



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

The 2024 Annual Proceedings of the ASSR

Edited by

Darren J. N. Middleton
Baylor University

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2024 Annual Meeting

March 1-3, 2024

The Year 2024 Proceedings of the ASSR

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion

Presents

*The Year 2024
Annual Proceedings of the ASSR*

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*Annual Meeting
March 1-3, 2024*

President's Note

I am delighted to bring you the 2024 *Proceedings* of The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR).

The *Proceedings* offer an instructive array of papers and presentations from both our perennial authors and presenters as well as a host of new academic talents who bring with them fresh topics and innovative approaches. In addition to our professional academic papers, the ASSR also includes student papers in the *Proceedings* as submitted and presented at the annual meeting, and in addition to the Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research for professional papers, two student awards are now available—the Harry Hale Prize for Graduate and Undergraduate Research.

The quality of these *Proceedings* discloses the outstanding work that has been accomplished by the efforts of many who participate and promote our meetings through research, writing, attending our sessions, and sponsorship via generous donations and the purchase of this collection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helps to make the ASSR what it has been, what it is, and what it hopes to become. Joining the ASSR only costs \$20.00 yearly (or a one-time \$100 lifetime membership) and we value your support and participation in our yearly sessions and helping to make them successful by writing and presenting papers, chairing sessions, contributing to the *Proceedings*, and attending the presentations of others. It is important for our future that every member of the ASSR not only encourages new membership at every opportunity but solicits scholars throughout the colleges, universities, and organizations at which you reside to become involved in our group through chairing sessions, writing and submitting papers, or serving as an officer.

I hope all of you have a productive year and the ASSR will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2024-2025. Be sure to visit us online at: www.assronline.org, complete with online publications of papers from past meetings (see the **Archives** on the site). Hopefully you will share this site with colleagues and students alike. Thanks.

Appreciatively,

Darren J. N. Middleton, 2024-2025 ASSR President/Editor

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Caesarea, Paul's Journeys, and Mediterranean Trade Patterns

Patrick Scott Smith
Independent Scholar

Introduction

The key port city from which Paul set sail on three of his four missionary journeys was the city of Caesarea Maritima. As trade between the littoral nations of the Mediterranean was accomplished largely by sea, that Paul the apostle traveled through it for his far-afield proselytizing efforts reflects Caesarea's prominent role in the projection of Rome's commercial dominance in the eastern Mediterranean region. Moreover, the New Testament accounts of Paul's travels reflects not only Rome's commercial interests but shipping and trade patterns, often meteorologically determined, throughout the Mediterranean. Thus, as we will see, not all roads led to Rome. As the eastern Mediterranean region began to create its own area of commercial dominance the import and export of goods moved not just from east to west but in all directions. Furthermore, while ancient shipping manifests are rarely discovered, certain goods for which a particular place is known to produce and the spread of those goods as they are archaeologically traced, can also help establish in some instances a fair assumption as to what goods were exported from particular ports and in other instances, what goods went where.¹

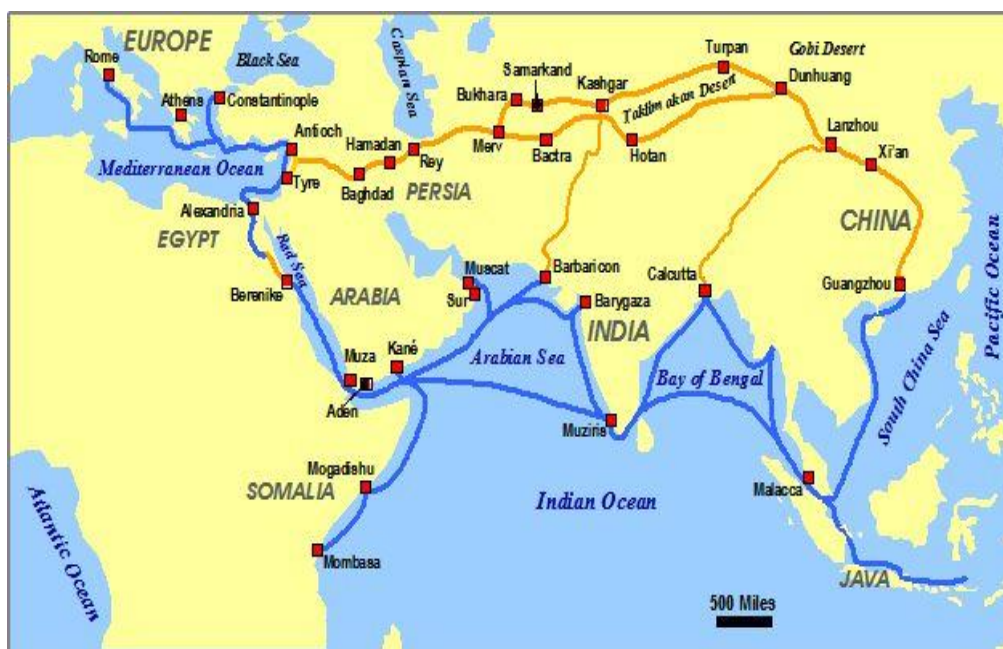
Caesarea's Role in Eastern Mediterranean Trade

Just a few decades before Paul's travels Caesarea was built with Rome's largesse by Herod the Great. However, its location on the coast provided no significant bay or promontory on which to construct the gargantuan harbor that would service the city. This begs the question, why then this site? While the challenges posed to Herod's engineers were daunting, Caesarea's location indicates thought towards current and growing markets, and a desire to make it a nexus between east-west, and north-south land and sea routes. First, being on the coast, just south of Tyre, Caesarea now had access to the caravan routes that led north and south between Tyre and Egypt.² While Caesarea and its harbor was being built, it was during this time, after Roman subjugation of the eastern Mediterranean, that long distance Eastern trade was beginning to realize greater potential with newer markets beginning to flourish. During

¹ The Muziris papyrus - of a contract between a merchant and financier - elucidates trade between Roman Egypt and India. The cargo - to be shipped up the Red Sea then taken across the eastern desert to Koptos then shipped up the Nile to Alexandria - contained nard, pepper, ivory and elephant tusks. [Muziris papyrus | Oxford Classical Dictionary \(oxfordre.com\)](https://www.oxfordclassicaldictionary.com/article/Muziris-papyrus)

² Tyre had for years been a commercial powerhouse in the Mediterranean. In mid-900 BC Hiram king of Tyre sent David carpenters, stonemasons and cedar to build his palace (2 Samuel 5-11). To assist Solomon in the building of the temple he sent craftsmen, cypress and cedar products and gold (1 Kings 5:10, 18; 9:11-14) along with the making of bronze finished products such as shovels, basins, pillars, capitals, latticework, etc. (1 Kings 7:40-45). Read also Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7.3.2.66; 8.2.6.50-9.60; 8.5.3.141; 8.6.4.163-4.

the early Augustan period there was a dramatic increase in Eastern items coming to Rome itself: silks, decorated cotton, shells, tortoiseshell, coral, ivory, nard, aloes, frankincense, myrrh, and spices like pepper, cinnamon and cassia.³ During the period around 200 BC pearls, gems, tortoise shell and silk were trans-shipped from China by Indian merchants.⁴ Nard, costus, cinnamon, ginger and pepper, all came to the Mediterranean either by the overland caravan route through northwest India, Afghanistan and Iran to Seleucia near modern-day Baghdad, where it followed routes along the Tigris and Euphrates to northern Mesopotamia which the Parthian Empire controlled. However, from there it split in three directions: south to the ports of Tyre and Sidon, west to Antioch or on to Asia Minor to reach the sea at Ephesus. A second route involved loading ships at India's northwest ports which coasted west then turning up the Persian Gulf to unload at its head. From there camels took the merchandise to Seleucia. A third route was all by water where vessels left India's northwestern ports for the southern shores of Arabia where they unloaded to Greek craft for the voyage up the Red Sea through Egypt. There they were sold, processed, then shipped out of Alexandria to all parts of the Mediterranean.⁵ This same route would later be usurped by Rome. As Roberta Tomber reveals concerning Indo-Roman trade, "A Roman pound of pepper cost 32 times more than a pound of bread. Nevertheless, it was pepper, other spices and aromatics that drove the trade between East and West."⁶



The Northern and Southern East/West Trade Routes

³ Gary K. Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC-AD 305* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 15-16.

⁴ For the possible presence of Chinese traders in the Red Sea read, David Peacock, "The Roman Red Sea Port Network" in *Rome, Portus and the Mediterranean*, ed. Simon Keay (Oxford: Berforts Information Press, 2012) 349-50.

⁵ Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 161-62

⁶ Roberta Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade: From Pots to Pepper* (London: Duckworth, 2008) 16.

Concerning overall East/West trade and Caesarea, one has to wonder if the Eastern goods going south from Mesopotamia, during this period, which were headed for Tyre and Sidon might have later instead gone, in small or large part, to Caesarea at the turn of the millennium? Did Caesarea benefit as well from goods headed north then west, out of Alexandria? It appears Rome wanted to situate Caesarea to take advantage of the movement of these goods. For example, Caesarea was well situated to receive goods from Petra and Gaza. From Yemen and southern Arabia came myrrh and frankincense. The products of southern Arabia traveled by camel to Gaza and farther to ports in Phoenicia. Again, the placement of Caesarea between Petra and Gaza to the south and Tyre to the north, indicates Caesarea likely intended to usurp trade traveling to Phoenicia.⁷ Goods coming from India, Indonesia and south China would also find their way west, by way of the Red Sea. As Tomber mentions, "In the complex network of regions it is the Red Sea that served as a funnel for goods from the East to the Roman Empire."⁸ Roman interest in Petra, Gaza and Red Sea trade would be more fully realized with Trajan's annexation of the Nabatean Kingdom as the *provincia Arabia*.⁹ The Nabateans were major traders and middlemen for goods coming from the east through Arabia and the Red Sea by way of their port, Leuce.¹⁰ It would be this lucrative market that Rome wanted a part. Concerning Roman/Red Sea connections: besides evidence of Nabataean presence in the Roman harbor town of Puteoli,¹¹ in 2003, on a Farasan island at the southern end of the Red Sea, archaeologists found an inscription of dedication to the emperor Antoninus Pius (143-144 AD). On it is mentioned the *legio II Traiana Fortis*, a legion Trajan created.¹² While it is likely that the Roman presence at the Farasan archipelago was a detachment of the main legion in Egypt, this find represents continuing Roman interest and possible expansion in the Red Sea. As Dario Nappo summarizes, "Trajan initiated a period of Roman expansion in the Red Sea that had important commercial consequences. This policy was also consistently pursued by his successors, probably reaching its peak under Marcus Aurelius; it provided the right context for Roman commercial expansion in the East."¹³

When it came to some developing markets in Mesopotamia, Caesarea was also fairly situated in relation to the important trading oasis of Palmyra. Palmyra later became an important conduit for goods coming from India and China, especially the products of silk and Chinese silk in particular.¹⁴ But besides Palmyra and Petra, further north was Antioch and south was Alexandria. Important cities within Caesarea's regional neighborhood were Jerusalem, Samaria, Damascus and the Roman colony

⁷ Ibid., 161.

⁸ Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade*, 57.

⁹ Dario Nappo, "Roman Policy on the Red Sea in the Second Century CE" in *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade*, ed. Federico De Romanis, Marco Maiuro (Boston: Brill, 2015) 69.

¹⁰ On trade routes of Arabia and the goods brought to the Nabateans by the Minaean, Gerrhaean, and Gebbanitae tribes, read Taco Terpstra, "Roman Trade with the Far East: Evidence for Nabataean Middlemen in Puteoli" in *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade*, eds. Federico De Romanis, Marco Maiuro (Boston: Brill, 2015) 74-75.

¹¹ Ibid., 73-94.

¹² Nappo, "Roman Policy", 65-68.

¹³ Ibid., 71.

¹⁴ Ibid., 142-143



Important centers of trade within the vicinity of Caesarea:

- Alexandria
- Petra
- Gaza
- Tyre

Major consumer cities within the vicinity of Caesarea:

- Jerusalem
- Bostra
- Samaria
- Damascus

of Bostra.¹⁵ Caesarea probably played an important role in supplying the needs of these communities, besides its own demand. It is interesting to note Bostra, a Roman colony, later usurped Petra as the trading center of the region to become Rome's capital in Arabia. After Rome's takeover of Petra, a road was quickly constructed to connect Bostra to the Red Sea.¹⁶ Though Trajan invested and built up Bostra as capital of Roman Arabia, Bostra was already likely in the satellite of trade and service with Caesarea.

In respect to Gaza and Petra, it is also important to note, though Trajan would take over Petra in 106 AD, Augustus granted Gaza to Herod 136 years earlier. Thus, not only did Caesarea own Gaza's markets and worked cooperatively with Alexandria it would have captured trade flows from Petra with its location en route to Gaza. As Gary Young points out incense was in fact carried from Petra by road to Gaza.¹⁷ By owning Gaza, with its diverse markets, Caesarea was placed in a position to not only dominate sea trade, but overland trade to consumer cities inland, like Bostra, Samaria and Jerusalem. A number of trading scenarios would also include the movement of building materials, weapons and military personnel to these cities and other towns in the eastern end of the Mediterranean, as the empire expanded. Specific ways in which Caesarea could also have generated income would include harbor and duty fees; income from the control and trade from mining operations; freighter service charges; its own buying and selling of bulk and refined goods; the reprocessing of goods coming

¹⁵ Which was settled by Roman legionary veterans. Nigel Rodgers, *The Roman Army Legions, Wars and Campaigns: A Military History of the World's First Superpower From the Rise of the Republic and the Might of the Empire to the Fall of the West* (London: Anness Publishing, 2005) 86.

¹⁶ Nappo, *Roman Policy*, 63-64.

¹⁷ Gary K. Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC-AD 305* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 92, 97.

from the east and north; and money saved by owning its own fleet of freighters.¹⁸ Moreover, concerning mining and the production or import of the critical alloy, bronze, Robert Bull summarizes, "In AD 6 the Romans made Caesarea the seat of provincial administration. Roman procurators, residing in Caesarea, were charged with collecting taxes, overseeing civil affairs and recruiting personnel from the local population to serve as auxiliary legionaries. The troops were paid in bronze coins struck from a mint at Caesarea licensed by Rome. The coins were also used as a means of exchange in the area's rapidly developing economy."¹⁹

Not All Roads Led to Rome

Though evidence is beginning to reveal extensive commercial development within the eastern Mediterranean at the turn of the first millennium, trade within the Mediterranean is still viewed from the point of consumption by Rome. The problem stems from the fact that most literary accounts about trade, goods, ships, and military adventures, were by Romans themselves. The importance of archaeological finds in the eastern Mediterranean therefore will balance out the picture. As Kevin Greene elucidates,

What is absolutely clear is that no economic history of the Roman Empire can ever be written again which does not give the same detailed attention to the results and technical problems involved in archaeology as it does to the textual criticism of Roman documentary sources. The balance is not even, of course, and in parts of Italy, archaeology is likely to remain firmly within the framework of Roman history, rather than providing an alternative structure. However, in areas more distant from the heart of the empire, the importance of archaeology rises as the number of relevant documents falls.²⁰

While Rome was the major draw for commercial activity within the empire there are two important exceptions to the idea that all roads led to Rome. First, the Roman military - legionnaires and auxiliaries alike - were garrisoned throughout the Mediterranean and would have used and consumed food and material goods. Second, within the Roman provinces: as cities began to mirror Rome in structure, they would begin to mirror Rome in appetite as well. The refining and reprocessing of Eastern goods in Italy is known, but as Gary Young points out,

¹⁸ Such ownership is indicated from one of the inscriptions found on the pedestals at Herod's palace dating from the 2nd century to as late as the 4th century CE. (Burrell, 57) Interestingly, along with the honoring of rulers, the philosopher Titus Flavius Maximus as friend and patron of Varius Seleucus, curator of ships of the colony of Caesarea, was also honored. Such honor among dignitaries including the "curator of ships" indicates the importance of ship ownership and oversight. Burrell, et al., 57.

¹⁹ Robert J. Bull, "Caesarea Maritima: The Search for Herod's City" in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, vol., 8, no. 3, May/June 1982; 27.

²⁰ Kevin Greene, *The Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 171.

It is probable that many of the goods which were finally purchased for consumption in Rome or in other markets throughout the empire had undergone some similar form of reprocessing **since** their arrival in the East. This is very important to bear in mind, as it implies that the bulk of money which was spent on the goods may very well have gone not to foreign traders or 'middlemen' but rather to those who traded in and reprocessed the goods within the empire itself. Once they had undergone this processing, these goods were then conveyed to the final point of sale, which could have been anywhere within the empire itself.²¹

Therefore, not all bulk or reprocessed goods went directly west to Rome but probably were manufactured and traded in all directions. Caesarea likely played a part in this, thus making it a busy center of commerce and possibly a reprocessing center as well. Concerning bulk goods coming from Egypt: with Alexandria to the south and Egypt being a prodigious grain, textile and papyrus producing country, Caesarea would have been interested in having a part in that trade. It has been noted most of the grain coming out of Egypt went to Rome.²² This brings to mind several questions. Considering the counter clockwise current patterns in the Mediterranean²³ the route taken by the great grain ships could easily have brought them to Caesarea. As Lionel Casson explains,

Egypt lies to the southeast of Rome. The winds that prevail over the waters between, during the summer months when the ancient mariners sailed, are northwesterly. This meant that freighters raced downhill from Ostia or Pozzuoli to Alexandria with the wind on their heels in ten days to two weeks.²⁴

The trip back to Rome involved a northern route to Asia Minor, and west then to Rhodes, Crete, Syracuse, and finally to Rome. The general counterclockwise pattern of sailing in the Mediterranean comes from northwesterly winds traveling southeast reaching the southeast elbow and southwesterly winds²⁵ of the eastern Mediterranean which makes surface currents there bend north. This pattern held true for the sailing season of the ancient mariners. Hesiod urged all sailors not to sail except for the fifty days after the summer solstice in July and August. Vegetius pinpoints the best conditions for sailing is from May 27 to September 14. With fog, cloudiness and stormy

²¹ Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade*, 23.

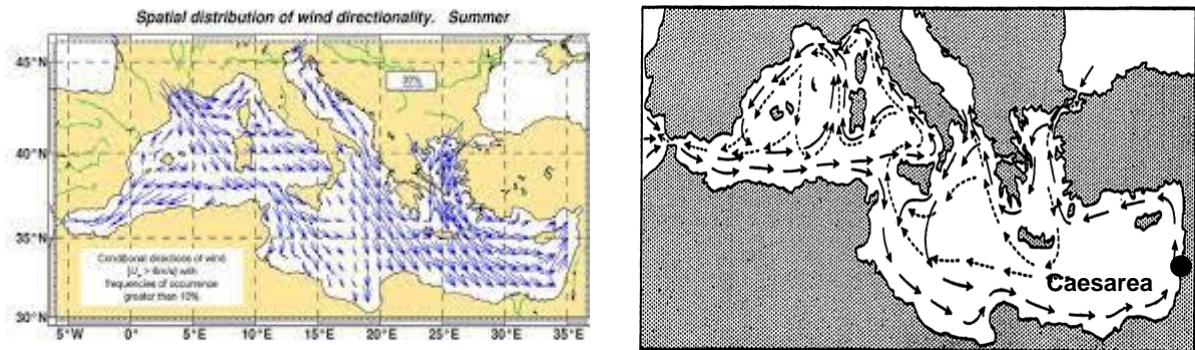
²² Northern Africa employed an ingenious method of dry farming using a combination of olive trees and wheat fields. Africa satisfied much of Rome's thirst for olive oil. Josephus described it as "that third part of the world, which feeds the city of Rome for eight months of the year." Nigel Rodgers, *Roman Army*, 84; Josephus, *Wars*, 2.16.4.382-83.

²³ For more on wind patterns in the Mediterranean read Jefferson White, *Evidence and Paul's Journeys: An Historical Investigation into the Travels of the Apostle Paul* (Hilliard, OH: Parsagard Press, 2001) 44, 69-70, 131.

²⁴ Casson, *Mariners*, 207-8.

²⁵ As Bull mentions, "The prevailing winds in the eastern Mediterranean are out of the southwest, and it is from that direction that most storms come." Bull, "Caesarea Maritima", 26.

seas increasing in the fall sailing at this time was kept to a minimum.²⁶ With these patterns, ships from Alexandria to the south could conveniently travel north to Caesarea. But did the large cargo ships have reason to stop at Caesarea? No doubt



Wind and Current Patterns in the Mediterranean and Caesarea's Location

Caesarea initially planned to service a large area. And not all oil, grain, textiles and papyrus coming out of Egypt and North Africa would have gone to Rome. Besides goods going to active and retired military personnel throughout the Mediterranean, as the eastern Roman provinces began to mirror Rome in structure and taste, the consumption for the same goods would increase and those same goods would therefore begin to travel not just west to Rome, but north within the eastern Mediterranean area and then to Asia. Starting with Caesar, who established Roman colonies for his veterans throughout the empire, in Spain, Gaul, Carthage, Corinth, Greece, Syria and the Black Sea coast, Augustus had 300,000 veterans to find land for, and so established 75 colonies. Twenty eight were started in Italy, the rest throughout the empire: in Spain, Gaul, Greece, Africa, Macedonia, Syria, and Turkey. According to Nigel Rodgers, "All these generally small settlements - usually a couple of thousand veterans, growing perhaps into a city of 10-15,000 - helped the urbanization and Romanization of the empire."²⁷ In the case of Bostra, with the *legio III Cyrenaica* stationed there, after years of personal and commercial interaction it would make sense for retiring personnel to settle there, representing Rome as a colony. The point here is these newly founded colonies required goods and foodstuffs similar to those wanted by Rome. As Rodgers mentions, "As the colonies became established, they developed a competitive pride in being Roman. Local aristocracies, especially in the west - the long Hellenized east was rather different - vied to become Roman in clothes, deed and name."²⁸ Thus, as the eastern Mediterranean region began to develop its own commercial network, Caesarea was in position to interact with it in a significant way.

²⁶ Lionel Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1971) 270-71.

²⁷ Rodgers, *Roman Army*, 87.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

found their way through Antioch for distribution throughout the northern Mediterranean areas.³¹

Cyprus on the other hand, with a prominent location at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, was also known for its wine and olive oil production. A scenario for trade could have been a combination of Eastern goods loaded alongside refined and agricultural products accumulated at Antioch, with a stop at Cyprus for partial distribution, while its products would have been added for final distribution in Asia. Considering the eastern Mediterranean economy was self-sustaining, a dynamic exporter, and obtained basic and luxury goods for itself from the East and south from Alexandria, the ship Paul took back to Antioch, after his missionary work in Asia, may have been on an empty one headed back for reloading.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey: Goods Going East From the Aegean



Paul's Second Missionary Journey (AD 49-52)

On Paul's second journey, after traveling and performing his work throughout Asia and Greece, he leaves Corinth's port Cenchreae in Greece for Ephesus then went on to Caesarea (Acts 18:18-22). One of the largest cities of Greece, Corinth was once a busy trading center. With land access to the Peloponnese it dominated trade in the Saronic Gulf to the east and the Gulf of Corinth to the west and through these waters had access to the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. Concerning its commercial prowess, Corinth may have exported, to some degree, their own perfume and textile products.³² As to their bronze making skills and exports, Carol Mattusch declares "Corinthian bronze was highly prized for its color, and the Corinthian metalworking industry was

³¹ David L. Kennedy, "Roman Empire" in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 439.

³² J. B. Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth: A History of the City to 338 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 117-20.

highly respected. Athenaeus (5.199e) refers to two famous Corinthian bowls with capacities of more than 360 liters each, with seated figures on the rim and relief figures on the neck and body.”³³ Pliny states Corinthian bronze, with respect to utility, was more valuable than silver and almost as valuable as gold, and was “the standard of monetary value.” He further declares, it was so celebrated in antiquity there was a “mania” for possession of it and relates how Gegania, a wealthy lady, paid fifty-thousand sesterces for a Corinthian lamp-stand.³⁴ While bronze and iron works were in operation in the Forum Area at Corinth from the sixth century BC to the twelfth century AD,³⁵ archaeologically, only small finds of Corinthian bronze have been discovered thus far throughout the Greek mainland and Macedonia.³⁶ This discrepancy may be explained that besides self-sufficiency from local district workshops, because of its intrinsic durable value as a product apt to be remolded and reused, tracing bronze and surmising production may be difficult.³⁷ Therefore, volume of find may sometimes be a tapered reflection of real production. Two other products from Corinth likely produced for wider export were stone and roof tiles. A facility known as the Tile Factory was found not far from the center of Corinth and significant use of Corinthian stone and roof tiles is evident in the construction of the fourth-century temples at Epidaurus and Delphi.³⁸ But above all, though it’s value to Corinth’s economy is debated,³⁹ Corinthian pottery was a famous export with significant range in the Mediterranean. Specifically, as S. B. Salmon affirms, “The overwhelming preponderance of Corinthian vases in North Africa, Sicily and Italy up to the Straits of Messina demonstrates that a conscious effort was made to establish and maintain a market for Corinthian vases in these areas.”⁴⁰ Though in lesser volume, Corinthian pottery has also been found on islands in the Aegean (at Delos, in graves and in the sanctuary of Hera); on the western coast of Asia Minor and inland, such as at Sardis. Corinthian pottery has also been found in Greek colonies on the Black Sea, on non-Greek sites on the southern coast of Asia Minor, and in the Levant.⁴¹ The two main ports on the Isthmus of Corinth was Lechaenum and Cenchreae. Lechaenum was the port for Corinthian goods going west and Cenchreae (the port Paul left from) for those headed east.⁴² However, despite its

³³ Carol Mattusch, “Metal Working and Tools” in *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World*, ed. John Peter Oleson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 433-34.

³⁴ Pliny the Elder, *The Complete Works of Pliny the Elder: Natural History*, trans. John Bostock, Henry Thomas Riley, 1855 (Hasting, United Kingdom: Delphi Classics, 2015) XXXIV.1, 3, 6.

³⁵ Mattusch, “Metal Working”, 434.

³⁶ Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth*, 118.

³⁷ Though iron was an important source for tools, weapons and armor, bronze appears to have had the most universal of use. It was used to make sickles, nails, roof sheeting, coins, mirrors, chandeliers, tableware, kitchen utensils, surgical instruments, shears and combs. John F. Healy, *Mining and Metallurgy in the Greek and Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 238-39, 241-43, 246-52. Pliny mentions the use of bronze to make dishes, wash-basins, lamp-stands, feet for furniture; and to adorn tables, banqueting-couches and buffets. He also mentions that temple statues, doors and capitals were made of bronze. Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXIV.3-9.

³⁸ Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth*, *Ibid.*, 122-24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117, 132-33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 140. Though Attic black figure ware grew in popularity and began to take market share from Corinth in the mid-6th century BC, this does not mean Corinth stopped their pottery production, it just was not as dominant.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 107-9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 143-45.

significant commercial past, after the enervating Corinth-Corcyra, Peloponnesian and Corinthian wars⁴³, Corinth was finally destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. But, with its rebuilding by Julius Caesar, it may have resumed the production of the products it was familiar with, and some may have gone to places like Ephesus and Caesarea.

When Paul lands in Ephesus he is asked to stay, but quickly leaves for Caesarea (Acts 18:20-21). After landing in Caesarea the text says Paul greets the church and goes to Antioch (Acts 18:22).⁴⁴ With no mention of him staying, it appears Paul is anxious to get back to Antioch. The question is, why did he not sail directly for it then? The answer may come from the counterclockwise pattern of merchant vessels for the quicker, easier “downhill” run to Caesarea. With a number of ships going there, Paul’s choice for landing elsewhere may have been limited. That the merchant ship was headed for Caesarea rather than Sidon or Tyre, which were close by, may also indicate Caesarea’s growing commercial dominance in the region.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey: Passenger Service Between Asia and Europe - Metals From Anatolia to Phoenicia

On his third missionary journey, after traveling by land back to Asia and Greece to revisit places he had ministered before, Paul’s water portion of his journey back home, begins at Assos. Before that Luke and others sail from Philippi across the northern part of the Aegean Sea to Troas where they meet Paul. There some decide to sail to Assos, but Paul walks there (Acts 20:6, 13). From Assos they all leave for Mitylene. (Acts 20:14). At Mitylene they sail for Miletus (Acts 20:15). From Miletus they sail to the Lycian port of Patara with quick stops at Cos and Rhodes (Acts 21:1). At Patara they board another ship for the longer non-stop route to Tyre, where the ship unloads its cargo. Paul stays a week at Tyre with brethren then sails for Ptolemais where he stays a day (Acts 21:2-8). There, he boards for Caesarea, his final stop by water. The shortest journeys by water are the ones from Troas to Assos and from Tyre to Ptolemais to Caesarea. The longer ones are across the Aegean from Philippi to Troas, the trip from Mitylene to Miletus, then from Miletus to Patara, with the longest being from Patara to Tyre. The general itinerary of Paul traveling west to Asia and Greece by land, then back east by water conforms with the general northwesterly wind patterns of the day.⁴⁵ What is known from Paul’s trip is his choices of destination. What is not known is the number of ships headed in other directions. Given that, the number of stops on Paul’s trip back home still reflects a surprising level of regional and inter-regional activity. The junket between Philippi and Troas would have been a common

⁴³ It is likely no coincidence Corinth’s commercial decline is traced to the fourth century BC when Corinth’s involvement in the Greek wars began.

⁴⁴ Some show Paul on this trip going from Caesarea to Jerusalem **then** to Antioch. But as White points out, this is unclear. White, *Evidence*, 35. Rather a closer reading of the following chapter shows this happening on his third trip. In his second missionary journey, he spends virtually no time in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21) but does so on his third trip (two years, three months, Acts 19:1, 8-10) creating trouble for the worshippers of Artemis (Acts 19:21-41; 20:1). After this occurrence, he travels to Macedonia and preaches in that region for three months (Acts 19:8) after which he finally sets sail from Assos. After several stops he sails past Ephesus in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 19:21; 20:16).

⁴⁵ The exception on Paul’s third trip is the short junkets between Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea.

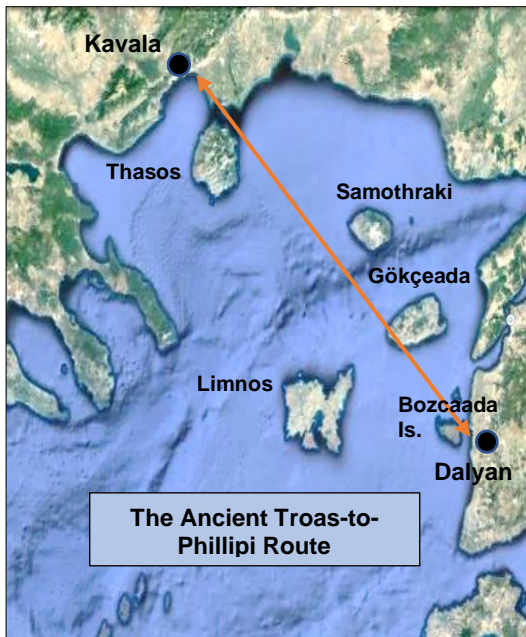
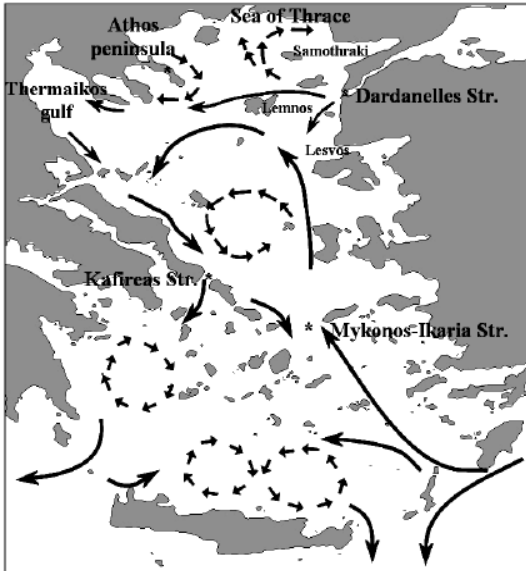


Paul's Third Missionary Journey (AD 53-58)

one. A Roman colony near the Aegean, Philippi's station on the *via Egnatia*, a major Roman road, connected it to the Dardanelles and the Adriatic.⁴⁶ Troas on the other hand was known for its location long connecting Asia with Europe. Their proximity across from each other on the upper Aegean made seagoing activity between the two a natural development. Interestingly, the back and forth trip between Philippi and Troas was different from other circuitous ones determined by wind patterns. While northwesterly winds moving southeast determined many traffic patterns in the Mediterranean the leeward side of islands and peninsulas offered cover. With their southeast slant the cover the Greek and Thessaloniki peninsulas provided may partially explain the popularity of the Philippi/Troas route. While we are accustomed to think passenger service was secondary to cargo in ancient times forever entrepreneurial, then like now, owners would have tailored their hold and transfer arrangements. Like ferry service today between mainland and popular island destinations passengers are accommodated but cargo is still added on.⁴⁷ Conversely, the ship Paul took out of Myra on his last leg of his last journey as prisoner of Rome

⁴⁶ John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1941) 282-83.

⁴⁷ The practicality, popularity and fees of ferry service across rivers in ancient times is reflected in the myth of Charon the ferryman of the dead, charging a coin to carry souls of the newly deceased over the river Styx.



was a merchant freighter loaded with grain. Yet Luke relates after the ship wrecked, all 276 persons, including prisoners, were saved (Acts 27:37, 42). The number of people on warships loaded only with personnel - officers, deckhands, marines, archers, and rowers - could approach 200.⁴⁸ Considering the number of crew on a merchant galley would be considerably less the passenger-to-crew proportion on this ship would have favored passengers, most of whom were prisoners and their guards. In this instance the profit for the owner would have been from a combination of per person charge for passengers and a weight charge for cargo. As far as sailing patterns go, wind and surface current patterns in the Aegean mirrored those in the Mediterranean.⁴⁹ Currents initially traveling north up the eastern Mediterranean coast, would bend west then as they enter the Aegean would travel north along the Asian coast, then west, then south along the Greek coast in counterclockwise fashion.⁵⁰ Kavala, just south of present-day Filippi was likely the area of port on the Greek side for the Philippi/Troas route. Dalyan (south of the Dardanelle straight) is the present-day village near the site of ancient Troas. Reasons for the ancient popularity of this northwest route is it could be accomplished in a day,⁵¹ and several islands could be utilized for leeward protection or stops along the way. Going west from Turkey, with possible clockwise assistance

⁴⁸ Ibid., 304-5. See also footnote 23.

⁴⁹ Casson, *Ships*, 272. For exceptions to general wind patterns in the Mediterranean read also, Casson, *Ships*, 272-73.

⁵⁰ Without engine drive, getting from point A to point B for ancient mariners was always a relative thing. Depending on load weight, vessel type, hull configuration, type and amount of sail, in relation to current, wave and wind conditions, speed of travel could vary from 1 to 6 knots. Casson, *Ships*, 281-82 and all of 281-96. For different types of sail-rigging which affected speed see also, Casson, *Ships*, 235-45, 264-69.

⁵¹ Though he does not say why, Luke says his trip from Philippi to Troas took five days (Acts 20:6). Stops to supply islands or difficult winds may have delayed his trip over. A ship traveling 1 knot could take four days to cover the 100-nautical mile trip over. To get from inland Philippi to shore to board on the Greek side would have taken a good part of a day.

from surface currents bending west, ships passed immediately under the leeward south-side protection of the island Bozcaada. They then would pass under the islands Gökçeada and Samothraki to the north and above Limnos to the south. Depending on



wind conditions ships would pass by or go under the island of Limnos. On nearing the Greek shore, mariners would finally meet and go around the island of Thasos to get to the Kavala shore area. Satellite imagery of the western slant of the Keramoti promontory, providing haven to vessels in the area, confirms the counterclockwise motion of currents in the Aegean, at this

uppermost part, moving west. Thus, one possible final leg for the trip over from Troas would be that ships would enter this strait from the east side of Thasos, to ride the current west to Kavala. Traveling back to Troas, passing by the west side of Thasos, mariners might have been assisted by northwesterly winds moving in the same direction. Distance between the Kavala and Dalyan areas is approximately 100 nautical miles. With favorable conditions a merchant vessel could average between 4 to 6 knots.⁵² At 6 knots the Philippi/Troas route could be made, shore to shore, in 16.5 hours. At 4 knots the trip could take 25 hours.⁵³

After Troas, once Paul and company rendezvoused and left from Assos, the trip from Mitylene to Miletus took three days and may have involved two stops. "And sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus." (Acts 20:14-15). Mitylene was the main port-city for the island of Lesbos. Miletus was an important Ionian port serving Ephesus. Trade between the two districts probably involved heavier loads. That the trip from Miletus to Patara, a commercial center for Anatolia, was a long one, with two stops on the way (at Cos and Rhodes, presumably to unload or add on cargo) indicates Miletus' significance to maritime trade in that region. Once Paul reached Patara he boarded a ship headed to Tyre. Though Paul's destination was Caesarea, his stop at Tyre first, then Ptolemais, suggests his itinerary home was determined by the scheduling of vessels from one port to the next. The text does not say Paul had specific purpose in Tyre or Ptolemais, just that he stayed with brethren (Acts 21:4,7). Once in Tyre, Paul was close to Caesarea, but he traveled to Ptolemais first. Starting from north to south: Sidon, Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea were all cities on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean in close proximity. The scheduling of stops

⁵² Casson, *Ships*, 283, 285 and all 281-96.

⁵³ While 4 to 6 knots would be considered within the bounds of a normal pace, under right conditions exceptions might have been attained. Hanson cites a report by Thucydides of a messenger ship traveling at 8 knots. Victor Davis Hanson, *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Random House, 2006) 261.

at these ports so close to one another suggests some type of successive servicing. Did the Patara ship service Tyre, then Ptolemais, then Caesarea with products from Anatolia? Either way Paul's third missionary journey is an interesting account of commercial activity between ports which, because of their close proximity on the eastern seaboard, allowed their ships to travel south, contrary to the more common pattern at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, from south to north. But more importantly the unloading of cargo from Patara at Tyre (Acts 21:3) for distribution in the eastern Mediterranean region, shows the flow of trade was not limited to Eastern, African and Egyptian goods moving north and west, but moved interactively to and from all directions. Patara's significance was as conduit of goods from Anatolia. Evidence for the traditional production of agriculture goods (mainly barley and wheat) and animal husbandry (mainly sheep and goats) in Anatolia reach back to the first centuries of the 2nd millennium BC during the Kārum period. The other main resource from the Anatolian plateau was metals and metallurgy. The Assyrians during this period were especially interested in Anatolia's gold and silver.⁵⁴ Besides gold, silver and lead, Anatolia produced copper. Alloyed with tin, from northwest of Iran and Uzbekistan, to make bronze, Anatolian metallurgists traded silver for tin from Assyrian merchants.⁵⁵ As Amélie Kuhrt shows, some gold was also purchased by the Assyrians, but besides the tin, Anatolian merchants were especially interested in Assyrian textiles. Special kinds of garments and certain kinds of cloth were produced in Assyria in Ashur by the female members of the Assyrian merchant houses. The textile and tin products were then sent from Assyria by way of small caravans of donkeys to the permanently settled Assyrian colonies in Anatolia. But it was the textiles that provided the largest volume of trade for the valuable metal products from Anatolia.⁵⁶ With evidence of metal production going back even to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, James Muhly mentions, "Anatolia is a land blessed with abundant natural resources, including a wealth of mineral deposits and abundant forests, the two elements necessary for a major metal industry. Recent calculations provide the following figures: 415 major copper-rich zones, more than 136 complex lead-zinc-copper ore deposits, and almost 200 silver-lead deposits, as well as numerous deposits of gold, zinc, antimony, arsenic, and iron."⁵⁷ As Robert Shepard states, "Anatolia has been termed the 'cradle of mining' with reference to the appearance of iron in Hittite times, and with evidence of the export of this valuable metal being found at important trading posts on the Mediterranean coast."⁵⁸ With sufficient food production in the easternmost part of the Mediterranean

⁵⁴ Cécile Michel, "The Kārum Period on the Plateau" in *Ancient Anatolia: 10,000-323 B.C.E.*, ed. Sharon R. Steadman, Gregory McMahon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 313, 324-25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁵⁶ Amélie Kuhrt, "The Old Assyrian Merchants" in *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City*, ed. Helen Parkins, Christopher Smith (London: Routledge, 1998) 26-28.

⁵⁷ James D. Muhly, "Metals and Metallurgy" in *Ancient Anatolia: 10,000-323 B.C.E.*, ed. Sharon R. Steadman, Gregory McMahon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 858-59, 859-876.

