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Religion—Southwest***

presents

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Edited by:

Jon K. Loessin and

Scott Stripling

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President and Editor's Note

Welcome once again to the *Proceedings* of Association for the Scientific Study of Religion--Southwest (ASSR-SW). It is again both an honor and privilege to serve as the editor for *The Year 2010 Proceedings of the ASSR-SW*. Year after year, the Proceedings are another fine collection of papers and presentations from both our perennial authors and presenters as well as a host of new academic talent who bring with them new styles and topics. As usual, this year's papers are again both scholarly and exceptional.

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

The ASSR-SW launched a new annual award in 2008. *The Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research* is a peer reviewed award process for professional papers meeting the organizations expectations for quality and the *Proceedings* publication deadline. We want to congratulate the 2010 recipient, Todd Jay Leonard of Fukuoka University of Education, Japan.

I would also like to take this opportunity also to acknowledge the officers of the ASSR for this past year. These are the people who, along with our presenters, truly made the Year 2011 meetings possible:

President: Jon K. Loessin, Wharton County Junior College

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I hope all of you have a good year and the ASSR-SW will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2011-2012! Be sure to visit our Web Site at: www.assr-sw.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, 2010-11 ASSR-SW President

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Upsizing Jesus: Megachurches, the Church Growth Movement and Image Management in a Consumer Culture

J.B. Watson, Jr.

Stephen F. Austin State University

Walt Scalen, Jr.

Stephen F. Austin State University

Introduction

Sociologists of religion have detailed the rise of consumer religion in American society in recent decades, as traditional religious practices and consumer culture have become increasingly intertwined. The growing influence of the church growth movement (CGM), church marketing, megachurches, the “therapeutic” gospel, and the “prosperity” gospel reflect the towering influence of consumerist ideology within modern evangelical churches. In this paper, we will examine the ways in which megachurches use the Internet to manage their image at a macro level. While religion scholars have extensively studied the phenomena of religion on the Internet (Howard, 2011), our focus will be on a sociological analysis of megachurches’ use of the Internet. A content analysis of megachurch websites will serve as the principal methodology for this paper.

Megachurches represent a powerful influence within American religion. Megachurches - commonly defined as large, primarily Protestant churches with an average attendance of at least 2,000 attendees per week - have reshaped religious culture locally, regionally, and nationally, and have radically transformed denominational and congregational practices (Thumma and Travis, 2007). Megachurches have incorporated multiple religious innovations, including major changes in worship center architectural design, traditional ritual practices, hierarchical church structures, and the use of new marketing techniques. The number of megachurches has risen from fewer than 50 in 1970 to over 1,300 in 2009 (Thumma and Bird, 2009). By 1990, there was one megachurch per four million Americans, and a recent study notes that there are more than four megachurches for every one million Americans, and approximately 80% of the U.S. population resides within one hour’s drive of a megachurch (Thumma and Bird, 2009). More detailed analysis of the history of megachurches is available elsewhere (e.g., Ellingson, 2007), but it is important to note here that the growing dominance of larger congregations in U.S. religious life was propelled by the “Baby Boom” generation of the 1940s to 1960’s, suburbanization, and the rapid growth of traditional and emerging social institutions, including education, entertainment, sports and a consumer-centered economy.

A main concern of U.S. megachurch leaders is not merely the total number of individuals attending worship services, but instead what is commonly referred to as the “revolving door” principle (Ellingson, 2007). That is, megachurches must address both the delivery of high-quality large group worship experiences while also responding to the significant number of attendees that exit the service and often never return (Thumma and Bird, 2009). As a result, a critical organizational focus of modern megachurches is the issue of retention - with a dual emphasis on securing new attendees and converting the largest possible number of current attendees into

active members. Of course, the effectiveness of this strategy determines the level of financial support in megachurches.

Megachurches have redefined religious culture in a myriad of ways. In particular, the emphasis on consumer culture is perhaps the most directly observable feature in the geographic space of megachurches. Many megachurches have diversified operations such as bookstores, coffee shops, cafes, and child care centers (Twitchell, 2004). Once an attendee enters a megachurch, regardless of his/her original motivation for participation, the overall experience is built upon the consumption of additional products and services, often resulting in additional monetary revenue for megachurches (Thumma and Bird, 2009). The potential hazard of this "consumer religion" emphasis is that it reduces lived religious experience to a series of consumer choices to meet "felt needs." This emphasis also leads to a sociological paradox: conservative evangelical megachurches embracing a new form of secularization through a consumerism focus while publicly eschewing "things of the world" as an improper focus for the devout (Watson and Scalen, 2008).

The church growth movement, with its purpose-driven or seeker-sensitive paradigm, has also played a major role in the growth and dominance of megachurches in U.S. religious life. The key element of the purpose-driven or seeker-sensitive paradigm for church life involves a view of congregations as targets of marketing, i.e., implementing a detailed business model for "doing church." In this paradigm, key questions often asked by church leaders are: What do people want? What do they like? What keeps them coming back? An additional key marketing strategy is to appeal to the constantly changing youth culture. Just as McDonald's installed playgrounds in front of their restaurants to attract children who will persuade their parents to take them there, churches of this ilk offer a dazzling array of amenities in an appeal to all levels of the youth culture (pre-K through 12). Adult prospects are target-marketed as well - they often find facilities and programs similar to their workplace, shopping malls, and sports activities. The church buildings, architecture, and interior decorating reflect the surrounding culture as well. Technology is typically state of the art, musical performances are first-rate, and messages (sermons) are humorous, practical, and short.

Megachurches tend to reach, at a certain point, a critical level of membership size whereby expansion takes place (Ellingson, 2009). According to one recent study, between 2005 and 2008, U.S. megachurch average attendance grew by 573, while average worship center seating size increased by an average of 124 seats (Thumma, Travis, and Bird, 2008). The establishment of "sister churches" or the creation of a network of "likeminded" independent congregations with the megachurch as a hub, has become a favored solution (Thumma and Bird, 2009). Recently, the predominant megachurch physical plant model involves the creation of "satellite campuses" whereby segments of a single congregation meet at multiple sites, with local pastors and worship leaders. The rationale is based on the notion of extending socially constructed church space, and maintaining a sense of being a part of a single unit. In some cases, the sermon is delivered by a senior pastor through a DVD, video streaming, or live satellite feed projected on to screens on the satellite campuses. This type of strategy is consistent with the recent economic

recession, reducing some construction costs and zoning issues connected to new sanctuaries. In addition, new developments in modern technology and bandwidth make this model especially appealing; web resources such as Facebook, Twitter, Second Life, GodTube, and YouTube, can serve as a natural extension of the megachurch. A further extension to the use of the Internet to communicate with members and potential members is the “virtual” megachurch, which exists on the Internet, disconnected from a physical congregation (Hamilton, 2009). Many megachurches strike a middle ground - connecting physical locations by creating a strong online presence with social networking capabilities in an attempt to better reach a younger age segment, supported by their youth and college ministries. Megachurches often prefer this model for expansion; the satellite campus system is viewed as reflecting a post-modern approach, consistent with a flattened and networked global reality (Thumma and Bird, 2009).

Thus, an online presence represents a “natural” marketing practice for typically embraced by megachurches. In this paper, we are especially interested in an exploratory qualitative analysis of the websites of the ten largest U.S. churches. Do these websites reflect the megachurch patterns described above or do they emphasize more traditional religious content? For example, will we identify an emphasis on entertainment, amenities, and self-help? In contrast, will more traditional doctrinal and religious content be emphasized? Will traditional Christian symbols be prominently displayed? Will doctrinal statements - often called “statements of faith” - be discussed in a detailed way? Will the central messages of Christianity be highlighted? Will Biblical content and references be highlighted? Will Jesus Christ and his teachings be mentioned?

There are a number of limitations associated with this exploratory study. The website content of a megachurch may not closely reflect the actual current beliefs and practices of a congregation. Also, while our focus is on the social construction of an image via each church’s website, we recognize that we might neglect or miss an important dimension included on a website. In fact, our interest in this topic stemmed from the need to develop a typology of website content of megachurches - a potential useful framework for future research on megachurches.

Website Content: The Ten Largest U.S. Megachurches

#1 - Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas, Average Attendance, 43,500

The “pastor” of Lakewood is motivational speaker and international celebrity, Joel Osteen. The church spends enormous amounts of money for airtime around the world. Osteen may be the most familiar American religious figure on the airways worldwide. The front page of Lakewood's website (lakewood.cc/pages/home.aspx) began with a series of “rolling” headlines, all with accompanying artwork or pictures. At the time the website was viewed, the headline screens included church events, programs, schedules, classes, and life groups. A human interest story was also featured on the front page. The calendar yielded a “dizzying” array of programs and activities. While Christian symbols or religious references of any kind are largely missing, the front page did have a section called “pathway” which explained in a very abbreviated and simple manner how to become a Christian: “accept Jesus,” commit to the church, and connect to the church in order to grow and serve. The web page also contained over sixty-five links to specialized programs and resources.

The doctrinal statement was very brief and vastly different than a classical Confessions of Faith. While books and other items were available from the bookstore, the web page did not appear particularly commercial. Also, while there were a number of entertainment-based programs such as the Super Bowl Party and a Valentine Day party, there were also programs on improving one's prayer life and addressing addictions and personal problems.

#2 - LifeChurch.tv, Edmond, Oklahoma, Average Attendance, 26,776

This was a virtual church that hold meetings at various locations, but services and activities are primarily delivered online and through video. The pastor is identified as Craig Groeschel, but featured speakers include Mark Driscoll and Perry Noble, names often linked to the emergent church movement. The titles for the administrative staff were interesting: Innovation Leader, Team Development Leader, Operational Leader, and Campus Operator. The front page of the Church's website (lifechurch.tv) was very brief and simple. Essentially, there were three banners: who we are, what we support, and resources. They identified as their primary purpose "to lead people to become devoted followers of Christ," a phrase originated by Willow Creek Church in greater Chicago. A statement of beliefs was available, but it was not prominently displayed. One had to search the links in very small print to find it. It was relatively comprehensive with multiple Bible references. Interestingly, it contained the following qualifying statement: "what makes the Covenant unique from other denominations is the fact that while it strongly affirms the clear teaching of the Word of God, it allows believers the personal freedom to have varying interpretations on theological issues that are not clearly presented in Scripture." Classic Christian symbols of any kind were notably missing. Links to Twitter, Facebook, etc. were prominently displayed. Resources included a web-based blog, real time chat, and podcasts of sermons. The few sermons that were reviewed seemed to be largely devoid of any religious or doctrinal content. They were humorous, brief and primarily focused on solving everyday problems. Overall, the website seemed focused on the conspicuous consumption of technology.

#3 - Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois, Average Attendance, 23,400

It could be argued that Willow Creek is the "mothership" of the church growth movement. While Robert Schuller has claimed that he founded the movement, and while Bill Hybels the pastor of Willow Creek doesn't dispute that claim, the seeker-sensitive paradigm began here. If the Crystal Cathedral is the beginning, Willow Creek was the first offspring. This church has defined the movement for decades despite the fact that Rick Warren and Saddleback are typically the focus of media attention. The Willow Creek web page (willowcreek.org) began with a prominently displayed picture of a rock band. A survey of the rest of the front page would lead one to believe that Willow Creek is a family counseling center instead of a church. Marriage, relationships, and financial issues were clearly featured topics. There were multiple links under the headings of "I Need Help, Connect at Willow, Kids/Students, Outreach, Go Deeper, Inside Willow, and Regional Campuses." There were no Christian symbols, artifacts, or images commonly associated with a traditional Christian church; links, however, for Facebook, Twitter, and RSS were prominently displayed. The image of Willow was thoroughly modern, "hip, and trendy."

After reviewing a few podcasts of sermons, it was clear that Bill Hybels is an outstanding speaker and one of the co-authors found a selection from the "Troublemakers" series especially noteworthy. Jeremiah was identified as a young man who was given a trouble making assignment for God. He enthusiastically embraced this calling, but soon found that his messages of doom and gloom were not well received. He then called God into account to complain. So far, so good, but after smashing a vase on stage, which was a particularly vivid illustration, Hybels made the application to those who have had "callings" to ministries at Willow Creek who have gotten discouraged and not followed through. Not all the sermons reviewed had the apparent Biblical or religious content that this one did, but the application was more limited than expected. One of the common beliefs associated with megachurch leaders is that working for a specific church is equated as "working for God."

Multiple links were required to find Willow Creek's doctrinal statement, but once located, it was actually quite comprehensive. It was actually divided into two parts: Willow Creek Statement of Faith and Willow Creek Values. The State of Faith addresses in some detail the topics of the Bible, God, Salvation, Jesus Christ, The Christian Life (The Holy Spirit), Human Destiny, The Church, and Faith and Practice. This statement rivaled classic creeds and confessions in regard to its content and thoroughness. A detailed description of values on the website more specifically defined the church's philosophy of ministry. To summarize, Willow's teaching focus on: (1) "life change"; (2) evangelism is relational and a process; (3) the church must connect to the culture, i.e., be relevant; (4) members must be authentic and pursue personal growth; (5) service should be based on spiritual gifts - leaders must be gifted - and ministry involvement must be "love-driven;" (6) life change occurs best in community; (7) excellence in performance honors God; and (8) full devotion to Christ is defined in terms of stewardship (financial giving) and servanthood.

#4 - North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Georgia, Average Attendance, 23,377

The pastor of this church, Andy Stanley is the son of legendary minister, Charles Stanley. The start page of their website (northpoint.org) featured a picture of a lone guitarist on stage playing to a large audience bathed in blue light - it greatly resembled a rock concert setting. The colorful graphics on the front page had a very "young" feel with several references to children and youth. The most notable links at the top of the page included "new to NPCC, service times and directions;" "get involved," "next steps," "serve," "find a group," "messages," "watch online," "podcasts;" "invite a friend, upcoming events," and "donate, local and global opportunities." The tab quick links connected to over fifty other links on a variety of topics including a very brief doctrinal statement. Once again, there were no religious symbols, no scripture verses, and no classically Christian icons or art. The web page is inviting, offering a wide array of programs and amenities. It has a very contemporary, even secular feel. Except for the word "church" in its name, North Point's web page appeared to intentionally avoid a religious image of any kind.

#5 - Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, Average Attendance, 23,377

When one opened the Second Baptist website (second.org/Woodway.aspx), it began with a video narrated by a small child. You see rapidly changing scenes of children performing before audiences of other children. There was a Disney-like array of colors, clowns, and activities. The narrator used the words "cool" and "blast" to describe how fun it is for children at Second. Ed Young, the pastor at Second then appeared to say, "Children love Second, and Second loves children." The entire web page was very colorful with a large picture of an amusement park Ferris wheel. Second was described as having a total of five locations with a total membership of 53,000. There is also a podcast of Ed young wearing a football jersey. He was apparently giving a sermon entitled the "Real Super Bowl." The "Upcoming Events" section includes "A Night of Promise for Students," "Love Through the Ages," "Single Live Valentines Dance," and "The Mother/Daughter Chocolate Festival." There were a number of other links regarding schedules and other activities. Second appeared to offer "something for everybody." Conspicuously absent were Christian symbols, art, Scripture quotes, common religious or classical Christian terms such as Christ, redemption, sacrifice, confession, or communion, etc. Overall, there appeared to be more of an emphasis on entertainment than religious practice.

#6 - Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA, Average Attendance, 22,000

Rick Warren is senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California with eleven campuses in southern California. Warren is also a best-selling author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and a number of other books. His father was a Baptist minister, and Warren received his Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary. Saddleback is an evangelical Christian church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Saddleback was started in 1980 out of a Bible study group in his condo, which grew to 250 people. By the 1990's, Saddleback attendance had grown to 10,000 and the land for their current facility was purchased. Services were held in a 2,300-seat tent for several years during construction. Weekly attendance in their completed 3,500-seat worship center is estimated to be approximately 22,000. Due to the success of his book sales, Warren no longer receives a salary from Saddleback and has returned prior years of salary to Saddleback.

As we have noted on other megachurch websites, Saddleback (saddleback.com) emphasizes a sense community by noting that the church is "one family, many locations." State-of-the art technology is denoted by the availability of a Saddleback I-phone app and multiple podcasts of messages by Rick Warren and other Saddleback ministers. Interestingly, there was no prominent reference to Saddleback as a Baptist church, though an examination of their web-based statement of faith ("what we believe") indicated that Saddleback adheres to a fairly standard conservative evangelical doctrinal stance. The Saddleback website provided links to explore its multiple campuses and provided a "something for everyone" link, with church program details for these demographic subgroups: men, women, singles, couples, children, junior high/high school youth, college students, and seniors.

Information on both worship service times and involvement in small groups was prominently displayed on the website. Interestingly, a link is provided to a “virtual campus” - actually online small groups emphasizing prayer needs and Bible study via social networking. A blog on the Saddleback start page highlights recent sermons by Saddleback staff and study group opportunities, including: (1) Christian Life and Service Seminars (CLASS) - a Saddleback-developed study marketed to other churches as well; (2) Foundations: A Purpose Driven Resource (men’s study); and (3) Financial Freedom Workshop (personal finance). Community/missions involvement was also prominently highlighted under a “Care and Help” link. Financial support information was also available via a “giving” link that notes “put God in your finances and see what he can do.”

#7 - Fellowship Church, Grapevine, TX, Average Attendance, 17,000

Ed Young serves as Senior Pastor of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, an evangelical Christian church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Young is the son of Dr. Ed Young, Pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Fellowship Church started in 1989 with an average attendance of 150 members. While Ed Young was not the founding pastor, he transformed the church to a “seeker-style” church made popular by Bill Hybels of Willow Creek. The church has seen consistent annual growth and has also added four satellite locations. Ed Young started his professional ministry working as associate pastor at his father’s church after earning his Masters of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

A cursory analysis of the church’s website (fellowshipchurch.com) suggested that it de-emphasized its affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, perhaps to appeal to a younger population less focused on denominational church identity. Fellowship Church followed the concept of age-appropriate spiritual teaching, so the website noted to parents of children fifth grade and under that separate worship services are available. The emphasis on a contemporary and youth-oriented approach was evident in the website information on worship services and sermon podcasts featuring late-model automobiles. The four campuses of Fellowship Church are prominently highlighted on its website: Plano, Dallas (downtown), Fort Worth, and Miami (South Miami), Florida. The three satellite campuses serve as extensions of the Grapevine location - the three satellites have live worship music and their own staff, but all sermons are broadcast from the Grapevine campus. The contemporary worship service schedule was highlighted on the website, including one Saturday night service and two Sunday services. Fellowship Church was unique among the ten megachurches reviewed in that it operates a campus (South Miami) outside of its original geographic region.

#8 - Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY, Average Attendance, 17,000

Dave Stone is senior minister of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, succeeding Russell after his retirement in 2006. Previously, Stone had served as a preaching associate at Southeast. The church was established in 1962 and by 1976, average weekly attendance exceeded 1,000. Since 2006, average weekly attendance has grown to over 13,000, with the current weekly attendance at an 17,000. Southeast is an evangelical, Christian church associated with

Independent Christian Churches and the Church of Christ, though there was no reference to this affiliation on the church website (southeastchristian.org). The Southeast mission statement stated that they exist to “evangelize the lost, edify the saved, minister to those in need, and be a conscience in the community - leading people to Jesus and one another.” The start page of their website highlighted children/youth activities and the upcoming Easter production. The three campuses of Southwest Christian - the main Blankenbaker Campus, an Indiana campus, and the Oldham campus - are prominently detailed, including multiple worship services (Saturday and Sunday), and a deaf worship service.

#9 - Woodlands Church, Woodlands, Texas, Average Attendance, 15,000

Kerry Shook is senior pastor of the Woodlands Church, a non-denominational church in Woodlands, Texas (greater Houston area). Woodlands Church was founded in 1993 and now expanded to three additional campuses - Humble, Tomball, and Katy - all highlighted prominently on the church website (fotw.org). Shook is a best-selling author and former pastor of another Houston area congregation. Shook is well known for his belief in a contemporary and engaging practical sermon style. His sermons have been broadcasting on local television since 2005 and are now televised in 50 states and over 200 countries. His weekly messages are delivered live online via the Woodlands Church website. The church’s website placed much emphasis on the “Church Online” with five online worship experiences each week.

#10 - Calvary Chapel, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Average Attendance, 15,000

Bob Coy is pastor of Calvary Chapel of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The church was founded in 1985 and now meets in a 3,700-seat sanctuary that includes facilities for both children’s and youth ministry. A skateboard park is part of the physical plant of the church. The Fort Lauderdale church started with four people in the living room of Coy’s home (in 1985). The church website (calvaryftl.org) made the assertion that they are not simply a church building, not overly leader-centered, and not a theological institute, but rather a vibrant body of believers that depend on God. Prominent emphasis was placed on community outreach programs and community groups, centered on home meetings where church members can engage local residents in discussions on spiritual matters.

Conclusions and Implications

Our exploratory analysis of the websites of the ten largest megachurches leads to a few tentative conclusions and a myriad of questions that could be addressed in future research. First, a few of the concepts reflected in the church growth movement or new paradigm (purpose-driven) model were evident on all the websites. For example, the absence of traditional Christian symbols and church architecture - perhaps supplanted by modern graphics and pictures of contemporary building design - was evident on most of the websites we assessed. Secondly, an emphasis on youth - i.e., children, adolescents, and young adults - was prominently featured on all of the websites. Only two or three websites made any mention of programming for older adults. While we did not examine this issue, it is possible that age segregation is amplified by multi-campus megachurches, since many new campuses are built in new neighborhoods of young families. Target marketing to a

young demographic was the most commonly observed feature of all of the websites that we examined. Finally, we noted a major emphasis on everything contemporary - technology, cultural elements, and architecture - and a marked deemphasis on the traditional aspects of religious life. For example, no websites called attention to events focused on church history or recent Biblical archeological findings, or seminars on the early church fathers.

Clearly, internet-based technologies have altered religious life in the U.S. in a number of ways more fully detailed elsewhere (e.g., Zeleski, 1997). Earlier communication advances, such as the telegraph, rendered messages into electrical current and the opportunity to share ideas was no longer connected to face-to-face interaction. A "telepresence" allowed for new forms of social interaction accelerated by telephone-based communication technologies (Howard, 2011). By the 1970's, personal computer applications further transformed communication as more complex human expressions could be transmitted. With the development of the Internet, "persistent webs of telepresent human discourse became possible" (Howard, 2011:18).

The potentially profound effects of Internet technology on individuals in relationship to megachurches are yet to be fully examined. Paolo Apolito observed that Internet and computer technologies have "marginalized the charismatic, shifting the focus as it does from the 'gift' of [a] direct relationship with Heaven to the technical structure of the procedures of vision and contact with the beyond" (2005: 5). Computer networking technology, then, may actually create greater social distance between the perceived experience of the divine and humans who pursue such experiences. Some megachurches, for example, offer elaborate virtual worship and small group experiences, not simply using their websites as purveyors of information and marketing to prospects. The oft-cited notion that the medium is the message applied here suggests that megachurches may create a paradoxical effect via their web presence: the attempts at building quality websites may encourage some seekers to regularly attend church online and to send their tithes and offerings elsewhere. The use of web-based technology may thus reach a point of diminishing returns in the extension of the seeker-friendly paradigm and as a favored megachurch growth strategy.

Emile Durkheim emphasized the need for a transcendent understanding of aggregate social action. For Durkheim, "society" is a social fact - its impact is observable through ongoing cooperation and common action, influenced by a "consciousness" of itself growing out of active cooperation. Similarly, social action also dominates religious life, since society is its source (Turner, 2010). Cooperative religious action creates a context in which individual experiences are given meaning beyond the individual. In this sociological process, "the ritual enacting of the social divine renders its presence visible across time by creating, maintaining, and re-creating the shared meanings that link individual humans together" (Howard, 2011:19).

Based on this Durkheimian perspective, a critical and undervalued aspect of megachurches' utilization of Internet technology may accelerate the process of providing individuals increased opportunities to construct their own personalized systems of belief outside of the social space of megachurches. Robert Howard, in a

recently published book on religious organizations and Internet technology, made this observation regarding his research:

What roles do communication technologies play in these individualistic constructions of religious belief? What dangers are emerging in the heavily mediated and individually constructed religious marketplaces of the digital age? The case of vernacular Christian fundamentalism demonstrates that individual believers can deploy even the most powerful communication media to limit their exposure to the diversity of ideas those media have made available to them. Documenting individuals making this choice without the influence of any central leadership, this research suggests that individual believers empowered by modern technology must be considered responsible for the sorts of religiosity they choose to construct (2011:20).

Howard's conclusions from his empirical study also point to a number of future research questions regarding the Internet and megachurches. Will current attendees at megachurches feel less connected to local congregations due to the increasingly decentralized nature of megachurch web information? Given the competing web-based sources of religious influence available on a daily basis from sources such as Facebook and Twitter, will pastoral leadership influence in megachurches diminish? Will megachurches feel more pressure to promote a therapeutic gospel of self-help and other versions of "Christianity Lite" due to new forms of radical individualism emergent from religiously connected Internet usage and social networking?

A final implication of our exploratory study is methodological in nature. We examined the ten megachurch websites to identify what emerged as we evaluated specific content. In our literature review, we did not identify any useful typologies that have been developed to provide a framework for the analysis of church (or megachurch) websites. In addition, we intentionally did not develop a typology of church growth movement concepts before analyzing the websites, since we were interested in both what was included and what was omitted on each website. We recognize that this approach limited our findings, but it also allowed us to avoid "premature closure of inquiry" - we did not want to miss elements not contained in our pre-existing typology. In future studies of megachurches on the web, however, we suggest that researchers may find it helpful to develop a tentative typology (framework) to analyze relevant web content. In addition, an important future research question is the degree of correspondence between web content and the actual practices and beliefs of individual megachurches. Conclusions about web content may have no substantive connection to the subculture of a specific megachurch. Finally, the use of Internet technologies by megachurches poses certain limits on both the expression of religious ideas and the "consumption" dimension of religious practice. This dynamic phenomenon provides multiple research avenues for examining the effects of network communication technologies on religious life. While this paper has focused on megachurches, clearly the impact of Internet technologies on all forms of modern religion needs to be examined by scholars of religion, in the context of rapidly changing lived religious experience.

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J.B. Watson Jr., Ph.D. serves as Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, the Director of the William J. Brophy Academic Enrichment Center, and Coordinator of the College of Liberal and Applied Arts Service-learning Initiative at Stephen F. Austin State University. He was the recipient of the first ASSR:SW Annual Frank Forwood Award for Academic Excellence in Presented Research in 2008. His most recent publication (forthcoming) is "Endings and Beginnings: Service-learning, Religious Perceptions, and Historical Cemeteries" in the Spring 2011 Issue of *Academic Exchange*

Quarterly (with Jeff Roth and Karol Chandler-Ezell). He currently serves as Vice-President (Membership) for ASSR:SW.

Walt Scalen. Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Government at Stephen F. Austin State University. He teaches classes in Criminal Justice, but has also taught classes in Sociology and Psychology at the community college and university levels. He received the Minnie Piper Award in 2003 for excellence in Texas community college teaching. In addition to conducting research on Criminal Justice issues, he has also been writing in the field of the Sociology of Religion for the last several years. His career in the Federal and State Courts spanned twenty years before he began his career in higher education. His most recent publication (forthcoming with Lee Payne) focuses on alcohol-impaired driving.

The Glorious Minds: 19th Century Theocratic Orthodoxy in Europe and its Influence

Jon K. Loessin

Wharton County Junior College

“The whole Earth, perpetually steeped in blood, is nothing but a vast altar upon all that is living must be sacrificed without end, without measure, without pause, until the consummation of things, until evil is extinct, until the death of death.” --Joseph de Maistre, Les Soirées de Saint- Pétersbourg (1821)

An often unrecognized, historically-significant, and understudied phenomenon that influenced how the world of today is structured politically, ideologically, theologically, and culturally, concerns the role of a few select European minds in the 19th century whose influence, though subtle and almost lost in a world of new, faddishly popular, and progressive ideas, were literally the catalyst to some of the most profound changes the world has ever witnessed. These thinkers represented the counterrevolutionary view in an increasingly modernizing and culturally-evolving world—pleading for a halt to what they viewed as cultural decline, ordering a return to the past—the re-establishment of a prior Golden Age, the resurrection of the old order—a return to *anciens régimes*—in an effort to save humanity from the biggest error of history—modernity and the shape of things to come. These men were dedicated to save the world and its people—warning that the society that humans were in the midst of creating was in eternal and condemnable opposition to the pure and perfectly organized gift of life and domain that God had provided to all of humanity. The vexations of change in the 19th century and before, even to the point of denying the existence of the traditional God and the acceptance of society as a veneration of worship (e.g. Comte), or the belief of evolutionary processes in human development (e.g. Darwin), or atheistic constructions of social and ideological systems of class egalitarianism (e.g. Marx) were all nothing short of heresy—a Godless error of human judgment and arrogance that rejected the true natural (read, Godly) order of things and would destroy humanity while insuring the loss of Heavenly Grace for anyone accepting these premises of Enlightenment: modernity, progressivism, liberalism (even the classical version), and all non-authentic versions of Christianity (read, “anything but orthodox Catholicism”). Though reactionary in scope, fringe in perspective, extreme in rigidity of thought and principle, and authoritarian in practice by 20th and 21st century standards, a production of ideas, concepts, longings, and grandiosities were incubated and eventually hatched from these figures that were to result in profound historical perspectives, cultural developments, political movements, and even wars.

The Logic of Doctrine

In the observation of history and the vision of things to come, much attention has been given to the obvious imperfections of the past and how best to remedy

them for times to come. Such exercises have led invariably to efforts to eliminate negative human challenges and engineer the future of human existence which explains the efforts of human beings to plan and implement solutions to problems, empirically evaluate the state of existence, and produce lofty goals toward not only improving society and the human condition, but set forth a doctrine of perfection, an endgame, a perfect scenario, a utopian vision to which all people may aspire, understand, and take actions toward its fulfillment. Differences in the imagined utopian outcome have certainly resulted in rival ideologies, protracted conflicts, civil instability, social disintegration, even wars. These romantic inclinations, which history documents all too well and often, are always dismal failures, because they, according to the reactionary theocrat, are all human devised and induced.

Conversely, to the 19th century counterrevolutionary, there has been only one utopia in human history and any alternate future reality of another is not only misguided, it is a manifestation of human-induced depravity. God's Creation and placement of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to live happy, content, and perfect lives forever in this earthly paradise represented that one and only Utopia the world had ever witnessed. The perpetual utopia was brought to an end by a wretched disobedience to the Creator, exposing the fallibility, flawed character, and treachery of all humankind. Thus, the goal of the human future is not to reform, revolt, resolve, redesign, or restate the direction of society, but to react, restore, and reestablish to the greatest degree possible the original intention of God the Creator by adhering to a series of "holy" trinities preordained by God just as he had intended the perfect world of the first man and woman should last forever. In sum, the utopia of God's making was Glorious. If it were of this earth and persons, it was evil incarnate and for the sake of Righteousness, all false visions were to be extinguished and if necessary, their purveyors as well—in essence, to launch a righteous romantic reaction against progressive romanticism itself.

