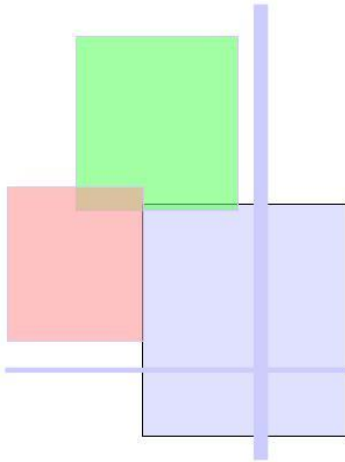
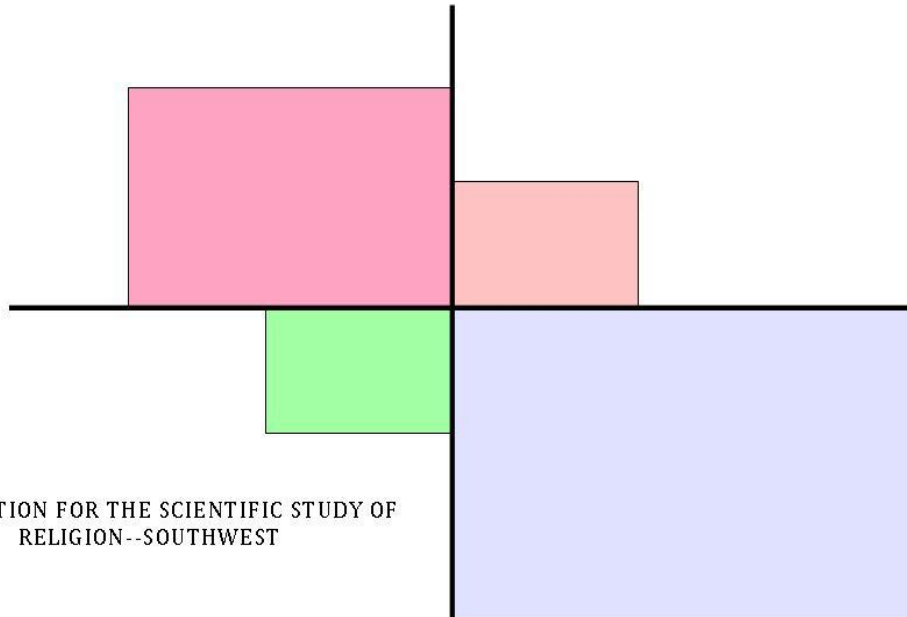


ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF
RELIGION--SOUTHWEST



The Year 2010 Proceedings of the ASSR-SW



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF
RELIGION--SOUTHWEST

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March 13-14, 2010
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ASSR-SW



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President and Editor's Note

Welcome once again to the *Proceedings* of Association for the Scientific Study of Religion--Southwest (ASSR-SW). It is again both an honor and privilege to serve as the editor for *The Year 2010 Proceedings of the ASSR-SW*. Year after year, the *Proceedings* are another fine collection of papers and presentations from both our perennial authors and presenters as well as a host of new academic talent who bring with them new styles and topics. Regardless of who contributes to this collection, the subject matter never tires or bores the reader. As usual, this year's papers are again both scholarly and exceptional.

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

The ASSR-SW launched a new annual award in 2008. *The Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research* is a peer reviewed award process for professional papers meeting the organizations expectations for quality and the *Proceedings* publication deadline. We want to congratulate the 2009 recipient, Dennis J. Horton of Baylor University.

I would also like to take this opportunity also to acknowledge the officers of the ASSR for this past year. These are the people who, along with our presenters, truly made the Year 2010 meetings possible:

President and Proceedings Editor: Jon K. Loessin, Wharton County Junior College

Vice-President, Programs and Publications and Program Chair: Richard Ambler,
Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia

Vice-President, Membership: J. B. Watson, Jr., Stephen F. Austin State University

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2008-2010 ASSR Awards Committee: Joe Barnhart (University of North Texas—Retired), Jon K. Loessin (WCJC), Dennis J. Horton (Baylor), Jeter Basden (Baylor), and Harry Hale (University of Louisiana—Monroe)

I hope all of you have a good year and the ASSR-SW will be looking forward to your participation in the ASSR in 2010-2011! Be sure to visit our Web Site at: www.assr-sw.org complete with online publications of papers from past meetings (see the **Archives** on the site). Hopefully you will share this site with colleagues and students alike. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Jon K. Loessin, 2009-10 ASSR-SW President and ASSR Proceedings Editor

NOTES:

A "Spiritual Center of Light" since 1886—The Spiritualist Community that Talks to the Dead—Historic Camp Chesterfield

Todd Jay Leonard
Hirosaki Gakuin University

Introduction

Modern Spiritualism has its roots in upstate New York where in 1848, two sisters—Maggie and Katie Fox—realized that they could communicate with a disincarnate spirit that was haunting their home. Through a series of “raps,” they ascertained his name, how he died, and who murdered him.

