of Jesus Christ was dedicated beside the Administration Building.

1996: Arsonists set fire to the Lily Hotel, and it was completely lost.

1998: The Tree of Life Bookstore and Gift Shop was renovated and rebuilt in the space vacated by the Lily Hotel after the 1996 fire.

1998: The United States Department of the Interior, in conjunction with the "National Park Services," designated Camp Chesterfield as an "historic district," listing it officially on the National Register of Historic Places.

2013: The Friends of Camp Chesterfield Foundation (FCCF) was formed as a non-profit organization to promote and encourage the preservation of Camp Chesterfield's historic buildings and landscape displays and architecture.

Source: Todd Jay Leonard, retrieved on January 30, 2022 at "World Religions and Spirituality Project" for Camp Chesterfield: Camp Chesterfield – WRSP (wrldrels.org)

Appendix B: A Map of Camp Chesterfield

White River

North

Valley View Drive

432 W Stone Pyramid 442 V 436 V Cathedral 415 E 419 E

421 G Cross 414 E

401 W Totem Pole Quan Yin 410 E

413 G Sun Singer 411 E

315 W

313 W 409 G Toad Stools 404 P 405 E

312 W 405 G Trail of Religions 322 P 321 E 402 E

Grandview Western Drive 318 P 313 E 322 E

311 W 315 G Stone Bridge 314 P 318 E

311 G Chesterfield Angel Garden of Prayer 310 P 314 E

307 W 307 G Parkview Drive Eastern Drive 310 E

Buddha Garden Mother Mary 306 P 306 E

225 W Chapel 303 E PRIVATE PARKING

Gnome Garden Fountain 222 P 225 E

Memory Gardens 218 P

224 G 221 E 222 E Guest House

RV Parking 216 P 218 E

Western Hotel Maxon Fellowship Center Jesus 217 E ARC 214 E

RV Parking Visitor Welcome Center 214 P 213 L

Lincoln Drive

Sunflower Hotel Lily Park Tree of Life Book Store 200 E 206 E

Hett Art Gallery

Camp Entrance Gatehouse

Washington St.

S.R. 32

MAP LEGEND

PARKING   PUBLIC   PAVED STREETS   GRAVEL   PUBLIC WALKWAYS   PAVED SIDEWALKS   RESTROOMS

PRIVATE   LISTED MEDIUMS

W – WESTERN DRIVE   E – EASTERN DRIVE
G – GRANDVIEW DRIVE   L – LINCOLN DRIVE

Missionaries: Imperial Germany's Social Engineers in Africa

Dawson Davis
Indiana University

Western missionary work focused on converting newly colonized lands to the teachings of Christianity during the age of empire. As imperial regimes imposed economic and administrative reforms on conquered nations, missionaries enforced behavioral reforms to reflect the culture of the conqueror nation. Missionary societies, often based in Western metropoles, were in direct collaboration with the regimes they lived under, often vocalizing the need for an imperial presence to conduct missions of "civilization" in tandem with the teachings of Christ. Despite their vocalized reluctance to secular colonialism, Germany's missionaries harbored many beliefs of cultural superiority that implicitly aligned them with the ideals of the Kaiserreich. Therefore, German missionaries were highly susceptible to the secular world in their doctrine, practice, and lifestyle, resulting in their participation for a greater national effort to socially engineer indigenous societies.

Colonialism was used as a means of religious imposition, dating back to its conception. From Columbus to the time of modern decolonization, colonizer nations sought to transform not only the economic and administrative capabilities of their holdings abroad, but also the spiritual identity of those colonized as well.[1] Christian missionaries and inquisitors were historically bound to the European conquest of the New World, Africa, and Asia as a means of stamping out religious and cultural customs contrary to the Church. As the age of globalization reached its zenith in the second half of the 19th century and the trend of empire-building was underway in Europe, missionaries generally were highly collaborative with imperial regimes. Mission work from the United Kingdom, for example, was nationalistic in nature, emulating the secular goals of the state as a means of conversion.[2] Integration into the global economy and introduction of European cultural trends was believed to recreate the conditions that Christianity supposedly flourished in. As a result, most Western missionaries subscribed to a missiology that emphasized temporal secularism.

While German colonialism and missionary work reached Eastern Europe, Asia and Oceania as well, Africa from 1871 to 1914 will be the primary region discussed in this paper. Africa was almost entirely colonized after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia.[3]

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[1] Encyclopedia of Religion, *The Inquisition in the New World,* (Encyclopedia.com, 24 Jan. 2022) https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/inquisition-inquisition-new-world.

[2] Dana Lee Robert, *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History: 1706-1914,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 11-12.

[3] John Iliffe, *Geschichte Afrikas,* (München: Beck, 2003), 189

Somebody500, *Comparison of Africa in the years 1880 to 1913*, Wikimedia Commons

Before the formal partitioning of the continent, European traders and missionaries had already established roots in many coastal regions. The first overseas German missions were located in the western and southern portions of Africa in the 1730's by the Herrnhuter Pietists, but were unsuccessful in significantly transforming the spiritual makeup of coastal African societies.[4] After European military authority was established in Africa, missionary effectiveness drastically increased. Viera Vilhanova identifies Christianity as the first permanent introduction of Westernization on the interior lands as missionaries now had legal access and military protection to venture beyond the coastline.[5]

For secularists in the colonies, the Christianization of Africa was a perfect complement to the political and economic takeover of conquered nations. Christianity was viewed and served as an umbrella idea that satiated both moral behavior and conduct. The colonies were advertised as modern Gardens of Eden (self-determination, rule over nature, and a "Father" land that provides subsidy). This appealed to the German public through their promises of future economic prosperity and elevation of German international prestige. Missionaries were called upon by the metropole to teach Africans how to work for the economic gain of the colonies. Through the lens of this Euro-centric system, Africans were expected to cast off their "uncivilized" behaviors and assimilate as dutiful participants to European economic and cultural activity.

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[4] Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 18.
[5] Viera Vilhanova, *Christian Missions in Africa and Their Role in the Transformation of African Societies*, 2007, 258.

While called upon the Imperial government and general public to carry out this pre-determined path of colonial development, German missionaries had starkly different aspirations under colonialism. Often publicly denouncing racial theories and the harsh treatment handed to indigenous subjects, German missionaries placated themselves by upholding a strong reverence, or calling, to a godly mission of Christian ambassadorship. Despite their Christ-centered rhetoric, German missionaries under the Kaiserreich were deeply influenced by their desire to socially engineer African society away from perceived "heathenism".[6] Their doctrine, methods of instruction, and participation in political circles all sought to convert not only the souls of Africans, but to stamp out undesired behaviors that missionaries abhorred. So, while German missionaries boasted an apparent repulsion to secular conversion that other European mission societies practiced, a unique (and equally as manipulative) practice of social engineering was underway.

Doctrine

Missionaries under the German Empire had many distinctive attributes and beliefs that distinguished them from other contemporaries. German missionaries were generally more educated than their Western counterparts, having backgrounds in academia, medicine, and the natural sciences.[7] These trades would serve many non-secular purposes surrounding the establishment and perpetuation of mission communities. For one, mission doctors were among the first to arrive and form societies in remote reaches of the colonies since missions could not survive in the harsh conditions of sub-Saharan Africa without proper medical provision.[8] Secondly, those trained in geography and topography were crucial in traversing the vastness of the interior. At the time, Africa hosted some of the world's least explored regions for Europeans. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, founder of the Bethel Foundation for mental illness, praised mission work as a multi-rewarding opportunity for exploration and world-wide conversion.[9]

The academic prowess of German missionaries helped establish a doctrine that would make Germany's mission history strikingly unique from others. Highly intricate conceptions of a mission goal formed from these circles of academic discourse, shaping the principles of missionary work under a highly nationalistic, imperial regime. Jeremy Best identifies Germany's intellectual think tanks behind the missionary movement as *Missionwissenschaftlers* (mission scientists).[10] *Missionwissenschaftlers* were highly revered among religious communities as they were the inventors of a modern German mission doctrine. *Missionwissenschaftlers* existed in both Catholic and Protestant denominations, usually reflecting similar ideas of purpose and non-secularism. Cardinal Lavigerie, for example, was an

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[6] Jeremy Best*, Heavenly Fatherland German Missionary Culture and Globalization in the Age of Empire,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 11.

[7] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 24

[8] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, January 1906, 98.

[9] Horst Gründer, *Christliche Mission Und Deutscher Imperialismus: Eine Politische Geschichte Ihrer Beziehungen während Der Deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884-1914) Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas Und Chinas*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1982), 321.

[10] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 51

influential Catholic that established a road map to "civilizing" pagan regions of the world. He gained support of Pope Leo XIII to endeavor on a European effort of eradicating slavery in Africa.[11] The overarching message *Missionwissenschaftlers* taught was that the missionary was to separate themselves from their German national identity and submerge themselves in African society.[12] Providing their message of salvation far removed from the vices of the modern day was key to exuding a godly identity. As shown in the following integral tenets of German missionary work, the message of casting off one's temporal identity had its shortcomings.

First is the notion of a new world order. The age of globalization in the late 19th century introduced many new manners for Christian outreach. The most domineering idea to come from the *Missionwissenschaftlers* was the suggestion of international Christianization. Christian missionaries now had at their disposal an opportunity to ride on the backs of imperial conquest and form from the old, a new, universal Christian identity.[13] Missionaries (Protestants in particular) were encouraged by the "Great Commission" in the Bible to conduct this international calling. The Great Commission in the Bible comes from Mark 16:15 where Jesus told his disciples to "Go into the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."[14] The Great Commission in the context of imperial conquest directly connects any mission of Christianization with the regimes of those traveling to Africa.

A stark difference from that of other European mission societies was Germany's resolute desire to preserve African language and promote literacy. Protestantism, being vastly dominant in the German colonies, placed a heavy emphasis on African language usage. German missionaries' interest in language was not random. The stories of Pentecost, particularly in Acts 2:4 where "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages", resonated deeply with Protestant missionaries.[15] Additionally, most German-sourced Christian denominations required the Gospel to be read by the believer before baptism could be conducted.[16] Obviously, this heavily incentivized mission societies to pursue a language-based form of education. As a result of their own interpretations of the Bible and traditions behind the conversion process, missionaries' roles in almost exclusively formulating written African language would be a staple feature of their outreach.

To Protestants and Catholics alike, averting secularized Western practices was key in the shift towards an African Christian identity. To German missionaries, concepts such as capitalism and modernity represented "false idols" to conversion.[17] Only through a strict adherence to cultural isolation were Africans to avoid the precarious vacuum of German secular integration. Although opponents to this

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[11] Vilhanova, Viera, *Christian Missions in Africa*, 252
[12] Vilhanova, Viera, Christian Missions in Africa, 254
[13] Gründer, Horst, *Christliche Mission Und Deutscher Imperialismus*, 322
[14] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 23
[15] Best, Jeremy*, Heavenly Fatherland*, 54
[16] Vilhanova, Viera, *Christian Missions in Africa*, 255
[17] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 34

ideological isolation, such as Rhenish mission leader Friedrich Fabri, argued for an emulation of British and American mission practices because of their ability to remove the "scanty residue of coloured natives'[culture]"[18], the potential damage imposed on the cultural integrity of African society outweighed consumerism. Those on the exact opposite end of the spectrum, such as Bruno Gutmann from the Leipzig mission, advocated for the entire removal of any material goods produced in Europe in order to offer the image of temporal neutrality.[19] The decision to remain culturally isolated from European secular influence prompted many unorthodox social experiments. Utopianism became extremely popular under the German Catholic missionaries as the geographic isolation from the influence of "modernity" fostered an exceptional environment for cultural experimentation.[20] The Protestant Pietist movement found its origins in Africa as a response to the desire for isolation.[21]

Pietism originated from Lutheran Protestantism, combining biblical callings with an extremely traditional temporal lifestyle. In other words, "Pietists believed that Christianity should be characterized by more than just thinking the right things about God, it should be characterized by living in ways that demonstrated one's commitment to God."[22] With a heavy emphasis on small group ministry and individual spiritual development, missionaries were to establish communities within Africa that rejected outside influence and promoted staunch adherence to biblical texts. Pietism was highly popularized under colonial missionary work as its tenets of isolation and traditional living were easily followed in the scarcely populated colonies. The isolationist doctrine reveals many things. Isolation as a form of control over Africans is one of many instances where the very desire to remain distant from secular political economy creates in itself a power dynamic of control and subjugation. While those such as Friedrich Fabri were socially outcast from religious academic circles for their secular standpoints on ministry, the idea of guiding the intellectual and moral developments of indigenous peoples down a coerced path were universal for both secular and non-secular entities.