The Foundations: Maistre, Bonald, and Menendez-Pelayo

Three central figures of the European counterrevolutionary movement stand out as perhaps the most influential: Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821) and Louis de Bonald (1754-1850) emerging as the primary critics of post-Revolutionary France, and from Spain, the scholar, historian, philologist, and literary critic Marcelino Menéndez-Pelayo (1856-1912). These three figures dominated a 19th century body of thought that served as a counterbalance to rapid modernization, secularism, political reforms, and the quest for equality and democracy. The movement would be far more popular and influential than imagined.

The "holy trinity" of Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821) was perhaps the most shocking, unapologetic, authoritarian, and even paranoid, consisting of the hope for a terrifying but righteous prospect of a world that was the antithesis of the Enlightenment. Consisting of Pope, King, and Hangman, Maistre breathed new life into the doctrine of The Divine Right of Kings in an era in which it was fading quickly. The Church, the State, and the people were all a single entity and anyone failing to recognize or comply with that acceptance was guilty of heresy and had to serve as an example toward other potential deviants. The unity and collectivity of society as a

single, cohesive, national, holy culture must be based on authority and power without question. His politics and theology were Catholic predecessors to the concept of modern-day “holy war” which totally embodies life, religion, state, culture, and education as synonymous. These embodied the “national soul” of a people and the only way to preserve unity was to enforce compliance, even with a hangman if necessary. To Maistre, the last great unity of society had been seen in the Middle Ages, where most believed that God was in command, the world could end immediately upon His word, and the “miracle, mystery, and authority” (as Dostoevsky was to observe about Orthodox Catholicism much later) served to stabilize the known world to the greatest degree possible. All constitutional systems were illegitimate, all individual rights were as well, and separation of church and state was the greatest heresy of all.

Louis de Bonald (1754-1850) in his most notable writing, *Théorie du Pouvoir* inspired by the original Catholic Trinity, also formulated his own version, consisting of three functions of solidarity expressed by the divine: a general will, a general love, and a general force. Authority is the unity that must be maintained to avoid rebellion and conflict and such authority is provided by the father in households, by the church in communities, and by the state in the nation. These three branches of authority are inseparable and all come from a common source—the will of God. Therefore, representative governments rather than theocratic ones are inherently destructive to not only the social and moral fabric of society but to societies themselves. Not only does modernity with its emerging industrial economies, progressive and secular social ideals, representative forms of government, and the spread of Enlightenment and materialist quests shun the values of traditional faith, it allows “foreigners to intervene” in national affairs “with their gold.” Once such economic infiltrators subvert the political and economic systems, the cultural systems (including religion) will also erode, eventually disappearing entirely, leaving only a mélange of secular and enslaving values imposed upon the entirety of what remains of a society. Bonald contended that agricultural society had certainly been purer than industrial society. After all, agricultural families could feed themselves and were not dependent on others. As Irving Zeitlin states:

Bonald longed for the “good old days” of the prebourgeois era... He scoffed at those who now saw industry as providing for man’s needs and pleasures... Bonald derided them for seeing industry as an independent force that that guarantees peace and liberty, while, in fact, it was agricultural society that was in all respects superior to industrial society. The agricultural family can feed and nourish itself; it is not dependent on other men and other social events to assure its continued existence. The industrial family, on the other hand produced children whom it cannot be sure of supporting, dependent as it is on the vicissitudes of the market. In the agricultural family, moreover, the natural and divine order is respected because the father is the authority, which is not the case in the industrial system where the father, mother, and children are isolated, and family

unity is disturbed. The industrial system thus undermines the most natural and sacred of social units... Agriculture, therefore, unifies society while industry tends to divide it into hostile classes and factions.

Bonald concluded that without adhering to the natural laws of God, societies would disintegrate into crisis and anarchy and cease to exist. A nation must be protected from within through the deliberate enforcement of authority and the exclusion of all outside (read, foreign) ideas and the risk of cultural outsiders (read, foreigners) if a nation is to survive in perpetuity. These somewhat xenophobic notions incubated by Bonald were to become a major survivor of his influence on modern history.

Marcelino Menéndez-Pelayo also extolled the virtues of the Middle Ages when, as he observed, Spain had reached its pinnacle of greatness precisely when it was in its “most intolerant” state as a nation. In the 16th century, Spain politically dominated and was evangelizing nearly half the known world and during this same period it was expelling Jews, discovering and conquering new lands, producing great art and literature, and enforcing authority at home during the latter stages of the Inquisition. For Menéndez-Pelayo, the 16th century had been a glorious epoch—the Golden Age of Spain—that the coming of the 18th century was to almost entirely destroy. Menéndez-Pelayo considered the very early 17th century novel of Spanish unity and principle, Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* an epic anti-Romantic work and the epitome of the dominance and greatness of 16th century Spain. He touted the virtues of the Inquisition, stating that there had never been a more productive literary era in the history of Europe. Menéndez-Pelayo was dismayed however by the history of the 18th century. He called the Enlightenment “the most perverse and ungodly age in history” in which Spain “forgot its religion, its language, its science, its arts, and everything that had made it wise, powerful, and feared in the world.”

A fierce traditional Catholic, Pelayo called for a restoration of Spain and its greatness through his own trinity: Orthodox Catholicism, Spanish Nationalism (which he called “the union of cross and sword”), and Hispanic Culture. The quest to restore Spain to its 16th century greatness would have certainly meant affecting change to many places around the world that Spanish influence had touched. There is no doubt that Menéndez-Pelayo’s reach did exactly that. He was not referred to as the “lay saint of the Falange” without good reason and his influence in both Spain and Latin America was pronounced.

The Impact of Maistre, Bonald, and Menendez-Pelayo

Deeply influenced by the ideas of the classical 19th century counterrevolutionary theocratic thinkers, the Frenchman Charles Maurras (1868-1952), (who was already somewhat influential by the turn of the 20th century) was probably the most important of a long list of disciples. Writing as if a hybrid of Maistre, Bonald, and Menéndez-Pelayo, Maurras made the assertion that since monarchy was no longer ruling in France, the rule of justice had been replaced by the rule of gold—the least responsible of all possible forms of government—and as

gold held sway, society passed from the authority of princes to that of merchants (read, businessmen). "Its rule is indifferent, regardless of friend or enemy, of citizen or foreigner." Maurras also claimed that resurrecting the "old order" would insure that the "laws of gold" in the new materialistic society would be replaced with the "laws of blood" that would reunite France to its former grandeur. He attacked the French Revolution as the "greatest catastrophe of modern history" and to save society, rationalism, secularism, liberalism, individualism, and democracy must all be eliminated.

One notion from Maurras that found its way into several Latin American nations during the 20th century was how the United States sought to spread the idea of women's rights and feminism into other nations as a merit of democracy when, in fact, he and his disciples believed that the feminization of society would weaken its social fabric, increase pacifism, and make entire nations more vulnerable to outside (especially U.S.) imperialism. He hailed Catholicism as the last bastion of free thought and last hurdle to the rule of society by wealth. He despised foreigners and foreign influence and interference in France and actively sought to expel some while preventing others from immigrating to his homeland. Love of nation, culture, and people were first and foremost on his agenda. An unapologetic, intense, and driven nationalist, he even called for the elimination of any moral restraints or ethical boundaries in the functioning of politics and legitimized the use of violence and acts of terrorism to achieve political goals. Maurras is today regarded as the creator, developer, father and patron saint of 20th century fascism and his impact on the politics of Europe since 1900 is without debate.

Other prominent figures influenced by the founding fathers of the counterrevolution, though not in the same light as Maurras included the French psychologist Gustave LeBon (1841-1931), the Italian economist and sociologist Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1922), and the French novelist Maurice Barrès (1862-1923). All subscribed to elitist theories of society and personality, reminiscent of some classical Machiavellian principles, but fully understood nations, cultures, and people and how great unity and promise of the return of a previous golden age could easily steer the course of the future.

In the 20th century and (now the 21st), the echoes of Maistre, Bonald, Menéndez-Pelayo and their disciples are still being heard and seen throughout the world. From the presence of fascist movements, parties, and dictatorships in Europe and Latin America, to xenophobic and nativist reactions to those considered foreign in nationality or faith, to the use of terrorist tactics for political or religious gain, to *de facto* theocratic states, to potentially-violent Nationalist attitudes and organizations, to anti-feminist religious attitudes and even *machismo*, it is almost indisputable that these figures had a prominent influence. To cite one example of the legacy left by these counter revolutionists, witness the following excerpt from the best known and most attractive representative of Falangism in Spain, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, taken from his Madrid speech on October 29, 1933:

The liberal state came to offer us economic slavery, saying to the workers, "You are free to work as you wish; no one can compel you to accept specified conditions. Since we are rich,

we offer you the conditions that please us; as free citizens, you are not obliged to accept them if you do not want to; but as poor citizens, if you do not accept them, you will die of hunger, surrounded with the utmost liberal dignity...

Therefore, socialism had to appear, and its coming was just...However, socialism, which was a legitimate reaction against liberal slavery, went astray because it resulted, first in the materialist interpretation of life and history; second, in a sense of reprisal; and third, in the proclamation of the dogma of class struggle.

The Patria [read, national family] is a total unity in which all individuals and classes are integrated; the Patria cannot be in the hands of the strongest class or of the best organized party... Here is what is required by our total sense of the Patria and the state which is to serve it:

That all of the people of Spain, however diverse they may be, feel in harmony with an irrevocable unity of destiny.

That political parties disappear. No one was ever born a member of a political party; on the other hand, we are all born members of a family; we are all neighbors in a municipality; we all labor in the exercise of a profession...

We want less liberal word-mongering and more respect for the deeper liberty of man. ***For one respects the liberty of man when he is esteemed, as we esteem him, the bearer of eternal values; when he is esteemed as the corporal substance of a soul capable of being damned and of being saved. Only when a man is considered thus can it truly be said that his liberty is respected, and more especially if that liberty is joined, as we aspire to join it, to a system of authority, of hierarchy, and of order...***[emphasis mine]

Finally, we desire that if on some occasion this must be achieved by violence, there is no shrinking from violence...the banner is raised...Now we are going to defend it gaily, poetically...In a poetic movement we shall raise this fervent feeling for Spain; we shall sacrifice ourselves, and the triumph shall be ours... Our place is outside...weapons in our hands, with the stars above us. Let the others go on with their merrymaking. We outside, in tense, fervent, and certain vigilance, already feel the dawn breaking in the joy of our hearts.

Shortly thereafter, the Spanish Civil War ensued and fascism rose to power. It had been a speech of which the Glorious Minds would have been proud.

Biographical Note

Jon K. Loessin is a Professor of Sociology, Anthropology, and English at Wharton County Junior College. He is the current President of the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion—Southwest, the Editor of the *Annual Proceedings of the ASSR-SW*, and a Director of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies. In recent years he has focused his research on reactionary and counterrevolutionary movements, societal reaction to authoritarianism, the contemporary evolution of society, the postmodern condition, and the decline of traditionalism and its consequences.

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*NOTE: All information, quotes, paraphrases, and background research included in this essay are found in the above-listed references or are considered the common knowledge of the author or the academic community. All of these sources provide a great depth of information on the subject of this paper and are highly recommended by the author for further study on this topic.

African Traditional Religion in the Torobo Context of Conflict and Resolution

Shelley Ashdown
Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics

Abstract

Beliefs emerging from concepts of African Traditional Religion and Torobo notions of Self figure prominently in the discussion of Self in relation to community Other and conflict resolution. African Traditional Religion among Torobo teaches each individual to pursue that which benefits the community. Torobo tend to describe sin in terms of behavior which conflicts with the interests of the tribal community and past tribal traditions. Sin is defined as rebellion against community Other. It is anti-social, that which disrupts the tranquility of the social context, and requires social restoration. The sacrifice of olive leaves is one community ritual performed two or three times a year to prevent and resolve challenges between Torobo community members. The purpose of the olive leaves ritual is to invoke peace and prosperity from Creator God, *Enkai*, by reaffirming community harmony.

Key Words: Harmony, community, conflict, African Traditional Religion.

Introduction

The Torobo of Kenya are an enigma to both anthropologists and historians because their original name and language has been lost and the group has assumed much of the language and culture of two major tribes living in closest proximity, the Kalenjin and Maasai. It has been inferred Torobo are merely a catch-all for those choosing to leave or banished from their original tribe due to drought or discipline (Van Zwanenberg, 1976; Harvey, 1976). The conventional anthropological view along with Torobo legend maintains the group was the earliest inhabitant of eastern Africa. Nearly every European explorer mentions Torobo in journal entries including the earliest anthropological writings on the east African area (Hobley, 1903; Hollis, 1909; Routledge & Routledge, 1910).

Most Torobo groups occupy the highlands of west central Kenya centering on the Mau Escarpment, Tindiret forest, and highlands north of Nakuru town. The majority of these geographical areas are in the great Rift Valley. Torobo settlements historically reflected a nomadic lifestyle associated with honey gathering with the people living at different levels of elevation according to honey seasons. As land became appropriated and agriculture more important, Torobo began to settle permanently at middle to upper altitude forest areas (Huntingford, 1953). Settlements became fixed in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the Kenyan government demarcating group ranches in Narok District which subdivided land into individual holdings.

The diversification of subsistence by Torobo over the last fifty years has been a gradual process. The shift to predominantly farming and herding from hunting-gathering has taken decades. Most Torobo now rely on potatoes and other crops along with cattle, sheep, and goats to largely subsist and provide a meager income.

The long history of honey gathering persists however; honey seems to be a source of not only a prized spirited drink for ceremonial use but also a cherished part of ethnic identity (Blackburn, 1982).

Literature is replete with conflicting opinions on the origin of Torobo yet a number of facts may be established. The group as a separate tribe with a distinct cultural identity is substantiated. It is very likely Torobo preceded the main tribes in Kenya but were nevertheless greatly influenced by these ethnic groups. Torobo have assumed the language and many beliefs of the tribe encapsulating their settlements; and still Torobo have somehow managed to preserve characteristics differentiating them from other various tribes. The Maa-speaking Torobo of the southern Mau escarpment are the focus of this paper. Notions of Self and community living together in harmony figure prominently in Torobo understanding of conflict resolution and their practice of African Traditional Religion.

Torobo Manner of Peace and Harmony

A Torobo individual is defined and their life experience played out in an inherent union with his/her community in-group based on interdependency. That is, the Torobo community an individual Torobo has membership in is a closed society operating on in-group membership (insiders). It is at once a relationship of mutual benefit and mutual need by divine design. Community Other is perpetuated by single members, and individual selves find personal definition through interrelations with the community in-group. This interdependent image makes the Torobo Self and community Other the primary relational consequence in discussion of African Traditional Religion in the Torobo context of peaceful community relationships.

A wholesome Self only comes through relationship with community Other. In fact, this relationship is a moral imperative and not viewed as voluntary. The personality (*olkuak*) component of Self is perceived as destiny, and one's destiny as a Torobo is to assume the role and duties of a community member. The relationship between Self and community Other recognizes self-in-community as the prime directive in individual experience. Community Other works towards a relationship with Self that restricts or curves individual desire in submission to the authority and expectations of community. Self autonomy is not lost but cooperation and the need for cooperation to achieve self fulfillment is emphasized by one's personality component.

Strategic to Torobo interdependence with community is a greater awareness of members in the sense that all behavior is expected to conform to the social norm. Markus and Kitayama (1994) have coined the term intersubjectivity to describe this interconnectedness between Self and one's community in-group. Torobo view community Other as those on the same plane following the same course of life. Self sees community Other as a horizontal distribution of equals each supporting the other.

The relationship between Self and community Other is founded upon the common interest and identity of Torobo-ness. It is believed there is a general Torobo character (*empukunoto*) each individual inherits from the social environment, described as: (a) attitude of avoiding conflict, (b) attitude of respecting elders by accepting discipline and advice, (c) attitude of community support and cooperation,

and (d) attitude of individual responsibility of social role.¹ It is easier to reject or deny character (*empukunoto*) than personality (*olkuak*), since personality really cannot be denied. A person is Torobo and remains so despite the desire to change. But character can be altered and does change to imitate environmental cues, personal desires, and emotional influences; hence the cultural emphasis on conforming oneself to proper social relations.

Character and personality depict Torobo-ness as the willingness to extend mutual help for whatever reason and cooperate in effort for the good of the whole. The social relations one shares with kin and community members is a high cultural value. A Torobo individual is emotionally attached to community Other, external control is high, and personal values tend to be social. The closeness of Self to the community in-group is reflected in life meaning given by personality and the social pressure levied on behavior. Personality and character elements supply the necessary relational provision Self must have to relate to community Other thus ensuring a meaningful life.

The relationship of Self with community Other begins with social acceptance conceived in explicit terms of behavior. The desirability of social acceptance is very high and has two relational values: (a) harmony in interpersonal relations, and (b) sensitivity to the social courtesies of hospitality and reciprocity. Key terms in the relationship between Self and community are defined in collectivist terms such as harmony, unity, peace, friendship, hospitality, respect, and sociability.

The social world Self occupies with community Other is a world regulated by harmony and unity, both features of *olkuak* (personality) and *empukunoto* (character). Harmony here refers to the notion of *aning*. The word for 'hear' is *aning* and is the same word used for 'emotion.' *Aning* is also translated 'feel,' 'perceive,' 'hear,' or 'obey.' Community Other are persons to be heard and responded to as a voice, not merely to be noticed as a passing presence. Relations are held together by a harmony of sounds, in other words a blending with others by obedient conduct. To coin a phrase used by Ong, Self perceives community Other in terms of "world-as-presence" (1969:646). Each Torobo person is enveloped by community in immediacy of being and relevance for life. In this way, community Other is to be the guide and supporter of Self.

Harmony is derived from the Torobo concept of unity. Relations with community Other give Self a sense of belonging and generate deep rooted loyalty to one's community in-group. Solidarity and camaraderie are coupled with a protective and sympathetic attitude toward community. A Torobo must exhibit loyalty to other community members and accept a measure of responsibility for their welfare. A proverb advises, "Be as familiar with your surroundings as you are with your home," meaning one should develop friendship with neighbors as extended kinsmen. Thus a feeling of unity binds Self with community Other psychologically in shared interests and activities. Harmony and unity are synonymous with love and togetherness.

The feeling of togetherness in the life experience comes across in sayings such as: "Love one another's noses," "Have a sweet smell," *Matoningoto!* or "Let us hear!" meaning, "Let us agree!" A blessing spoken by an elder over someone traveling begins with, "O God, may [this person] have a sweet fragrance!...Return home sweet smelling" (see Appendix A).² A general blessing given for family

prosperity speaks to the intertwining relationship between the family homestead and community: “O God, may this community have a sweet fragrance! Live long! Live long! Be victorious over life! Be a wise community of elders!” (see Appendix B).³ In this prayer, family is synonymous with community and all members of both are compelled to live together in love. The phrase “sweet fragrance” is used in both blessings referring in figurative language to love encompassing the community with peace.

These phrases are commonly spoken at community ceremonies and figure significantly in the value of ceremonies. One informant explained the most important reason for ceremonies or rituals is to bring the community together. The most valued statement an elder speaks at all ceremonies involves love, respect, and unity. All are values attributed to personality and character and deemed virtues.⁴

The fabric of village relationships is sewn together by two compelling social courtesies, hospitality and reciprocity. In actuality, hospitality is a form of reciprocity. Generous hospitality is generally reciprocated and smiled upon by community Other. The mechanics of hospitality and reciprocity are represented in the way Torobo refer to the legs, “Two legs represent unity because they work together and share all things together.”⁵ Hospitality encourages solidarity of relationships between Self and community Other, and reciprocity ensures the means necessary for defending interests through cooperative efforts.

The more relationships one enters into, the more benefits become available. Reciprocity in Torobo relationships is defined in terms of friendliness, hospitality, or an extraordinary service, each of which may or may not be solicited yet demand some type of return. The return given need not be equal in value or time; and giving is rarely, if ever, anonymous. Part of the significance of giving is in the action as a witnessed event. The question being, “How can others reciprocate without knowing to whom they are indebted?”

Hospitality carries ideas of personalization. Pascasio (1981) contends that personalization (recognizing the person as such in relationship) conforms to cultural norms and concept of Self, and this is certainly true for Torobo. Personal treatment is a significant part of personality manifested in overt behavior. Social hospitality is a strategic action in relationship between Self and community Other. Torobo pursue these social relations under conditions that maximize incurring social obligation.

One illustration is the custom of offering *chai*, a concoction of tea, milk and sugar, to passing tribesmen. Food is essential for the maintenance of life; therefore, if one provides this essential commodity, they will have established a positive relationship with the receiver. In this regard, it is an essential step toward friendship and closeness. The proverb, “Friendship comes from the stomach,” is indicative of this belief. The word ‘friendship’ is *osotuaa* and is translated ‘love,’ ‘the one of close relationship,’ ‘peace,’ and ‘umbilical cord.’ It also has the meaning of ‘a gift out of friendship.’ Hospitality is a validation of the worth of the guest and reconfirms the commitment of the host to the relationship.

The role of any community member forbids refusal of a request by another community member in order to maintain smooth interpersonal relations. To do so would be to sever relations with the requesting neighbor and this is intolerable in community affairs. It is viewed as a breach of community harmony and thus

weakens community solidarity, i.e., threatens survival. Failure to reciprocate places a certain amount of shame on the individual but more importantly, the person is perceived as selfish and condemns himself in the eyes of *Enkai* (Creator God) and community Other. Torobo use shame more in the sense of moral propriety than social which gives conformity to community norms greater emphasis. Failure to live up to social standards is a breach with that which *Enkai* has ordained.

Consequences for unsociable and inhospitable behavior are manifested in varying ways. For instance, a head first birth is normal, a feet first delivery is abnormal. There must be a broken taboo or cultural sin in the family to cause a feet first delivery. Examples include failure to care for elders, ignoring the needy, hoarding resources - all of which upset the balance of peaceful community relationships. The baby is then expected to have abnormalities after such a feet first birth (fainting, early death, bad spirit). People treat the baby differently as if it was cursed. However, a celebration called *Emasho e inoto e nkerai* is always given after the birth of any child. If a feet first child turns out to be a good person, it is thought the birth celebration washed whatever impurity away through the blessings and prayers spoken.

The interdependent relationship reflected in Torobo conduct, norms, scripts for social interaction, events, and linguistic conventions have been shown to ensure a self-in-community relationship forms between Self and community Other. Community Other serves as the supreme object of importance to Torobo and in doing so functions in Burnett's (1979) understanding as religion. Self relates to community Other by submitting to Torobo way of life which pervades all of life and greatly influences behavior. Behavior is dependent on whether the interaction is with a Torobo (community member) or earthly Other (out-group). Who the Other is must be identified before personality dictates the terms of the relationship. Torobo believe their personality element intentionally discriminates between these two types of relationships by divine design.

The personality and character elements of a person bring an individual into a dynamic relationship with community Other and supernatural Other. The relationship of Self to society directly affects the relationship between Self and supernatural Other. A Torobo actively participates in the general condition of his community. If the relationship has been strained for some reason, Self expects the relationship with supernatural Other will become disturbed as a result. The moral rules of life are bound up in keeping harmony in the relationship Self shares with community Other.

Torobo Manner of Conflict Resolution

The bond of unity and display of friendship at social events define a meaningful existence for Self. Events of community ritual are not numerous among Torobo, however they are valued for the in-group solidarity each promote. And in-group solidarity contributes to greater conformity of Self to community expectations. The sacrifice of olive leaves is one community ritual performed two or three times a year to prevent or resolve challenges between community members (see Appendix C). The purpose is to invoke peace and prosperity from Creator God, *Enkai* by committing to or restoring community harmony. Women gather fresh olive leaves and vine leaves from the forest to be used by the men to make a fire in the middle of

a sheep/cattle pen or where there are many beehives. As the leaves are burned and smoke rises, chosen elders pray a ritual blessing over the community for continued peace, love, and prosperity (see Table 1).

Table 1: Text of Torobo Prayer: Sacrifice of Olive Leaves.

Torobo Prayer	
<p><u>Section One:</u> Given by first elder.</p>	<p>May the community be blessed with a sweet fragrance of the olive tree and sweet as honey in the Morintat Forest. O God, I pray you will give us life, cattle, people and children. O God, I pray to my earthly God [surroundings/concerns] and true God who cannot be seen. O God, give us all things. Give us good things and keep away bad things. Prevent any problem from us and protect us from wild animals both day and night. Grant me children, cattle, wives and all good things. Remember our nation and make it [big and strong] like Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro. O God, I pray you will hold us in your hand. Hide us where evil cannot find us in the heavens with the stars. God who sends rain, we pray you give us all good things.</p>
<p><u>Section Two:</u> Given by second elder.</p>	<p>Grant us herds of cattle [so great in number] that the birds cannot fly over without resting. Give us so much food that wild animals and even birds cannot finish eating it. O God, we pray you give us children, wives, cattle and all good things. Let us live in peace with all peoples.</p>

The prayer given at the sacrifice of olive leaves begins by speaking of the community being blessed “with the sweet fragrance of the olive tree and sweet as honey in the Morintat Forest.”⁶ The olive tree symbolizes that which is holy, and honey represents purity. These are attributes of relational harmony. Prosperity will only visit the community if this harmony, practiced through loving actions, is present between community members. There is no greater consequence of a community at peace than the blessing of children and cattle.

Relational harmony is a facility for avoiding outward signs of conflict. This does not preclude open disagreement that moves toward resolution but does exclude any physical violence or outward sign of rage. Harmony denotes being agreeable in difficult situations and connotes the smile, friendly lift of the eyebrow, hand shaking, head patting, a word of concern or interest in each other, etc. It is personality overtly manifested as a social duty. An elder who has an extended earlobe untorn is respected as someone who able to control his emotions and allow his good *olkuak* (personality) to guide his behavior. Earlobes are frequently targeted in a fight so as to damage the honor of those in dispute.

Disruption of harmonious relationships require the mediation of elders or the village *loibon* (diviner). The use of mediators is utilized to avoid possible conflict or remedy an existing problem. Prayers for forgiveness and restoration do not

admonish either party directly. Statements tend to rebuke and state fact and reconciliation all at once. Supplication integrates community Other into the actions and consequences of Self (ves), hence the affect of Self action always includes community Other. Of foremost importance is restoring social harmony and preserving group affiliation for offending members.

Elders or the village *loibon* (diviner) offer a blessing for reconciliation after a dispute has been resolved. The emphasis being on outward signs of love and acceptance of others by “fighting for your age-mates” and living in harmony and unity through this love. The attitude is that once said, it is then law and relationships have returned to a peaceful, natural state.

The personality of a person functions as their conscience and presses an individual to seek resolution and restore proper community relations. The person yields to social pressure because his conscience/personality has been leaned upon in such a way as to cause shame and guilt. This comes from the knowledge elders remind offending parties that one’s actions affect not just Self but the in-group as well. Love is found in the actions of community relationships that are without conflict. Community members must live in unity and harmony, if they do not calamities such as famine, sickness, and drought will come from Creator *Enkai* to cause repentance. Prosperity will only visit the community if this love of close friendship is practiced between community members. The consequence of sharing good fortune with community Other insures against the withdrawal of favor by the divine power dispensing it.

Concluding Remarks

Torobo tend to describe evil, wickedness and sin in terms of behavior which conflicts with the interests of community and traditions. Prater argues African Traditional Religion (ATR) makes ethics of African communities “effectively wedded to the pursuit of peace, prosperity, and, most especially, the solidarity of society” (2005:202). This is true of Torobo society. Sin for Torobo as with other followers of ATR invariably relates to community. Personal sin is in reference and determined by the most significant Other in their lives - that being community. Sin is defined as rebellion against community. It is anti-social, that which disrupts the tranquility of the social context, and requires social restoration.

Torobo understanding of African Traditional Religion constructs a horizontal plane of most significant relationships in which a person is self-in-community. Upsetting the social reality of these strategic bonds results in alienation from one’s ethnic group. The Torobo conscience is a social product judging and prompting Self according to customary law. The Torobo individual looks to community for life meaning and the defining features of morality for ethical conduct. African Traditional Religion among Torobo teaches to pursue that which benefits the community.

Torobo view morality as avoiding undesirable social consequences and community sanctions. The Torobo social need to regulate individual conduct for social harmony fashions a moral system for social relationships, and it is these which constitute the basis of Creator *Enkai*’s judgment, not divine pronouncements or revelation. The Creator by divine function in Torobo practice of African Traditional Religion concerns himself with the moral life of man without specifically itemizing a

divinely sanctioned code. The social standard of morality are socio-cultural expectations that Torobo believe are used by Creator *Enkai* to judge appropriate behavior. The process of restoring social relationships is of utmost importance and requires the community redeem a person back into harmonious social relations.

Biographical Note

Shelley Ashdown is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas, USA. Research areas of interest reference world view, African studies, missiology, and biblical Hebrew.

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Appendix A

Blessing and Prayer: Travel Safety

Date recorded: 9/18/97

By: Impaayo Ngayami, male, age 70

Naai! Torropilo! Olakaishuro! Topua! Shomo ang erropil!

O God./Be sweet of smell!/Be a winner!/Live!/Go/home/sweet of smell!

O God, may [this person] have a sweet fragrance! Be successful! Live long!

Tunguai ene erropil! Turrunya!

Leave/here/sweet smelling/bear./ To bear/

Return home sweet smelling. May you bear children!

Mikitapashare ilmeita! Nchuro! Tubula! Tobiko nchu! Tobiko nchu!

Avoid/natural disasters!/Win!/Increase!/Remain/remain!

May you avoid natural disasters! Be successful! Increase your family! Live long!

Mikitapasha olmeitai! O nkeru inono pooki.

Stay away from/natural disasters/children/your/all.

May you avoid natural disasters! May this be so for all your children.

Appendix B

Blessing and Prayer: Family Prosperity

Date recorded: 9/18/97

By: Impaayo Ngayami, male, age 70

Naai. Torropilo! Topua! Tobiko nchu!

O God./Be sweet of smell!/Live/last or remain!

O God, may this community have a sweet fragrance! Live long!

Inchuro! Taa oiparari.

Live!/Win or victorious!/Be asked!

Live long! Be victorious over life! Be a wise community of elders.

Appendix C

Prayer: Given at Sacrifice of Olive Leaves

Date recorded: 8/16/97

By: Ikayo Lolokula, male, age 50

Section One: Given by first elder.

Metoropilo metaa inaishi naishi metaa oloinea ole morintat.

Sweet fragrance/be/honey/honey/be/olive/of/Morintat [forest].

May the community be blessed with a sweet fragrance of the olive tree and sweet as honey in the Morintat Forest.

Nai aatoomono Pasinai nchoo iyiook enkishon, nchoo iyiook inkishu, nchoo iyiook iltungana, nchoo iyiook inkera.

God/I pray/O/God/give/us/life/give/us/cattle/give/us/people/give/us/children.

O God, I pray you will give us life, cattle, people and children.

Pasinai atoomono Enkai ai naishu wena sipa naishu Enkai ina atomono

O/God/I pray/God/my/hairy/and/bald/God/world/of this/pray

O God, I pray to my earthly God [surroundings/concerns] and true God who cannot be seen.

Pasinai nchoo iyiook pooki toki. Nchoo iyiook isidain torishe iyiook intorrok.

O/God/give/us/all/things. /Give/us/good things/prevent/us/bad things.

O God, give us all things. Give us good things and keep away bad things.

Torishe iyiook enyamali torishe iyiook ilowuarak le kewarie ole dama.

Prevent/us/problem/prevent/us/wild animals/of/night/and/day.