⁵⁸ Robert Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, published for the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy (New York: Elsevier Science Publishers, 1993) 219.

the likely goods thus imported from Anatolia by way of Patara would have been of a metal nature, likely shipped in ingot form.⁵⁹



Patara in Anatolia

Considering Rome's growing presence in the eastern Mediterranean region, if the Patara ship did hold metallic cargo it is hard to imagine Rome would not have demanded a take of the proceeds. Moreover, it is often contended ancient economies were supported by tribute and spoils of war, but it appears mining played no small part as an important source of revenue.⁶⁰ Livy says the Macedonian mines "produced a very large profit" for their kings.⁶¹ Relevant to Caesarea and her harbor Livy also mentions that Phillip V, in his preparations for war with Rome, funded the buildup of his war machine with revenue not only from the produce of the land, but from "port duties and mines."⁶² Phillip's son Perseus also amassed provisions and pay, to support, for ten years, 30,000 infantrymen, 5,000 cavalrymen and 10,000 mercenary soldiers with the help from "the annual revenue accruing from the royal mines."⁶³ While profits to be made from mining were substantial in supporting ancient economies, how revenues were divided between state and private interests appears to vary over time. In the instance of the Assyrians in Anatolia it appears control and production was left in the hands of local owners. Profits for Assyrians were derived from the exchange of goods between local principals and the Assyrian colonists, with the Assyrian state

⁵⁹ Though gold and silver could be circulated as finished products in the form of bracelets, rings, beads, etc. and bronze in the form of tools, household products and weapons, all [including iron] could be circulated and shipped in ingot form. Michel, "Kärum", 325,

⁶⁰ Citing Polybius, Strabo says the silver mines in New Carthage (Cartagena, Spain), worked by forty-miners, itself contributed a daily sum of twenty-five thousand drachmae to the Roman government. Strabo of Amaseia, *The Complete Works of Strabo of Amaseia*, trans. H.C. Hamilton, W. Falconer (Hastings, United Kingdom: Delphi Classics, 2016) III.II.10

⁶¹ Livy, XLV.18.3.

⁶² Ibid., XXXIX.24.1.

⁶³ Ibid., XLII.12.10-13 and XLII.52.1-10.

benefiting from duty and apportionment. In the Hellenistic period the patriarchal kings owned mines outright, working them through agents supervising operations; yet it appears there was some sharing of revenue with the locals in Thasos, who paid no taxes and were able to build ships and defensive walls. On the island of Siphos, after paying a tithe to the Oracle of Delphi, the residents there divided the income among themselves.⁶⁴ John Healy also points out private individuals in the Greek world could also benefit from owning and leasing slaves to work the mines.⁶⁵ In Macedonia after being conquered by Rome under Paulus, copper and iron mines continued to operate. The gold and silver mines were at first closed to prevent uprising, but after this measure proved futile, they were reopened after 157 BC.⁶⁶ According to Livy, Rome imposed taxes on those who worked these mines at half the rate paid to the king.⁶⁷ In Egypt, all mines were owned by the kings, but when Rome took over they became imperial property and were leased to contractors. Under Tiberius a “metallarch” was in charge of the emerald mines at Zmaragdus and all other mines in Egypt.⁶⁸ In Republican times copper, lead and tin mines were kept in private hands, but gold and silver mines were held by the state.⁶⁹ Though Strabo says, during imperial rule, some silver mines in Spain remained in private hands,⁷⁰ but as mines were taken over by procurators productivity improved.⁷¹ According to Tacitus, though Marius owned gold and copper mines and was considered “the richest man in Spain” that too was taken over by the state.⁷² In Britain, Roman governors appointed procurators to oversee the mines and to grant licenses to private prospectors who received royalties up to fifty percent of the produce.⁷³ In Spain, as Robert Shepherd informs, the revenues from the mines there provided considerable taxes to the state treasury during the reign of Augustus [the same period Paul traveled] helping fund public works that created a “new and opulent Rome.” “Succeeding emperors continued the trend of maximizing the advantages of Spanish mining accruing to both imperial and state coffers. By the end of the reign of Tiberius (AD 37) gold and silver mines were firmly in the hands of the state, but were still leased to *publicani*.”⁷⁴ Might similar arrangement have begun in Anatolia? Roman domination of Anatolia would be part of a gradual acquisition process in Asia Minor. In 133 BC Rome acquired Mysia, Lydia and Caria. In 67-66 BC Cilicia was appropriated, and in 74-63 BC so was Bithynia and Pontus. Lycia and Pamphylia was added in 43 BC; Galatia in 25 BC, with Cappadocia finally being annexed in AD 17.⁷⁵ With the conquering and acquisition of territories, including Anatolia, one would assume similar trends, like the Spanish one, would help fund Rome’s military presence and

⁶⁴ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 52.

⁶⁵ Healy, 111.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁷ Livy, XLV.29.12-13.

⁶⁸ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 55.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 53

⁷⁰ Strabo, III.II.10.

⁷¹ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 54.

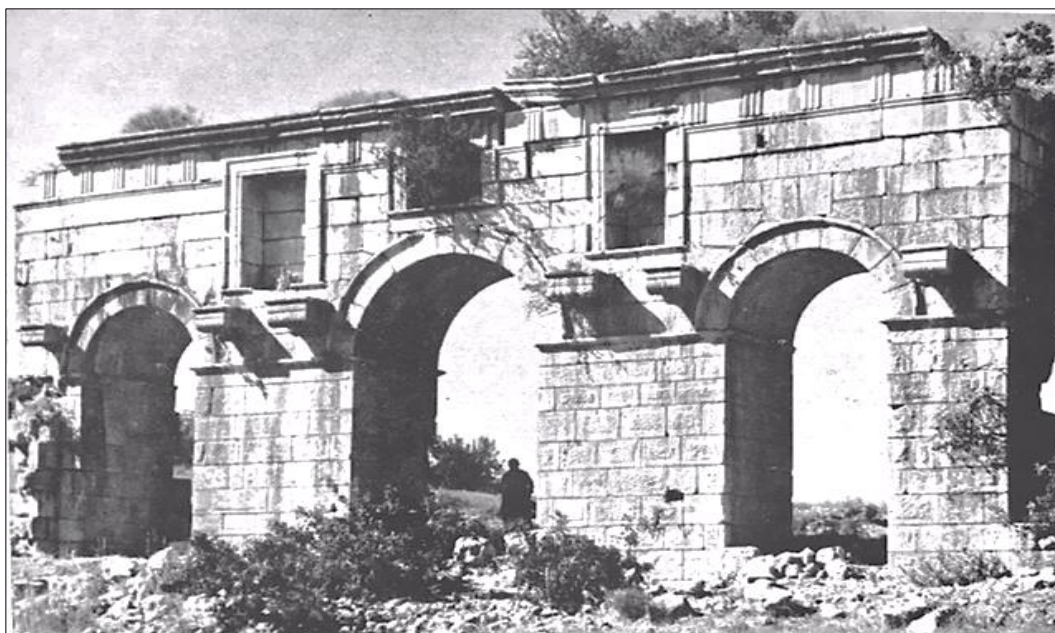
⁷² Tacitus, describing Marius as “Spain’s wealthiest man”, reports Tiberius accused Marius of incest, then executed him and confiscated his mines. Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals* (6.19) trans. Cynthia Damon, (London: Penguin Books, 2012) 177.

⁷³ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 58.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 215, 219.

infrastructure investment in their new lands. In fact, according to Shepherd, after Trajan acquired Dacia, the profits from the gold mines there helped efficient operations of the Danube army; as did the Gallic mines for the Rhine army later in the Empire.⁷⁶



Roman Archway at Patara

(After Shelagh Jameson, "Lycia and Pamphylia: An Historical Review")

As part of the planned eventual buildout of Anatolia and Asia minor, with investment in roads, forts, and city infrastructure⁷⁷ (no doubt an efficient road system would expedite the movement of material goods) funding from mining operations in Asia Minor might be indicated at Patara itself, where at the Patara ruins, there still stands a Roman archway and partially intact theatre, themselves indicators of a sophisticated social structure supported by a wider network of infrastructure.⁷⁸ Like the proximity and benefit of Spain's mining operation for Rome and the benefit of mining in vicinity to the Danube and Rhine armies, it is possible Patara also profited from Rome's appropriation of mining operations in Anatolia.⁷⁹ While the production of Anatolian copper, gold, silver, iron and lead, were documented by Pliny and Strabo⁸⁰ modern survey confirms Anatolia was, from 3000 BC to the Ottoman period, an important producer of copper and possibly tin, essential ingredients in the production of bronze. In addition, evidence

⁷⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁷ For Roman investment in Anatolian cities and the eventual construction of Rome's highway system in Anatolia, see Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor: The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 124-36, 198-226.

⁷⁸ Shelagh A. Jameson, "Lycia and Pamphylia: An Historical Review" in *Geology and History of Turkey*, ed. Angus S. Campbell; printed for The Petroleum Exploration Society of Libya; Tripoli, Libya, 1971 (Castelfranco Veneto, Italy: Grafiche Trevisan, 1971) 23.

⁷⁹ It is assumed the appropriation of Anatolia by Rome would mean control of mining operations were also appropriated. The successful experience Rome had from mining in Spain may have been something Rome wanted to duplicate in Anatolia and a reason for Rome's interest in Anatolia.

⁸⁰ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 222-31.

has been found which traces lead mining, at the Murgul mines near the Black Sea, to the fourth century BC and lead production, in western Turkey, in the Kütahya region, to the first century AD.⁸¹ However, while there is yet no archaeological or historical evidence that Rome probably did in Anatolia, like it did elsewhere: use revenues from mining operations to fund provincial development, example of infrastructure funding from mining in the eastern Mediterranean comes directly from Cyprus.⁸² There according to Josephus an arrangement was made between Augustus and Herod in which Herod was given “half the revenue of the copper mines in Cyprus, and committed the care of the other half to him and honored him with other gifts and incomes.”⁸³ This was no small acquisition for Herod since Cyprus was known for its prodigious copper production and was the place where copper got its name.⁸⁴ Being Herod’s sponsor it is hard to imagine Rome did not have significant say as to how Herod was to invest his half. Besides the revenue that was granted, the responsibility awarded to Herod in the running of the Cyprus mine and the “other incomes” given were probably part of Rome’s leverage over Herod. With such “gifts” and “incomes” it is expected Rome would monitor Herod’s expenditure and would expect much of it, with theirs, be invested with Rome’s interests in mind. The many projects Herod embarked on in the region and the one most benefiting Rome, Caesarea and its harbor, may in fact have been, in part, funded from mining operations like those at Cyprus and Anatolia

The goods coming south from Anatolia by way of Patara also speaks to the demand and need for a reprocessing capacity within the eastern Mediterranean. If the products on the Patara ship were indeed gold, silver, copper, iron or lead, the buildout of cities and infrastructure in the eastern Mediterranean speaks to a demand for these goods: gold and silver for currency and aesthetic items; iron for tools, weapons and armor, copper for bronze statuary, household goods, and armor;⁸⁵ while lead itself was the preferred product used by Rome for pipes and plumbing.⁸⁶ To ship such material, the most efficient way would have been in ingot form. This would have necessitated a reprocessing capacity that Caesarea logically would have wanted to fulfill as it did with the minting of bronze coins. Herod’s own investment in infrastructure in the region included “palaces for exercise” at Tripoli, Damascus and Ptolemais; cloisters and temples at Berytus and Tyre; theatres at Sidon and Damascus; an aqueduct system for Laodicea; and baths and fountains for Ascalon.⁸⁷ Concerning the import of lead,

⁸¹ Ibid., 231-233.

⁸² A reason for sparse evidence of Roman ownership of Anatolian mines, besides lack of archaeological survey, may be Anatolia was newly acquired. Rome likely planned increased control later, but in the interim local ownership would be allowed with a mandate to increase production, while Anatolian goods would be purchased at a discount.

⁸³ *Antiquities*, 16.4.5.128.

⁸⁴ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 113-15, 324.

⁸⁵ Copper alloy and iron products were used interchangeably for armor. While Republican helmets, the Coolus and Montefortino, were of copper alloy and used into Imperial times, Imperial-Gallic helmets were made of iron. Personal armor: scales, plating, and mail could be either copper alloy or iron. M.C. Bishop, J.C.N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment: From the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006) 64-65, 101, 119, 170, 242-44.

⁸⁶ Other uses of lead by the Romans includes for coffins, the lining of ships, making seals, admission tickets for theatres, and for loading whips with lead balls. Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 176.

⁸⁷ *Wars*, 1.21.11.422.

Rome's main source came from Britain and Spain,⁸⁸ but if the eastern Mediterranean region, as a self-sustaining colonial sphere, could import lead from a nearer source, the convenience would make cost-savings sense. We know lead clamps were used in the construction of the harbor, but to get at a more accurate picture about possible reprocessing of lead ingots into manufactured products will necessitate archaeological substantiation of the use of lead in the infrastructure build-out in the region and will require product-to-source material forensics. For example, if lead pipes are found to have been used at Caesarea, finding the product's material source, where it was mined, could shed more light on manufacturing capacity and trade patterns in the region.

Paul's Final Journey: Products from Sidon to Asia - Grain From Asia to Rome

Additionally, tracing and fleshing out Paul's final journey as prisoner of Rome may further clarify some of Caesarea's wider role in Mediterranean trade patterns. After his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul set sail from Caesarea aboard a ship from Adramyttium⁸⁹ from the northwest coast of Asia.⁹⁰ After sailing north and then west, the ship finally landed at Myra. Here Paul boards another ship from Alexandria, which was carrying grain and prisoners,⁹¹ headed for Italy.⁹² After leaving Caesarea the Adramyttium ship quickly stopped at Sidon, a short journey north. As Paul mentions they stopped there the next day.⁹³ Sidon was an important manufacturer of luxury goods such as glass, dyes, and beautifully embroidered garments. That the ship stopped there, on the way to Myra, a grain storage center,⁹⁴ indicates it may have added Sidon's products to merchandise it was already carrying, possibly ivory from Africa or papyrus from Egypt or spices and incense from the east. Since Myra shared the same Aegean coastline south of the great cities of Ephesus and Smyrna it likely would have been to these cities the products from Caesarea and Sidon were chiefly sent. That Paul disembarked this vessel at Myra for the Alexandrian one, indicates the Adramyttium ship obviously did not load grain for Rome, since that is where Paul was headed and would have stayed on board. Neither did it need to load grain to take back to Caesarea since Caesarea was a source of grain, but may have quickly, with an empty hold, trekked back to Caesarea to start the same circuit over, or one similar. Paul's boarding at Myra onto the Alexandrian ship full of grain and prisoners headed for Italy may indicate

⁸⁸ Shepherd, *Ancient Mining*, 53, 59, 67, 176, 199-203, 289-324. Pliny states lead was extracted with great labor from Spain and Gaul, but Britain had so much near the surface there was a law prohibiting the production of more than a certain amount. Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXIV.49.

⁸⁹ Acts 27:2.

⁹⁰ A harbor on the coast of Asia, southeast of Troas and east of Assos. *New International Version Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1995) 1699.

⁹¹ We know it carried grain because before it wrecked the crew "began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea." Acts 27:38.

⁹² Acts 27:6.

⁹³ Acts 27:3.

⁹⁴ NIV, 1700.



Paul's Journey as Prisoner of Rome (AD 60-63)

Myra was part of its itinerary to first unload some of its cargo at Myra to make room for the prisoners it would transport to Rome. Concerning shipments on the great grain ships from Egypt: as Casson mentions these giant vessels did not make many stops, but preferred to limit their destinations to unload to smaller freighters.⁹⁵ A stop at Caesarea would have been particularly advantageous for the Egyptian grain freighters before rounding the northeast corner of the Mediterranean to head west with their larger more cumbersome ships. The storm Paul ran into out of Asia in trying to get to Italy⁹⁶ is not atypical. As Casson mentions the trek east from Rome following the southern coastline was an easy one with help from winds moving southeast. But the journey across from the north side of the Mediterranean, especially from Asia, was another story. "Ships traveling in most southerly directions . . . could generally count on a quick and easy downhill voyage. But they paid for this on the return, which had to be made in the teeth of the prevailing wind. And in both directions, they had to be prepared for fairly stiff breezes. The Mistral in the west has already been mentioned; the Etesians, which ruled the Aegean, are notorious."⁹⁷ Apparently from similar winds en route "to Pontus and the traffic cities of Thrace" the fleet of outsized freighters built in joint effort by the kings of Judah and Israel, Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah, were so destroyed "by being so great and unwieldy" that they completely gave up on the idea for any future shipping venture.⁹⁸ The largest freighters from Egypt therefore may for the same reasons have avoided the long trek to Rome especially on approach of rough weather season and did at times unload to smaller freighters scheduled for Rome or other places.

That Caesarea was the choice for Paul, as prisoner and Roman citizen, to leave for Rome, itself reveals its port was an important conduit of conveyance of the day. That

⁹⁵ Casson, *Mariners*, 209-210.

⁹⁶ Acts 27:6-16.

⁹⁷ Casson, *Ships*, 27

⁹⁸ *Antiquities*, 9.1.4.17.

he boarded a cargo ship planning to stop at Sidon, a short distance away, to add luxury goods, reveals the diversity of Caesarea's services, its commercial cooperation with neighboring interests and a possible capacity to freight for others.⁹⁹ As far as Caesarea and its own fleet of ships go, Herod was given a fleet of warships by Mark Antony for his support against Augustus.¹⁰⁰ After Antony's defeat, though Herod gained Augustus' favor, it is doubtful this fleet in any event would have remained Herod's, though part of it may have been stationed at the harbor. What Herod did do though, as part of his great expenditure on infrastructure in the area and after the harbor's construction, was to assemble a fleet of commercial ships, to be built by Rhodes. Josephus says he "conferred upon Rhodes large sums of money for building ships."¹⁰¹ This was no magnanimous act, but part of a trade deal. Rhodes, itself a maritime commercial power, had earlier, to the ire of Rome, been neutral in Rome's third war with Macedon. In 164 BC Rhodes surrendered its independence and became an ally of Rome, but was later sacked by Cassius. Therefore, besides the dubious relationship Rome had with Rhodes, practicality says these ships were not built by Rhodes for Rhodes, but for Caesarea's use, representing Rome's expanding commercial interest in the eastern Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Concerning trade and Caesarea: While Caesarea's harbor site was not ideal, the location of the city in relation to ship and trade flows indicates a purposeful plan to capture income. The substantial flow of Eastern goods going west¹⁰² to the eastern Mediterranean coast and the counterclockwise movement of ship traffic, made Caesarea a gateway to the west.¹⁰³ With backing from Rome, Caesarea may have offered freighter service throughout the Mediterranean and consumer cities in its vicinity. With the counterclockwise movement of vessels, Caesarea was en route for emptied or loaded vessels circuiting the Mediterranean and for loaded ships moving north up the coast from Alexandria. With their giant freighters wanting to make few stops some Alexandrian ships may have unloaded at Caesarea to smaller Roman freighters for markets throughout the Mediterranean. Caesarea also controlled Gaza who received goods from Africa, Arabia, India and Indonesia, the most lucrative of which would have been pepper and frankincense.

Thus, during Paul's time, Rome succeeded in making much of the Levant a projection of its own military and commercial interests. As Rome concentrated on controlling the southern east/west silk routes by way of Arabia and the Red Sea, Caesarea was strategically located to capture not only the commercial activity of those

⁹⁹ Did the adding of cargo at Sidon represent freighter service for Sidon or outright buying and selling of goods on the part of Caesarea?

¹⁰⁰ *Antiquities*, 14.11.4.280.

¹⁰¹ *Wars*, 1.21.11.424.

¹⁰² To be more specific, the overland silk road routes moved more directly west. Goods from India and Indonesia would have moved west then northwest through the Arabian and Red Seas. Goods coming from Egypt and Africa would have moved north up the eastern Mediterranean coast for distribution there, then west throughout the Mediterranean.

¹⁰³ Could eastern goods through Caesarea also have gone to Cyprus, Rhodes, Crete, Greece and Italy, and Spain as well?

routes, but goods from Africa, to be spread west. Then as the southern Levant - controlled by Rome - began to develop its own concentration of economic activity the exchange and trade of goods began to spread in all directions throughout the Mediterranean.

In addition, the New Testament's account of Paul's travels as an itinerant preacher spreading the Christian gospel, also sheds light on trade patterns in the Mediterranean. As a traveler aboard cargo ships, Paul sailed through Caesarea's harbor three of his four journeys. This again reflects Caesarea's growing significance as a dealer in trade for Rome. On his first journey from Antioch we get an idea of the growing demand for Far Eastern goods combined with eastern Mediterranean agricultural and refined goods moving west to Asia. On his second journey, leaving from Antioch and traveling through Asia, Paul ferries over to Europe by way of the popular Troas/Philliipi route. Then after an itinerary of preaching in Macedonia and Achaia he boards a ship from Corinth to Ephesus. Goods from Corinth would have been refined, and as Corinth was famous for its quality bronze and pottery products, Ephesus, itself an advanced city, would have been desirous of such goods. With a short stay at Ephesus Paul boards a ship for the easier "downhill" run directly for Caesarea. At this juncture, from Paul's travels, we see eastern goods moving west then western goods moving east. On his third journey Paul starts from Antioch with a preaching itinerary by land through Asia where he again takes the Troas/Philliipi route to Europe and back again. Finally leaving Asia he travels back on a ship likely loaded with metals in ingot form for refinement, perhaps at Caesarea. On his final trip, as a prisoner of Rome leaving from Caesarea, his ship stops at nearby Sidon to add on glass and textile goods for export to Asia. On reaching Asia, at Myra he is transferred to a grain ship headed for Rome. Thus, at the turn of the first millennium, as the eastern Mediterranean region began to develop its own concentration of commercial activity, and as Caesarea was meant to serve Rome as its commercial hub, Paul's trips confirms a growing interregional demand and export of goods moving in all directions across the Mediterranean.

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Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, Cleopatra? – A Study of Past Life Regression, Practitioners, and the Impact of Reincarnation Beliefs Under Hypnotism

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Abstract

Past life regression sessions are touted as a way to reflect on past lives, address current fears and anxieties, and explore our deeper identities. This practice has been widely condemned as unscientific, unprovable, and can even be seen as dangerous, yet adherents still flock to these sessions. In my paper, I take a closer look at the nuts and bolts of past life regression sessions, including direct observation and interviews with practitioners and believers, and examine the efficacy of recovered memory and the possible pitfalls of using trance and hypnosis to rediscover or imagine, past lives. And perhaps even discover why so many sessions focus on important historical identities and so few seekers find out they were serfs. I explore the traditions, practices, and beliefs of past life regression practitioners, their tools, approaches, and ties to religious traditions and spirituality. I also provide background on hypnotherapy and the uses and possible harms of using the practices to recover memories. By evaluating actual past life regression sessions, I seek to place this controversial practice within the context of its historic roots and current application.

Introduction

The memories of children are tricky things. Allow me to tell you a story. I grew up terrified of rabbits. A silly phobia but one that persisted into early adulthood. I have a solid memory of being attacked by a rabbit in a field near my grandmother's house as a very young child. I got too close to a rabbit warren and was chased, scratched, and bitten by a wild rabbit acting in an uncharacteristic manner. This rabbit was so aggressive that I climbed a tree to get away from it and screamed my head off until a neighbor heard me and called my father. I remember being taken to the hospital and receiving a series of painful rabies vaccine injections in my abdomen as a result, this would have been a possible course of treatment for such an animal attack in the mid-eighties. Obviously, this experience was profoundly traumatizing, and I suffered night terrors for years as a result.

Now, here's the kicker. According to my entire family, this never happened. My mother asked me, in my twenties, why I was so afraid of rabbits, of all things. I responded, referencing my attack and subsequent painful medical treatment, and she was baffled. I had never been attacked by a rabbit. I had never been vaccinated for rabies. The entire thing was made up in my mind in childhood. My father blamed my interest in medicine as a very young child. Both my parents assumed I would become a doctor after discovering me pouring over a copy of *Gray's Anatomy* as a kid. I was fascinated by the pictures and knew a shocking amount of medical

terminology as a result. I would clamor to stay up late to watch medical episodes of *Dateline*. Relatives talked about my future as a doctor as a matter of course.

What they assume happened is that due to my childhood fascination with medicine and disease, I often watched programs about medicine on television and read a lot of books in the local library about illness and death. They have theorized I must have read or watched something as a child about rabies and then had a nightmare about it, although they do not specifically recall such a program. I was so young that the dream had the flavor of memory to me. It carried the same weight and emotional impact years later. Furthermore, since a fear of rabbits was seen as silly and often mocked, I didn't speak about the experience often with others. Thus, no one was able to correct my false belief in the attack.

So, am I still terrified of rabbits? Did the realization that this memory was false cure my phobia? Yes and no. I no longer wake in a cold sweat thinking of their pointy teeth and beady eyes, but they still make me uneasy. I do not like to be around rabbits. I am still very much afraid of the rabies virus, but I no longer feel destined to die from it in some cruel twist of fate. Knowing the memory is false does take some of the sting out of it. I no longer recall the details quite as sharply and without the same fear and ownership of the experience. Yet, that twinge of fear is still there. The memory still has fangs, even if the rabbit doesn't.

How much more powerful would this phobia be if instead of being something I hid and was later talked out of, I had my fear reinforced? If I had parents who believed that I was remembering my death in a past life, or came from a culture that embraced reincarnation, would I have had my memories reinforced? Would this fictitious memory of a rabbit attack have become an inextricable part of my personal narrative? Have become an essential part of myself? My early fascination with medicine could definitely be interpreted as an unusual interest. No one in my family was in the medical field, nor was anyone else I knew as a child. I had no unusual exposure to illness or medical care. In all other respects, I was a normal American child in the 1980's. I had what appeared to be an autobiographical memory of the attack, with just as much detail and evocative emotional weight as the memories of other children presumed to be remembering past life experiences. The memory was specific, traumatic, and first person. Had I been born into another time, family, or culture, it is possible my childhood fiction would have been reinforced and believed as proof of past life recall.

There is an enduring allure to the notion of past lives. The idea that our essential being, our moral selves, and our histories are woven into an ever-evolving tapestry of refinement and evolution is an extremely attractive one. If our current life is difficult, perhaps our next life will be better because of the lessons we are learning now. Perhaps we suffer now in a retributive sense. We are paying for the mistakes of our past lives, even though we don't remember them. Or, perhaps through virtuous action in this life, perhaps we can earn a better future for our soul in our next incarnation. Some people believe that they selected the circumstances, privileges, and struggles in this life before their birth. Their essential self, or soul, made choices to refine their souls overall, and they can make different choices next time around. Thus, no matter our current state and powerlessness to change the circumstances

of our birth in this life, we still retain some control over the overall narrative of our existence.

This attractive framing also allows us to make sense of the relative inequalities of our world. If others have easier lives, were born into wealth and power, or seem to live charmed existences, perhaps they are learning different lessons along their own path. Their essential selves may merely be more advanced or older than ours. Or, when viewed in a more negative light, maybe they took the easy way out this time around and are choosing not to evolve, learn, and spiritually progress. Thus, there is an inherent justice in the universe after all. We are free to pity the rich for their shallow progress deficient lives, or to see abject poverty as an inherent reward to come. The meek poised to inherit the Earth. By linking our current circumstances to a larger spirit-progression-based history, we free ourselves from the fickleness of fate and can better make sense of our circumstances.

Such beliefs also match our current lived experiences. Over the course of our lives, we change, we make mistakes and learn from them, we suffer the consequences of our actions, we are rewarded for hard work by better pay or promotions, and our relationships are changed by our behavior. On a fundamental level, the person we were in childhood seems as far removed and distant from our present self as if it were a past life. With our present selves in a constant state of change, how intuitive it feels to accept that our histories also change throughout different lives in a similar manner. One can embrace the notion of past lives without even needing to accept a formal doctrine of reincarnation. One does not need to embrace Eastern religion to incorporate reincarnation into their spiritual life. Past lives appeal to the secular as well as the devout, especially since the intensity of these ideas can vary drastically from person to person.

Past lives are an attractive prospect, so of course, many seek to remember them. Past life regression therapy is alive and well in the modern age. It is often used to complement psychotherapy or performed by trained hypnotherapists. Past life regression has been used in court. Testimony has been enhanced by hypnosis, most famously during the Satanic Panic in the 1990s, but it was used to obtain other witness testimony in less flamboyant cases as well. The notion that our subconscious mind houses a perfect record of all our lived experiences merely awaiting our hypnotically enhanced recall is compelling and widely believed.

With the prevalence of reincarnation beliefs throughout the world, its frequent incorporation into New Age and secular thought, and its popular appeal, there are millions who believe in some form of past lives. The notion of remembering those lives pervades the popular consciousness, and through hypnosis, many seek to know who they were. But is this practice safe? Is it effective? Does it produce proof or lead to evidence? And above all, why do so many remember past lives that feature traumatic deaths, famous or special people, or dramatic events? Why are so many recalling lives like that of Cleopatra, powerful priests to the old gods, or political prisoners and not serfs living in poverty? Or are we all just dreaming of rabbits and telling each other it's true?

Reincarnation and Past Life Belief

A remarkable portion of the population of the world believes in some form of life after death, including 46% to 60% of those without any religious affiliation.¹ The scope and nature of these beliefs vary, from a vague sense that death is not the end to an eternal paradise. According to surveys by Gallup International, 57% of people worldwide believe that there is life after death.² In the United States, 73% of adults believe in heaven, and even among those who do not, 7% still believe in some alternative form of afterlife.³ 83% of U.S. adults believe that people have a soul or spirit.⁴ In addition, 57% of Americans believe that non-human animals have souls.⁵ For the majority of Americans, life after death and the souls of humans are very real.

One afterlife belief that is especially prevalent throughout the world is belief in some form of reincarnation. 27% of adults in the United States believe in reincarnation.⁶ Not all those who express belief in reincarnation believe that souls of humans can travel between human and non-human incarnations, but 30% of cultures worldwide believe in human-to-human reincarnation, although it is widely accepted that these details may be underreported in anthropological literature.⁷

Reincarnation is not one unified theory. There are many different concepts of reincarnation. Some believe in a complete rebirth of the soul, a transfer of consciousness, or migration of the soul into another human or animal body.⁸ Sometimes memories are completely lost, and other beliefs hold that these memories carry over into new lives, although one may or may not have the ability to access them. In many Eastern conceptualizations of reincarnation, there is a strong emphasis placed on karma (karman), which can be broadly defined as the consequences of certain kinds of actions and thoughts that are carried throughout many lives.⁹ In Patanjali Yoga, the soul carries over karmic memory traces (samskara) that remain in the unconscious and can create a predisposition toward

¹ Lucam J. Moraes, Gabrielle S. Barbosa, João Pedro Castro, Jim B. Tucker, and Alexander Moreira-Almeida. "Academic Studies on Claimed Past-Life Memories: A Scoping Review." *EXPLORE - Elsevier Inc.* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2021): 371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2021.05.006>.

² Gallup International Association. "More Prone to Believe in God than Identify as Religious. More Likely to Believe in Heaven than in Hell." *Polling Around the World: Gallup International 75 Years Anniversary Survey*. Gallup International Association. (2023): 71. <https://www.gallup-international.com/survey-results-and-news/survey-result/a-new-gias-anniversary-book>

³ Justin Nortey, Michael Lipka, and Joshua Alvarado. "Few Americans Blame God or Say Faith Has Been Shaken Amid Pandemic, Other Tragedies." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, Pew Research Center. (2021): 11. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/11/23/few-americans-blame-god-or-say-faith-has-been-shaken-amid-pandemic-other-tragedies/>

⁴ Becka A. Alper, Michael Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, Justin Nortey, and Asta Kallo. "Spirituality Among Americans." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, Pew Research Center. (2023): 35. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spirituality-among-americans/>

⁵ Alper et al., 44.

⁶ Alper et al., 36.

⁷ Claire White. "The Cognitive Foundations of Reincarnation." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2016): 265. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43907232>

⁸ Moraes et al., 371.

⁹ Peter Forrest. "Reincarnation without Survival of Memory or Character." *Philosophy East and West*. Vol. 28, No. 1 (1978): 91. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1397928>

repeating thoughts and actions from past lives, leading to habit patterns (vasana).¹⁰ In Theravada Buddhism, there is no distinct soul or personality being reborn, but karma does pass on from life to life, while in Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism, there is a rebirth of the soul along with the passing on of karma.¹¹ So, even among Eastern religions and philosophies such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, and Jainism, where belief in reincarnation is common, there are different notions for how this process works and whether there is an ongoing consciousness or memory of past lives.

Reincarnation memories can have present relevance. In Tibet, reincarnation has been used to determine political succession and the inheritance of property.¹² The Dalai Lama is determined by seeking out and finding a child believed to be the reincarnation of the last Dalai Lama. Children selected as candidates for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama are tested to see if they have residual knowledge of the past. For example, a candidate able to identify the personal possessions of the late Dalai Lama from a selection of similar objects is presumed to be the present incarnation.¹³ Since the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, as an enlightened being, they must be able to recall past lives. Bodhisattvas are souls who chose not to enter Nirvana in order to help free others from the cycle of reincarnation. To believers, the Dalai Lama isn't just another religious teacher or leader but is seen as a manifestation of the bodhisattva of compassion. He is holy in himself.¹⁴ In Tibet, this cycle of succession has extended to ownership of property, inheritance, social standing, political power, and governmental positions and is based upon proof of reincarnation.¹⁵ While inheritance based on reincarnation is not common outside of Tibet, there are often possible benefits to a reincarnated person, such as improved social standing, access to education, and perhaps even gifts from the family of a past incarnation. After all, according to some reincarnation beliefs, the body does not "have" a soul; it is the soul that has a body.¹⁶

Belief in reincarnation is not merely the purview of the East. There are reincarnation beliefs throughout the world in places as diverse as Africa, South America, Asia, Europe, and North America. 20% of Western Europe believes in reincarnation, including 38% of those who consider themselves spiritual but not religious.¹⁷ Reincarnation was even a matter of concern for the early Christians. Early Christian scholars and theologians wrote at length about the Transmigration of Souls as a way to remember and atone for sins committed in their current and

¹⁰ Harold G. Coward. "Psychology and Karma." *Philosophy East and West*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (1983): 49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1398665>

¹¹ Forrest, 91.

¹² Melvyn C. Goldstein. "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1973): 445. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2052683>

¹³ Goldstein, 446-447.

¹⁴ Goldstein, 446.

¹⁵ Goldstein, 447-451.

¹⁶ Mikel Burley. "Karma and Rebirth in the Stream of Thought and Life." *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (2014): 968 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43285933>

¹⁷ Moraes et al., 371.

previous incarnations and thus regain perfect union with God.¹⁸ Many of these ideas came from the Greeks. Pythagoras claimed to remember previous incarnations, as did other ancient Greek philosophers such as Empedocles.¹⁹ While the Catholic church later considered the idea of the transmigration of souls to be heresy, early Christian sects like the Gnostics incorporated reincarnation beliefs into their views of Christianity.²⁰ One key feature of this early fusion of reincarnation with Christianity was the idea that the soul moves between Earthly incarnations and, based on their deeds, finds an eternal destination in either heaven or hell.²¹ These early beliefs have modern connections. The transmigration of souls was key in the final restoration of the souls of sinners into the Kingdom of God.²² The second coming of Christ, considered heresy by the church in the fifth century, is now a tenant of many modern Christian believers.²³ Thus, we can find reincarnation beliefs within even more fundamentalist Christian sects.

Taking a closer look at past life beliefs in Western countries, around one-fifth of respondents to surveys claim to believe in reincarnation. In the United Kingdom, only approximately two percent of the population comes from regions that are associated with reincarnation beliefs, such as Buddhists, Sikhs, and Hindus from the Indian subcontinent, while 24% of the total population believes in reincarnation. These beliefs in past lives are often added alongside traditional Christianity, and thus can be viewed more as a religious trend than an entirely new religion or an embrasure of Eastern beliefs.²⁴ One reason these beliefs are so popular in the United Kingdom is a fascination with past life experiences and identities, rather than a belief in karma and its potential effects. This fascination is evidenced by the popularity of regression therapists and curiosity in the personal accounts of past lives in magazines like *Reincarnation International*.²⁵ When karma is discussed at all it is a vague notion of cause and effect, akin to “you reap what you sow.”²⁶ For these respondents, karma is discussed as a way to evaluate their own characteristics, a function of identity, often employed to explain their present circumstances via past trauma, similar to modern psychotherapy or self-help.²⁷ This functions more as a rising process, one of self-growth and self-betterment, as evidenced by an inability to imagine a nonhuman incarnation or regression to a lower state. Reincarnation is optimistic. It is a way to continue the process of growth by living a series of lives, a life review after death to evaluate mistakes and growth, or time to reflect and learn.²⁸

¹⁸ Alexander Alexakis. “Was There Life beyond the Life beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 55 (2001): 156-158. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1291816>

¹⁹ Alexakis, 161-162.

²⁰ Alexakis, 166.

²¹ Alexakis, 168.

²² Alexakis, 175-176.

²³ Alexakis, 161.

²⁴ Tony Walter, and Helen Waterhouse. “Lives-Long Learning: The Effects of Reincarnation Belief on Everyday Life in England.” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001): 85. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nr.2001.5.1.85>

²⁵ Walter and Waterhouse, 86.

²⁶ Walter and Waterhouse, 89.

²⁷ Walter and Waterhouse, 90.

²⁸ Walter and Waterhouse, 90-94.

Thus, past lives are a path to meaning and identity, a secular solution that can fit neatly alongside existing religious beliefs.

In the United States, reincarnation beliefs are even more popular. 57% of Americans surveyed by Pew Research Center believe in life after death, with 27% specifically believing in reincarnation into new lives on Earth.²⁹ These beliefs are not limited to “new age” thinking and religious movements and, in fact, have roots in the 19th and early 20th century through movements such as theosophy and spiritualism.³⁰ The idea of living multiple lives was seen as almost scientific, as natural a progression for the spirit as Darwinian evolution for the species, and could be analyzed by their perceptions and experiences of the natural world.³¹ Like their counterparts in the United Kingdom, American believers in reincarnation did not believe that a human could reincarnate into animal form. There could be a social devolution, but not a spiritual one.³² Reincarnation was even used actively in Christianity; one New Thought Christian author, William Walker Atkinson, claimed that the miracle of Jesus’ virgin birth was not due to his mother’s virginity but because he was a non-reincarnated being, a sort of virgin soul.³³ Far from being bound to existing religious traditions, such as its incorporation into Christianity or links to Asian traditions, reincarnation in the United States took on a uniquely secular connotation.

Americans love the idea of soul mates. The idea of intimate relationships that endure throughout time is, perhaps, the most popular of reincarnation beliefs in America. Nor does this idea only exist in romantic entanglements, soul mates could be teachers, family, friends, or spouses that are destined to reconnect through their various incarnations.³⁴ One could reflect on past lives and remember their personal histories and past relationships via dreams, meditation, trances, or hypnosis. Thus, past life memories were possible for anyone.³⁵ Such a democratization of access to past lives only further reinforced the popularity of reincarnation beliefs and the yearning to remember previous lives.

Different routes to these memories have been tried over the years. From placing emphasis on certain dreams to trances to consulting spiritual mediums, there have been many paths to memory. One promising avenue has been hypnosis.³⁶ Recovered memories of past lives achieved via hypnosis have become a staple of American reincarnation beliefs.

²⁹ Alper et al., 13-14.

³⁰ Courtney Bender. “American Reincarnations: What the Many Lives of Past Lives Tell Us about Contemporary Spiritual Practice.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 75, No. 3 (2007): 590-593. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40005998>

³¹ Bender, 593.

³² Bender, 594.

³³ Bender, 595.

³⁴ Bender, 596.

³⁵ Bender, 596-599.

³⁶ Bender, 597-599.

Two Types of Past Life Memories

When discussing past life memories, a distinction must be made between two types: spontaneous and recovered memories. Spontaneous memories are often the most convincing, consisting of children and adults who remember their past lives spontaneously, without any special effort. Recovered memories are memories of past lives discovered through past life regression, either as part of psychotherapy, hypnotic regression or suggestion, trances, guided meditation, or other relaxation techniques. When discussing past life regression, we are talking about recovered memories.

The importance of this distinction is that it draws a sharp line between the relative plausibility and implausibility of any claimed memory of a past life. When a child begins to speak unprompted about their “real parents” or displays a unique skill they were never taught, that is quite compelling. In the article “How to Know You’ve Survived Death,” Claire White, Michael Kinsella, and Jesse Bering describe the popularity of these post-mortem survival narratives. They are extremely popular and convincing “because they meet default cognitive assumptions about what human survival would look like if it were possible.”³⁷ Detailed accounts of people remembering traumatic events, such as being burned alive or drowning, are a huge commercial success, in part because they are so persuasive and contain details that seem to verify their authenticity. Such as a child giving a distinct account of remembering eating a certain fruit before their murder in a past life and then a similarly reported death is found to have existed.³⁸ This privileged information bolsters the perceived validity of the story.

These accounts conform to how most people view identity: you have a material body and an immaterial self. That immaterial self, your mind, contains the memories and thoughts that you define yourself by. Since we have a default cognitive assumption that memories are the most accurate test of our identity, the capacity to remember details of a past life adds to the plausibility that something of ourselves survives after death.³⁹ Research bears this out: a person’s identity remains as long as their memories are preserved, even if they undergo profound physical changes. In the human mind, if Jim still remembers being Jim even after a disfiguring accident, we still recognize him as Jim. This effect persists even if Jim is physically transformed into a robot; as long as the memories remain, so does Jim’s identity in the eyes of others. The same holds true of behaviors and personality traits. We identify Jim because he is just as stubborn as always.⁴⁰

Not that body is irrelevant. Part of why many past life memory narratives are seen as so plausible is the persistence of physical marks or deformities that are often used as evidence. A birthmark that corresponds to how a person says they remember dying is often presented as evidence of the validity of their claim, such as

³⁷ Claire White, Michael Kinsella, and Jesse Bering. “How to Know You’ve Survived Death.” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2018): 279.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26507489>

³⁸ White et al., 284.

³⁹ White et al., 285-286.