Missionwissenschaftlers emphasized the importance of eradicating "heathenism". To German missionaries, heathenism was an even greater enemy than secularism, serving as the justification for a presence in Africa. According to missionaries, prolonged isolation from the Gospel led Africans down a path of heathenism and savagery.[23] Europe was supposedly spared this path due to Christianity's proximity to and dissemination throughout the Roman Empire. As a result, German missionaries were motivated by a confidence in superior moral ethics and found purpose in influencing Africans away from this alleged savagery.[24] Being

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[18] Friedrich Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland Der Kolonien?,* (Gotha: Perthes, 1884).

[19] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 98

[20] Gründer, Horst, *Christliche Mission Und Deutscher Imperialismus*, 322

[21] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 58

[22] Messiah University*, Pietism*, Messiah, a private Christian University in PA (Messiah College, April 16, 2014),
https://www.messiah.edu/info/20265/the_three_traditions_that_shape_our_mission_and_why/327/pietism.

[23] Best, Jeremy, Heavenly Fatherland, 17

[24] K. J. Munholland, *Origins of Contemporary Europe: 1890-1914*, (New York, 1970), 201.

"the bearer of a cultural mission"[25] necessitated a calling to rid the world of all culture that was anti-Christian. German missionaries therefore centered around a task of not only conversion, but an elevation of Africans out of the apparent primitivity of heathenistic, non-Christian customs.

Overall, the importance of non-secularism that *Missionwissenschaftlers* espoused was not translated over in doctrine or practice. Missionary doctrine under imperial Germany clearly demonstrated a struggle between separating nationalism with religion. Many parallels exist between Kaiser Wilhelm II's *Weltpolitik* doctrine of transforming Germany into a world power and German missionaries' desire for an international Christian identity. Both sought to export ideas native to 19th century German thinking to regions of the world subjected to colonialism. While both pledged allegiance to different sources of power, the message of German superiority existed in both.

Establishing Mission Societies in Africa

Prior to formal colonialism, missionaries were confined largely to coastal regions, relying on permission from local African leaders to establish mission societies. This went away with the invasion and establishment of colonial administrations as mission societies were granted free movement rights by the imperial government.[26] The road to reaching African audiences was paved by the German conquest of its allotted territories laid out in the Berlin Conference. These colonies included modern day Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. Collaboration between missionaries and Imperial forces in this initial stage of development was commonplace as both offered the other services in achieving subjugation of indigenous populations. For example, mission doctors' presence and work on tropical disease and acclimatation methods gave colonial administrations the means of extending their influence on the interior.[27] Imperial Germany would help missionaries with transportation and scope of reach throughout the colonies. Railroads were the lifeline to reaching the interior, so their construction and usage always indicated areas with mission societies.[28]

Mission societies were established largely due to a growing popularity for colonialism in the metropole. Mission stories from the colonies were extremely popular to German audiences in their usage of superficial and fantastic lingua. Magazines and periodicals published by missionary societies played into the colonial fantasy movement in the *Heimat* (homeland), an act that helped further spread popularity for colonialism. One such story, published in 1906 by the Evangelical Mission Magazine, tells of Missionary Maddor and his wife. They are described as living in dense jungle with volcanic scars. Maddor and his wife formed a mission in the remotest of places surrounded by people in "primal stages of human

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[25] Fabri, Friedrich, *Bedarf Deutschland Der Kolonien?*
[26] Gründer, Horst, *Christliche Mission Und Deutscher Imperialismus*, 323
[27] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 98
[28] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 254

development".[29] Such testimonial speaks for a larger genus of secular advertising that sought to popularize and fanaticize Africa. "Colonial fantasies" were such commonplace in German society that toys, foods, and literary works were brandished with racist depictions of Africans and African society. For missionaries, the colonial fantasy movement offered a platform for fantastic depictions of a future Africa under Christian ministry. The mission of "civilization" in this context grew as a response to the hope that mission work would one day transform the apparent lack of moral standards seen in Africans at the time.

If it were not for the German government, legitimacy in establishing mission settlements would have been challenged by African communities. Land expropriation, as long as it served an apparent non-secular purpose, was justified as "God's will" by missionaries. Many cited Deuteronomy 1:8 as a justification to "Go in and take possession of the land".[30] Missionaries were given military support to take land as they saw fit if regional African communities were reluctant to have missions established in the area. Missionaries' plans for land development and allocation generally revolved around placing communal priority on the mission. Missions were to serve as farms, living settlements, education and health centers, and religious development. More times than not, Imperial ideas of land allocation and development lined up in this sense.

While missionaries were abjectly opposed to chartered land plots due to their blatantly exploitative manner of resource extraction and African mistreatment, the concept of sectioning African society off from German settlers was unilaterally agreed upon. For example, the colonial administration and missionaries in Southwest Africa agreed on a segregated colonial policy that sought to corral Africans away from the coast and towards mission-sanctioned farmland.[31] Obviously, the colonial administration wanted Africans away from white settlements due to a motive of racial bigotry. While missionaries pursued a racialized policy of segregation with the Imperial regime, their motivation was in distancing African society from German society as a means of preventing invasive "colonial immorality".[32] The compromise of deciding African mobility was a blatant act of collusion, speaking for a larger intent in missionaries to control both secular and non-secular aspects of African life.

The establishment of mission legitimacy and presence in German colonial Africa is a testament to the degree of cooperation and secularity that missionaries engaged in to reach their audience. Mission societies at the time could not have existed in Africa without the backing and continuous support of the German imperial government. Even if German missionaries detested African mistreatment in what they saw as secularly motivated debauchery (market exploitation and racialized rhetoric), they provided exemptions for involvement in administrative affairs as long

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[29] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 254-255

[30] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 115

[31] Stephen Morgan, *Christian Conversion and Colonial "Native Policy": The Role of Missionaries in Formulating Reservation Policy in German Southwest Africa*, (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 741.

[32] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 39

as it served a greater purpose of establishing a greater Christian community within African society.

Obtaining a Congregation

Concessions that strayed from non-secular instruction were commonly made to accommodate the smooth operation of the societies. At a time of instability and food shortages (due to countless land expropriations and plantation-style land allocation), obtaining a congregation could be easily obtainable with several relatively easy adjustments to their non-secular doctrine. Wage labor and the enticement of trade goods for Africans to construct churches and attend church sermons were used despite an ideological aversion to the global economy.[33] Furthermore, tax codes in the colonies heavily incentivized Africans to join mission communities as membership implied dependency status.[34] As mentioned, a culture of subsidence farming combined with food grants from the German government guaranteed food security. Beyond providing basic living needs for Africans, other methods were used to gain membership.

African rulers were high priority targets for initial conversion as Christianized kings not only welcomed missionaries, but they would influence their subjects to convert.[35] Technology exhibitions were presented in mission societies as a means of sparking interest and encouraging people to join.[36] The greatest incentive to join, outside of survival, was education. Focusing on writing, farming, and construction techniques, schooling became a staple feature for not just German mission societies, but virtually every mission program in Africa. Education was the largest incentive for the imperial government to allow missionary activity within the colonies. A large area of political debate between Germany and the German missionaries was the curriculum that was taught. While the administrative bodies of the colonies wanted education to serve the needs of the colony (in the form of agriculturalists or translation), German missionaries lobbied heavily for a strict education of Christian teaching and literacy.[37] In blocking imperial Germany's desires for a factory of minimally-educated workers, the missionaries had hoped for an independent teaching environment.

German missionaries parted from others in that they excluded Africans from leadership roles in churches.[38] Most imperial governments permitted African instruction of schools as a means of encouraging school attendance. Under the German colonies, missionaries held express rights to education instruction. Education, in general, became the most regulated offering that missionaries provided. Education came with many caveats: that one must attend congregations

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[33] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 94
[34] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 124
[35] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 195
[36] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 263
[37] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 94
[38] William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background,* (Portland, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 72.

and be loyal members of the mission society.[39] Overall, German missionaries incentivized Africans to join the societies. The level of dependency that Africans had on mission societies to provide for them vastly outweighed any spiritual enlightenment that a voluntary program would have fostered. When survival was threatened and educational opportunity was a benefit of conversion, people agreed to any stipulation that the missionaries may have established. This fact seriously questions the message that German missionaries were trying to deliver. If anything, the methods used in obtaining a congregation that the German missionaries used dissolved any true connection to a godly message of charity and assistance.

Mission Societies' Conduct

Mission societies utilized individual interpretation of biblical texts to establish their worldviews. "[Protestants] took the texts of the Bible and elaborated on evangelical understanding of Christianity that encouraged engagement and brotherhood."[40] In the broader sense of Christianity, Evangelism became extremely central to the Protestant method of salvation during this globalizing period. The core belief that the literal words of the Gospel provide the pathway to salvation (through grace), which is only achieved through an atonement of sin, defined the manner in which African-missionary relations were carried out. African linguistics was respected out of a reference to the story of Pentecost. Most other customs of African life were blatantly disrespected and disregarded as heathenism. To German missionaries, an atonement of sin suggested that Africans strip away many identities that defined who they were and how they perceived morality. As this segment will show, reward and reprisal were handed out in clear methods to socially engineer a desired "Christian" behavior.

According to Stephen Morgan, German missionaries targeted societies within the colonies that were known to practice undesired cultural norms.[41] For example, nomadism was a common practice among many African nations in German Southwest Africa due to the scarcity of arable land. According to the missionaries, nomadism was ideologically antithetical to Christianity as nomads placed no seeds in their surroundings.[42] In general, the perceived turning away from cultivating land clashed with the Christian image of planting seeds in life and in faith. Julius Richter, one of unified Germany's first generation religious minds, spoke on how

All attempts to make them settle down, to get them used to orderly farming and to convert them into Christians have failed so far because of their irrepressible urge for freedom.[43]

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[39] Vilhanova, Viera, *Christian Missions in Africa*, 254
[40] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 21
[41] Morgan, Stephen, *Christian Conversion and Colonial "Native Policy"*, 747
[42] Morgan, Stephen, *Christian Conversion and Colonial "Native Policy"*, 747
[43] Julius Richter, *Evangelische Missionskunde*, (Leipzig: Deichert, 1920), 240-241

Heavy emphasis was placed on subsistence farming, and all mission societies grew food with African converts tending the land.

Derogatory language towards African work ethic was commonplace in weekly mission reports. African women in particular were targets to claims of laziness:

In general, the women are extremely lazy and work-shy. But they are not too lazy to beg and it is the best way to get rid of the annoying beggars, by asking them to work. That scares them away forever.[44]

Further attacks on African women accused them of infidelity and purposelessness,

Before Christianity arrived, there was absolutely nothing for the women there to break the dull monotony of their existence. Modesty and what is called chaste were unknown qualities to them.[45]

Insults on character and morality overshadowed any message of Christian instruction. German missionaries, for example, were willing to incorporate secular economic policies in order to rid African society of "laziness".

There is a contradiction between whites and blacks, but I think it's mainly [that] blacks shy away from work and want everything that's good without doing anything for it.[46]

Hut taxes, a widely controversial policy of forcing Africans to enter the market economy because of apparent laziness, were even proposed as a means of ridding African society from "freeloading".[47] Such language (and degree to which missionaries were willing to entertain secular policies) suggest that the highly revered doctrine laid out by the *Missionwissenschaftlers* could be disregarded under certain circumstances.