Prevent any problem from us and protect us from wild animals both day and night.

Inchooki nkera nikicho inkishu nikicho ntononok nikicho pooki toki.

Give me/children/give me/cattle/give me/wives/give me/all/things.

Grant me children, cattle, wives and all good things.

Tadamu olosho lang intaba anaa oldoinyo Keri intaba iyiook anaa oldonyio Oibor

Remember/nation/our/make/like/mountain/Kenya/make/us/like/mountain/Kilimanjaro.

Remember our nation and make it [big and strong] like Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Aatomono Pasinai atoomono mbunga iyiook openy.

I pray/O/God/I pray/hold in the hand/us/alone.

O God, I pray you will hold us in your hand.

Tipika iyiook enkilata enanka narok tipika iyiook enipik ilakir dama.

Hide/us [where evil cannot find] / inside/cloth/black/hide/us/where/stars/daytime.

Hide us where evil cannot find us in the heavens with the stars.

Kitoomono iyie nonkipa ai kitoomono iyie nchoo iyiook pooki toki.
We pray/you/white birthing substance/my/we pray/you/give/us/all/things.
God who sends rain, we pray you give us all good things.

Section Two: Given by second elder.

Nchoo iyiook nkishu nchoo iyiook imbarbali nemelang ilmo-tonyi eirag.
Give/us/cattle/give/us/herds/pass over/birds/resting.
Grant us herds of cattle [so great in number] that the birds cannot fly over without resting.

Nchoo iyiook imemut owurak nememut motonyi.
Give/us/can finish/wild animals/can finish/birds
Give us so much food that wild animals and even birds cannot finish eating it.

Kitomono iyie pa Sinai nchoo iyiook inkera nicho ntomonok nicho inkishu nicho pooki toki.
We pray/you O/God/give/us/children/give/wives/give/cattle/give/all/things.
O God, we pray you give us children, wives, cattle and all good things.

Intonyorra iyiook olosho.
Make love/us/nation-tribe-people group.
Let us live in peace with all peoples.

The *Passionsspiele Oberammergau*: Efforts to Reform Anti-Semitic Elements in the World's most Famous Religious Melodrama

Todd Jay Leonard
Fukuoka University of Education, Japan

Abstract

The *Passionsspiele Oberammergau* has been performed (with few interruptions) since 1634 as a talisman against a plague which was wiping out entire communities in the Tyrol region and Bavarian Alps in what is now Austria and Germany. As payment to God for sparing their village from any further death from the plague, the villagers of the small hamlet of Oberammergau have performed this religious melodrama for 376 years. Since its inception, and much like other Passion Plays during the time, the Oberammergau rendition of the passion of Jesus contained very prominent, if not overtly, anti-Semitic overtones through the dialogue and costuming choices which seemed to place squarely the blame on all Jews for the death and crucifixion of Jesus. Efforts to reform these anti-Jewish elements were largely unsuccessful throughout the many decades after World War II until a young scriptwriter, Otto Huber, and young director, Christian Stückl, finally were able to garner enough support from newly appointed “reformists” on the Oberammergau Town Council to override decisions by the “traditionalists” who had ruled the council with an iron hand for decades. This paper, with detailed notes and appendices, summarizes the efforts by Otto Huber and Christian Stückl to reform the Oberammergau Passion Play through a personal interview with Otto Huber conducted on June 9, 2010 during the forty-first season of the world's oldest religious melodrama.¹

Introduction

The *Passionsspiele Oberammergau* is unique among “Passion Plays”² because of its long history. Since 1634, with few exceptions, it has been performed once every ten years (as well as on significant anniversary dates) fulfilling a promise to God made by the town's elders in 1633. There were many Passion Plays being performed before and around the time the Oberammergau Passion Play first started, but none have continued for as long as it has. The year 2010 marks the forty-first season since the occasion of the first Passion Play some 376 years ago.

“Passion Plays” that depict the last three days of Jesus' life were quite common during the Middle Ages.³ Many villages and towns around the annual Easter holiday

¹ An abbreviated version of this paper was published in the journal *Bulletin of Fukuoka University of Education—Part I. Language and Culture*; Vol. 60 (2011); Munakata, Fukuoka: Fukuoka University of Education Press, February 2011.

² The term “passion” in English has at least two meanings: 1) emotion; and 2) suffering. Passion Plays historically encompass both of these meanings.

³ Popular early on in the history of Christianity, especially within the Catholic tradition, the majority of Passion Plays developed in the Tyrol region of what is now Austria. The “Passion of Christ” depicts the period from Good Friday through the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, portraying his

(Mork, 2010) would perform these theatrical productions as a way to remind people to be pious and to retell the story of how Jesus met his final demise at the hands of the Romans.⁴ It was widely believed in early Christianity that in order to prove one's religious devotion and pietistic reverence to the Creator, some type of outward demonstration of faith was needed. Also, Passion Plays served to remind people of the story of the Passion, with many communities regularly performing the Passion of Christ during Lent (the forty days leading up to the Easter holiday). This signifies the period of time that Jesus spent in the desert, enduring constant temptation by Satan, before beginning his public ministry.

Historically, Passion Plays often had a polarizing message that pitted the “wicked Jews” against the “suffering Christians.” (Mork, 153) After all, it was commonly believed that the Jews killed Christ, and thus, forever they should be reviled for this.⁵ Of course today, this archaic attitude seems illogical, if not silly, because an entire people cannot be blamed for the actions of a few zealots from over two millennia ago. Besides, Jesus of Nazareth was a practicing Jew at the time of his death; all of his Disciples and followers were Jewish, including his family—parents, Mary and Joseph, and his siblings.

The movement which became the religion of Christianity, and the idea of Christians as followers of the movement, did not occur until much later. Sadly, however, it remains today that certain negative stereotypes do persist and unfortunately discriminatory attitudes are perpetuated which have their roots in the early condemnation of the Jewish people dating back to the time when Jesus lived.

Passion Plays, then, also traditionally served to emphasize the culpability of the Jews, albeit erroneously but surreptitiously, by fostering a belief that Jews are to blame for Jesus' death. Further exasperating the situation, Passion Plays routinely depicted Jews as sinister and evil in the majority of Passion Plays performed throughout Christianity's tumultuous history. The Oberammergau Passion Play was no different. From its inception in the 17th century, until modern times, a number of aspects of the Oberammergau Passion Play followed the traditional belief that the evil Jews were responsible for Jesus' death and it was the religious responsibility of the virtuous Christians to reinforce this message through these melodramas.

This blatant anti-Semitism continued within the Oberammergau Passion Play until well after World War II. This anti-Semitism with regards to certain aspects of the play persisted in less obvious forms until the 1990 season when a group of “reformists” within the Oberammergau Town Council (the entity in charge of monitoring and promoting the play) finally outnumbered the “traditionalists,” hence

entrance into Jerusalem; his trial at the hands of the Romans; his suffering and crucifixion; and finally his resurrection.

⁴ After Jesus was accused by Jewish priests who were threatened by his sudden popularity among the masses, they demanded that he be arrested and tried in a Roman court. He was attracting quite a following (some believed he was the Messiah), which caused the Jewish priests to become alarmed, worrying about their own place in society and in maintaining religious control over the masses.

⁵ For a detailed commentary on the history of the *Oberammergau Passion Play*, and the anti-Semitic elements contained within the play's dialogue and costuming, see Appendix 1 (an interview with *Oberammergau Passion Play* scholar and researcher, Dr. Gordon Mork of Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana).

being able to truly reform and affect sweeping changes to the script and costuming which traditionally cast Jews disparagingly.

Leading the reformists was a very unassuming, but passionate individual named Otto Huber. His tireless work and desire to make the Oberammergau Passion Play as historically correct as possible, while taking into account the scriptures from which it is based, is a feat that has given him adoration from supporters and scorn from critics and detractors. This paper consists of an interview with Otto Huber, a man with whom I had the rare and most fortuitous opportunity to spend the larger part of a June morning during the 2010 season. During our discussion, he related his role in reforming the play, revising the script and the difficulty he had with making changes in the face of much opposition by traditional forces within the village council.

Historical Background

After neighboring villages and hamlets located in the Bavarian Alps had been decimated by a plague⁶ that was sweeping the entire geographical area, the town elders of the small village of Oberammergau met to make a heartfelt plea to God to spare their village further from the wrath of death that had touched so many.

In the year 1633 the villagers of Oberammergau, in the Bavarian Alps, were peacefully hoping to avoid the ravages of the Thirty Years' War, which was tormenting their country. As if the murderous bands of soldiers were not bad enough, the war brought with it an outbreak of the plague. No one knew at the time exactly how the plague was spread, but it was clear to everyone that once the epidemic entered a village it would create a painful death for a large proportion of the population within a few days. (Mork, 153)

The town elders decided to meet and ask God to spare their little village further from this hideous disease. In exchange, the elders promised to perform a Passion Play every ten years for an eternity. God listened as no other person died of the plague. The townspeople made good on their promise to God and in 1634 performed the first Oberammergau Passion Play.

Over the years, the play's schedule was adjusted so that (except in times of crisis) the play was performed on zero-numbered years, and instead of merely being a production for the home town folk, it became an international attraction which was of major economic significance to the village and surrounding area. But to be a part of the production and the performance, one still had to be from the village. No one is exactly sure what text was used for the play in 1634, but we do know that several different texts were used over the next 150 years, and fragments of full editions of them have been

⁶ It is not certain which plague was responsible for all the deaths around this time period in the area. Likely, rather than the "Bubonic Plague" (or "Black Death") it was the "Pneumonic Plague" that was spreading so rapidly. (Leonard, 2)

preserved in local archives. During the early nineteenth century the play was established more or less in its current form by two local priests, father Weis and Father Daisenberger, and the music to accompany it was composed by the village schoolmaster, Rochus Dedler. In the twentieth century it was performed in 1900, 1910, and was planned for 1920. The problems surrounding the First World War and the overthrow of Imperial Germany caused the rescheduling of the 1920 play to 1922. A regular performance followed in 1930 and a special 300th anniversary production took place in 1934, one year after Hitler took power. The 1940 production was in the planning stage when World War II began, and it was cancelled. Productions resumed after World War II in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1984 (the 350th anniversary), and 1990. (Mork, 154)

The 2000 production incorporated many changes which dealt with the issue of anti-Semitism. The “blood Curse” from Mathew 25 was completely removed, a menorah was placed upon the table during the Passover Seder, and Jesus was referred to as Rabbi numerous times which emphasized his stature within the Jewish community and made clear his “Jewishness.” The 2010 production continued to promote the previous reforms and changed the order of the play to demonstrate more concretely the “hope” that Jesus was bringing to the people by emphasizing the oppression of being occupied by the Romans.

Otto Huber Interview

[Author’s Note: The following is a partial transcript and summary (with detailed notes) of an interview conducted with Otto Huber on June 9, 2010 at his home in Oberammergau, Germany. The text is largely in its original form with minor corrections to grammar in order for it to read more fluidly.]

TJL: Having grown up in Oberammergau, how has the Passion Play been a part of your life—first as a child and now as an adult?

When I was 3-years-old... I have a picture which was in the book by Jim Shapiro.⁷ At that time, I went to the Passion Play Theater; my grandfather was a good actor and was a well respected person. And so, when I was 13-years old, it was fun.⁸ My grandfather died in 1960. And that was a little bit of an experience [to realize] how much he was involved in the Passion Play.

Otto Huber has had a lifelong connection to the “Passion Play.” Having been born and raised in Oberammergau, it has been an integral part of his and his family’s

⁷ Mr. Huber is referring to the book *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World’s Most Famous Passion Play* by James Shapiro (Pantheon Books: NY, 2000). A photograph depicting a young Otto Huber alongside his grandfather, Hugo Rutz (as Peter), is found on page 53. [See Figure 1.]

⁸ “As a thirteen-year-old he had appeared in a few of the play’s celebrated tableaux vivants—scenes in which the curtain is raised to reveal the actors standing frozen, as if in a painting.” (Shapiro, 18)

lives for generations. In fact, one very important rule that is strictly adhered to is that the play be performed and done by only those who were born in Oberammergau or who have resided there for at least 20 years. Perhaps this, in part, is what makes the Oberammergau Passion Play so unique and special—it takes a village, literally, to create and produce a production of this magnitude.

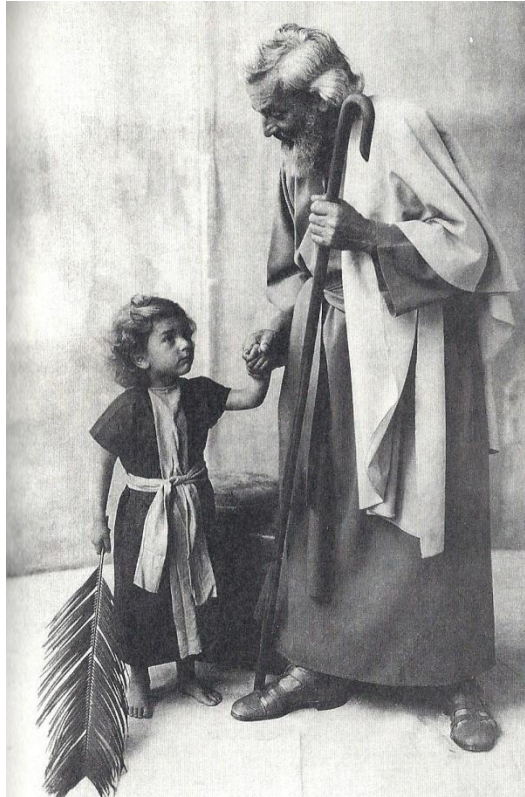


Figure 1

“Hugo Rutz (as Peter) and his grandson, Otto Huber, 1950.” (Shapiro, 53).

Many villagers who have smaller roles in the play leave their “day” jobs at variously appointed times during the play’s performance to bustle through the medieval streets of Oberammergau in order to be on stage at the right moment for their particular parts; immediately upon finishing their roles, they rush back to their jobs to resume the work that is their livelihood.

Mr. Huber runs a small hotel to house pilgrims not only during the performance years, but as a part of his livelihood. Like his fellow villagers, the Passion Play is an entity in itself that has become so intertwined in the lives of the village that between performance years, much work and preparation occurs to ensure its success every ten years. Even though his association with the play began when he was but a small child, his real work started when he was approached by some who felt the play needed updating and modernizing when he was a young adult.

Around 1960, this was of course around the time of Vatican II,⁹ and so everyone said “this is an old play of the 19th century, and it doesn’t correspond to the modern approach of the story, so you should get a completely new version of the story.” There were 100% traditionalists [on the town council] who said we should not change one iota.¹⁰

And then after a certain time, there was an important German composer, Mr. Carl Orff,¹¹ and he knew that in 1750 there was maybe the most outstanding literary version of the Oberammergau Passion Play; it was written by Rosner¹² and this thing had [nearly] 9,000 verses—and Rosner, by the way, brought in the “living tableaux’s”¹³—he didn’t call them living tableaux, he called them “meditations” because he wanted to have a balance of drama, meditation, drama, meditation, and so on.¹⁴

The tableaux vivants used in modern performances and renditions of the play date back to Father Rosner’s concept of allowing a short, meditative break to occur during the performance. In the 2000 version of the Passion Play, as well as in the 2010 season, the tableaux vivants play an important role in offering biblical background to the Gospels on which the play is based. For example, in the 2010 Passion Play, the first tableaux vivant depicts “Paradise Lost” where Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden by God (*Passionsspiele Oberammergau*

⁹ *The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican*, better known as “Vatican II,” convened between the years 1962 and 1965 to debate a number of issues facing the modern Catholic Church. Of particular interest to the Oberammergau Passion Play, the Vatican II categorically declared that the entire world’s Jewry—past, present, and future—are not responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. [See Appendix 2 for the actual text from the decree of Vatican II.]

¹⁰ Throughout the interview, Mr. Huber repeatedly voiced his frustration with the process he had to go through in order to revise and change the play. Of course, he would not have an opportunity to do so until the 1990 performance season, when “reformers” finally outnumbered the “traditionalists.” A few minor reforms were made, but not until the 2000 season did the more substantial reforms occur.

¹¹ Even though the old text remained for the 1970 play season, nonetheless attempts to reform the play took on a new life (even though, in the end, the efforts made came to nothing). Among these early reformers was Mr. Carl Orff, along with A.J. Lippl, A.M. Miller, S. Schaller, and R. Raffalt. Between the years 1969-1989, a push to eliminate anti-Semitic elements within the play was actively pursued by a growing reformist camp from within the village. (“Chronology of the Passion Play 2000,” *Passionsspiele Oberammergau 2000*, Press Kit.)

¹² A Benedictine monk from the Ettal monastery, nearby to Oberammergau, Ferdinand Rosner set out in 1750 to make the most comprehensive rewriting of the play in nearly a century. (Shapiro, 61)

¹³ “Rosner’s greatest innovation was his masterly use of versification, including the introduction of alexandrines for the choruses. While he kept to the sequence and plot line of the old play, his use of music and his systemization of the tableaux vivants into regular prefiguration scenes—six sets of three tableaux in succession—utterly transformed the flow and rhythm of the play.” (Shapiro, 61)

¹⁴ Otto Huber commented, “And the 9,000 verses—if you look at a Shakespeare play it mostly has around 5,000 verses, so they needed two days for the performance. And so, the problem was that Mr. Orff was a really good composer, and a man of theater, and he said to the people of Oberammergau ‘maybe you should try instead of the 19th century version, the 18th century version is more powerful.’” (Personal interview, 2010)

2010, 9) and the second tableaux vivant, “Moses leads the Israelites through the Red Sea” (*Passionsspiele Oberammergau* 2010, 19), offers attendees an opportunity to comprehend visually these biblical episodes in order to gain an understanding of the alleged events that occurred throughout the Old Testament that have a historical connection to the final Passion of Christ.

*I became in 1962, a scout, or a Catholic Youth, and after some time, I became a leader of the group, and then a leader in the Oberammergau parish troop. And then suddenly the young priest who was responsible for the youth had to go away to Munich, and he gave me something like a “heritage,” he said, “Otto, you have a clear mind, clear brain, you know...you must renew the whole thing by going back to the meaning of the whole thing. Try to bring it forward.”¹⁵ That’s what I did, again and again, but it wasn’t so easy back in 1970. I did a little bit of criticism, in a way which was quite clever what I said. The leader of *Passionsspiele* back in 1970 was an old Nazi [Anton Preisinger]. He didn’t understand what I said and threw me out of the play and this was typical for the 1970s.¹⁶*

This episode with the director, Anton Preisinger, only fortified Otto Huber’s desire to change the script of the play. After locating an old Passion Play script from 1740—which included the music and meditations used at the time—Huber began to embark upon some self-training in how to rewrite and adapt text from the script. This endeavor was met with a certain level of success which encouraged him to dig deeper into not only the history of the Passion Play, but into the theological questions which surrounded the play.

Then in the 80s, there was a real earthquake in the city council, a complete change of generations and suddenly there was a young generation there, and some of them came out of the Catholic Youth from when I was a leader there. So they still had confidence in me, and they called me and they called me... “Otto, can you come back to Oberammergau to continue the whole thing.”

In the meantime, there was a committee [to initiate] a dialogue [to deal] with the anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish issues.¹⁷ ...The playwright

¹⁵ The young parish priest whom Otto Huber refers to here was Father Hamburger.

¹⁶ As Shapiro points out in his book, there was “no love lost between Preisinger and Huber.” (p. 19) To illustrate the conservatism surrounding the play by the traditionalists, Otto Huber related a story regarding Christian Stückl’s grandfather who was denied the part of Jesus back in the 1960 version because he was married, at the time, to a Protestant—a non-Catholic. The part went to Preisinger, the ex-Nazi that Otto Huber refers to in the above text. [See Shapiro, 18-19]

¹⁷ Frustrated with a lack of willingness by the villagers of Oberammergau to remove anti-Semitic elements from the play after the Vatican II ruling in 1965, American Jewish organizations called upon attendees to boycott the play in 1970 which helped to bring the issue of anti-Semitism embedded within the text of the play to the forefront, forcing the Oberammergau elders to address the issue.

of 1980 and 1984¹⁸ was Mr. Hans Maier, and he was a wood carver but a very simple man. You have to understand in the Protestant tradition, to read the Bible was natural, but in the Catholic tradition, it took until 1942 when the Pope said, “OK, Catholics read the Bible,” because [church leaders] knew how hard [it was to understand] the differences between the four Gospels that were written 2000 years ago. It was a different time and you can’t read it the same way as a gothic novel of the 19th century. I think maybe the Pope had a right at that time to say to Catholics, “I will write the homily or something and don’t read too much of the scriptures.” The people of Oberammergau didn’t have a good understanding of the scriptures. A funny example is when Christian Stückl once went to a neighbor and asked, “Could you please give me a Bible?” And she gave him the Passion Play of Daisenberger.¹⁹

So, in 1984, Mr. Maier was a really friendly man; and a good Catholic; and went to church—but his understanding was that the Passion Play must not be an outstanding art form but it must only be done by pious people...by true believers. Which meant Jesus must not be a good actor but he must be a strong believer. It doesn’t work like this.

At this point in the interview, Mr. Huber’s frustration showed when he talked about the inflexibility of the “traditionalists”: “They always had the idea that we have to keep 100% tradition...and I cannot stand them in many ways. From outside Oberammergau was a place where nothing would change; don’t change your behavior because this is against Oberammergau.” (Personal interview, 2010) The tide began to change, however, as more reformers were elected to the new city council in 1984 (which outnumbered the traditionalists who preferred to keep the play exactly as it was). The council’s reformist faction, though, was somewhat divided between those who were supporters of Christian Stückl and those who were backing Otto Huber. It was amicably resolved when Otto Huber yielded the directing of the play to Christian Stückl:

So, the question was who should be the first Play Director? And maybe I am the softer person, and I thought, “Oh, he was here the whole time and I was away...” so, the most important thing to be a theater director is really to know the people and to know who is able to do what.

¹⁸ The year 1984 marked the 350th anniversary year of the original play’s production. On anniversary years—like 1934 when Hitler attended the play and remarked so positively about its treatment of the Jews—the village will include a special performance.

¹⁹ Joseph Alois Daisenberger (1799–1883, priest in Oberammergau since 1845), made some revisions to the script and directed the Passion Play in 1850. He wanted the play to be understood and enjoyed by the common folk, hence his desire to reform the script.

So, I was a little bit of the specialist for the whole message of the play, as well as, let's say, for the ideology and for the hermeneutic questions. And he was the one who knew the people and [who] could be this and that.

Our tasks included a few changes in 1990 and this was a real challenge; we were quite young—Christian was 27 or 28 and I was 43... so now I am 63, and in 2000 I was 53...so this was a real challenge for two youngsters for the first time and we had so many problems with the city council...

TJL: Does the City Council have to approve everything that is changed in the Play?

They have to approve everything. They have funny things, for example, since 1933 there has to be a special play done about the beginning of the Oberammergau Passion Play. The question is why is it they have made this vow? I think this vow was done as a background of a certain theology. They really thought that every plague was a punishment of God so you can find many tableaux's with the idea of a punishing God. He has to punish humanity down there or punish sinners. And so how do we get rid of the punishment [aspect]?

There is either Mary showing her breast saying "I gave my milk to your son," and so on. And there's another one, Sebastian, "I take all the errors on my breast," as well as other saints, and so on. And then the main contrast, Jesus is kneeling there and he is shown as the Jesus in the Passion. He is portrayed as a representative of humanity. He took on his shoulder all this punishment for humanity. This is a theology which is extremely interesting, but extremely hard to understand somehow for people today...it is not so easy. Sometimes it goes together with the Lutheran idea of justification by faith.

The War of Thirty Years started in 1618, so at the moment it was after 15 years of war... maybe they were a little bit exhausted after 15 years of war. At the same time, this was a very cruel war.

Before the Thirty Years War, there was a population of 17 million in what we now call Germany; after this war, there were 4 million—from 17 back to 4 million. You can find places around Oberammergau where there were formally villages and they died out completely. There is now forest where there was a village before.

So, I can understand them, they were really like, “God we are dying.” So, one approach was maybe that God has forgotten that his son has taken everything on his shoulder and we have to remind him. So, look here God, what this town has done for you.

And there was an idea that it was not to remind God but to somehow repeat it.²⁰

So Christian [Stückl] tried to find a way...using an expression [of art]...how can there be a God if humanity has to suffer? How can there be a God and look at this?²¹ The Oberammergau parish, the council—the parish has its own council—and there were still a few traditionalists, members of the city council, and they could not understand the whole suggestion.

And they said, “This Mr. Stückl is the end of Oberammergau!” It was interesting, we had worked for many things, and we had made changes to avoid anti-Jewish elements...and there was this really wonderful, talented young man [Christian Stückl] in Oberammergau who had done a stage design for several new performances of Dvorak and 19th century Wagner, and so on. And he is a strong man. He was then working in Berlin as an artist and he had done a stage design, and this new stage design had been accepted by the Oberammergau City Council.

Change is often difficult in the best of times, but when considering trying to change an institution with a history and tradition as old the Oberammergau Passion Play, the task to make even the slightest changes in not only the script, but in the set design and directing, was met with vociferous opposition.

Mr. Huber related a story to illustrate the type of nonsensical opposition he and Christian Stückl encountered in trying to reform parts of the Passion Play. A traditionalist, who was an ex-Nazi, was blinded during the war in an exercise to test a soldier's courage. As a young soldier, he was told to hold a live grenade after the pin was pulled for as long as he could before it exploded. Obviously, he held on to it a bit too long and was blinded by the explosion.

²⁰ Mr. Huber continued on discussing this idea of a collective feeling of “Catholic guilt.” He referred to it as a “blood and soil tradition” relating the attitude of Leo Weismantel, a man from outside the village who some town leaders wanted to write a new “blood and soil” play, but his play text was never used. Mr. Weismantel had received an important award for a drama he wrote previously, but according to Mr. Huber, he did not have a good theological background. Weismantel concentrated on the “sinful” aspect of humanity, emphasizing carnal sins of the flesh and reiterating how God was punishing the people for their earthly indiscretions. The message was simple: Stop sinning. (Personal interview, 2010)

²¹ For an eloquent essay written by Christian Stückl and his struggle to find common ground between the art form and the theology of the Gospels in his stage direction of the Passion Play, see *Press Kit Oberammergau 2010*, provided by *Gemeinde Oberammergau*.

This ex-Nazi was a well-respected man around the village with a number of supporters, but he was against the new set design created by the young Christian Stüchl. When pressed as to why he was against the new set design, he replied: “Because I don’t like the color.” The joke being the ex-Nazi was completely blind and could not see colors anyway. Mr. Huber’s point was quite clear: The remaining traditionalists were against anything new because it meant change.

As a reformist, Otto Huber had a difficult task in choosing which changes should be done initially, and which ones could be dealt with in future revisions of the script. With much pressure from American Jewish organizations to omit anti-Semitic language, props, and staging from the 2000 version of the play which had been often times emphasized in traditional versions of the play, he needed to choose his battles carefully and strategically.²²

For example, in the 90s we wanted to get rid of Mathew: 25,²³ the blood curse. We said in the Gospel of Mathew, this blood is so much of a purifying blood; ...the blood of re-consecration...that is too sophisticated [to portray] on the stage that people never will understand it. Also, the reception of this blood sentence over the centuries was so awful that we should just get rid of it.

There were three meetings of the City Council to talk about this. So you can see how hard it was to bring something forward. And at the end of it they had asked the Bishop at the time, and he said, “Oh, this sentence must stay in the Passion Play, but I will write an article about it in the textbook.” But nobody read it... about 6 pages.

So, Christian did the staging, and in the moment when they should have said this sentence, there was so much noise that nobody could hear it. This was the 1990 play. I only told you this story to make you understand how great a challenge it was to create something new against the wishes of the traditionalists and the City Council.²⁴

²² In previous versions of the play, costumes portraying the followers of Jesus and Jews on stage were starkly different—the followers of Jesus wore lighter, friendlier tones with Jewish characters assuming more sinister colors and designs. Also, the headgear of the Jewish priests was horned-miters which seemed to suggest that Jews had horns, making them appear devil-like. These costuming aspects (style of clothing and horned-hats) were used through the 1984 performance year, and beginning in 1990, were changed to more sensitive attire that was less melodramatic in pitting Jews against the Gentiles. Of course, logically, none of the traditional choices for costuming made any sense because at the time of Jesus, they were all Jewish; Christianity was not a movement until well after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. (Leonard, 3-4)

²³ The Gospel According to Mathew, Chapter 27; verse 25: “Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* upon us, and on our children.” (*Holy Bible*, King James Version Mathew 27:25)

²⁴ Finally in the 2000 version and onward, the “blood curse” sentence was completely deleted from the script’s text. It was very clever, though, how the reformists buried the sentence in the clamor and cacophony of a huge crowd scene where it would largely go unnoticed. This is an example of how the reformists introduced changes gradually and in clever ways in order to proceed with their long-term agenda of making more noticeable changes.

Then there came so many changes...after the year 1990. If the traditionalists had been a little bit more clever, more elegant somehow, they could have found another agreement for the question: Can the women of Oberammergau have the same right as the men? In the Catholic Church, only priests, men, are allowed to perform the important roles. They thought the Passion Play would be something similar when Passion Plays started in Europe around 1200. Oberammergau did not invent them.

I haven't looked at the history of those places, but the first time we know of a lady being in a Passion Play was 1530, in southern Tyrol. The men did all the female parts. And in Oberammergau, it was a little shadow of this. So women were only allowed to be in the play until they were 35—and only if they were not married! So often, Jesus was 45 years old and his mother was only 20 years old. This was an unnecessary miracle in my opinion.

The women in 1990 asked for the same rights [as men] and this actually was not so easy...because women have more time to be in the play than men...so we could fill Jerusalem three times with the women of Oberammergau. So then there was the question of did there live men, too?

The traditionalists refused any agreements so they went to the court of Munich, a Bavarian court, and the decision was Oberammergau is public domain, and they have to follow the same rules as for any other public institution.²⁵

At this point, Mr. Huber gives some historical background to the religious leanings of the people who were traditionally from Oberammergau. Until World War II, basically everyone was Roman Catholic. Once the war ended, and many displaced people began to migrate to the village, the population not only doubled in size but was much more diverse in terms of religion and ethnicity.

From this moment, not only the believers—there was a time when there were only Catholics—then there was a change when Protestants could be in the play, too. Especially, Protestant critics about the Passion Play could have a better impression and since, I think, 1970 or so, all those Protestants were in the Play. I have to say that before that there was only one Protestant lady in

²⁵ The courts ruled favorably to allow women to participate equally in the play as men, which also included other minorities and people of different faiths (or no faith) to participate if they fulfilled the residency rule. Previously, only the most pious—true believers—were allowed to act in the play even if they had no ability. Today, potential actors have auditions and the best possible actor is given the part of a particular role.

Oberammergau in 1930. And the Protestants, they came only after the War [WWII].

In Oberammergau, in 1945 to 1946, we had 2000 inhabitants born in Oberammergau—all of them Catholic—and we had 2,500 refugees. So, 100% had to be integrated. There were many Protestants, and so in the 1950s we built a church for the Protestants. But, for example, in Bavaria they wanted to keep the Old Catholic traditions. So for example, when I was a pupil, at school, there were 8 Catholic classes and there was a special Protestant class in Bavaria.