This revelation started a religious revival that was unprecedented in the history of the United States.¹ Literally overnight, these country girls became national celebrities, and equally as fast, their new movement—Spiritualism—spread across the country. Notable writers,² famous politicians, well-known doctors and fabulously wealthy magnates all were drawn to this new religion—one of three American-made religions (Mormonism, Spiritualism, and Christian Science) that developed in the 1800s in New York. As a testament to how pervasive the Spiritualist movement became in the United States, séances were held in living rooms across America, even in the White House.³ Spiritualism changed how the average American during the time viewed life...and ultimately death. Especially during and after major wars (Hazelgrove, 13), Spiritualism flourished. People wanted to make contact with loved ones who had passed over to the other side.

Spiritualism, as a religion, is really no different than most other religions except that its adherents believe that people do not die—bodies do—and after death, kin and acquaintances are able to communicate with those left behind through a sensitive called a “medium.” Spiritualist church services feature mediums who offer “messages” from loved ones on the other side to those in attendance. This is in addition to a sermon and songs that most people raised in a Christian tradition would readily recognize.

¹ In his book, *The Other Side of Salvation: Spiritualism and the Nineteenth-Century Religious Experience*, John Buescher found the Spiritualist movement boasted millions of followers in the 1850s—just a few years after the Fox Sisters initial revelation. “...the New England Spiritualists Association estimated the number of spiritualists in the United States as 2 million, and the *North American Review* gave its opinion that the figure was reasonable. The *Spiritual Register*, a popular annual serial compiled by spiritualists, estimated the number of spiritualists in 1860 as 1, 600,000 but suggested that the number of nominal believers was 5 million.” (x)

² Mark Twain attended a séance in San Francisco in 1866, which he wrote about in several humorous short stories, including “Among the Spiritualists” (in *Territorial Enterprise*, January 1866); “Mark Twain a Committee Man” and “Spiritual Insanity” (*Territorial Enterprise*, February 1866). In addition, Sir Conan Doyle, creator of the world’s most rational fictional detective, *Sherlock Holmes*, was a devout Spiritualist. “He worked tirelessly, setting aside all other literary endeavors to prove the validity of Spiritualism to the world. The most definitive work on early Spiritualism, *The History of Spiritualism*, was written by Doyle.” (Leonard, T., 30)

³ In addition to purported séances in the Lincoln White House hosted by Mary Todd Lincoln, and attended by the President himself, it was revealed well after Lincoln had been assassinated that perhaps the President used at least one medium in decisions of national interest: “It is believed by some Spiritualists that the Emancipation Proclamation, which brought freedom to slaves and over which Lincoln presided, was expedited by spirit intervention. This is explained by medium Nettie Colman Maynard in her book *Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist? Or Curious Revelations from the Life of a Trance Medium*. Nettie first met the President when she was 19, in December of 1862, in the Red Parlor of the White House, and she kept the confidentiality of that meeting for thirty years before revealing all. By that time, Lincoln was long dead and she a sick woman, confined to her bed.” (Leonard, M. 141; Horowitz, 61)

Initially, when Spiritualism began to draw huge numbers of members from other more mainstream churches, it was unfairly labeled as being a form of witchcraft or satanic worship by those which felt threatened by its claims (and those who had a vested interest in keeping memberships in their own churches high).⁴ The reality is: Spiritualism is a God-centered religion, accepting the sacred truths from all religious traditions, including Christianity,⁵ and is in no way connected to black magic or devil worship. This, however, does not mean that Spiritualism is welcomed with open arms within the larger religious community.

Even with religious freedom and diversity being a hallmark of American ideals and values, many mainstream religions look at Spiritualism askance, often regarding it disdainfully—similar to the way a wayward relative who does not fit the social norm is outcast as a black sheep within a family. The fact remains, however, that the Spiritualist movement (and later religion) has survived for well over a century-and-a-half and is still continuing despite the negative reception it has traditionally received by mainstream denominations (outlasting other religious movements, some of which are long defunct).

Since 1886, Spiritualism has been a visible part of Indiana's rich and varied religious historical landscape through the auspices of the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* (IAOS), settling permanently on the banks of the White River in the small town of Chesterfield, Indiana officially in 1890. Affectionately called "Camp Chesterfield" by its members, this association has been a "spiritual center of light" for generations of Hoosiers.

A number of religious groups during the 19th century took advantage of Indiana's frontier spirit by choosing to settle there.

In the 1830s, most religious organizations in Indiana were imported units filled with new arrivals from somewhere else. Furthermore, probably more churches were founded by the influence of missionaries than grew up spontaneously from woodland cabins. For the year 1836, there were 319

⁴ In 1854, a petition with 15,000 signatures was presented to the U.S. Congress demanding a scientific committee be formed to investigate Spiritualism and its otherworldly phenomena. "Lawmakers ultimately tabled the petition, even as a new debate raged among the nation's clergy. Many clergymen became alarmed on June 10 [1854] when former Wisconsin governor Nathaniel P. Tallmadge became a charter member of the Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge. 'Your pulpits—and we speak kindly when we speak of them, for they have holy office...have launched forth invectives. The cry of delusion and chicanery has been heard all over the land.... Policy was adopted...not only from the pulpits, but by the religious press of this country, namely that evil spirits have visited the earth still further to delude deluded mortals. What pity! ...It is very strange, if they believe this thing—that evil spirits can come to do evil on their earth—that good spirits will not be permitted by the good God also to come upon this earth to effect good purposes.'" (Stuart, 176-177) Also, Tallmadge was a dear and old friend of Maggie Fox, a founder of Spiritualism, who was constantly being accused of everything from humbuggery to satanic witchcraft.