Biblical interpretations of the "wilderness" are used widely to denote a lifestyle astray from Christianity. According to German missionaries, Christianity brought to Africans such things as "comfortable dwellings and well-tended plantations in the place of the former wilderness."[48] The term "wilderness" has many connotations, mainly that Christianity pulled Africans out of the wilderness of temptation and paganism more so than a literal wilderness. German missionaries operated under the notion that Africans needed help in escaping their heathenistic tendencies. Bans on liquor and other such trivial prohibitions of daily decision-making were all-encompassing of a greater effort to help Africans.[49] The story of the "white man's burden" plays directly into the mission statement of the German missionaries: that Africans need help in their ascension to God. Overall, missionaries had great power

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[44] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 262-263
[45] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin,* 262-263
[46] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin,* 263
[47] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin,* 292
[48] Basel Mission Society, *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*, 264
[49] Hogg, William, *Ecumenical Foundations,* 72

in the day to day lives and decision-making of Africans. Practices that repulsed conceptions of Christian virtue were always eliminated by any means necessary.

German colonial history is pockmarked with countless moments of brutal violence against the Africans who lived there. From famines led on by land expropriations to full-scale military reprisals against civilians, the imperial German government squashed any attempts of insubordination or revolt. The line between missionary involvement in direct violence is very thin in Germany's colonies. Usually as last resort efforts to stamp out undesired behaviors out of Africans, Christian humanitarian lobbies would appeal to the Imperial government for assistance in coercing a change in African behavior.[50] Despite their condemnation of brutal acts of oppression like Leopold II's Belgian Congo, German missionaries at times would support, or at least turn an eye, to violence.

The Rhenish Mission in German Southwest Africa is the greatest example of direct involvement in genocide. Having gained notoriety because of its once outspoken leader, Friedrich Fabri, the Rhenish Society had tried distancing itself from the secularized conversion doctrine. Despite Fabri's sacking in 1884, many within the society harbored unusually nationalistic sentiments of a mission purpose in Africa. The deteriorating situation in the colony at the turn of the century aligned the members of this influential mission society to the actions of the colonial administration. As unrest reached an all-time high with the Herero nation in 1904, large scale revolt broke out against imperial rule. As a result of decades of broken treaties and land expropriations, the Herero people were placed in a position of starvation that only violence would remedy. The German army, under the command of Lothar von Trotha, was sent to quell the rebellion. After routing Herero rebels into the desert and poising water sources that would impact Herero settlements, a *Vernichtungsbefehl* (extermination order) was carried out, beginning the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Rhenish Mission in the years leading up to the genocide worked heavily with the Herero and Nama nations in Southwest Africa. As in other colonies, German missionaries placed a heavy emphasis on farming and communal settlement. Since the colony had been Germany's largest settler colony, continuous land expropriations were conducted to give German agriculturalists access to the already scarce arable land. The Rhenish Mission had grown extremely distraught over the reluctance of the Herero and Nama to end their tradition of nomadism.[51] Nomadism was more than a way of life; it was the method used for obtaining food in the arid environment of the Kalahari Desert. Missionaries here had many ranging reactions to war against the German imperial administration. From humanitarianism to nationalistic sympathy for the situation at hand, the Rhenish Mission found itself outcast from both the Imperial administration and African nations.

In general, those in the Rhenish mission such as Paul Rohrbach pursued the idea of following the Imperial army to assist in a humanitarian relief effort. In

[50] Vilhanova, Viera, *Christian Missions in Africa*, 252
[51] Glen Ryland, *Stories and Mission Apologetics: The Rhenish Mission from Wars and Genocide to the Nazi Revolution, 1904-1936*, 2013, 22.

exchange for their assistance in transporting captured Herero soldiers and their families at gunpoint, the Rhenish Mission was permitted to construct mission societies outside of the concentration camps that they were to be sent to.[52] Aid during the genocide came with the expectation that the Africans near the camps could be "rehabilitated" under the eyes of Christianized program.

Obviously, this is an extreme case of direct involvement in the secular affairs of imperial Germany. Most mission societies within the German colonies were appalled by the situation unfolding in Southwest Africa. The fact remains that the Rhenish Mission, along with many secular actors, willfully participated in the Herero-Nama Genocide of 1904-1907. While most missionaries would not go to these lengths to obtain a desired behavioral change in Africans, the fact remains that Christianity was used to denote preference and worth of Africans. Christianized Africans were generally more protected from the genocides, famines, and hate speech than non-Christianized Africans. Africans' rights to determining their way of life came at a real cost to their potential ability to survive.

German missionaries could not respect African customs under the parameters they forcefully established. Generational traditions considered "pagan" or "heathenistic" were banned as mission societies carried with them the leverage of education and upward mobility.[53] German missionaries perpetuated myths common in secular circles such as the "lazy African" to demoralize and denounce non-Christians. As a result of colonization and the limitations that occupation encompassed, any deviation from what either the imperial government or mission societies wanted was impossible. German missionaries based their interactions with Africans on the pretext that faith was the arbiter for which indigenous peoples were to be treated. For example, those faithful received education, food, and other means of support whereas those distant from the Church were outcast or painted as culturally inferior. As a result, German missionaries were clear social engineers as conversion carried with it the elevation of the converted in comparison to the non-believer.

The Church and Germany

Frieda von Bülow, Germany's most outspoken female advocate for German imperialism, acknowledged Protestantism as an integral part of German national identity.[54] German Protestant missionaries harbored reverence for Germany's central role in the Reformation. The works of Luther and the calling to evangelical ministry motivated missionaries to carry out an exclusively "German" perspective of Christianity where emphasis was placed on conversion exclusively. While German missionaries were not outspoken nationalists, they argued that national identity existed strongest through language and that people shared a common culture with

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[52] Glen Ryland, *Stories and Mission Apologetics*, 20
[53] Vilhanova, Viera, *Christian Missions in Africa*, 257
[54] Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*, 18

those they spoke to in mother tongues.[55] Espousals of a German *Völkisch* (ethnic-chauvinist) identity in superior linguistics and racial traits revealed their own shortcomings to nationalism.[56] In addition, secular traditions such as flying the imperial German flag and displaying photographs of the royal family were honored within mission communities.[57] Overall, Germany's history in Christianity combined with popular trends of superior *Kultur* led many Protestant missions down a path that supported imperial nationalism to some degree.

Rhenish Mission inspector August Schreiber emphasized the key role German missionaries played in bridging the gap between *Naturvölker* and *Kulturvölker* (savages and civilized respectively) for the imperial government.[58] Jeremy Best states, "Both Catholic and Protestant mission societies had entered the colony either in collaboration with or at the urging of secular groups."[59] Although German missionaries and the Imperial government were at constant odds with each other on topics regarding African education, treatment, and spiritual development, mutualism guaranteed cooperation. Missionaries were indebted to imperial Germany for their invasion of Africa and continued military protection. The Imperial government utilized missionaries' linguistic, topographic, and diplomatic knowledge to communicate with and govern Africans. Missionaries preferred not to associate with the Imperial regime due to its history of brutality and cultural erasure. The imperial government at times distrusted missionaries due to their avid claims of a Christ-first mission. The distrust that missionaries and the German Empire had with one another does not equate to an impedance of collusion. The relationship between the two entities operated under need-based parameters, and their intertwined missions of culturally engineering African culture placated any refusal to cooperation.

Political lobbying and involvement were methods to which a distant, yet open relationship could be maintained. To mediate a growing administrative presence in the colonies, many missionary societies had convened and organized an *Ausschuss* (committee) to lobby for greater operational rights within Africa[60] Friedrich Fabri, Gustav Warneck, and Franz Zahn, representing some of Germany's largest and most prolific mission societies, were the leaders of the Ausschuss. Negotiations between the Imperial Colonial Office and Germany's *Missionwissenschaftlers* ranged from educational curriculum to African institutionalization into the global economy. Swahili, for example, became the national language of instruction for German East Africa.[61] This compromise incorporated missionaries' desires to keep African language at the helm of instruction with Germany's demands that a lingual franca be adopted for

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[55] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 60

[56] Richter, Julius, *Evangelische Missionskunde,* 241

[57] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 124

[58] Stephen Morgan, *Christian Conversion and Colonial "Native Policy",* 747

[59] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 123

[60] J Oldham, *The International Review of Missions,* (London, 1914), 603

[61] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland,* 83

administrative efficiency. No matter the topic, all revolved around who in Germany had rights to deciding the livelihoods of Africans.

Overtime, secularism within Germany's *Missionwissenschaftlers* became acceptable, or at least understood as a viable means of advancing religion. Gustav Warneck, one of the original *Missionwissenschaftlers* and the largest advocate for exclusively non-secular missiology, increasingly was seen as out of date and unwilling to compromise in Imperial-missionary relations. His ideas, while noble, were increasingly overshadowed by younger, first generation (in unified Germany) missionaries eager to utilize the imperial government to reach new audiences.[62] Young Protestants, in particular, were much more linked to the German government as the national image of Germany as a Protestant state resonated with them. In the years prior to World War One, the Dernburg administration saw missionaries collaborate directly with his office as they felt the "Dernburg Reforms" against excess reprisal towards Africans revealed a united mission of "civilization".[63]

Catholicism vs Protestantism

The relationship between German Protestants and Catholics under colonialism was turbulent. Commonly called the *Kulturkampf* (cultural struggle) within German religious society, Catholics and Protestants had a long history of distrust and resentment for the other. Competition between the two had spread to the colonies, and missionaries competed for regions in which to teach. German Catholics were at a disadvantage after the formation of the Empire. The national religion, being Protestant, politically disenfranchised and outcast Catholic lobbies within parliament. The same can be said in the colonies. Protestants were given express advantages in establishing mission societies under a Protestant (usually Lutheran) identity. As a reaction to these initial attacks, the Catholics devised strategies to gain political sponsorship.

The Catholic Centre Party was established in the years prior to the Berlin Conference and grew to be one of Germany's largest parties within parliament.[64] The Catholic Centre was historically pro-colonial, advocating for a colonial empire. By the time of formal German, colonialism the Catholic Centre was highly organized and relatively effective in enfranchising the Catholic minority. Protestants felt threatened by this strictly Catholic lobby, and since Protestants had no official political party, they confided within the liberals and conservatives to push their agendas. Protestant missionaries appealed to the colonial department (run by liberals and conservatives) to systematically dismantle Catholicism in the colonies.[65] The *Kulturkampf* had Protestant missionaries claim that Germany's national identity aligned with the history of Lutheranism and anti-Catholicism. Catholics were

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[62] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 48

[63] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 109

[64] "Historical Exhibition Presented by the German Bundestag," https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/189790/1907ef7ab16a75a7048c04b3d2558f00/elections_empire-data.pdf.

[65] Best, Jeremy, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 118

denounced by Protestant missionaries as anti-German, weak, and anti-liberal: common nationalistic rhetoric for the time. Many double standards were revealed under the *Kulturkampf.* Outside of their mission environments, many missionaries were actively engaged in common debates and nationalistic ploys to disenfranchise their enemies in ministry. Missionaries were not far removed from the elements of secular identity politics that they reportedly repulsed.

Conclusion

Missionary work is a method of religious outreach that aims to convert members of an outsider community to the principles of the mission's institution. Ideally, through humanitarian efforts and a commitment to the betterment of the target society, individuals would willingly subscribe to and share the principles of that mission. Missionaries under the German Empire seemingly drafted well-intentioned methods of achieving conversion for their African audience. Emphasis on literacy, African language preservation, and a commitment to exclude European spiritual vices (such as capitalism and modernity) distinguished the German frame of religious outreach from other Western contemporaries. However, *Missionwissenschaftlers* neglected the greater placement of missionaries in the colonial movement and the implications of collusion with imperial Germany, albeit to reach a greater African audience.