From the 1970s on, Protestants were in the play. In 1990, for the first time, a Protestant [was cast in] a main role as the Prologue. Since this decision, now everybody who is born in Oberammergau or who has lived here for 20 years is allowed to be in the play. Even if you are atheist...there are some Muslims in the play...and so on.

But you can see, in 1990 to 2000 to 2010—the years where I had the responsibility—and in 1990, it was really a great effort to reform; in 2000 we were more clever, and again in 2010, we had more experience in thinking and in doing theater...both, but especially Christian who is a leader of a theater in Munich, had done a lot of Shakespeare and so on. So from 1990 to 2010, changes, changes, changes.

TJL: In comparison to the previous performance in 2000, in what ways has the current 2010 play changed?

Many, many, many. I think that one of the things is when Jesus and the Jews entered Jerusalem,²⁶ a great hymn... “The one who comes in the name of the Lord”...it was not clear why they were singing for him. What were their hopes? [In the previous 2000 version] he got off his donkey and threw the tables in the temple...it was not clear that this was the act of a prophet who says you have to focus on God—take away all the money, all the goats, etc—all that was not the center...God is the center and that was not clear.

You can find in the four gospels, four different versions of the moment when Jesus enters Jerusalem. In John, it is chapter 12; and in Mathew he goes to Jerusalem, and he throws the merchants out of the temple; in Mark he comes to Jerusalem, enters Jerusalem, and then goes away to Bethany or somewhere and

²⁶ See Figure 2. Also, in Figure 3, a menorah is prominently placed on the Passover Seder table which serves to emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus and his Disciples.

comes back again. That's when he throws the merchants from the temple.²⁷



Figure 2

Jesus of Nazareth, coming from Jericho on a pilgrimage for the Passover feast, enters Jerusalem with his disciples. [Permission granted by *Gemeinde Oberammergau* to reproduce this photo by Brigitte Maria Mayer.]

We thought, maybe we should bring the throwing out of the merchants in another act...so we brought it to the third act. And in the first act, we have to make it understandable why there was hope because of Jesus. Or maybe people know less and less about his messages and I think that is a general change in theology...this idea that Jesus took on his shoulder all the punishment of God for humanity. This brings, somehow, an automatic redemption. We are redeemed automatically.

When Jesus came to Israel, he did not say you are redeemed and continue to live...go on, go on, and do the same thing. You have to change your life; you have to change your ideas. You have to change your relationships with your brothers and with God. He was really demanding.

²⁷ Jesus entered Jerusalem on what is now Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter Sunday) and is mentioned by all four Gospels Mark 11:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; and John 12:12-19). (Holy Bible, King James Version)



Figure 3

Jesus of Nazareth, preparing for the Passover feast (Last Supper) with his disciples. Please note the Jewish menorah prominently placed upon the table, an addition from the 2000 performance of the play. [Permission granted by *Gemeinde Oberammergau* to reproduce this photo by Brigitte Maria Mayer.]

Do you know we look at a certain time, for example, Gandhi, when he comes to India and all the British soldiers are around? ... So when you look now at the first scene, there are Roman soldiers around and this is a part of the situation why Israel waited for a Messiah because he should have helped them to get rid of the occupiers.

And there are moments where there are words from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus inspires self-confidence: "You are the light of the world; you are the children of your father in heaven, so you behave like your Father." So, the moment where he shows mercy towards the sinner, for example, the adulteress...that is the first act.

The third act, when he has thrown out the merchants from the temple, the last time in 2000 we looked to show a moment of prayer, and we took a Psalm, there are a number of Psalms, which are about pilgrims entering Jerusalem. We used one of them, but in 2010 we didn't think it was clear enough. So, maybe we should use a prayer, and a prayer which the Jews and the Christians can pray together: "Shema Israel".²⁸

²⁸ "Shema Yisrael (or Sh'ma Yisrael or just Shema) (Hebrew: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל; "Hear, [O] Israel") are the first two words of a section of the Torah (Hebrew Bible) that is a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,' found in Deuteronomy 6:4." (Wikipedia, retrieved December 31, 2010 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shema_Yisrael).

And another thing is, in the dialogue of the olden days, you can always find or see the conflicts of Jesus and the political conflict between Jesus and the Romans. And they don't want to look at the religious conflict.

And so in the four Gospels there are only religious conflicts, until the end and then they said he should be punished by death and then they bring him to Pilate. So Pilate—and the Romans—only appear at the end of the story.

At the beginning of the story, it is the Romans who are making the laws. So, Pilate arrives in the third act. He says to Caiaphas, "You are responsible for law and order in the city and if this young preacher brings chaos to the city then you will lose your job and I will bring my soldiers and you will see what happens." So in the following acts, it can be understood why Caiaphas says, "It is better that one man dies, than that the whole nation suffers."

These are a few of the changes...and some changes really tried to make the historical situation more understandable. And it has consequences for the question of the guilt of the Jews when you can see the Romans and Pilate at the beginning; and it makes it clearer that Jesus is not an enemy of the law, like it is shown in the Letter of Paul, where he is against the law.

It is clear during our conversation that Mr. Huber is quite concerned about the future of the play and how it will be carried on with future generations of Oberammergau villagers. He mentioned that he is heartened by young people in the village who say they can identify with the current version of the play. He very much wants the youth of Oberammergau to be actively involved so they will maintain interest in the story and a desire to continue the tradition into the next millennium. "The young generation must take over the questions and they have to find their solutions; they have to take on the task." (Personal interview, 2010)

Certainly, Otto Huber and Christian Stückl are leaving a huge legacy that will endure for generations to come. Both have fought to reform all aspects of the play, and have made many enemies in the process. Although they have very different personalities, they both believe in what they are doing and that it is for the good of the local and world community. The accurate portrayal of the last days of Jesus' life, based on the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, cannot be altered completely or interpreted correctly without risking losing the theological and spiritual aspects of the play and alienating those who feel offended by some of its depictions. To scores of believing Christians and faithful pilgrims, the Bible is the inerrant word of God and is the only truth. The interpretation of this literary work, however, shall always be debated and revised as humankind evolves.

I am quite proud as I have written many verses for the lyrics for the choir...and all of these words which I have written have inspired the composer to write wonderful music. And I think that Oberammergau is not only a historical drama, it is a mystery play. And I think that many touching moments are in the music. I think some of the most inspiring messages are found in the music. There is a lot of new music and we took away a lot of stupid things regarding Judaism and Judas [to make it more acceptable and less divisive]. And this is kosher...not only kosher but persuasive, somehow.

Christian [Stückl] is much more interested in politics than I am. For me, the high priest talks too much. I would like to get rid of some of these sentences. So that is the difficulty. You know, we have so many people in Oberammergau who would like to be in the play. So it is so nice to bring them to the high council and everybody has one sentence to say. Everyone is proud to be in the play. So it is very difficult to bring everyone in and make it shorter.

Maybe we will gain a more adequate understanding of what happened—not only in a historical way, but in a spiritual way. Sometimes, I said to my Jewish dialogue’s partner, “I will be more interested in a spiritual dialogue than to be in one where the American organizations like ADL²⁹ feel they must act as policemen and we the criminals...and I don’t like [the Play] to be controlled by policemen.

The stupid thing is when there is someone coming only to argue about historical arguments and not accepting anything that is in the Gospels. If somebody comes and says the four Gospels are completely a collection of errors, and you should get rid of them—and some of them really ask us to change completely—so as I have said several times, we went very far [with our revisions], so maybe you should go and see the Pope and ask him to change a few parts...

I think it is so wonderful when I go to Mass in Oberammergau, and the church is completely filled with people coming from all over the world. When you go to Rome they, too, are coming from all over the world, but only the Catholics. In Oberammergau, maybe there are less people than in Rome, but they come from really different religions and backgrounds. So somehow you feel the universal brotherhood of Christians here in Oberammergau. I think this is wonderful.

²⁹ ADL= Anti Defamation League.

Conclusion

As the interview came to a close, we took pictures and exchanged addresses. Mr. Huber had to then prepare to go to the theater to give an English presentation to pilgrims before the afternoon's performance. He alternates between acting in the role of "Prologue" on one day, and assisting the director, Christian Stückl, with organizing the actors backstage to make sure all is in order and in the right place at the correct time.

The next day, as I sat in the huge, open-air theater watching the play for the second time (I attended the 2000 performance, as well), the enormity of what Mr. Huber had accomplished finally became clear. The reforms to the play itself and the revisions to the text of the play were indeed triumphs. It took much courage and determination, strategically, to implement the types of reforms that he was instrumental in doing over a thirty year period.

Although not all view his work as being triumphant, as a number of Jewish organizations would still like to see further and deeper reforms made to the play,³⁰ the question arises as to how much of the historical record according to the Gospels can be altered without risking changing the whole story and purpose of the play? As Otto Huber humorously offered in the interview, perhaps these critics should take their grievances to the Pope. Not much more can be changed as the most basic script of the play available is the Holy Bible.

Regardless of the critics who maintain there is still blatant anti-Semitism present in the current production, it is my opinion—when comparing the script to past historically archived scripts and when considering the conservative atmosphere within the City Council during the time the traditionalists ruled the play with an iron hand—the sensitivity the newest version offers to these important issues which affect and are important to world Jewry are evident in the numerous reforms which have been adopted. I am sure that Mr. Huber would be the first to admit that future reforms to improve upon the changes already made is welcome and inevitable. Interestingly, the reforms have forced Oberammergau to embrace the 21st century by bringing to the forefront a variety of outdated customs and traditions regarding the role of women in the play, the acceptance of non-Catholics and even non-believers to participate in the play.

It will be interesting to see what reforms lay in future performances. As society evolves, and people's attitudes toward social and moral issues change, so will the

³⁰ The *Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations* formed an Ad-Hoc Committee to report on the 2010 Oberammergau Passion Play script. On May 14, 2010 the committee released its findings: "Negative Impressions—The team expressed varying degrees of concern about aspects of the 2010 script in three main categories. (1) Some of the script's interlacing of Old Testament scenes with New Testament ones with 'living images' recalls perennial demeaning depictions of Judaism; especially problematic is the Golden Calf episode from Exodus 32. (2) The Temple priesthood is inaccurately depicted as primarily concerned with "purity of doctrine." Typical debates of the time over Torah observance are thus inaccurately made into capital offenses, resulting in Jesus anachronistically being called 'heretic' and 'apostate.' (3) Caiaphas, the script's principal antagonist, as well as Annas, are unnecessarily and baselessly portrayed as fanatics driven to see Jesus crucified. As a result the depiction of Pilate is somewhat skewed as well. In short, Jewish opponents of Jesus are unjustifiably depicted in such extreme terms as to risk impressing on the audience a negative image of the entire Jewish community. We also noted other negative features in the script." (Boys, p. 1)

Oberammergau Passion Play evolve and change. However, there will have to be people with the same fortitude and determination as Otto Huber and Christian Stückl to ensure the play remains valid, well-grounded, genuine and legitimate. And above all, it should offer those who see it a sense of hope—the primary goal of both Otto Huber and Christian Stückl in the most recent production of this age-old story.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Personal Internet-Interview with Oberammergau Passion Play Scholar and Researcher, Dr. Gordon Mork, July 5, 2010 (via E-Mail)

1. When did you first become interested in the Oberammergau Passion Play?

In 1983 Dianne [Dr. Mork's wife] and I decided to try to organize a travel group to the play. As I began to learn more about it, at that time, I realized that there were some very controversial aspects of the play, particularly the anti-Semitic prejudices embedded within its traditions.

2. Could you give an historical outline of the Passion Play?

In 1633, during the 30 years war, a deadly plague infested Oberammergau and the surrounding areas. The village elders made a pledge that if God would spare the village from the plague, the village would perform the Passion Play once each decade, forever. According to local tradition, thereafter no one else died of the plague, and therefore the Passion Play (based on texts locally available) was performed in 1634. Performances have continued in a more-or-less unbroken tradition since that time.

3. How far back do actual copies of the script date?

According to the Chronology in the book we each purchased from Otto in 2010, the earliest text we have is from 1662, though we know it was based on an earlier version. [Dr. Mork is referring to the book Passion Play Oberammergau 2010, published by Prestel in conjunction with the Community of Oberammergau, 2010.]

4. How common were Passion Plays at the time Oberammergau started its tradition?

Very common, used as part of Easter rituals.

5. How has the Oberammergau Passion Play evolved over the years? Specifically, with regards to the script, how has it changed?

That is a long story. Suffice it to say that nearly every play year has seen some changes. The standard traditional text was written by Fathers Weis and Daisenberger in the 19th century, and hardly changed until 1990. Since that time, major changes in text and tone have sought to eliminate anti-Semitic stereotypes and prejudices.

6. Historically, anti-Semitic overtones had always been a central theme to the Oberammergau Passion Play—perhaps some of it unintentional, other parts very intentional. Can you give a brief description of some of these and how it has changed for the current play?

During the 19th century, the play was basically a melodrama pitting "wicked Jews" against Jesus and his "good Christians." After the reforms begun for the 1990 play, the interpretation now shows clearly the "Jewishness" of Jesus and shows the conflict as being within the Jewish population of Jerusalem, and between the Jews and the Romans. "Christians," as a distinct religious group, only appear after Jesus' death and resurrection.

7. In addition, as a comparison, referring to the Passion Play performed when Hitler was in power up to the most recent versions of the play—specifically 1984 (the 350th anniversary of the Oberammergau Passion Play), 1990, 2000, and 2010—what are some of the more significant changes in the script and in the play itself?

Let me give two examples: 1) In the traditional play (i.e. 19th century to 1984), the verse from Matthew in which the Jewish crowd chants "His blood be upon us and our children" was given a very prominent role, as if to blame all the Jews for Jesus' death; in 1990 the line was virtually drowned out in a purposely chaotic crowd scene. 2) The staging of the traditional play costumed the Jewish high priests with headgear which looked to some as devilish horns; after 1990 the "horns" were gone, replaced with other forms of headgear.

8. Specifically, what major differences in the Play did you observe between the 2000 performance and the 2010 performance?

Aside from the change in timing, from afternoon to late evening, rather than from morning till later afternoon, the major change was the addition of Jesus' teachings which were introduced into the text. For example, elements of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer (which are not technically part of the Passion texts) were given a prominent part in the on-stage dialogue.

9. If you could briefly reiterate for me, what were the most distinguishing differences, historically, that are in contrast to how it is currently being performed?

The current version the play is far more sensitive to broader questions of theological and historical appropriateness than was the version which I saw in 1984. The villagers leading the play now, Christian Stückl and Otto Huber, are well informed about the Roman Catholic theology of the Vatican II Council, [See Appendix 2 for an excerpt from the official declaration by Vatican II] they are informed about the dangers of anti-Semitism which were inherent in the traditional version of the play, and they are well positioned to shape the play for the 21st century.

10. As an expert having studied and researched the Oberammergau Passion Play for over twenty-five years, what changes do you foresee in the future renditions—moving to 2020 and beyond—of the Oberammergau Passion Play from the perspective of someone who has researched it in detail, and are quite familiar with it?

It is difficult to say. The controversies surrounding the reforms of the play have receded, so there is unlikely to be a strong reaction against those reforms. Moreover, the reforms have largely accomplished their goals. There will still be changes in the future, no doubt, attempting to make the drama ever more meaningful to the faithful Christians who perform and who visit the drama, hopefully without unnecessarily offending non-Christians.

11. What makes the Oberammergau Passion Play so special and why has it endured for 376 years?

Among the many 17th century versions of the European passion plays, most have ceased to exist. Therefore, Oberammergau has remained in a very prominent role. That role has led to it becoming a model of passion play revivals in the late 20th and 21st centuries.

12. What is amazing to me, is how the local townspeople keep interest in the Play alive, passing the torch to subsequent younger generations at a time when modern technology with its bells and whistles could cause younger generations to lose interest? How do they do it? Any ideas?

As Otto Huber and others will attest, it is not easily accomplished. Surely there are economic and social forces at work, as well as purely religious ones. Nevertheless, I would say that the message continues to resonate in the village of Oberammergau, as it does in religious congregations throughout Christendom.

13. Of the several versions of the Play you have personally witnessed, which is the "best," in your opinion?

That is very difficult to say, because each one had its own unique impact—because of itself and because of my personal situation when I saw it. Most exciting, I suppose, was the 1990 version, when the first breakthrough was made, moving decisively away from the anti-Semitic traditions of the past.

14. Do you have any parting comments?

I owe so much, to so many, so that I have had the opportunity to study this phenomenon over the years. Otto Huber and others in Oberammergau have been so gracious and helpful. Fellow scholars, like you, Todd, have kept my interest alive and my critical faculties sharp. And the institutional support of scholars and travelers has combined to make it all possible.

Appendix 2: Excerpt from Vatican II Declaration

The following quotation is taken from the official Vatican website. It clearly states the Catholic Church's desire to reject any and all forms of anti-Semitism.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(Cf. *John*. 19:6) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

*-Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, **NOSTRA AETATE**, Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI, on October 28, 1965 [Retrieved on September 10, 2010 from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html]*

Todd Jay Leonard is an associate professor at Fukuoka University of Education, Japan, in the Department of International Studies and Education. His primary areas of interest are comparative culture, cross-cultural studies and history. He is the author of 20 books on topics ranging from American religious history, cross-cultural understanding, English as a Foreign Language and spirituality.

The Effects of Short Term Missions on Mission Team Members

*Dennis Horton, Amy Rozzi, Claire Aufhammer, Matt Berry, and Daniel Camp
Baylor University*

Introduction

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the number of U.S. Christians participating in international short-term mission (STM) work (that is, trips generally lasting less than one year) grew exponentially, from 540 in 1965 to an estimated 450,000 in 1998.¹ By conservative estimates, this number has grown to more than 1.5 million U.S. Christians who annually participate in short-term international mission work at an average cost of about \$1,400 per person.² Because two-thirds of these trips last two weeks or less and the volunteers are not always adequately trained, a number of missiologists have begun to question the wisdom of investing so much money—an estimated \$2 billion per year—to fund short-term travel expenses if the results do not merit such a heavy investment in this particular type of mission work.³

The potential impact of short-term missions lies in three areas: (1) impact on the mission team participants; (2) contribution to the ministry and work among those in the host community; and (3) impact on the mission-sending entities. The sending agencies for these short-term missionaries include denominational groups on the state and national levels, independent mission organizations, as well as a growing number of churches and schools. The primary purpose of these trips may be evangelism (such as sharing the Christian message of salvation through preaching, teaching, Vacation Bible Schools, plays, etc.), teaching English as a second language, providing medical aid, construction, technology transfer, agricultural or business development, or some other form of Christian ministry. The mission team participants may gain a greater understanding of other cultures, become less materialistic, and increase their long-term involvement in mission work.

On the surface level, the short-term missions movement has the appearance of a win-win-win phenomenon. The sending agencies benefit by greater involvement and commitment on the part of STM participants, generating a greater focus on local and long-term global missions. The host cultures benefit through the influx of volunteers and material resources, providing expertise and development in a variety

¹ Richard Slimbach, "First, Do No Harm," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 36 (October 2000), p. 441.

² Robert J. Priest and Joseph Paul Priest, "'They see everything, and understand nothing': Short Term Mission and Service Learning," *Missiology* 36 (January 2008), pp. 54 and 57. The cost estimate may actually be much higher. The denominational mission-sending agency which participated in this study reported an average cost of \$3,600 for 10-week international mission trips. While the cost to the individual student is much lower and close to the \$1,400 figure reported in the Priest and Priest study, the total costs of these trips are normally subsidized by denominational funds and/or fundraising efforts on the part of the participants.

³ See, for example, Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen, and C. M. Brown, "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology* 34 (October 2006), pp. 431-450. See especially p. 433 for data about the number of days commonly spent on international mission trips.

of areas. The mission team members benefit through personal development and spiritual transformation.

Some concerns have arisen, however, that may temper the enthusiasm for STM work. Perhaps the money spent on participant travel expenses would have greater impact if it were given directly to the host country's partners. One study, for example, demonstrated that ten times as many houses could have been built if local Christian leaders in Honduras had simply been given the money that STM participants spent on trip expenses.⁴ Moreover, much of the work performed by the participants could be completed by local workers and multiplied if travel money were simply allocated to employ nationals. Some long-term missionaries have also complained that culturally insensitive STM participants have actually done more harm than good, damaging relationships that had taken months and sometimes years to build.⁵

Despite these concerns, the potential positive effects on team members may offer significant justification for continuing to encourage STM trips. Anecdotal evidence indicates that those who participate in such work are more likely to be supportive of local and long-term global missions and more likely to become long-term missionaries themselves. Participants may also become less ethnocentric and less materialistic. Moreover, the participants may benefit by simply having personal involvement in missions and thereby gain a greater understanding of global Christianity.

Such assumptions of positive effects on the participants may, however, be overstated. While some studies do indicate significant long-lasting changes,⁶ other studies find little difference in several key areas between STM participants and U.S. Christians who have not participated in such trips. With some exceptions, the giving patterns are similar, levels of materialism are similar, and levels of ethnocentrism are similar.⁷ Nevertheless, nearly all studies show that certain factors such as the kind of pre-trip training, on-site mentoring, and post-trip processing can make a difference in the level of impact that STM trips have on the participants.

Due to the concerns about the questionable effectiveness of STM work and the potential lack of immediate and long-term impact on STM participants, a number of leaders have developed codes of best practice for doing STM work. U.K. Global Connections established one of the first such codes, *The Code of Best Practice for Short Term Mission*, in the late 1990s (updated in 2010), followed by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in 2000 (updated in 2009 as *The Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission—2nd Edition*), and then in the U.S. by the Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders in 2003—*The Seven U.S. Standards of Excellence for Short-Term Mission*. Among their broad range of recommendations, all of these codes encourage greater transformation of the participants through proper pre-trip training,

⁴ Kurt Ver Beek, "The Impact of Short-Term Missions: A Case Study of House Construction in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch," *Missiology* 34 (October 2006), pp. 482-483.

⁵ Jim Lo, "What Have we Done?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 36 (October 2000), pp. 436-438.

⁶ See, for example, Roger P. Peterson and Timothy D. Peterson. *Is Short-Term Mission Really Worth the Time and Money?* (Minneapolis: STEM Ministries, 1991), pp. 6-30, and Daniel P. McDonough and Roger P. Peterson, *Can Short-Term Mission Really Create Long-Term Career Missionaries?* (Minneapolis: STEM Ministries, 1999), pp. 9-20.

⁷ Priest, et al., "Researching," pp. 438-445, and Ver Beek, "Impact," pp. 484-490.

discipleship/mentoring during the trip, and post-trip integration of mission practices. When leaders incorporate these practices, the mission team members may have greater potential for lasting transformation in the following areas: (1) greater daily interaction with people of different races, religious beliefs, and socio-economic status; (2) a less materialistic attitude and lifestyle; and, (3) greater commitment to local and global missions.

The most recent STM guidebooks likewise are reinforcing the principles expressed in the codes of best practice mentioned above. For example, Kara Powell and Brad Griffin recently published a guidebook which has missional transformation as its sole focus.⁸ The work is designed to help trip leaders extend the learning process for the participants and involve the team members in activities that will help them "move from mission trips to missional living" (as designated in the book's subtitle). The desire is to ensure that STM experiences become more than spiritual tourism in which participants travel to an exotic place, take a myriad of photos, and return to their relatively isolated home environments as well as their pre-trip behavior and routines. Rather than surface-level enrichment, STM experiences should help participants translate their mission/serving experiences into a missional lifestyle.

Purpose of the Current Study

Now that codes of best practice and noteworthy guidebooks are available to encourage deeper transformation, two key questions need to be answered. First, are the recommended guidelines being followed? Second, if the guidelines are being followed, do they truly make a difference in the lives of the participants? This study provides data that helps to answer both of these pivotal questions for an important segment of the STM movement.

This research project also helps meet another need highlighted in previous studies: the need for more data in general to continue charting current developments in STM work and continue identifying the various effects (both positive and negative) of STM activities. Nearly all of the STM research literature highlights the need for further study as leaders make a concerted effort to foster positive long-term changes.⁹ The present study helps meet this need through its collection of data related to the effects of mission trips on current university students as well as the gathering of other pertinent information about STM work and the training provided by mission sending entities.

Potential Significance

By providing important data about the effects of mission trip experiences on the participants in relation to the types of training provided, the findings of this study should help leaders gain a greater understanding about how to best prepare, mentor, and follow-up with team members to facilitate lasting positive effects while

⁸ *Deep Justice Journeys: 50 Activities to Move from Mission Trips to Missional Living* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

⁹ E.g., McDonough and Peterson, "Can Short-Term," p. 30; Priest et al., "Researching," p. 445; Priest and Priest, "They see everything," pp. 70-71; and Ver Beek, "Impact," p. 493).

minimizing negative effects. Because of the similarities between mission-sending entities involved with this study and the many other mission-sending entities across the U.S., the findings of the study should have widespread implications for leaders in various parts of the country.

Methods

For the survey component of this project, four different groups of students participated in the study. Three sets of students completed a pre-trip survey prior to leaving for a 2010 summer missions experience (domestic or international) for at least one week or longer. These trips were organized through a church, a university missions program, or a state denominational mission-sending agency. All of the survey participants, with a few exceptions, were enrolled in Texas colleges during the spring 2010 semester. A fourth set of survey participants were drawn from general college student populations, some of whom had STM experience, but most did not. This fourth set of students, especially those without any mission trip experience, helped provide comparative data on student levels of ethnocentrism and materialism.

The survey was administered in the following manner. All participation was voluntary. All of the pre-trip and comparative surveys were administered in group meetings or class sessions, using paper copies of the survey. The participation rate of those present ranged from 95-100%. The post-trip surveys were administered online largely limited to those participating in missions through a state denominational agency. The post-trip surveys were administered at least three months after they returned from their summer mission work. The response rate for this particular group was approximately 38% which is relatively high for voluntary online surveys. The number of completed surveys (pre-trip, comparison group, and post-trip) totaled 568.

In addition to the surveys, a number of STM leaders (48) and mission team members (32) were interviewed to provide a qualitative element for the study. The leaders, representing a variety of mission-sending and/or mission-receiving entities, had a combined experience of participating in and/or leading approximately 1,000 STM trips (split evenly between international and domestic trips). The student interviewees also had extensive missions experience with a total of 59 domestic mission trips (about 2 trips on average for each) and 95 international mission trips (about 3 trips on average for each). These students participated in their trips through a variety of mission-sending entities: churches, university programs, denominational agencies, and/or independent mission-sending groups.

Findings

The three key areas of the study include the effects of STM experience on participant levels of ethnocentrism, materialism, and involvement in long-term missions/ministry. We will examine each of these areas, beginning with the leaders' perspectives, then the mission team members' insights from the interviews, followed by the results of the survey data. In this manner, the study has three different

avenues through which to view the potential effects of STM trips on mission team members, two qualitative perspectives (that of the leaders and the actual participants) as well as a quantitative assessment of the potential effects.

Before examining the findings related to ethnocentrism, materialism, and long-term mission involvement, the survey and interview data do provide at least a partial answer to the first question posed above: "Are the recommended guidelines being followed?" For mission trips to have the greatest impact on the participants, the guidelines advise that the leaders provide thorough pre-trip preparation, guidance during the trip, and post-trip follow-up. While both the students and the leaders indicate that the first two components—pre-trip preparation and guidance during the trip—are usually sufficient, a lack of extensive post-trip follow-up became apparent. Of the students who were interviewed, only seven indicated that they had at least one formal follow-up session after they arrived home. Only three of these had more than one session. Eight students noted that they had a reunion meeting, but the primary purpose was to exchange photos and visit. Two of these eight were unable to attend. One student mentioned that team members were encouraged to visit a trip website to blog about their trip as a means of follow-up. Over half, 18 students, had no post-trip sessions of any sort. While a higher percentage of the leaders (69%—33 of the 48) indicate that they did hold at least one post-trip meeting for the team members of their most recent trip, only eight of these leaders were able to meet more than once or meet for three or more hours.

Ethnocentrism

Concern for mission team member attitudes about culture is a key focus of STM leaders. In fact, the leaders interviewed for this study identify the effect of being "less ethnocentric" as the most desired change they hope to see in the lives of mission trip participants (see Chart 1 below). These leaders also indicate that a lower level of ethnocentrism is the most common effect that mission trips seem to have on mission team members (see Chart 2 below). All 48 of the leaders, without exception, affirmed that "going on a short-term mission trip changes the way a Christian sees other cultures." One leader (#10) noted, "This is one of the greatest things that happens on a mission trip." Another leader (#29) indicated that this component is a particular point of emphasis in her missions program.

Chart 1: Most Desired Effects of Mission Trips on Participants

Effects Desired Most by STM Leaders	Overall Ranking (and Point Value)
Less ethnocentric	1 (70)
Greater local mission involvement	2 (56)
More evangelistic	3 (45)
More open to long-term mission work	4 (44)
Greater desire for social justice	5 (23)
Less materialistic	6 (18)
Greater appreciation of the ways in which they have been blessed	7 (15)

Chart 2: Most Common Perceived Effects of Mission Trips on Participants

Effects as Observed by STM Leaders	Overall Ranking (and Point Value)
Less ethnocentric	1 (72)
Greater appreciation of the ways in which they have been blessed	2 (71)
More evangelistic	3 (36)
More open to long-term mission work	4 (34)
Greater local mission involvement	5 (27)
Greater desire for social justice	6 (21)
Less materialistic	7 (16)

The leaders also provided a number of reasons why mission team participants need to gain a greater appreciation for other cultures. Doing so helps the participants to build bridges with those in other cultures and with international students living in the U.S. (#2, #4, #7, and several others). Rather than viewing God only through the lens of Christianity in American culture, the mission team members are able to see how God is working in many different cultures in various ways (#11, #17, and #32). The STM experience also enables the participants to break down stereotypes so that they are better able to see the individuals within a particular culture (#6, #8, #19, and #27). Learning about other cultures also helps the participants to understand their own culture better (#3). Another leader (#32) highlighted the importance of becoming less ethnocentric because of its direct effect on missions: "Understanding other cultures makes you more effective as a short-term missionary; it helps you to love God and love your neighbor."

Nearly all of the student interviewees (29 of 32) believed that their STM experience had changed the way they see other cultures. Twelve students noted a greater awareness of cultural differences and the challenges within other cultures such as extreme poverty. Of more importance, over half (17) indicated that participating in short-term missions had contributed to an increased level of respect, understanding, and/or concern for other cultures. While two students mentioned that the trips gave them a greater appreciation of their own culture and way of life, 11 participants noted a greater appreciation for some of the values/practices in other cultures, which has helped them to reconsider some of the values/practices in their own culture. Three interviewees mentioned an increased awareness of good and bad elements in all cultures. Five others noted a greater awareness about the ways in which God is working in all cultures. Overall, the student interviewees do reflect in their responses that they have a deeper understanding of cultures, both their own culture and that of other cultures. Most were able to see differences between cultures along with some of the commonalities which cut across cultures and human nature.

The survey data offers an affirmation of what both the leaders and participants state in their interviews; that is, STM experiences have a tendency to lower the level of ethnocentrism for the mission team members. When, for example,

comparing survey participants with no STM experience (n=178) to those with at least two international trips (n=158), the level of ethnocentrism is slightly lower for those with STM experience (1.79 vs. 2.04). For those with only U.S. STM experience or only one international trip, the level is still lower but only slightly (see Chart 3 below). The data further indicates that this generation of students, in general has a very low level of ethnocentrism. Their ethnocentrism scores reflect a relatively high level of appreciation for other cultures or at least a relatively high level of tolerance for those from other cultures.