⁴⁰ White et al., 288.

a pale birthmark on the skull that matches up to autopsy photos of someone who had brain surgery before death.⁴¹ This sort of evidence, birthmarks, autobiographical episodic memories, and their role in how we identify each other are often components in claims of past life memories and are seen as particularly compelling when recounted by children in a spontaneous manner.

Recovered memories of past lives, such as those gained under hypnosis during a past life regression, often contain the same narrative elements. However, these memories are of a different nature since there is a large body of evidence describing how drastically our memories can be distorted, misattributed, manipulated, or outright created during hypnosis. Remembering is a reconstructionist process. Memory is a loose collection of details and impressions that our minds piece together to form a coherent narrative that is colored and shaped by lived experiences and what we know and believe about the world around us.⁴² Memory is not like a factual, indelible recording of events as they happen. Memories can change over time; they are malleable and subject to deliberate and unconscious distortions, and memory can be influenced.

Moreover, once a false memory has been incorporated, it can be indistinguishable from true memories. Often, real memories are more detailed than false ones, but highly detailed false memories are possible, even when the recalled event is implausible or completely impossible, such as extreme childhood medical procedures or shaking hands with Bugs Bunny at Disneyland (due to licensing Disney does not allow other costumed characters into their parks).⁴³ These false memories can be unknowingly implanted by therapists and hypnotists trying to recover memory due to the use of suggestion, leading questions, visualization, and imagination, and the more elaborate and detailed these false memories are, the harder it becomes for the subject to distinguish them from true memories. The details add to the authenticity of the false memory and can make it far more difficult to reject later, even when told the memory is false or impossible.⁴⁴

Witnesses to crimes that have had their memories “refreshed” using forensic hypnosis often add inaccurate details to their accounts, such as a hypnotized eyewitness to a robbery confidently recalling the license plate of a car belonging to the perpetrator only for that plate number to belong to the president of Harvard University, where the witness worked and often saw the car.⁴⁵ Such misattribution of memory is common as a natural consequence of how our memory works. For instance, after the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, a witness recalled a second man being present when Timothy McVeigh rented the van used in the attack so well a sketch was made and distributed to law enforcement. It was later determined that the witness had seen the man in the sketch at a body shop the day after the attack

⁴¹ White et al, 290.

⁴² Daniel M. Bernstein and Elizabeth F. Loftus. “How to Tell If a Particular Memory Is True or False.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. Vol. 4, No. 4, The Next Big Questions in Psychology (2009): 373. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40645702>

⁴³ Bernstein and Loftus, 371-372.

⁴⁴ Bernstein and Loftus, 372.

⁴⁵ John F. Kihlstrom. “Hypnosis, Memory and Amnesia.” *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*. Vol. 352, No. 1362, Biological and Psychological Perspectives on Memory and Memory Disorders (1997): 1730-1731. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/56696>

and had misattributed the memory to the wrong episode. McVeigh had acted alone.⁴⁶ No hypnosis was involved in that incident, but where hypnosis is employed, such false memories or misattributions are even more common since hypnosis interferes with the way the mind retrieves memories.⁴⁷ These effects persist even when the hypnotized subject is told they are falsely remembering. When a group of hypnotized subjects received the suggestion of being awoken by a loud noise, all of the subjects remembered this event as if it had actually occurred post-hypnosis. Almost half still insisted on the memory being accurate when told the opposite. They insisted they had heard the loud noise even after being told the idea was suggested to them by the hypnotist. They were convinced their memory was real.⁴⁸ As cognitive, social psychologist John F. Kihlstrom states, "Hypnosis is first and foremost a state of believed-in imaginings; in the absence of independent corroboration, there is no reason to think any hypnotically refreshed recollection is an actual representation of the historical past, and, in fact, every reason to doubt it."⁴⁹ If we rely on our memories for our sense of self and to identify others, past life memories are powerful evidence. Unfortunately, such memory is not always reliable.

How Do We Prove a Past Life?

When it comes to providing "proof" of a past life, believers have quite an uphill battle. I would be remiss if I did not discuss Dr. Ian Stevenson and his work investigating past life memories. Dr. Stevenson spent over fifty years investigating and collecting cases of past life memories. He called these Cases of the Reincarnation Type (CORT) and claimed to have recorded over 2,500 such instances.⁵⁰ The bulk of his work concerned children with spontaneous memories of past lives. An in-depth analysis of his research and claims is beyond the scope of this paper, but considering his contributions to a mostly neglected topic, he is worth discussing in brief. Dr. Stevenson theorized that incorporating the belief of reincarnation had an explanatory value and, as a unifying theory, could answer questions concerning psychology, biology, and medicine, most specifically regarding child psychology and childhood development.⁵¹ The CORT cases he documented had a set of common factors that he claimed added weight to his arguments.

Cases of the Reincarnation Type typically involved children who began claiming to remember a past life between the ages of two and four, typically around

⁴⁶ Daniel L. Schacter, and Chad S. Dodson. "Misattribution, False Recognition and the Sins of Memory." *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*. Vol. 356, No. 1413, Episodic Memory (2001): 1386.. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/306709>

⁴⁷ Kihlstrom, 1729.

⁴⁸ Kihlstrom, 1729-1730.

⁴⁹ Kihlstrom, 1730.

⁵⁰ Ian Stevenson. "The Phenomenon of Claimed Memories of Previous Lives: Possible Interpretations and Importance." *Medical Hypotheses*. Vol. 54, No. 4 (2000): 652. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10859660/>

⁵¹ Ian Stevenson. "The Explanatory Value of the Idea of Reincarnation." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. Vol. 164, No. 5 (1977): 305. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00005053-197705000-00002>.

thirty-seven months.⁵² The child would exhibit unusual behavior and play that corresponded to the behavior, profession, life circumstances, and personality of the person he claimed to be the reincarnation of. Such as children who name dolls the same name as the past incarnations of actual children, children who play at teaching school or shopkeeping mirroring the profession of their past lives, habits such as smoking or a desire to drink, or skills they had not learned like using a sewing machine.⁵³ Furthermore, children who claimed to remember typically rejected current family members, claimed to have other parents or live in a different place, expressed desires outside the norms of their family regarding diet, religion, or behavior, and a distaste for their current status such as a rejection of their families poverty due to a past life in a different social caste or in a wealthier home.⁵⁴ These children may have birthmarks, congenital deformities, or diseases that corresponded to their past lives, especially marks mirroring their cause of death.⁵⁵ These children may remember specific details of their past lives, such as names of family members or places lived, and will typically recall the manner of their death.⁵⁶ These remembered deaths are often violent or traumatic. 76% of his cases reported the manner of their death, with 63% of those deaths being violent.⁵⁷ Children who claim to remember commonly have specific unexplained phobias, especially ones correlating to the manner of death in their previous life, such as fear of water coupled with a claim of death by drowning.⁵⁸ Dr. Stevenson further claims that when a child gives specific details, such as names, locations, and manner of death, a person matching these details can often be found with the details of that person's life matching 90% of the statements made by the child claiming to remember.⁵⁹ In most of his cases, the memories and unusual behaviors typically fade as the child ages, with the child having forgotten them by eight to ten years old.⁶⁰ In a cross-cultural review of CORT-type cases from multiple countries, children start making statements about their past lives at around 35 months, the interval between death and rebirth was 16 months on average, 20% of children report intermission memories (memories from a period between lives), 75% describe how they died, and 35% had phobias relating to their mode of death.⁶¹

There are cultural differences, however. While Dr. Stevenson analyzed cases from ten different countries, the cultural beliefs surrounding the child did produce variations in the claims made by these children. In cultures containing reincarnation

⁵² Ian Stevenson. "American Children Who Claim to Remember Previous Lives." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. Vol. 171, No. 12 (1983): 742. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00005053-198312000-00006>

⁵³ Stevenson, "The Explanatory Value..." 313-314.

⁵⁴ Stevenson, "The Explanatory Value..." 313-315.

⁵⁵ Stevenson, "The Explanatory Value..." 318-320.

⁵⁶ Stevenson, "American Children..." 742.

⁵⁷ Stevenson, "The Phenomenon of Claimed Memories..." 653.

⁵⁸ Ian Stevenson. "Phobias in Children Who Claim to Remember Previous Lives." *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. Vol. 4, No. 2 (1990): 246-247. <https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/wp-content/uploads/sites/360/2016/12/STE34Stevenson-1.pdf>

⁵⁹ Stevenson, "The Explanatory Value..." 307-308.

⁶⁰ Stevenson, "American Children..." 742.

⁶¹ Jim B. Tucker "Children's Reports of Past-Life Memories: A Review." *Explore*, Vol. 4, Issue 4 (2008): 244-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2008.04.001>

beliefs that do not allow for sex changes, children do not report being of a different sex in their past lives. In matrilinear societies, children claim to be reincarnated from their mother's family line; in patrilinear societies, from the fathers.⁶² The scope of these changes is especially striking when one looks at some of the differences involving cases of American children who claim to remember past lives. American children make fewer specific statements about their past lives, and these statements contain fewer identifying details such as names or locations. Compared to cases in India, 75% knew the name of the person they claimed to have been in their past life but a name was mentioned by an American child in only 34% of cases.⁶³ In Indian cases, it was possible to match details of a child's statements to a specific deceased person for 77% of the cases. Such a match was only possible in 20% of the American cases studied by Dr. Stevenson. In these American cases, the person found was a deceased member of the child's own family, such as a grandparent, 94% of the time, with the only exception being a close friend of the child's mother. In the Indian cases of identified past lives, the matched person was related only 16% of the time. 78% of Indian cases mentioned the mode of death, while only 43% of American children did so. The manner of death reported was also different. Of the children who recalled the mode of death, 56% of Indian children reported a violent death, yet 80% of American children reported violent deaths.⁶⁴

It should be noted that all of Dr. Stevenson's cases were of spontaneously recalled memories. Dr. Stevenson was outspoken in his dismissal of recovered memories as evidence for past lives. He considered the use of hypnosis for past life regression by psychotherapists a "fad" and ineffective for the treatment of phobias. One of the leading claims for hypnotic regression as a treatment for phobia is that the patient will be cured of their fear once they remember the source of it in their past life. In Dr. Stevenson's experience, this was not the case. In his studies of children who remembered past lives, many children had phobias corresponding to the manner of death, and these phobias persisted despite knowing where they came from.⁶⁵

While Dr. Stevenson is by far the most published authority on spontaneous past life memories, his research is not without flaws. He claimed to have recorded 2,500 CORT cases as evidence for his theories, yet in a paper responding to criticism of his work, he admitted to not investigating any case that did not look promising. In fact, he has an entire cabinet of cases he considers "inauthentic or fantasies" that were never investigated.⁶⁶ This raises the specter of confirmation bias as it is hard to determine the overall prevalence of his reported phenomena when

⁶² Stevenson, "American Children..." 743

⁶³ Stevenson, "American Children..." 745.

⁶⁴ Stevenson, "American Children..." 744-745.

⁶⁵ Ian Stevenson. "A Case of the Psychotherapist's Fallacy: Hypnotic Regression to 'Previous Lives.'" *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*. Vol. 36, No. 3 (1994): 189-191
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00029157.1994.10403068>

⁶⁶ Ian Stevenson, Satwant Pasricha, and Godwin Samarartne. "Deception and Self-Deception in Cases of the Reincarnation Type: Seven Illustrative Cases in Asia." *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*. Vol. 82, No. 1 (1988): 24. <https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/wp-content/uploads/sites/360/2016/12/STE23.pdf>

cases that did not support his theory were dismissed and were therefore not recorded or taken into account in his reports. To be sure, he was able to determine many consistent features in his accounts, and many of his findings have been replicated by other studies, but what is presented by Dr. Stevenson is an incomplete record. As such, while his data is highly suggestive it cannot be considered irrefutable evidence of his theories. The patterns he recorded do provide a contrast for latter cases of past life regression as they provide a basis for comparison between spontaneous past life memories and recovered memories.

Memory Recovered by Hypnosis

However, it is one thing to wish for memories of previous lives and another to actually remember who you might have been. Due to the fringe nature of these beliefs in mainstream scientific inquiry, there has been limited research done into the possibility of remembering past lives and accessing those memories. However, the idea of recovering other types of memories buried in one's subconscious has been explored and studied. Due in part to the controversies surrounding witness testimony during and after the Satanic panic in the 1980s and 1990s, the recovered memory phenomenon has been discussed and studied at length. The entirety of this debate is well beyond the scope of this paper, but recovered memory phenomena have a bearing on the issue of past life regression (PLR).

Contrary to popular depiction, hypnosis is not mind control, a door to the collective unconsciousness of mankind, or a way to exceed human potential. Hypnosis is a social interaction where two people, the hypnotist, and the subject, engage in an imaginative experience that changes the subject's cognition and voluntary actions based on suggestions provided by the hypnotist.⁶⁷ Through these suggestions, the hypnotist can alter the perception, memory, and mood of the subject.⁶⁸ Hypnosis is not some distinct mental state where we are totally freed from our inhibitions, become indifferent to pain, or can perform astounding feats of strength and skill. In fact, hypnosis primarily works not because it is some profound phenomenal mental state but because of the subject's expectations about what this hypnotic state entails and what they could experience.⁶⁹ Studies have shown that a person roleplaying being hypnotized, in essence acting out what they think hypnosis would look like, has many of the same responses and outcomes as a person who is hypnotized.⁷⁰ This does not mean that hypnosis has no effect on the subject. Hypnosis provides the subject a "license for fantasy" that lowers critical judgment,

⁶⁷ Kihlstrom, 1727.

⁶⁸ Martin T. Orne, Wayne G. Whitehouse, Emily Carota Orne and David F. Dinges. "Memories" of Anomalous and Traumatic Autobiographical Experiences: Validation and Consolidation of Fantasy Through Hypnosis." *Psychological Inquiry*. Vol. 7, No. 2 (1996): 169. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1449010>

⁶⁹ Scott O. Lilienfeld, and Hal Arkowitz. "Altered States." *Scientific American Mind*. Vol. 19, No. 6 (2009): 81. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/24940025>

⁷⁰ Steven Jay Lynn, Timothy G. Lock, Bryan Myers and David G. Payne. "Recalling the Unrecallable: Should Hypnosis Be Used to Recover Memories in Psychotherapy?" *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. Vol. 6, No. 3, Memory as the Theater of the Past (1997): 81. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20182453>

allows the subject to suspend their orientation on reality, can encourage the use of imagery and imagination to change how we recall experiences, and can even encourage us to create and accept false experiences and beliefs as reality.⁷¹

In 1997, surveys indicated that between 20% and 34% of psychotherapists regularly employed hypnosis to recover forgotten and repressed memories and help reconcile current problems by finding a “historical truth” to explain them.⁷² Yet, there is a preponderance of evidence that hypnosis does not improve memory, nor does it facilitate accurate recall or elaboration of existing memories.⁷³ Hypnotized subjects fare no better than non-hypnotized control subjects on tests of accurate recall and, in fact, often performed worse.⁷⁴ Hypnosis, however, increases the likelihood of false recall, confabulation (the creation of false memories), and increased confidence levels in these false memories or incorrect details.⁷⁵

The suggestive nature of hypnosis increases this incorporation of false memory, and even when subjects are told later that a memory is false and was deliberately implanted, they may cling to their belief in the false memory, as seen in those who had a loud noise suggested to them.⁷⁶ As Lynn, Lock, Meyers, and Payne concluded in “Recalling the Unrecallable: Should Hypnosis be Used to Recover Memories in Psychotherapy?” “Hypnosis is not a reliable technique for augmenting accurate recall, and generally results in a trade-off of errors for accurate remembrances.”⁷⁷

Specific note should be made of the practice of hypnotic age regression. Hypnotic age regression is a technique where a subject is tasked with thinking, feeling, or acting like a child at a specific age, often used to have subjects return to memories of their childhood.⁷⁸ When asked to remember a childhood event, to “be and feel like” a child of that age, subjects can often exhibit dramatic changes in behavior and demeanor. Yet, in over 80 years of research across numerous studies, these enactments of childlike behavior are quite different from the ways actual children behave.⁷⁹ Even when the behavior of the subject is similar to childlike behavior, the act is performed at the same level as control subjects not under hypnosis instructed to pretend they are children.⁸⁰ These age regression experiences are not based on the lived experiences of the subject; they are reflections of their beliefs, assumptions, and fantasies about childhood.⁸¹ Nor are their recollections accurate to their childhood experiences. For example, when regressed to three years old, hypnotized subjects asked to identify a childhood comfort object were less accurate than non-hypnotized control subjects. Hypnotized

⁷¹ Orne et al., 170-172.

⁷² Lynn et al., 79.

⁷³ Kihlstrom, 1729.

⁷⁴ Lynn et al., 80.

⁷⁵ Kihlstrom, 1729.

⁷⁶ Kihlstrom, 1729.

⁷⁷ Lynn et al., 80.

⁷⁸ Lynn et al., 80-81.

⁷⁹ Michael Nash. “What, if Anything, is Regressed About Hypnotic Age Regression? A Review of the Empirical Literature.” *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (1987): 42-52.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.102.1.42>

⁸⁰ Nash, 51.

⁸¹ Lynn et al., 81.

subjects were correct only 21% of the time, while those not under hypnosis roleplaying their childhood selves were accurate 70% of the time.⁸² Hypnotically regressed subjects are not displaying the same type of cognition, nor are they regressing into childhood memories or thought processes. They are still functioning on the cognitive level of adults who are merely acting out childhood. There is no change to childlike brainwaves under EEG; they perform the same as control adults on IQ tests under regression, and their cognition and moral performance were adult in nature.⁸³ The hypnotic suggestion of regression simply allows them to indulge in the fantasy of childhood; there is nothing actually regressed about them apart from enacted behavior they believe to be childlike. Since age regression and regression into past lives are essentially the same process, this is a very important detail to note. In fact, prominent past life regressionist Dr. Brian Weiss claims to have first encountered past life regression when attempting to age regress a patient under hypnosis to treat a childhood phobia.⁸⁴ Past life regression and age regression are two sides of the same coin.

Past Life Regression and Hypnosis

While memory recovery via hypnosis has a host of known issues, a few are of specific concern regarding past life regression and deserve emphasis. Much like other practices in hypnosis, PLR is highly influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of the participants. The subjects of PLR tend to experience past life memories and identities that align with the views and beliefs about reincarnation held by the hypnotist. If the hypnotist believes that rebirth into a new incarnation happens immediately upon death, then their clients report no lag time between lives. If the hypnotist believes that there can be long periods between lives their subjects report lives separated by longer spans of time.⁸⁵ Since remembering is a reconstructionist process, it is strongly influenced by the expectations held by the subject and the hypnotist about what should happen, and these beliefs shape what actually happened for both parties. Thus, if both the hypnotist and the client believe that they will uncover past life memories, any hint of another identity is explored and pursued while other statements are glossed over. They will then maintain that this was a real past life being recalled even when there is evidence to the contrary. Since these memories are expected, they are then legitimized as real memories by the very nature of hypnosis and the attitudes and expectations of the hypnotist.⁸⁶

The types of lives remembered are also influenced by culture and beliefs. If the subject is from a culture that believes reincarnation can include lives as animals,

⁸² Lynn et al., 81-82.

⁸³ Nash, 42-50.

⁸⁴ Oprah.com. "How Dr. Brian Weiss Went from Past-Life Skeptic to Past-Life Expert." *Oprah.com*, 2024. <https://www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/how-dr-brian-weiss-went-from-past-life-skeptic-to-expert-video>.

⁸⁵ Nicholas P. Spanos, Evelyn P. Menary, Natalie J. Gabora, Susan C. DuBreuil and Bridget Dewhirst. "Secondary Identity Enactments During Hypnotic Past-Life Regression: A Sociocognitive Perspective." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Vol. 61, No. 2 (1991): 312. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.2.308>

⁸⁶ Spanos et al., 314.

they are likely to report such incarnations. These animal incarnations are also tied to cultural components, such as Korean students reporting lives as tigers and bears; there is a legend in Korea of a tiger and bear who wanted to be humans.⁸⁷ Yet, in cultures without a belief in animal incarnations, such as another study in Canada, there were no animal lives reported by subjects.⁸⁸ Preference also plays a role; favorite countries or easy-to-imagine settings the subject is familiar with are the most likely locations for past lives from different regions or countries, such as America for non-Americans who have been exposed to the worldwide prevalence of American media.⁸⁹ Subjects typically give common names, such as Tom or Ann, are from historical eras they are familiar with, such as the 19th and early 20th centuries, share the same sex and age, or have extensively studied the referenced time or place claimed by their past life, such as places they have visited or studied about in college courses.⁹⁰

The pre-hypnotic discussion also shapes the experience and the types of memories produced. Studies have demonstrated the relative ease with which the past life identity can be manipulated. Having a specific identity suggested by the hypnotist, even of a fictional character from folklore, would produce memories correlating to that identity.⁹¹ Books, pictures, flags, and other visual cues in waiting rooms influence details reported under hypnosis.⁹² The way regression is framed by experimenters also influences results. If subjects are played a tape with either highly favorable descriptions of PLR, neutral descriptions, or skeptical descriptions, 85% of the group primed with favorable descriptions reported past lives, 60% of the neutral group also reported past lives, while only 10% of the group exposed to skeptical and dismissive priming did so.⁹³ Furthermore, after the experiment, the subjects in the negatively primed group who reported past lives admitted to having strong preexisting beliefs in reincarnation and studying occult and Eastern literature.⁹⁴ In other priming experiments, if subjects were told about a high rate of sexual abuse toward children historically they were more likely to report sexual abuse happening to their prior selves.⁹⁵ What subjects are told to expect, their minds provide.

The details of the past lives reported by subjects are also often quite inaccurate. PLR subjects often get significant details wrong, such as not knowing who the leader of the country was during their claimed past life, declaring the country was at war when that was historically inaccurate, or reporting Julius Caesar

⁸⁷ Young Don Pyun and Yun Joo Kim. "Experimental Production of Past-Life Memories in Hypnosis." *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (2009): 274.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00207140902881031>

⁸⁸ Spanos et al., 311.

⁸⁹ Pyun and Kim, 275.

⁹⁰ Spanos et al., 310.

⁹¹ Young Don Pyun. "Creating Past-Life Identity in Hypnotic Regression." *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Vol. 63, No. 3, (2015): 368,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00207144.2015.1031557>

⁹² Pyun, 369.

⁹³ Robert A. Baker. "The Effect of Suggestion on Past-Lives Regression." *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1982): 72-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00029157.1982.10404067>

⁹⁴ Baker, 75.

⁹⁵ Spanos et al., 314-315.

was the current emperor of Rome, a title he never held.⁹⁶ When previously hypnotized past life reporters were again hypnotized and questioned about the source of specific details they reported stories heard in childhood, movies, television shows, books, and current events woven into the narrative of their past life identities.⁹⁷ Dr. Stevenson also highlighted specific inaccuracies given by hypnotized PLR subjects, such as referring to the court at Versailles during the Crusades, before Louis XIV built his palace there, reporting living near the mountains in the Netherlands, a country without any mountains, or reporting a lobotomy happening years before the practice was invented.⁹⁸ These inaccuracies on the part of PLR subjects are not necessarily indicative of fraud or attempts to deceive; rather, they are evidence of our mind's ability to construct memories out of things we have experienced or learned in other contexts, things we imagine, or misattributed pieces of fictional stories.

These past life memories and identities are easily shaped and imagined by subjects. The beliefs and expectations of both the hypnotist and the subject come into play when creating them. Suggestions given by the hypnotist, leading questions, and ambient details from the environment all work together to shape these memories. The cultural beliefs of the participants have a clear role in these memories and identities. The largest factors influencing what a subject will experience when participating in PLR are what everyone wants to happen and what they expect. A person seeking to remember a past life who undergoes PLR is motivated to remember, and the hypnotist is equally motivated to encourage their recollections. Highly suggestible and motivated subjects are clearly and easily influenced by the attitudes, tone, demeanor, suggestions, and demands of the hypnotist and the hypnotic process.⁹⁹ When the memories recovered are particularly intense, if both parties expected to obtain results in accordance with existing beliefs, and the hypnotist affirmed these memories and experiences as real and not merely imagination, the PLR subject becomes convinced this was a real experience and everything they remembered was true.¹⁰⁰ All these influences and demands come into play and create the imagined result; the seeker finds a past life.

Past Life Regression as a Practice

Past life regression (PLR) as a practice outside of psychotherapy is not one unified procedure. There are professional hypnotists who offer past life regression as part of their practice. Their methods, aims, and services vary widely, with each hypnotist following a different method. Furthermore, these methods are not discussed or studied in specifics. Hypnotists do not tend to publish the details of their services. These individual methods tend to fall into the category of “trade secrets” rather than formal guidelines set out by an industry. In fact, in the Professional Hypnotism Manual by Dr. John G. Kappas, no mention of past life

⁹⁶ Spanos et al., 311.

⁹⁷ Spanos et al., 312.

⁹⁸ Stevenson, “A Case of...” 190.

⁹⁹ Baker, 75.

¹⁰⁰ Spanos et al., 319.

regression is specifically made. However, age regression is discussed in a tone of warning stating that age regression is “the most problematic and dangerous technique in the field.”¹⁰¹ Caution is given surrounding the likelihood of “the subject’s increased capacity for confabulation,” and that whether the experience is factual or not, once the subject has emotionally experienced this memory, it “now becomes their reality.”¹⁰² In fact, specific attention is paid to the trauma a person would have to experience to repress a memory in the first place and cautions hypnotists to avoid this “risky” technique. “The only time that hypnotic age regression can be a justified therapeutic technique is when the historic traumatic event is known to the client, and you go back to desensitize the experience and its resulting impact. Never should age regression be used as a search tool to ‘find cause’.”¹⁰³ Since past life regression is a form of age regression, the same warnings and cautions would apply to this practice.

So, if professional hypnotists are cautioned in manuals not to engage in casual speculative age regressions, where are all these regression specialists coming from? One common thread I discovered when looking at the websites of hypnotherapists offering PLR was training in the technique with Dr. Brian L. Weiss, a psychiatrist, hypnotherapist, Chairman Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, and author who specializes in past life regression. One of the most prominent figures in the American past life regression landscape, Brian Weiss has promoted the technique via books such as *Many Lives, Many Masters: The True Story of a Prominent Psychiatrist, His Young Patient, and the Past-Life Therapy That Changed Both Their Lives* (1988), *Through Time into Healing: Discovering the Power of Regression Therapy to Erase Trauma and Transform Mind, Body and Relationships* (1993), *Only Love Is Real: A Story of Soulmates Reunited* (1997), *Same Soul, Many Bodies: Discover the Healing Power of Future Lives through Progression Therapy* (2005), and *Miracles Happen: The Transformational Healing Power of Past Life Memories* (2012).¹⁰⁴ Weiss also appeared on Oprah Winfrey’s *Super Soul Sunday* program in 2013, where he discussed his experience of regressing a patient dealing with phobias “back 4,000 years in time to a past life” in 1980 with Oprah herself.¹⁰⁵ In the frequently asked questions position on his official website, he answers a question often raised about the story of this patient. “In *Many Lives, Many Masters*, Catherine remembered a lifetime in 1863 B.C. How could she know that it was B.C. when B.C. was not yet a concept?” His explanation includes “the hypnotized mind, always retaining an awareness and knowledge of the present, puts the childhood or past life memories into context. If the year 1900 flashes, and you find yourself building a pyramid in

¹⁰¹ John G. Kappas. *Professional Hypnotism Manual*. Fifth Edition, Van Nuys, CA: Panorama Publishing Company, (2009): 122.

¹⁰² Kappas, 122.

¹⁰³ Kappas, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Brian L. Weiss “Home - Brian L. Weiss, MD.” *Brian L. Weiss, MD - Best-selling author of Many Lives, Many Masters and several other books*, 2022. <https://www.brianweiss.com/>.

¹⁰⁵ Oprah.com. “How Dr. Brian Weiss Went from Past-Life Skeptic to Past-Life Expert.” *Oprah.com*, Harpo Productions, Inc, 2024. <https://www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/how-dr-brian-weiss-went-from-past-life-skeptic-to-expert-video>.

ancient Egypt, you know that the year is B.C., even if you don't see those actual letters."¹⁰⁶

In addition to his speaking engagements, regression workshops, books, seminars, and audio recordings, Dr. Weiss also leads training for others seeking to enter the field of past life regression as a hypnotherapist. His 5-day professional training course consisting of "mainly experiential work with large and small group exercises as well as one-to-one practice" is open to anyone, even those with no background in therapy or other professional training in hypnotism.¹⁰⁷ His upcoming course, *Past-Life Therapy Training*, hosted by the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York, in August 2024, is completely sold out. The cost of this five-day intensive is \$1,395.00, not including accommodation or meals, although those can be arranged through Omega Institute. These accommodations can vary from camping in your own tent for \$550, or if you want AC and heat, you can spring for a bunk in the dorm for \$1,100 or \$1,750 for a single cabin room. So, training can add up quickly; however, emphasis is placed on the profitability of a past life regression career, and you do get a certificate of completion for when you hang out your shingle as a practitioner.¹⁰⁸ Although, if you want to attend his *Miracles Happen The Transformative Power of Past-Life Memories* seminar to explore the concepts as a layperson and witness demonstration sessions with volunteers from the attendees, the two-day seminar will only set you back \$475, not including room and board. Of course, all 425 seats for the upcoming session at the Omega Institute are also sold out.¹⁰⁹

However, these days, many of those seeking to unlock memories of past lives do not always turn to psychotherapists or even "trained" hypnotists. There is somewhat of a cottage industry of laypeople facilitating these explorations. A quick search of "past life regression near me" on Google will turn up new-age spiritualists, crystal healers, past life regression healers, and Reiki practitioners, along with licensed hypnotherapists, many of whom have training with Dr. Brian Weiss, listed as professional accomplishment.

Melanie Harrell, a yoga teacher, Reiki master, advanced energy work practitioner, and hypnotist, has a past life regression practice in Houston, Texas. She attended a Brian Weiss intensive training seminar at the Omega Institute in 2009. Her website features his books, quotes, and information prominently. She offers past life regression by Zoom or in person for \$195 for a 90-minute session, public group sessions for \$50, private group sessions by Zoom for \$300, and on-location for \$500 for up to fifteen participants. She touts group sessions as the less expensive option but does point out that these are very general, and she cannot give individual guidance, so this is a less personalized option. She claims that past life work can result in physical or emotional healing, regardless of if the events you recall are

¹⁰⁶ Brian L. Weiss "People Often Ask." *Brian L. Weiss, MD - Best-selling author of Many Lives, Many Masters and several other books*, 2022. <https://www.brianweiss.com/people-often-ask/>

¹⁰⁷ Weiss, "People Often Ask."

¹⁰⁸ Omega Institute. "Past-Life Therapy Training." *eomega.org*, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, 2024. https://www.eomega.org/workshops/past-life-therapy-training?utm_source=weiss&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=weiss_OC_2023.

¹⁰⁹ Omega Institute. "Miracles Happen The Transformative Power of Past-Life Memories." *eomega.org*, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, 2024. https://www.eomega.org/workshops/miracles-happen?utm_source=weiss&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=weiss_OC_2023

“literally true”, because “the information comes from within you, and the process may help you move forward with more understanding and clarity than before.”¹¹⁰

Licensed Professional Counselor and spiritual facilitator Barbara Nadalini Priesnitz of Austin, Texas, also has regression therapy training from Dr. Brian Weiss. According to her website, she is only offering group PLR sessions currently, but her former prices are listed as \$100 for a required 30-minute consultation, followed by a 110-minute regression session for \$450. She will also be offering PLR training beginning in 2024, consisting of “12 hours, spread across 3 sessions. This training is open to all, subject to availability.” She believes that she helps her clients “find truth and meaning in their lives, as well as relief from pain and anxiety.”¹¹¹

Training from Brian Weiss is not the only path to past life regression. Crystal healer, certified life coach, and Reiki master Arleen Gregg of Tyler, Texas, offers PLR in a “guided hypnotic event in which you will be invited to enter into your own spiritual memory.”¹¹² A 90-minute regression at her shop, Good Vibration Crystals, costs \$150. Kevin Foresman, energy healer, intuitive psychic, reconnective healing foundational practitioner, and certified hypnotherapist, will help you find your soul mate, twin flame, or star seeds and explore your past lives in Dallas, Texas, for \$349 in a three-hour session where “energy can be balanced, released, and we can move on in the current incarnation with less karmic baggage.”¹¹³ At Lotus Wellness Center in Illinois, past life regression is only one of the services offered by their staff; their hypnotherapists offer PLR for \$300 worth of breathwork, guided imagery, hypnotic past life regression, and integration after a \$150 exploration session.¹¹⁴

At Sacred Stairways Hypnotherapy & Healing in Stillwater, Minnesota, hypnotist Adam Dince, certified through iNLP and the International Federation of Hypnotists, offers his clients PLR through a 60-minute intake session for \$75 and a \$225 hypnotic regression session by Zoom and phone. On his website, he offers his clients the following reassurances of safety during hypnosis, “All hypnosis is self-hypnosis. All suggestions made to you during the session are within your control to accept. It's completely up to you as to which suggestions you accept and which you let go.” He also claims your ego will protect you from experiencing any negative effects during hypnosis. “You cannot go against your morality or ethics during a hypnosis session. If you try, the noise of the inner-conflict will pull you out of the hypnotic experience. Keep in mind that you do not disassociate from your ego while under hypnosis. It listens in the background the entire time. It's the ego's job to protect you.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Melanie Harrell. “Past Life Regression Houston.” *Melanieharnell.com*, Grounded Energy, 2023. <https://www.melanieharrell.com/past-life-regression/>

¹¹¹ Barbara Nadalini Priesnitz. “About Past Life Regression.” *Regressionaustin.com*, Past Life Regression Austin, 2022. <https://www.regressionaustin.com/about-regression>

¹¹² Arleen Gregg. “Past Life Regressions” *journey-guidance.com*, Journey Guidance - Good Vibration Crystals, 2021. <https://www.journey-guidance.com/service-page/past-life-regressions>

¹¹³ Kevin Foresman. “Past Life Regression Hypnosis, Past Lives Reading Dallas TX.” *Enlunmia.com*, Enlunmia Energetic Health and Wellness, 2024. <https://enlunmia.com/past-life-regression-dallas-tx/>

¹¹⁴ Lotus Wellness Center. “Past Life Regression Therapy.” *LotusWellnessCenter.com*, Lotus Wellness Center, January 15, 2024. <https://www.lotuswellnesscenter.com/past-life-regression-therapy/>

¹¹⁵ Adam Dince. “Past Life Regression.” *Sacredstairways.com*, Sacred Stairways Hypnotherapy and Healing, 2021. <https://sacredstairways.com/past-life-regression/>

Among the statements made by the past life regression practitioners on their websites, I found Adam Dince's to be the most interesting to my line of inquiry. Each of the hypnotists above made various claims to their potential clients regarding their services and expertise, and while some ensured their techniques were gentle or safe, only Dince made the claim that the client was in complete control and that it was the sole duty of their mind to protect itself. I found this assertion a little alarming, as the hypnotherapist does have a role in guiding the session. The suggestions a hypnotist makes and the way he phrases his questions have been shown in studies to impact the experience of regression subjects.

Let me be clear: I do not fault the hypnotists and regressionists for their income. They have a skill that is in demand, and they deserve to be paid for their work. However, I make a note of their fees because I feel we need to understand the financial pressures placed upon a successful PLR session. When you have paid over \$2000 for a Brian Weiss seminar (assuming you chose to bring your own tent to save on lodging), and your clients have possibly paid you hundreds of dollars for regression sessions, you do not have the luxury of patience. You need to meet client expectations, and they expect to remember a past life, find their soulmate, or at least feel that they got close to remembering.

Both the client's expectations and the hypnotist's expectations play a role in the experience of remembering. The internal pressure to deliver on the client's expectations for the session will influence the behavior of the hypnotist. He might be more aggressive in his induction instructions, ask more and more leading questions to encourage his client to make some sort of discovery, or his suggestions may be more akin to calls to action instead of gentle encouragements. This need not be a deliberate considered action. The indirect power the hypnotist wields during PLR to manipulate his client's experience is a factor. He doesn't need to attempt to cynically steer his clients to influence their memories; such a thing can be easily done inadvertently. The financial influences are merely one more factor that shapes the outcome of these sessions.

Some of these past life regressionists may be in it for the money, but after exploring the websites of many of those offering these services, I do not think the majority of them are performing some cynical grift. Many of these regressionists consider themselves healers in multiple fields, and PLR is merely one of their tools. Arleen Gregg's primary focus is on rock and crystal healing and energy work. She reads tarot or runes for clients looking for answers, uses her skills in Reiki for rejuvenation, and offers life coaching to help people find their path. Past life regressions seem more like a sideline to augment her other healing endeavors.¹¹⁶ Adam Dince of Sacred Stairways considers himself to be a healer and Reiki Master, his focus is on using many different methods to energetically heal his clients.¹¹⁷ Melanie Harrell has a master's degree in transpersonal psychology from Naropa University and is also a Reiki Master.¹¹⁸ Barbara Nadalini Priesnitz is a licensed therapist with a master's in counseling from St. Edward's University. She studied

¹¹⁶ Gregg, "About."

¹¹⁷ Dince, "Our Founder."

¹¹⁸ Harrell, "About."

under Brian Weiss five years after beginning her psychotherapy practice.¹¹⁹ Lotus Wellness Center is a full-service practice with many different practitioners offering a range of services, including traditional therapy, hypnotherapy, chiropractic care, yoga, doula services, massage therapy, and life coaching. They even take some forms of insurance for certain services. Past life regression is only part of their practice.¹²⁰ In my opinion, people who set out to be healers and help others tend to make that their primary focus. For some of these individuals, PLR is one of many tools. Others are true believers in reincarnation and in the past life regression process. Of course, some might be performing past life regressions purely for the lucrative nature of these sessions, but I believe most are sincerely trying to help others.

Many who perform past life regressions have no formal training whatsoever. Their methods may include trance induction, but others view PLR as a form of guided meditation. Their methods are passed by word of mouth or taught by others who believe in the process. Some even learned their methods from reading books on the subject, like those by Dr. Brian Weiss. I met two such people in person in preparation for this paper. I underwent a casual form of PLR with them, and at this session, both answered a written questionnaire composed of fifteen open-ended questions surrounding their beliefs about past life regression, as well as a post-session discussion. Their responses to the questionnaire are included in Appendix A and B. Nickloas L., who led the session, has no formal training in past life regression. He believes PLR “can be a helpful tool in releasing and recognizing past traumas in order to help an individual move forward in their life with emotional and/or mental healing.”¹²¹ Georgina H., who observed the session, believes PLR is a guided meditation that “frees the mind to allow things to rise to the surface for exploration.”¹²² Both Nickolas and Georgina are former youth pastors, Nickloas in the Baptist church and Georgina the Methodist. Neither are trained hypnotists nor do they consider their PLR sessions to include hypnosis. They do not charge for PLR sessions. Many others who offer PLR as more of a hobby, informal practice, or as part of a spiritual ritual also offer these sessions for free. If they do charge, it is likely to be far more affordable than a professional PLR session offered by a hypnotist. However, the end goal is the same: to recover memories from past lives.

Personal Experience of a PLR Session

In preparation for this paper, I participated in a past life regression session. I met with a facilitator of past life regression (Nickolas L.) and a colleague of his (Georgina H.) who was interested in the process in November of 2023. Both participants were aware of the research project and agreed to participate. The session was recorded for me to watch later. N.L. would lead the session, with G.H. silently observing. We selected a keyword to end the session in case of distress. I decided on “platypus,” my favorite animal. Apparently, this is one of the top three choices. Also included are banana and aardvark, as these are all unusual words that are not likely to come up in conversation.

¹¹⁹ Priesnitz, “Therapist.”

¹²⁰ Lotus Wellness Center. “Services.”

¹²¹ See Appendix A.

¹²² See Appendix B.

To begin the session, I was instructed to relax, and N.L. led me through a relaxation process similar to hypnotic induction. Progressive body relaxation, focus on breathing, visualization, and a countdown were all used. Visualization included the suggestion of being surrounded by a warm blue light with the instruction that this light was protective and would prevent harm as a safeguard. The session progressed to include targeted visualization, including the instruction to see myself in a bare white room, to imagine a chair and sit in it, and to visualize a window on the opposite wall. I was asked to describe the view from the window, with questions asked about what I could see and how I felt about the vision. I was then asked to rise and walk to the window and offered the choice to open a door beside it to enter the scene.

Firstly, I visualized a meadow similar to one I had seen on a trip to Scotland, including a range of hills and a shallow stream. I was invited to walk through the meadow and describe what I saw and experienced. I expressed peace and contentment with the scene. After exploring my surroundings, I was returned to the door and instructed to reenter the white room and sit in the chair. I was directed to another wall and another window.

The second scene was of a grey featureless space. I described a rocky ground with a pervading fog limiting the visibility of the scene beyond. When offered the choice to enter the scene through a door, I declined, stating I didn't like this window and did not want to explore the grey landscape. I was reassured that I was safe and did not have to open the door. I was then instructed to return to the chair.

I was directed to a third wall with another window. The resulting scene was a lake with a dock leading onto the water. After exploring the dock, I then heard voices a small distance away down a path. Instructed to follow the voices, I visualized a debate among several people. I did not recognize these people, and we revisited the dock, where I lowered my feet into the water. I found this calming and pleasant. I was then asked to return to the white room and the chair.