German Missionaries operated under the presumption that their actions were justified under a godly calling to Christianize African society. The lengths to establish and coerce African society towards a "Christian" lifestyle disregarded the German missiological statement of exclusively non-secular instruction. Christian internationalism became secondary to the needs of the state and an adherence to German nationalism. Many, such as Leipzig Mission Director Karl von Schwartz, argued that colonialism was a "divine" facilitator of expanding Christianity.[66] Colonialism is an inherently secular structure that seeks to exploit human, natural, and financial capital while simultaneously diminishing the value of other cultures. A mission sponsored by the institution of colonialism is merely an extension of the colonizer nation to promote cultural erasure of the colonized nation. Despite groundbreaking advances in education and literacy, all missions of humanitarianism came with the stipulation that Africans must desert their cultural identity and conform simply to what European Christians viewed as moral truths. As a result, Germany's missionaries were integral to the greater imperial mission of socially engineering African society to accept German authority and embrace its cultural institutions.

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[66] Gründer, Horst, *Christliche Mission Und Deutscher Imperialismus*, 326

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Criticizing the Devil; Critiquing God: Fiction Media as a Potential and Legitimate Means of Criticizing and Critiquing Religion

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"He wished me luk. I hope I have luk. I got my rabits foot and my luky penny and my horshoe. Dr. Strauss said dont be so superstishus Charlie. This is sience. I don't know what sience is but they all keep saying it so mabye its something that helps you have good luk."
                                        - Charlie Gordon, Flowers for Algernon (Keyes, 2004, p. 11)

Religion is a multifaceted and complex concept and institution which consists of many different and interlocking parts (e.g., ideas, practices, texts, beliefs); moreover, individuals everyday across the world access and live their religions through the interlocking components of religion previously mentioned. Although many incarnations of the components can be described as good, helpful, or beneficial while others can be described as harmful, derogatory, and/or hateful. In this paper, I am going to argue that fiction literature could be used to modify the components which makeup a religion in order to present the religion in a more beneficial formulation. This paper will have two different parts the first outlines fiction literature from a structuralist perspective looking at what gives fictional literature its meaning; while the second will utilize ideas from International Relations scholars Daniel and Musgrave's (2017) paper, "Synthetic Experiences: How Popular Culture Matters for Images of International Relations" and religious scholar Jolyon Baraka Thomas' (2012) book Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan, in order to explore different theories on how individuals learn through fiction about things in the real world. Moreover, following the exploration of parts I and II, in the final section of the paper, the main argument of this paper will be articulated and explored.

Introduction
        Scholars attempting to capture the essence of religion within a single definition will have difficulty in completing such a monumental if not impossible task. Attempting to account for all the essential properties of religion though the pursuit is noble on the action will ultimately fall to the wreckage of imperfect language which both structure reality (structuralism) and also open reality to individual interpretation with no rooted meaning in the world (existentialism). Moreover such a definition of religion in order to be effective at defining the essence of religion needs to contain information which is cynosure and of importance to the pertinent formulated definition of religion. However, by reverting back to a definitional schema which covers the basic parts of religion then scholars of religion should have be able to account for a basic essence of religion.
        All essence is genetic and is based on a constellation of interlocking parts which shift semantically and in ethicality through temporal space. These parts are established on the part of all religions in order to propagate, promote, and progress the actions and goals of the religious body: They consist of the idea, text, belief, and practice. Though a religion is not just a set of independent parts instead the religion

originates at the point of a complex set of parts in interrelationship with each other. A explication in the proceeding paragraphs of each of the four parts, idea, text, belief, and practice, should highlight this point.

The most basic operating part of religion that of idea is the origin point for all religions and the lifeblood which keeps all religions moving. For example, the first two chapters of the bible (Genesis 1-2) discuss the idea that the earth was created by God in six days. Or moreover, the Hymn to Diameter which is a play written by the ancient poet, Homer details the myth of the changing seasons: Or to make the explanation more plain the Hymn to Diameter, and its accompying myth, details the origin of the idea of individual seasons. The idea is a plastic template for the text, belief, and practice, shaping them and providing them form and giving them content. Ideas additionally help to stimulate the visualization, construction, and maintance of an arbitrary hierarchical system of levels govern the importance and prestige for the text, belief, and practice of the religion in question.

While in the birth of a religion there was the idea, in the cementation into reality the idea becomes codified into text. The Bible, Quran, Torah, etc., as well as the accompying written mythologies comprise such texts. Furthermore, the stated texts are not solely the only texts which could be set under that particular label for texts such as oral legends and histories, also serve to cement the religion and codify the ideas of that specific religion into text. The text serve as important evidence for practitioners of the religion under the auspices of the idea of the religion which grants the text its power. The text additionally serves several other functions including the structuring of the power granted to the text by the audience (followers) and providing a new worldview for nascent individuals to a religion. Moreover, based on Latour's actor-structure theory perspective the meaning and power which a text could hold and how the text could be used change based on the structure and actors in that particular structure.

From the text of the religion which contains the cauterized remains of past ideas which guide religions, comes the belief. The belief is immaterial and driven by the ideas of the individual while the individual is additionally driven by the idea. Moreover, beliefs are a more fulfilled version of an idea that has been cauterized by the text in question and given form by the audience and supplied power or energy by the text to support that form. Beliefs are present in all religions and act as a perpetuation of the text, guiding attention and energy towards important items or goals recognized by both the religion and individual.

Now, practices can be seen as a form of manifestation which integrates all the idea, text, and belief and utilizes them to give meaning to specific constellations of acts, actions, or traditions which progress from a beginning to another state. As materialists such as Marx, Gramsci, or Adorno and Horkheimer might say practices are materialized and driven by material goods (e.g., material culture and economics). However, although practices may seem material based the whole process of a practice is in actuality a process of ideas that similar to that of the text, which cauterized the manifested idea into a permanent form, which illuminates the semipermanent nature and comprehension of ideas which present themselves at the intersection of a certain temporal moment and certain locative moment. The idea is to borrow a term from cultural studies scholar Fredrick Jameson a vanishing mediator

(Jameson, 1973) between the material world and the knowledge and comprehension of the world itself. The practice is the illumination of how the idea will play out in the material world in a semipermanent manner and thus impacts the material conditions at a future time and place as the elucidation of the world allows for new visions of the world to formulate.

Structuralism and Fiction

Structuralism as a perspective used today in literary and cultural analysis originated through the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (Barry, 2009, p. 40). Saussure unlike previous linguistic scholars before him examined language from a synchronic perspective, in this approach he denoted two parts interrelated any linguistic system: The *Parole* and *Langue* (Tyson, 2006, p. 213). Parole is the set of communication systems utilized by a particular community (e.g., English, French, German, etc.); while Langue consists of the rules used to produce meaningful communication by the community (Tyson, 2006, p. 213). A famous analogy Saussure used to illustrate the difference between Parole and Langue was that of a game of chess; where the game of chess represented the concept of Parole (performance) while the rules and guidelines that make up the game represent the concept of Langue (structure) (Storey, 2021, p. 117). Within the linguistic system the meaning of words are arbitrary and are depend on other words for their significance (Berry, 2009, 40-42). For example, we know what the word dog means because of its relation to the words animal or canine similar words inform the meaning of the item in question. The link between the meaning or mental representation of a word such as dog and the physical representation of the word dog is weak and arbitrary (Berry, 2009, 40-42).

According to Johnson (1975) the structuralist thought is that:

> [T]he structuralist sees it, language doesn't describe the "real" world (this is a practically impossible task). Rather it inscribes the functioning of consciousness. The structuralist literary critic sees language as literature's world - its subject and formal paradigmatic model - as well as its material. Thus in literature we are dealing with something which denies its own authority (transcendence) and purpose (intersubjective communication) while it asserts them. The sign serves to distance the other from the signified and signifier while it "tells" him about itself. It simultaneously subverts the teller in his pretense to know his subject. Consequently literature both is charged with meaning and yet denies understanding in any total or complete sense (p. 282)

Fiction according to the Oxford English Dictionary has been defined in terms of literature as: "The species of literature which is concerned with the narration of imaginary events and the portraiture of imaginary characters; fictitious composition. Now usually, prose novels and stories collectively; the composition of works of this class" (2021, 4a). In the structuralist view language use by individuals does not reflect the true nature of the world but instead the true nature of reality is constructed by those individuals and their use of language. In other words reality is a type of fiction made possible through language and in which can be read from many different angles.

But, due to the arbitrariness of language and the imperfect relationship between the media and reality, the meaning of fiction comes from the language used in the works' construction. At most the fiction work is constructed through language and given meaning through language.

Synthetic experiences: How popular culture matters for images of international relations

Individuals learn. Everyday people gather and transmit information to and from each other, but how do they do that if they do not actively seek out sources that supply that information? Scholars Daniel and Musgrave (2017), argue that individuals learn this information through their interactions with pop culture (or abstract material, such as informational research data); which produce what the authors call synthetic experiences. Although the authors detail their argument concerning synthetic experiences around international relations the idea could theorically be applied towards any domain, which for this paper the domain religion was chosen.

Daniel and Musgrave (2017) start their argument by defining two terms naïve sophistication which is the idea that audience members can understand what they are consuming is fictional and when it is fact and can maintain the difference between categories. While synthetic experience is defined by the authors as a theoretical mechanism similar to a conveyor belt through which various types of information contained in fiction can have conquences in the real world; the experiences are "produced by narratives, fragments of a story, descriptions of a place, impressions of a culture, dramatized portrayals about "real" processes, or illustrations of a strategy's consequences" (p. 4).

The basis of the idea of synthetic experiences rests in the individual as experiencing the narrative and believing the narrative as true, this is an argument which has roots in Kahneman's dual-process model (Daniel & Musgrave, 2017). According to the authors under the sophisticated naïvete model, individuals tend to use fast (or automatic) processing and have a tendency to believe more than disbelieve as doubt takes valuable cognitive resources which are limited in stock. In fact, individuals when are exposed to stories those individuals tend to assimilate both information and misinformation. Sophisticated naivete gains even more ground over the naïve sophistication when considering the effects of narrative transportation on the ability to separate fact from fiction. For one when individuals interact with media more engrossing media tends to aid individuals in transporting into fictional places where they lose some of their knowledge from their place of origin and can even lead to the individual losing subjective clarity and ability to separate reality from the fiction of the narrative. Inside the world the individual is subject intense emotions, and they are changed by the experience.

Religious Frame of Mind

In his book Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan, American religion studies scholar Jolyon Baraka Thomas details a concept called religious frame of mind (2012). The concept of religious frame of mind revolves around the audience using media in a manner that Thomas (2012) encapsulates in the concept "shukyo asobi" (or religious play or entertainment) when reading manga

(or watching anime). Shukyo asobi is more a redefinement or reinterpretation of entertainment in terms of religious recognition, by using media to broadcast their religion the media is ultimately shaping the religion itself while at the same time those same religious ideas are being reinterpreted and religion is recreated (Thomas, 2012). The redefinition of religion through the medium of manga and anime can be seen in how individuals from audiences barrow and utilize ideas, concepts, and characters from the whole of religion (Thomas, 2012). Individuals can additionally barrow ideas and concepts from anime that are not necessarily religious but instead transform them into religious-like concepts with the aim of making life better for one's self. Thomas at the close of the introduction of chapter discusses two techniques that aim to facilitate a religious frame of mind by demanding suppression of the institices between the physical world of empirical fact and the fictional world: Closure and composition. Closure is the demand placed on the audience due to gaps in the architecture of the medium itself; the manga artist utilizes economy of images due to page size to create compelling stories, though in the process, gaps between the images which make up the narrative are formed which forces the audience to mentally fill in the gaps themselves (Thomas, 2012). While composition is the process of creating a whole and complete picture from select images which utilize different frames of different depths and angles to tell a narrative (Thomas, 2012).