Chart 3: Student Levels of Ethnocentrism*

Students with no STM Experience (n=178)	2.04
Students with 3 or more Domestic Mission Trips (n=42)	1.89
Students with 1 International Mission Trip (n=88)	1.92
Students with 2 or more International Mission Trips (n=158)	1.79

*The numbers in the right column indicate the level of materialism based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being the least ethnocentric and 5 being the most ethnocentric.

Those survey participants who completed both the pre- and post-trip surveys (n=39) also reflect a net lower level of ethnocentrism. The ethnocentrism level for 20 of the 39 respondents remained essentially the same. Four of the respondents indicated higher levels of ethnocentrism while 15 respondents indicated lower levels of ethnocentrism. The overall ethnocentrism score was also lower (6.32 total points less for the 39 respondents). While these scores do not reflect a huge drop in the overall level of ethnocentrism, several of the STM participants did experience significant decreases in their level of ethnocentrism. For those with a significant shift in their level of ethnocentrism, the ratio is 4 to 1 in favor of lower ethnocentrism levels. Moreover, detailed statistical analysis of the level of ethnocentrism does reflect a statistically significant drop in the level of ethnocentrism as shown in Appendix 2.

Materialism

On the topic of materialism, the leaders ranked "greater appreciation of the ways in which they [mission team members] have been blessed" as the second most common effect that mission trips have on team members (see Chart 2 above). Nevertheless, these same leaders ranked "less materialistic" as the least common effect evidenced in the lives of the participants (see Chart 2 above). From the leaders' perspective, recognition of material blessings does not lead to a less materialistic mindset or lifestyle. One leader (#31) sums it up best, "It pains us to see folks go on and on about how this experience showed them how blessed they are, but then they go back and continue to be just as materialistic—only with the idea they are blessed." Most of the leaders, however, do not place as much emphasis on the need for STM participants to become less materialistic. They ranked the two components related to lower degrees of materialism as their least desired effects from a mission trip (see Chart 1 above).

While nearly all leaders (46 of the 48) agreed that STM trips can decrease the level of materialism among participants, many leaders noted that the intensity and durability of the effect is dependent on two key factors: the level of poverty to which the participant is exposed and the amount of processing/guidance that the trip leaders provide. If the mission team members are not exposed to any serious level of poverty, they will not have had an experience capable of jarring them out of their materialism. Even if they are exposed to poverty but do not have adequate guidance for incorporating practical changes in attitude and lifestyle, the participants will simply experience some guilt for a short period of time and then fall back into their previous thought patterns and lifestyles. More than ten of the leaders expressed that even those who do attempt to make some adjustments in this area relapse into their old patterns after a short amount of time. One leader (#33) succinctly concluded: "Any effect on this [i.e., materialism] is very short-lived at best."

Nearly all of the 32 student interviews indicated that their STM experience had affected their attitude toward material possessions and those living in poverty. All except one of these had participated in at least one international trip, and nearly all had some exposure to poverty in one or more of their experiences. A few noted that one of their previous trips had a greater impact on them because of the deeper level of poverty in the prior experience. Eleven of the interviewees said that they now place less value and focus on material possessions. The same number of students noted that they now are more conscious of their actual needs when making purchases. Some other observations they made include the following: increased contentment and generosity (7 students), recognition of their own wealth along with the selfishness and greed among those in the United States (8 students), dashing of their negative stereotypes of people living in poverty (4 students), recognizing the multiple causes of poverty (5 students), realizing (by observing the joy/contentment among the poor) that one can be content without material wealth (7 students), and being humbled by the generosity shown by those living in poverty (3 students).

While the students overwhelmingly sense that their exposure to poverty has impacted their attitude toward material possessions, no consensus surfaced about how to live a less materialistic lifestyle. Most had a greater sense of appreciation for what they have or perhaps disgust toward American greed, but only a few mentioned concrete steps they were taking to address materialism in their own lives. One student (#25) mentioned her involvement and support of microfinance for small businesses in impoverished countries. A few students were attempting to live a simpler lifestyle, purchasing fewer things and/or giving away clothing and other items they are no longer using. Some expressed a desire to give more to help those living in poverty. Another student (#32) noted that she and her family, upon their return from a trip, began to give money to help build homes for those who were living in cardboard houses near a city dump.

Although these participants do not exhibit a coherent strategy for addressing materialism in their lives, they do voice a stronger and more lasting impact on the level of materialism than observed by the leaders. The survey data lends support to the students' perspective; that is, STM experience (in impoverished communities) does indeed tend to lower the level of materialism among the participants. The responses to the questions on materialism indicate that students with STM

experience have slightly lower levels of materialism. In fact, the more STM experience, the lower the level of materialism. Those with two or more international mission trips had the lowest level of materialism (see Chart 4 below).

Chart 4: Student Levels of Materialism*

Students with no STM Experience (n=178)	2.64
Students with 3 or more Domestic Mission Trips (n=42)	2.13
Students with 1 International Mission Trip (n=88)	2.25
Students with 2 or more International Mission Trips (n=158)	2.09

*The numbers in the right column indicate the level of materialism based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being the least materialistic and 5 being the most materialistic.

For those students who completed both the pre- and post-trip surveys, the level of materialism also decreased. Of the 39 students in this subset, 21 retained essentially the same level of materialism, 6 indicated slightly higher levels (with increases between 0.20 and 0.63), and 12 respondents (31%) indicated lower levels (with decreases between 0.20 and 1.09). The overall materialism score was also lower (4.53 total points less for the 39 respondents). Of note, the students with the most significant decreases had served in countries with high levels of poverty or with impoverished population groups (within more economically developed countries). Once again, the detailed statistical analysis of the level of materialism reflects a statistically significant drop in the level of materialism as shown in Appendix 4.

Long-Term Missions

The leaders had a number of insights about the ways in which short-term mission trips affect the participants' understanding of their role in long-term missions. This is a matter of great importance to the leaders who identify "greater openness to long-term mission work" and "greater local mission involvement" as two of the top four effects that they hope to see in their mission team members (see Chart 1 above). Nevertheless, these same leaders do not see either of these effects as often as they desire for the effects to occur (see Chart 2 above). Only 23 of the 48 leaders identified "greater openness to long-term mission work" as one of the top three actual effects of participation in STM trips. Only one of the 23 identified this as the top effect of seven different possible effects listed. Only 17 of the 48 leaders noted "greater local mission involvement" as one of the top three effects.

According to the leaders, however, there is a definite correlation between participation in short-term mission trips and long-term involvement in local and global mission work. When responding to a question about this topic, over half (27) of the leaders saw a strong, though not guaranteed, connection between the two. Several of the leaders identified specific examples in which a mission trip made a profound long-term impact on a participant's life. One leader (#10) noted in the case of a particular student, "Everything changed because of a short term trip." Another leader

(#37) responded, "Yes, absolutely. I have been doing this for over 25 years, and we have students all over the world who first went on trips with us and then went back for longer term work." Most leaders were careful to qualify their affirmations by noting that some mission team members, not all, have significant impact on their long-term involvement in missions. Others noted that local missions involvement, unfortunately, often proves temporary. One leader observed that those who participate in more than one trip are more likely to make missions an integral part of their lives. Interestingly, two of the leaders responded that STM trips can actually steer some participants away from long-term global missions: "Some who intend to serve as missionaries find it much different from what they were thinking and perhaps not what they should be doing long term" (#13); "Some end up not feeling 'called' to missions at all after a short-term trip" (#21). An observation made by one leader (#18), however, was particularly noteworthy in highlighting the strong connection of STM experiences with long-term missions involvement: "I really don't know of anyone who has actually followed through with a call to minister cross-culturally who has not gone on a short-term mission trip, and the vast majority of these first began dealing with their call as a result of a mission trip."

In the student interviews, the participants responded to the question: "Have you found that going on short-term mission trips has made you more open to long-term involvement in local and global ministries?" The participants were also asked to explain their answers. Of the 32 respondents, 29 answered the question "yes" while the other three registered a "yes and no" response. For those who were ambivalent in their initial response, they noted that the mission trip experiences brought greater clarification about their potential future involvement in missions which would not be in a long-term international context. One student discovered that the longer STM experiences are more helpful than the shorter trips because it gives the participant a much better sense of what the mission work is like on a long-term basis. She discovered that, even though she has a desire to be involved with missions, she has a hard time adapting to different cultures and struggled with the lack of progress in the work with the people she was trying to reach. The other two respondents noted similar discoveries. The short-term experiences had helped them to understand better some of the challenges and sacrifices involved with long-term missions in certain contexts. All three came to a realization that long-term missions would not be the way in which God would best be able to work through them to reach others although all three remained committed to missional activities—just not on a long-term basis within a highly challenging context. Thus, the mission trips helped them clarify their calling by eliminating long-term global missions from their vocational plans.

For the other 29 participants, call clarification was also a key theme running throughout the responses. For many, the STM experiences helped them to realize the needs in various parts of the world and helped them acquire a "passion" or increased desire for a particular people group or region of the world. Fifteen of the participants identified a confirmation or reinforcement of a call to global missions; six students noted a long-term commitment to local missions; and seven identified a growing awareness to serve both locally and globally. The experiences also helped some participants broaden their understanding of mission work: "Missions can be

anywhere; it's not just going global" (#11). Another respondent (#25) noted that she learned how God ministers in a variety of different ways. The mission trips therefore provide opportunities for students to learn and explore various ways of fulfilling their call to ministry.¹⁰

The most helpful survey data about effects on long-term involvement in local and global ministries is the comparison data between the pre- and post-trip surveys. The most direct question in the survey—"Have you sensed a call to vocational ministry?" shows some distinct shifts among some of the participants. Of the 39 participants who completed both the pre- and post-trip surveys, 27 (69%) retained the same answer to this question (19 "yes" on both, 8 "no" on both). Two moved from "unknown" to "yes"; two changed from "unknown" to "no." The surprising shift occurred with 8 students (about 20%) changing from "yes" to "no." This does not, however, imply that these students are strongly opposed to the idea of incorporating missions into their lives at some level. Two related questions about long-term missions both reflect overall increased levels of agreement with the idea of becoming a career missionary. For example, only 6 respondents indicated less desire to serve as a long-term missionary while 10 expressed greater desire to do so. Moreover, for a number of those who expressed an interest in the idea of becoming a career missionary (pre-trip survey), the post-trip data indicate increased levels of agreement with this idea (with 6 participants shifting from "agree" to "strongly agree"). In response to the statement, "I think it is quite possible I will be a career missionary some day," 7 participants shifted from "agree" to "strongly agree." These responses seem to indicate greater confirmation about their call to long-term missions in the global context. Each trip then may prove instrumental for a student's call to ministry—from initial sensing of the call to confirmation and clarification—even though some may not ultimately be working as career missionaries. The short-term trips, therefore, provide a serious time of spiritual reflection and clarification.

Discussion and Recommendations

All of the key findings of this study lend support to the concept that participation in STM trips tends to have significant impact on the mission team members, reducing their levels of ethnocentrism and materialism while helping provide clarification about vocational calling. Moreover, the leader and student interviews reflect an extremely positive overall value of STM experiences. When asked to rate how beneficial STM trips were to a Christian's faith, the STM leaders had an average rating of 9.2 (on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest). While this should not come as a surprise, the high rating does reflect how much the STM leaders believe in the value of what they are doing. When the students were asked a similar question but slightly expanded to include spiritual growth and/or personal growth, they had an average rating of 8.8 (on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest). Moreover, all of the students (100%) said that, based on their most recent STM experience, they are "likely to recommend that others participate in this type of

¹⁰ For a detailed example of the way in which this process may work, see the personal narrative (in Appendix 5) of a ministry student as he describes the impact that successive mission trips had on his call to vocational ministry.

short-term mission trip.” Such a strong endorsement certainly indicates that the participants find great value in these trips and may be one of the key reasons that the U.S. has seen such an exponential growth in mission trips over the past four decades.

Nevertheless, the study also reveals some areas in need of improvement. In particular, the post-trip follow-up efforts appear to be falling short of the recommended guidelines. If these efforts are strengthened, the mission team participants should be able to integrate more of what they have learned from their STM experience into their daily lives. Powell and Griffin aptly refer to this process as “ongoing transformation.”¹¹ Often, team members do not live in the same city or even the same region of the state, making it difficult to gather these participants for meetings after they return home. Due to distance issues and time constraints, leaders may simply be unable to do the extensive post-trip mentoring with team members. Online follow-up can be helpful and should certainly be employed. The responsibility for ongoing transformation, however, likely needs to be shouldered by others who have continuing close contact with students. Churches, campus ministries, and some college coursework (for those attending Christian colleges) need to help students clarify issues related to ethnocentrism, materialism, and long-term missional involvement. These students also need help creating a coherent strategy and structures to facilitate continuing interaction with those of other cultures, development of proper attitudes and actions related to material possessions, and growth in their ability to practice missional lifestyles. Progress in these areas rarely occurs without intentional efforts.¹²

In the area of materialism, additional work and emphasis will be necessary on the part of the leaders to help participants achieve long-lasting substantial changes. While the survey data demonstrate a lower level of materialism for those with STM experience among poverty-stricken areas, the leader and student interviews do reveal some problems. Many leaders note that reduced levels of materialism are often temporary. The students seem to lack a coherent understanding of materialism and fail to have a strategic approach for combating materialism or helping those in poverty. While the leaders recognize a problem when students gain a greater appreciation for their material blessings but fail to adjust their lifestyles, many of these leaders do not see materialism as an issue of high priority. Their desire to focus instead other issues may be somewhat counterproductive. Material possessions and financial priorities often provide a strong indication of a person’s overall priorities in life.¹³ The leaders should therefore place greater emphasis on this issue to help the participants develop the kind of lifestyles that align well with their spiritual priorities. Such an alignment of material resources with their professed beliefs may be one of the strongest indicators of spiritual transformation and genuine concern for those living in poverty.

¹¹ Powell and Griffin, *Deep*, p. 155.

¹² See, for example, Mark DeYmaz’s book, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church*, in which he explains the necessary theological groundwork and concrete steps required to make substantive progress toward a multi-ethnic congregation (Grand Rapids: Jossey Bass, 2007).

¹³ As Jesus states, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

In the area of long-term involvement in missions, some observations and a few recommendations may be helpful. College students are definitely in a stage of transition and clarification about their vocational aspirations as evidenced by the high percentage of students who change their majors. They are still making discoveries about their key interests and abilities. Many Christian students are also seeking to determine how God can work through their vocation, or perhaps they sense a call to vocational ministry. Both the interviews and the pre- and post-trip comparison data confirm that these Christian students are making significant decisions and clarifications about their vocational and avocational aspirations. Most leaders are well aware of this important stage of vocational discernment and are actively helping the students in this clarification process. Because the study clearly indicates that a number of students may realize that they are not best suited for long-term global missions, the leaders will do well to help participants understand the broader nature of a missional lifestyle and how they can be involved with missions and ministry without necessarily becoming a long-term international missionary. Many leaders, as evidenced from their comments, are already doing a good job of helping the students in this manner. Nevertheless, some leaders may need to incorporate a larger vision of missions than they currently espouse. Perhaps even more importantly, they may need to educate pastors and other ministers within the churches about the importance of this broader understanding of missions and help these ministers to set up structures that will enable the churches to engage in substantive local mission involvement, moving beyond a few events a year at the local soup kitchen. Greater local involvement may also help prevent what a few leaders referred to as “short-term junkies,” that is, those who take STM trips in order to get their missions “fix” for the year and then return to their not-so-missional lifestyle.

Overall, mission team leaders and participants need to continue to find ways to increase the effectiveness of these experiences, given the large investment of finances and time. The leaders may even want to incorporate the pre- and post-trip surveys used in this study (or similar surveys) as a means of accountability and a tool for encouraging long-term impact on the participants’ levels of ethnocentrism, materialism, and local missions/ministry involvement.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. The participants, with few exceptions, were limited to Texas college students. Although several of these students grew up outside of Texas, the vast majority represent those who been raised in this region of the country and therefore do not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of students from across the U.S. Two categories of survey participants—those with only one or two domestic trips—were not sufficient in numbers to provide accurate results about their levels of ethnocentrism and materialism. Finally, the number of pre-post comparison surveys was sufficient in number (39) but would benefit from a greater number of participants in the post-trip survey to get a more comprehensive assessment of the effects of STM experiences on mission team members. Future

studies may be able to provide larger numbers of post-trip surveys that will add to growing body of research on short-term missions.

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Biographical Notes

Dennis Horton is an Associate Professor of Religion and Associate Director of Ministry Guidance at Baylor University. His research and teaching areas focus on Christian practical studies with particular interest in vocational calling. Prior to his current position at Baylor University, he taught in Hong Kong, Thailand, Georgia, and Brownwood, Texas. Address correspondence to: Dennis Horton, Department of Religion, One Bear Place 97284, Waco, Texas, 76798 (or email him at the following address: dennis_horton@baylor.edu).

Amy Rozzi is a Statistics major at Baylor from Spring, Texas. She will be graduating in May 2011 and will be enrolling in graduate school in the fall to begin working on her doctorate in statistics.

Claire Aufhammer is a University Scholar at Baylor from Pasadena, California. She has an emphasis in religion/theology and medieval spiritual literature. After she graduates in May 2013, she plans to attend Talbot School of Theology and ultimately work in the mission field, fusing together social justice work and spiritual formation/discipleship.

Matt Berry is a Religion major at Baylor from Idalou, Texas, with a minor in Business Administration. After he graduates in May 2011, he plans to become a youth minister and earn a Masters of Divinity degree at Truett Seminary.

Daniel Camp is a Religion major at Baylor from Garland, Texas, with a minor in Rhetoric and Argumentation. After he graduates in May 2011, he will be getting married in June and enrolling at Truett Seminary in the fall with eventual plans of becoming a pastor.

Appendix 1: Ethnocentrism Survey Questions¹⁴

Please answer the following questions by circling the response that indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Work quickly and record your first reaction to each item. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. People from other cultures act strange when they come to my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

¹⁴ To determine the "ethnocentrism score" for the survey questions, do the following steps after taking the survey. Delete questions 3, 6, 12, 15, 16, 17, and 19. Assign scores as follows: "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neutral" = 3, "agree" = 4, "strongly agree" = 5. Reverse score questions 4, 7, and 9. Add all the scores and divide by 15.

10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
12. I have many friends from different cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
15. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
16. I apply my values when judging people who are different.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
18. I do not cooperate with people who are different.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
19. Most people in my culture just don't know what is good for them.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
20. I do not trust people who are different.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
21. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
22. I have little respect for the values and customs of other cultures.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix 2: Ethnocentrism Results for Pre-Post Data

A hypothesis test was used for both materialism and ethnocentrism analysis, assuming that the data was normal for both. The t-test was also employed for both sets of student data.

For this hypothesis the null hypothesis is that the pre- and post-test scores are equal. The alternative is that the pre-test score will be greater than the post-test score.

Quantiles

100.0%	maximum	1
99.5%		1
97.5%		1
90.0%		0.66667
75.0%	quartile	0.4
50.0%	median	0.13333
25.0%	quartile	-0.0667
10.0%		-0.2666
2.5%		-0.6
0.5%		-0.6
0.0%	minimum	-0.6

Moments

Mean	0.169233
Std Dev	0.3473701
Std Err Mean	0.0556237
Upper 95% Mean	0.2818373
Lower 95% Mean	0.0566286
N	39

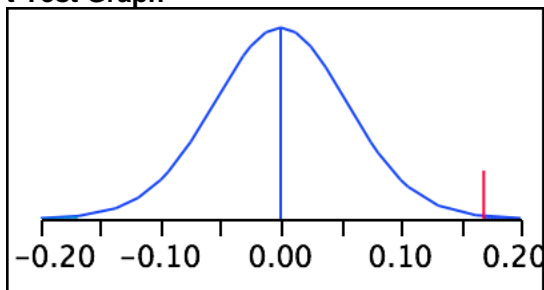
Test Mean=value

Hypothesized Value	0
Actual Estimate	0.16923
DF	38
Std Dev	0.34737

t-Test Results

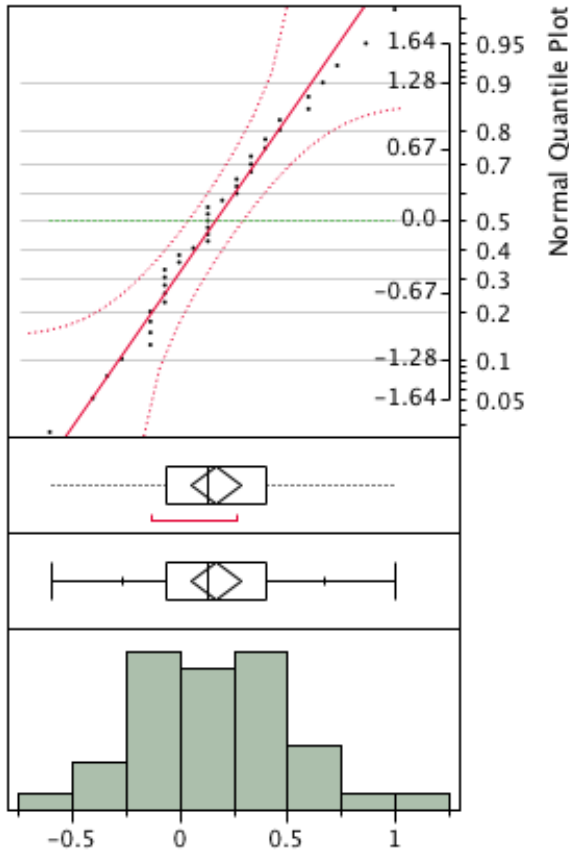
Test Statistic	3.0425
Prob > t	0.0042*
Prob > t	0.0021*
Prob < t	0.9979

t-Test Graph



Because the p-value (.0021) is less than our significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ (95% Confidence), there is statistical evidence that the alternative hypothesis holds, meaning that the null hypothesis can be rejected, meaning that the ethnocentrism score of the pre-test was significantly higher than the post-test.

Normality for the ethnocentrism data was assumed due to the following Normal Quantile plot:



Appendix 3: Materialism Survey Questions¹⁵

Please answer the following questions by circling the response that indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Work quickly and record your first reaction to each item. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2. I like to own things that impress people.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

¹⁵ To determine the "materialism score" for the survey questions, do the following steps after taking the survey. Assign scores as follows: "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neutral" = 3, "agree" = 4, "strongly agree" = 5. Reverse score questions 6 and 7. Add all the scores and divide by 11.

3. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. I like a lot of luxury in my life.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
6. I am content with what I currently possess.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. I believe that I own too many material possessions.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
9. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
10. I'd rather spend time buying things than doing almost anything else.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
11. I would be more content if I had more money.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix 4: Materialism Results:**Quantiles**

100.0%	Maximum	1.09091
99.5%		1.09091
97.5%		1.09091
90.0%		0.63636
75.0%	quartile	0.36364
50.0%	median	0.03636
25.0%	quartile	-0.0909
10.0%		-0.2727
2.5%		-0.6364
0.5%		-0.6364
0.0%	minimum	-0.6364

Moments

Mean	0.111655
Std Dev	0.3847289
Std Err Mean	0.0616059
Upper 95% Mean	0.2363697
Lower 95% Mean	-0.01306
N	39

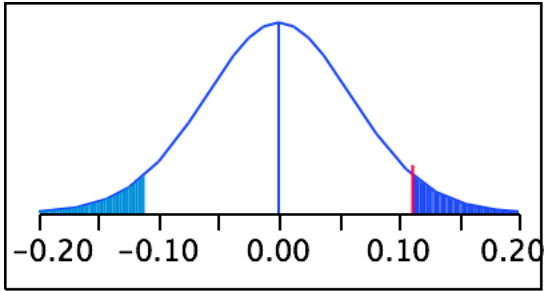
Test Mean=value

Hypothesized Value	0
Actual Estimate	0.11166
DF	38
Std Dev	0.38473

t-Test Graph

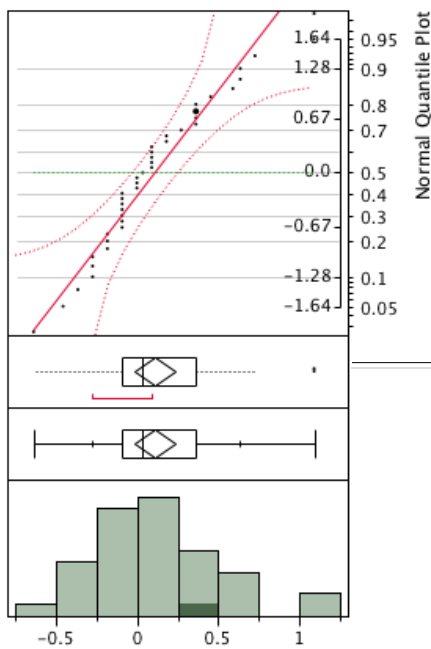
Test Statistic	1.8124
Prob > t	0.0778
Prob > t	0.0389*
Prob < t	0.9611

t-Test Graph



Since the p-value (.0389) is less than the significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ (95% Confidence), there is statistical evidence that the alternative hypothesis holds, meaning that the null hypothesis can be rejected, meaning that the materialism score of the pre-test was significantly higher than the post-test.

The normality is assumed for the materialism scores based on the Normal Quantile Plot below:



This point indicates a possible outlier.

Appendix 5: Student Narrative about Effects of STM Experience on Calling¹⁶

My experience all began in the summer of 2006. My youth group went on a mission trip to Mexico. The main reason we were there was to build a church in a village. But while we were there, we got to work and interact with the youth. This is when the call made its first appearance in my life, but at the time I wasn't interested at all in working in the ministry so I pretty much just shrugged it off and didn't even think about it. The next summer, 2007, I signed up to go on a Volunteer Student Mission (VSM) trip to the Czech Republic. This trip was all about working with youth. They had been taking a conversational English class all year and we came on the last week of school to help them practice it. While we were in the school we invited them to come to our nightly services at the church there. The services gave us a chance to bond with the youth, build relationships with them and most importantly share the gospel with them. After I got home from this trip, I felt like God was once again putting on my heart a life of ministry. The only difference between the two calls is that this time I actually listened. I still wasn't fully on board with a life of ministry, but I was definitely willing to listen to what God wanted to say to me. So for the next year I spent a lot of time in prayer and really tried to meditate and listen to what God was trying to say to me. Then in the summer of 2008, since I love the country and the people so much, I signed up to go on another VSM trip to the Czech Republic. We essentially did the same thing as the prior summer, but—because I was experienced—I got to be in a small leadership position. I was able to use my testimony as a sort of message on Sunday morning. I also got to reconnect with some of the youth there from the prior summer. It was great to see that the decisions they made the last year were still apparent in their lives. Seeing this really reinforced my belief that God was calling me into the ministry. When I got home, I spent a few more weeks in prayer and then went to talk to my pastor about it. He saw that I had spent a good amount of time on making sure that God had called me into ministry so that Sunday I surrendered my life to the ministry. Since I had so many great experiences working with youth, I feel like that is really where God is calling me to work, but I have also been very interested in working in missions.

¹⁶ This personal narrative by a Baylor University ministry student is used with the student's permission.

Predicting Jesus' Second Coming and the End of the World: A Study Over Time with Some Conclusions and Considerations

Jerry Hopkins
East Texas Baptist University

Abstract: This study will consider some of the predictions of Jesus' Second Coming and the End of the World that have been presented in the past. The paper will present important examples and ideas associated with Christian eschatology and end time theories. The paper will utilize both non-fiction and fiction works in presenting this subject. The focus will be on the importance of interpretation, analysis, factual accuracy, literary techniques, and appropriate philosophical associations that can enrich, encourage and inspire students in considering the role of religion in life. Selected authors, ministers, pamphlets, novels and techniques will be presented and explained.

There has been an interest in, even a preoccupation with, the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus from earliest times. From New Testament times there have been those who want to know when the end will come. Even Jesus' disciples tried to find out when the event would occur. They wanted to know the exact time.

During Jesus' earthly ministry He was sitting on the Mount of Olives teaching about the Temple's destruction when His disciples asked him, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"¹ This question has re-occurred down through history showing that people have a curiosity about the end of time and how they might be able to identify the approaching end and Jesus' second coming. These two events are linked in the thinking of these followers of Jesus and have been since that time as people have tried to determine Jesus' coming and the judgment at the end.

Jesus responded to his followers asking these questions with a statement that history has confirmed numerous times and in many different ways. Here is what He said in part about His coming and the end,

"Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

⁹"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow

¹ Matthew 24:1-3 NKJV.

cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵“Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

²³“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand.”²

This passage in Matthew has been the basis for many different interpretations regarding the second coming of Jesus and the end of time. Our purpose is to focus on what selected interpreters and thinkers have argued regarding these two events, Jesus’ second coming and the end of the world. The first and most important point is that there is a tendency in every human being to want to know the answer to this question of the end. Thus there are examples across history from this first century inquiry of those who have asked this question and then argued different, but often similar answers to the question usually with accompanying “signs and wonders.” There is something that triggers this terminal philosophy that generates this preoccupation with end-time thinking and the ideas about what Hal Lindsay called “The Terminal Generation” which turned out not to be terminal at all. This is the repeated result of such flawed reasoning and failing eschatological conclusions, it proves to be wrong. History must be considered and we must come to hear what Jesus has said in his answer to His disciples who were preoccupied by these questions of intrigue. Did He not say, “Take heed that no one deceives you. All these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”³ There is an end, but note the important “sign” that marks that coming—the preaching of Jesus’ kingdom “in all the world as a witness to all the nations.”

Any event in the Middle East generates a round of apocalyptic comments and predictions. There was a tension-building round of these comments that accompanied the Persian Gulf War. Even major news magazines headlined these end-time comments with such questions as these—“Is This the Battle of Armageddon?” “Is The End Near?” “Apocalypse Now?” “Revelations in the Middle East.” National television programs spent time discussing these predictions and

² Matthew 24:4-25 NKJV.

³ Matthew 24:4, 6, 14 NKJV.

possibilities. Doomsday books of all sorts emerged with proclamations and predictions about the end of the world.

An Associated Press news article asked "Is everything spinning out of control?" A *Wall Street Journal* headline stated, "Millennium Fever: Prophets Proliferate, The End is Near." A *New York Times* book review began with this statement, "Some 50 million Americans share a belief that these are the last days." In a Sunday edition the *Chicago Tribune* printed a front-page story suggesting that the end of time was near.⁴

This is merely an example of such headline comments that have occurred since the very beginning in the first century with Jesus and His disciples. After the Persian Gulf War ended and the apocalyptic predictions about a doomsday did not occur the newspapers and magazines printed all kinds of satirical cartoons about end-times musings. One said, "CORRECTION: DISREGARD LAST DOOMSDAY MESSAGE. There have been many others similar to this kind of statement. Here is one that lampoons the 2012 predictions."⁵



Such end-of-the-world statements have appeared down through history, but they are soon forgotten and nothing is remembered of their failed predictions and statements. All of the historical examples have one thing in common and that is the end did not come.