After noting my increased contentment after lowering my feet into the water at the lake in the previous scene, I was offered the choice to revisit the window leading onto the grey waste. After viewing the scene again, I elected to walk through the door and described a cold, featureless, rocky plain shrouded in fog and mist. I did not like being there and expressed anxiety about my surroundings. I was reassured that I was safe and was instructed to return to the white room and resume sitting in the chair.

Once I was seated and calm, N.L. decided to end the session. He repeated the progressive relaxation technique and utilized another countdown to end the session. Upon conclusion of the session, I felt relaxed and rested. I did not initially have clear memories of the scenes I had described. Upon later reflection and after viewing the recording, I did remember most of the experience, although it had a distant, dreamlike quality. The entire session lasted less than forty-five minutes.

In our post-session discussion, we went over the details I had described and discussed my feelings about the process and experience. We also discussed their beliefs about past-life regression and reincarnation. Both N.L. and G.H. expressed doubts about any phenomenal nature of the practice, comparing it to guided meditation instead of hypnotic induction. We discussed N.L. and G.H.'s beliefs about

the practice and its role as a ritual. Both have explored ritual work and magic in the past but consider themselves to be in transitional phases in their faiths. When discussing their beliefs about what past lives are, both express the belief that they are more like echoes than actual memories. G.H. expressed doubts about recovered memory, pointing out the backlash during the Satanic Panic in the 80s and 90s as a concern. N.L. expressed that his beliefs about past life regression have changed over time. He is less of a firm believer than he was when he began leading PLR sessions. He now believes the memories we may tap into are of a more genetic heritage nature. G.H. agreed with this notion. Both stated that if one is recovering memories, they are most likely to be echoes of the experiences of an ancestor, passed down somehow, like eye color. Both agreed that my “memories” from the session could easily fit within my own European heritage, which is indicative of this concept. G.H. elected to fill out her questionnaire that day, while N.L. agreed to email me his responses later to give the questions more consideration. He emailed me his responses at the beginning of December.

I do not believe I was hypnotized during the session. I tend to agree with N.L. and G.H. that this was more akin to guided meditation. I was encouraged to relax and essentially imagine whatever I wanted to about the experience. This is in line with a creative process where my mind was tasked to produce situations and scenery. In a relaxed state, I was free to let my mind wander and see what came up. I did not experience any lingering effects from the PLR session. I did not suffer any increased anxiety. I did have several dreams about the rocky grey landscape in the week following the session, but they did not have any details of note and did not stir up any further feelings or “memories” associated with the scene. Apparently, my subconscious found the landscape compelling and decided to revisit it while I slept. I would also like to note that at no point during my PLR session were rabbits encountered in any way.

Overall, my experience was similar to that of others who have pursued past life regression in a casual way. Since I was not undergoing hypnotherapy or psychotherapy, the setting and experience were not clinical in nature. All involved were laypeople. Neither N.L. nor G.H. has a background in therapy, although, in his questionnaire, N.L. did state he sees a therapist, in part to cope with his own feelings about what can come up with others in his PLR sessions.¹²³

Is my experience the same as those who undergo PLR facilitated by a trained hypnotherapist or as part of psychotherapy, perhaps supplementing cognitive behavioral therapy? No. Of course not. Nor did anyone involved believe that it was. Yet, I believe this experience does align with what many with an interest in past life memories might have. There is a network of laypeople who seek out and provide PLR sessions. Some seekers are merely curious, while some are diehard believers that they have lived before and have concrete memories from those lives they are able to access via trance, hypnosis, or guided meditation. Much of this seeking is facilitated by untrained practitioners functioning in ways they pass on to each other, read in books and magazines, see in the media, and stemming from any number of belief systems and religious practices.

¹²³ See Appendix A.

Why do PLR Sessions Often Lead to Famous/Prestigious Lives?

So, back to one of my original questions: why do so many people who are under PLR recall famous, prestigious, or exceptional lives? Why are there so many Cleopatras and so few serfs? These results are not consistent with spontaneous memories reported by the children in Dr. Stevensons' research. With a few notable exceptions who remembered lives such as Mahatma Gandhi, most of the children he interviewed claimed to be ordinary people with average lives. Perhaps their economic circumstances were better or worse than their claimed prior incarnations, but by and large, they were still normal people.¹²⁴ Yet, special people appear over and over in PLR subjects' memories. People claim to remember being emperors, or French nobility.¹²⁵ They remember being mythic heroes and cultural icons.¹²⁶ They remember being Nazi officers, architects in ancient Greece, heretics in the Middle Ages, and powerful priestesses.¹²⁷ They remember being Earls and running afoul of Oliver Cromwell, or being John Wilkes Booth, or courier to the King of France.¹²⁸ They remember dramatic deaths and harrowing drama, and they remember rich tapestries of life.

When so much evidence leads to the conclusion that the construction of these past life identities is shaped by our desires, it is hardly surprising that what PLR participants recall is larger than life. They seek out PLR as a way to experience something different and special. They are looking for answers to their current lives, their fears, and their dreams. When given a free license to imagine and invent, it should not be surprising that our imaginations run away with us into sweeping vistas of meaning and purpose. It is human nature to wish for better than what we have. If we are impoverished children in India, we wish to be a rich landowner or members of a higher caste. If we are unfulfilled office workers in Ohio, we wish to be living lives of purpose as healers and nobility. If we are average people, we want to be special. PLR gives us a route to make these desires feel real to us. You might be nobody this time around, but once you ruled Egypt and men like Mark Antony bowed at your feet.

Is PLR Dangerous?

Considering how very attractive and alluring past life regression is to so many I feel we should look at the possible dangers of this practice. Recovered memory and False Memory Syndrome have done well-documented harm in the past. People have gone to prison based on the "refreshed" testimony of witnesses.¹²⁹ Law enforcement resources and time have been wasted following up on hypnotically induced false leads.¹³⁰ Lives and families were destroyed during the Satanic

¹²⁴ Stevenson, "American Children..." 746-747.

¹²⁵ Spanos et al., 310-311.

¹²⁶ Pyun, 368.

¹²⁷ Weiss, "About the Books."

¹²⁸ Stevenson, "A Case..." 190.

¹²⁹ Kihlstrom, 1730-1731.

¹³⁰ Schacter and Dodson, 1386.

Panic.¹³¹ There is very real harm that can come about when recovered memory is given weight and validity by hypnotists and psychotherapists. Since PLR is recovered memory, the process shares in these dangers. There might not be a risk of innocent people going to prison based on a past life, but there are still psychological factors at play. Recovered memories can grow to take over the lives of those who recall them.¹³² They can become a source of trauma in the subject's life, especially when the recovered memories are upsetting or traumatic in their own right.¹³³ Since so many of the causes of death reported in past life memories were violent or traumatic, those memories can create negative thoughts and feelings once recalled. The entire process of hypnotically recovered memory leaves the subject vulnerable to memory distortions.¹³⁴ Subjects can become totally convinced of the reality of these memories, even if they are later told they were suggested to them by the hypnotist.¹³⁵ Subjects can come to believe in these memories and identities so completely that these intense past-life fantasies can cause awareness of their real lives to fade into the background.¹³⁶

While these memories can be constructed out of bits and pieces of things by our minds and thus are not based on reality, we still experience them as memories. There is often no way to tell these memories apart from others; a false memory is still experienced as real to the subject.¹³⁷ And these memories do not fade as might be expected. When past life memories are reinforced by hypnotists, subjects' beliefs, and interactions with like-minded communities, their conviction in the validity of these memories grows.¹³⁸ These memories become part of the subject's identity; they are experienced as very real.¹³⁹

There are also concerns about the potential negative effects of hypnosis and induced trances in general. People can suffer dizziness, nausea, headaches, difficulties returning to awareness, anxiety, panic, and negative reactions to inadvertently given suggestions by hypnotists.¹⁴⁰ While the majority of people find the experience of hypnosis pleasurable and relaxing, between 5% and 31% of participants report negative posthypnotic effects like headaches, dizziness, and confusion.¹⁴¹ These effects were also present when the subjects participated in "body awareness" relaxation experiences where no hypnotic technique was used.¹⁴²

There are suggestions for reducing or minimizing these negative hypnotic effects, such as robust informed consent, pre-hypnotic talks dispelling myths and

¹³¹ Marita Sturken. "The Remembering of Forgetting: Recovered Memory and the Question of Experience." *Social Text*. No. 57 (1998): 103-125. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466883>

¹³² Sturken, 120.

¹³³ Sturken, 121.

¹³⁴ Kihlstrom, 1731.

¹³⁵ Kihlstrom, 1729.

¹³⁶ Spanos et al., 312.

¹³⁷ Spanos et al., 314.

¹³⁸ Spanos et al., 318.

¹³⁹ Sturken, 122.

¹⁴⁰ Steven Jay Lynn, Daniel J. Martin & David C. Frauman. "Does Hypnosis Pose Special Risks for Negative Effects? A Master Class Commentary." *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1996): 7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207149608416064>

¹⁴¹ Lynn et al., 8.

¹⁴² Lynn et al., 9.

minimizing feelings of failure if responses are not what is expected, inviting questions before and after, utilizing a spotter or uninvolved assistant to monitor and identify potential negative reactions during hypnosis, post-session debriefing, and post-session follow-up conversations at 1-week intervals.¹⁴³ These recommendations were made in regard to clinical settings, but since these negative effects may be even more likely in nonclinical settings, such as the average PLR session, caution should be taken and similar safeguards employed in nonclinical environments as well. Negative effects are far more likely when hypnosis is employed by overzealous and poorly trained hypnotists, or by using authoritarian methods and aggressive suggestions.¹⁴⁴ The demand structures in PLR sessions are higher. Both clients and practitioners are highly motivated to produce past life results. Those pressures and the potential for ardent belief in PLR on behalf of the participants can affect the outcome, and it is possible negative consequences could result.

There are also ethical concerns about the use of past life regression in general.¹⁴⁵ The specific techniques of PLR could violate the principles of medical ethics, beneficence, autonomy, and non-maleficence. Informed consent may be difficult to actually obtain with such speculative hypnotic techniques; there is a lack of information about the process or what to expect available to the subject, which would allow them to make a truly autonomous choice.¹⁴⁶ The risk of implanting false memories that become real to the subject, whether intentional or not, violates the mandate to “do no harm.” Patients could be forced to reckon with the emotional results of trying to process traumas that never happened and were created via these false memories.¹⁴⁷ Considering the potential harm to subjects undergoing PLR, these are real ethical concerns.

Even though many of the people facilitating PLR sessions, hypnotists included, are not medical professionals, in fact, many of them have no training whatsoever, much less a robust understanding of the implications of medical ethics, these concerns are not invalid or inapplicable. Perhaps if more information about the possible risks and potential harms of PLR were more widely known and available, both PLR practitioners and their clients could make more informed choices about PLR and take better precautions. Even when no hypnosis is used, the risk of implanting false memories and all other potential consequences remains.

Conclusion

What can we make of all of this? I have evaluated the history of reincarnation beliefs, especially how those historic roots have developed and influenced the current pattern of reincarnation beliefs in the Western world. I primarily focused on the West as this is where I was aiming my investigation into PLR practices and beliefs. Based upon the history, I delved into an evaluation of the two types of past

¹⁴³ Lynn et al., 10-11.

¹⁴⁴ Lynn et al., 12.

¹⁴⁵ Gabriel, Andrade. “Is Past Life Regression Therapy Ethical?” *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*. Ecollection. (2017): 1-8. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29416831/>

¹⁴⁶ Andrade, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Andrade, 6-7.

life memories we encountered: spontaneous and recovered memory. While they are very different in function and have different sources and hallmarks, the contrast between them does highlight some of the particular features of PLR. Looking deeper at the function, sources, and consequences of recovered memories and false memory creation, we can come to better conclusions about PLR and past life memories retrieved under hypnosis.

Recovered memories are fundamentally different from true memories, although once a memory has been created, it can be extremely difficult to tell that false memory apart from real memory. This has an acute bearing on PLR as a practice, as unlike spontaneous memories found in children, PLR-recovered memories are those of adults and are shaped by their beliefs and expectations. As an often hypnotically induced process, the various influences upon memory development cannot be ignored. The role of the hypnotist and how his beliefs and attitudes can directly influence the type of memories experienced by his client also give us a valuable clue to this process. Ultimately, the expectations of both parties are the largest determining factor in whether a person will “remember” a past life during PLR. The broader cultural factors, the beliefs and attitudes of both parties, and the suggestions made by the regressionist can profoundly affect the details and specifics of past life memories. However, since the composite whole of those memories is created from innumerable tiny details from within the client, the ambient environmental cues, and their latent collection of facts, fiction, half-remembered stories, and beliefs about the world and the past, the memories created in the reconstructionist process of memory are a collaborate process happening within the mind of the client.

PLR is imagination, set free and building indiscriminately from the subconscious of the client under the demands of the setting and influence of the regressionist. This process can be profoundly satisfying for all involved. The regressionist may view their efforts as healing or at least helpful to the client, and by discovering past life memories for the client, they have met expectations and done their job. Thus, earning their fee and seeing their investment in training and their practice as valid and thriving. The client may feel like the experience was worthwhile; they remembered details that helped them make sense of their lives, resolved or explained deep dissatisfaction in their waking lives, and perhaps helped them identify and begin addressing deep-seated fears and insecurities. This is the best-case scenario: a beneficial process leaving the lives of all enriched and doing no real damage.

Unfortunately, this best-case scenario is not guaranteed. Some people react poorly to hypnosis and body relaxation techniques, which can lead to unpleasant negative effects, although most often transient in nature. The process of memory recovery used to facilitate PLR can lead to more destructive and lasting negative effects. False memories are experienced as real memories, and once those memories are created, they stay with the client. Even knowledge the memories may be false and directly suggested by the regressionist might not rob them of their impact on the client. To some extent, better practices may help curb these negative repercussions, but they are unlikely to be implemented. Considering the requirement of belief and expectation needed to instigate the imaginative process of PLR, there

are real incentives for both parties to double down on the reality of the process and identities discovered and to reject anything that might undermine the PLR experience.

These concerns are not removed by regressionists who are not able or willing to use hypnosis. Negative effects and false memories are possible with relaxation and guided meditation techniques. Misattribution and confabulation of memory are not limited to hypnosis alone. Due to the high cost of PLR with a trained hypnotist, people may be tempted to seek out free or lower-cost options offered by less skilled regressionists, often true believers in the PLR process and with their own incentives to reinforce the past life memories created in their sessions.

PLR is a very attractive form of wish fulfillment. We are free to imagine we lived special and important lives in our past and to flesh them out in ways that correspond to and reinforce our own beliefs and perspectives. People do not need to belong to any religion or have a formal belief in reincarnation to participate in PLR. Furthermore, backed up by the portrayal in media and the hype of PLR and past life memories, the practice is attractive to a large percentage of the population. The fact that regressionists represent PLR as completely safe and might even assign the sole responsibility to protect the client to the client's subconscious is disturbing. The client is even less likely to anticipate any possible risks to the PLR process and cannot rely on the regressionist to fully inform them as to possible harms. The regressionists themselves may not be fully aware of all the implications. I do not know the itinerary or curriculum of Brian Weiss' 5-day training events, but I cannot imagine 5 days, no matter how intensive, can completely cover all the possible risks and techniques to mitigate them alongside lessons on induction techniques and suggestion routes. Bear in mind that there are no other training requirements. You do not need to have any training in therapy or psychology to learn PLR.

What we have is an industry built around vague beliefs, no standard of practice or care, and a public intrigued by the prospect of learning they may have been noble and special in a life long ago but close enough to touch via PLR. With book deals, speaking fees, training expenses, client fees, and public hype, this is a situation that has some true downsides. Yet the industry is treated as safe, mostly harmless fun, if not a gateway to deeper meaning and purpose.

We remember being Cleopatra because that speaks to the inner needs of our modern selves, but perhaps we shouldn't. Perhaps the best way to cope with the woes of our lives, with all our insecurities and fears, is not to find some hidden story in our minds to reinforce and explain them. Perhaps, to bear the phobia of rabbits, one does not seek to believe the threat is real, but one must accept that life is complicated, and sometimes you have to just be okay with the occasional scare. Instead of shining faulty flashlights around ourselves in the darkness, trying to find the source of the feeling of unease and stirring the shadows into even wilder shapes in the sweep and flood of the poor light, we should focus on what we can see clearly and let that be the foundation for our future. I do not know if reincarnation is real. I do not know if some people may naturally remember prior lives, even if it is. But I do know that a life tilting at windmills and chasing ghosts is not as likely to lead to deeper personal fulfillment as one spent facing reality and working to make the future we want. Even if we aren't Egyptian queens, we can still be complete people.

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Appendix A: Nickolas L. Questionnaire

Past Life Regression Session Questionnaire Responses

Name – Nickolas L. (39/M)

Date – 11/11/2023

Response Date – 12/3/2023

1) What is your religious/spiritual background (upbringing)?

Christened in the Catholic Church as a baby and later Baptized in a Baptist church as a teenager. So, it varied.

2) What are your current religious/spiritual beliefs?

Polytheistic. I'm open to all spiritual beliefs and believe that, in one way or another, all belief systems can contribute to society.

3) Do you follow any religious or spiritual traditions?

Prayer, meditation, and smudging/cleansing with sage and essential oils.

4) Have you had any religious/spiritual training?

Only in the Baptist church as a Youth Pastor/Associate Pastor.

5) Have you had any training regarding past life regression or leading past life regression sessions?

No

6) What are your thoughts/beliefs about past lives?

I believe that we are consistently, whether it be consciously or subconsciously, or in dream state, reflecting on history and situations. Sometimes ancestry can play a part into what a person feels or thinks has happened in their past.

7) What are your thoughts about past life regression?

I feel that it can be a helpful tool in releasing and recognizing past traumas in order to help an individual move forward in their life with emotional and/or mental healing.

8) How do you think past life regression functions?

N/A

9) What is the procedure for a past life regression session?

My experience has taught me that the best method is to be in a quiet, calm, relaxed environment with minimal people and outside noises around. The person should be in as relaxed of a state as possible. It's good to have someone that you are close to and trust with you as someone that can observe and record the session and later

help you through talking and remembering things you may or may not remember saying.

10) What are your thoughts about the recovery of memory or regression?

I believe it is needed to help a person heal from past traumas they may not be aware are holding them back in life. Holding on to things from our past without forgiving ourselves or others, and/or realizing that we may be blaming ourselves for something that was out of our control, can stunt our emotional and mental growth. This can in turn, I believe, lead to self-sabotage and intrusive thoughts that can cause us to hurt ourselves and our progression in all aspects of life. From friendships, to family to romantic relationships, sex life, productivity, work ethic, professional life, etc.

11) Positive thoughts about recovered memory?

See above.

12) Are you aware of or concerned by the possible negative results of recovered memories?

Of course. Any time you dive into someone's past and help bring up memories, it could cause them to become emotional or react in different ways. I always have information on resources people can reach out to in order to help with further healing. I have helped people get in touch with counselors, therapists, private investigators, family members they have lost touch with, spiritual leaders according to their personal faith and others in order to continue their emotional and mental healing. I also think this is why it is important to have someone they know and trust there when the session is being done.

13) How does this ritual affect you?

Physically, it makes me tired. It seems to drain energy from me. And it can leave an emotional imprint as well. I myself see a therapist regularly to help me work out and talk through some of the more intense situations that have come up during these sessions.

14) What do you get out of this practice?

I truly feel like I am helping people when I perform these sessions. And that is something that is very important to me, to help others when they may not be able to help themselves.

15) Anything you would like to add?

N/A

Appendix B: Georgina H. Questionnaire

Past Life Regression Session Questionnaire Responses

Name – Georgina H. (56/F)

Session Date – 11/11/2023

Response Date – 11/11/2023 (Same Day)

1) What is your religious/spiritual background (upbringing)?

Rural Southern Baptist.

2) What are your current religious/spiritual beliefs?

Mixed.

3) Do you follow any religious or spiritual traditions?

A mix.

4) Have you had any religious/spiritual training?

Past youth minister – Methodist.

5) Have you had any training regarding past life regression or leading past life regression sessions?

Observation.

6) What are your thoughts/beliefs about past lives?

It's possible. But not animals or trees.

7) What are your thoughts about past life regression?

It's useful. The person performing the regression has a lot of potential to help or harm.

8) How do you think past life regression functions?

Frees the mind to allow things to rise to the surface for exploration.

9) What is the procedure for a past life regression session?

Guided meditation.

10) What are your thoughts about the recovery of memory or regression?

Can be beneficial.

11) Positive thoughts about recovered memory?

Provides the participant an opportunity to address possible spiritual/emotional issue.

12) Are you aware of or concerned by the possible negative results of recovered memories?

Am aware. My largest concern is an ego-driven power hungry person conducting.

13) How does this ritual affect you?

It's very peaceful and provides insight into areas I may need to work on or clarifies why something is holding me back (from personal growth).

14) What do you get out of this practice?

Personal growth.

15) Anything you would like to add?

(Field left blank)

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Christianity and Caste: What Dalit Theology Has to Say About Christ, The Church, and Social Injustice

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Abstract

Known colloquially in the West as the caste of “untouchables”, the *Dalits* of the Indian subcontinent have been historically marginalized from nearly every position of influence in society including those of religious affairs. Dalits today face intense social, cultural, and economic discrimination in every aspect of their lives and rampant violence is a commonplace occurrence for many. Yet, despite this perpetual persecution from all sides, the Indian Dalit community has created for themselves a distinctly unique expression of theology in their adherence to the Christian faith particularly in their understanding of the relationship between caste, class, and the Church. The Dalit cry for liberation from their physical and spiritual oppression has manifested itself through a radically different understanding of Christ, his mission on Earth, and what this incarnate mission entails for the lowest members of society. In this paper, I will begin by examining the roots of the social, spiritual, and material afflictions plaguing the Dalit people. I will then explore the unique role Dalit Theology, particularly its unique expressions of Christology and Liberation Theology, play in advancing the liberation of Dalits from their oppressive social conditions and what this can say to those of us in the West about Christianity’s relationship with social injustice as a whole.

Introduction

On April 28, 2019, a 45-year-old Dalit man named Kollimallai was driving home on his two-wheeler from his work at a brick kiln in the Thiruvanduthurai village of Tamil Nadu, India. Suddenly, he was hit by a log and thrown off his bike by an attacker named Sakthivel from a dominant caste joined by two other upper-caste men. The assailants began to beat Kollimallai with nearby bricks before tying his hands behind his back and forcing open his mouth to push a long stick with human feces collected at the end of it into his mouth.¹ All three men then proceeded to urinate on Kollimallai’s face while demeaning him for his caste before fleeing the scene at a bystander’s approach leaving Kollimallai alone on the road “riddled with injuries and reeking of urine.”² Although Kollimallai’s physical injuries healed after a week of hospitalization, the psychological damage it did to him was permanent. “I felt

¹ Prabhakar Tamilarasu, “Dalit Man Forced to Eat Excreta; 2 Caste Hindus Held, One on the Run,” *thefederal.com*, May 7, 2019, <https://thefederal.com/states/south/tamil-nadu/dalit-man-forced-to-eat-excreta/>.

² “Tamil Nadu Dalit Man Says Force-Fed Human Excreta by Non-Dalits,” *The Times of India*, May 8, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/tamil-nadu-dalit-man-says-force-fed-human-excreta-by-non-dalits/articleshow/69225460.cms>.

so humiliated I wanted to commit suicide on the spot,”³ he said. Initially when Kollimallai reported his incident to the police, they simply refused to take it, but after receiving pressure from a large group of Dalit demonstrators, the police obliged. Although all three assailants were captured and handed over to the police, only one was arrested and charged with lesser crimes while the other two escaped without facing penalty⁴.

As alarming as a case like this may sound to those of us unfamiliar with the socio-political landscape of the Indian subcontinent, violence of this sort is the norm for those that subsist at the bottom of the caste system, the Dalits. In 2022, there were 57,582 reported crimes committed against Dalits with 4,241 cases of rape and 975 murders⁵ although these numbers are sorely underreported due to rampant police corruption, ineptitude, and intimidation. In fact, the case described above is but one in a long string of cases involving the use of human excrement to perpetuate violence against Dalits⁶ offering a harrowing reminder to those in Dalit communities that they are still nothing more than mere objects of filth and disgust for all other members of society to wage their grievances on. Dalits today are some of the poorest people in the world with 94 million⁷ of them living below the Indian national poverty line of a mere \$2.15 a day⁸ making economic advancement an almost unthinkable endeavor for many.

In this paper, I will begin by examining the nature of this casteist oppression towards Dalits in Indian society and the physical, social, and spiritual ramifications it has for the Dalit self-conscious. Then, I will show how certain elements of Dalit theology, particularly Dalit Christology, Dalit Liberation Theology, and the various gospel narratives they are modelled after, restore Dalit dignity and offer hope for the future to realize their total liberation.

Part I: Dalits, Dalit Bodies, and The Dalit Problem

The word “Dalit” comes from the Sanskrit root “dal” meaning to crack, open, or split which Dalits believe resonates with their tortured existence as victims of oppressive institutions⁹. Other labels for the Dalit people include “harijans”, “Scheduled Castes” as referred to by the Indian government, or the more commonly known “untouchables.”¹⁰ Dalits themselves, however, tend to resist the usage of

³ *The Times of India*, “Tamil Nadu Dalit Man Says Force-Fed Human Excreta by Non-Dalits.”

⁴ Tamilarasu, “Dalit Man Forced to Eat Excreta; 2 Caste Hindus Held, One on the Run.”

⁵ National Crime Records Bureau, “Crime in India 2022 Statistics Volume II,” 2022.

⁶ Pratikshit Singh, “Beneath Dignity: Unveiling the Disturbing Incidents of Urinating on Lower Castes,” *The Mooknayak English - Voice Of The Voiceless*, July 6, 2023, <https://en.themooknayak.com/dalit-news/beneath-dignity-unveiling-the-disturbing-incidents-of-urinating-on-lower-castes>.

⁷ “UN Report: One Third of India’s Dalits Remain Poor,” *International Dalit Solidarity Network*, November 23, 2021, <https://idsn.org/one-third-of-indias-dalits-remain-poor/>.

⁸ Manoj Kumar, “One-Tenth of India’s Population Escaped Poverty in 5 Years - Government Report,” *Reuters*, July 17, 2023, sec. India, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/one-tenth-indias-population-escaped-poverty-5-years-government-report-2023-07-17/>.

⁹ James Massey, *Roots, a Concise History of Dalits* (The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1991), 9.

¹⁰ S. M. Michael, *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values*, 2nd ed. (1999; repr., Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 16.

these more popular categories externally imposed upon them by their oppressors in exchange for their own word, “Dalit”, which speaks to and emerged more authentically out of their lived experience. The term Dalit was first coined by the Dalit social reformer, Jyotirao Phule, in the late 1880s to refer to those cast out from society and began to grow in popularity during the Dalit Panther Movement of resistance to casteist oppression in the 1970s¹¹. To be Dalit is to acknowledge one’s brokenness under the heaping weight of oppression, yet to recognize with expectant hope that this condition is unnaturally constructed and ultimately fleeting. “Dalit” has thus become a term of hope for their eventual liberation from their casteist chains.

One of the earliest known historical accounts of the caste system can be found in the oldest Hindu scripture, the Rig Veda. In it, the four major castes, or *varnas*, originate out of differing body parts of the creator god, Brahma, in hierarchical order with the high-caste, priestly *Brahmin* caste proceeding from the head, the *Kshatriya* caste of warriors next from the shoulders, the merchant *Vaisyas* from the thighs, and the low-caste, servant *Shudras* from the feet. Each of these castes has an assigned *dharma*, or duty, towards the rest of society assigned to them at birth and each of them are further divided into sub-groups known as *jatis*. Below these four *varnas* reside the Dalits – typically associated with “unclean” labor such as cleaning the streets, working with waste, cremating dead bodies, and making leather. Dalits are also known as *avarnas* or those “outcaste” by the *varna* system entirely¹². This dominant Hindu anthropology has devastating societal ramifications for the Dalit people. “Dalits were believed to have originated outside the physical structure of the divine. This creation myth implies that Dalits are ontologically separate and distinct from the divine and restricts dalits from making any claims of being part of the Hindu community,”¹³ Dalit Theologian Dr. Jobymon Skaria writes. Thus, we see here how casteism begins by robbing Dalits of their dignity through stripping them of their divinity in the created order and denying their humanity through negating common descent with every other man. This crucial step creates the spiritual, ethical, and social justification for all further debasement of Dalits that comes after.

The most grievous manifestation of this mythology can be understood through the role purity and pollution has played in forming Indian society. The Dalit body is the central site of ritual impurity capable of contaminating all it comes into proximity with. Thus, to avoid contagion, Dalit communities are often relegated to segregated living areas outside the outskirts of their local village and upon entering the village, Dalits were required to strike a piece of wood to warn others of their presence and wear a special pot over their mouth to protect upper-caste members from being polluted through their speech.¹⁴ The shadow of a Dalit is thought to pollute water which has continued to lead to intense restrictions of wells and drinking water from Dalit communities today and harsh punishments for those that attempt to defy these

¹¹ K.P. Kuruvila, “DALIT THEOLOGY: AN INDIAN CHRISTIAN ATTEMPT to GIVE VOICE to the VOICELESS” (International Rural Churches Association, March 2023), <https://irca.online/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DALIT-THEOLOGY.pdf>.

¹² Jobymon Skaria, *Dalit Theology, Boundary Crossings and Liberation in India: A Biblical and Postcolonial Study* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Peniel Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation* (Routledge, 2016), 15.

boundaries such as when a Dalit man was lynched for using a village handpump in November of 2022.¹⁵ This fear of pollution was codified in legislation as early as the sixth century BCE where the ancient Hindu law codes, the *Dharmasutras*, prescribe a series of elaborate purification rituals to anyone that even so much as sees, talks to, or touches a Dalit. For example, they note that if a *Chandala*, a member of a north-Indian jati of Dalits associated with the disposing of dead bodies, enters a person's house, "the whole house should be washed with water mixed with cow-dung, and the earthenware in the house should be thrown away."¹⁶ The owner of the house along with their whole family and servants are then told to bathe three times a day and consume various mixtures of cow urine as a purifying agent for twelve days straight until they are made clean.¹⁷ Although these laws and customs are not as strictly adhered to today, particularly in more crowded, urban environments, what seems to be evident at play in these scenarios of pollution is an overwhelming sentiment of disgust for Dalit, their bodies, and the pollutive work associated with what they do.

This disgust also takes on a certain kind of ethical reinforcement as Indian sociologist M.N. Srivinas describes this pollution as "the means by which guilt spreads."¹⁸ Unlike many other forms of guilt, however, this pollution is permanently affixed to the Dalit body and cannot be removed through any number of purifying rituals or cleansing. The role of karmaic reincarnation in Hindu theology helps illuminate some of the foundations for this moral disgust. Through this lense, the atrocious circumstances of a Dalit's birth can be reconciled by their moral failures in a past life and their oppression is merely Lady Justice in disguise. Thus, no act of violence against a Dalit can ever be anything more than the righteous hand of divine judgement enacting retribution onto pernicious sin.

In his book, *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation*, Dalit Theologian, Joshua Samuel, extrapolates on an idea coined by another Dalit Theologian, Sunder John Boopalan, known as "grammar of the body."¹⁹ This refers to the oppressive social prison that dictates the confines by which Dalit bodies are permitted to act and exist according to what is narrowly prescribed as acceptable by the social order. "Socially conditioned 'speech acts and body language' are means by which personal and social values are affirmed or denied,"²⁰ he says, showing that the social puppeteering of Dalit bodies and the use of force that coerces them act as a testing ground for the dominant powers to impose their will on society and experiment with just how far they can continue to do so. Dalit bodies are 'disciplined' for non-cooperation with the social order in a number of ways. Through the use of explicit physical violence, particularly violence against Dalit women through rape, murder, and other forms of sexual violence, Samuel writes, "Dalit women's bodies

¹⁵ Ashok Sharma, "Dalit Man Killed for Filling Water from Handpump in Rajasthan, 3 Arrested," India Today, November 8, 2022, <https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/dalit-man-killed-filling-water-handpump-rajasthan-soorsagar-2294720-2022-11-08>.

¹⁶ Michael, *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values*, 46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ V Devasahayam, *Frontiers of Dalit Theology* (Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1997), 393.

¹⁹ Joshua Samuel, *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation* (BRILL, 2020), 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

are used as the battleground for the caste war. The attacks on our bodies are used to teach a lesson to the larger community.' Thus, by punishing a Dalit body – a Dalit women's body – caste and gender transgressions are kept in check, even while caste supremacy and patriarchy, are reasserted."²¹ Though physical violence reconfigures and re-inscribes the particularly heinous grammar of the body the dominant caste order seeks to engrave on the Dalit body, the grammar is maintained much more effectively through a much more subtle means – self-regulation. Samuel recounts a time in which he attempts to go to the outskirts of the city to purchase beef from a beef stall when a Dalit man pleads with him repeatedly not to go. The man offers instead to buy it in his place for fear of Samuel's good name as a pastor to be tarnished for being seen in a disgusting, polluted place associated with such contemptible people as the Dalits. Samuel evokes the imagery of Foucault's panopticon here to show that while the myriad of threats associated with a non-compliance of the Dalit to the prescribed grammar of their body are not in any given moment *necessarily* actualized, their permanent and ever-present *possibility* forces Dalits to comply with the imposed social coercion of their bodies shackled by the fear of the consequences of resistance. As the National Backward Classes Commission reports, "the real triumph of the caste system lies not in upholding the supremacy of the Brahmins, but in conditioning the consciousness of the lower castes in accepting their inferior status in the ritual hierarchy as a part of the natural order of things."²²

Part II: Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation

How does Dalit theology work to address the deprivation of Dalit dignity and restore a rightful self-image of liberation to the imprisoned Dalit? In order to better address these troublesome questions, we must first understand what Dalit theology is and its significance for the Dalit situation today. Despite making up 70% of the Christian population in India,²³ Dalits continue to face intense discrimination within the Indian church assigned segregated seating apart from non-Dalits in churches, being denied the same communion together, being severely underrepresented in clergy positions or areas of church influence, and even being segregated from the same burial sites as non-Dalit Christians in death.²⁴ Dalit Christians are also denied the same Scheduled Caste status by the government that non-Christian Dalits receive barring them from any kind of government assistance or positive affirmative action measures on the basis of their caste. "Dalit Christians are triply oppressed – inside Christianity, in the secular world, and by the government,"²⁵ Dalit theologians

²¹ *Ibid*, 62.

²² M. E. Prabhakar, *Towards a Dalit Theology* (Delhi: Indian Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1989), 91.

²³ Vincent Manoharan and John Packianathan, "TOWARDS a PRACTICAL DALIT THEOLOGY: A STUDY on the STATUS and RELEVANCE of DALIT THEOLOGY among GRASS ROOTS DALIT CHRISTIANS in THEIR STRUGGLE against CASTE OPPRESSION," 2012, <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/3348/1/Manoharan12PhD1.pdf>, 11.

²⁴ Arvind P. Nirmal and V. Devasahayam, *A Reader in Dalit Theology* (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute For The Department Of Dalit Theology, 2007), 27.

²⁵ Manoharan and Packianathan, TOWARDS a PRACTICAL DALIT THEOLOGY, 13.

Vincent Manoharan and John Packianathan write. Dalit theology is first and foremost grounded in reaction to the stark deficiencies of Indian Christian theology to address the full reality of the Dalit experience and of the majority of the Indian Church as a whole. Dalit theology critiques the historical Brahminization of Indian Christian theology and its refusal to care for the material concerns of the most marginalized.

Through its utilization of the Imago Dei, Dalit theology works to restore Dalit dignity through its restoration of Dalit divinity. Manoharan and Packianathan write, “When Hinduism denies human status to Dalits, Dalit Theology affirms that all human beings are created by God and therefore Dalits are also created in the image of God to enjoy full humanness beyond just being simply human... Dalits who were made ‘no people’ by the Hindu concept have become God’s people in Christianity.”²⁶ Thus, Dalit Christian theology succeeds in granting dignity to Dalits where the dominant Hindu narrative fails. Arvind P. Nirmal, often referred to as the Father of Dalit theology, describes its mission as follows: “[f]or a Christian Dalit Theology it cannot be simply the gaining of the rights, the reservations and privileges. The goal is the realisation of our full humanness or conversely, our full divinity, the ideal of the Imago Dei, the Image of God in us.”²⁷ Thus, the creation story of Genesis 1 and the introduction of the dignity of the Imago Dei act as the normative framework for Dalit theology to reclaim the broken sense of Dalit self-identity and work toward the holistic liberation of the Dalit people.

Through Dalit Christology, Dalit theology works to reaffirm both the divinity and the humanity of the Dalit people through recognizing the Dalitness of Christ and understanding God as a Dalit, Suffering God. Nirmal establishes the paradigm of a “Dalit Christ” and points to passages such as Isaiah 53:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.²⁸

The Dalit lived experience resonates with Christ’s suffering, his grief, and the hatred He received with men refusing even to look upon His figure. Nirmal writes, “On the cross, he was the broken, the crushed, the split, the torn, the driven asunder man - the dalit in the fullest possible meaning of the term. ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’...That feeling of being God-forsaken is at the heart of our dalit experiences and dalit consciousness in India. It is the dalitness of the divinity and humanity that the Cross of Jesus symbolizes.”²⁹ Dalit theology is often “Jesus-centric” rather than “Christ-centric” focusing on the humanness of Jesus and His

²⁶ *Ibid*, 94

²⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

²⁸ Isaiah 53:3-6 (ESV).

²⁹ Nirmal and Devashayam, *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, 69.

capacity to dwell with Dalits in their experience of suffering³⁰. However, Dalit theology has come under criticism from newer generations of Dalit theologians who point to its overemphasis on Jesus's suffering and crucifixion in obscurity of the quintessence of His divinity and resurrection and their unparalleled importance for obtaining Dalit liberation to come. As Dalit theologian Sathianathan Clarke explains, "[I]t is because of the cosmic dimensions of the Christ that suffering is not hopeless and final. This power is needed if Jesus Christ must be thought of as able, trustworthy, and relevant to aid suffering Dalits to move towards freedom and liberation."³¹ It is Christ's death on the cross that allows the Dalit to see herself in the eyes of her suffering savior and it is His final resurrection that allows her to hope for a restorative future free from the piercings and enslavement of the present. It is this indispensable paradigm that newer Dalit Theologians yearn to see centered more at the forefront of Dalit Christology.

Through a reverence for the disgusting, "indecent"³² body of Jesus Christ, Dalit theology works to reaffirm the innate dignity of the Dalit body reflected in Christ's own. Dalit Theologian Eve Parker writes, "Dalit Christology therefore centers on the incarnation of God and His choosing to take on a 'polluted' identity thereby participating in the pain-pathos of the oppressed. In doing so, Jesus radically enters a world of untouchability to form a praxis of unreserved touchability."³³ "The enfleshed resistance of the incarnate one begins with his conception where the 'unclean' one – the body of the still unmarried Mary – 'becomes the site of incarnation,'"³⁴ Josh Samuel writes. Samuel's Dalit Mariology here repudiates the sexual shame affixed to the Dalit female body prescribed to both its femininity and its Dalitness, revealing that instead of being irredeemably contaminated as they are told, they are instead perfect vessels fit for divine inhabitation. The central mission of the Incarnation is the defilement of the divine that he might take upon Himself all the waste and filth of our world and call us pure. Throughout the course of his life, Jesus' body soils itself with the socially contemptible and outcast – the sinners, the tax collectors, the gentiles - and renders them not impure or degenerated, but perfect.

Dalit theologians emphasize this praxis of unreserved touchability³⁵ as resistance modeled after a multitude of stories in the gospels that illustrate Christ's redemption of the impure during his ministry. He constantly touches sick and diseased bodies deemed untouchable by society in order to heal them including those of lepers segregated from society for fear of their contagious pollution.³⁶ He touches the unclean bodies of the dead raising them to life, taking their impurities onto Himself, and purifying it.³⁷ He carries the yoke of disgust of a low-caste, squalid servant when he insists on getting on his hands and knees and washing his

³⁰ Samuel, *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation*, 146.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Eve Rebecca Parker, *Theologising with the Sacred "Prostitutes" of South India: Towards an Indecent Theology* (BRILL, 2021), 83.

³³ Parker, *Theologising with the Sacred "Prostitutes" of South India*, 82

³⁴ Samuel, *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation*, 68.

³⁵ Parker, *Theologising with the Sacred "Prostitutes" of South India*, 82

³⁶ Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation*, 120.

³⁷ Mark 5:41 (ESV).

disciples' feet despite their bewildered protests to the contrary.³⁸ He goes out of His way to meet a Samaritan woman, doubly outcaste by both Jewish society and her Samaritan village, for her supposed sexual promiscuity with multiple men.³⁹ Jesus converses with her and asks her specifically to give Him a drink of water from the well, an unthinkable task for Dalits who have often been degraded and met with violence for doing so. Through these acts of touch and physical intimacy, Dalit theologians call their non-Dalit Christian brothers and sisters to an unbridled, filthy love that allows them to create political and religious shared spaces of community between Dalits and non-Dalits alike.