Analysis

The process of change is never easy nor simple especially on the scale of entire societal or cultural instutions. And at the same time change does not have to be negative like the tone taken by humanistic critics, I think when considering religion, the institution should be given what the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1976, p. viii) termed positive critique from which the concept positive means "sympathetic" or "constructive." E.M. Griffin (1997, p. 41) in his book A First Look at Communication Theory discusses about several qualities of a good humanistic theory are that the theory is supported by the community while also being artistic in its work. However, work out of the humanities have a tendency to be condescending, frustrating, and unnecessarily complex and maybe a little too artistic in nature. Moreover, their work can be seen as condescending towards audiences while at the same time lacks to take their viewpoint in to consideration. Furthermore, it is this condescension that fuels the impotence to change things in institutions such a religion. However, given the vague and prototypical definition of religion held in societies across the world and especially in the United States that of mainstream religion the fact would be that the decision not to change religion is not hard to see why; after all religion can be seen as two-face, benevolent and kind to those who follow and to those who reject or do not follow the notions of religion the repercussions can be seen as cruel and possibly deadly.

Though I believe that religions already change without the need of a supposed supra-condescending critic leading the charge. Fictional worlds located in media are powerful devices designed to capture the imagination and open the mind. While the media shapes these fictional worlds into content for the media itself the audience simultaneously shapes the media's content through their own interpretation of the content. As scholars Johnston, Detwelier, and Callaway (2019) have written "movies

function as a primary source of power and meaning for people navigating through the complexities of life in our contemporary life" (p. 9). And, as Thomas (2012) has noted individuals learn from media such as anime and manga through their own interpretation of the material and in turn in the process the audience recreate religion though the act of borrowing and redefining ideas and characters held within the specific text within the confines of their own lives.

I use the framework of idea, text, belief, and practice, to promote a manageable view of the essence of religion while at the same time attempting to define religion. Each religious system is built under these four concepts while at the same time each religion is going to be different and have a unique audience for which these concepts apply. All religions recreate, rebuilt, and change under their appropriate audiences similar to the auspices of the ages which guided the change of languages over time, and leaders did not change language; but instead the audience occupied this task. Although all religions will not change all at the same rate and that rate depends on the freedom of not only the audience but also their source of media. The source of media shapes the form of the religion the area constantly pumps out their own propaganda and allows no media content from the outside the form of the group's religion is going to be smaller and limited in size; compared to an area whose audience is freer in the media that they choose. This is one reason why anthropologists, archaeologists, and other scholars of religion have found great similarities between the major religions taking on characteristics of not only its sibling monotheistic religions but also other more polytheistic religions. These cultures frequently travelled, comingled, and shared cultural ideas and practices among each other.

In modern times, individuals from many different cultures engage in the same task that our ancient ancestors did through the process of globalization. The variety of media has exploded due in part to these international processes allowing a further selection of choice on the part of the audience. And, often unless one has the resources or means to travel then media often is the only means of serving that function, it is not perfect though (as noted by Daniel & Musgrave, 2017). The aggregate of these international processes constitute globalization which works to function to redefine the various cultures and societies of the world and their many features, properties, and institutions. Although, individuals can redefine and reconstruct the world through travel and media this is mainly through the aggregation of new knowledge.

Though through fiction we can also redefine the world due in part to the uniqueness and exclusivity of symbols (e.g., blackface, race; Christian cross, religion; male/female bathroom signs, sex) and are ability to recognize and relate meaning from the available symbols. Most fiction contains symbols that barrow from religion or a religious context. Moreover, according Thomas (2012) individuals constantly barrow these symbols and use them in different ways which subjects the symbols to recreation and in turn a reinterpretation of such meaning granted by such religion. In fact all symbols are barrowed all the time and are used in new contexts shaping their interpretation of the product. At the same time media which are fictional but that may not contain overt religious symbolism in it can be considered covertly religious and possession and overt historical background which calls back to a time when the symbol was a overtly religious. This history can be called back to with the addition of

extra actions or dialogue (e.g., The Stepford Wives: Submission of women to their husbands). And more importantly these symbols can still be interpreted and changed by individuals who recognize the nature of the symbol itself. Although at the same time the symbols are not the ones being changed but the ideas behind the symbols; as Saussure has noted language is arbitrary as a result the relationship between the signified and signified is meaningless. Although as Balota & Coane (2008) have discussed in their chapter on semantic memory, new ideas not based on something else rarely come about; ideas mainly come about from other ideas that have been attached to physical objects present in the real world. This makes sense seeing as ideas about things and their meanings are so easy to change and why symbols themselves are more difficult to manipulate, although at the same time symbols contain a variety of meanings. Still the grounding point for ideas are the symbols they are embedded into and it is here where the origin for change can begin.

Biographical Note

Nicholas Elliott is a second year Ph.D. student perusing a doctorate in communication studies at the University of Southern Mississippi located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The focus of his research is in entertainment media. Moreover, his research interest s lie within anime, manga, Webtoons, and videogames.

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A Comparative Phenomenological Study of Substance Use and Religious Practice in Celebration and Coping

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I. Part One: The Project

I.1. Introduction to the Study & Its Approach

With the economic and psychosocial pressures levied on individuals by the COVID-19 pandemic, substance use has risen across the United States per CDC reports.[1] Interestingly, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, this trend is mirrored in the U.S. population's religiosity with a quarter of Americans attesting to an increased sense of faith and religious dependence due to pandemic factors.[2] Such findings raise an intriguing question about the potentially shared motivations and meaning-making strategies behind religious practice and substance use. The purpose of this research project, then, was to compare the ways in which religious/spiritual[3] practices, contrasted with mood/consciousness-altering substances, are used and understood to be used to celebrate moments of joy and cope with moments of pain. This small-scale, phenomenological study was conducted at Yale Divinity School (YDS) in New Haven, CT during the Fall 2021 term. Participating volunteers – all of whom were Yale Divinity students – were interviewed in a set of two, narrative-oriented conversations designed to draw-out and explore linguistic similarities and differences in the students' usage of substances versus religious practices (**Fig. 3a-c**). Recruitment of the five participants – pseudonyms being Benjamin, Keely, Laura, George, and Chloë[4] – was on a volunteer-basis and occurred through open invitations to the YDS student body. It was necessary for my research that all participants have personal experiences using religious practices to celebrate and to cope as well as *separate* experiences using substances to celebrate and to cope.

From a religio-pastoral lens, the heart of this study lies in a meta-question: what kinds of subjective affect undergird one's relationship to religious practices in particular, and how might such a relationship present itself in simultaneously life-

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[1] Mark É. Czeisler, Rashon I. Lane, Emiko Petrosky, Joshua F. Wiley, Aleta Christensen, Rashid Njai, Matthew D. Weaver, Rebecca Robbins, Elise R. Facer-Childs, Laura K. Barger, Charles A. Czeisler, Mark E. Howard, and Shantha M.W. Rajaratnam, "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *CDC MMWR* 69, no. 32 (2020): 1049.

[2] Claire Gecewicz, "Few Americans say their house of worship is open, but a quarter say their faith has grown amid pandemic," last modified 30 April 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/30/few-americans-say-their-house-of-worship-is-open-but-a-quarter-say-their-religious-faith-has-grown-amid-pandemic/.

[3] From this point onward, I will shorthand "religious/spiritual practices" as merely religious practices. My rationale for doing so is the fact that, for my participants, there was not a distinct division drawn between religiosity and spirituality, preferring the umbrella terminology of "religious practice" even if said practices were not necessarily associated with a formal religious container.

[4] Given the length limitations on this paper, I have heavily abridged the formal write-up of this project and will be focusing the explication of my results primarily through Chloë's story. If you wish to read the full write-up, you may forward a request to adam.toler@yale.edu.

affirming and/or maladaptive ways? In this sense, I am utilizing substance use as a foil for religious practice rather than as a material of religious ritual. While it is interesting to contemplate George's consumption of an MDMA/damiana cocktail while participating in an occult ritual as a sacred concubine, or Chloë's use of sedatives to ameliorate their anxieties about hell and damnation in order to effectively evangelize, such explicit use of substances within religious movements does not yield a clear distinction between the impeti behind religious practice separate from substance use. In other words, such experiences obfuscate the data this project seeks to evaluate.

Methodologically, this is a phenomenological project as it seeks to distill and characterize the paradigmatic essence of embodied experiences,[5] where "the essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language [through phenomenology] if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner."[6]

I.2. Academic Motivations

In the broader schema of my academic career, I am interested in developing a theory of "religious addiction" – that is, investigating how the relationship between constituent and religion can evolve and be shaped by affective influences into something akin to a behavioral or substance addiction.[7] Much of my past writing on this topic of religious addiction employed various theoretical models to argue for the scholastic integrity and appropriateness of the question itself, identifying a common vocabulary across recollections of religious and/or spiritual "encounters" and substance-induced "trips."[8] As such, my initial design for this project expected a consubstantial relationship between the participants' affects toward religious practice and their affects toward substance use. And yet, as can be seen in **Figure 4.**, only three of the affective terms – exciting, communal, and guilty – actually produced true overlaps while some rather pivotal terms – revelatory, traumatic, and necessary – had quite wide margins of disparity.

As it turns out, recent research on entheogens like psilocybin and some strains of marijuana indicates that such substances can actually prove successful in *treating* addictions to *other* substances like cocaine, nicotine, opioids, and alcohol.[9,10] So, initially, I came into this study with a relatively flattened view of substance use/abuse that made the instrumentalization of religious practice a simplified question of religious addiction. In reality, with some entheogens being used as promising treatments for addiction, the question is no longer whether religion can function addictively on personal affect like an illicit drug. Instead, it is a

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[5] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qual. Inq.* 12, no. 2 (2006): 232.

[6] Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6, 10.

[7] Adam Toler, "Religious Addiction," *Trinity University Undergraduate Student Research Digital Commons*, 58 (2019): 1.

[8] Ibid, 9.

[9] Bruno Romeo, Marianne Hermand, Amélie Pétillion, Laurent Karila, and Amine Benyamina, "Clinical and biological predictors of psychedelic response in the treatment of psychiatric and addictive disorders: A systematic review," *J. Psychiatr. Res.* 137 (2020): 278-280.

[10] Yasmin Hurd, "Cannabidiol: Swinging the Marijuana Pendulum From 'Weed' to Medication to Treat the Opioid Epidemic," *Trends Neurosci.* 40, no. 3 (2017): 125-126.

question of what *kind* of substance religion emulates. Is it the kind of substance that promotes or inhibits addictive behaviors?

II. Part Two: Results and Reflections

II.1. Main Research Findings

Looking at **Figure 4.**, two prominent conclusions fall out of the data. First, in regards to interview Question #5 (**Fig. 3a-c**), substance use was employed with a view to both positive, negative, and balanced affect, while religious practices were used almost exclusively to address negative affect. Second, the affective terms in Question #7 (**Fig. 3a-c)** that demonstrated the greatest difference between experiences – revelatory, traumatic, and necessary – presented a rather perplexing distribution. In spite of the fact that substance use was more often associated with the fairly positive "revelatory" and religious practice more often associated with the negative "traumatic" term, participants still considered their religious practices to be more "necessary." To further understand these findings and their theological import, we will look to the narrative responses provided by the five participants with a particular emphasis on Chloë's experiences.

II.1.a. Religious Practice & Negative Affect

When you use religious practices, would you say that you use them more often to intensify positive affect or cope with negative affect? (**Fig. 3a-c**) This question seeks a comparative or relative answer – do they use religious practices *more often* for one intention or the other? As such, we will explore two ways the participants understood their employment of religious practices as a way to address negative affect: 1) religious practices were used *more often* for coping than celebration/intensification, and 2) religious practices were directed more toward negative affect *on the whole*, regardless of whether the intent was to cope, intensify, or, paradoxically, to both cope *and* intensify the negative affect.