⁴ The Associated Press article; the *Wall Street Journal*; the *New York Times*; *The Chicago Tribune* quote all appeared in <http://www.jeremiahproject.com/prophecy/signofthetimes.html>. An Associated Press writer asked, "Is everything spinning out of control?" A *Wall Street Journal* headline read, "Millennium Fever: Prophets Proliferate, The End is Near." A *New York Times* book review began, "Some 50 million Americans share a belief that these are the last days." Even the *Chicago Tribune* ran a front-page story about the end times in a Sunday edition near the time of the Gulf War. Also check this source:

<http://www.jeremiahproject.com/prophecy/markofthebeast.html>

⁵ Example Cartoon from www.cartoonstock.com by Graham Harrop.

Hippolytus (A.D. 170-236) in his commentary on Daniel calculated that the world would end in A.D. 500. He documented his prediction of the end as based on an analysis of the dimensions of Noah's ark and the timing of Jesus' birth. This is how he stated his explanation,

For the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus, in the year 5500; and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And 6,000 years must need be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come.... For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they 'shall reign with Christ,' when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for 'a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.' Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled.... From the birth of Christ, then, we must reckon the 500 years that remain to make up the 6000, and thus the end shall be."⁶

This is a basic approach for most typical end-time predictions. They use some calculation based on Scripture or some time-format. The year A.D. 500 came, Jesus did not appear and the end did not come.

As the first millennium drew to a close and the year A.D. 999 approached, many in Europe became quite concerned. Most of the world did not use the Christian-based calendar, or any calendar to speak about, and most people could not read. Europeans became concerned as the millennium approached. Many accounts began to surface associated with the approach of this date with the thousand years spoken about in the book of Revelation and that the end would come and Christ would return for the second time to end everything with judgment. As the year A.D. 999, progressed many signs and warnings were observed, European monasteries almost came to a standstill as the year ended. Obviously, nothing happened and the world did not end. Jesus did not return.⁷

When the end did not come in A.D. 1,000 and Jesus did not return, those anticipating such events suggested that they had miscalculated and began to re-figure their dates based on Revelation's premise, figuring from Jesus' ascension and not from his birth. When A.D. 1,033 came that also did not mark Jesus' second coming or the end of the world. Nothing was learned from such faulty, flawed calculation and reasoning.

As the years passed, Jesus did not come and the end did not arrive. Still individuals sought to determine by various means and calculations Jesus' return and the promised end of the world. For example, Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202), an Italian monk and prophecy student in his day, challenged the allegorical interpretations of Augustine and others, insisting that a literal interpretation of Scripture was needed in order to accurately determine the date of the second coming and the end. Joachim began figuring so as to gain the exact date of Jesus' coming and the end. He calculated in his efforts to set a date that the end of the world was to occur sometime

⁶ Hippolytus of Rome, *Fragments from Commentaries*, translated in Alexander Roberts and Richard Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 179.

⁷ Richard Erdoes, *A.D. 1000* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 2, 4; James Reston, Jr., *The Last Apocalypse: Europe at the Year 1000 A.D.* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 166-168.

between A.D. 1200 and 1260. He was very vague about this, but insisted that this was the time period when the end was to occur.⁸ It didn't happen.

Even Christopher Columbus became involved in the speculating about the end time, arguing that from the time of his discovery of the new world it should be allowed 155 years for all mankind to be converted to Christianity and then the world would end in A.D. 1501.⁹ Sometime around the turn of the sixteenth century, about 1500, Columbus remarked to Prince John that God had called him for a special task. He said, "God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, of which He spoke in the Apocalypse by Saint John, after having spoken of it by the mouth of Isaiah; and He showed me the spot where to find it." In Columbus' writings one discovers that he believed two things had to happen for the second coming and the end of the world to come—the Gospel had to be preached to all the nations and the Temple had to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. He believed that his discovery of the New World played an important part in the coming of the end and Jesus' return. He believed that the gold discovered in the Americas could finance a crusade to reclaim the Holy Land and begin the rebuilding of the Temple. He even suggested that David and Solomon had used stones quarried in Panama to build the first Temple, obviously believing that he had discovered Solomon's mines. As at other times, none of these things came to pass and neither Jesus nor the end of the world came.¹⁰

From time-to-time, even Martin Luther speculated about the coming of the end. In 1518 he wondered if Pope Leo X might be the true Antichrist, but by 1520 Luther had modified his view of the Antichrist to include the whole of the papal system.¹¹ Luther stated many times before his death in A.D. 1548 that "verily the day of judgment [or end of the world] is not far off; yea, will not be absent three hundred years longer." Luther also believed that all of the signs preceding the coming of the last days had already appeared.¹²

In the opening years of the 19th century there were numerous predictions and prophecies pertaining to the second coming of Jesus and the end of time. Many speculated that the year 1800 was to be the date of the end. Thomas Brightman had suggested this to be the case in 1607. Drue Cressener (1638-1718) stated that the end would come in 1800, as did Cardanus. Francis Dobbs proclaimed that

⁸ Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 Volumes (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), 1:707.

⁹ Yuri Rubinsky and Ian Wiseman, *A History of the End of the World* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1982), p. 91.

¹⁰ Quoted in Mircea Eliade, "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology," in Frank E. Manuel, *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1966), p. 262; Delno c. West & Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 108-109; Philip Lamy, *Millennium Rage: Survivalists, White Supremacists, and the Doomsday Prophecy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), p. 47.

¹¹ Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination With Evil* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), pp. 202-203; James A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1970), p. 8; Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 9.

¹² Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, "Of the Antichrist," Christian Classics Ethereal Library (see <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/tabletalk>); "Of the Resurrection" has to do with "the last days."

Jesus would return either in 1800 or 1801 to Ireland. A host of other “prophets” arose to claim the end and the second coming in 1801, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1817, 1819, 1820, and other years leading up to 1850.¹³ In the year 1835, Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) believed that the coming of Jesus was near and that “56 years should wind up the scene.”¹⁴ A magazine published for some period of time, *The Last Times*, promoted numerous times the coming of the end and Jesus’ return. None of the dates proved to be accurate.¹⁵

In 1818, a Baptist farmer-preacher in New York predicted that Jesus would come and that the world would end sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. William Miller stressed a systematic study and methodology to rationally determine the date of the end. Miller’s end-time prophetic movement swept across the United States generating great excitement and enthusiasm. When the coming of Jesus and the end did not occur on his time schedule the date was revised to October 22, 1844. Obviously, that was a failed date and neither Jesus nor the end came.¹⁶

As the 19th Century continued whole movements emerged with some contention regarding the coming of the end and Jesus’ return. The Millerites that became the Seventh Day Adventists was one such movement. Another that was most impressive was the Jehovah’s Witnesses. This movement claimed to be the sole possessor of God’s revelation about the end of time, initiated a chain of prophecies regarding the end of the world that has continued through the years with numerous people and groups blindly embracing these dates—1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, and 1975. Obviously, nothing occurred at or on or near these dates. They were all flawed and failures. Who remembers these failures? Multitudes still embrace such movements.¹⁷

In the twentieth century these dramatic predictions and prophecies regarding the end of the world and time have continued. Beginning in 1917 in the Roman Catholic Church there was a movement related to prophecy and the end of time that involves three dramatic appearances of the Virgin Mary occurring in Fatima, Portugal. The first appearance of the Mother of Jesus involved a horrifying vision of hell and prophesied the end of World War I. Then the second appearance warned of the major world conflict that we know as World War II, the rise of communist Russia and its ultimate collapse and conversion to Christianity if enough people prayed and consecrated it to Mother Mary. The third appearance involved outward

¹³ Francis X. Gumerlock, *The Day and the Hour: A Chronicle of Christianity’s Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World* (Atlanta: American Vision, 2000), pp. 223-239.

¹⁴ *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 182.

¹⁵ *The Last Times* was a magazine published to promote the “last days” message during the 19th century.

¹⁶ Francis D. Nichol, *Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, who Mistakenly Believed that the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place* (Teaching Services, Inc. 1994); John de Patmos, *The Great Disappointment of 1844* (Misketon University Press, 2001); David L. Rowe, *God’s Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008).

¹⁷ References on this point are drawn from Francis X. Gumerlock’s excellent work *The Day and the Hour: Christianity’s Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World* (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 2000).pp. 250-278.

visual manifestations witnessed by some 50 to 70,000 people has not been publicized by the Roman Church because they do not want to create a world-wide panic. It supposedly predicted a fiery end of the world. In May 2000, the Vatican made an official statement that it had foretold the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II.¹⁸

A leading pastor and missionary leader in the early twentieth century, Oswald J. Smith, wrote a book titled *Is The Antichrist At Hand?* stating that the Great Tribulation could begin in 1926 and suggesting that Mussolini was the Beast prophesied in Revelation 13. He wrote that with the Tribulation beginning in 1926, the people were then facing “the Great Tribulation, the revival of the Roman Empire, the reign of the Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon, [that] must take place before the year 1933.”¹⁹ None of this was true. The end did not come and Jesus did not return.

One of the major points of reference for prophecy and eschatology theorists was the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. In the 1970s a major figure emerged promoting a new emphasis on the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world. Hal Lindsey wrote *The Late Great Planet Earth* with the title speaking for itself the message of his book.²⁰ Lindsey cited the founding of Israel in 1948 as the prophetic fulfillment triggering the beginning of the end of time.²¹ He argued in this book that in one generation (he figured forty years and that by 1988) the world would come to an end and Jesus would return.²² He suggested a new interpretative point saying that a nuclear war would begin in Israel and result in radioactive fallout polluting and melting the earth.²³ The dust jacket of Lindsey’s 1977 edition of the book warned readers not to plan beyond 1985.²⁴

In 1978 several pastors and end-time enthusiasts raised alarm pointing to the founding of Israel and other issues related to the end. Gary Wilburn in “The Doomsday Chic” in *Christianity Today* stated, “The world must end within one generation from the birth of the State of Israel. Any opinion of world affairs that does not dovetail with this prophecy is dismissed.”²⁵ Salem Kirban in his book *The Rise of Antichrist* stated forthrightly, “We are already living in the age of Antichrist! The world is on the threshold of catastrophe.”²⁶ California pastor Chuck Smith wrote in his 1978 book *End Times: A Report on Future Survival* that he was “convinced that the Lord is coming for his church before the end of 1981.”²⁷ Obviously, none of these three famous ministers/authors were correct in their statements. It has been

¹⁸ Check the following sources on this:

<http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/privaterevelation/remedies.htm>

¹⁹ Oswald J. Smith, *Is The Antichrist At Hand?* (Toronto, Canada: Tabernacle Publications, 1926), pp. 17, 19.

²⁰ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43, 48-50.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-167.

²⁴ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Nashville, TN: Zondervan Book House, 1977).

²⁵ Gary Wilburn, “The Doomsday Chic,” *Christianity Today*, Vol. 22 (January 27, 1978), pp. 22-23.

²⁶ Salem Kirban, *The Rise of Antichrist* (publisher etc.), p.

²⁷ Chuck Smith, *End Times: A Report on Future Survival* (City: Maranatha House Publishers, 1978).

easy however for people to forget such statements and/or ignore them as the newest catastrophe looms on the horizon and another alarming scenario is unfolded.

John Walvoord wrote a book published in 1974 about the Middle East and the oil crisis. He titled the book *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* and sold over one and a half million copies. Walvoord re-issued his 1974 book in 1990 playing off the apocalyptic fears of the American war with Iraq that could lead to the final Battle of Armageddon. When the Gulf War ended and nothing near that occurred, the book sales dried up and the memories of such mistaken views and prophecies passed from public consciousness.²⁸

In 1991 a Dallas Seminary professor, Charles Dyer, published a book titled *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Time*. In this book he indicated that Saddam Hussein was restoring the ancient city of Babylon and that the end-time destruction of this city prophesied in the book of Revelation was near. Of course, this idea was discounted when the United States defeated Iraq in the Gulf War, but did not finish the war and remove Hussein from power. Then in 2002 the United States and her allies defeated Iraq totally, removing Saddam Hussein from power and ultimately executing him for war crimes. This idea may return with the events that have transpired in Iraq in recent times, particularly if the more violent Arab forces that are anti-American take control of the nation.²⁹ The defeat and conflict in Iraq has aroused many other contenders for prophetic speculations. Mark Hitchcock is one who has promoted the idea that what has happened in Iraq prefigures what prophecies have for the future regarding *The Second Coming of Babylon*, proceeding to give what he says Bible prophecy presents about Iraq in the end times, Israel and Armageddon, Antichrist's ruling city, America in the final days, and war in the Middle East.³⁰

In 1992 this picture appeared in publications around the world.

"Rapture. October 28, 1992.

Jesus Is Coming in the Air"

"Don't Receive The 666 Mark" appeared in some of the advertisements.

This was started by a Seoul, South Korea church with some 20,000 members and pastored by Lee Jang Rim. In a short time after this emphasis Rim was convicted and sentenced for defrauding members of more than \$4 million dollars.³¹

In 1993 Harold Camping predicted in a book that he titled simply *1994?* that Jesus was going to return in September of 1994 and that the end of the world would take place. It didn't happen.³²

²⁸ John F. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974, 1990).

²⁹ Charles Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Time*, in the revised version in 2003 this subtitle was dropped and this inserted instead *Is Iraq at the Center of the Final Drama?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991, 2003).

³⁰ Mark Hitchcock, *The Second Coming of Babylon* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), front cover of the paperback edition.

³¹ B. J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why no One Knows When Christ Will Return* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 11, 37, 171; quoted in Gumerlock, pp. 302-303.

³² Harold Camping, *1994?* (New York: Vantage Press, 1992), p. 208.

There are many other examples that could be given from the past. Indeed the examples continue even today. As the crisis heats up in the Middle East and Israel comes under a greater threat the prophets will re-emerge with their speculations and alarms. What should we do; what should we say as it becomes obvious that the endsayers continue making their claims? Should we not listen to history? Should we not pay attention to what has happened, or not happened in the past?

The failure of these many prophets, some of them prominent and great men, surely should teach us something. This is a sobering and somber lesson that we need to consider. If we do not learn from history we will certainly make the same mistakes and be deceived as others have been in the past. There is a cost to these failures. It is more than just bad guesses, faulty predictions and flawed prophecies. The real problem has to do with correctly interpreting Scripture, understanding what is meant by “the end” and acknowledging that no one knows and that none of the signs are meant to warn us that Jesus is returning. He is going to return when no one thinks He will, as Scripture says.

This preoccupation with the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world resulted in numerous works of fiction depicting supposedly what will happen when the end comes. Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins authored a series of bestsellers over a number of years beginning in 1995 devoted to the eschatology advocated by the Scofield Study Bible (King James Version). The novels promoted the Premillennial, Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory of the second coming and the end of the world that came to be known as “The Left Behind” series. The first novel in this series was titled *Left Behind—A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days*.³³ There are many others who picked up on this interest in fictional accounts of the end times and rushed to fill that

³³ Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind—A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1995). The other novels following this initial one are *Tribulation Force—The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind* (1996); *Nicolae—The Rise of Antichrist (The Final Victory)* (2007). In 2005 LaHaye and Jenkins with Sandi L. Swanson published *The Authorized Left Behind Handbook* presents the details of the series covering the details of the sixteen bestselling novels. At the publication of the handbook over 60,000,000 books had sold.

³³ Pat Robertson, *The End of the Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996) was one such novel by a prominent pentecostal minister and business executive whose roots were in the Southern Baptist movement.

³³ Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001).

³³ Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).

³³ Larson, K. (2000). *Vol. 9: I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (213). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.1997); *Soul Harvest—The World Takes Sides* (1998); *Apollyon—The Destroyer is Unleashed* (1999); *Assassins—Assignment: Jerusalem, Target: Antichrist* (1999); *The Indwelling—The Beast Takes Possession* (2000); *The Mark—The Beast Rules the World* (2000); *Desecration—Antichrist Takes the Throne* (2001); *The Remnant—On the Brink of Armageddon* (2002); *Armageddon—The Cosmic Battle of the Ages* (2003); *Glorious Appearing—The End of Days* (2004); *The Rising—Antichrist is Born* (2005); *The Regime—Evil Advances* (2006); *The Rapture—In the Twinkling of an Eye* (2007); *Kingdom Come—The Final Victory* (2007). In 2005 LaHaye and Jenkins with Sandi L. Swanson published *The Authorized Left Behind Handbook* presents the details of the series covering the details of the sixteen bestselling novels. At the publication of the handbook over 60,000,000 books had sold.

need.³⁴ LaHaye and his colleagues have produced other volumes related to the second coming of Jesus and the last days. In 2001 LaHaye and Thomas Ice collaborated on such a classic guide, titling it *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy*.³⁵

There are consequences attached to such flawed reasoning and predictions. As Richard Weaver has argued in his 1948 book, *Ideas Have Consequences*.³⁶ If we accept the idea that the end is coming, then why do anything to make things better? If Jesus is going to return, why try to improve or reform anything? If the earth is going to be destroyed, then why try to “save the earth?”

We have a responsibility to seek and to speak the truth, even the truth about the second coming and the end of the world. The search for truth also involves recognizing wrong thinking for what it is. Obviously, when people prophecy the end or the second coming and those events do not occur, then we must realize that those prophecies and predictions are wrong. When many individuals have repeatedly announced the coming of the end and Jesus’ second coming and those have not occurred then we must conclude that those individuals are false and deceived. They have deceived and disappointed many people who have believed them.

As these predictions and proclamations continue we should focus on certain important theological and historical points, such as the idea that “the last days” actually began when Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection. Scripture and certainly most thoughtful and reasonable Christians realize that nobody knows when Christ will return or the end will come. It is the task of Christians to emphasize light, life and righteousness while remaining faithful in the present. The final resolution should be that we will live as though every day is our last. We should live as good stewards of our world, our witness, our work, our families, our friends, and our personal lives.³⁷

Biographical Note

Jerry Hopkins, Ph.D. is a Professor of History at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas. He is active in the Southern Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Conference on Faith and History, the East Texas Historical Association, the American Studies Association, the Baptist History and Heritage Society, the African Studies Association, and other professional organizations. He also locally serves on the board of the Harrison County Historical Museum. He has traveled extensively in the Middle East, Europe and Asia for research, business and professional meetings. The focus of his research has been on evangelicalism, revivalism, racism and conservative reform movements. He also

³⁴ Pat Robertson, *The End of the Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996) was one such novel by a prominent pentecostal minister and business executive whose roots were in the Southern Baptist movement.

³⁵ Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001).

³⁶ Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).

³⁷ Larson, K. (2000). *Vol. 9: I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (213). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

writes a column on history, social and political issues for newspapers and magazines.

Race and Religion in Rural Arkansas: A Case Study

Dianne Dentice
Stephen F. Austin State University¹

This paper explores the dynamics of a racist couple as they confront the realities of an African American president and growing societal diversity. Both are actively involved in the White nationalist movement and although they interact with mainstream people in their community, they remain social liminars because of their racist beliefs. This paper analyzes how the couple connects their racist beliefs to fundamentalist religious perspectives in a small non-denominational church in rural Arkansas. This study is the result of a series of personal interviews with the couple that began shortly before they were married in August 2009. Findings indicate that the two individuals have very different reasons for attending church. They also have different views on religion, God, and Christianity. Findings also suggest that despite contact with diverse groups in their community and pressures to conform, the couple refuses to integrate tolerant beliefs into their social portfolio.

Billy and Stacy Roper are admitted racists and activists in the White nationalist movement that is also sometimes referred to as the White Supremacist and White separatist movement, among other things. Billy is agnostic while Stacy is a Christian Identist. They attend a small, fundamentalist church in rural Arkansas where they are active church members. Recently they have been attending evening services in order to listen to Reverend Thom Robb's radio sermons on Sunday mornings. Robb is the leader of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas and a well-known Christian Identity minister. This paper is a discussion about how the Ropers reconcile their religious beliefs with their views on race. I also analyze elements of Christian Identity and explain why this extreme religion appeals to both of them, but for very different reasons.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore social and religious factors that may have contributed to the belief system of a married couple who are White racial activists and avowed racists. The study also sought to explain how racist ideology affects this couple's religious perspective despite exposure to more traditional Christian beliefs as church members along with exposure to diversity through limited social interaction and the media. Interviews with the couple began in July 2009 and are ongoing. The researcher has gathered writing samples and email communications as well as attended church services with the couple. The study of religion evolved as the researcher and the couple had in-depth discussions concerning all aspects of their life as activists in a reactionary social movement that is well known for its racist ideology.

¹ This research was funded by a grant from the Stephen F. Austin Office of Research and Funded Programs.

Christian Identity Theology: Overview and Origins

The following citation was quoted in a Christian Identity publication called *Apocalypse News* in 2009. It is followed by a quote by Abraham Lincoln from the newsletter's editor, a Christian Identity minister named Eli James.

I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in anyway the social and political equality of the White and Black races - that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with White people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the White and Black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior; and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the White race. I say upon this occasion I do not perceive that because the White man is to have the superior position the Negro should be denied everything.²

Yet more important is the Biblical reason why God Almighty demands that the Adamic race of Isaac's sons is to live separate from other people of the Earth: *They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.* (Exodus 23:33) *And ye shall be holy unto me: for I Yahweh am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.* (Leviticus 20:26)

Christian Identity theologians use Biblical scripture to back up their ideas about race and the inherent superiority of Whites. They understand that their beliefs are unconventional and highly criticized by people of all faiths. Many in their ranks also believe in the apocalyptic vision of the countdown of days that will supposedly occur in December 2012. Specific doctrinal beliefs drive Christian Identity dogma such as the belief that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the only God and the creator of all things. Yahweh is also an Aryan God in whose image White men are created. Evolution is not part of Christian Identity culture. God is believed to be White, male, and powerful. This idea serves to reinforce traditional ideas about gender and the places that women and men occupy within both the family and the broader society.

For Christian Identity adherents, the Old and New Testaments are interchangeable and equally important. They believe the scriptures to be the strict word of God. They also believe that the words in the Bible were written exclusively for the children of Yahweh who just happen to be White people. Their covenant includes three distinct beings: 1) God the Father; 2) God the Son; and 3) God the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was used by God to identify the true children of Israel and

² See *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, "Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois" (September 18, 1858), pp. 145-146.

since the Bible was written only for the people who are the direct descendants of a White God, they are the only people who will achieve salvation at the end of days.

Christian Identity dogma states that God chose a special race of people to be above all other people on the earth. Scriptures that are used to back up this claim are *Deuteronomy 7:6* and *Amos 3:2*. This special group came from the “seed” of Isaac and Jacob. The descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob comprise the twelve tribes selected to inherit the Kingdom of God. These tribes, White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and kindred people are God’s true Children of Israel. Only the Aryan race fulfills every detail of biblical prophecy and history concerning Israel according to Christian Identity beliefs.

Adam is believed to be the true father of the White race because he was made in the image of God and is referred to as the son of God in the Bible. Adamic man consists of body, soul, and spirit. This gives him a higher form of consciousness and distinguishes him from all the other races and of course, Adamic man is White. Because Christian Identity adherents believe Whites are God’s chosen people, they reject integration and embrace total separation of the races. Intermarriage is considered to be a satanic attempt to destroy the chosen seed line.³ Currently enlightened Whites who adhere to Christian Identity tenets are awaiting the return of their Savior. When this event occurs, all the tribes of Israel (Whites) will gather in the United States, which happens to be the new Promised Land. According to Christian Identity interpretation of scriptures, America is where God brought the seed of Israel to establish his Kingdom as a Christian nation.⁴

Ole Time Religion: Roper Style

In an interview that I conducted with the Ropers in October 2009, they told me that there is a resurgence of Christian Identity in the White nationalist movement. According to Billy, people who joined traditional Klan groups back in the 1950s and 1960s tended to be Christian Identity and therefore did not usually associate with any other groups that did not adhere to those beliefs.

Things have started to change because now lots of guys who come out of prison want to have some continuity with their racist beliefs and religion so they merge race and Christianity....so now you have a strain of Christian Identity among the younger folks who are not Klansmen that is on the ascendancy along with the Creativity worldview and agnosticism and even Odinism. It really kind of surprised me when I realized what was going on.
[Billy, October 9, 2010]

³ The scriptures cited as upholding this idea are *Exodus 34:14-16*; *Numbers 24:1-13*, *I Corinthians 10:8*; *Revelation 2:14*; *Deuteronomy 7:3-4*; *Joshua 23:12-13*; *I Kings 11:1-3*; *Ezra 9:2, 10-12*; *10:10-14*; *Nehemiah 10:28-30, 13:3, 27*; *Hosea 5:7*; and *Malachi 2:11-12*.

⁴ Material contained in this section is a synopsis of two sermons given by Christian Identity minister, Wesley A. Swift, in 1968. Swift’s writings are still extremely popular with contemporary Christian Identists.

Billy's wife, Stacy, interjected with the following statement:

I am really excited about it. I like Christian Identity. I used to be a skinhead and me and my friends really didn't pay much attention to religion. As I have gotten older, I have found a religion that makes sense to me. [October 9, 2010]

My next question was about their church. Even though their congregation tends to be more fundamentalist than progressive, they consider it to be non-denominational. They also agreed that if pressed to describe their religious perspective, most members would probably identify as Southern Baptist. The following quotes provide further insights into their attitudes about church and religion in general.

I go to church because I love God. I can get whatever I want from the sermon. I can also determine from the sermon if they just don't know any better...so I take something good from it in my own way. Going to church and Sunday school is good for our daughter too because she gets up and sings every Sunday with her church group and she socializes with her friends. [Stacy, October 9, 2010]

I am much more pragmatic than Stacy is when it comes to religion. I think it's a good thing for our child to have a Christian religious foundation. Then she make her own choices in the future. There is something really American about it. Ours is a small country church, very much like the one I was raised in as a child. Some people in the congregation I know would agree with me on most points concerning race and they are certainly rabidly anti-homosexual. Our Sunday school teacher preaches against homosexuals, hate crime laws, the government and Obama as much as he can get away with. I have yet to hear anyone protest about anything he has to say. [Billy, October 9, 2010]

Billy's views and his personal activism are well known in his church community. Even though he is agnostic he feels it is important to go to church with his family. They both laughed about their preacher's attempts to save Billy's soul from eternal damnation. Ever since Billy started attending church services with his wife and child, their minister began preaching about how Jesus was a Jew and the Holocaust was wrong. Billy commented that in rural Arkansas there is no reason to preach about Jews because no one knows any Jews. Billy and Stacy have a running joke about how many Jews will be killed in the Holocaust from Sunday to Sunday.

It seems like every Sunday the numbers increase by so many millions. It is really funny when he (their minister) starts talking about how God can forgive Nazis too. Billy kept saying, does he know who I am? I said oh yes he does, I told him all about you. [Stacy, October 9, 2010]

Stacy's religious upbringing was very different from her husband's. She was born in Oakland, California to a religiously diverse family. One side of her family is Pentecostal and the other side is Catholic. Her recollection of family gatherings includes the Catholic side enjoying wine and other spirits and the Pentecostal side maintaining a disapproving distance. As I stated earlier, Billy was raised in a fundamentalist Christian church with "hell fire and brimstone" preaching every

Sunday. When he was seven years old he took his Bible and visited all his neighbors, witnessing for the Lord.

The Roper side of the family is heavily involved in the same church that Billy and Stacy now attend. Billy's father is a Deacon and his 93 year old grandmother goes every Sunday that she is well enough. She sang a hymn at the service I attended with the family. It was during high school that Billy discovered the writings of Adolf Hitler and his attitude toward Christian beliefs began to change. At one point in his days as a youth recruiter for the National Alliance, an American Nazi organization, he referred to Jesus as a "Jew on a stick." Billy's father and grandmother are still very upset with him over this.

I wish Billy would leave that Hitler thing alone. Even though I was not the best Christian in the world, I didn't raise my son to say bad things about Jesus.
[Billy Roper, Sr., January 6, 2011]

During Billy's two year association with the National Alliance from 2000 until 2002, he became a member of Dr. William Pierce's church of Cosmotheism.⁵ Pierce performed the ceremony for Roper's first marriage. According to Roper, Cosmotheism supports the idea that there is a life force and a purpose to life that mankind is obligated to uphold with reverence and honor. The religion was created by Pierce and founded on the principle that the betterment of the White race is what all Whites should be working toward. Pierce felt that competition between the races was a good thing because, in his mind, Whites would always come out on top and they would be the ultimate winners of the inevitable race war.

Cosmotheism was based a little bit on English romantic poetry and a whole lot on tax evasionLord Byron and fooling the IRS. [Billy, laughing, October 9, 2010]

When we returned to the topic of Christian Identity, Billy commented that he wishes Whites were as aware as Jews are of their identity. He believes that Jewish people maintain their solidarity because of both their religion and their culture.

Look – Jews are the only group in the world with their own racially based state of Israel. Their citizenship is based on their ancestry. If White people in America tried to establish a state of White nationalists it would be like Serbia all over again. Every country in the world would come down on us. [Billy, October 9, 2010]

In the Bible, Revelation, it says that God scattered Whites all over the place and we have forgotten who we are as a people. The Jews have never forgotten who they are and they remind us all the time. Who is being punished the most nowadays? It's us. Whites are conveniently guilty for everyone else's problems – we are all evil racists and creators of the world's problems.
[Stacy, October 9, 2010]

⁵ William Pierce was Roper's mentor and the leader of National Alliance until his death in 2002.

Billy acknowledges that he is not a Christian but rather an agnostic; however, he likes Christian Identity and he uses it to make points about both race and Jews.

The thing I like about Christian Identity, and I think that you might agree with me is that the majority of White Americans are at least marginally Christian. Most people need some kind of crutch to lean on. So you allow them to have that crutch. The thing that supports Christian Identity beliefs is that all through the Bible there are admonitions against race mixing. I use Christian Identity for my benefit when I approach Christians who are racial but are having a major dilemma because they believe that Jews are God's chosen people. They feel that they can't criticize the Jews even though they have these liberal views and support Obama and civil rights and all kinds of things. We have to be on the Jews' side because of Armageddon and all that...the fact is that 850 years after the diaspora, the Khazar king in southern Russia converted along with his noblemen to Judaism. This forced all his subjects to do the same. Ashkenazi Jews were derived from the Khazar kingdom and once it disintegrated they spread throughout Eastern Europe. Now both Jews and fundamentalist Christians believe that Jews are God's chosen people because they supposedly inherited some covenant between God and Abraham. The point is clear, if the Eastern European Jews did not descend from Abraham, but instead from converts to Judaism, then they are no more God's chosen people than my pet dog is. If Christians believe that Jews are God's chosen people then they should all convert to Judaism. They should have their children marry Jews so that their grandchildren can become God's chosen people. That's what I would do if I believed that Jews were God's chosen people. But I don't believe that for the reasons I just stated. Christian Identity adherents believe that Whites are the true Israelites, the true children of God, and they are the ones who inherited the covenant I mentioned earlier. [October 9, 2010]

Billy's commitment to the White nationalist movement transcends his religious beliefs. As he continues his personal activism and mobilizes a political party, he is resolved to use Christian Identity dogma to help convince marginal Whites of the importance of segregation and separation of the races.