However, Dalit theology does not merely wait on the sidelines for those outside their plight to procure their rights in their stead. Instead, Dalit theological praxis emphasizes the role faith plays in attaining liberation for Dalits everywhere. Faith as praxis is not merely relegated to a benign corner of intellectual assent to dogma, but rather a dangerous, rebellious, political act of transgressing social boundaries culminating in confrontation and conflict with those in power. In this way, Jesus allows a hemorrhaging woman deemed ceremonially unclean by Hebrew law to be healed by means of her faith and agency expressed through her crossing of her social boundaries by pushing through the crowd to reach out her hand, touch Christ, and find liberation for herself.⁴⁰ "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease,"⁴¹ He says. Her illness here is both physical and social and her faith is the means of liberation from both. The implications of this statement for Dalit theologians is that Dalit faith as "participatory and persistent action"⁴² in religious and political spheres is a necessary salvific means in eradicating the social condition the Dalits find themselves in.

Perhaps the most salient example of this rebellious faith is the story of the anonymous "sinful" prostitute who anoints Jesus's feet in Luke 7. The polluted woman through her presumptuous act of faith transgresses her social boundaries by entering the house of the Pharisees (read: Brahmins) completely unannounced and without permission. "In doing so she uses her body to challenge the social hegemonies of patriarchy and break the boundaries of purity, pollution, and decency."⁴³ The woman then sits beneath Jesus's feet (the divine origin of the low-caste servant-Shudras) and flips the dharmic narrative by carrying an alabaster flask of ointment to anoint Him usurping for herself the Brahminic role as cleanser and purifier. She then proceeds to express her love for Jesus in a provocatively vulgar and indecent manner through wetting His feet with her tears, drying them with her loose, unbound hair, and kissing his feet through the polluted orifice of her mouth to the horror and disgust of the Pharisees who repeatedly rebuke her. Rather than condemning her for her blatant transgression of social boundaries as the dominant social order pleads with Him to, Jesus offers her forgiveness from her sins liberating her from her shame and restoring the dignity taken from her. As Parker writes,

³⁸ John 13:1-17 (ESV).

³⁹ John 4:18 (ESV).

⁴⁰ Parker, *Theologising with the Sacred "Prostitutes" of South India*, 83.

⁴¹ Mark 5:34 (ESV).

⁴² Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation*, 103.

⁴³ Parker, *Theologising with the Sacred "Prostitutes" of South India*, 141.

“Despite traditional exegetes attempting to disempower the woman by ‘giving her a place seen appropriate to women: the crying figure pleading for salvation’, she is the agent of her own liberation.”⁴⁴

Through this lens, the sinful woman’s faith motivates her to defy the assigned grammar of her body, confront the spiritual oppressors of her time, and successfully reclaim for herself the sacred and material spaces stolen from her offering us an effective blueprint for Dalit praxiological action. By emulating this example, Dalits are encouraged to collectively invade sacred spaces of political and religious significance reclaiming the respect and rights owed to them. Ultimately it is the sinful woman’s persistent, disruptive faith that flips the social norms of her situation on their head and works to restore what was taken from her. Such a story offers the same promise of salvific faith to Dalits today in their fight for the restoration of their human dignity and their total liberation from oppression.

Final Thoughts

Dalit theology offers a provocative hermeneutical lens through which we come to a more holistic understanding of Christ and his incarnate mission on Earth towards the spiritual and material needs of the uttermost marginalized. The Dalit Christ’s perpetual self-defilement through His embrace of the outcaste of society challenges us to follow in His footsteps and begets a harrowing question to the rest of the modern world: Who are the Dalits in our society today? Who have we failed to clothe, to feed, to look upon with love and embrace? Whose bodies have we implicitly imprisoned and desecrated forgetting it is the holy body of Christ we have spat and urinated upon? Yet, however riddled with the pangs of a tortured, sinful world, the cry of Dalit theology is never anything less than hope – a hope that does not wait idly by for its own realization, but that fights to be seen and heard and touched by those in power. A hope for a future where the captive is set free from the chains of shame, disgust, and indignity and the oppressor is liberated from the lie of superiority he has been possessed by. Along with our Dalit brothers and sisters in Christ, we may learn to long with expectant hope for the resurrection and return of the risen Christ and work in faith to create a caste-free world of dignity and liberation for all.

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A Heretic Comes Home: Hans Ehrenberg, The End-Time and Revelatory Hope

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Introduction

The Return of the Heretic by Hans Ehrenberg is a post-Great War memoir, but not of his wartime experiences. It is his great confession of a transformation that overtook him in a way his four years of military service could not. It was “the fruit of a long spiritual journey and also the start of a new thinking, signifying a new life.”²

Hans Phillip Ehrenberg (1883-1958) was born in Hamburg-Altona, in the German Empire, the son of Otto, a bank officer, and his wife, Emmi Fischel Ehrenberg, who were nonobservant Jews. Hans received a strong education through high school and was well prepared to engage in university studies. He professed to have no “special talents,” but he did inherit a strong intellectual and spiritual passion from his mother and the determination to persevere from his father. After completing a doctorate at the University of Munich in political economy, he pursued another degree, by which he became first a Privatdozent and then a professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg in 1910. In the same period, he experienced a turnabout toward Christian mystical and cultural interests that precipitated his conversion to Christianity and baptism in 1909. He and Else Anna Zimmerman, a language teacher, were married in 1912. He served in the German Army during the Great War, 1914-1918. After the war he found greater involvement and commitment to the congregational life of the church, and prepared as required for ordination as a pastor in the German Protestant Church (The Old Prussian Lutheran Church). Installed in 1925 as the pastor of the *Pauluskirche* in Bochum, he proved himself a popular preacher and lecturer in the region and leader among his colleagues. He was a 1933 founder of the Confessing Church movement one year before the Barmen Declaration. A “non-Aryan” and a resister, his normal pastoral tasks, activism, and writings challenged National Socialist policies against Jews and Jewish Christians. For him it was a matter of life and death for the church against the Nazis, and he, like millions of others, found his citizenship, his professorial standing, and his public influence first threatened and then revoked. His resistance for the sake of the church and its confessions challenged the “great tyranny” of the Third German Empire. After his forced resignation in 1937 as a pastor, he continued to promote the aims of the Confessing Church. The Gestapo arrested him the day after

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2. Hans Ehrenberg, *Die Heimkehr des Ketzers, Eine Wegweisung*, (Vol. 1), *Der Bücher vom Kreuzweg*, erste Folge (Würzburg, Germany: Patmos-Verlag, 1920), 8; Günter Brakelmann, Hans Ehrenberg: *Ein Judenchristliches Schicksal in Deutschland*, Band I, *Leben, Denken und Wirken 1883-1932* (Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner), 47-75, 102, 340-41. Unless noted otherwise, all translations are mine.

Kristallnacht, the national pogrom of November 9, 1938, and he was incarcerated at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for almost five months. Assigned command of the camp's corpse bearers and compelled to other duties in harsh weather, twice he almost died from exhaustion and exposure. As a prisoner of special interest to the Gestapo, he was the last to be released in late March 1939. With his family, he took refuge in England, where he preached and wrote, offered adult Christian education seminars, and counseled other German refugees. Hans and Else returned to Germany in 1947, where he wrote many more books and articles, taught adults using dialogical principles, led in the *Jedermannsfreizeit* spiritual retreat movement, and continued to promote the ecumenical movement. He died in Heidelberg.³

In his Foreword to *The Return of the Heretic*, Ehrenberg says he had been on various paths homeward since 1911, always holding back, keeping silent, until he should arrive there. "Often, I died, only to awake into a new life; and I was never untrue to myself. I was then a child of my time, secretly already a son of the hour that now has come over us. I should not now report on my stations along the way; it is difficult to relate my spiritual transformation to others, even though it comes from the soul." He had made his way home, but home was not quite the same place as before, for he was not quite the same person as before. Nonetheless, having completed his wanderings, his search was complete, and he could provide this guidebook to show the way. That is his purpose.⁴

My purpose is to examine how the themes of *The Return* relate to the "new speaking" or "speech thinking" and its coordinate "new speaking," and how they help to enhance the more familiar salvation history of Judaism and Christianity by encouraging fresh insights through a distinctive approach. It is good to understand what Ehrenberg intends by his designation of the "new heretics" in the Church, for they are the fruit of the revelation that continued after the revelation of Jesus Christ. The "heretics" are his followers, as he was regarded a heretic. I will summarize how the new heretics are in union with the *Una Sancta*, the "One Holy", the universal and invisible Church.⁵ In *The Return of the Heretic*, the disciples-apostles of Jesus are the body of the yet-unveiling or unfolding revelation. Here I examine what that assertion implies, and how the unfolding revelation protects the church. I seek to explain why the authoritarian pursuit of certainty for the sake of spiritual authority in the Church is *anathema*, or invites a curse, and how the true impulse for change from age to age can and should be recognized as the work of the Spirit.

3. Their son Andreas and daughter Juliane continued their schooling, graduate and professional education, and made their lives in England and India. Hans Ehrenberg, "1. Lebenslauf zum 1. Examen 1923," "3. Lebenslauf zum 2. Examen 1924," in Günter Brakelmann, ed., Hans Ehrenberg: *Autobiographie eines deutschen Pfarrers; mit Selbstzeugnissen und einer Dokumentation seiner Amtsentlassung* (Waltrop, Germany: Hartmut Spenner, 1999), 156-158; 168-173; G. Brakelmann, "Summe eines Lebens: 1933-1939," in Hans Ehrenberg: *Ein judenchristliches Schicksal in Deutschland*, Band 2, *Widerstand, Verfolgung und Emigration 1933-1939* (Waltrop, Germany: Hartmut Spenner, 1999), 457-9.

4. *Heimkehr*, 8-9.

5. Leonard J. Swidler, *The Ecumenical Vanguard: The History of the Una Sancta Movement* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966).

Ehrenberg argues that change is certain and can be a virtue. It is most prominent in the model of Jesus, his disciples-apprentices, and his lay servants who were considered abnormal and thus heretics. This was because of their constant challenging, even opposing, relationship with the dominant culture, whether in Jerusalem or Athens, Nazareth or Rome, and in the Church itself. The reactions to Christians from the beginning determined their identity as heretics, that is, that they showed themselves to be distinctively not of the societies from which they emerged. That spiritual response of struggle has grounded the Church, *Una Sancta*, honoring the dynamic divine spirit that advocates for witnesses to redemptive transformation. It is the divine spirit in Jesus the Christ and in his Church that champions a *Johannine* faith (that is, textually, of the Gospel, Letters of John, and the Revelation of Jesus Christ) and maintains the expectation and hope of the Parousia as the capital *End-time* act of *Redemption*, the fulfillment of *Revelation* for all of *Creation*.

The word “revelatory” in *The Return of the Heretic* identifies the people of God as bearers of revelation, whether they be Jews, Christians, or, ultimately, heretics as Ehrenberg defines them. Like the Apostle John, they have reached the outermost border of the range of revelation; like “the wanderer who hurries with rapid steps to the End of the Way, finds himself suddenly in a surrounding world where there is no hurry, and above all an infinite resistance slowed the pace of the wanderer adopted by the divine love.” Many themes interact here, folding over and inward upon each other again and again, much as if in a sustained dialogue, but with many verses and refrains as in a rondeau. In this instance they are more like a dance.⁶

The *End-time* here is Ehrenberg’s special term in a scheme of religious, theological, and historical perspective and orientation; it differs as to concept and history from common contemporary eschatological or apocalyptic narratives. The End-time belongs to the progress of time, Revelation, and Redemption, as through the hours of a day: Morning, Midday, Evening, and Midnight, in a day that encompasses all of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. The pages concerned with “the year zero” describe the Christ as having begun the End-time, at the point when and where “the Jews do not cross over the height of the Midday Mountain.” At the same time “Christ has brought us across, and thus we now count our day no longer from the beginning of the ascent, rather from the highest pinnacle of the entire journey. And Jesus, who gave a new world the First Day, gives each day the character of the Last Day.” There are contrasts in this journey from that which the Old Covenant provides or does not provide: the power of the Midday and of the End-day. “In Christ the power of the Midday contains that of the End-day, that the Return, begotten or innate, and from this point on, is active in human living as the advancing power of Redemption. . . . But in Christianity the station of Redemption commands the stations of Creation and Revelation, and thus now the power of the End of Life is become the strongest of all powers from God that are active among humankind.” In the scheme of the world day, the End-time lasts during the long descent from the

6. “The round-dance of the apostles already weaves in or intertwines with the dance of Christian history; all three of them are united in a communal group in every period of the Christian church; happily they change in the lead-off of the round, but never does one of the three completely leave the round-dance.” *Heimkehr*, 54.

Midday height to the Life-Evening of the Creation. This much conveys Ehrenberg's creative schema of salvation history in *The Return*.⁷

The Return of the Heretic

Great War memoirs, all distinctive, are urgent statements; Ehrenberg's is no less so: "I was still in a field-gray jacket when I was already at home, as I now for one and a half years grasped the plan for this book, and started to gather my spirit that was frazzled through the war and was called up to newer activity." Yet it was no memoir. He conceived the plan for it in 1917 during his assignment to the artillery training school in Jütetog, away from the western front. He had been making notes since 1917 and had written and published two dozen or so newspaper accounts and reflections on the war. He wrote from the German battle front during the battles of Lotharingia and the Somme as an infantry company commander and regimental adjutant; and when he convalesced from nervous exhaustion and illness away from the front.⁸

The German word *Heimkehr* means a return to one's starting place, a return home. The synonym *Heimkunft* also suggests a present or future return that is suitable to themes in *Die Heimkehr des Ketzers*, and relevant to the author and others who have returned or could return to their origins in God, their true home. The theme also fits the core of Christian hope in the End Time, with the continuing presence and fulfillment of revelation and redemption in Jesus the Christ. As Ehrenberg would have it, clearly there are many "heretics" who have shared and will share in that hope.

The subtitle identifies *The Return* simply as a guide, but it is more. Its concepts and spatial details defy any map legend, for its orientation and scale, landscape and locations can seem inexact and confusing. Its broad human scale represents living and experience; in it, the arc of life for the individual and all humanity is a story from salvation history that transcends historical narrative. Ehrenberg's imaginative use of allusions and symbols is meant to reframe and explain the human plight in the world, but in a way that suggests the presence of truth. His guidance makes sense. His book could be as "sweet, living water" for some readers, but he was amazed at other readers: "Repeatedly I have the experience, that the most abstract and lifeless thoughts, as soon as they are embellished with clichés about experience, immediately are thought to be lively and powerful." That was surprising enough, but "meanwhile, in addition, in the same way, the most powerful thoughts are seen to be spiritually out of touch, discredited as pale constructions, simply because there are those who read without the tools to accept life, and who have never themselves experienced the inward unity of spirit and word, speech and concept." He could not write for everyone, for his guidebook, he says, will best touch whoever is on the way home or who has already gotten there; it can offer only resentment for anyone who

7. Ibid., 37-38.

8. Ibid., 8; *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 1: 47-75, 102, 340-41.

refuses to turn homeward. “Finally, if someone who does not read me had never needed to turn homeward, then Christ can be right in the midst of us at any time.”⁹

The Return starts with an inscription from John 21:19-22, at the heart of a post-resurrection story. After Jesus has been raised, the fishermen, having caught nothing overnight, came to shore where he was waiting for them. They obeyed Jesus and cast their nets once more, but from the shore; they pulled in 153 fish. There by the Sea of Galilee on the western shore, Jesus had fresh bread and roasted fish on the charcoal fire. There was a historic, transformative conversation: Simon Peter has much to overcome, and Jesus has much to impress upon him. Three times he asks Peter, “Do you love me?” Peter, who had denied him three times, insists with exasperation that he does ultimately care for Jesus and his cause; ultimately, yes, he has sacrificial affection for him; yes, he would also feed his master’s sheep.

It is quite an exchange between two brothers – the teacher and his disciple – this down-to-business talk, this prayer-dialogue between Peter and the resurrected Messiah. Then the crucial moment of teaching and obedience happens and is sealed in the final exchange, Peter’s question and Jesus’s command. Pointing toward John the Beloved Disciple, Peter asks, “What about him?” Jesus says, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” That is how Peter received his sole directive for the End-time (John 21:22).¹⁰

The command created a great change for Peter, as it did for Hans Ehrenberg; both of these men found in it the great task of their lives. The rabbi Jesus, now the risen Son of God, had delivered a summons, itself a vital reinterpretation, to *halakha* or the practical law and way that was to govern his life mission and conduct, and that of all others who followed. They were to continue in the eternal covenant of God, but in new ways, proceeding with new minds and renewed hearts. In this instance, Jesus revealed the lines of Peter’s life.

It had been no less so for Hans Ehrenberg who found his life uniquely restructured, with consistencies and surprises that could only be revealed from day to day. God-given situational tasks continually shaped his life. Throughout the Gospel of John, the symbolically rich account teems with the real marks of human life and work, food and eating, sweaty and wet work (for fishermen!), honest-to-the-core relationships, death and healing, error and correction, community celebrations, and incalculably significant life assignments. The full humanity of the Christ and his followers was there to see and hear, to smell and feel. Ehrenberg had taken all of this to heart, keeping it there and in his energetic outward life, despite all obstructions. It is no surprise that he appears to have adopted the Johannine account and the directive of Jesus as a life theme.¹¹

9. *Heimkehr*, 9-10.

10. *Ibid.*, 40.

11. *Ibid.*, 7. *Halakha* is “law” and a guide, literally, “the way” (from *halakh*, “to go”), governing Jewish life. The term and its applications developed within postexilic rabbinical Judaism. See Louis Jacobs in the Jewish Virtual Library: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/halakhah> and Menachem Posner, “What is Halakhah (Halachah)? Jewish Law,” https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4165687/jewish/What-Is-Halakhah-Halachah-Jewish-Law.htm Ehrenberg accepted tasks as they came to him, such as the task of theology more urgent in wartime; the task of ecumenicity as a

The Return has a foreword and a preface. In the latter, strikingly and audaciously, Ehrenberg exclaims, “The modern academic scholarship (*die Wissenschaft*) that was is no longer. The modern academic scholarship that will be is not yet. We are turning back toward the original source of knowledge (*Wissens*); the simplest truth is with us. It is the beginning of Christian modern academic scholarship.” His judgment is harsh: “All modern science in itself is objectionable. No devil has eaten so deeply into humanity – like old rust in the iron – like Lucifer, the tempter in the mind (*im Geiste*).” Such striking words from a German university scholar! But his comment conveys the full non-scientific intention of his book, or it may fit the metaphor of the book, which does not prohibit openings, or connections, between worldly understanding and spiritual truth as he wishes to present it. Certainly though, Ehrenberg presented a confessional book full of existential awareness and soul satisfaction.¹²

Ehrenberg in 1920 was a veteran of a brutal war and had seen the Devil run deadly amok on the military battlefield between the world’s most advanced complex societies. Modern scientific industrial technologies supplied the means of destruction but offered empty remedies for their effects. It was as much a cosmic and spiritual battle as a secular war, for it was the battle that had been waged in the world ever since the coming of Christ two millennia ago: “Two millennia long the Spirit has fought successfully to defend itself. Christianity always succumbed to him [Lucifer] again and again. In this battle, however, to which the apparent victory of the mind – Lucifer – belongs, he and his kingdom have exhausted their powers. Now the power of science is here. Now is the moment. The mind is weak for the first time since the revelation has come to us. The time of Lucifer has run out; only Satan, the devil of the body, will remain until the last day.” Here is a remarkable shift from Lucifer to Satan, one suggesting, or mirroring, interpretations that assume a lesser status of the chief worldly opponent. Yet the topic parallels Ehrenberg’s declarations about the Devil’s resistance to redemption, the “sword of damnation” that flashes over all living: “The earth is not so much only a likeness of heaven, rather it is a likeness of hell.” There is no more horrible comparison. The Great War itself illustrated the vanity and hubris of offensive war for economic and political advantage by technological means. “The mind is weak . . .” could be another way of referring to the depressive disillusionment of Germany and the other powers after they had “completed” a futile war.¹³

refugee pastor in Britain; advising the British to adopt a “manly Christian attitude” towards the war, accepting it as a task, for “churches can live only while they retain their definite power to speak and have a living message to proclaim.” To uphold a “during the war gospel” was the only real and virile thing to do. Hans Ehrenberg, *Autobiography of a German Pastor*, transl. Geraint V. Jones (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1943), 128, 140-43, 154-55. The “task” is *eine Aufgabe* in the German edition: *Autobiographie eines deutschen Pfarrers*, 138.

12. *Heimkehr*, 12.

13. Ehrenberg may have had in mind that the name Lucifer mythologically connotes the powers and regard given to an angel named Light-bearer as opposed to Satan (*Ha Satan*), the Accuser or Hinderer, as if the Morning Star, Venus, had been stricken from the heavens and the Denier’s comparably inferior powers restricted to earth, thus to work dire mischief among humanity. He may not be concerned here about the “reading in” of Satan in Isaiah 14:3-12 that clearly refers to the king

He continues, “The moment has arrived. Now it pays to attack the weakened, to defeat and – to redeem. The defeat of all truths paves the way for the victory of the truth. Modern academic knowledge is no more; now, without rivalry, Christianity can take over in dominance (*Herrschaft*), and there without rivalry, also without the sins of their own rivalry. . . .” The dragon of modern science lies on the ground, Michael steps on his head. Only by complete mortification can modern scientific scholarship prepare for the resurrection in Christ – for the rebirth in the Spirit of God. This sounds overstated, certainly, and some will think Ehrenberg naïve, but his statement is strong and has our attention.¹⁴

I suggest that the battle between the mind and spirit actually amplified Ehrenberg’s own personal existential and spiritual conflict, now presented as resolved in the guidebook that directed him home. He has found his solution, his salvation, and he has high hopes for everyone else, which is enough to attract accusations of idealism. He considered such accusations, though, to be explicitly denials of the Christian gospel that he wanted to present creatively and satisfactorily. After all, he introduced a guidebook to others for that purpose. Most probably he believed his own journey provided answers for his readers. Probably there were worldwide implications, certainly for Germany and Europe. He was driven actually to produce a guidebook fully confessional yet allusive in character, and stemming from his conviction that “Christianity cannot absolve earthly dominion from the obligation of Christianity.” It was not the task of the believer to employ the latter to achieve the former, and much less the reverse.¹⁵

New-Thinking and Speech-Thinking

Ehrenberg approached his book topic methodically, with a professor’s intentionality and logic. He used type-pairs or dyads from the history, sociology, and psychology of religion, (so much for the end of modern academic scholarship!), and people could recognize the word pairs gentile and Christian, priest and laity, the orthodox and the heretical, all of them traditional, yet contemporary. These dyadic relations in society and culture refer to vital developments among people over time. They account for diversity among societies and their cultures. Ehrenberg “uses the method of correlation, of comparison and contrast, whereby the one is not to be understood without the other.” Here, “correlation” or “relationship” is important. Shared relations and differences interact, so that each word pair makes up a “dialectical interconnective relationship.” Speaking of persons within these dyads, there is always the possibility of dialogue. The dialogue may be and most commonly is between two persons alone, but, without dialogue among multiple persons from

of Babylon. “The hell of political history,” in *Der Tragödie unter dem Kreuz*, Vol. 2 of Hans Ehrenberg, *Tragödie und Kreuz* (Würzburg: Patmos-Verlag, 1920), 35-36.

14. *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 1:103; *Heimkehr*, 12. Ehrenberg’s parabolic speech intensifies the effect of the revelation that modern human knowledge has not supplanted older ways of knowing.

15. *Heimkehr*, 10; *Tragödie und Kreuz* II: 36-37.

diverse societies, there can be no true developments leading to functioning complex societies. Mutual agreement about the task makes ongoing dialogue possible.¹⁶

A dialectical and dialogical “thought and speech character” shapes Ehrenberg’s method throughout; all are related so that each one benefits from and informs the other. Discrete parts are reciprocal and retain their distinctiveness within the whole. “Thus the Christian presupposes the pagan (heathen), not only in time, but intrinsically by nature (*wesensmäßig*). All humanity was and is the enduring process of heathenism and Christendom.” In heathenism humans have created their own gods in their own image. The projection theory of Ludwig Feuerbach is one tool to analyze the god-creation, where “theology is anthropology, that is, all assertions in the robe of theology are none other than assertions of humans about themselves, about their reality and their yearnings.”¹⁷

In the introduction to his own Feuerbach edition, Ehrenberg wrote, “From religion Feuerbach battles against God—namely against the God of theology and philosophy, and his own philosophy is not some naturalistic system, but instead a religious system; that should prompt some thought.” The allegation of religion contradicts Feuerbach’s actual naturalistic and materialistic positions; apparently, though, in order to continue his arguments about the atheistic Feuerbach, Ehrenberg emphasizes a contrast between materialist theory and materialist convictions. He offers stronger reasons in his *Disputation*, Book One, judging that Feuerbach alleged a fundamental error in both theology and philosophy, that of their idealist stance; for him, “speculative philosophy” “is the genuine, consequential, most reasonable theology.” That assertion expressed in “reverse” order is “God is the only consequent, complete, and true idealist.”¹⁸

Ehrenberg wrote, “Feuerbach thus argued for the Kantian understanding of reason and negation in the deepest way and with greater impression. The belief in thought was sold through theology; Immanuel Kant still believed he could save the

16. *Judenchristliches Schicksal*, 1:103.

17. Ibid., 1:104. Ehrenberg did not seek to rehabilitate Feuerbach, who had been criticized by many scholars and whose mistakes in academia cost him dearly. See Gooch, Todd, “Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/ludwig-feuerbach/> citing “Zur Beurteilung der Schrift Das Wesen des Christentums” (1842), also in Feuerbach, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 9, ed. W. Schuffenhauer, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1981-), 229-42. V. Harvey compared Feuerbach’s writings on the projection theory with other contemporary theories. Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Ehrenberg also had been influenced by similar thinking, especially among proponents of Eastern Christianity who were emigrés from revolutionary Russia or those who were incarcerated or executed. For example, Nikolai Berdyaev argued that Christianity at its core was anthropological, and cited the anthropology of Ludwig Feuerbach as a witness. See “Das Problem der Anthropodizee,” in *Östliches Christentum: Documente*, Vol. 2, *Philosophie* eds. Nicolai v. Bubnoff u. Hans Ehrenberg (München: C. H. Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1925), 246f.

18. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Philosophie der Zukunft*, ed. Hans Ehrenberg (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, H. Kurtz, 1922); Hans Ehrenberg, *Disputation: Drei Bücher vom Deutschen Idealismus, Fichte: Der Disputation Erstes Buch* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923), 167. In the *Disputation* volume on Fichte, the character “Johannes” is “Hans” Ehrenberg’s chief voice in the dialogue; the second and substantial voice is that of “Friedrich”.

faith if he surrendered thinking. But after Kant, the Idealists came and gave faith – that already had been rescued back again from the claws of concepts – gave faith back to thought, and thought freedom over faith.” Ehrenberg would be emphasizing how the subjection of faith to thought weakened and conceptualized or abstracted faith. It would be better if faith were instead related to practical living and response. He continues, “Fichte first did this, also against his intention, as he raised up the *absolute I* as the bearer of thought and philosophizing as the content of the God-concept, out of which Hegel then drew his gnostic theology and philosophy.” Here is Ehrenberg’s identification of a God-concept itself as the actual object of knowing. He habitually and fundamentally opposed this, first, because it restricted human knowledge of God through personal encounter, and second, because it was also too easy to accept a gnostic and thus not fully human Jesus. “Knowing and faith now were so inextricably matted together, that no *Kant redivivus* would be allowed to release them from each other. Being instead united they could only suffer the same fate, for which Feuerbach was prepared. Feuerbach could only overcome Idealism if at the same time he renounced theology.”¹⁹

Ehrenberg argued that what Feuerbach did next was reasonable, even if it seemed contradictory: “Feuerbach’s atheism depends chiefly upon a thoroughly religious, indeed a Christian thought-revelation (*Denkentdeckung*)”. Feuerbach became a pioneer of the “I-Thou” dialectical work of scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “The word pair *I and You (Ich und Du)* marks the bearers of genuine living; its logic is a logic of the neighbor, a logic of the You instead of the logic of I, and its metaphysic rests and flows in love, as in I and You. ‘The content of I and You – is God.’ By this Feuerbach became conscious of a new philosophy; he did not want to bring a new religion, but soars with the great words, ‘In love, chiefly in the feeling, every person admits the truth of the new philosophy.’”²⁰

Feuerbach had made a hard bargain for a new philosophy at the price of atheism. But even if he did not consciously know it, he found a fully believable God in his faith in love, because faith in God underlay faith in love. Yet love without faith is nothing, and Feuerbach’s decision meant that love lost its depth and wonder. Now, supposing Feuerbach had gone further to express the *Wir* (We) that comes out of the *Mir und Dir* (Me and You) relationship, could he have discerned the presence of God in the We relationship? Ehrenberg offered life-pictures that Jesus presented to illustrate the point. First, “I was naked, and you clothed me . . .” and, second, “What you have done to one of the least of my brothers, you have done to me.” (Matthew 25:35-36, 40) The neighbor is the *one nearest*. An entire mentality comes from the mind and spirit of Jesus’s words. “Done to me!” Ehrenberg exclaims. “The neighbor is none other than God – because God is! Thus the atheist Feuerbach is the creator and discoverer of a Christian logic.” Yes, this is an amazing jump. But further, “Since him, the habit of the philosopher or *mos philosophicus*, this bastard of the *mos geometricus* or habit of the geometer (geometrician) is conquered and ruined. Reading only his *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, you would still get a

19. *Disputation I Fichte*, 167; italics are mine.

20. *Ibid.*, 167.

wealth of critical words about Idealism and no longer have any doubt that our philosophy of the future also really emanates from this point.”²¹

Franz and Hans. The matter of experience and speech was a dominant theme between Ehrenberg and his cousin Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) before, during, and after the Great War. Both of them served four years in the Kaiser’s armed forces. They were cousins and fast friends in their late teens and early twenties, but their respective religious conversions restricted the topics they discussed during the period between 1910 and 1919. Religion was off-limits, philosophy was not. The nominal Jew Rosenzweig converted to Judaism in his twenties after earnest examination of Christianity and a decisive, transcendent, and moving experience of synagogue worship in 1913; he decided Judaism without Christianity was more than adequate for salvation. As one born a Jew who “consciously chose to be a Jew,” he was a “theological Jew.”²² The equally nominal Jew Ehrenberg, who also converted in his twenties, a few years before Rosenzweig, asserted his commitment and conversion to Christianity early on with his cousin. Even so, despite lingering disagreement, they continued as the “Castor and Pollux” pair whose synergy in dialogue and friendship influenced each man to refocus his life. Their disagreements were grist for the mill. Unequivocally, their major discussion was about “who and what Jesus as a Jew is for the Christian and who Jesus as the Christ is for Christian belief.” Their theological and theoretical work was “existential-practical self-affirmation.” Their focus was the “final farewell to every idealist philosophical system, in favor of a basic position from revelational theology.” They were not trying to synthesize Judaism and Christianity, or philosophy and religion; instead, their efforts came from “a consistent and unmistakable Jewish and Christian decision.”²³ In his

21. Ibid., 167-68. The *mos philosophicus* and the *mos geometricus*, philosopher and geometer (geometrician) as symbols of modern scientific and mathematical systems are conquered by the new thinking, a new philosophy. Consider the subjective or personal meaning of the assertion. The comment points to the philosophies that developed alongside “the development of scientific networks.” In the West, “mathematized philosophy” from the age of Plato onward tended to be caught up in disputes such as the Nominalist-Realist controversy, and preludes to the development of mathematical-hierarchic views based in mathematical proof. Ehrenberg and his friends in dialogue were responding to the three overlapping “restructurings of the intellectual field” in the scientific revolution: in mathematics (e.g., Descartes’s “infallible discovery-making method”), multiple parallel developments in the scientific revolution(s), and the philosophical revolution in an allied interaction with mathematics and the sciences. The philosophers gaining the most “attention space” in these developments were working partly out of the pervasive Cartesian system and the ability to “draw heavily from a purified scholasticism.” Matters related to Kant’s work, and afterward to that of Hegel, affected Ehrenberg and his generation. See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass., & London, England: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1998), 552, 555-59, 569.

22. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, ed., *Judaism Despite Christianity: The 1916 Wartime Correspondence between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2011); viii, the “theological Jew” comment from Paul Mendes-Flohr, citing Arthur A. Cohen, “Why I Chose to Be a Jew,” in D. Stern and P. Mendes-Flohr, eds., *An Arthur A. Cohen Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 32.

23. For example, Rosenzweig and Ehrenberg employed a triad of themes found in rabbinical theology and in the liturgy of synagogal worship. Both *The Star of Redemption* and *The Return of the Heretic* feature the triad of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption, the thematic and structural grounding for both books. Theologically and as to revelation, the triadic approach has consequences

biography Ehrenberg reminisced positively about their respective paths.

Rosenzweig's eventual achievements were such that "the Jews of Europe came to regard him as a leader and a saint." Hans invoked his own words about the period from 1909 until 1920: "I, however, remained for a time a wanderer, a pilgrim, until I became a fighter, a soldier on the defensive and on the offensive;" . . . Rosenzweig and others had prophesied "that many years would pass before I had completed my journey and found my spiritual home."²⁴

Together and separately they developed in dialogue while each man explored the foundations of his faith. "This turning about, this turning homeward, transpired for each of them as a 'new thinking'. It was the return of two heretics to their roots, to the one God of the Jewish and Christian religion of revelation." For Ehrenberg and Rosenzweig, this was a new realization about history, reciprocally revelation-as-history and history-as-revelation: the occurrence of real events that related to all other world history.²⁵

Other studies help to explain the relationship between works by Rosenzweig and Ehrenberg, chiefly about the center of the "new thinking" in Rosenzweig's *Der Stern der Erlösung* (The Star of Redemption) and Ehrenberg's *Disputation: Three Books about German Idealism*. Each volume of the *Disputation* represented a day of dialogue between "Johannes" and "Friederich," with one or both vocalizing Ehrenberg's message. An earlier work, *The Cleavage of Philosophy*, stood on its own and expressed the need for a new creation of the dialectic principle that would end the impasse of the major philosophical camps.²⁶

Again, Rosenzweig and Ehrenberg relied on each other to shape the dialogical character of the new thinking, which had most to do with how *metalogical* speech was developed from the old. "In order to say in the language of their works: Just as Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung* in its First Part breathes the spirit of Ehrenberg's *The Cleavage of Philosophy* and in its entirety the spirit of Ehrenberg's *Disputation*, so in turn Ehrenberg's *Disputation* overall breathes the spirit of *The Star of Redemption*."²⁷

What Rosenzweig owed to Hans Ehrenberg was tangible in his gratitude, for Part I, Book Two, of *The Star of Redemption* bears the title, "Metalogic". The dedication drew from Ehrenberg's 1911 *Die Parteierung der Philosophie* (The Cleavage in Philosophy), where he had introduced the metalogical concept.

for dogmatic, methodological, and hermeneutical study, with implications for mutual relations under the unity of God. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, trans. from 2nd ed. 1930 by William W. Hallo (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1971); Wolfram Liebster, "Der Beitrag Hans Ehrenbergs zur gegenwärtigen Israeltheologie," in Manfred Keller and Jens Murken, eds., *Das Erbe des Theologen Hans Ehrenberg: Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin/Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 167-68; 265, n.1.

24. *Autobiography*, 110.; *Autobiographie*, 106-7.

25. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:102.

26. Heinz Jürgen-Görtz, "Franz Rosenzweigs und Hans Ehrenbergs Wege in ein neues Denken," in T. Jähnichen & A. Losch, eds, *Hans Ehrenberg als Grenzgänger zwischen Theologie und Philosophie*, Hans Ehrenberg-Studien 1 (Kamen: Verlag Hartmut Spenner, 2017), 57; Hans Ehrenberg, *Die Parteierung der Philosophie: Studien wider Hegel und die Kantianer* (Leipzig: Verlag Felix Meiner, 1911), 130-32.

27. Görtz, 58-9.

Rosenzweig's "germ cell" (*Urzelle*) of *The Star*, actually a letter to another cousin, Rudolf Ehrenberg, November 18, 1917, referred to Hans's metalogical teaching about the "Reality of Reason." Chiefly, the relationship of the *Disputation* to *The Star* concerned the different new thinking terms such as time, speech, and the "other": The two works together expressed the loving God with the "beloved soul" oriented as a "new standpoint of philosophy." Each of them was a distinctive expression of revelation.²⁸

Ehrenberg, his "original teacher in philosophy," contributed to Rosenzweig's criticism of "the totality of philosophy." He opened up and closed out his *The Cleavage in Philosophy* with a tidy and clear set of statements first published when he was a new lecturer at Heidelberg, an unsalaried *Privatdozent*. He challenged the dilemma of an isolated logic: a "logic without system" that led repeatedly to "logic without system." Such an isolated logic lacks boundaries with the nonlogical disciplines but still draws different elements of them into itself. Consequently it is impossible to reach nonlogical findings that are clearly separated from logic." He asserted, then, that "logic remains a *philosophie-fragment*, only comparative at best: whether now in the form of Hegelian developmental philosophy, with which one in the enclosure of an existing system is overwhelmed by logic and the 'result' is 'logic without system,' or in the form of Kantianism, by which fate the fragment has remained most obvious, and that even occasionally has tried to annul the nonlogical disciplines as unscientific worldview philosophies." Because of this impasse, Ehrenberg resolved to treat his thesis as an *inner-logical* question, in order to show how one always more quickly moves toward the *metalogical*.²⁹

Ehrenberg considered his own contributions toward a "new thinking" and a "new science" to be part of a common effort. *The Return of the Heretic* is not a typical theological-academic essay; there is no position to defend against other experts, and no heap of comments to explain it tidily. It is a product of the decision to abandon philosophical logic as a primary pursuit, but it is more. Because of his new interests and activities with the church and theology, Ehrenberg was more engaged in an explicit confrontation with contemporary philosophy. His choice in response already turned him toward the witnesses of the Bible in the Old and New Testaments. Consequently, as evidence, *The Return* pairs his biography with a long-term inquiry that is associated with "a new thinking, the sign of a new life."³⁰

28. Ibid., 64. Rudolf Ehrenberg (1884-1969), another cousin, was a biologist, physiologist, and, as a new thinker, a metabiologist.

29. *Parteitung*, iv. Rosenzweig elaborates "the new foundation for philosophy" in the "triad of bases, of grounds, of sources and so follows the "irrational" metalogical intention. None, though, can be the source of All. The formulation 'All = All' was the philosophical hubris that revealed itself as vacuous because it kept out the particular propulsions of the three irrational objects." These were "three great philosophical objects of God, Man, and World that Kant had reduced to nothings (for knowledge) – but not 'as objects of rational science, but precisely the reverse, as 'irrational' objects .'" Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 405; Wayne Cristaudo, *Religion, Redemption, and Revolution: The New Speech Thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 126-27.

30. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:102-03.

The Orthodox and the Heretic

What, or who, is the heretic? Generally the Greek term “heretic” (someone of another group or faction) as used within Christianity refers to one who teaches falsely or against church dogma. But this definition does only so much for us in *The Return*, for the heretics are a type defined primarily by the relationships they hold, that is, by their group identity. Strictly speaking, if we consider the ways Ehrenberg describes those relationships, and the basis of faith for the heretic, we might admit that our heretic is actually rather orthodox. The heretics are reconciled to the Revelation of Jesus Christ and to the Redemption provided through Christ. As a group they constitute the Johannine Church.

The heretic is one who chooses an alternative spiritual or intellectual perspective and position, a socio-cultural stance that contradicts the truth as a society customarily has understood it, usually over many generations. The succession of generations finds the received truth customary and traditional if not natural. Ehrenberg asserts revealed truth, and it is personal while cosmic; it is truth from the history of salvation, from the Creator, through his Son who sets truth upright against all accusations of heresy, though the heresy becomes the entire point:

“If the love of our brother savior were not also in the world, outside his command, then there could be no return home. The command of succession to Peter to makes love only into law, not into grace. In the following of Peter everything threatens to sink down to the law. Pure grace, the giving love, waits in John, and only in him is the potential of the homeward return kept as in a shrine of the costliest relics. And truly all relics of Peter are human substitute pieces for the one true reliquary that Peter does not possess, because it lives as John’s own. To this One and genuine reliquary, the illustrious secret of the heart of Jesus that is stored by John, allows us to go on a pilgrimage and to pray before him to the Father. *Unto the memorial of the human love of our Savior!*”³¹

“In Peter, Christ rules as King and Lord, as Lord of the Twilight Realm; in John, he lives among us further, and he has love, not only as Christ, but also as Jesus. Not only is God undying, but also the Human One (‘the Son of Man’): Jesus! Jesus, on whose breast John lay his head, the loving and beloved, dwells among us. That is the genuine ‘Blood of the New Covenant,’ the blood of his love and becoming love. In John *Jesus himself gives human continuity in the brother*, and the final word is not directed toward Christ, but instead on Jesus: ‘Amen, Come, Lord Jesus!’”³²

And so the heresy takes more recognizable shape, though the nations, the social classes, and the clans show great resistance to the message of the brotherhood of Jesus, that is, to the heresy of love and grace. What the societies and tribes can do on their own is what they do. The mistake one might make in

31. *Heimkehr*, 126.

32. *Ibid.* Italics are mine.

reading *The Return of the Heretic* is to assume that its message, even its narrative, are all about the past and the present and changes over time. What Ehrenberg has compressed into a mere two days is the whole history of humanity. It is compressed both as narrative and as a reference to the world that I must conclude is largely about the present. It is about the present because the present is all that we have—all that the reader has, all that the nations and tribes have. Yes, we do have valued traditions—the matters and things that have been handed down over the generations. The ultimate possession though is to have the love of Jesus and John enshrined in every human society or institution. The heathen, the Jews, and the Christians are present to the societies and institutions they have created and that they rely on, that is, their essential religion.