II.1.a.i. Coping Relative to Celebration

According to Clyde Kluckhohn in "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory," the anthropological teleology of religion is a story of escapism:

> In the face of want and death and destruction, all humans have a fundamental insecurity. To some extent, all culture is a gigantic effort to mask this, to give the future the simulacrum of safety by making activity repetitive, expective…. Rituals and myths [of religion] supply, then, fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment.[11]

By design, then, religion "provid[es] an alternative reality, religious mythology and…hope-filled coping mechanisms, fashioned to address an antagonistic world."[12] So, the finding that religious practices were geared more toward negative affect than positive for my participants is simply religion functioning as intended. This sensibility

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[11] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 152-153.

[12] Toler, "Religious Addiction," 4.

– that religion is for coping – is something that George also identified as a story sold to them through institutional traditions:

> Christianity and prayer – I would say as religious practice or as spiritual practice – have been sold to me as something you use as tools to alleviate the pain and suffering of life. And so, I'm still trying to figure that out for myself and divorce those two things. But, it absolutely was given to me as, like, "This is what you do when life gets hard – do X, Y, and Z, and that will help."… I mean, it's still sold to me [that way] to be honest. I feel like – and maybe it's the people I'm around, being [at Divinity School] – it's like, when stuff is hard, the people, the friends I have here tell me things like, "You should pray or journal or go for a walk," or, "What does God say first?"[13]

Stories shape imaginative possibilities, and a large part of religion, especially Christianity's, historical narrative has been and remains a lens that sees this world as broken, a glass half-empty, where the primary purpose of religion is to respond to negative affect. Chloë explicates this exact understanding of religions' philosophy toward life:

> A fundamental concern of [religions] is [that there's] something profoundly wrong in the world and wrong with yourself in some sense. And that acknowledgement, I think, is what really resonates with me. For someone who grew up experiencing something very wrong with themselves – whether it was biochemically, socially, familially – religion took that seriously. And I think that's why I respected it, and why I still resonate with it because it says, "No, there is something wrong."[14]

This fixation of religious practices on negative affect is worrisome. As Sonia Waters iterates in her book *Addiction and Pastoral Care*, "Pride, pleasure, appetite, and desire can be ancillary to the experience of addiction but not its primary motivator. The primary motivator is pain…. It is spiritual distress. Addiction is not an enjoyable experience. It is not an attempt to run to pleasure. Rather, it is an attempt to manage pain."[15] If religion, then, is primarily sold as pain management, then it is already primed for a relationship of addictive use and abuse by its practitioners. One may contend that these dispositions toward negative affect are not concerning for religious practices because, unlike substances, religion is immune to the maladaptive relationship characteristic of substance addiction. In other words, religious practice is on par with water or oxygen – one is obviously reliant, even desperately reliant on both, but such reliance is always unproblematically life-sustaining. If one wants to call a reliance on water, oxygen, and religious practice an addiction, then they must be healthy addictions at that. Unfortunately, such an optimistic presumption is not always the case.

II.1.a.ii. Religious Practice as Negative Affect

I erroneously construed the intent of both substance use and religious practice as bi-directional – either for the intensification of positive affect or for the

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[13] George, interview with author, 8 Nov. 2021.
[14] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[15] Waters, Sonia, *Addiction and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 33.

alleviation of negative affect. In spite of my academic research into addiction experiences, I didn't think to word my inquiry in a way that would allow for the seemingly counterintuitive use of these practices to alleviate *positive* affect or intensify *negative* affect. Yet, such a counterintuitive instrumentalization is at the heart of addictive behaviors: "This is the tragedy of addiction: the insidious flip from something that helps us manage our lives to something that must be managed. This is where the possession takes hold."[16] Addiction is a relationship in which the fixation has become both the alleviator and intensifier of negative affect. Chloë recognized this paradox as a live factor in their own attraction to religious practices – practices that wrought them great psychological and physiological anguish. They were the only participant to recognize this bias in my research question – my implicit expectation that all people do and/or ought to pursue positive affect – and explicate a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied:

> Spiritual practices for me – once again, it's sort of sadomasochistic – are simultaneously engendering the stress, and [they're] also the coping mechanism. So, I guess in some sense, it is very much like a terrible sort of…phenomenological, psychological, psycho-spiritual substance abuse in some sense. I mean, I'm destroying myself with the very thing that sort of is able to provide some sense of relief or- I guess if you could call it relief. So, I mean, to cope with/alleviate negative affect?... I honestly think I probably just pursue religion because it *intensifies* negative affect.[17]

This account demonstrates the complex relationships to negative affect that are possible through religious practice both molding and being molded by its practitioners. Religion is sold as a coping mechanism, free from the maladaptive behavioral narratives – but not the maladaptive behavioral *realities* – surrounding substance use and abuse. This may explain why religious coping is so often correlated with negative health circumstances[18] Not only do "people usually turn to religion when there is something bad going on in their lives, and when their situation improves, then involvement with religion often lessens," but also, religion seems to have the capacity to inflict unrecognized, causal trauma on practitioners without the vocabularies and theological narratives necessary to effectively evaluate one's relationship to religious practices as genuinely life-affirming or not.[19]

II.1.b. Religion as Traumatic & Necessary?

Related to this idea that religious practice is correlated with trauma, we have the second, quite perplexing conclusion: in spite of the fact that religious practice is more often associated with the term "traumatic" and substance use seems to receive the more appealing association of "revelatory," participants are more likely to associate religious practice than substance use with "necessary" (**Fig. 4**). When asked Question #13 – *What would your response be if religious practice/substances were removed from your access?* (**Fig. 3a-c**) – every single participant, even those

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[16] Waters, *Addiction and Pastoral Care*, 45.
[17] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[18] Harold Koenig, Dana E. King, and Verna Benner Carson, "Religion and Coping" in *Handbook of Religion and Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95-97.
[19] Ibid, 96.

most attached to their substance use, settled on some form of resignation to this hypothetical restriction. By contrast, rather curiously, all five participants responded to a restriction on religious practices by either 1) noting a drastic change in self that makes religious practices necessary to retain their identity, 2) trying to qualify the limitations of such a restriction by looking for loopholes, or 3) simply rejecting the hypothetical scenario altogether.

One might object that the target population is skewed in deference to religious practice. After all, all five participants are pursuing graduate degrees at Yale Divinity School, making it a high probability that they'd have fairly strong attachments to their religious practices. And yet, George claimed,

> Substances are way more [of] a religion to me than religion is…. I have a ritual around them. I have practices, beliefs. I could articulate them. They're important to me. They're necessary. They add to my quality of life. They take away pain, like…I was thinking of all these questions you're asking about my religious practices, and I'm like, "Oh, I get all that from drugs."[20]

Even so, for some inexplicable reason, George finds themself choosing to attend an institution that quite literally restricts these substance rituals, these practices and beliefs. When I asked why their evaluation of substances as necessary seemed so incompatible with their decision to attend YDS, they said that something about religion has "f*cked [them] up…f*cked [them] all the way up," and they simply don't know why.[21] To interpret this conundrum, these perplexing findings, let us look at two factors that appear to be contributing to the necessity of religion: 1) desire versus fulfillment and 2) inescapable as necessary.

II.1.b.i. Desire vs. Fulfillment

The relationship between desire and fulfillment has to do with repetitive, habitual use. How likely is a practitioner to habitually use a practice they consider fulfilling, "effective," and "revelatory" compared to a practice that taps into their desire but lacks a point of completion or fulfillment? Based on the findings in **Figure 4.**, not very likely. According to Michael Pollan, "Psychedelics shake the snow globe in your brain, and when the snow resettles, it settles in a very different pattern, allowing you to break your [own] patterns."[22] If substance use for my participants has shown itself to be so effectively revelatory in this kind of snow globe-shaking way, then it is quite comprehensible why it doesn't prompt or necessitate repetitive use. The revelation has been received, the fulfillment has been obtained, the present appetite has been satiated. When I asked Chloë if they had any desire to use intravenous ketamine again – a revelatory experience they credit as the moment they came out to themself and accepted their gender identity – their response was,

> No, precisely because it was such a bittersweet realization…. "Oh, I've been blind to this. And it's cost me in many ways, like I said, having a body when I was young."... And so, I mean, for me, when all that was

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[20] George, interview with author, 8 Nov. 2021.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Michael Pollan,"Expert Answers Psychedelics Questions From Twitter (ft. Michael Pollan) | Tech Support | WIRED," WIRED, 14 Sept. 2021, video, 9:33, https://youtu.be/IBLnSl8Q1NQ.

explained, it was like, "Oh, this is the *final* piece [in] sort of cobbling together a life that fundamentalism managed to shatter."[23]

In fact, Chloë found substances to hold so much efficacious potential that it made them entirely unwilling to pursue medical psilocybin trials to treat their depression:

I mean, for someone whose sort of primary hermeneutic of the world is, in some sense, pretty profoundly masochistic, you know, it's sometimes, you know- the question Jesus asked, "Do you want to be healed?" There's a valid answer that says no…. I don't have a good answer beyond the fact that the simple answer is, I can't imagine a life that isn't sort of masochistic and depressed. And not only that, but a sort of relationship with the world that wouldn't be that. So, it's sort of tantamount to saying, "Well, why don't you take this [drug] to change?" [that] would be, "Why don't you become a totally different person?" And arguably, that's tantamount to a kind of death, and generally not the kind of death I'm as interested in.[24]

By comparison, religious practice, for my participants, was less reliable in fulfilling these desires for revelation, for meaning and connection.

The complicated, cultural narrative surrounding religious practice is that it *should* be revelatory, God *can* be expected to respond to your prayers and appear before you in some kind of beatific theophany, and yet, for so many, this narrative is more a story of hope than a testimony of fulfillment. As Chloë confessed,

God was almost overly hidden from me, which was something I felt profound shame about as a fundamentalist…. I was told that, I mean, it was basically, "Well, you got sin in your life, and it's interfering with your communication with God. I mean, you need to figure out what it is."... Once again, for me, religion is silence. God is hidden. God is silent, the occult is silent, everything is silent.[25]

When there is this unsatisfied desire and/or impermanence in reorienting, religious revelations, there is a need for habituated use, continued renewal, a recurring reminder to hope, to have faith – "that's the kind of burning thing about rituals and being in community and sh*t…it reminds [us] of More-ness even if [we] don't personally feel it."[26] Religious practice, then, is more often associated with "necessary" than substance use precisely *because* it is less often associated with revelatory epiphanies.

II.1.b.ii. Inescapable as Necessary

Second, there is a philosophical definition of "necessary" that elucidates this irresistible draw of religion – philosophical necessity marks something as a brute, unavoidable, inescapable fact. There is no feasible world in which it is *not* the case that such a necessary thing obtains. In this vein, it's not so much that the participants felt like they needed to practice their religiosity, rather, there was simply no other option. For Chloë in particular, the inexorability of religious practice defied even practical considerations. In spite of the fact that attending church every Sunday

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[23] Chloë, interview with author, 8 Nov. 2021.
[24] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[25] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[26] Chloë, interview with author, 8 Nov. 2021.

made them feel physically ill, in spite of the fact that – as a young, fundamentalist evangelical – participation in religious services led to them collapsing, fainting, being hospitalized, and having full-on panic attacks, they continued and still continue to partake in religious practices. When I asked Chloë why, in light of all this pain, they continued to find religious practice meaningful and necessary, they replied,

> The meaning of my life has been inextricably connected with my relationship to religion. And so much so that, sort of, the narrative of my life is only granted meaning within the matrix of religion. [My life] wouldn't be understood apart from it. But, I wouldn't say it's granted a sense of…fulfilled meaning. It's just a fact. It made my life meaningful in a very destructive way, but it was meaningful nonetheless…. I can't imagine a narrative without religion, even if it would be a rejection of religion that would sort of provide any sort of coherence or objective schema upon my life…. Even when I felt I couldn't believe, I was just believing…in an inverted sense…. It was necessary even after I considered myself an utter failure in relationship to it…. I wasn't willing to give it up under any circumstances.[27]

Religious practice, then, is associated with "necessary" because it is buffeted by long-held, theological narratives of hope despite divine silence as well as the narratival impossibility to imagine one's life without any orientation to the divine.