Discussion

Christian Identity theology has gone through several incarnations since it was first conceived by Howard Rand and William Cameron in early twentieth century America. There are conflicts with traditional Christianity which teaches believers to love their enemies and forgive those who sin. First of all, Christian Identity doctrine restates basic Christian tenets of love and forgiveness. Adherents believe that since Whites are the chosen people of God, salvation is attainable by Whites only. Other races are condemned to eternal damnation. Believers revel in the promise of a militant second coming of Christ where Whites will be victors in the final battle. They discount the idea of the 'rapture' that is embraced by fundamentalist Christians. Over the past twenty years research indicates that Christian Identity is the thread that holds contemporary extremist groups together (Barkun, 1989, 1994; Aho, 1990; Ridgeway, 1990; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; Dobratz, 2001). For contemporary leaders in the movement such as Billy Roper, Christian Identity doctrine is a way to attract marginal (unenlightened) Whites to the movement and build solidarity among believers.

Serious talk about the Aryan race is associated with Hitler and Nazi Germany. People in the White nationalist movement are not politically correct when it comes to discussions about the superiority of White Aryans and they seek out the company of likeminded others in sites such as Stormfront.org, White Revolution, and others that are available on the Internet. Among contemporary extremists, eugenics is a valid science and they refer to the work of Arthur de Gobineau (1915), William Graham Sumner (1906), and Carlton Coon (1948), to name a few.

Christian Identity in its present configuration retains the sense of millenarian imminence inherited from British-Israelism (Barkun, 1994:112). American Identity proponents emphasize the centrality and importance of America in the millenarian vision. The use of pyramidology has been discounted to avoid the embarrassment of incorrect predictions.⁶ Traditional British-Israelism was not particularly anti-Semitic which provided another reason for American Christian Identity theologians to distance themselves from it. The belief that the origin of the Jews is satanic and their bloodline irreparably tainted resulted in justification for demonization of Jews that continues to this day among contemporary Christian Identists.

Even though eugenics was declared unreliable during the 1930s, a new eugenics movement has resurged in the United States and Canada. In 1995, David Lykken, a psychology professor at the University of Minnesota wrote a book titled *Antisocial Personalities*. He takes a hereditarian view of criminal behavior and theorizes that people who are genetically pre-disposed to obey the law and submit to authority are likely to grow up as law abiding citizens no matter how dysfunctional their parents may be. According to Lykken, genes set the direction of behavior. Another prominent racial scholar, J. Philippe Rushton, hypothesizes that race is a biological concept with Asians at the top of the racial hierarchy and Africans at the bottom (1995). His ideas first came to the attention of the scientific community at the annual meeting of the American Association for Advancement in Science in 1989. Rushton draws heavily on the work of Arthur Jensen (1974), Hans Eysenck (1971), Daniel Vining (1982, 1983), R. T. Osborne (1969), and Richard Lynn (2001) who are all contributors to contemporary eugenics-inspired books and publications. Despite the controversy, Rushton continues to obtain funding for his research. His theory dwells on differences in evolutionary development between species, including humans. The ideas of both Lykken and Rushton give credence to many of the racist ideas that are part and parcel of Christian Identity theology.

Conclusion

In an early conversation with Billy Roper, I asked him to describe his belief system. He stated that he considers himself to be a "biologic racist." What this means is that he adheres to the doctrine that Whites are biologically superior to all other races. He isolates his reading to pseudoscientific books and articles that support his ideas. His wife Stacy is not as widely read and she does not have a college education. She does read the Bible, however, and she interprets it through

⁶ In 1859 John Taylor, an eccentric British publisher, posited that the architect who had planned and supervised the building of the Great Pyramid of Cheops was not an Egyptian but rather the biblical patriarch Noah.

the frame of Christian Identity doctrine. They both believe that the concept of natural equality is non-existent and is an outright lie that has been perpetrated by Jews to kill the White race. Billy cites the founding fathers quite often in our conversations:

Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln all spoke out against integration and race-mixing. Many of them owned slaves themselves so they were acutely aware of how limited Black intelligence was and still is. [January 6, 2011]

With a Master's Degree in Anthropology, Billy is familiar with the anthropological view on race. He is highly critical of the Boas-Columbia school of anthropologists whose political motivation was suspect. In his opinion advancement of egalitarian ideology has superseded the search for truth among members of this discipline. Their scholarly agenda has distorted the thinking of generations of Americans (email communication, January 20, 2011).

The Ropers are convinced their ideas are correct. They believe in the higher and lower order of races. Whites are at the top of their racial hierarchy and Blacks are at the bottom. They both agree that people are so afraid of being labeled racist that they lose sight of what is most important and that is to insure that society remains guided by the most capable citizens – White citizens. Billy is not so concerned with biblical scripture and he questions the existence of God. Stacy, on the other hand, believes that the Bible is the word of God and that God is male and White. She believes the Bible states certain guidelines and laws to live by, one of which is the law of genes and heredity. Rejecting all Judeo-Christian references, Stacy maintains that racial pride and separation of the races are among the most important tenets of her religious belief system.

Christian Identists and White racial activists immerse themselves in literature that supports their beliefs about race and the superiority of Whites. They also interpret the scriptures in their own way in order to justify their thought processes. A low tolerance for diversity and inter-racial relationships builds solidarity among people in the movement and those who embrace Christian Identity theology. Billy's and Stacy's story is unique in that they spoke openly about their religious views. Billy uses bits and pieces of Christian Identity doctrine to further his political agenda and recruit members to his group. For Stacy, Christian Identity doctrine is her religion of choice and it guides her life. As a recovering addict, she also clings to her church and religion to help her maintain her sobriety.

I have been clean and sober for almost two years now. As I told you earlier I was a skinhead for most of my teenage years. It was sort of a rebellious thing but I got addicted to drugs and alcohol. When I moved to Arkansas and met Billy I realized I needed to change for both my daughter and him. When I found my church it really helped me to focus on my recovery. I feel like now I'm finally living a good life.

Dianne Dentice received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas in May 2006. Her area of research interest is the American separatist movement. Currently she is focusing her research on the 21st century Ku Klux Klan.

Dr. Dentice is an Assistant Professor at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

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Makarios: Redefining Blessings in the Context of the Eminent Threat of Poverty

*Michael D. Royster
Prairie View A&M University*

Introduction

In general terms, the mission of the North American church assumes a vantage point of economic self-sufficiency. Such vantage points have impacted the connotation of the term “blessing”. However, U.S. economic downturns are not new, but recently have impacted a host of least probable populations, and church U.S. culture. Therefore, this paper explores the effects that large sectors of society entering the ranks of poverty have had on the traditionally affluent church culture. Second, the common usage of the term “blessing” has been implicitly associated with a particular brand of American materialistic prosperity, which differs substantially from Biblical prosperity. Such materialistic prosperity functioning as a cultural goal has its theoretical roots in Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The flaws in Weber’s theory can be attributed to the human control over the distribution of resources that created social and economic inequalities that are independent of faith. However, the ideology has a long lifespan. While the change in economic reality frequently occurs at a quicker rate than the change in ideology, church culture as an institution has fallen under three primary categories in response to shifts in economics: (1) Churches have accumulated large amounts of debt in order to sustain the illusion that there is no economic crisis so the congregation can feel secure in the church. (2) Churches have downsized paid staff, reduced overhead, and suspended expensive mission trips, due to supporters assuming that unemployment or underemployment would not affect them. In addition, congregations have underestimated the degree of devastation that accompanies severe economic hardship. (3) Church supporters became discouraged due to prolonged personal economic hardships, despite a lack of blessings as traditionally understood. The various meanings of blessing include *makarios* and *eulogetos*, are explored in order to broaden the denotation, despite its truncated appropriation within the context of church culture, while applying social and economic theory to explain the relationship between the Church, human behavior, human attitudes and the economy.

The Denotation of Makarios

The concept of “blessing” or the state of being “blessed” as used in both Matthew and Luke’s version of the Beatitudes derives from the original Greek word *makarios*. The modern day Western connotation of “blessed” refers to financial prosperity; adequate physical health; having an exceptional aptitude, skill, or talent; or an overall sense of well being. However, *makarios* refers to “having God’s favor bestowed upon.” *Makarios* does not necessarily imply the absence of life challenges such as failing health, lack of economic security, or lack of recognized skills and

talents. Skills and talents have only seasonal benefits, good health will eventually end in death, and economic security can cease through a layoff, lawsuit, audit, accident, health crises, common and high-tech thievery, and a host of unexpected events. Although, the word does not directly translate as “blessed” or “happy”, the word can be described as within God’s favor, meeting God’s approval, or well received by God. In the New Testament, *eulogetos* solely refers to accolades to God.

The Effects of the “Spirit of Capitalism”

According to Sallie McFague, typical middle class North American Christians of have at least subconsciously embraced the neoclassical market model of economic rules which consists of an “ideology of greed and its goal of growth”¹. The cultural goal of unyielding consumption does not relate to any creedal statement; however, religious institutions produce sub-narratives that shape cultural values on a large scale. For example, the motive behind reciting the text Romans 8:31 without reference to context, “If God is for us, who is against us?”² Consequentially, the message received can become Biblical justification for being part of “the elect” fused with ethnocentric exceptionalism. Such beliefs were partially theoretically explained by Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which concludes that capitalism’s beneficiaries are “God’s elect”. When such macro-messages derive from religious institutions, they become linked to an authority such that the messages become sanctioned by God. Despite its Biblical meaning or theological implication, society has reconstructed the meaning of “blessing” as primarily material benefits as it had been initiated through the church.

America’s brand of “materialistic prosperity” has its roots in the acquired cultural goal of the capitalist ideal. The ideal of capitalism in its purest and unregulated form entails yielding the maximum production, from as few producers as possible for as little as possible. The connotation of such prosperity entails existing on the beneficiary side of capitalism; however, the Spirit of the Beatitudes poses a challenge to the masses both locally and abroad who “do not share in the victory of capitalism”³. On a global level, the widening gap between the affluent and the poor, with a fading middle indicates the resulting trajectory of the distribution of the world’s resources. “If nothing else, the increasing poverty of children even in the United States and the death of 35,000 children everyday throughout the world from preventable causes must serve as a wake-up call”⁴. Approximately, one in seven children in sub-Sahara Africa dies before the age of five. Approximately seventy percent of the world’s population lives off of less than twenty percent of the U.S. standard poverty level annually. While the average life expectancy in the U.S. is approximately seventy-eight, as of 2010 the average life expectancy in Haiti is twenty-nine. With the proliferation and mobility of globalized capital, private

¹ Knitter and Muzaffar, 2002: 119

² Romans 8:31 New Revised Standard Version, 1989

³ Rieger, 1996: 1

⁴ United Nations’ Human Development Report, 1996

companies face greater pressure “to move their investments to countries with less-demanding regulatory systems, for example to countries with lower labor and environmental standards”⁵. Unlike earlier eras, the world’s poor have become increasingly aware of their impoverished conditions and degree of deprivation. “Poverty can no longer be spiritualized. Nor with a certain fatalism can poverty be left to the merciful acts of the church”⁶. Partisan polarization contributes to the failure of treating the needs of the poor as urgent. Hyman Bookbinder, a former Assistant Director of the Economic Opportunity made an ideological neutral statement which theorized a way to fix the problem of poverty in America with the following statement: “the poor can stop being poor if the rich are willing to become even richer at a slower rate”⁷.

The Horatio Alger myth which implies that “if a person is smart, works hard, and holds the proper values will surely be able to climb the social ladder and achieve success”⁸, has been accepted as gospel. Despite exceptions, the parameters of individual social status typically depend on ascribed characteristics, such as gender, race, nationality, inherited wealth, poverty, or the overall social position of their parents. “Rationality and science have the highest degree of validity in the West,”⁹ except for when it comes to race. “There is almost everywhere, a noxious synergy between gender and race based inequalities and economic inequalities: for example, the majority of poor women in the United States are women of color”¹⁰. Such empirical claim often accompanies an ideologically driven counter argument with accounts of unlikely candidates who have gone beyond/ the social-economic “glass ceiling”. This approach acknowledges the success of exceptional racial, ethnic, or gender minorities including impoverished immigrants, as conclusive evidence that structural barriers only exist in the imagination. A second tactic used to neutralize relative deprivation would be to use the populations from the least industrialized nations of the world as the “measuring stick” of comparison who experience absolute deprivation such that the degree of poverty becomes life-threatening. Typically, a poor person in the United States would be rich if compared to the average person in Haiti, India, Cambodia, or Sierra Leone. Rags-to-riches accounts often omit the fact that upward mobility requires assistance such as someone offering them an opportunity in comparison to being denied. “It serves the interest of some and not others to keep the social roots of suffering and disease out of view.”¹¹ As a defense mechanism against collective guilt towards direct or indirect contributions to unnecessary suffering and disease, human creatures and groups frequently employ a combination of “techniques of neutralization”¹² mainly “denial of responsibility”¹³.

⁵ Paarlberg, 2008: 181

⁶ Rieger, 1996: 130

⁷ Bookbinder, Hyman, statement made December 29, 1966, previously referenced by Martin Luther King Jr. in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, 1968

⁸ Hays, 2003: 176

⁹ Weber, 1930, 1998: 16

¹⁰ Saussy, 2010: 532

¹¹ Saussy, 2010: 538

¹² Sykes, Gresham and David Matza, 1957: 664-670

¹³ Sykes, Gresham and David Matza, 1957: 667-670

“Most Americans want to believe that we live in a smoothly functioning meritocracy”¹⁴. Such beliefs become prone to change as former middle-class enter the ranks of the “new poor”, due to unforeseeable circumstances such as long-term unemployment, health crises without adequate financial means, or natural disasters.

Although non-Asian ethnic minority males have historically been the most vulnerable of the male population in losing their family “bread winning” capabilities, men across the racial spectrum have faced increased vulnerability as male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing rank as one of the more severely affected industries. “Data from the Chicago Urban Poverty and Family Life Survey show that efforts by out-of-school inner-city black men to obtain blue-collar jobs in the industries in which fathers had been employed have been hampered by industrial restructuring”¹⁵. With the acceleration of technology, the future of certain industries is uncertain. When members of society lack success in adjusting to changes in a given industry, then they face the eminent threat of poverty. “In 2009, with the country in a deep recession, the U.S. national safety net is even more frayed. The welfare policies enacted in the 1990s failed to anticipate and prepare for an economic crisis of this depth”.¹⁶

Church and Cultural Response to the Recession

Church financial crises’ have become more widespread since economic realities often change at a faster rate than ideological adjustment. Social Theorist William Ogburn coined the concept “cultural lag”¹⁷ to explain how symbolic culture which consists of beliefs and customs does not necessarily change at a pace consistent with the material culture. And, material culture to an extent functions as the driving force behind perceptions of ideas and information. Economics shapes culture, communal perspectives of the world, and collective theological understandings of God’s self-disclosure. As the tides of the economy change, people’s acquired beliefs tend to lag behind with a longer life span. The danger that can arise from prolonged individual and cultural affluence lies in their patterns of acquired habits, the denial of addiction to “conspicuous consumption”¹⁸, psychological and physical disconnection from the poor and impoverishment, and the underestimating the power of the human freewill and God’s sovereignty.

Acquired habits in themselves do not equate to transgression; however, they shape sub-conscious decisions, and impact both individual and collective theological understandings. The root of all acquired habits that deriving from prolonged affluence lies in the assumption that the devastations and perils of poverty exist only remotely. The longer the period of experienced affluence, especially if the affluence was inherited from previous generation, there become an increase in the belief in the

¹⁴ Hays, 2003: 176

¹⁵ Wilson, 1996: 30

¹⁶ Morgen, Acker, and Weigt, 2010: xvi

¹⁷ Ogburn, William, coined the expression in “Cultural Lag as Theory” 1957

¹⁸ Veblen, Thorstein, coined the expression in *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899

exemption from the possibility of economic tragedy. Churches and para-church faith-based organizations tend to follow the same patterns with theological reinforcement of the belief that experiencing severe economic loss is improbable and remote. Verbal professions of faith at best reflect cerebral beliefs, yet “core beliefs” manifest through practiced behaviors. In Martin Luther King Jr.’s sermon “Rediscovering Lost Values”, he used the term “practical atheism”¹⁹, to describe the professed belief in God, while simultaneously living “as if God does not exist”²⁰.

When the church takes an apolitical stance and remains silent, when propaganda and ultraconservative subcultures tag sectors of society as the “deserving poor” or lazy “welfare queens” despite the fact that many “played by the rules and what happened to them was not their fault”²¹, then in essence the church as an institution becomes supportive of an implicit culture war waged against the poor by default. Such ideologies easily become interwoven into theological discourse and rhetoric, while denying the existence of poverty as attributed to the denial of access to legitimate means of acquiring sufficient resources. Biblical references to texts such as “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”²² or “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat”²³, provides extra theological support against the masses of undeserved poor. Frequently, the word “willing” is omitted when recited, which attacks the unemployed. Such texts can easily be manipulated into justifying near-slave labor for below a livable wage, without regard for compassion or humane treatment by the employer. Consequentially, such ideologies deny that there lies an element in attaining employment and livable wages that exist beyond the worker’s control. Seeking employment with sufficient wages does not equate to becoming hired. Also, nepotism and discrimination persists in hiring practices, yet are difficult to prove. The time and expense of Civil Rights lawsuits discourage victims from opening cases through the judicial system.

Although the consequences of church related seminars, conferences, workshops, banquets, and retreats lack intension, collectively they make a public display of social inequality, such that the sub-middle class tends to face institutional elimination or highly inconvenienced due to registration fees, travel and lodging expenses. Such practices overlook two critical areas: (1) the events tend to have little likelihood in meeting substantial needs of the sub-middle class. (2) The working poor often lack flexibility in taking time off from work.

Based on research reported by *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, while church’s continued to cling to old habits of consumption, expenditures have either increased or leveled since the downturn leading up to the most recent economic recession. According to *Christian Today Australia*, church revenue through giving

¹⁹ King, Martin Luther Jr., term used in sermon “Rediscovering Lost Values” delivered on February 28, 1954

²⁰ King, Martin Luther Jr., term used in sermon “Rediscovering Lost Values” delivered on February 28, 1954

²¹ Shipler, 2004, 180

²² Genesis 3:17, the curse of Adam, New Revised Standard Version, 1989

²³ 2 Thessalonians 3:10, New Revised Standard Version, 1989

has declined with the Pacific States experiencing a fifty-five percent decrease and a forty-six percent decrease in the Mountain States. Mega-churches have suffered the most; while all sized churches have endured some effects. The most common adjustments to the drastic shift included cutting staff travel from the budget, downsizing conference expenses, canceling building renovations and expansion projections, and reducing full and part-time staff. Some smaller and less affluent churches have replaced full-time pastors with part time pastors. The Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church began drastically reducing clergy prior to “the official economic meltdown”. Perhaps, they were able to detect a slow leak in revenue well in advance in order to be in a more favorable position if the economy worsened and hoping for an economic recovery, there lays a great probability that faith-based organization will likely be more frugal which entails spending only as necessary; or the path of debt accumulation with mounting interest in order to maintain the illusion that the congregation is “blessed”.

Biographical Note

Michael D. Royster is a faculty member at Prairie View A&M University in the Division of Social Work, Behavioral and Political Science, and has previously served as an adjunct faculty member at Houston Graduate School of Theology in Homiletics. Recent courses taught include Social Stratification, Seminar in Race Relations, and Sociology of Minorities.

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Negotiating Modernity, Identity, and Pluralism in South Asia

Michael Barnes Norton
Villanova University

This paper will focus on the construction of religious identities and approaches to religious pluralism in contemporary South Asia. My motivation in examining the three main sources of this paper stems from the ways in which the objects of these studies mark spaces from which to critically assess modern Western ideas about religious identity: the topologies of religious, political, and ethnic differences in India, Sri Lanka, and other countries in the region, by virtue of both their colonial and indigenous heritages, are arranged in ways very different from those of the West. My conviction is that, by examining ways in which religious differences are negotiated specifically in postcolonial milieus, new productive approaches to such differences can be taken up, which can then be brought to bear on issues of pluralism around the globe.

In *Provincializing Europe*,^{vii} Dipesh Chakrabarty explores the ways in which historians coming from or practicing in postcolonial regions – specifically Bengal, the place of Chakrabarty’s birth and the area of his specialization – are obliged to take account of European history and theory, because Europe stands as the origin and classical locus of any modern practice of historiography. However, the reverse does not hold: European historians do not stand under a similar obligation with regard to the histories of non-European peoples (41-2). Thus, he claims that “insofar as the academic discourse of history ... is concerned, ‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ and so on” (27). The same could be said for discourse about religion; indeed, questions of the discursive construction of religion in postcolonial settings emerge repeatedly in Chakrabarty’s discussion. His goal in emphasizing such unbalanced discursive constructions, however, is not simply to undermine the privilege given to the figures of Europe or the West – an operation that could too easily transform into naïve cultural relativism. Instead, his aim is a recognition and analysis of the privileged position of Europe globally that uncovers the ways that European rationality “has been made to look obvious far beyond the ground where it originated” (43). The unmistakable fact that this form of rationality must play a crucial part in any academic analysis, even (and perhaps especially) one that attempts to trace its lineage historically and geographically against the grain of its claims to universality, posits within Chakrabarty’s work a certain basic aporia: “the project of provincializing Europe must realize within itself its own impossibility” (45).

This constitutive impossibility reveals itself within an analysis of Marxist historiography, in which Chakrabarty identifies a tension between a major universalizing discourse and minor discourses of difference that exceed or are excluded by it. The very multiplicity and flexibility of such minor discourses destabilize the (self-)definition of a supposedly universal concept, such as capital. This is not to say that, ultimately, capital cannot operate globally; there is certainly much evidence that it can and does. The point is that its operation cannot be taken to be homogenous throughout its undoubtedly global scope. In a sense, the global

itself is a product of capital taken as a universal category of human economic exchange, but each localization of this universal category will also produce its own singular alternatives. In the interchanges between the universal and the singular, each side is modified by the other, such that the universal cannot ever fully “realize” itself in history. It is instead continually disrupted by encounters with what it might otherwise exclude or ignore (71).

The singularity that appears as the alternative to the universalizing or generalizing concept, should not, however, be understood simply as that which stands alone, “in itself” opaquely resistant to categorization. It always stands in relation to the universal it challenges. Chakrabarty understands the singular as a limit concept that arises in and as resistance to “our attempt to see something as a particular instance of a general category” (82). Thinking singularity narrowly within the fields of sociology and historiography, he argues that cross-cultural comparisons based on generalizations from specific concrete examples are possible only on the basis of universalizing narratives to which such examples can be reduced or in light of which the differences that marks the distance between such examples can simply be ignored. On the basis of a Marxist analysis of capitalist production, one can place the spiritual beliefs of Bolivian miners and Bihari laborers in the same category – but only by assuming that the Marxist narrative expresses the reality of both sets of beliefs. If the relationship is reversed, and one attempts to analyze Marxist critique in terms of the relations between each group and their respective spirits, the general category is disrupted and any comparison becomes problematic. Without the master narrative to show the way, any relationship between the objects of belief of the Bolivian and Bihari workers is obscured. As singular, they each resist easy integration into a universalizing conceptual structure that works, with a view toward its full self-realization, to undermine differences (83).

It is important to emphasize, though, that the resistance Chakrabarty recognizes in the singular implies opacity with respect neither to universals nor to other singulars. Plurality thought in terms of singularity entails a certain amount of interrelation, porosity, or permeability that Chakrabarty explores under the model of translation. What this model articulates is a relation between singulars that does not need to appeal to a third, universal term in order to ground itself. For instance, “the Hindi *pani* may be translated into the English ‘water’ without having to go through the superior positivity of H₂O” (83). Chakrabarty goes on to cite an example of translations from Hindu to Islamic religious expressions in the Bengali *Shunya-puran*, in which gods from the Hindu pantheon are said to have incarnated themselves as personages from Islamic religious history such as Muhammad and Adam.^{viii} These translations were inscribed during a period of Islamic conversion in Bengal, and are thus products of the political and cultural realities of that time and place (84). In light of this, one should of course not ignore the way in which these translations participate in the appropriation of Hindu religious imagery by Islam in order to undercut the authority of the former. However, what Chakrabarty wants to emphasize with reference to such examples is that no super- or sub-structure is required to make the logic of these translations work. “The translations in these passages take for their model of exchange barter rather than the generalized exchange of commodities,” he writes, adding that these translations “are based on

very local, particular, one-for-one exchanges...” (85). They neither appeal to nor set up a general framework within which translations of religious expressions *as such* would operate; they stay entirely on the level of the singulars between which this particular translation is being enacted.

From a different but not unrelated perspective, Ashis Nandy pursues a critique of the modern concept of secularism motivated largely by what he sees as the failures of this model in contemporary Indian politics. The idea of secularism – wherein religious beliefs and practices are expurgated from the political sphere as a means to the end of establishing a common ground for public discourse free of the intractable dissent that religious difference is thought inevitably to introduce – has, according to Nandy, been imported to South Asia from the modern West in tandem with other modern ideas, such as the nation-state and the “individual” self. The connections between secularism and commitment to the modern nation-state are especially noteworthy, as the latter tends to reduce traditions operative at local levels either to instances of larger, homogenous institutions that can be effectively managed or to backward relics that must be brought up to speed with the modern world or discarded. In either case, the modern state and its constituent notion of the individual citizen (both concepts thought to be universally applicable to all humans) go hand-in-hand with a universal-categorical conception of religion that is able to envelope both larger, institutional forms and smaller, local ones. In order to offer a successful critique of secularism, then, it would be necessary to analyze and perhaps dismantle its corresponding notion of religion.

In his *Time Warps*,^{ix} Nandy identifies in the conceptualization of South Asian religions two facets that have increasingly been separated from each other in the processes of both colonization and secularization: that of “faith” and that of “ideology.” “By faith,” he says, “I mean religion as a way of life, a tradition which is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural” (62). Ideology, by contrast, designates the way in which a religion comes to stand for a population grouping in political discourse, wherein the issues at stake are not exclusively or necessarily “religious” at all. Religion-as-ideology has less to do with the actual lives and practices of religious people than it does with an idealized pure form of a religion (62). “One way of explaining the difference between the two,” Nandy writes, “is to conceive of ideology as something that, for individuals and people who believe in it, needs to be constantly protected, and faith as something that the faithful usually expect to protect them” (63). It is religion construed as ideology with which the modern state “prefers to deal.” This is largely because the flexibility and fluidity found in religions understood as ways of living – religion-as-faith – make them not only less distinctly identifiable according to ideal categories and political demographics but also less manageable within the sharp division between public and private spheres that is central to modern social and political organization. Religion-as-ideology, on the other hand, is something molded more or less according to same model as the nation-state, which can thus be posited over against the latter. Just as the state occupies the sphere of the political, religion is supposed to occupy the private moral sphere. Ironically, though, it is just this understanding of religion that has helped pave the way for religiously-motivated nationalist movements such as the Hindutva movement in India and the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan. The ideology of secularism,

according to this argument, thus ends up helping to produce its own enemy: religious ideologies that focus on political (and sometimes violent) engagements in order to defend their own rigidly defined identities from what they see as the encroachment of anti-religious social forces.

Against this ideological, antagonistic model of the relationship between the modern state and religious traditions that are understood as “non-modern”, Nandy proposes an alternative that would integrate what he identifies as traditional resources of religious tolerance and cooperation into contemporary political structures. This proposal is non-secular insofar as it does not attempt to evoke an environment of tolerance out of a supposedly universal public space that is in principle free of particular religious commitments, but instead draws on precisely those commitments that already exist within a particular situation to build understanding and pluralistic political collaboration. He argues that “each major faith ... includes *within* it an in-house version of the other faiths both as an internal criticism and as a reminder of the diversity of the theory of transcendence” (68). Public spaces reconstituted in order to accommodate conversations among these *particular* commitments to diversity would not be strictly universal, but if they are constructed pluralistically according to the situations out of which they arise then they can achieve a level of generality appropriate to their own circumstances. The strength of this approach lies especially in what Nandy identifies as an inescapable fact of modern politics with regard to religious traditions: “It is assumed that in a participatory democracy, however imperfect, citizens will employ categories and interpretative frames in the public sphere known to them through their heritage, in turn transmitted through religious, community and family traditions” (116-7). The secularist approach aims to minimize the influence of tradition and heritage while appealing to universal categories and concepts. Nandy’s model attempts instead to maximize the constructive possibilities of traditions, undermining the efficacy of secularist discourse in order to “self-consciously accommodate non-secular modes/codes of tolerance in faiths and cultures.” These “modes of tolerance” would then be able to operate to at least some degree on their own terms, without the demand to account for themselves according to secularist political norms (120).

To highlight some of the ways in which these modes actually do operate, he draws on examples of what we could call hybrid religiosity in South Asia. In many locales, and for a variety of historical and cultural reasons, there have arisen religious ways of living that incorporate elements from two or more “major” religious traditions. One example is the apparent adoption of certain Hindu religious rituals, not instead of but alongside their Christian beliefs and practices, by British colonials during the nineteenth century (141). A more contemporary survey that Nandy cites points to over 150 distinct religious communities in India that can be properly understood as simultaneously Hindu and either Christian or Muslim (143-4);^x the addition of hybrids other than these may bring the figure closer to 400 communities (125). Now, it is not the case that the members of each of these communities would identify *themselves* as part of more than one major tradition; rather, it is their practical incorporation of elements from diverse sources that marks their hybridity. In this way, they exhibit the operational pluralism within their own communities that Nandy sees as a resource for cultivating practical interreligious tolerance. Of course,

this kind of pluralism is no guarantee against the eruption of intolerance and violence – especially since hybrid identities that do not have the rigid institutional support of majority traditions may be more susceptible to anxiety about their own continued existence. This is why Nandy sees the overemphasis on religion-as-ideology that accompanies modern secularism as such a danger, for it can work to engender such anxiety on the part of marginal communities.^{xi} The complex variety of non-monolithic and interrelated traditions faces the risk of being reduced to “six or seven standard, mutually exclusive faiths because, in the contemporary world, only such standard faiths enjoy respectability and political clout” (145). Sharp delimitations of religious traditions in such a situation would seem to work against, rather than foster, greater tolerance and more harmonious coexistence.

Nandy is not proposing, however, a simple rejection of modern secularist ideas in favor of a “return” to communal traditions and the resources they possess. Instead, his project is one of cultivating relationships that already exist among operationally plural religious traditions and forging new ones not only among “local” traditions but also between these traditions and the modern democratic state. One can make a strong case that this project presents a clear example of the constructive possibilities inherent in a thorough critique of European conceptual privilege that draws heavily on pluralist traditions in postcolonial milieus. Nandy’s advocacy of traditional pluralism as a resource for fostering contemporary tolerance seems to resonate with Chakrabarty’s appeal to a notion of situated translation that does not need to appeal to any category of general equivalence in order to be effective. Despite Chakrabarty’s expressed concern that Nandy’s position remains overly decisionist with respect to its evaluation of traditions – that it “overstates the autonomy we have with respect to the past”^{xii} and understates the potential of the past to surprise us in sometimes terrifying ways – it is useful to draw on the insights of both positions in order to begin to understand the complex discursive and practical structures of religious pluralism in a postcolonial setting.