The example of John and the explanation of the heresy and the heretic, however, convince me that Hans Ehrenberg wanted that essential religion to be the heretic's refuge and providential resource, so that everyone among the nations and tribes could share in the heresy of love. To belong to each other as heretics was explicitly to be brothers and sisters in the fellowship of love. That fellowship and that love were, and are, distinctive in two ways. The first is that the fellowship of John the Beloved set the pattern in the first century when Christianity was new. The second distinction is that the operating manual of the Johannine brotherhood, even beyond the life of John, is still available in the Gospel and Letters of John, and in the Apocalypse or Revelation of Jesus Christ. Here the would-be heretic finds the heart of God and of grace most sharply emphasized: the kingdom is now; "brothers, let us love one another." Furthermore, "Follow me" is the invitation to life in grace and love, a most heretical matter, "I am the Vine, you are the branches, . . . dwell in me."³³

In these documents of the first Christian century are intimations of Ehrenberg's Twilight Realm between the Resurrection of Jesus and the Parousia, but they are not intimations alone. They are demonstrations of a lively heresy, that the heretic may live each day in the eternal present, in the "already but not yet" that still offers the experience of love, which is the authentic evidence of the presence of God, for it is God manifest among the believer-heretics. They are the ones who continue to carry the heresy beyond all boundaries. They are the ones who live out the reality of the "Man of all expanses" who is not too great to live in humility with his brothers and sisters—the heretic. Twilight is often the best time of the day.

Though late in the book Ehrenberg sharpened his references to the churches since the Reformation, his vague references earlier may have been intentional. So, for example, the relationship of priest and layman refers to various periods but remains relevant today. The dyadic relationship of the priest and the layman came in time before that of the orthodox (right-believing) and the heretic. These two dyadic relationships are essential to *The Return*, for they belong to the history of all religion

33. "I am the true vine, you are the branches, . . . abide in me as I abide in you. . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:1, 5, 12); "Beloved, let us love one another, because Love is from God; . . . if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . . There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; . . ." (I John 4:7ff, 12b, 17-21); "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. / . . . let everyone who is thirsty come. / Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift (Revelation 19:9b, 21:3f 22:17); Oxford NRSV.

throughout time. The priest and the layman belong to both heathen and Christian religion. Yes, a shift occurred, actually a decisive break, when revealed religion came, that is, Judaism, and Christianity following out of it. That is when “all religion now has become lay religion.” These movements originated both from the Revelation of Moses and Israel and the Revelation of Jesus the elect Son of God, the Messiah or Christ. The events and revelation of Redemption in the Old and New Testament are one Revelation, however decisively delivered first through Moses, and then through Jesus of Nazareth.³⁴

Revelation breaks through the framework of the creation that contains heathen life, leaving the framework shattered. Meanwhile the world cries out for Redemption to proceed, so that the fulfilled Realm of God can arrive. Two adjacent kingdoms cannot coexist: while the divine realm grows, the world decays. As goes the proverb, the horror worsens toward evening; as humanity turns toward the Evening, life pulls down deep fear in the face, and the life framework is gone (Psalm 91:5-6). So it is that the layman keeps getting the upper hand over the priest, for there is a terrible struggle between the past (Midday) and the future (Midnight) over the soul and life of the creation.³⁵

When the priest ruled over the laity, the layman was *right-believing*, orthodox. While the framework of the past is visible, he remains orthodox. In humanity's afternoon, individuals, the tribes, all epochs and cultures, and entire ethnic groups repeat the pattern of the small Pre-Noon, Midday, and Afternoon. Europe's own Pre-Noon has endured and is not over. (Remember, World War II was still in the future.) Midday is there in the hot sun. The priest still leads but has lost the office of leadership; and all the more the laity are seizing the forward advance. Europe's Afternoon is beginning. The great Midday of humanity, the original, did not know its own time as Midday—it is the recurrence of the great Midday of the world and must be lived recurrently. One might say that because they did not proceed past the Midday, they are stuck in the past. The Midday is paradoxical.³⁶

It was the Midday when Ehrenberg personally experienced what renewed him in his journeys. He wrote, “In [the Gospel of] John the lifeline of humanity has left the high point of Midday; the Evening in view, the wandering man descends into the Valley of Reality, always in the radiance of the sun, that throws its shadow backwards. And to uphold the past, and not to lose the Midday station as the exit station of the Way, the Christian soul throws himself into his plan of the Spirit, which was presented by John, and makes himself into a child of the Spirit, into a member of the Church.”³⁷

From now on the heretic is *in* the church, and the old right-believer who disappeared in the Midday merely assists the priest. Authority for the world changes there, as the priest gives it over to the layman. As the priest's dominance ends, the existing form of church communion ends. The priest who formerly ordered the world is now only the timeless protector of the eternal past. But to the layman came the

34. *Heimkehr*, 18-19, 28-29.

35. *Ibid.*, 22.

36. *Ibid.*, 22-24.

37. *Ibid.*, 54.

first Christian *Office of the Layman*. The layman separates from the priest, not to become a priest himself, but actually to become a layman. Truly a layman will only be a heretic. The right-believer or orthodox is already the servant of the Church and of the altar boys, and if he really wants to be this and no more, then even now he is justified, because then he is not appearing with claims or ambitions that he is the only Christian whom all others must follow. "After Midday, the light of Midday breaks into all of the wide open spaces; it has to, so that the fully gathered cosmic light will flow through, that the man "from all expanses" himself will be lifted up in the full light of Midday. And the Man from All Expanses – that is the heretic." The true laity who are the body of Christ by extension are the laity of the heretic. And the heretic takes on the authority over life. In the afternoon of our life, only he can serve life itself in a Christian manner. If not all people should be servants of God, then everyone that does not serve must be a heretic. But should not all be priests? Certainly not, because the priest alone would bring the earth to a standstill (the priest still preserves the past while the layman leads to the future), and the End-time could not come. Only the layman is able to fight for the End – so far as this is allowed at all to man; as far as it is allowed, that far it is also required.³⁸

The influence of the heretic is comprehensive in *The Return*. The heretic is defined by association with others and by his role in the Church. The laity as heretics struggle alongside and with each other late in the End-day, while life is more and more in the hands of the heretic and is Christianized through them. The heretic is the true Christian among the laity, and as much a part as their counterparts, the priests and orthodox. Jesus Christ created the heretic by seating John next to himself, so the line of heretics begins with John; there are always heretics and orthodox, and because Peter was a heretic along with John, the Church he led also is heretical. The way station of the world Midday led to the name *Ketzerchristentum* ("heretical Christianity"). John the beloved disciple is the everlasting archetype of the true heretic, who knows through love. The true heretic is a heretic like John because the love of Jesus dwells in him. Presently, though not yet, when the return of Christ is freshly received in the Christian soul, then the one who remained in the love of Jesus can remain, being near to Peter and the Church.³⁹

Presently the hour of the *Return of the Heretic* has struck in the new epoch of heretical Christianity. The heretic who stands in the love of Jesus at the end of the day is closer than the Christian of the Church. It is the heretic's official duty to live and to wait for the end. He does not enter the Church until the new sense of ecclesial unity in Christ does away with the dividing wall between Church and heretic. Afterward he continues his office as a churchman from inside the Church. For the sake of the kingdom, the heretic enters the Church just as anyone does. In the meantime, Church and heretic have the same opponents that spur the Church to unity as well as to the adoption of the heretic. There is the predawn gray of the Second Christian Life-day, and in it the mind of the heretic fashions the act of adoption in Christ among the individual visible churches. In the unity of the churches, and Christ's control of the changes of the times, the judgment of the heretic in each

38. Ibid., 24.

39. Ibid., 24-26, 47, 53.

church turns toward the advance of love, even the Christian love of the enemy. The heretic of the other church is the enemy of your faith, but still following Christ, you turn your whole hearts to love. So the heretics, exchangeable as the heretics of the other churches, allow the call of leadership in love to resound against the domination of belief.⁴⁰

But formerly when men have again been distanced so far from our European midday, so far that this height is hardly noticed, then, too, priest and layman are themselves no longer as sharply opposed as orthodox and heretic. We do not know when the world will end; we do not know when Christ will return for us, and when the last judgment of Creation will take place. We do not speak about what we do not know. Let our will be humble. We speak only about the threshold of the Midday height of our European humanity. It is what we experience and see for ourselves. And for this time, short or long, we speak about the heretic as the true Christian among the laity. The priest and the layman are perpetual parts of Christianity, but the orthodox and the heretic are as well! For Jesus Christ himself created the heretic, after he seated him nearest to himself, when Peter recklessly called out, "Lord, what about him?" And Jesus responds, "So if I will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" Right-believer and heretic are perpetual expressions and do not presuppose already specified dogmatic obligations; the church already existed before it was a completed institution. The church begins with Peter, and the heretic with John who himself did not need to obey Peter. But they have kept to the course until now and will keep to it in the future life participation of Christianity; that is why now we can speak about them as eternal. It became so only recently, and one day it might actually be no more.⁴¹

Baptizing the heathen. Is there a difference between receiving heathen persons into the church and receiving heretics? Being an adherent of "another group" or a dissenter from one's own group" suggests the church would have to deal with either of them in the same way. From the church catholic through Roman Catholicism, baptism has been provided to converts as well as to infants, and in instances of heresy or apostasy, remedies such as penance and absolution, perhaps even rebaptism; analogous processes applied in Protestantism. This could well be the main point of it all for Ehrenberg, who had been identified as a baptized Christian when he, a cultural Jew, came to the German Protestant Church and received baptism in 1909. Even before his conversion he had plunged so deeply into biblical and theological studies that his early lectures as a university philosopher brimmed with theological questions along with the cultural and literary observations he always made. In his autobiography, he reflected on this pattern of thinking and engagement that he continued with his students in the period 1919 to 1921. By then he had become more active as a Christian, which he had not done since his baptism. For him, at last, "the discovery of truth lies only with the congregation of God, for all true thought is a communal act of the faithful." His own and others' commitment to the spiritual tools of speech thinking meant there was a source of "the authority of belief" in a community of belief "through the revealed Word of God and the guidance of the

40. John 21:20-22; *Heimkehr*, 84, 87-89.

41. *Heimkehr*, 25-26.

Holy Spirit.” It was something he wanted to share with his students, so he embedded that committed faith stance in a university tutorial course on “Experience, Teaching, and Wisdom.” Evidently his dominant intention was to incite vivid changes in the lives of the professor and the students.⁴²

I have tried to draw adequate attention to Ehrenberg’s confidence that, by experiencing dialogical thought, his students could change their minds, being persuaded toward a new viewpoint. He offered the story of a student, “a young seeker of truth,” who remarked to him about the confusion he experienced in his various classes as he was exposed to the opinions and worldviews of other professors. His remark implied that Professor Ehrenberg’s lectures and dialogical methods offered an exceptional response to the confusion he was experiencing elsewhere. What the other professors did not convey in their methods and statements was compensated for in Ehrenberg’s template for the class, one grounded in “philosophizing, thinking, and conversing in dialogues.” It is in that spirit that Ehrenberg included his chapter-letter addressed to Karl Barth, whom he knew well, and with whom he mostly agreed theologically, so he said. Largely he wrote to Barth with confidence that they were true collaborators in seeking the goal of bringing together “thought and faith,” just as he conveyed the synthesis in his lectures and discussions with students, and always hoped to convey in his preaching.⁴³

I want to be clear that Ehrenberg expressly experienced and lived out what for others was heretical and surprising in ways they might not even recognize. Johannine Christianity allowed and showed a new attitude toward life priorities and motivations, toward one’s way of relating to other people. More than that, it expressed incalculable possibilities that resonate with the teachings and model of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴⁴ The new church of Jerusalem and the apostles was heretical in relation to the Old Covenant and Judaism. In due time the Reformation Church in the Holy Roman Empire would be heretical too. Even now the Johannine trend has no visible end.⁴⁵

42. *Autobiography*, 134-35; 113.

43. *Ibid.*, 134-6. In the same narrative, Ehrenberg emphasized his and Barth’s common role as “reactionaries” against nihilism and, as he frequently mentioned, the new Gnosticism generally present in the age, but specifically so in the recent rise and fall of the third German “empire”. Nihilism, Gnosticism, and a socio-political anthropology gotten out of hand were among the threats the church must be open about in its discussions.

44. Jerry L. Summers, “Intimations of the New Copernicans in the Johannine Christianity of the New Thinkers,” SWCRS/Association for the Scientific Study of Religion, Irving, Texas, 2018, ASSR Proceedings. <https://www.assronline.org/archives> .

45. Various reform movements in Roman Catholicism typically were suspected of heresy until they got approval from the Holy See: for example, the Valdesian movement (Peter Waldo and Waldensians) and the Society of Jesus, both of Iberian origin, avoided the Spanish Inquisition during the Catholic Reformation period, and the latter order was fully acknowledged by Pope Paul III in 1540. The upstart Ursulines seized the moment and got past regional authorities long enough to gain papal approval in 1544. The question of authority remained vibrant, though permeable. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 255-62.

Jesus the Christ – Messiah and Chosen Son

“The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from where it comes and where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”⁴⁶

Across three main stations of life, humanity encounters Creation, Revelation, and Redemption; the first and last correspond to birth and death, and the second, “the high point of life,” winds out over all of the life span. Human experiences come in between the beginning and endpoints, and “the revelation takes up in our consciousness” as mediated knowledge, coming through faith, and given so that we may know fully. The Word of God, from God, is present in his creation and shall be until the end of the world.⁴⁷

Jesus brought no new teaching and said so. He himself fulfilled all teaching to complete the revelation. God chooses one who extends the life journey of humanity. God elects one as Son, who speaks the Word to the people. Jesus, the elect, himself the revelation, proclaims what flows from himself – in him is the voice of God. The Lord chose the Son to be his representative: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have delight.” Never did God give as much as at this time; he directed commands to Moses and the prophets, but Jesus presented his own love. He gave revelation, here redemption, and thus here began the New Covenant. The child of God in Jesus one day would be able to obtain the whole redemption in the return of Christ. Jesus is Christ, the mediator and executor of redemption. Jesus has been empowered by the love of God, that to him was given the full possession of the revelation and to him as a true son was bequeathed the father’s exclusive inheritance. Jesus is the first heir, and thus in him God gives to his followers a beginning and an expectancy of the inheritance. In that position, the believer now can enter into the experience and knowledge of heirship. The believer who can only believe what he sees presently acquires in Jesus the capability to believe without seeing, and this belief is what makes him holy.⁴⁸

Ehrenberg stresses many further points in the section. As to Jesus being the “Chosen Son of God,” the Old Covenant is secure, for “through Jesus it does not lose its place as the original proclamation of the revelation.” “There is no heresy that Christianity has fought so successfully and ruthlessly as the attempt of Gnosticism to detach the Old Testament from the New Covenant. Otherwise Christianity would become a heathen redemptive religion, without the revelation that the Son should fulfill, as if God had not chosen a Son.”⁴⁹

He also warns that the various roles Jesus completed singly or together do not adequately identify him. Jesus’s life alone was the demonstration of God toward humankind, so beloved of God, in a love without charge, without the command to preach and to reveal (as had been the case with Moses and the prophets)—the only

46. Ehrenberg’s epigraph to the section, John 3:8.

47. *Heimkehr*, 27.

48. *Ibid.*, 29-30. Re *holos*, or whole, and thus distinct.

49. *Ibid.*, 31.

thing God conferred on Jesus was his simple “pleasure”. That is all, but it really is everything.⁵⁰

The mystical-mythical trope of the world-day in the cosmic theme of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption continues. Jesus stands at the end of the Midday plane. Revelation is for the sake of the Creation; in the Old Covenant, it shone for the sake of God’s glory. But there is more, as the act of election at the river Jordan “contains the Revelation over the revelation, and therewith . . . that the Revelation be closed.” It is revealed that God reveals himself from love to his creatures for the sake of his creation, so that the creature is able to find the way home. The final revelation points to Redemption, that is, what was revealed but now is revealed in the possibility of experience. In Jesus Christ the perpetual experience of God as redeemer has come to us, the children of God. We come to God the redeemer only by Christ: “To come to the Father” means “to return home to the Father,” to be redeemed; even now no Jew has had a foretaste of Redemption outside of him, the last Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. The Jew knows God and the Revelation, and therefore he believes in the Redemption, but there he dismisses Christianity, as “only” a belief. He presupposes that he believes more strongly than the Christian, who only through having believed that from the Christians, believing already the Messiah has appeared. He stands actually in the faith; not the least with the Christians, there is no doubt, but in our portion with God that we receive through Christ is not only belief. Instead we receive a possession through Jesus, a possession that lies beyond faith, the possession of redemption. Ehrenberg offers more comparisons between the experiences of Christians and Jews in respect to Jesus Christ.⁵¹

Jesus, the first fact of redemption, is the New Covenant and, as he discovered at the Jordan River, Messiah: Jesus’s consciousness as messiah is the boundary between the rabbi Jesus’s own Jewish faith and community and his actual reality, as “between” the last Jew and the first Christian, being both. Simon bar Jonah revealed this insight to Jesus, confessing him as Messiah. Jesus’s Passion made his messiahship a public matter. Ehrenberg would exclaim the deep paradox of Jesus’s actual life, his being: is it fulfillment, or does it become so? Is he Son of God, or does he become so? Because he becomes—becomes the Son of God, “he is already and always that, fulfillment and Son!”⁵²

What God began with Moses and completed with Jesus is the revelation of the “I AM”. And so God is present to human consciousness and awareness through Jesus. Jesus the elect is higher than the prophets, a representative or deputy of God. This is not a typical term and phrase for Christians; perhaps Jesus is thus a model for believers, but this does not sound like a high Christology. Still, Ehrenberg writes Jesus and not Christ; the term *Stellvertreter* has a higher meaning though, suggesting one who “stands in the place of.” Jesus, like the prophets, indeed spoke what God gave him to speak. Perhaps Jesus was acting even more directly. But he also says Jesus is the “vessel of God,” also “finisher” and “speaker” of God; more than an heir, but the bearer of the New Covenant; also “one higher,” called of God,

50. Ibid., 30-31.

51. Ibid., 31-32.

52. Ibid., 29-30.

and “his last prophet.” Ehrenberg writes, “God’s name and thus his life for mankind! And God speaks through his elect to his elect, through the mouth of his prophet to the ears of his people. . . . in him only is God, and the elect live in God.”⁵³

Günter Brakelmann wrote, “The most basic expression that can be made, is made; Jesus is a Jew and only to be understood from his Jewishness. He has been chosen as a Jew, and as the Chosen One he remains as Jew.” In no way is the Old Covenant to be considered closed or superseded or under God’s judgment. “Jesus is the *Chosen Son of God*. Ehrenberg’s faith in this wonder of divine love is conveyed unambiguously, and Jesus the Redeemer draws near, as the Christ for the existence of the Old Covenant, going forward for the existence of Judaism.” The Old Testament did not lose its place as the original proclamation of revelation because of Jesus. Jesus was not merely a teacher: if it were not so, that is all he could be except perhaps as the last fulfillment of the prophets, and then Christianity would only be a “purified Judaism.” Being only a teacher would not have set the Pharisees so aggressively against him. If Jesus were no more than a prophet, why is there a New Covenant?⁵⁴

With mention of the Jews comes the reminder that “the synagogue remains close to the Church to the end of the day.” The Judaism of the elect people Israel, a genuine nation (*Volk*), “suggests the eternal bridge between nature and grace, Creation and realm, world and God. Without Judaism, without the Old Covenant, and indeed the Hebrews being called out as a distinctive people, the servant of God must come to the attention of the world and, consequently, always be known to us as one of the dualistic teachings that are under the names of Gnosticism or of Manichaeism. The world’s hope of salvation rests on that provision through election of a visible, bodily member of humanity. That Jesus was a Jew who had a mother, a heavenly father, and a family is important.”⁵⁵

The matter of gnosis in modernity was no dead letter, but already present in western society, as would be revealed most shockingly in National Socialism and the Nazification of the German Protestant Church. From the late 1920s through the 1930s Ehrenberg’s affirmation of the Jews and Jewish Christians was a major effort. His misfortune, wrote Brakelmann, was to be a “Christian out of Israel” who theologically affirmed the revelation-historical coherence of the Old and New Testaments, and the identity of the Creator and Redeemer. His clear understanding of the revelation theology and his own Christological approach placed “the Jewish Question” in the forefront for him and for the Church. The vehemence of responses from the Church and the Third Reich to his and others’ confessional resistance showed the degrees and range of German apostasy. By the time he found himself involved with the Gestapo, they were long since all too aware of his orthodoxy and his defense of the Jewish roots of his Christianity.⁵⁶

As for Ehrenberg, “The redemption for the Christian is the return to the Father” through the Son, the bridge and the “fact of redemption.” The elect Son personally

53. Ibid., 27-28.

54. Ibid., 30-31; *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:111.

55. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:125-126.

56. Ibid.

conveys the power of the revelation, and even beforehand the Old Covenant. Jesus as a Jew is awakened to God's choice of him as the Son, as the Messiah; and so we have to call upon his consciousness of his messianic role. What he kept secret from people empowered his words and actions, and only a few began to understand it, especially Peter, who blurted out what was revealed to him, "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God!" Jesus's recognition after that of Peter as "the Rock" cements the truth of their mutual faith.⁵⁷

In *Heimkehr's* scheme of the day, Jesus appeared at the end of the Midday plateau, just before the descent toward the evening of life, and in the direction of the time when God will "gather the strands of his revelation in a single stream," making his glory to shine on one of his creatures. Is Ehrenberg referring to Jesus Christ, or to Jesus not-yet-Christ? I ask in connection to the narratives about Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit and his conception without sexual encounter with a man. It becomes clearer that the unique creation is the Spirit-conceived Jesus born to a human mother; not the first human being to be born, but the first to be born under the specific circumstance. *The Jesus as not-yet-Christ has not become the Christ, not yet.* Doubletalk? Perhaps as emphasis, it is, but I see at this point that Ehrenberg maintains the growth of Jesus's revelatory identity across different stations of his life and ministry; the Gospel writers either compress that timeline or rearrange it to suit their own perspectives. But the Gospels are distinctively different from other books that are bounded by the covers to a beginning and an end. E. Rosenstock-Huessy wrote of the Gospels that "They progress through time, and, at the end, *they barely begin*. At the end of all four Gospels, John says that the whole cosmos was not big enough to contain all the books which it would be possible to produce on Christianity." I would contend that in a similar way, Ehrenberg's great confession in *The Return* does not equal a completion, rather it marks a new beginning with indefinable bounds.⁵⁸

In a never specified allusion to the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), one's return to the Father involves a homecoming in order to find redemption, which is the fruit of the final revelation. What once was promised is now revealed in and through Jesus Christ so that the children of God could experience God as their redeemer. Ehrenberg struggled long-term, as do others, with the matter of Jewish unbelief in Jesus as Messiah.⁵⁹ "The presence of God that satisfied Moses and settled the heart of Augustine is Jesus, the 'first fact of redemption,' . . . a deed of God, but not as of one part of God." The following statement serves to clarify: "But the revelation and the election to trusteeship go in advance, preceding the Old Covenant. Jesus was born in it, he never abandoned it. We cannot disregard this

57. Ibid., 32-33; *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:111.

58. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Fruit of Lips or Why Four Gospels*, ed. Marion Davis Battles (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 1978), 80.

59. For example, Hans P. Ehrenberg, "The Rediscovery of the Jew in Christianity (with Special Reference to Pascal)," *International Review of Mission* 33:4 (1944): 400-406; *In der Schule Pascals* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1954), 54-78.

without offending Jesus' own faith. Jesus himself believed in the Old Covenant, but he "is" the New Covenant!"⁶⁰

The priestly and the prophetic offices relate directly to Christology, that is, what can be said about Jesus as the Christ. Ehrenberg frames the matter with "the resumé of humanity" that runs between Creation, Revelation, and Redemption, with Revelation as the pinnacle at midlife. Creation and Redemption serve as bookends for the middle of life; the beginning and the end, they explain the meaning of the way of humanity. "The Revelation is the lightning-bolt of God that strikes in his Creation; therefore it has boundaries in time and space. God elects his bearers of the Revelation, nation, and individual man! The Revelation does not create, it elects! Elects from what it has already to date created. God elects time and place for his earthly appearing and his speaking to people. The God who reveals himself hides himself in the Word that he sends to people. The Revelation is a gift of God that does not fail, and thus the creation of knowledge by God is always newly given."⁶¹ The God who reveals, encases himself in The Word whom he gives to humankind.

God elects his servants from among humanity: "I did not choose you (*Ihr*, singular), rather I have elected you (*Euch*, plural) (John 15:16). And so the Word becomes flesh by God's election in Jesus and his disciples, suggesting a replication process made possible in rebirth. The Revelation is the Word of God that never comes to an end and therefore always newly sends the knowledge of God to his creatures. "The Word of God comes out of the Creator, enters through his Creation, and lives from then on among his creatures until the end of the world." Revelation is an event in the creation and exists as history. Revelation is history and makes history, thus it rightly belongs to world history and appears in space and time. God chooses specific persons in the revelations, starting with Moses and ending with Jesus; the prophets are his mouthpieces, his instruments. Jesus by comparison is the deputy or representative of God and fulfiller of the Covenant.⁶²

Günter Brakelmann mused that Ehrenberg left no role for the historical-critical exegetical tools of modern scholarship; neither was he interested in theological-systematic dogmatics or confessional traditions. For him, Jesus Christ was best or only known through the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel. Meanwhile the church has its reliable confessions. Ehrenberg enfolds Jesus as the Christ into a panoramic history of Revelation and salvation that includes both Testaments, and the crucial knowledge is directly accessible in the biblical texts.⁶³

It is important yet again to emphasize with Ehrenberg that Jesus did not offer new teachings; certainly his presentation and applications were fresh, though. Emphatically, his person rather than his teaching is crucial. The Father's choice of him as Son is crucial, and his applied mission commenced with his Father's election of him as the Son: "At the Jordan the birth of the divine sonship from the Spirit of God fulfilled itself; birth from the Spirit is birth by powerful election, not by power of

60. *Heimkehr*, 31-32.

61. *Ibid.*, 27.

62. *Ibid.*, 27-28. Others have noted to me that Ehrenberg begins not with Noah, or Abraham, or Genesis 1-11, but with Moses and the Israel of biblical history to fit his narrative that ends with Jesus.

63. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:102-3.

primordial creation. At the Jordan therefore is the birth of the divine sonship. There the fact of Jesus of Nazareth is fashioned by God, through the elective act of his love.” The sonship was achieved at that point. For Ehrenberg, the confirmation as Christ comes later.⁶⁴

Ehrenberg describes a peculiar adoption, at least it seems so, or is it that most Christians have not examined the teachings about the Christ enough? Ehrenberg in effect asks his readers to clear up the identity of Jesus as “Son of God by election” and his designation as Messiah in relation to the resurrected Jesus who is Christ. Does the Church make such fine distinctions that the terms Christ and Jesus would not be interchangeable depending on the discussion? I think Ehrenberg wanted to express a chronological development in Jesus’s own recognition of his messianic call. Also, he would emphasize that the fulfillment of Jesus’s messianic mission was confirmed in his resurrection. That was as much for Ehrenberg as for anyone, yet he shared it with anyone who would read his book. His preaching probably drew on his experience of grappling with the theology of the incarnate one, Jesus Messiah, the Christ.

Wolfram Liebster judged that Ehrenberg’s surprising adoptionist Christology “is in strict relationship with the confession of the unity and indivisibility of God and is thus theocentrically oriented.” The middle space of Revelation, God’s lightning bolt, or thunderclap, “is Israel in the figure of Moses and Christianity in the figure of Jesus Christ.” Jesus, in the event at the Jordan River, and Peter who confesses Jesus as Messiah, while distinct, are connected, both of them in the one Revelation of the God who chooses and has chosen them. For Liebster, the validity of the First (Old) Covenant is “an irrevocable dimension of relationship” (*eine unaufhebbare Größe*), else Christianity could only be a pagan redemptive religion, specifically, Gnosticism. In such an adoptionist statement, Ehrenberg was not denying a “Logos theology” from the church fathers; he was emphasizing Jesus Messiah as a deed, an act, of God—not “created” or divided off from God, but fully consistent and in full standing with God in the Spirit.⁶⁵

Günter Brakelmann characterized the last twenty pages of *The Return* as an “eschatological hymn” that placed the central positions of Ehrenberg’s theology on display. Most important among them was the Parousia or “coming again” of Christ. “God with us” again, is affirmed, with a new call to humanity to return home through the Son, to the open arms of the Father who takes home the whole creation through his Son. “The Parousia is the final work of God’s love for his creation, for man and creature.” Anyone who presently believes, lives already in the “time between” the Jordan River baptism and the Parousia. Whoever hears the call of the Coming One as one of the brotherhood of reconciliation and redemption is already a different person: “He is already in love in the world, that in the event of the Parousia will be complete. . . . he already has in himself the sign of the new world. The old oppositions and hostilities are reconciled, and with them the distinctions among

64. Ibid., 1:108-09; *Heimkehr*, 28.

65. Wolfram Liebster, “Der Beitrag Hans Ehrenbergs zur gegenwärtigen Israeltheologie,” in Manfred Keller & Jens Murken, *Das Erbe des Theologen Hans Ehrenberg: Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin & Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 167-70; the “irrevocable relationship,” p. 170.

human beings become instead a “polyphonic harmony”. In God’s new world true reconciliation can begin.⁶⁶

Ehrenberg explains what he means by reconciliation in two parts: in the first, the relationship of man and woman, the sexes; in the second, the relationship of living and thinking, knowing and believing. For man and woman the “accord of love” that begins with long lasting “brother-and-sisterhood.” Mary and Christ belong together, for example, to creation and revelation in the gospel, an example of the feminine and the masculine finding loving fulfillment in that interrelationship. Extended into marriage, it illustrates the loving and responsible pattern of community in the world during the Christian realm, the time between or Twilight Realm. The relationship of living and thinking actually is analogous to marriage but in the spiritual-intellectual realm; even thinking and living, knowing and believing come into the embrace of Christ in his future call: “For those who have heard and hearkened to the future call of Christ, the great final part of our evening wandering begins.” By this Ehrenberg advocates the faith that people can begin in “new work.” “Hope releases energies for the outbreak of the new in the old.”⁶⁷

Ehrenberg emphasized the call of Christ, “our future brother,” whose love is prominent in the Gospel of John. There, where the name of Peter stood for succession or discipleship and church, the name of John stood for love and reconciliation. Ultimately the world will be “Johannine”, so that reconciling love breaks into an unreconciled world. John leads in the end time, and “Patmos” stands for the brotherly call of Christ to the future, the promise of adoption to all humanity. At the end of days there will be only brothers and sisters, only fellowship. Ehrenberg fit his personal and political understanding and practice to his eschatology. He applied these understandings to his relationships with the Church and to his politics. His most intense political activism came at the time *The Return of the Heretic* was published. He sought and advocated a better world of peace and justice. What he wanted of unity and cooperation in politics, he also wanted for the churches, among the nations, and among the social classes. Brakelmann recognizes Ehrenberg’s broad and rich efforts in these and other areas of concern, but asserts that his understandings of Jesus the Christ and his eschatological world view were the foundations for all that he did. In this vein, he stated that “*The Return of the Heretic* remained for the coming decades the “land register” of his life.” He had staked out his convictions and his manner of demonstrating their truth in his life.⁶⁸

Una Sancta – The Communion of the Churches

Hans Ehrenberg’s primary thinking about “Una Sancta” probably came from a new movement in his time that was congenial to his continuing interest in ecumenism. There were dozens of Una Sancta discussion groups across postwar

66. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:127.

67. Ibid., 127-28; *Heimkehr*, 94-5. The “evening wandering” of humanity is the time between “the cry of Christ on the Cross and the Hallelujah of the Returning One” (120).

68. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:129-30.

Germany that brought Roman Catholic and Protestant lay people together for dialogue. He did not live to hear the announcement of Vatican II in January 1959, but perhaps he was aware of rumblings suggesting what might happen. His comments on *Una Sancta*, however, resemble developments to come out of the first Roman Catholic Church ecumenical council since 1868-1870. Leonard Swidler analyzed the “Copernican turn” of Catholicism in Vatican II. He made five points: (1) the “turn toward freedom” and Catholics’ “coming of age” to exercise “their freedom and responsibility”; (2) the turn from a static conception of reality to “the historical, dynamic view of reality and doctrine”; (3) the turn from such actions as heresy hunting and the censuring of theologians, especially Jesuits, to the *Aggiornamento* of John XXIII, an inner reform and updating of the Church; (4) a movement from the focus on salvation as being all about going to heaven after death to conceiving the Church as being in the world to promote liberation according to Christ’s teachings; (5) and the turn from an “anti-Christian” faith to a faith that embraced people of other faiths and emphasized dialogue as required for love and action.⁶⁹

That last point alone obviously agrees with Ehrenberg’s emphasis on dialogue and ecumenicity, and certainly with his theological work that emphasized the transformative mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the good news for all humanity. Swidler approved the continuing positive effects produced when Roman Catholics were taught to leave their tribalism, their Antisemitism, their hatred of other Christian churches, and their imperialistic conversionism; where instead they were taught to recognize every opportunity to bear witness “to the teaching and life of Jesus” by lifestyle and action.⁷⁰

If such changes were to be made even in part, the feeling of a common faith between the great church communions would be much better. These matters had everything to do with what the Reformers of the sixteenth century had attempted to achieve with Roman Catholicism before the Church retrenched in the Counter-Reformation. Swidler’s focus on Vatican II sharpens the meaning of Ehrenberg’s thinking about the Church and churches in the modern, even postmodern eras.

The “Church of the heretic” finds its focus in a particular point in redemption history, as Ehrenberg expresses it, at the point where the newly born Christian churches have entered into a new Life-day, the second day of life. No Christian church has died; all are resurrected. “For they all are enduring and cannot dispense with any of the others if they do not know that.”⁷¹

This transformation occurs in the night between the first and second days of Christianity, when the churches learn to be openly interdependent and to rely actively on each other. This is different, because “Christendom is now at this point more than ecclesiasticism.” Before this, at the end of the first Life-day when each church wanted to be the true church, they fell into disputes that prevented their recognizing each other in an emergent, common Christianity. Overnight the churches were branded, and in the anxiety of death they began to recognize

69. Leonard Swidler, “Vatican II—The Catholic Revolution from Damnation to Dialogue!” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 50:4 (Fall 2015), 512-523.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Heimkehr*, 86.

themselves in one another. By dawn on the second day, they saw in horror how they had been defeating each other the day before. "How could it be otherwise, than that Christianity was broken on the form of this world, although it once had become victorious through Christ? Christianity had become fragmented because there was no consistent single battle front against the enemy, and resources that might have been better directed to resisting the enemy were all burned up in futility. And as for the Christian of the other church, a great wonder occurred: the Christian again recognized himself in other believers! Where once as a rule believers quarreled among themselves, now they could experience unity in Christ. Christ has the victory over the very conflict that was conducted in his name. He revealed to Christians that they all rightfully bear his name; together they are his body on earth; the church becomes openly the instrument of the body of Christ!"⁷²

The Christian churches are not distinctive religions; their unity is not some mixture of religion, but a claim or demand for union. *Una Sancta*, one holy church, does not require a visible single church decided under its own authority; no external union of churches creates Christian unity. No new institution, but only a new attitude leads to a new Christian day, led by the grace of God. In the middle of it all, there is the heretic who is already within a new church of the heretic. Ehrenberg believed that the unity of Christianity supersedes church unity. "If the life of the Church is separated, then the form of this world is not yet passed, and the completed unity of Christ is yet to come in the last state of salvation at the day's end. "The triad of the churches arises not from human arbitrariness; the inmost hidden triunity of Christ himself speaks in it: . . . Christ, once Jesus, himself belongs to the perennial changing of the times, for he is the bridge that leads from the valley of the earth to the heavenly heights. This is the true triunity of Christian reality: the unity of the three churches of divided Christianity!"⁷³

The three churches are not newly visible. They are the Old Church become the Roman Church, the Byzantine or Eastern Orthodox divided from the Roman Church in 1054, and the Church of Wittenberg or Protestantism. Each of them suffers from imperfection, incompleteness in the experience of the Christian law of life, creation, and love, yet the call to union persists. Only the other two churches can help to complete any one of the three: "The eastern church has the flaw of childhood; the Catholic the flaw of manhood; the Protestant the flaw of aging. But as the ages of life are eternal, so also are the churches, in their virtues and strengths, their weaknesses and disadvantages. Surprisingly though, the three Christian churches are actually one!"⁷⁴

Brakelmann writes that the healing word of the *Una Sancta* for Ehrenberg is not a matter of overcoming the three great traditions of the churches; it is not about organizational unity, and not about some worldwide Great Church. It does, however, involve new ways of encounter between the churches, "that for their part they first enter from their specific theological and historical foundations into a new outbreak of self-understanding, that comes from a new encounter with Christ and experience

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., 96-7, 87.

74. Ibid., 97.

with Christ.” Given the spirit of Christ the brothers and sisters then can recognize who they are for each other.⁷⁵

For Ehrenberg a principle of ecclesiology was that “the Christian mystery has its home in the church, in which Christ is evermore reborn, lives, dies, and rises again.” The body of Christ is housed in the Church so that all of the history of the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrected Christ is perpetually made contemporary. This is a way of saying that the people as the body are always being renewed. Their way through time is the way from the Christ who has come to the Christ who will come again.⁷⁶

The Church of the Heretic. “The heretic of the past belongs in the new unity inside the invisible church. The *Una Sancta* lives in the individual churches on the whole, as the belief in the “return of the Savior” as a central statement again becomes a judgment and grace event. And Ehrenberg applies it thus, “The unity of the churches may be desired only in the spirit of the last hour; it is a final claim, otherwise it profanes the visible churches and along with them the redemptive efforts that go undying throughout the world from the Passion and death of the Messiah.” It is as if the churches needed a full reminder of their founding directives. “Truly the call applies to the churches: Wake up! If we would not play frivolous games with the grace of God, then we must get ourselves through to Christian community in love over all distinctions of the faith. How should Christianity be able to win over the heathen if they cannot win over themselves?” The point remains relevant, as it has through all the Christian past, that a sick or dying church has cut itself off from the vital presence and authority of God in Jesus Christ. “How should we now proceed where for the first time in the history of humanity, over the whole earth, truly all peoples are on the stage of life; how then can Christianity continue to exist if they cannot find themselves in themselves and be purified in the one love?” The churches could experience each other in fresh and redemptive ways, beyond their theological and historical divergences, and with new ways of understanding. Only then could the experience of Christ be increased for everyone, and the meaning of redemption be put into practice.⁷⁷

An example may apply: Leonard Swidler (1929-) is a champion of interreligious dialogue who writes about and teaches the importance of *dia-logos* over *Logos*, the “word/thought-between, which contains both deep-dialogue and critical-thinking. We can paraphrase the Fourth Gospel, *En arche en ho dia-logos*, “In the beginning was Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking.” *Dia-logos* “is at the heart of the cosmos (Greek for “ordered reality,” the opposite of chaos).” Consistent with this understanding, Swidler recently invited response to the imperative that “Deep-dialogue/critical-thinking needs to be expanded by “complementary-cooperation.” All of us need to foster these three virtues within ourselves, with one another, and with all the ‘culture-shaping’ institutions of society: not just religion, but also business, science, education, law, medicine, communications, art, government, diplomacy.” He added, “Now is the time to build institutions and to knit them together in complementary-

75. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:119.

76. *Heimkehr*, 60; *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:118.

77. *Heimkehr*, 88; *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:122]

cooperation, especially through the internet and electronic communications.” An appropriate response could produce “the cosmic dance of dialogue in the head, hands, and heart, integrated into the dialogue of (w)holeness, the original meaning of the word ‘holy’.”⁷⁸ He evokes the tone and spirit of Hans Ehrenberg and, as well, a non-dualistic and cosmic trinitarianism.

The Return confirmed how Ehrenberg had resolved his own antagonistic position with the Roman Catholic Church; Catholic and Reformation Christians need not be enemies. They complement each other like spirit and mind, man and woman, mother and father. For unity to happen, all spiritual and natural realities need to be completed. Within the perspective of end-time belief, for the sake of Christ, the three churches need to complement one another; the Protestant, the Catholic, and Orthodox churches are the “invisible triunity of Christ, invisible body of Christ.” The only manner of living with one another in another future before the complete inbreak of the kingdom of God is love. The heretic already had known for centuries what it is to live in love; if so, it is possible for everyone.⁷⁹

A few remarks to finish

*This is why you can't go home again: because the you that arrives is not the you that left, and the home you left is not the home to which you return.*⁸⁰

Ehrenberg might be surprised to know that our world now is in a post-Christian age, that is, we are past the time when Christianity in its great ecclesial forms could dominate minds and hearts and influence empires. He might or might not be surprised that we did not put enough store in his book to see that, from a western, imperialist mindset, the age of Christianity is over, but that Christianity has not changed in its essence if we abandon that old mindset. Our western societies have long since abandoned it, though our economic, diplomatic, and strategic holdovers from the decline and end of the old empires still hangs on. This observation was current in Ehrenberg's time though perhaps has been more thoroughly studied since then. Earlier I included the term *distemporaneity* that E. Rosenstock-Huessy had included in his thematic sociological studies of time, space, and society. I would like to suggest one area of discomfort in our experiences of time that has come to mind in this study of *The Return of the Heretic*.