III. Part Three: In Conclusion

Max van Manen refers to phenomenological research as a poetizing activity – "as in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize the poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result."[28] To that end, I am tempted to conclude this essay with a chuckle and a shrug – "Summaries are for endings. My participants are still living their lives. Their stories are not over, and this is not an end." However, I have the inkling that such a tongue-in-cheek use of van Manen would not be received particularly well nor would it help my readers digest and appreciate the life that has been shared across these pages. I will do my best to rehash the primary findings before concluding with a question for my readers.

The purpose of this project was to compare the ways in which mood/consciousness-altering substances, contrasted with religious/spiritual practices, are used and understood to be used to celebrate moments of joy and cope with moments of pain. It was an ultimately phenomenological endeavor, seeking to "reawaken or show…the lived quality and significance of [both substance use and religious practice] in a fuller and deeper manner."[29] By comparing the experiences of five Divinity School students – particularly through the eyes of Chloë in this essay – we have explored the phenomenal, affective essence behind the tendency to use religion as a salve for pain and to consider religious practice necessary even as it seemingly lacks practical rationale.

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[27] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[28] van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 13.
[29] van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 10.

Returning to the request that my readers join me in taking on the mantle of qualitative researchers, I hope that this story I have shared strikes my readers as empathetically recognizable even if not entirely agreeable. Phenomenology seeks to evoke such an affective resonance – a kind of Jungian "collective unconscious…'a common substratum [of the human psyche] transcending all differences in culture and consciousness'"[30] – in order to "find 'memories' that paradoxically we never thought or felt before."[31] It is at once voyeuristic and autobiographical. In regards to my ongoing research with religious addiction, I find myself in this very piece warning against the incredible potential for religious behavior to be instrumentalized inadvertently in self-abusive ways, and yet, when seeing such a maladaptive relationship lived out by Chloë, I am having a hard time decrying it as undesirable or even unnecessary for them. The model of divine viciousness that is Chloë's fundamentalist God, the theological view of the world as profoundly wrong, these are the matrices that inflict constant agony upon Chloë. *And*, they have been Chloë's only advocates, validating and bearing witness to their depression as not a problem to be solved – a self to be murdered – but, rather, something at once "bright and sad" and worth living.[32] Unlike Chloë, I've never been struck by the realization while reading Kierkegaard that even tragedy is a valid perspective, a valid story of a life that can be lived well; but, after conducting this research, I have come to intuitively recognize the beauty in true stories that are both "bright and sad "[33] without problematizing the sad or idolizing the bright. So, dear readers, after bearing witness at least to Chloë's story, do you too have memories of experiences that "paradoxically [you've] never thought or felt before?"[34]

Biographical Note

Adam Toler is currently a Master of Arts in Religion Candidate at Yale Divinity School with a concentration in Philosophical Theology/Philosophy of Religion. His research interests involve various issues within modern, lived religion and theology including religion's dialogic overlap with science as well as conceptions of relatable divinity in comic books. At the time of this article's submission, Adam is pursuing doctoral placement in Religious Studies and Theology programs.

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[30] Wesley Wildman, *Spirit Tech: The Brave New World of Consciousness Hacking and Enlightenment Engineering* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021): 159.
[31] van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 13.
[32] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[33] Chloë, interview with author, 14 Nov. 2021.
[34] van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 13.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Select participant demographic information (n=5). *Participant declined to answer.
**"Queer" was used by participants to refer to a non-heterosexual orientation. More on the use of this term can be found at the following source: Merrill Perlman, "How the word 'queer' was adopted by the LGBTQ community," *Columbia Journalism Review* (2019), https://www.cjr.org/language_corner/queer.php.

	Benjamin	Keely	Laura	George	Chloë
Substances	alcohol, marijuana, psilocybin, cocaine	alcohol, marijuana	alcohol, marijuana, psilocybin, prescribed opioids	alcohol, marijuana, psilocybin, cocaine, lysergic acid, MDMA, MDA, sassafras, kava, kratom, OxyContin, Percocet, amphetamines, opiates, fentanyl, PCP, ketamine, damiana	alcohol, ketamine, prescribed antidepressants (Zolpidem, etc.), sedatives
Religious/ Spiritual Practices	communal & individual prayer, worship services, meditation (Vipassana, insight, metta bhavana/ loving-kindness), incense burning, yoga, spiritual direction, incense burning, yoga	communal & individual prayer, worship services (Tsai worship service, Marquand Chapel, ANS Emmaus), daily examens, spiritual direction	communal & individual prayer, worship services, meditation, deep-breathing exercises	communal & individual prayer, meditation, worship services (Marquand Chapel, ANS Emmaus), ecstatic dance, occult practices (fire rituals, feast day rituals, initiations), journaling	communal & individual prayer, confession (private & public), fasting, retreats & camps, worship services, Bible reading, small groups and Bible studies, witnessing/evangelizing, lower-school chapels, meditation retreats, occult practices

Figure 2. Participant experience with substances and religious/spiritual practices.

Figure 3a. Interview questions

Interview #1: Substance Use Interview Questions

Demographic Information:
Age:
Race/Ethnicity:
Gender:
Sexual Orientation:
Religious Affiliation:
Education:
Hometown:

Questions Regarding Substance Use:
1. What substances have you used in the past? (e.g. marijuana, cocaine, LSD, psilocybin/mushrooms, alcohol to the point of legal intoxication, peyote, PCP, etc.)

2. Have you ever attended a 12-Step Program for your substance use? If so, how did that affect your approach to substances?

3. How often do you use substances to celebrate and/or intensify positive affect?
  ☐ Very infrequently
  ☐ Somewhat infrequently
  ☐ Occasionally
  ☐ Somewhat frequently
  ☐ Very frequently
4. How often do you use substances to cope with and/or alleviate negative affect?
  ☐ Very infrequently
  ☐ Somewhat infrequently
  ☐ Occasionally
  ☐ Somewhat frequently
  ☐ Very frequently

5. When you use substances, would you say that you use them more often to intensify positive affect or cope with negative affect?

6. How would you describe your relationship to substance use?

7. Check the following box(es) of words you associate with your substance use:
  ☐ revelatory
  ☐ scary
  ☐ calming
  ☐ exciting
  ☐ traumatic
  ☐ communal
  ☐ lonely
  ☐ effective
  ☐ meaningful
  ☐ necessary
  ☐ good
  ☐ guilty
  ☐ empowering
  ☐ sinful
  ☐ natural

8. Tell me about a notable time you used substances to celebrate and/or intensify positive affect? In addition to narrative details, please reflect on how the experience impacted you then and how you relate to that experience now.

9. Do you feel drawn to employ the use of substances to celebrate in the future? If so, how?

1

Figure 3b. Interview questions (cont.)

10. Tell me about a notable time you used substances to cope and/or alleviate negative affect? In addition to narrative details, please reflect on how the experience impacted you then and how you relate to that experience now.

11. Do you feel drawn to employ the use of substances to cope in the future? If so, how?

Additional Questions:
12. When you think about your substance use, do you instinctually include the substances you've been prescribed by medical professionals? If not, why?

13. What would your response be if religious practice/substances were removed from your access?

FOLLOWING FINAL INTERVIEW
14. After participating in these interviews, what similarities and differences have stuck out to you between your substance use and your religious practices?

Interview #2: Religious/Spiritual Practice Interview Questions

Questions Regarding Religious/Spiritual Practice:
1. In what religious/spiritual practices have you participated in the past? (e.g. communal and/or individual prayer, meditation or other contemplative practices, confession, worship, fasting, etc.)

2. Have you ever utilized substances as an explicit part of your religious practice? If so, how did that affect your approach to religious practices?

3. How often do you employ these religious/spiritual practices to celebrate and/or intensify positive affect?
- ☐ Very infrequently
- ☐ Somewhat infrequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Somewhat frequently
- ☐ Very frequently

4. How often do you employ these religious/spiritual practices to cope with and/or alleviate negative affect?
- ☐ Very infrequently
- ☐ Somewhat infrequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Somewhat frequently
- ☐ Very frequently

5. When you partake in these religious/spiritual practices, would you say that you use them more often to intensify positive affect or cope with negative affect?

6. How would you describe your relationship to religious practice?

7. Check the following box(es) of words you associate with your religious/spiritual practices:
- ☐ revelatory
- ☐ scary
- ☐ calming
- ☐ exciting
- ☐ traumatic
- ☐ communal
- ☐ lonely
- ☐ effective
- ☐ meaningful
- ☐ necessary
- ☐ good
- ☐ guilty

2

Figure 3c. Interview questions (cont.)

☐ empowering
☐ sinful
☐ natural

8. Tell me about a notable time you used a religious/spiritual practice to celebrate and/or intensify positive affect? In addition to narrative details, please reflect on how the experience impacted you then and how you relate to that experience now.

9. Do you feel drawn to employ the use of religious practices to celebrate in the future? If so, how?

10. Tell me about a notable time you used a religious/spiritual practice to cope and/or alleviate positive affect? In addition to narrative details, please reflect on how the experience impacted you then and how you relate to that experience now.

11. Do you feel drawn to employ the use of religious practices to cope in the future? If so, how?

Additional Questions:
12. When you think about your substance use, do you instinctually include the substances you've been prescribed by medical professionals? If not, why?

13. What would your response be if religious practice/substances were removed from your access?

FOLLOWING FINAL INTERVIEW
14. After participating in these interviews, what similarities and differences have stuck out to you between your substance use and your religious practices?

3

	Benjamin		Keely		Laura		George		Chloë			Substances	Religion	Favors	Difference	Word
	Substances	Religion	Substances	Religion	Substances	Religion	Substances	Religion	Substances	Religion						
Question #5 Instrumental Use	positive+	balanced	positive+	negative–	negative– > positive+	negative–	balanced	negative–	negative–	*negative+						
Question #7 Word Association											y = +1; s = 0; n = -1					
												Substances	Religion	Favors	Difference	Word
revelatory	y	s	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	n		5	0	substances	5	revelatory
scary	s	s	y	n	s	s	s	s	y	y		2	0	substances	2	scary
calming	y	y	y	y	y	s	y	y	y	n		5	2	substances	3	calming
exciting	s	n	s	y	s	s	y	y	n	n		0	0	both	0	exciting
traumatic	n	s	n	n	n	n	n	s	n	y		-5	-1	religion	4	traumatic
communal	y	s	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	s		3	3	both	0	communal
lonely	n	n	n	n	n	s	n	y	y	s		-3	-1	religion	2	lonely
effective	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	*y		3	1	substances	2	effective
meaningful	y	y	*y	y	y	y	y	s	y	y		5	4	substances	1	meaningful
necessary	n	y	*s	y	n	y	y	*n	s	**y		-1	3	religion	4	necessary
good	s	y	n	s	y	s	y	n	n	n		0	-1	substances	1	good
guilty	s	s	y	s	n	n	s	n	n	y		-1	-1	both	0	guilty
empowering	y	y	*y	y	y	y	y	s	y	*y		5	4	substances	1	empowering
sinful	s	n	n	n	n	s	n	n	n	y		-4	-2	religion	2	sinful
natural	y	y	s	y	y	y	y	n	y	n		4	1	substances	3	natural
			*thru study				*inescapable		*negative+ **inescapable			religion = traumatic, lonely, necessary, sinful substances = revelatory, scary, calming, effective, meaningful, good, empowering, natural both = exciting, communal, guilty				

Figure 4. Cumulative results and analysis of interview questions #5 and #7. Positive/balanced/negative refer to question #5's targeted affect with "+/–" indicating "elevate/alleviate" intentions, respectively, and ">" indicating a change in behavior over time. Y/s/n refer to question 7's possible responses: yes/sometimes/no, respectively. As a note, because quantitative values associated with y/s/n are vectors with both magnitude and direction, the analysis of which practice is favored is more likely to emphasize differences in value over similarities.