Nandy’s discussion also touches on the issue of religious identities, especially insofar as these identities are not easily assimilable into dominant discursive categories. In order to explore this issue more directly, we will now turn to Ananda Abeysekara’s *Colors of the Robe*. In this work, Abeysekara looks to both public and literary discourse in order to trace the construction and change of Sinhala Buddhist identities in contemporary Sri Lanka.^{xiii} He argues that discourses about modern Sri Lanka in terms of ethnic, religious, or political identity too easily take these categories as stable concepts, their interrelations being the only factors that are understood to transform over time as new historical situations arise. On the contrary, Abeysekara maintains that specific historical situations and the discourses to which they give rise produce changing, contestable accounts of what counts in each case as religious, ethnic, political, etc. The identities and differences defined according to each of these categories are thus also constructed discursively and are constantly shifting. Abeysekara’s aim, then, is to trace the contingent construction of Buddhist and Sinhala identity in contemporary Sri Lanka, with a view toward articulating these categories outside the rubrics provided by either colonialist or anti-colonialist thought. He argues that attention to the contours of discourse about religion within the “specific knowledges” of contingent circumstances “should form the basis for

disciplinary works seeking to understand religion, identity, and difference as historically varying ideas” (16).

Abeysekara positions his discussion against those who would claim to analyze contemporary Sri Lanka according to pre-established categories that are readily available “outside” the historical situation. The primary example of such a concept is that of Buddhism, which for reasons historical, political, and demographical has become inseparable from questions surrounding the political and social construction of modern Sri Lanka. Buddhism, according to Abeysekara’s argument, has been understood as a given, unitary tradition that is subject to either faithful or unfaithful interpretation in the present. Instead, whether this or that contemporary strain of Buddhist practice is authentic or inauthentic is, in a sense, a question secondary to questions concerning the ways in which such a debate is constructed in the first place; to put it another way, authenticity as a category arises only within a specific discursive conjuncture where the conceptualization of a tradition is already up for grabs.

To say, however, that there is not a given social or historical reality called Sri Lankan Buddhism to which modern accounts and, more importantly, modern practices conform to a greater or lesser degree is not to say that we are thus condemned either to moral relativism or to contests of power with regard to contemporary debates about the nature and role of the Buddhist tradition. Abeysekara’s argument is that “traditional Buddhism” is in fact available as a reference point, but it is available precisely *within* contemporary debates about what properly constitutes Buddhist tradition and what does not (65). Since the terms of these debates, and the conjunctures in which they arise, are constantly shifting, the discursive depictions of Buddhist tradition are not only continually contested but also continually unstable. An example is provided in the coincidence of the emergence of the Sri Lankan government’s “prototype of an apolitical monkhood” with the economically liberal policies of the Jayewardene administration, as well as the counter-type of the politically activist monk that emerged to oppose that government (109ff.). Abeysekara aims not to reduce divergent interpretations of Buddhist tradition to political considerations, but only to demonstrate the ways in which the tradition is and has been contested within contemporary milieus that include political, economic, and other factors. The contestation and attendant instability of the tradition does not, however, render it not *actually* existent; instead, this underscores the degree to which the tradition is both flexible and plural. This plurality does not stand in opposition to Buddhist identity but rather is part of that from which such identity is constituted.

In Abeysekara’s approach as in Nandy’s and Chakrabarty’s, we find that difference and plurality is not only inescapable but also a crucial part of living religious practices and their intersection with political and other considerations. In order to better understand the various roles of religions in the contemporary world, it is thus necessary that this pluralism be addressed. The examples explored here should demonstrate that tolerance need not be imposed from outside local traditions; pluralistic resources already reside within the frameworks of diverse religious practices and need only be brought to light.

Michael Barnes Norton is a graduate student in philosophy at Villanova University. He received the Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard Divinity School.

O Body, What Art Thou? **A Theological Critique of James F. Ross' Metamorphosis of the Human Body at Death**

Ben D. Craver
Wayland Baptist University--Albuquerque Campus

*It turns out that there cannot be a resurrection for me unless I will live forever
“together with the body I love.”¹*

—James F. Ross

Introduction

James F. Ross (1931-2010) was Professor of Philosophy and Law at the University of Pennsylvania. He earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from Brown University and a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Ross also held membership in the Pennsylvania Bar. Across a stellar academic career, he authored five books and more than 80 articles and papers.²

This paper focuses on Ross' analysis of personal survival between physical death and the general resurrection. For Ross, only four possible interpretations exist for explaining the survival process:³

1. *Dualism*—a person is not really a body, but uses or naturally inhabits one that can be reassembled or replicated;
2. *Separated souls*—although humans are living bodies, they have souls which, at the moment of death, separate from their body and endure throughout the death-gap until the final judgment, when their original bodies are reunited or reassembled;
3. *The apparent “death-gap”*—the “death gap” is apparent only to the living because the general resurrection is one's next experience after death; or
4. *Human metamorphosis*—either by natural or miraculous means at death, by which *bodily personal existence* [emphasis mine] continues until the general resurrection and everlasting body.

Ross analyzes each of the four possibilities pointing out briefly what he considers to be flaws in the first two. For example, he faults *dualism* primarily on ontological grounds because “it yields a false definition of human beings as an

¹ James F. Ross, Abstract of “Together With the Body I Love,” available online at Ross' University of Pennsylvania homepage: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jross/bodylove.htm>.

² James F. Ross, Curriculum Vitae, University of Pennsylvania, n.p. [cited January 2011]. Online: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jross/resume.htm>. Ross identified primarily with analytic philosophy, an approach which he described as the “abstract but rigorous argument which is mainly characteristic of philosophy in America and Britain.” See James F. Ross, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969).

³ Ross, Abstract; full article in “Together With the Body I Love,” in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, by The American Catholic Philosophical Association, Vol 75 (November 2001), 1-22, [cited January 2011]. Page references listed are to the online version; available at <http://www.nd.edu/~afreddos/courses/43151/ross-bodyilove.pdf>.

immortal soul using a mortal body.”⁴ And while he agrees that the concept of *separated souls* successfully explains resurrection—the same person is re-embodied—it leads to theological inconsistencies “with the religious requirements for particular judgment upon death, with the personal intercession of the Saints, with the personal purgation of others saved, and with the Communion of Saints that used to be in the Creed.”⁵

The final two alternatives win more favor in Ross’ thinking. The concept of the general resurrection and last judgment occurring in one’s experience immediately after personal death harmonizes well, he believes, with “hylomorphic theory and with religious belief, provided the ‘*death-gap*’ and the intercessions, miracles and prayers of and for the dead, are interpreted as belonging to our ‘time-situated’ appearances, but not to the explanatory reality that is timeless.”⁶

Ross, however, prefers the fourth interpretation, arguing that . . .

. . . humans materially metamorphose upon death and endure as whole persons, bodily, through the death gap until the General resurrection, with continuation of the phenomenal person and character and memory, and undergo the particular judgment, purgatory and the like, and at the end of the world are again, this time, miraculously transformed into the renewed and everlasting creation and glorified body.⁷

A human metamorphosis corresponds completely with the essentials of both a “hylomorphic understanding of nature and of the foundations of physical science.”⁸ What does Ross mean by “hylomorphic” and how does it inform his thinking?

The Philosophical Basis of the Hylomorphic Account of Nature

Hylomorphism is a fundamental Aristotelian philosophical concept or doctrine. The term theorizes that all ordinary physical objects are compositions of matter (*hylê*) and form (*morphê*). Key to both Aristotle and Ross is the notion of change.

For Aristotle, change involves two critical aspects: 1) something which survives, and 2) something which does not.⁹ Aristotle contends that “. . . one thing comes to be from another thing, and one sort of thing from another sort of thing, both in the case of simple and of complex things.”¹⁰ He illustrates the point by appealing

⁴ Ross, “Together With the Body I Love,” 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2. The statement discloses Ross’ Catholic loyalties and how Catholic tradition has influenced his philosophical formulations. Ross earned an undergraduate degree at Catholic University of America; the title of his Ph.D. thesis at Brown is, *A Critical Examination of the Analogy Theory of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ross, Curriculum Vitae).

⁶ Ross, Abstract.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (New York: Random House, 1941), 190a5-15.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Phys.* 189b30-35.

to a person learning to become musical. It is possible, Aristotle insists, that a person may change from being “not-musical” to being “musical.” If such a change takes place, “. . . man remains a man and is such even when he becomes musical, whereas what is not musical or is unmusical does not continue to exist . . .”¹¹

The change is confined to a particular category, in this instance, a human person. The person (*matter*) remains in existence, even while something is lost and something is gained (*form*). That which is lost is being “not-musical” and that which is gained is being “musical.”¹² Aristotle explains: “One part survives, the other does not: what is not an opposite survives (for 'man' survives), but 'not-musical' or 'unmusical' does not survive, nor does the compound of the two, namely 'unmusical man'.”¹³

Another of Aristotle’s favorite examples concerns the making of a bronze statue. Clearly, the bronze material does not contain the potential to turn itself into the statue. Something or someone fashions the unshaped substance and brings about the change. Even after the maker finishes the statue and the bronze has taken a new form, the primary matter—i.e., the bronze—remains. Aristotle explains, “for when a product (*the statue*) is made out of these materials (*the bronze*), the first matter is preserved throughout.”¹⁴

Thus, in its most basic and uncomplicated representation, hylomorphism simply identifies each of the two factors: 1) that which remains is *matter* and 2) that which is gained (or lost) is *form*.¹⁵ Ross presses this Aristotelian construct into philosophical service as he theorizes what happens to the human at the moment of physical death.

Hylomorphic Realism and Human Metamorphosis at Death

Ross contends that both naturally and conceptually the human animal¹⁶ cannot exist disembodied: “. . . we ARE living bodies and we can’t turn into something else at death.”¹⁷ Hylomorphic realism proves to be a valuable tool for Ross as he describes how the person survives bodily upon biological death and why it is important both philosophically and religiously.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Phys.* 190a10-15.

¹² Christopher Shields, "Aristotle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2009), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), n.p. [cited January 2011]. Online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/aristotle>.

¹³ Aristotle. *Phys.* 190a15-20.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 1014b30-35; emphasis mine,

¹⁵ Shields, n.p.

¹⁶ Ross, “Together With the Body I Love,” 1, asserts: “I AM a living body. I am an animal—not part of one—but really one; and so is Jesus, an animal.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2; emphasis his.

Ross describes the body as, “Any material, either originally informed or later informed by the soul, that is sufficient for one’s being, is one’s body.”¹⁸ For purely religious reasons, the material which composes the body must be sufficient to assure phenomenal continuity. If not, there would be no ontological person subject to eschatological reward or judgment and no valid reason for saintly intercession.¹⁹ Since *personal being* cannot, for religious reasons, be interrupted, neither can *bodily being* be placed in abeyance until the general resurrection.

The apparent “death-gap” (apparent only to the living since the general resurrection is one’s next experience after death) is thus a corollary of a religious requirement. It is a temporal manifestation of the consequence of a reality not itself in time. While the deceased may benefit from remission of temporal punishment and/or suffering upon biological death and the immediate experience of the general resurrection, the actual “prayers, sacrifices, alms of the living, and the miracles interceded for, are later—even centuries later than the saint’s death—‘in time.’”²⁰

Ross is left with one option—an interim metamorphosis. By metamorphosis, he does not mean a change of personal substance, but rather “the actualization of latent powers of the substantial form, as the soul develops the matter, as happens in gestation and maturation, and reverses in advanced aging.”²¹ Perhaps, as Ross can only speculate, the process continues upon death.

Metamorphosis is “a radical change of materialization . . . the transformation of a living thing, internally caused by its form’s developing suitable material into further active ability . . . previously impossible, in one single life and being . . .”²² Examples of “further activity” may be explained naturally; tadpoles become frogs and caterpillars become butterflies. Through the same biological process that animals and insects undergo change, Ross contends that a human person will at death undergo a radical but ordered, formally-driven fulfillment of a specific life.²³

Humans begin life, like other animals, with the powers that define them actual but latent. That is, powers such as the ability to reason and freely choose “emerge

¹⁸ Ibid., 2. Aristotle defines soul as “substance in the sense which corresponds to the definitive formula of a thing’s essence. That means that it is ‘the essential whatness’ of a body of the character just assigned.” See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith (New York: Random House, 1941), 412b10-15. When Ross states that “the soul informs the body,” he draws upon an Aristotelian concept by which the presence of a soul explains why this matter is the matter of a human being and not the matter of some other kind of thing, such as an axe. He explains further, 7, note 5: “The unique feature of the human soul is that it can subsist on its own, but not *ab initio* [“from the beginning”]. But, the soul *per se* is not sufficient to be the person. A body is requisite.”

¹⁹ Ibid. Again, the separated souls theory is at risk. Ross speculates that “the material bases could be a proton cloud (as perhaps it is now), if that is otherwise possible to preserve animality.”

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. Ross rejects the positions of both Aquinas and Scotus, insisting that metamorphosis is not a “succession of substantial forms [i.e., a living thing, then an animal, and lastly a human being; see 9, notes 34 and 36] for that [would] not preserve the unity of being required for a single life.”

by the soul's developing its matter suitably, and eventually go latent again from the unsuitable matter of senescent or comatose persons, but are not lost *to* the form or *from* the substance."²⁴ A person ambushed by senility is incapable of reasoning well, while newborns have no ability to reason at all. Yet the disparities in their respective abilities—including the loss of abilities by those with various mental challenges or the comatose—are not substantive changes resulting in loss of personhood.

For Ross, intact personhood is essential:

Metamorphosis at death may be even more radical, with the person departed from terrestrial life, but still retaining its whole being, including its characteristic memories and proclivities of choice and judgment, for which an animal basis is required, but not external animal organs. Still, traces won't do. The person has to be present for survival.²⁵

Human metamorphosis at biological death coheres with and relies upon hylomorphic theory at three points all utilizing the nature of Aristotelian forms:

1. Forms, like the rational soul, are active constitutive principles of things;
2. Forms, like songs, structures, or shapes, can typically be received in many kinds of matter; and
3. Forms can be transmitted and stored physically without exercising their definitive causal powers (e. g., mailed recordings of songs), and sometimes without informing the medium at all (as when color is naturally transmitted through the atmosphere, or software on the internet).²⁶

Aristotelian forms are thus indispensable for Ross' thinking. According to Aristotle, the form is "the essence of each thing and its primary substance."²⁷ They account for reproduction in animals, the axiomatic and principled behavior of things, and the replication of structures not realized during their transmission. This, Ross concludes, is what Aristotle meant by forms—they are active principles in nature. It is as if, he notes, "there are scripts that things follow in what they do by nature."²⁸

Will Aristotelian forms allow a radical interim human metamorphosis upon biological death? Ross concludes with a measure of epistemological humility:

Still, we can't show that humans metamorphose after death, or even that it is possible. For, consistency-to-us, and even a neat fit with our philosophy of science, will not assure real possibility. As I said, the notion of metamorphic

²⁴ Ibid; emphases mine.

²⁵ Ibid. Ross adds: "Animality is not suspended as basis for experience, but externality via operative organs is. This is the way an animal starts out its life as well."

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Met.* 1032b1; he explains further: "when I speak of substance without matter I mean the essence (1032b14)."

²⁸ Ibid., 5

survival fits with a general hylomorphic account of nature, and it fits well with common religious belief. But militating against the idea is the fact that it requires elements of physical science we know very little about.²⁹

Theological Issues and Human Death

The issue is not whether Ross accepts the fundamental Christian premise of continuing existence following biological death. He does not dispute the so-called intermediate state³⁰ although it is not mentioned as such in this particular article. His concern focuses rather on the *condition* of the believer during the interim between physical death and the general resurrection. His question is: “What does this body “look like”? Or perhaps: “O body, *what* are thou?”

Ross concedes that he has few supporters of the human metamorphosis theory and mentions none. He admits also that the phrase which forms the title of his address—“together with the body I love”—borders on being both “romantic and redundant.”³¹ The problem he raises, however, is a lively one for both theologians and philosophers. Do humans survive in a *material continuity* after biological death as they await the general resurrection?

Theologians and biblical scholars have much to say about the matter, most of which is irrelevant to the present topic since it fails to address the matter raised by Ross—the material continuity of the *person* immediately following death. The paucity of biblical materials related to the intermediate state only exacerbates the problem. The NT writings hold the most hope for gleaning information on the situation of the dead between death and the general resurrection.

The authors of the NT documents approach death in the light of the hope they found in the resurrection of Jesus. The authors are not, however, dismissive of death or of its merciless character. Death remains “a sinister force lying under the power of Satan and striking fear in human hearts” (Heb 2:14).³² Jesus Himself regarded death as a potent enemy (Mk 8:30-32) and longed to avoid its pain (Mk 14:35-36; Heb 5:7).

It is Paul, however, who provides the most strident and cynical assessment of death in the NT, linking it directly to human sin. Sin entered the world through Adam and “death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Traditionally, the intermediate state refers “either to the condition of all mankind between death and resurrection or to the period of time that elapses (from an earthly viewpoint) between the death of the individual and the consummation of history. This condition or period is called ‘intermediate’ because it lies between two fixed points; death and resurrection, and because it is temporary, ultimately being eclipsed by the ‘final state’ of mankind.” See Murray J. Harris, “The New Testament View of Life After Death,” *Themelios* 11:2 (January 1986): [47] 47-52.

³¹ Ibid., 2. It would be similar to saying, “I am here together with my foot, and my neck.”

³² Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 579; see also comments on 163.

5:12³³). Further, death is the payment or “wages” humans receive if they continue in sin without forgiveness through Christ (Rom 6:23, 7:11). For Paul, “the sting of death is sin” (1 Cor 15:56). But, Paul’s panoramic perspective on death also included its crushing defeat. Jesus “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). And though Christ’s battle with his enemies is intense, Paul confidently concludes that “[t]he last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Cor 15:26). The eradication of death ushers in a new dynamic. Paul explains:

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory” (1 Cor 15:53-54).

As hopeful as the news of death’s eschatological demise may be, these texts reveal little if anything about the nature of the dead in Christ and the material condition in which they survive until the resurrection. Even Paul’s confidence in “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1) seems to anticipate not the provisional bliss of the intermediate state but the final glorified body received at the *Parousia* of Christ.³⁴

One issue which so easily entangles biblical interpreters concerns the way humans mark time and specifically how time is related to eternity. The obsession with temporal issues has a significant impact upon interpretation of biblical texts. Two extremes should be avoided: 1) divorcing eternity from time “making eternity into a never-ending state of rest or quiescence disconnected from time” and 2) collapsing eternity into time “so that eternity becomes merely an endless succession of temporal units.”³⁵ The interpreter’s understanding of the time-eternity relationship is decisive for textual meaning.

For example, in 2 Cor 5, is Paul addressing a “when” question? Does he portray God as a divine clock-watcher ticking away the moments until the general resurrection at the *Parousia* of His Son? If Paul is not concerned with God’s timetable or with a provisional state of bliss, could he be describing an immediate “human metamorphosis” of the theological type?

Of 2 Cor 5:1, David E. Garland comments that the present tense verb ἔχομεν (“we have”) means that “there is no homeless interlude between the destruction of

³³ Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

³⁴ Grenz, 594. Paul is not here denying the intermediate state; he simply looks beyond it to the believer’s final glorification with Christ. F. F. Bruce insists that “Paul is no longer so much concerned with [the heavenly body] as with nearness to the Lord (the heavenly body is but the means by which this nearness is made possible).” See Bruce, *I & II Corinthians* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 205.

³⁵ Grenz, 597.

the earthly tent house and receiving the building from God.”³⁶ Paul’s blueprint of a building “eternal in the heavens” does not refer to a temporary or intermediate residence which would imply “some lesser form of existence.”³⁷ Rather, the adjectives ἀχειροποίητον (not made by human hands) and αἰώνιον (“eternal”) suggest that Paul is describing a permanent home ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (“in the heavens”). Thus, Paul maintains that “when Christians die they have resurrection bodies.”³⁸ Garland’s interpretation appears to position the dead outside of time as the earth-bound count it.³⁹

On the other hand, E. Earle Ellis insists that “while the Christian dead remain in time, they do not count time.”⁴⁰ He rejects the idea of instantaneous resurrection and refers instead to a personal “hiatus” between death and the general resurrection at the *Parousia*.⁴¹

He explains:

The hiatus in their individual being between their death and their resurrection at the last day of this age is, in their consciousness, a tick of the clock. For them the great and glorious day of Christ’s Parousia is only a moment into the future. The “intermediate state” is something that the living experience with respect to the dead, not something the dead experience with respect to the living or to Christ.⁴²

Does Ellis have a paradoxical connection to Ross? Ellis argues that Paul regards the body as the person and the person as the physical body.⁴³ The apparent

³⁶ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (NAC 29; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 252.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 253. Garland explains: “If eternal life is already present and discernible in the lives of those who bear the Spirit (5:5), then it follows that they will have a heavenly body at death and do not need to sleep or wait for resurrection.”

³⁹ Theologians typically refer to this interpretation and the resulting condition of the dead as instantaneous resurrection. See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1181. Erickson classifies W. D. Davies’ work, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955) as advocating an instantaneous resurrection.

⁴⁰ E. Earle Ellis, “*Sōma* in First Corinthians,” *Int* 44:2 (April 1990): 143.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* Ellis refers to Paul’s position as a “salvation-in-history eschatology.” See also Oscar Cullman: “the bodily resurrection of the individual is bound to the temporal course of [the redemptive] process, and therefore it cannot coincide with the time of the death of any given individual. Cullman, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. Floyd V. Filson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 232.

⁴³ Ellis and Ross appear to see through the same lenses. Ross insisted that both naturally and conceptually the human animal cannot exist disembodied: “. . . we ARE living bodies and we can’t turn into something else at death” (“Together With the Body I Love,” 2). Rudolf Bultmann seems to agree, noting: “it is clear that the *soma* is not a something that outwardly clings to a man’s real *self* (to his soul, for instance), but belongs to its very essence, so that we can say man does not *have* a *soma* he *is soma*, for in not a few cases *soma* can be translated simply ‘I’ (or whatever pronoun fits the context).” Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribner’s, 1951), 1:194.

agreement is all the more surprising since Ellis broadly classifies “those with lenses ground in Athens” as positing a dualism in which a living but disembodied soul separates from its human body upon death and is subsequently reunited at the general resurrection.⁴⁴

Ellis asserts that interpreters favoring Greek dualism are “numerous in Christian tradition.”⁴⁵ Clearly both Ellis and Garland, however, interpret Paul’s comments in 2 Cor 5 in a monistic manner. But, as Ellis contends, numerous Christian interpreters advocate a dualistic approach in which the soul survives in a disembodied state of bliss waiting for the resurrection and its reunification with the body.⁴⁶

There is at least one additional interpretation situated between Garland and Ellis. F. F. Bruce argues that Paul refers in 2 Cor 5 to an immediate spiritual body. He explains: “So instantaneous is the change-over from the old body to the new which Paul here envisages that there will be no interval of conscious ‘nakedness’ between the one and the other.”⁴⁷ Bruce rejects Ellis’ “hiatus” argument because it addresses an undefined, even if momentary, interval of disembodiment rather than enjoying the immediate presence of the Lord. Bruce posits that the speed of this bodily transition (metamorphosis?) compares to another of Paul’s statements that the change will be “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor 15:52).⁴⁸

Christian interpreters have developed a number of considerations for describing the condition of the dead in Christ prior to the general resurrection. Does anyone really know the answer? Of the difficulty in relating time and eternity, Emil Brunner writes: “*Perhaps* events which lie at a distance from each other in time are not separated from the standpoint of eternity, but simultaneous in the eternal Now.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ellis, 143; Ross again would agree with the incongruity of a separated soul.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Among them are: Erickson, 1184, whose interpretation focuses on “a model of human nature which allows for disembodied personal existence . . .”; Cullman, 240, who contends that connection with Christ becomes “more intimate as soon as we put off this physical body”; Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, 205; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco: Word Books, 1986), 106, posits: “For Paul the interim period is a bodiless one . . .”; Colin Kruse offers an ambiguous assessment: “the nakedness which Paul expects to avoid when he puts on the heavenly dwelling is the nakedness of a disembodied soul.” How the Apostle avoids this he fails to mention. See Kruse, *2 Corinthians* (TNTC 8; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 114; Terence Nichols maintains that Paul speaks in 2 Cor 5 of the intermediate state which “occurs after we have died and have been stripped of the earthly body but before we have put on the resurrected glorified body” at the *Parousia* of Christ. See Nichols, *Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 50; Anthony A. Hoekema who insists that Paul is referring to “a kind of intermediate body between the present body and body of the resurrection.” See, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 104-05; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 497-508.

⁴⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 312.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁴⁹ Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation*

It is significant that Brunner begins the sentence with “perhaps” signifying that he approaches the topic with uncertainty. While Paul may feel confident in writing, “We know . . .” (2 Cor 5:1); his interpreters do not. Bruce lessens the human anxiety to know explaining that if Paul failed to provide explicit answers to questions related to the condition of the dead and the kind of body they may or may not have, “this may be because he has received no clear revelation to this effect.”⁵⁰

A Theological Critique

The condition of the body after biological death has no definitive answer among either philosophers or theologians. It remains the final human frontier and demands an epistemological humility⁵¹ on the part of scholars regardless of the discipline. Critique of scholarly interpretation remains a valid enterprise provided a disposition of epistemological humility characterizes the one analyzing the conclusions of others. It is to this task and with humility we must now turn.

It is obvious that Ross has a deep and profound commitment to his Catholic traditions and theological perspectives. Perhaps he is so committed or entrenched to this perspective that his conclusions are driven by his bias. In particular, the leading partner in Ross’ thinking is a philosophical construct whereas theological and/or biblical ones play lesser roles. This approach is fundamental to Ross’ method and argument; he utilizes Aristotelian, Thomistic, and Scholastic ideas and arguments to make his point about the condition of the body after death.⁵²

Ross is equally determined to “save orthodoxy by distinguishing science from appearance.”⁵³ He hopes to resolve the anomaly of how a person actually survives biological death when neither science nor philosophy offers a credible explanation. Following Aristotle as scientist, he moves to reform the sacred into a more scientifically compatible worldview:

One way to resolve the anomaly is to say that the common religious understanding describes the true, objective, but consequential appearances of things (like the night sky to us), but that the explanatory scientific reality is that the general resurrection follows one’s death immediately (as one’s next experience), and explains the appearance.⁵⁴

(trans. David Cairns and T. H. L. Parker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 28 [emphasis mine].

⁵⁰ Bruce, *Paul*, 312.

⁵¹ The term refers to the fact that limits exist on how much one can know. Epistemological humility reflects the conviction that holding to an epistemological position is valid, but the particular position is not nor can it be considered authoritative or complete. The term is frequently found or applied in religious thought and scientific analysis.

⁵² Ross follows the lead of Aquinas who more than anyone who preceded him produced a “system of Christian Aristotelian philosophy” in his *Summa Theologiae*. See Alexander Broadie, “St Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Oxford Guide to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., 2005.

⁵³ Ross, “Together With the Body I Love,” 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Ross explains: “So too, it looks as if the stars are ‘there’ all at once when we look up,

For Ross, “the explanatory scientific reality” of the metamorphosis of the human body at death relies on Aristotelian theory: “everything that is produced is something produced from something and by something, and that the same in species as it.”⁵⁵ The human bodily metamorphosis produces a change which enables continuation of the phenomenal person including personal character and memory. As the corn seed has within it the seeds of its own end, so also the human person experiences no less than the same at the moment of death. The end for both Aristotle and Ross leads to “that for the sake of which a thing is . . .”⁵⁶ For Ross, the metamorphosis ultimately leads to the transformed and glorified body at the general resurrection.⁵⁷

Ross takes a commendable and strong theological position again owing primarily to his Catholic faith. While many philosophers would reject out of hand the notion of personal continuity after death, Ross at least acknowledges its possibility and strives to provide a logical, rational, Aristotelian basis for the possibility. While his position, like the others, cannot be demonstrated neither can it be discredited.

The apparent compatibility of Ellis’ position with Ross’ position merits further consideration. Clearly, Ellis rejects a rigid Platonic worldview with its accompanying body-soul dualism. Ellis may have created, unintentionally perhaps, a possible connection to Plato’s student Aristotle.

Ross finds an ally in Kevin Corcoran who argues that texts such as 2 Cor 5 are consistent with a monistic anthropology. The text does not “distinguish between the body or organism of a person and the mass or aggregate of cells that composes the body or organism.”⁵⁸ To experience existence “away from the body” (2 Cor 5:8) does not necessarily infer an immaterial state of being or suggest an immaterial soul.⁵⁹ Rather, Corcoran contends that “the whole [biblical] narrative, from creation to new creation, seems to be one of embodiment and materiality.”⁶⁰

and in a way that is true; it is the consequential reality, but what is ‘there,’ explanatorily, is temporally diverse, with some parts millions of years ‘behind’ others, like voices heard together but coming from diverse distances, or rearward instruments in a large orchestra.”

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Met.* 1049b27-30.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Met.* 1050a9-10.

⁵⁷ Ross, Abstract.

⁵⁸ Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 145-6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 147. He refers to Deut 6:5; Isa 26:9, 55:3; Matt 10:28; Luke 10:27; 2 Cor 5:8, 12:2; and 1 Thess 5:23.

O Body, What Art Thou?

The topic addresses a *mysterium tremendum* which cuts across the disciplines of both philosophy and theology. In the final analysis, it may not be primarily a problem for biblical interpretation or philosophical speculation; but rather it addresses the vulnerability of the human person. The loss of someone for whom we care deeply, as well as the musings of our own personal non-existence, moves the discussion to a higher and more personal level, one that relates acutely to the ultimate human condition. John Newport notes that the NT is not so much concerned with a state of existence presumably including a kind of surviving entity (a body?) as it is with the continuing relationship one has with Christ through and beyond death.⁶¹

O body, what art thou? The answer is unknowable and will most likely remain that way. The words of a humble Otto Weber demand recognition of our earth-bound situation and somewhat laughable human deficiencies: “. . . our conceptual tools are not adequate for the task of uniting to each other the hereafter of the Kingdom and the Now which is the lot of the dead.”⁶²

Biographical Note

Ben D. Craver is Executive Director and Dean at Wayland Baptist University's Albuquerque, New Mexico Campus, and Associate Professor of Religion. He serves on the Membership Committee for the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion—Southwest, and is a member of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. He has recent publications in the journal *Teaching Theology and Religion*. His main interests focus on the intermediate state and the utilization of quality pedagogical methods in theological and religious studies.

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⁶¹ John P. Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 309.

⁶² Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics* (trans. Darrell L. Guder; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 2:688.

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Notes

- ¹ Julius Ngayami, personal communication, September 14, 1999.
- ² Impaayo Ngayami, personal communication, August 18, 1997.

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- ³ Impaayo Ngayami, personal communication, August 18, 1997.
⁴ Julius Ngayami, personal communication, January 14, 2000.
⁵ Julius Ngayami, personal communication, June 15, 1998.
⁶ Ikayo Lolokula, personal communication, August, 16, 1997.

Notes

- ^{vii} Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
^{viii} Chakrabarty's source for this citation is Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1911).
^{ix} Ashis Nandy, *Time Warps: Silent and Evasive Pasts in Indian Politics and Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
^x This survey was conducted under the direction of Kumar Suresh Singh; the results have been published as the *People of India* series by the Anthropological Survey of India (Calcutta). See K. S. Singh, *People of India: an Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), for a concise summary edition.
^{xi} Also, as Nandy notes, the forms of religion-as-ideology to which members of marginal, hybrid communities are pushed often end up being exactly the reactionary forms that themselves emerge at least partly as a response to secularism (144).
^{xii} Chakrabarty, "Modernity and the Past," *Habitations of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 46-7.
^{xiii} Ananda Abeysekara, *Colors of the Robe: Religion, Identity, Difference* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).