78. Leonard Swidler, “Editorial: Deep-Dialogue/Critical Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44:3 (Summer 2009): 471-72.

79. *Judenchristliches Schicksal* 1:123. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy wrote, “And we shall always find that the future of Christianity is present here and now as long as two or three Christians believe in it, and answer. And they answer, these poor timeful [sic] creatures, by contracting time to a point of most fruitful faith and love, and in this contraction, the suddenness of the end of the world and the endlessness of a first beginning are coupled and bear witness to the timelessness of our origin and destiny.” *The Christian Future or the Mind Outrun*, intro. Harold Stahmer (New York: Harper & Row, 1966; reprint Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 91.

80 James K. A. Smith, *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2022), 58; ref. Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York: Scribner, 1934).

Politicians, managers, the media, and the publics of any western nation seem not to understand the distemporaneous experiences of people worldwide; that is, that western exclamations of progress or well-being are readily countered in the actual life experiences of others elsewhere (even in another part of town). A primary case in point is the plight of the Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli Defense Forces in late 2023 and early 2024, and, frankly, at the hands of the Hamas fighters who prompted the recent devastating and bloody exchanges. In another work by Ehrenberg, his *Job – the Existentialist* (1952) the Hittite Job could not help but remark at the terror and death that the Israeli War of Independence (1948) brought to the region. The parallels between now and then are stark, and all the more so because the West continues to reveal a tin ear to the lament of the Palestinians and others in the region. The terrific complexity of relations among the peoples remains daunting. Numerous other ongoing examples could apply. It has long been this way, but, still, hell is no more than a 24-hour chain of flights from our hometowns in North America; actually, hell can be closer, found all too easily not far from our own doors.

Analysts in the West have been challenged to find the best objective measures of human welfare, sometimes abandoning measurements and terms that were found degrading or narrow-minded (“First, Second, . . . Worlds,” for example, or “developing versus non-developed nations,” and so on). The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), for example, though useful, is more limited than the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita measure of all-round well-being. Most of us consider these terms familiar without considering them carefully, especially when we make judgments and decisions about the lives of others we will never meet, and do so using culturally strange or inappropriate methods and values. They also do not consider such matters as the scheme of past and present and future across the globe and the differences between chronological (measured) and *chairotic* (experienced or sacred) time: *Chronos* and *Kairos*, as experienced in the present.

My argument, and one I think Ehrenberg might approve, is that any difference from a general norm of human well-being includes a difference in the experience of time. In a chapter “The Hell of Political History,” Ehrenberg wrote, “The event (*Geschichte*) is unidimensional, the world of life is multidimensional.”⁸¹ *The Return of the Heretic* is not simply a compression of chronological time into the space of two “days”. It reconceives past, present, and future into the time frame of God, Creation, Revelation, and Redemption, which allows the explanation of faith (and unfaith) over the millennia. *The Return* is not a book of history but of remembered and interpreted experience. It is a pilgrim’s account of personal transformation from the “I” of one period of years to the “I” that is consciously and essentially related across time to the I-You relationship of God with his Creation – that includes every person who ever has drawn breath.

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81. Hans Ehrenberg, *Tragödie und Kreuz*, Band 2. *Die Tragödie unter dem Kreuz* (Würzburg: Patmos-Verlag, 1920), 41.

Tennessee, he has been married forty-eight years to Debra; they have two children and five grandchildren.

Dramas & Syncretism in the Korean and Chinese Afterlife: Reapers, Goblins, and the deities as heroes

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Abstract

Modern Korean and Chinese serial dramas draw global audiences, and one of the main draws is the exotic yet relatable elements of Korean and Chinese mythological and historical genres. From sageuks (a historical or period drama), to live action remakes of anime, to fantasy-and supernatural- themed dramas that incorporate the supernatural realm into modern settings, it is the exotic flavor of the unique historical, religious, and mythological settings of east Asia that set them apart. Chinese dramas draw on the cultural and historical diversity from their long history and blend them with a very modernistic twist on science fiction, technology, and storylines from e-games, anime, and manga. South Korea has found global appeal with their uniquely syncretized blend of ancient Korean history and folklore with more modern influxes of Western religion, mythology, and pop culture. South Korea's success stimulated a similar global marketing of Chinese dramas.

In K-Dramas, the supernatural realms and characters from these diverse sources interact, often with a humorous nod to the cultural conflict Koreans face as they blend ancient and modern systems. For the audiences of these dramas, this means a huge vocabulary of supernatural inspiration with complex and engaging characters based on these different sources. For examples, I'll show a few well-known dramas and how they have used the bureaucracy of the afterlife to elevate reapers, goblins, gumihos, and the old deities to personable and relatable characters interacting both to save national identity and the wayward humans caught up in their games.

Introduction

What are C-Dramas and K-Dramas?

Chinese Dramas (C-dramas) and Korean Dramas (K-Dramas) are television serial programs originating in China and the Republic of Korea (aka South Korea, hereafter written as Korea). In the 1990s, as a part of the Korean Wave (or *Hallyu*), the television and film industry started marketing their movies and serial programs for export to other Asian countries and eventually worldwide as a part of their goal of increasing South Korea's *soft power* (Jang 2012). The Hallyu was an intentional initiative started in South Korea in the 1990s to improve their prestige and recognition in the world through the export of popular culture through a variety of media platforms (Jang 2012, Kim 2007, Kim 2023, Oh 2018). After increasing success in both commercial profits and increased positive associations with Korea

and Koreans in other Asian markets, Korean dramas and music (K-Dramas and K-Pop) started to rise in popularity outside of Asia and currently have a great deal of commercial success and enthusiastic fans globally.

China was one of the first markets targeted in the Hallyu, and the popularity of Korean pop culture exports stimulated competition and development of Chinese dramas. (Jang 2012). Many of these earlier C-Dramas were remakes of Korean or Japanese dramas, mangas, or webtoons. *Manga* is a style of comic book or graphic novel originating in Japan, but the form is now found in Korean and Japan. They are very popular media in their own rights, so adapting them into dramas brings in even larger audiences who excitedly anticipate live action versions. Webtoons are illustrated stories or comic strips published online. Just as novels and plays are often made into movies or drama series in the West, Mangas and webtoons are often adapted into K-Dramas and C-Dramas. Both C-Dramas and K-Dramas have global audiences and are distributed on a variety of online streaming platforms around the world. To increase the cross-media hype, K-Dramas and C-Dramas also frequently cast idols from K-Pop or C-Pop, so they can bring in audiences from multiple fandoms. Conversely, idols from new or lesser-known groups will often appear in dramas to bring more people into their musical group's fandom. Advertising with fashion and cosmetic sponsorships ensure that no media platform is left out of the Hallyu or its Chinese cousin.

There are several similarities to C-Dramas and K-Dramas. Both use dramas to improve soft power by positive marketing of their "cultural heritage, history, and nationalism" (Jang 2012). One of the reasons China started producing their own dramas, music, and media versions of the Korean Hallyu were the success of the multimedia exports from Korea in improving Chinese perception of Korea and Koreans and improving Korean-Chinese relationships and economic exchange. Korean agencies recruited talented young Chinese-speaking (and Japanese-, Thai-, and English-speaking) girls and boys to improve their success in marketing and connecting to foreign audiences. They opened satellite companies in other Asian countries and recruited talent in addition to just targeting concerts, fan meetings, and "K-cons" overseas. (K-cons are fan conventions showcasing a variety of Korean media products in targeted overseas sites in China, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and throughout the Americas and Europe.) Idols from K-Pop, K-Dramas, and other media platforms are showcased, with a few famous headliners and newer actors and idols getting a chance to debut with global audiences. Though C-Pop has not been as successful with "C-cons", C-Drama idols have had a great deal of success in the last decade and also have global fan meets throughout Asia with a few incursions into Europe and the Americas. Many veterans from the Korean "idol schools" have set up agencies and groups in Beijing and Shanghai to grow Korean style idols in China.

The similarities in Chinese and Korean dramas are not surprising, then. Dramas are produced and designed to appeal to both domestic and international audiences, particularly those fascinated with Korean and Chinese idols and the

sense of exotic but particular places that Korean and Chinese physical and cultural geography provide (Oh 2018). Both are lush, gorgeously produced movies. The historical and fantasy dramas use elaborate sets and costuming. Even modern-day productions use designer clothes and copious product placement that create a fantasy world that markets modern China or Korea as a desirable and approachably exotic world. It works, and tourism to Korea stimulated specifically by Hallyu-based pop-culture exports increases annually. Ratings on media platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Viki show that consumption of K-Dramas and C-Dramas continue to increase as well. The runaway success is attributed not just to the expensive and quality of productions, though. Oh (2018) argues that it is that sense of a beautiful and exotic fantasy land that is also a real place with a real and deep sense of history and culture that the audience could visit is at the core of the attraction. This leads us to the core of the syncretism involved in one of the most popular genres of C-Dramas and K-Dramas—supernatural stories.

Supernatural Dramas

While genres like office romance, school drama, murder mysteries, and suspense thrillers are found in K-Dramas and C-Dramas, one of the most successful and interesting genres for someone interested in how religions interact are the supernatural dramas.

Supernatural themes abound, with an emphasis on ghosts, characters from the past, and supernatural interactions with the realm of the undead like reapers, deities, demons, or immortals. Lee (2015) argues that these supernatural elements allow the dramas and the audience to confront and analyze “the social injustices and repressed traumas that haunt contemporary South Korean society.” This is true for the domestic audiences in China and Korea, and you can definitely see an attempt to communicate the viewpoints and conflicts that linger in both cultures. Much in the way that *Star Trek* in the 1960s was able to showcase social problems of that time that were taboo to network censors by reframing those problems and characters in science fiction, Supernatural frameworks in K-Dramas and C-Dramas can pick at repressed conflict and the disjunctions caused by attempting to meld a sense of cultural pride and heritage with modern sensibilities. By using supernatural entities, there is a tacit understanding that the drama is a work of fantasy, excusing questions about the social order as an understandable plot device that nevertheless lets tacit concepts and understandings be explicitly discussed and argued. For example, in the K-Drama *Doom at Your Service*, Doom himself, *Myul Mang*- the Korean entity who brings God’s destruction to the world, is able to realize his feelings as an individual forced into the role of doom and his desire to destroy all of creation in its entirety and finally feel peace and rest. He arrives to grant the prayer of a human woman who has been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer for the destruction of the world that has treated her so cruelly. As they negotiate a contract, an ever-suffering God herself intervenes to teach both the beauty of a flawed world and life. The series is able to explore fatalism and the many injustices that people suffer and weigh those pains against the beauty of love. God is revealed to suffer eternally in

multiple incarnations, always ill, always suffering because she bears the pain of humanity and her creation. Even with the suffering of life and the grief of knowing your own mortality, the drama emphasizes that the ultimate love is giving yourself over to pain and even destruction if it gives a joyful life to the ones you love.

Both countries are heavily cultural Confucianist and Buddhist, with a deeply embedded sense of filial piety. Western audiences who are new to the Confucianist worldview often express frustration with this specific cultural difference. While the Abrahamic religions stress the importance of family and loyalty to God as a spiritual father-figure, the Eastern version of filial piety is immediately centered on one's parents and grandparents (Mead 1946). It is not an abstract, and the obedience and care owed directly to your parents is an ever-present burden. It is perfectly reasonable in this worldview for a person to have a legitimate karmic debt created by one's ancestors. It is also reasonable given the acceptance of reincarnation in a Buddhist worldview, that you have accumulated obligations from your previous incarnations. As one of many examples, in the 2023 K-Drama *Destined with You*, our female and male leads have finally reunited after multiple reincarnations. The male lead's ancestral line has lived with a curse for centuries taken on in penance for his failure to save the woman he loved. Only by exorcising the figurative demons of the past can both find happiness.

Which Heaven or Hell?

Religious Demography in Korea and China.

A (2022) U.S. Government report on the Korea Statistical Information Service's census data, 56% of the Korean population does not claim any religion. Of the 44% that claim a religious affiliation, 45% are Protestant (19.7% of the total population), 35 % are Buddhist (15.5% of the total population), 18% Roman Catholic (7.9% of the total population), and 2% are "other." (U.S. Dept. of State 2022, Evanson 2016). The "other" category includes Won Buddhism, Confucianism, Jeongsando, Cheongdogyo, Daesun, Jinrihoe, and Islam (U.S. Dept. of State 2022). In terms of religious beliefs and practices, Koreans interact with a variety of other religions (or lack of religion) in daily life, and grow up exposed to both Western Judeo-Christian belief systems as well as Eastern philosophies and religions. Korean culture has deeply embedded Confucianist, Buddhist, and indigenous animistic elements. For Kdramas, all of these supernatural beliefs, characters, and ideas of the afterlife are available for writers and recognizable symbols to the audience.

While China has some religious adherents, the government is firmly atheistic when it comes to endorsement of organized religion. Confucian beliefs and Buddhism are incorporated into secular culture as good citizenship and good family values. The government and therefore Chinese media are focused on promoting Chinese nationalism. As a result, the supernatural symbolic interaction in C-Dramas is more

associated with fantasy realms or the mythology of the distant past in a way that reinforces a sense of Chinese history and culture, not religious devotion.

The Underworld in K-Dramas and C-Dramas

The concept of debts owed preventing one from moving on to the afterlife (and eventually the next life) is a common theme in many popular K-Dramas. Plots usually involve supernatural agents of the Underworld interacting in the human world. When things go wrong, we see human agency trying to overcome an unfair fate. From the supernatural side, we see the supernatural characters trying to restore balance to the world—usually to help the world stay in harmony with the cosmos. For instance, the drama *Tomorrow* follows a special task force of grim reapers who are tasked with reducing human suicides. Suicide carries punishment in the afterlife, severing the red ties with loved ones and condemning the soul to penance in the Underworld without the chance to reunite with loved souls in the future or in Heaven. In this K-Drama you distinctly see the syncretism of the indigenous Han (Korean folk religion), Buddhist, and Confucianist Underworld with Western ideas of the Judeo-Christian Heaven and Hell. The workers in Jumadeung, or the Korean Underworld are the dead who have reason to linger before moving on to reincarnation. But Christians, atheists, and Buddhists are all Confucianist here, and explicit, nonchalant reference is made to the fact that the Heavens and Hells of the various religious exist in parallel—but this is Korea, and thus Jumadeung services the Korean afterlife. In one episode, the Korean grim reapers “rescue” Korean souls who are being taken by Japanese reapers from the ultimate violation—removal of even their souls from their homeland. Topics like suicide, bullying, comfort women, elder neglect, and the miseries of child loss can be examined as the grim reapers try to intervene with suicidal humans. Our male lead, an earnest young man who is accidentally made into a half spirit after trying to rescue someone attempting suicide, adds the human perspective and argument to the interactions between the denizens of the Underworld. He even interacts with God herself as she gives him the opportunities to redeem himself. It is important that though she loves humans and wants to give them every opportunity, she is still bound by the rules and bureaucracy of the Heavens—a very Confucianist framework.

It is important to note that the Gods are abstracted in Chinese dramas, with the focus on lesser agents or a mixed pantheon of local animistic nature spirits, demonic spirits, and officers of the Underworld like the *Devil Punisher*. Series like *Love Between Fairy and Devil* go straight to the time and realms outside of the human dimension to the ancient times of the old animistic gods before even Buddhism and Hinduism. C-Dramas, in particular, frame the supernatural world in deep cultural heritage before modern times, thus eliminating a need for current, modern God or theology. Given the national preference for atheism, supernatural characters are made to be explicitly fantasy without the confusion of modern religions.

In K-Dramas, a more profound syncretism is seen. God is usually a woman because all the way back to Taoist *Magu*, or protector of women, and animistic

Korean mythology, the Mago are the female creator gods. Even when more modern gods and entities like grim reapers are present, the Mago intervenes and is a force to be reckoned with, as seen in *Goblin: The Great and Lonely God*. We see the Mago (the old woman) challenge the grim reaper to abide by the rules, therefore saving the little girl. Later, we see her chiding God to follow the plan and the rules and to be more flexible in his punishment, as mercy and redemption are supposed to have a place in the world.

Ghosts, spirits that are for many plot-based reasons still anchored to the world and unable or unwilling to move onwards, are a common theme, with several dramas focusing on ghosts possessing the living to try and work out their problems. *Oh My Ghost!* was such a successful K-Drama that it has been remade in C-Drama and a Filipino versions. *Ghost Doctor*, *Bring It On*, *Ghost*, *Chicago Typewriter*, and *Hotel Del Luna* all feature ghosts as major characters interacting with modern people. *Hotel Del Luna* is an episodic series in which a boy is sold into service for the guesthouse of the dead—the Full Moon Hotel that spirits can visit to refresh themselves and leave off the regrets or pains of this life before crossing the bridge to Jumadeung and the afterlife. The series is able to address a variety of supernatural issues with death, including types and reasons for ghosts as well as the political intrigue of the Magos (the creator goddesses of Korean mythology, also the spirits of shamanism) (*Korean Shamanism*, n.d.). We also see in the female protagonist a person who committed such a crime against love that she suffers a thousand years of service as the manager of the Hotel del Luna in penance and waiting for the soul of her beloved to find peace. In the end, she must extinguish herself and end her life to cross the bridge to Jumadeung to finish her task. With that completion of the life cycle, she can be reincarnated to reunite, hopefully, with her new love. He waits on the side of the living in hope of finding her again, if not in this life, in another. This sort of ending, with main characters dying as is their fate—is difficult for the Western audience to accept at first. It is a very Buddhist approach to make us wait for reincarnation for souls to have their chance at happily ever after, but somehow we are attracted and fascinated. *Hotel Del Luna* and *Goblin*, two of the most internationally successful K-Dramas, both use this plotline, and the audiences keep coming back for more.

Conclusion

Kim and Omerbasic (2017) argue that these dramas represent post-secularism. The stories use a supernatural framework and the symbolism of religious systems that are familiar with their domestic audiences. They even incorporate a meta-interpretation of the interaction of modern Christian world views blending into formerly Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist societies. While the dramas present supernatural and fantastic realities, the dramas always contain characters who are skeptical “as a reflection of what postsecularism itself proposes: there is more to reality than a purely material world” (Sobhani 2019). We, the audience, recognize the tone of religious and supernatural symbolism even if we don’t know all of the particulars, and it tantalizes us in the way that good fantasy and folklore draws in all

humans who love a good story. The diversity and exotic nature of the supernatural elements we see in K-dramas and C-dramas mixed in with recognizable Western elements draws us in and engages our imaginations. We seek to domesticate the monsters and the scary things from the dark into heroes and even anti-heroes that we can identify and empathize with in a way that forms deep connections. In that way, we root for the *Goblin*, the reapers, and even *My Demon*.

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DRAMA CITATIONS:

Love between Fairy and Devil
Hotel Del Luna
Tomorrow

Matthew, Vicarious Suffering, and Isaiah 53:4

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The use of the Old Testament by New Testament authors continues to be a field ripe for exploration. Indeed, in recent decades the subject of intertextuality has exploded within the scholarly landscape. Yet, when analyzing how documents within the New Testament corpus have utilized Old Testament material, no document is more perplexing and controversy-generating than the Gospel of Matthew.

As George Soares Prabhu once noted, “No evangelist makes as much—and such explicit—use of the Old Testament as Matthew.”¹ Louis Venard lists 42 explicit quotations in Matthew (compared to 19 each in Mark and Luke, and 14 in John).² Norman Hillyer mentions 43 citations.³ Marty Jacques⁴ and Jean Miler⁵ each list 50 citations. These different counts have everything to do with how one defines a quotation. However, where scholars continue to be perplexed, or at least divided, is regarding how Matthew utilizes this material. This paper cannot address the full range of issues related to intertextuality in the first Gospel, but I do seek to address how Matthew appropriates Isaiah 53:4 in its narrative. Specifically, I want to address the assumption that Matthew utilizes this passage *primarily* (and that qualifier is key) to present Jesus as the vicarious-suffering Messiah. To better understand how and why Matthew employs this quotation, let us first look at the quote in its original context.

Isaiah 53:4 In Its Canonical Context

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 forms a single poetic unit following a celebration of Zion’s repentant spirit (here Zion is used as a stand-in term for all of Israel).⁶ The poem in

¹ George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, *Analecta Biblica* 63 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 18.

² Louis Vénard, “Citations de l’Ancien Testament Dans Le Nouveau Testament,” in *Dictionnaire Della Bible Supplément 2* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey, 1934), 24.

³ Norman Hillyer, “Matthew’s Use of the Old Testament,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 36, 1 (March 1964): 12.

⁴ Jacques Marty, “Citations de l’Ancien Testament Dans Le Nouveau Testament,” in *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de a Bible: Les Choses, Les Hommes, Les Faits, Les Doctrines*, ed. Alexandre Westphal, 3rd ed. (H Westphal, 1956), 213.

⁵ Jean Miler, *Les Citations D’Accomplissement Dans L’évangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu Se Rend Present En Toute Humanite*, *Analecta Biblica Dissertationes* 140 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1999), 360–67. Miler lists a total of 172 citations and allusions.

⁶ Regarding the literary unit: Harry M. Orlinsky is among the few modern scholars (within the Christian tradition) who have questioned the unity of this section. For his argument against seeing 52:13-15 and 53:1-12 as a single unit, see “The So-Called ‘Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Suffering

52:1-2 recognizes the Hebrews' humbled state (e.g. "shake yourself from the dust," "rise up," "captive Jerusalem," "the chains around your neck," etc.), followed by the poem in 52:7-12 which speaks of a coming salvation (52:7, 10), goodness (52:7), peace (52:7), joy (52:8, 9), comfort (52:9), and redemption (52:9). All of this is made possible because of the activity of the Servant described in the following poem (52:13-53:12).⁷ The text clarifies that the focus now shifts to Servant's activity through the use of the interjection *hinnah* ("behold").

There are substantial echoes of Levitical cultic material in this servant poem. The עֶבֶד is depicted as fulfilling four cultic roles: (1) He is the rejected animal, (2) the accepted sacrifice, (3) the scapegoat, and (4) the priestly intercessory. The rejected animal motif is prominent at the beginning of the chapter, as the servant is described as *mishchath* (disfigured, LXX: ἀδοξέω; 52:14),⁸ *bazah* (despised, LXX: ἄτιμος/ἀτιμάζω; 53:3),⁹ and *onah* (afflicted, LXX: κακώω, 53:4). He is said to know

Servant' in Second Isaiah," in *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 17–22. His arguments have remained unconvincing to most Isaiah scholars. For an argument on the unity of the section based on lexical repetition, see Paul R. Raabe, "The Effect of Repetition in the Suffering Servant Song," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Ra, 103, 1 (March 1984): 77–81.

⁷ Since it is outside our present purposes, I have set aside discussion of the identity of the servant. Some take this to refer to a historical foreign king—for example, John D. Watts interprets this entire section as referring to Darius, see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66, Word Biblical Commentary* 25 (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc, 1987), 229ff. Roger Norman Whybray takes it to the prophet himself, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah Chapter 53, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 4 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 25. For others, the Servant "is personified nation Israel," Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Second Isaiah* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1928), 135. Mettinger wryly stated, "we have to contend with an entire catalogue of historical individuals who have figured in the discussions of the servant...Isaiah, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, Moses, Jehoiachin, Cyrus, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Meshullam, Nehemiah, and Eleazar," Trygve N. D. Mettinger, "A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axion," in *Reports From a Scholar's Life: Select Papers on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Andrew Knapp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 296-297. Norman Gottwald wisely observes, "a strong odor of political conflict surrounds" descriptions of the Servant in chaps. 40-55, Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 500. The literature is far too voluminous to mention here, though see the bibliography provided by Watts, Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 227. Regardless of the original referent, the section relies on Pentateuchal cultic themes.

⁸ 1QIsa^a adds ' (מִשְׁחָתִי), causing some to suggest the reading, "I have anointed." For brief discussion and scholarship, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66, New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 373. For more extensive interaction with scholarship, see KyeSang Ha, "Cultic Allusions In The Suffering Servant Poem (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2009), 45-59.

⁹ Oswalt's contention that the term בָּזָה "lacks the strength of emotion" cannot be maintained. It can mean more than merely considering something or someone worthless or unworthy, as he wrongly maintains (see Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 383). The term does not require the presence of strong emotion, but neither does it preclude it. See Waltke for a similar point, Bruce K. Waltke, "בָּזָה," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 98–99. For a discussion of the term's range of meaning, including notions of 'contempt,' see M Görg, "בָּזָה," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. Botterweck, G. Johannes, Ringgren,

suffering/affliction) and bear sicknesses within himself. All these terms compare “the Servant to an animal unfit for use in certain ritual activities.”¹⁰

The accepted sacrifice imagery is by far the most pronounced of the four motifs.¹¹ Though the language of rejection has the most lexical terms, all of these ultimately point towards the Servant’s efficacy as a sacrifice. Though oppressed, despised, rejected, dishonored, stricken, and afflicted (etc.), the sacrificed Servant is nevertheless accepted (indicated by the terms pierced, slaughtered, sheep, and other sacrificial imagery) and brings about the desired result—שלום.

The scapegoat motif is more subtle. While the term עֲזָאזֵל is not used, Blenkinsopp points out the lexical link between Leviticus 16 and Isaiah 53 through the term גָּזַר. Speaking of the scapegoat rite in Lev. 16, he writes, “As the sins of the people are carried off into the wilderness, literally “a cut-off land,” so the Servant is “cut off from the land of the living” (Isa 53:8b).¹² Furthermore, de Andrado draws our attention to the fact that both Lev 16:22 and Isaiah 53:11-12 speak of the ‘bearing’ of sin.¹³

Helmer, and Fabry, Heinz-Josef, trans. Willis, John T., Stott, Douglas W., and Green, David E., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 60–65.

¹⁰ Jeremy Schipper, “Interpreting the Lamb Imagery in Isaiah 53,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, 2 (July 2013): 324. Paba Nidhani de Andrado disagrees with this view, stating, “the Servant is not portrayed as ritually unfit but as ideal because he is “righteous” (53:11) and blameless in doing no violence nor deceit (53:9),” Paba Nidhani de Andrado, “Reconciliation in the Templeless Age: The Servant as Sanctuary in Isa 53,” *Old Testament Essays* 34, 3 (2021): 926. But this view entirely ignores the fact that the passage is a work of literature which artfully interweaves tension and contradiction throughout this section. The reader is left with two statements of truth which remain incongruous until a resolution is found: (1) the Servant is unfit because he has taken on the wretchedness of sinners, and (2) the Servant is blameless and stands apart from sinners to make intercession for them.

¹¹ Schipper commits the same error as de Andrado, though on the opposite side of the coin. He insists the Servant is described “not as an ideal sacrificial animal but as an animal physically unfit for sacrifice,” Schipper, “Interpreting the Lamb Imagery in Isaiah 53,” 325. This view also ignores the literary tension. The Servant is both exalted (52:13) and held in low esteem (53:3)—a damaged and profane offering (though for reasons outside of himself), and yet an offering which is nevertheless accepted and effectual because of his inherent purity.

¹² Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Sacrificial Life and Death of the Servant (Isaiah 52:13–53:12),” *Vetus Testamentum* 66, 1 (January 2016): 8.

¹³ de Andrado, “Reconciliation in the Templeless Age: The Servant as Sanctuary in Isa 53,” 924. Also see Oswalt on this point, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 377. Other scholars are unconvinced. For example, Hermann Spieckermann rejects the connection because the exact phrase עֲזָאזֵל does not occur in Isaiah 53. Oddly, Spieckermann concedes (but then dismisses) that “verse 11 contains a synonymous expression סָבַל עֹנֵן, but not עֲזָאזֵל.” See Hermann Spieckermann, “The Conception and Prehistory of the Idea of Vicarious Suffering in the Old Testament,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 3. H. M. Orlinsky considers the idea of a vicariously suffering servant to be “a theological and scholarly fiction,” Orlinsky, “The So-Called ‘Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Suffering Servant’ in Second Isaiah.” Whybray identifies the servant as the prophet in exile with his people, thus understanding “this is shared not vicarious suffering,” Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah*

Finally, there is a priestly echo. The term *nazah* (52:15) is potent with cultic associations, assuming the MT rendering is correct.¹⁴ If this echo is indeed intentional, it recalls the priestly-sacrificial imagery described in Leviticus. This reading is reinforced when we consider that ritual imagery appears both before and after 52:15. Cultic terminology already occurred at the close of the previous section (52:11), with references to ceremonially unclean objects and the command to be ceremonially pure.¹⁵ We also see additional cultic imagery as we move forward into the Servant poem. Terms such as sheep (Isa 53:7) occur elsewhere in Isaiah in cultic contexts (43:23; 66:3), and along with terms like offering (Isa 53:10) provide direct links back to Levitical cultic imagery, specifically concerning the idea of reparation.¹⁶ The need for this reparation is underscored by three different terms for wrongdoing (חט, עון, and פשע). Taken together, the Servant not only serves as a sacrifice to atone for Israel but also as the priest who performs the sacrifice on Israel's behalf. Jacob Milgrom notes that the priest "acts as the offerer's (silent) intermediary before God" and "is the cultic counterpart of the prophet." He adds, "Both represent the Israelites before God. Both intercede on their behalf, one through ritual, the other through prayer."¹⁷

These echoes of Levitical material underscore the important themes of compassion and restorative justice that run throughout the literary unit. Despite the Servant being rejected and despised by mankind (LXX: τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), he nevertheless took our sufferings (53:4). Brevard Childs notes the term *akan* ("surely") indicates the striking contrast of the Servant's attitude in comparison to the rejection he has received.¹⁸ The Servant "carries" the pain and "bears" the suffering

Chapter 53, 59. John Collins acknowledges verbal similarities to Lev 16 (and, contra Orlinsky, accepts substitutionary atonement as an Old Testament concept), though he is unconvinced an allusion to the scapegoat is intended in Isa 53. Rather, Collins suggests that "suffering" is a symbolic action. See John J. Collins, "The Suffering Servant: Scapegoat or Example," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 4 (1980): 59–67. Oswalt defends the substitutionary view, noting that the theme of the servant bearing sin is so pervasive in the text that "Even those like Whybry and Orlinsky who wish to deny any substitutionary element in the Servant's suffering admit that the plain sense is that the Servant suffers undeservedly because of human sin," Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 377.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the complexities, interpretation, and proposed reconstructions of this term, see Ha, "Cultic Allusions In The Suffering Servant Poem (Isaiah 52:13–53:12)," 59–86.

¹⁵ John F. Sawyer, *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 93.

¹⁶ In Leviticus alone, the term occurs in Lev 5:6, 7, 15 (2x), 16, 18, 19, 25 (2x); 6:10; 7:1, 2, 5, 7, 37; 14:12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 24, 25 (2x), 28; 19:21 (2x), 22. On its connection to the reparation officering, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *Anchor Yale Bible* 3 (New Haven, CT: Doubleday, 1991), 344.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁸ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, ed. William P. Brown, Carol A. Newsom, and Brent A. Strawn, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 414.

of others.¹⁹ Though he has committed no *chamas* (“violence, wrong,” 53:9), the *avon* (“iniquity”) of humanity had been laid on him by YHWH (Isa 53:6). He is wounded because of our sins, which J. P. Brown suggests refers to the punishment of impalement frequently imposed in the surrounding ancient world for political crimes.²⁰ Notably, the Servant is described as being “seized” due to oppression and judgment (Isa 53:8)—which taken together have the meaning, “by a perversion of justice.”²¹ This injustice (i.e. the perverse disorder caused by wrongdoing) is thus set in contrast to the Servant’s actions to establish justice. The Servant is the *yahtzadeek tzaddeek*—the righteous/just one who makes many righteous/just” (53:11). The *Hiphil* form of the verb *tzadak*, followed immediately by the noun, not only establishes a causative relationship but also indicates a forensic connotation.²²

This forensic action brings justice, further defined by terms such as *shalom* (peace) and *rapha* (healing), 53:5. As Goldingay and Payne suggest, these terms point to “the restoration of a wounded people.”²³ This “woundedness” is evidenced in 53:4 with the terms like grief and sorrow. The first term, commonly translated “grief” in this passage, is used twenty-four times in the MT with sixteen of those referring to physical suffering or sickness of some sort.²⁴ At times, especially in prophetic literature, the term could be used to refer to spiritual sickness—though generally these were built directly upon the metaphor of physical sickness. In Isa 1:5-6, sinful Israel is depicted as being sick from head to toe. In Hos 5:13, Ephraim is said to have seen his sickness (and Judah his wounds), and unsuccessfully appealed to Assyria for healing. Others, such as Jer 6:7, seem to refer to physical and spiritual ailments as a conjoined reality. There “sickness and wounds” are said to be present in Jerusalem along with “violence and destruction.” The second term, translated often here as “sorrows”, appears sixteen times in the MT. It is always used in the

¹⁹ At least some later Jewish rabbis took this messianically, as *Sanhedrin* 98b indicates. Regarding the Messiah’s identity, it states, “What is his name?...And the Rabbis say the leper of the house of Rabbi [or, the leprous one] is his name, as it is stated...[quoting Isa 53:4].”

²⁰ J. P. Brown, “Techniques of Imperial Control,” in *The Bible and Liberation*, ed. N. K. Gottwald and A. C. Wire (Berkeley, CA: Radical Religion Reader, 1976), 73–83.

²¹ Anthony R. Ceresko, “The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12): Poetry and the Exodus-New Exodus,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56, 1 (1994): 48.

²² Bo Johnson, “צדק,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. John T. Willis, Stott, Douglass W., and David E. Green, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 250, 260. Harold G. Stigers, “צדק,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Archer, Gleason L., Jr., and Waltke, Bruce K., vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 753. Bo Ringgren, Helmer, “רשע,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglass Stott, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 1–2.

²³ John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, ed. G. I. Davies and G. N. Stanton, vol. II, *International Critical Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 308.

²⁴ Deut 7:15; 28:59; 28:61; 1 Kings 17:17; 2 Kings 2:1; 8:8; 8:9; 13:14; Isa 38:9; Jer 10:19; Eccles 5:16; 2 Chron 16:12; 21:15; 21:18; 21:19.

sense of anguish brought on by some misfortune, calamity, or physical ailment. Eugene Ekblad suggests there is an intratextual connection to Is 61:1 where the spirit of YHWH anoints the Servant and heals the sick through him.²⁵ Here (in 53:5) it is the Servant's suffering that accomplishes healing. Exodus 15:26 has already identified YHWH as your Healer—there in the context that it was never YHWH's desire for Israel to experience affliction (though these afflictions were always a possibility, see Deut 28:59-61). The healing of 53:5 is thus restorative in an absolute sense. Its intent is nothing less than to bring the Pentateuchal ideal to fulfillment (at long last). Just as "infidelity involves a reversal of the Exodus and of the Abrahamic promise,"²⁶ so now the faithfulness of the Servant is depicted as a reversal of Israel's infidelity. This restoration is boldly depicted in subsequent chapters (ex. 54, 60, 62), and the theme of Israel's exodus from captivity and return to Zion is prominent throughout 'Second Isaiah.'²⁷

Central to the Servant's role in restoring God's people is his characterization as one who identifies with the people. As J. M. Claasens noted, "Deutero-Isaiah grew out of a situation where people experienced a profound sense of powerlessness generated by the trauma caused by exile."²⁸ This identification with Israel is further suggested by noting the use of the term *grasp* or *seize* in Isa 52:5, there used of Israel being taken away to captivity. As Israel suffers, so the Servant suffers. As Israel is seized, so the Servant is seized. This suffering is not passive, as expressions like a lamb being led to slaughter and an ewe silent before its shearers portray his "willing and hopeful submission" to the task.²⁹

Matthew's Use of Isaiah 53:4

Miller is surprised ("*Cette citation étonne*") at Matthew's use of Isaiah 53:4 at this point in the narrative—especially when one considers the suffering figure in Isa

²⁵ Eugene Robert Ekblad Jr., *Isaiah's Servant Poems According to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology* 23 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 222.

²⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy," in *New Jerome Bible Commentary*, ed. Fitzmyer, Joseph A, Raymond E. Brown, and Roland Murphy (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 106.

²⁷ On the "second exodus" in Isaiah, see Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 73–90, 140–182. Hans M. Barstad, *A Way in the Wilderness: The Second Exodus in the Message of 2 Isaiah, Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph* 12 (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1989). Bernhard W. Anderson, "Exodus and Covenant in Second Isaiah and the Prophetic Tradition," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank M. Cross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 339–60. On this theme in the Fourth Servant song specifically, see Ceresko, "The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12): Poetry and the Exodus-New Exodus."

²⁸ J. M. Claasens, "Interrupting God-Language: Re-Thinking the Image of God as Liberator in Isaiah 42," in *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa OTWSA/OTSSA, Pretoria, August 2007*, ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, *Old Testament Studies* 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 68.

²⁹ Ha, "Cultic Allusions In The Suffering Servant Poem (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)," 91–92.

43 compared against the Matthean Jesus who is presented as being sovereign over diseases, death, and even demons.³⁰ In the emerging Christian tradition, Isa 53 would come to play a consequential role due to its likely theme of the Servant's vicarious suffering—a theme that is absent in the hypertext of Matthew 8:17.³¹ Though the narrator will subtly nod in that direction later in the Gospel (see 20:28; 26:28), Matthew utilizes Isa 53:4 to showcase Jesus' care for the marginalized. Or, as David Turner puts it, "Matthew 8:17 connects Isa. 53:4 to Jesus' earthly ministry, not to his atoning death."³² To make that case, let us turn our attention to the language employed by the narrator, which differs significantly from the LXX:³³

While the essence of Matthew's version is in line with the meaning found in Isaiah 53:4, as David New observes, "Outside of relatively minor words...Matthew has no words in common with the LXX."³⁴ Held considers this to be Matthew's own direct translation of the Hebrew text, as does Davies and Allison.³⁵ As we shall see, Matthew's version stays closer to the MT than does the LXX.³⁶ Eugene Ekblad calls the LXX's rendering of the MT's לִינִי with ἁμαρτίας "curious," especially considering it already rendered לִי in 53:3 with μαλακίαν (sickness).³⁷ ἁμαρτίας correctly captures the ultimate reason for such maladies but at the cost of the mental picture of the Hebrew. Matthew retains this picture with ἀσθενείας (weakness), which Miler

³⁰ Miler, *Les Citations D'Accomplissement Dans L'evangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu Se Rend Present En Toute Humanite*, 103.

³¹ Strecker refers to Isa 53 as the *locus classicus* of atonement theology (Sühntod-Theologie), though rightly noting those themes should not be read into Matt 8. See, Georg Strecker, *Der Weg Der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung Zur Theologie Des Matthäus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 66.

³² David L. Turner, *Matthew, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 236.

³³ For analysis of Matthew's Greek rendition, see Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Ramsay, NJ: Sigler Press, 1990), 106–7. Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope.*, *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 18 (E. J. Brill, 1967), 109–10.

³⁴ David S. New, *Old Testament Quotations in the Synoptic Gospels, and the Two-Document Hypothesis*, *Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series* 37 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 104.

³⁵ Heinz Joachim Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 259. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 37.

³⁶ Miler also notes that Matthew "est très fidèle au texte hébreu," Miler, *Les Citations D'Accomplissement Dans L'evangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu Se Rend Present En Toute Humanite*, 112.

³⁷ Ekblad Jr., *Isaiah's Servant Poems According to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study*, 212.

notes is used in 4:23 in the context of bodily diseases.³⁸ Conversely, the LXX's *περὶ ἡμῶν ὁδυνᾶται* ("suffers pain for us") is closer lexically (but not grammatically or metaphorically) to the MT's *מַכָּבִי*, rendered in Matthew as *νόσους* (diseases).³⁹ While divergent from the MT, this is in line with Matthew's contextual emphasis, which has thus far focused on physical infirmities (*λεπρός*, 8:2; *λέπρα*, 8:3; *παραλυτικός*, 8:5; *πυρέσσουσιν*, 8:14; *κακῶς*, 8:16).⁴⁰ While Matthew's context includes some cultic/priestly implications (esp. the use of *καθαρίζω* in 8:2-3),⁴¹ the lion's share of the narrative's focus is on Jesus' healing ministry (note the use of *θεραπεύω* in 8:7, 16 and *ἰάομαι* in 8:8, 13).

More significant is Matthew's rendering of the verbs. While the use of *ἐβάστασεν* is a straightforward rendering of *סָבַל* (carried),⁴² the narrator uses *ἔλαβεν* (he took) in place of the MT's *וְהָיָה* (he has borne). Davies and Allison point out that whereas in Isaiah the Servant suffers vicariously, in Matthew's narrative the Messiah heals the sick by taking away their sickness. Nevertheless, they go too far when they maintain, "it cannot be rightly said that the NT verse captures the true sense of the OT text."⁴³ While there is a slight semantic difference between bearing something for someone and taking something away from someone, these meanings are not mutually exclusive. Still, here Matthew places slightly more emphasis on the aspect of infirmities being *taken away*—that is, the result of restorative justice (i.e., removal of hardship) rather than the process through which

³⁸ Miler, *Les Citations D'Accomplissement Dans L'evangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu Se Rend Present En Toute Humanite*, 113.