Solids, Liquids, Gases, and Plasmas: The Elementary Forms of ~~Postmodern~~ "Emergent" Churches

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"It seems very strange that one must turn back, and be transported to the very beginnings of history, in order to arrive at an understanding of humanity as it is at present."

---Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912)

"A civilization begins by myth and ends in doubt; a theoretical doubt which, once it turns against itself, becomes quite practical. No civilization can begin by questioning values it has not yet created; once produced, it wearies of them and weans itself away, examines and weighs them with a devastating detachment. For the various beliefs it had engendered and which now break adrift, it substitutes a system of uncertainties, it organizes its metaphysical shipwreck with amazing success..."

--Emile Cioran, *The Fall into Time* (1970)

Introduction

The notable American fantasy supernaturalist author, H. P. Lovecraft (who was also an inspiration for numerous New Religious Movements) once proclaimed that "we live on a placid island of ignorance, in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far." Cutting through the complexities of religious faith, some later scholars studying his writings have implied that Lovecraft seemingly concluded that all gods throughout human history have generally been associated with the four basic elements of the universe—earth, water, air, and fire. Projecting these essential components of everything known into today's understanding of physics, quantum mechanics, and the broad scientific understanding of the universe, it seems these early godly elements have simply taken on more sophisticated and successive titles: solids, liquids, gases, and plasmas. If all gods were once related to these components in some way, perhaps such associations may extend to entire systems of worship—including the style and form (i.e., the culture) of churches and their objectives.

If, in the beginning, there existed the elements of fire, air, earth, and water, then a slow evolution and consolidation of these elements from their premodern

polytheistic origins to more recent modern monotheism, and now, (and some would say, toward the end) a fragmentation or deconstructive phenomena, forming a postmodern simulation of the beginning in the form of emergent faiths that adopt the reflection of the gods from the beginning of existence but are redefined to reflect the scientific jargon of the current epoch, then the entire idea of religion may have run it's full cyclical gamut. Is this more evidence that "the more things change, the more they stay the same?" Is the Western world reverting to a postmodern version of earlier "primal" forms of faiths? Is humanity's time nearing the end with a return to the beginning? This paper briefly explores these phenomena and is a theory in progress with a host of circumstantial evidence that with the emergence of postmodern society, the practice of faith has fragmented into these old, yet new, four distinct types, and today's churches (traditional and emergent) have taken on the characteristics of one (or some combination) of the four elements of matter as know them in the universe today—solids, liquids, gases, and plasmas.

Theoretical Considerations Related to Society and Physics

The history of sociology and its subfields, of which religion is a part, is replete with examples of how the laws of physics and social analyses are quite parallel. It was in fact the "Father of Sociology," Auguste Comte who recognized that the laws of society and the laws of physics were very much identical, albeit in a different context. For example, Newton's Third Law of Motion ("For every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction"), is easily applicable to the social world and examples are easy to observe. The duality principle inherent in his Law can also be understood in the social context regarding values (e.g., good/evil, right/wrong, positive/negative, moral/immoral, etc.). In fact, the laws of physics caused Comte to originally label "sociology" Social Physics, complete with the studies of "social statics" (things that remain solid and fixed) and "social dynamics" (things in flux, that constantly move or change)—the broad areas of engineering applied to the social environment. Comte also formulated his "Law of Human Progress" in which he described the transition from the Theological (or Religious) modes of explanation of phenomena to the Positive (or Scientific) modes of explanation for the same phenomena across human history. From fetishistic ritual, to polytheism, to monotheism, to metaphysics, to the polyscientific, to the final stage with the super monoscience of sociology, Comte drew parallels not only between physics and society, but religion and science. The dualistic, cyclical, and almost quantum thought involved in his analysis suggested society was nothing more than a physical entity, evolving from era to era, epoch to epoch, from the beginning of humanity to its predetermined outcome—but if physical forces guide existence, why would this not be so? Perhaps Comte was right (after all, he was a genius, but in reality, he was also insane).

Other considerations that come to mind regarding the relationship of physics to the study of society and its components include Georg Simmel's study of triadic relationships, in which he labeled the proverbial "third member of a triad" as either being a mediator, a tiebreaker, or a "rejoicer." Mediators have a "neutral" role (like a ground wire in electrical charges or an atomic neutron). Tiebreakers have a

"positive" role in that they make decisions in the group, like the positive terminal in electronics, or the atomic proton. Rejoicers prey on conflict within the group for their selfish advantage and may even instigate conflict toward their aims, rendering them a "negative" role, like the negative pole in electronics, or the atomic electron.

(Georg Wilhelm Friedrich) Hegel's Dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) is about oppositional forces under pressure that morphs into a new force that is immediately opposed in an infinite cycle of conflict duality.

Postmodern sociologist Jean Baudrillard's Successive Phases of the Image is a postmodern theory of how reality distorts to create new realities (such as hyperreality) in his predicted digital environment governed by technology. If a photograph is taken of a person, that photo reflects a basic reality. If the photo is then photoshopped, it perverts a basic reality. If the photoshopped image is then turned into a caricature (a cartoon image), it masks the absence of a basic reality, and if the caricature is then uploaded to a metaverse and reconfigured in some way, it bears no relation to any reality whatsoever—it is its own simulacrum—a reminder of the Biblical verse from Ecclesiastes 1:17-18 that reality does exist but it has only one element: "The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none…The simulacrum is true."

Even Durkheim's Four Types of Suicide (egoistic, anomic, altruistic, and fatalistic) carry mild associations with primal physical existence—egoistic/solid (the physical body), anomic/water (forces/expectations), altruistic/plasma (spiritual, higher purpose), and fatalistic/gas (evaporation of hope/life).

Given these examples of how physics, evolution and change, society, and alternate realities are created, their application to religion and the emergent forms that churches assume, can be projected. Here are the descriptions of the four elementary forms of churches existing or emerging today in the epoch of the postmodern.

Solid Churches

Under this theoretical model, the simplest form of churches to explain is without doubt the Solid church. When imagining a traditional place of worship with a conventional doctrine that is unwavering in belief and practice, the Solid church is its definition. Solid churches are grounded in their faith and their belief system is fixed. These churches are reliable (and some would say relics) of the past where values, norms, standards of morality (and expectations of the same) are cast in stone. They are what they are and cling to past beliefs, for why would what was holy then not be holy now? The Solid church rests on certainty and stability and provides its followers the same in a world defined by radical change and uncertainty—a safe-harbor for the faithful. The strength of Solid churches rests on this. Their weakness lies in being static which dampens the appeal of them for many potential congregants. In one Barna group study, "Six Reasons Why Young Christians Leave the Church," it was found younger people found the church was "overprotective," churches were "shallow" and antagonistic to science, that they are judgmental and simplistic regarding sexuality, that they had a "monopoly on faith," and were unfriendly to any doubt someone may have." In Drew Dyck's book, *Generation Ex-*

Christian, people who leave Solid (or traditional) churches are described as postmodern leavers, recoilers, modern leavers, neo-pagans, rebels, and drifters. As a result, Solid churches risk dwindling congregations, but remain steadfast in their beliefs and practices despite the risk to their existence.

Liquid Churches

While the Solid church is a manifestation of modernity, the Liquid church is an early postmodern creation. The term "liquid modernity" was first used by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman who believed that "liquid modernity" would supplant "postmodernism" as the proper term describing the new epoch. Liquidity describes "the reality in which life considers highly what is transitory rather than permanent, the immediate rather than long-term, and regards utility as prior to any other value." Thus, Liquid churches are trend-adaptive, contemporary, populist, and are constantly evaluating their appeal to meet popular expectations. Their messages may be based in scripture, but how they are delivered and presented may be unique and convey ideas and teachings in accordance with daily life, personal psychology, upbeat messaging, and providing amenities in concert with 21st century life—music, aesthetic facilities, venue atmosphere, on-site food and refreshments, and often featuring a younger (and often charismatic) minister and planning staff. The strength of the Liquid church is appeal and potentially expanding memberships. Negatives include the lack of stability in messaging and formats and the production of the church as a "show." As Baudrillard might say of traditional churches attempting to retool themselves and retailoring their message to be more attractive to a postmodern audience, "simulating oneself is still a simulation in competition with endless alternative simulations." Liquidity is not solid and just as water, flows where there is space, but always to the lowest point. Liquid churches may need to consider this possibility.

Gaseous Churches

Gases expand and contract, float and encompass, and potentially affect (for better or worse) those who encounter their seemingly formless form. True to the nature of gases, the Gaseous church is based on extensive outreach, the socialization process, and expansion of their sphere of influence. In many ways, Gaseous churches have commonalities with Liquid churches, but with a few distinct differences. While Liquid churches tend to resemble Solid churches with their existence in a single location or two, Gaseous churches can locate anywhere, recruit from anywhere, spread across any number of potential audiences, but with a common goal—to influence and socialize potential adherents. A good (and perhaps noble) example of a gaseous church are those who engage in education. Often these churches offer day care and formal schooling, especially for younger children, and because of their quality and care, members of all generations of often diverse communities collect to promote the common bond of education and the betterment of children. These schools instruct children in conventional subjects but also include

religious education, projecting their beliefs and doctrines, often to multiple generations of many families. The strength of the Gaseous church is outreach, appeal, and filling a familial need. The weakness can lie in a lack of structure and commitment from parents and others as well as the costs associated with such a curriculum often resulting in shorter term commitments to the church. (There are other examples of Gaseous churches as well, including some forms of religious cults who actively recruit members from wherever they can be found.)

Plasma Churches

The Plasma church is difficult to describe in a concise manner, but it is the prototype of a late postmodern church. As nothing exists in a solid form (or in reality) inside the postmodern perspective, it is almost the direct opposite of the Solid church. Its main characteristics vary, vacillate, and can evolve constantly. The lack of definitiveness in doctrines of the Plasma church manifest themselves in a variety of forms: universalism, new age, in alternative interpretations of faith, a return to polytheism, Gnosticism, or the worship of other gods or beings, digital-messaging, cause-directed theology, and even (as Danish existential philosopher Soren Kierkegaard proclaimed), "religionless Christianity," where the "spirit within" is the guiding force of life and nothing else. Advantages of Plasma churches is that they offer almost unlimited choice to prospective worshippers—a cafeteria plan of faith. There is something for everyone (or anyone) and all can find their particular brand of faith somewhere in this potpourri of "pick and choose" religion. Plasma churches are often highly individualized professions of faith which can be quite appealing to those "postmodern leavers" or others with their own unique values and moralities. On the other hand, the great downside of Plasma churches is disparateness, lack of a unified system of belief, excessive choice and the abounding of uncertainty or excessive flexibility in adhering to any conventions or doctrines. Everyone may believe in something, but everyone may believe in something different then everyone else. This lack of unity creates unique churches but ones that face a small adherent base, isolation, and ultimately are prone to more fragmentation and seekership.

Conclusion

On a final note, there are some models of the primal universe that recognize an additional fifth element of nature—space (or the void). This too may be in keeping with this theoretical model of postmodern church development. As space (or the void) is often depicted in ancient writings and diagrams as the largest and most expansive of all the elements of nature, perhaps it accounts for other emergent belief systems very prevalent in postmodern society—trends such as atheism, agnosticism, the occult, nihilism, esoteric knowledge, even the worship of "space occupants"—such as alien "worship" (like the Raelians). Postmodern belief systems are indeed diverse but where do these developments leave humanity?

In keeping with the theme of the subject at hand, the final word—the end—the conclusion—shall thus come from the beginning—from H. P. Lovecraft who proclaimed in his masterwork, *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928): "…some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age."

[Note: Pronounced: CAH-LA'-LU]

Biographical Note

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[Note: Other references referred to are general references of common knowledge or quotations used, and those works and their authors are cited in the text of the paper.]