³⁹ Also rendered as *νόσους* in Aquila (or possibly Symmachus). For details, see M. J. J. Menken, "The Source of the Quotation from Isaiah 53:4 in Matthew 8:17," *Novum Testamentum* 39, 4 (October 1997): 314.

⁴⁰ If Mark is the assumed source, we should note that Matthew (unlike Luke) does not retain any reference to Jesus forbidding the demons from speaking (see Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41). This may be further indication of the narrator's elimination of any material that does not keep the focus on Jesus' attention to the human, present-world need for restorative justice.

⁴¹ For the cultic implications of this term, see Moisés Silva, ed., "Καθαρός, Etc.," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 568–74. Rudolf Meyer and Friedrich Hauck, "Καθαρός, Etc.," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 413–31.

⁴² If the translations of the stanzas are rigid, the second key verb in the LXX is *ὁδυνᾶται* (suffers pain). However, the first verb is *φέρει* which is closer to the idea of 'carry' expressed in the MT and Matthew.

⁴³ Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004, 2:38. They appear to place undue stress on the meaning *taking away*, as opposed to the Hebrew's implied meaning of *taking upon*. But such distinctions should not be pressed to the extreme, as the meaning of the verb *λαμβάνω* involves seizing something, acquiring something, to hold or grasp something, etc. For range of meanings, see Gerhard Delling, "Λαμβάνω, Ἀναλαμβάνω, Ἀνάλημψις, Ἐπιλαμβάνω, Ἀνεπίλημπος, Κατα-, Μεταλαμβάνω, Μετάλημψις, Παρα-, Προ-, Προσλαμβάνω, Πρόσλημψις, Ὑπολαμβάνω," ed. Gerhard Kittel and Bromiley, Geoffrey W., vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 5–7.

that justice is secured (i.e. the Messiah bearing those hardships). Whatever subtle distinctions exist mean little to those relieved of the burden, and—fitting with his narrative aims—Matthew places the focus squarely on the *pastoral* implications of the Servant’s activity in Isaiah 53.

The assessment of Davies and Allison (noted in the above paragraph) that Matthew incorrectly captured the meaning of the Isaiah passage is partially based on the incorrect assertion that the stress of Isaiah 53 “seems to be mental or spiritual.”⁴⁴ While the overarching intent of the Servant poem points to Israel’s spiritual liberation—which is further limited in the LXX almost exclusively to a spiritual understanding—the physical ailments referenced in the MT are more than mere metaphors. As we have already seen above, the *חלי* and *מאב* suggest *real* suffering of some sort—which in Isaiah is often depicted as including physical suffering. It is not *merely* mental or *merely* spiritual, as that flattens Isaiah’s more robust meaning. The Hebrews were certainly in spiritual anguish and brought to a point where they recognized their need of repentance (at least, this is what the prophet was calling on them to do), but this was largely brought upon by the *physical* sufferings that accompanied their spiritual condition. This recalls God’s promise and warning in Deuteronomy 29:22, which guaranteed physical calamity if Israel departed from the covenant. Keener is likely correct when he notes that Matthew intentionally “bypasses the spiritualized reading in the Greek version,” which narrows the scope of the original Hebrew.⁴⁵ This does not suggest that Matthew does not intend a spiritual implication—he most certainly does. The restorative justice depicted throughout Isaiah involves healing in the fullest range of meanings: (1) spiritual healing from sin, (2) physical healing in human bodies, (3) ecological healing of the land itself,⁴⁶ and (4) social healing from unjust civil structures. Isa 53:4 contains two levels of meaning: the taking of physical suffering as well as the relieving of spiritual guilt. As Miler has noted, Matthew’s reference to Isa 53:4 within the context of stories dealing with Jesus’ healing ministry serves as a metaphor and pointer to a greater spiritual (yet, all-encompassing) salvation.⁴⁷

Another factor leading some to conclude Matthew has used Isa 53:4 divorced from its context is the differing emphases between the two passages. In Isaiah, the Servant is broken, abused, and pierced. He suffers *on behalf of others*, taking their sufferings into himself. This theme is absent in Matt 8-9 as Jesus is presented as

⁴⁴ Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004, 2:38.

⁴⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 273.

⁴⁶ Isaiah frequently depicts both judgment and restoration in ecological terms. One example is Isaiah 35 speaks of the desert and parched land being “glad” and the wilderness blossoming (v.1) because water gushes forth (v.6) turning desert sand into pools and springs (v.7).

⁴⁷ Miler, *Les Citations D’Accomplissement Dans L’evangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu Se Rend Present En Toute Humanite*, 111.

being victorious over both physical infirmities and the demonic world.⁴⁸ Jesus sees the sickness of others and heals them; he does not become sick in their place. However, this ignores how Matthew *does* link the Gospel's material to Isa 53—which, as Miller points out, connects the compassion of Jesus with the compassion of the Servant. In Isa 53:4-5, the Servant carries “our griefs” (חֲלִיֵּנוּ), suffers “our pains” (מַכָּאֲבֵינוּ), is pierced for “our sins” (מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ), and is crushed for “our misdeeds” (מַעֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ). Similar personal pronouns run throughout, suggesting *compassion* is the subtext of Isa 52:13-53:12, which Matthew makes overt in its narrative. This is seen in the various healing pericopes, but also in important word choices. For example, Matthew 9:36 uses ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (fig. “feel in the bowels”) to describe Jesus’ reaction to the distressed crowds. Milar suggests the term implies Jesus’ “viscérale compassion” (visceral compassion), as if the misery of the crowds “reached inside his body.”⁴⁹

Several scholars have drawn attention to Matthew's use of summary passages at critical points in his narratives.⁵⁰ Birger Gerhardsson identified nine major summaries (4:23, 24-25; 8:16-17; 9:35-38; 12:15-21; 14:13-14, 34-36; 15:29-31; 19:1-2; and 21:14-16),⁵¹ noting that these summary passages “are of the greatest interest for understanding how the ministry of Jesus in Israel has been apprehended and presented in the Gospel.”⁵² Significantly, many of these summaries involve quotations from Isaiah, leading Gundry to make the somewhat inaccurate claim that “quotations from Isaiah all occur in summaries of Jesus’ salvific work” (cf the citation of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:22-23, which is not summarizing Jesus’ ministry).⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 120. Original: “La compassion de Jésus pour les malades et pour les foules consiste à se laisser atteindre en son corps par la misère des brebis perdues de la maison d’Israël qui ploient sous le fardeau.”

⁵⁰ For further discussions on Matthew's summary texts, see X. Leon-Dufour, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” in A. Robert- A. Feuillet, introduction *to the New Testament* (New York: Desclee, 1965), pp. 167-173; H. J. Held, “Matthew as Interpreter of Miracle Stories,” in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 246-247; W. G. Thompson, “Reflections on the Composition of Matthew 8:1-9:34,” pp. 366-368; Zack C. Phillips, “Filling Up the Word: The Fulfillment Citations in Matthew's Gospel” (Ph.D diss., Duke University, 2017); Thomas J Ryan, “Matthew 15:19-31: An Overlooked Summary,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 5 (Spring 1978): 31–42.

⁵¹ Though he does not include Jesus’ own self-summary in Matthew 11:4-5.

⁵² Birger Gerhardsson, “Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on His 60th Birthday*, ed. R. Banks (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1974), 20.

⁵³ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 150.

Out of these, four summaries are commonly seen as being especially significant (4:23; 9:35; 8:16 and 12:15-16). In both 4:23 and 9:35, nearly identical language is used to summarize Jesus' teaching ministry, prompting Dale Allison and W.D. Davies to conclude these serve as "a sort of *inclusio*."⁵⁴ As 4:23 makes clear, the focus has been limited to Jesus' activity in the region of Galilee (v.23a, "Jesus went throughout Galilee"). A shift now occurs as word spreads as far as Syria (v.24), Judea, Jerusalem, and the "ten cities" East of the Jordan (v.25). That activity included both his teaching and miraculous healing.⁵⁵ The excitement generated becomes the basis for the large crowd gathered to hear the Sermon on the Mount (5:1). The summary in 9:35 follows a sustained miracle section of 8:1-9:34, where we encounter ten separate healing acts.⁵⁶ As noted above, the summary language in 9:35 is nearly identical to that of 4:23;⁵⁷ however, it is now expanded as Jesus commissions his disciples to preach and perform miracles (10:1).⁵⁸ The *inclusio* is further intensified in that we are provided an explanation for Jesus' emphasis on teaching and healing. Namely, because "he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

Unlike the summaries in 4:23 and 9:35, the summaries found in 8:16 and 12:15-16 are followed by a citation from an Isaianic servant text. Considering the proximity of the Isaiah citations to the summary texts, Richard Beaton "raises the question whether the specific referent is the summary itself, or whether a non-specific referent, the overall ministry of Jesus, is not also in mind."⁵⁹ Each of these four summary passages demonstrates Matthew's repeated emphasis on the overall ministry of Jesus to the marginalized, forgotten, hurting, and abused. The summaries in 8:16 and 12:15-16 specifically tie Jesus' compassion with YHWH's activity of restorative justice as prophesied in Isaiah.

⁵⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 411.

⁵⁵ Jesus' teaching ministry is referenced explicitly in 4:17 ("from that time on Jesus began to preach "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near") and 4:23a "(Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom..."). His miraculous healing is referenced in 4:23b ("...and healing every disease and sickness among the people").

⁵⁶ These include: the leper (8:1-3); the Centurion's servant (8:5-13); Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-17); "healing" of the storm (8:23-27); the demoniacs (8:28-33); the paralytic (9:2-8); the girl raised from the dead (9:18-19, 23-25); the woman with hemorrhages (9:20-22); two blind men (9:27-30); the mute demoniac (9:32-34).

⁵⁷ For a discussion on the structure of 8:1-9:34, see William G Thompson, "Reflections on the Composition of Mt 8:1-9:34," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33, 3 (July 1971): 365-88.

⁵⁸ In 10:7, Jesus commissions his disciples to teach, "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'" In 10:1, Matthew tells us that "Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness."

⁵⁹ Richard Beaton, "Messiah and Justice: A Key to Matthew's Use of Isaiah 42.1-4?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22, 75 (January 2000): 6.

With this understanding in view, the citation of Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17 serves to highlight the Messiah's compassion for those distressed (ἐσκυλμένοι—wearied, worn, troubled) and caste down (ἐπιρριμμένοι—flung, thrown to the ground). At this point in the narrative, the *vicarious suffering* of the Messiah is not in view. Indeed, as Held states, "When Matthew in Matt. 8:17, however, speaks of bearing sicknesses he cannot mean the substitutionary suffering of a sick person. For his context shows nothing of the thought that Jesus became a sick person in place of others."⁶⁰ Instead, Matthew places the focus squarely on the Messiah's compassion for the injustices and hardships experienced by his people.

This understanding of Matthew's use of Isa 53:4 is not meant to suggest that the author is in conflict or disagreement with the theological belief that Christ's death was vicarious. Nor does it suggest that Matthew utilizes the quotation wholly apart from any concept of atonement. Here I strongly disagree with scholars such as Georg Strecker, who insist Matthew is devoid of any atonement theology.⁶¹ While Strecker is correct that Matthew consistently focuses on the servanthood of Jesus, he downplays the significance of key passages. For example, Matt 20:28's declaration that Jesus came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many should not be reduced to *merely* speaking of Jesus' servanthood, as Strecker insists. Even when Strecker is forced to concede atonement-like language, such as in the declaration in Matt 26:28 that Jesus' blood is being poured out for the forgiveness of sins, he nevertheless claims the underlying atonement implications are of no particular interest to the author.⁶²

Ulrich Luz is also incorrect when he notes that in Matthew "the atoning death and the idea of vicarious suffering do not play a central role."⁶³ As David Turner rightly notes, "All of Matthew's narrative points toward the death of Jesus...the death of Jesus is the center of the passion of narrative."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the author of Matthew is not the apostle Paul. While the concept of atonement is present within the Gospel, Luz is at least correct in the sense that the quotation of Isa 53:4 is not *directly* linked to the atonement by the Evangelist. Matthew appears to have other purposes for employing the quotation. Isa 53:4 understandably plays an important role in the Christian understanding of Christ's atonement. However, if my reading of Matthew is correct, it also contains other important truths. For Matthew, the passage was central to his understanding that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who sees and has compassion for people weighed down by hardship, injustices, and iniquity.

⁶⁰ Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," 261.

⁶¹ Strecker, *Der Weg Der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung Zur Theologie Des Matthäus*, 183–84.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 221–22.

⁶³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, *Hermeneia* 61C (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 409.

⁶⁴ Turner, *Matthew*, 667.

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You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor (Though Everyone Lies): An Examination of Why Individuals Lie for Asked Questions in Opposition to a Religious Goal of Honesty

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“Talk is cheap, and lies are expensive”
-- “Walking Contradiction” (Green Day, 1995)

Abstract

The act of lying has been specifically prohibited presumably by all major world religions practiced around the world. In America the most recognizable idea of this prohibition is probably the eighth commandment present in the decalogue (the ten commandments) which prohibits the act of lying absolutely. However, even when lying is prohibited, individuals, even Christians lie: Why!? In the present paper, lying will be examined and discussed in relation to the activity of question asking to attempt to provide an explanation for this supposed paradox. To accomplish this goal this paper will present an overview of questions, in addition to their relation to deception before laying out a cursory survey concerning the relation between Christianity and lying. After laying out the available literature concerning the relevant areas related to the current argument a brief analysis will be provided utilizing the literature to examine the intersection between Christianity, lying, and question asking. This paper will serve two important functions. The first function will be to highlight the relation between religion and lying when it comes to question asking. While the second function, will be to set this paper as a building block for a larger conversation which bridges disparate fields such as religious studies and communication.

In 2014, the New Yorker columnist, Andy Borowitz wrote the satirical article “Supreme Court Calls Lying by Politicians an Expression of Their Religion.” In the article, Borowitz writes that the Supreme Court voted 5-4 to strike down an Ohio law that would make it harder to lie in political ads (Borowitz, 2014). The rationale as noted by the Supreme Court was: “[L]ying by politicians is protected by the First Amendment because it is an expression of their religion” (Borowitz, 2014, para. 1). This news article is based in satire, however the contents of the article provides a glimpse at the pragmatic and social nature of lying practiced in America everyday (see Sacks, 1975). Contrasting lying as a common pragmatic and social instrument is a 2014 report by the Pew Research Center which found that among “Highly religious” individuals 81% viewed “[b]eing honest at all times” as essential towards being Christian to the participants, while among “Not highly religious” individuals 60% said it was the same (Pew Research Center, 2016, Table 2). However, the item by the Pew Research Center is geared towards participants’ idealistic definition of being Christian, neglecting the amounts of honesty (opposed to lying) enacted by “Highly religious” and “Not highly religious” individuals.

Lying is a fact of social life argued DePaulo et al. (1996) as a result lies requires little planning to constitute. The authors found that the participants in the 1996 self-reported study told largely told light lies which took little effort and were largely self-centered; moreover, participants which were made up of community members who spoke one on one over a week lied to 30% of them and college students who lied to 38% of individuals in their life. Similarly, a study examining a combination of lying and cheating in both secular and religious high school students conducted by Bruggeman and Hart (1996) reported that between secular and religious high school students, 79% secular students engaged in a combination of lying and cheating versus 70% of religious students. The results showed a small difference of only 9% between secular and high school students, this points towards non-significant difference between the two groups in terms of lying and cheating not regarding their religious nature. The authors backed up the results from this study with an anecdotal story concerning how a large number of high school students from the religious school where data was collected were arrested for stealing and vandalism in association with a scavenger hunt. Furthermore, a 2014 four question telephone survey was conducted by Daniel Cox, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, and Robert P. Jones from the Public Religion Research Institute reported that individuals (atheist or religious) will regularly lie on questionnaires in regards to both religious attendance and salience (or “the extent to which religion plays an important role in one’s life,” p. 5). This deceptive behavior occurs frequently in telephone survey’s due to individuals engaging in social desirability bias or the tendency for individuals to give favorable or desirable answers that will be viewed favored favorably by others (Ruel et al., 2016).

These selected studies which all utilize different methods begin to present the opportunity for the reader to paint an interesting picture suggested to contrast the portrait displayed by the Pew Research results. This picture if correct might suggest that christian individuals, might not eschew total honesty, lie at around the same rate if not a high rate than secular individuals. This is contrast, paradoxically, to traditional religions including Christianity have condoned deceptive behavior including lying (simultaneously societies and their institutions demand an ideal ideology of honesty: Saxe, 1994) which was highlighted in the Pew Research Center survey mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The current paper will examine lying through the mechanism of question asking to propose one possible explanation of why the rates of lying in Christians is suggested to be prevalent. And, while lying in the context of religious individuals have been examined, question asking has not been studied nor argued upon as a common place means of deception within the same context. This paper argument will focus on the question and how they can and do promote deceptive behavior in the form of lying with regards to individuals with a religious background to attempt to explicate the paradoxical tension present between religion and society.

The goal of this present paper will be to add to the existing literature pursuing the activity of question-asking. At present no literature has been located at the intersection of religion, question-asking and lying, so some speculation on the point of the argument is possible. To accomplish this goal this paper will present a overview of questions and their relation to deception before laying out a cursory survey concerning the relation between Christianity and deception. After laying out the available literature concerning the relevant areas related to the current argument a brief analysis will be provided

utilizing the literature to examine the intersection between Christianity, lying, and question asking. This paper will serve two important functions. The first function will be to highlight the relation between religion and lying when it comes to question asking. While the second function, will be to set this paper as a building block for a larger conversation which bridges disparate fields such as religious studies and communication.

Questions

Questions in terms of conversational structure are normally (c.f., rhetorical questions) constituted by a pair of parts which form what sociologists Emanuel A. Schlegloff and Harvey Sacks termed “adjacency pair” where each part was spoke by each interlocutor (Schlegloff & Sacks, 1973). They are commonly utilized in the individual’s day-to-day activities as well as in many different facets of our modern society including in education (Gall, 1970), police interrogations (Stokoe & Edwards, 2009), negotiations (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2020), in organizations (Miller & Jablin, 1991), and in interpersonal conversation (VanEpps & Hart, 2022). In each of these facets – and more beyond (see McCarthy et al., 2021) – questions possess a myriad of different uses and possible functions (see Freed, 1994). Though average individuals commonly believe that they know what questions are and their use (de Ruiter, 2012). However, as Hayano (2012) has noted, questions have no one form, nor a single quality, that would identify them as a question.

Psychologist Art Graesser and colleagues in addition to sociolinguist Stephen Levinson have each given partial accounts to explain question facilitation. According to Graesser et al. (2005) questions are formed because of a cognitive breakdown between the current event and what occurs normally. For example, if the organization’s printer which usually prints in black and white, starts printing in color, then the discrepancy between both the normal state of the printer and its current state has the potential to facilitate what the authors termed: Cognitive disequilibrium. In contrast, Levinson (2012) argued in accordance to the standard speech act paradigm, question are defined as statements which under certain “felicity conditions” can constitute a form of speech act – although indirectly. The felicity conditions were conceived by the philosopher Searle (as cited in Levinson, 2012) in addition the last condition was added at a later date:

Felicity conditions on questioning

1. Essential condition: the utterance counts as an attempt to elicit the information specified in the propositional content.
2. Preparatory conditions:
 - a. the speaker does not know the information requested
 - b. it is not obvious that the addressee will provide the information spontaneously.
3. Sincerity condition: the speaker wants the information requested. (p. 14)

The common manner by which questions are utilized by individuals is termed by the scholar, de Ruiter (2012) as the “folk model of questionhood.” This model refers to the common almost unconscious understanding that questions are solely instruments

utilized to elicit information from others. Though questions are not generic instruments instead unknowing individuals use different types of questions to elicit different types of answer, each with its own type of informational content. Stivers and Hayashi (2010) discuss the differentiation of question type in their paper "Transformative Answers: One Way to Resist a Question's Constraints,"

A polar question constrains the response to yes or no ...; an alternative question (e.g., "Tea or coffee?") constrains the answer to one of the alternatives provided; and a wh-question (e.g., "When did you get home last night?") constrains the answer to, in this example, a time. (p. 2)

Each question type is utilized when seeking a different type of necessary informational content. For example, polar and Wh- questions are commonly used in police or military interrogations or when asking students in the classroom challenging questions. Whereas alternative questions are commonly used in more minor auxiliary situations such as a kid choosing a reward or a class choosing how they will take their exam. However, as Levinson (2012) argues different question types contain two different types of content, informational and social costs, which depending on the question are elicited at different rates. Information is what is normally attempted to be elicited by individuals when a question is asked and an answer is inquired. The social content however, is information bound up in the social identity, preferences, and expectations of another (for social content see the section: Problems Related to Accurate Elicitation and Communication in Question Asking). In the essay, "Interrogative Intimations: On a Possible Social Economics of Interrogatives," a typology of questions is constructed in the context of a basic economic model associated with interpersonal question asking. For the typology, polar questions are placed at the lowest level (unless presumptive tag-questions are considered then they would be at the lowest according to Levinson's second prediction) due to the minimum amount of content that could be elicited from such a question or such an answer being a Yes or No. At the highest level of the typology stands the Wh- question which invites the elicitation of even more information.

Timing's Relation to Deceptive Answers and Question Asking

First argued by Sacks et al. (1974) conversation is a highly structured activity. Individuals are highly attuned to this structure on a temporal basis where gaps between interlocutors have been recorded to be as small as 200ms (Levinson & Torreira, 2015; Stivers et al., 2009). In the highly regulated activity of conversations, participants regularly start preparing their response during the other person's turn as the process often takes roughly 600ms whereas the space available is only 200ms. Individuals who exhibit irregular behavior due to natural environmental conditions or who are attempting some type of deception (e.g., lying) have a tendency to violate these features of the conversational structure. This deviancy as apparent in conversational timing has been studied (and discussed) by numerous scholars, over recent time, in relation to questions and question asking (Bogels et al., 2020; Enfield, 2017; Stivers et al., 2010; Stokoe, 2018).

Enfield (2017) in his book, *How We Talk: The Hidden Mechanisms of Conversation*, argued that participants engaging in conversation are bounded to an ethical contract. One part of the contract specifies that the participating entities must answer any question asked accurately (or if the answerer could not answer the question then a legitimate reason must be given as to why). Though any responses are limited by time. For example, an acceptance answer should come according to commonly reported numbers within 300ms (or 0.3s) while every 0.1s increase the understanding that the answer will be one of disagreement (Levinson & Torriera, 2015). Furthermore, anything between 500ms and 700ms (or 0.5 - 0.7s) or longer will most likely be determined to be disagreement on the part of the answerer (e.g., Levinson & Torriera, 2015; Roberts et al., 2011; Stokoe, 2018). Moreover, sociologist Gail Jefferson discussed in her paper, "Notes on a Possible Metric Which Provides for a 'Standard Maximum' Silence of Approximately One Second in Conversation," a standard limit of one second for answering when a question is asked (Jefferson, 1988). Jefferson discussed that if the answerer does not grant the respondent a response within one second then the questioner will often attempt to repeat or rephrase and repeat the question again. Enfield (2017) in his third chapter, discussed the work of Francis and Roberts (2013) who tested Jefferson's idea experimentally - their study provided quantitative proof for Jefferson's qualitative idea. In 2003 Walczyk and colleagues constructed a novel framework which they labelled as the Activation – Decision – Construction Model (or ADCM) to describe the cognitive mechanisms involved in lying in terms of asked questions (see Figure 1 for ADCM diagram).

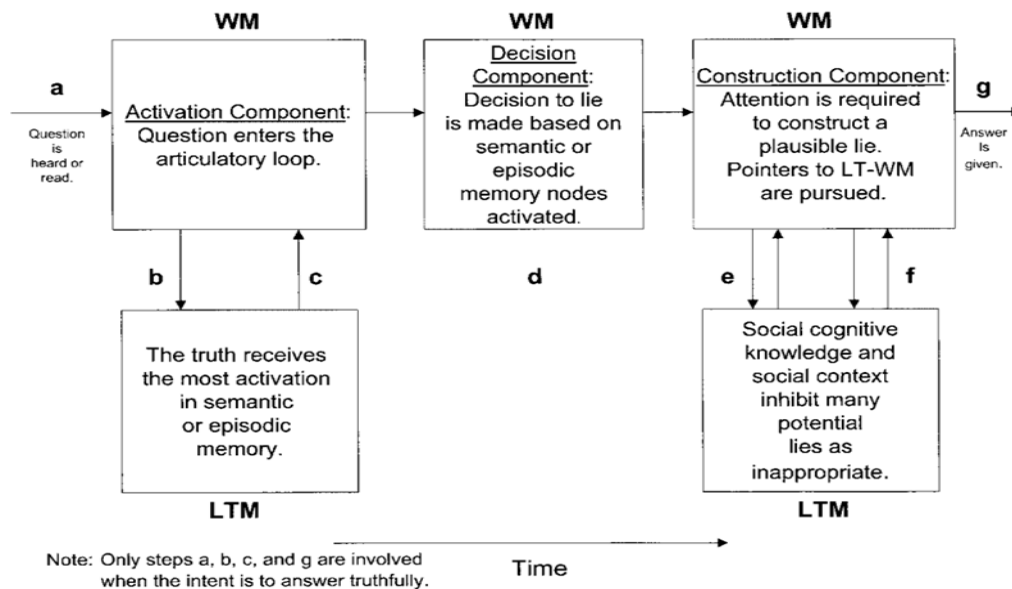


Figure 1. Steps of the Activation-Decision-Construction Model

The ADCM model constructed by Walczyk et al. (2003) not only models lying in the context of a question that has been asked or read but the ADCM also takes the element of time into consideration as a possible factor to detecting deception. The model posits that lying in terms of question asking occurs between four different cognitive

psychological mechanisms: Attention (including both automatic and conscious), Working Memory (or WM), Long Term–Working Memory (or LT-WM), and Long Term Memory (or LTM). Taking time into account in terms of the model the ADCM additionally posits that lying will possibly take longer than telling the truth due to the conscious requirement that is placed on the individual to decide whether it is in their in their self interest to tell the truth or lie and to push through with the decision. Although a note must be made that the potential different in time between when an the individual utters an answer of truth and when they decide and pursue the decision to lie will be milliseconds.

Outside of conversations, timing can similarly affect isolated cases of question answering. Polar questions for instance have been under extensive examination (Bogels et al., 2020; Enfield, 2017; Stivers, 2010; Tian et al., 2021; see Enfield et al., 2019 for discussion of polar questions answers). Regarding polar questions, scholars including Bogels et al. (2020) and Enfield (2017) have argued that timing is important in question asking. The temporal nature of one’s response can reveal whether the response will be preferred (i.e., Yes) opposed to dispreferred (i.e., No). Yes, responses have been shown by scholars to be faster than No responses. This response rate occurs as Enfield (2017) argues due to the fact that individuals answer Yes more than No: He terms this phenomenon the “fast-yes effect.” This is supplemented through data collected by American sociologist Tanya Stivers in 2010 as part of a ten scholar multination research project. Stivers (2010) found that of the 137 Yes/No answer type questions collected 72% were responded to with a Yes. This phenomenon which surrounds answers of “Yes” is also supported indirectly through a more distant study conducted by French et al. (1930) who examined the distribution of words in relation to their grammatical categories through weekly recordings of 500 over the phone telephones where words from each grammatical category was recorded. Over the course of the study, the results (which are laid out in several large frequency tables) showed that the word “No” only appeared a total of 77 times, out of 500 weekly conversations recorded – or only 15% of the time. Moreover, on the list twenty-five most common adjectives and adverbs which compared “Telephone Conversation” and “Written English,” “No” in terms of Telephone Conversation ranked twenty-third while on the list concerning Written English the word was ranked third.

Problems Related to Accurate Elicitation and Communication in Question Asking

In introducing their article Minson et al. (2018) utilized a small narrative which went:

Imagine finding your dream apartment. Before signing the lease, you ask the landlord: “How are the neighbors?” “Oh, they’re great!” comes the reply. You soon learn that “great” includes wild parties, undisciplined children, and a barking dog. As you listen to the loud music blaring from your neighbors’ apartment, you wonder what you might have done differently. After all, you did ask about the neighbors. (p. 76)

Minson et al.'s narrative is a good demonstration of where question asking can intersect with deceptive behavior including lying possibly leaving individuals with bad or worthless information. In recent article VanEpps and Hart (2022) wrote that when a question involves sensitive information or is found in a competitive context, deceptive behavior including lying, deflection, or dodging can occur. Minson et al.'s narrative and VanEpps and Hart's writing shows errors in how individuals view questions and question-asking, under the "folk model of questionhood." These errors are in direct contrast to the argument made by Enfield (2017) where interlocutors are ethically bound through a social contract to produce accurate and honest answers to given questions, in addition if the question cannot be answered then the interlocutor has an obligation to produce a legitimate reason why.

In addition to the main function of questions which concerns their ability to elicit information from other entities; Levinson (2012) argued, that questions as a function of their structure have a social cost which comes from the asymmetry present between the questioner and the answerer, where although the questioner holds control over the initial production and articulation of the question the answer (with some exceptions: e.g., rhetorical questions) has the potential to ask the same question back to the questioner. Additionally, as Levinson (2012) and VanEpps and Hart (2022) have noted questions have the potential to leak sensitive information including: Expectations, intentions, and concerns. The questioner is under an additional level of vulnerability as scholar de Ruiter (2012) notes that the questioner has to make the assumption that a potential individual has the information they are looking to obtain. This act of questioning can place the questioner in a place of uncertainty and potential discomfort (Bohns & Flynn, 2010).

Another problem with utilizing question asking to elicit accurate answers (or information) concerns the construction of the question in relation to the individual's cognition. Ronfard et al. (2018) noted that problems with question-asking, including asking bad questions or repeated asking of the same question, can be attributed to issues with an individuals ability to source monitor (see Johnson et al., 1993). The substandard construction of questions can lead to the elicitation of incorrect or unnecessary information. These types of questioning could be possibly mistaken as attempts at lying through the possible omission of information (additionally Dutton & Carroll, 2001, reported that high levels of emotional arousal – caused such conditions as discomfort - could additionally impair source monitoring ability) as they commonly result in missing information. Moreover, individuals may to avoid certain social effects such as losing face (Goffman, 1959; 1967) or embarrassment (Cooney et al., 2020) ask questions which circumvents the topic being inquired about. Or the questioner may arrange the question up in specific manner in line with a specific goal in sight, such as behavior legitimation (Minson et al., 2018) or deception (VanEpps & Hart, 2022). Individuals as Viebahn et al. (2021) found, treat deceptive questions in the same manner as their counterpart deceptive statements (i.e., lie; c.f., Tollefson, 2014).

One final problem which could arise from question asking is brought up by de Ruiter (2012) who noted that the standard means by which individuals utilize questions

in the elicitation of accurate necessary answers still relies on individuals to assume that the individual being asked has an answer to provide to the questioner. Assumption is the main problematic source present in the “Folk Model of Questionhood” as the action relies on individuals to first know what we want in terms of an answer but moreover the questioner needs to understand by some means who has what capacity to answer what question about what topic. The problem of assumption can clearly be conceptualized as a beetle in a box, in which the beetle is clearly changing form among each individual which mirrors the possible materials we possess to construct potential answers which maintains the possibility to change over time. Over time the possibilities of answers change and shift according to new experiences however, individuals are not able to view these answers at anytime over their life course similar to how individuals are not allowed to look at the beetle located in the box or this case the individuals’ cognition (see Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 100 for the beetle in the box thought experiment). So in order to know what answers individuals might hold cognitively they either have to be spoken out or another individual will have to ask a possible answerer to volunteer their answer.

Christianity and Lying

Many religious traditions have prohibitions on lying and deceptive behavior. The most common source in the Christian tradition for this prohibition is located in the decalogue (ten commandments). In the New King James Version (NKJV), the verse in Exodus 20:16 goes “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” This commandment is a type of law called an apodictic law or a law of absolute authority and contrasts to the idea of caustic law. Though while the commandment, prohibiting lying (and more general deception) in the decalogue is ideally absolute; Bruggeman and Hart’s (1996) study again reports – at least in terms of highschoolers - that this absolute is not always followed. Desmond and Kraus (2012) highlighted that the effect of adolescents’ religiosity on the act of lying to parents was strongly mediated by two variables: Parental attachment and self-control. Moreover, a supplemental analysis was conducted that suggested that an adolescent’s church attendance affected the individuals’ tendency to lie to their parents according to the importance that the adolescent provided to religion.

A study by Bateson et al. (1972) showed individuals who possess a higher degree of religiousness are more willing to give socially desirable responses at least when asked about prejudice – though all fifty-one participants who took part were of the caucasian racial background. Although other research undertaken throughout the 80s according to Kramer and Shariff (2016) found that high rates of social desirability were limited to intrinsic opposed to extrinsic or quest based religiosity. Indeed one consistent result that has been reported is that religiosity measured through church attendance consistently predicts more lying. Though religious situation research has reported that religious situations have a temporary effect on individuals honesty – although, outside the situation individuals who were primed tend to return to their baseline state. Moreover, such priming research has not yet, according to the authors Kramer and

Shariff (2016, p. 236), “explicitly tested for the effect of religious priming on lying to others or self-deception.”

The current state of matters for the domain of social science is that no consensus has currently been reached. This same state of affairs is also reflected in the discipline of theology. Early theologians, which represented one tradition discussed by Ramsey (1985) included St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine who were both inspired by the work of the ancient rhetor and philosopher Aristotle, argued against lying absolutely: With Aquinas arguing in the *Summa Theologiæ* “a lie is evil in respect of its genus” (1947/1247, Sect. 2, Quest.110, Art. 3, SubSect. co. 1). A second tradition of lying, discussed by Ramsey (1985), is that the action should be seen more as detailed by Plato in *The Republic* “useful as a remedy or form of medicine, it is obvious that such a thing must be assigned to physicians and laymen should have nothing to do with it” (p. 389). Theologians of this tradition would argue that lying should be utilized as the last result and outside of this, ancient scholars such as Dorotheus of Gaza argued that lying should in cases of social good (see Ramsey, 1985, p. 523 for example). Other theologians, such as Cassian, Niebuhr, or Bonhoeffer have moreover, raised similar arguments for lying (although not all arguments made are explicit, e.g., Niebuhr) which support the act for medicinal means or to support efforts of social good (Tollefson, 2014). Theologians in this second tradition however, did not see eye-to-eye in the argumentation (similarly to those in the first tradition) for lying.

Analysis: Two Mysteries Regarding Christianity and Lying

There exists between representation of apodictic law in the decalogue and the real life, tension. Whereas the eighth commandment prohibits lying (and general deception) in the thralls of everyday life the individual is reminded of the important phrase by American sociologist Harvey Sacks “Everybody Has to Lie” which formed the title of the synonymous 1975 paper. Lying is a means by which individuals regulate society and the social relationships which they hold. The religious are no exception to this rule although the literature is too small to note how much religious individuals deviate. Although a recent study conducted by Yaden et al. (2023) showed that religious individuals with regards to dimensions such as spirituality, prayer, meditation, and experiences possess different linguistic patterns which possessed non-significant relationships to positive emotion. The authors pursue from this result the possibility that individuals may think about different dimensions of their religious (and possibly spiritual) belief differently. However, it is still too early to understand how this difference in linguistic thinking may relate to the act of lying in Christians.

Another mystery concerns how Christians might differ in terms of question asking in terms of answering questions. While Levinson (2012) argued that interpersonal economics exist when considering question asking research has yet to be conducted if these economics might in some regard differ from the model posited by Levinson. To pull on the results from the study by Yaden et al. (2023) once more, the multidimensional nature of religious belief and its linguistic relation possibly positions

the economic-interpersonal system differently based upon each dimension and its related linguistic patterns.

Intrinsic Religiosity and Lying

Increases in intrinsic religiosity have been continuously found to be highly correlated to an increased tendency to lie as noted by Kramer and Shariff (2016). Putting the standard finding in the context of Sacks (1975) statement might help to alleviate some of the confusion between the attributes of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and standard results which show linkage between intrinsic religiously and lying. Sacks famously says individuals have to lie as a manner to categorize information as way of organizing social relationships – so from one perspective there is social pressure to lie to maintain normalcy within the individual's habitus. But, then as the famous "maxim" from British author George Orwell's 1984 highlights "[i]f you kept the small rules, you could break the big ones," in the present case small rules could pertain to activities such as going to church, observing Sunday as a holy day, or trying to spread the mission of the religion. While breaking the big rules in our present case might look like engaging in lying or as Kramer and Shariff (2016) moreover, have noted watching porn which tends to decrease on Sundays, then returns to baseline for the rest of the week. So to individuals with intrinsic religiosity the costs of lying might be diverted by going and following those small rules – which also may include lying.

Interpretation and Lying

Conversely, high levels of lying might result from differences in interpretation about what counts as a lie. The two traditions of lying in theology present two different interpretations of lying: Lying according to apodictic law and lying as "seasoning" and medicinal. However, according to Kraus and Desmond (2012) presented that lying in religious adolescents' tendency to lie to parents is ultimately mediated by the importance placed on their own church attendance – a mediation factor that possibly exists in some form in the individuals' adulthood – while lying to parents moreover was supported as well by parental attachment and self-control. Adolescents who provide little importance to their own church attendance possibly may interpret lying to be less wrong. This moral prescription towards lying may be relevant especially if the act does not directly harm anyone and if the effects are not observed concurrent with the action that prompts it.

Social Pressure, Question Structure, and Lying

Moreover, these two possibilities may be facilitated by external social pressure which wants the individual to answer in a certain manner. The structure of the question as Stivers and Hayashi (2010) argued dictates the type of answer which needs to be produced and VanEpps and Hart (2022) argued that the questioner in asking a question unknowingly leaks personal information such as preferences and expectations for the eventual answer. Additionally, in cases of polar questions, as Yes is considered the preferred response and may carry more persuasive weight in society than No and thus

individuals would possibly be more likely to say Yes as a result. Response times for agreement vs disagreement (Levinson & Torriera, 2015; Roberts et al., 2011; Stokoe, 2018) and for answering Yes versus No (Bogels et al., 2020) in relation to polar questions seem to corroborate such a response. With Yes being a preferred response the pressure to answer to this answer may be on some level to conform to their social group or even the larger society similar to what was shown by American psychologist Solomon Asch (1955) during his famous experiments dealing with conforming – as the response Yes in the normal course of actions is used in quite ubiquitous manner by others (e.g., Stivers, 2010). Or, possibly the preferred nature of responses including agreement or Yes over disagreement or No has come about through socialization processes as children are normally advised to be honest for example or be agreeable with authority such as family, teachers, police, or doctors, rather than be untruthful or disagreeable. More importantly, the ethical obligation to be honest and accurate between interlocutors prohibits deception during conversation (Enfield, 2017); however, accurate and honest responses of others have the possibility to be swayed by forces besides social conformity or socialization, such as the bias of social desirability (Kramer & Shariff, 2016) or self interest (Walczky et al., 2003).

Metacognition Problems and Linguistic Antics

Lying is an act of self-interest (Walczky et al., 2003). Whether one answers the question posed with the truth or with a lie many factors are found to be at play: Including the language utilized, answerers' memory, and whether the question will elicit any sensitive information. Measured against self interest, lying is a social behavior set against the social environment one is raised in (e.g., Kraus & Desmond, 2012). However, such problems with question asking on a metacognitive level comes from the environment an individual finds themselves in. Emotionally stressful situations can lead to higher counts of error in terms of source monitoring (Dutton & Carroll, 2001) which can lead individuals to misretrieving source information attributed to specific memories (Johnson et al., 1993). The act of misremembering may cause people to say things that is not true or did not occur. For example, a husband asks his wife, you remember when we went to the boardwalk last October. Though the husband remembers his wife as his partner in the boardwalk memory it actually turns out that he went with another women to that boardwalk and misattributed the source of that memory to over hearing his wife talking about the same boardwalk with a friend (see also Bergman & Roediger, 1999 for discussion of reconstructive memory and some of its problems).

On a larger scale, specific uses of language can lead individuals to psychologically perceive events differently from how they actually occurred, as psychologist Elizabeth Loftus showed in a 1974 experiment done in collaboration with John Palmer. In what is colloquially known as the "car crash" experiment Loftus and Palmer examined how the words used in questions could lead to individuals misremembering details in events (Loftus & Palmer, 1974). The researchers utilized the words including hit or smash in one of the survey questions participants took after seeing a simulated car crash. A week later the participants when asked about the speed of the colliding vehicles depending on the word used in the one particular question, they

recalled the vehicles colliding at different speeds. While the experiment was focused towards law enforcement the effects of such leading questions such as the ones Loftus and Palmer used can be utilized to manipulate another individual's answer in everyday life. Though such manipulation could in the right circumstances lead to someone perpetrating a lie while believing it to be the truth.

Conclusion

Besides the two mysteries concerning the deviation of Christians from other individuals from which conversational analysis and experimental studies draw from in terms of 1) lying and 2) question answering. What was discussed in the analysis of this paper were a number of explanations as to why Christians may lie. Although there are explanations which seem outlandish, I would argue that it would be foolish without further exploration into the subject to reject or eliminate such options as 1.) the type of motivation behind one's religious practice; 2.) interpretation of one's religious adherence; 3.) social pressure and structure of the question being asked; 4.) individual metacognitive and linguistic issues. The best that can be done for right now is to argue the possibility of certain answers based on the available literature and evidence. Future research investigating the relation between Christians and lying can be utilized to fill in the gaps and grant a denser and more fulfilling answer to the topic at hand.

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