⁵ Spiritualist ministers and mediums often use scripture from the *Holy Bible* in sermons for worship services. An often quoted scripture which refers to "spirit gifts" comes from 1 Corinthians 12 (the following is from the *Good News Bible version*) verses 4-11: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to everyone for their particular service. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way to each person for the good of all. The Spirit gives one person a message full of wisdom while to another the same Spirit gives a message full of knowledge. One and the same Spirit gives faith to one person, while to another person he gives the power to heal. The Spirit gives one person the power to work miracles, to another, the gift of speaking God's message; and to yet another, the ability to tell the difference between gifts, which come from the Spirit and those that do not. To one person he gives the ability to speak in strange tongues, and to another he gives the ability to explain what is said. But is the one and the same Spirit who does all this; as he wishes, he gives a different gift to each person."

congregations throughout an eighteen county area of Indiana. Most of these met in private homes, barns, schools, or outside; less than half had regular church buildings for worship. Of the 319 churches, 118 were Methodist groups which evolved from a larger number of informal classes. Baptists had organized 75 congregations, the Disciples of Christ 42, Presbyterians 39, Friends 24, and United Brethren 11; there were 10 other miscellaneous groups. (Vanderstel, 2009)

These congregations set the stage, in essence, for what was about to occur on Indiana's religious vista. After the Spiritualist movement first began, it was not long until the movement spread far and wide, including its arrival to the borders of Indiana. For a number of years, there was no specific association in the state devoted to the religion of Spiritualism. Hoosier adherents were forced to travel to Ohio, Michigan or Illinois to attend "camp" meetings modeled on those made popular earlier by Methodist preachers who would travel as itinerant ministers to different parts of the country to preach, convert, marry, baptize, and even bury those in need of "ministering."

Similarly to mainstream denominations, in the beginning years of the Spiritualist movement, regular church meetings were conducted in people's homes, in public spaces, outdoors and eventually centered on a revival-type of tent meeting where people would go to hear messages, receive readings, and attend séances. Gradually, these tent services began to take the form of "camps" where people could go for several days or weeks to "camp out" in order to attend the services. Eventually, these tents began to take the form of rustic cottages where mediums would reside during the "high" season, from May through September.

This is exactly how Camp Chesterfield began. After attending a Spiritualist camp in Michigan, Hoosiers John and Mary Ellen Bussel-Westerfield of Anderson felt that Indiana needed its very own Spiritualist camp, so they organized the first meeting of the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* in 1886. Interest in this newfangled religion spread quickly, and in 1890, a permanent home was made after the association purchased a sizeable parcel of wooded land on the banks of the White River in Chesterfield, Indiana. Indiana's own Camp Chesterfield is one of three of the most historically significant centers for Spiritualism in the United States (the other two being Camp Lily Dale in New York and Camp Cassadaga in Florida).

Today, Camp Chesterfield is a thriving Spiritualist community that supports a number of buildings that are historically significant.⁶ Upon entering its gates, the visitor to Camp Chesterfield is greeted by a nostalgic old hotel called "The Sunflower." It is reminiscent of something out of a John Steinbeck novel—the front porch, with its wicker rockers, allows one to be easily transported back in time to a bygone era. Another hotel on the grounds, "The Western," built in the style of a 1940s roadhouse, is unique because of its authentic exterior and charming interior. It boasts the distinction of being the first "fireproof" building in the state of Indiana, constructed out of thick concrete and covered with red bricks. (Hattaway, 2010)

Both of these historic hotels offer visitors an opportunity to go back in time, imagining how guests would have sat idly on the shaded porches—most likely escaping the hot Indiana summer sun—chatting to one another about the messages they received from their loved ones through one of the well-known resident mediums who lived in one of the many historic cottages around the perimeter of the camp.

⁶ The Western Hotel, on the grounds of Camp Chesterfield, is officially recognized as an historic landmark, listed on the U.S. Park Service's *National Register of Historic Places* [Listed July 26, 2002] (www.nps.gov/history/nr/listings/20020726.htm)

The Early Years

Early Hoosier Spiritualists were quite forward thinking and were involved in the free and progressive thought movements of the day. These people were very attracted to the idea of Spiritualism which advocated equality for women, Abolition, and the general negation of firmly held concepts of mainstream religion such as original sin, hell and damnation of wayward souls,⁷ vicarious atonement⁸ and the absolute divinity of Jesus,⁹ The Christed One.

Dr. J.W. Westerfield, and his wife Mary, of Anderson, Indiana were two such people who actively sought out alternative ideas regarding politics and religion. In 1883, Dr. Westerfield offered a second floor room in the hall he owned (which also housed his drugstore on the first floor) in downtown Anderson to act as a general meeting place for the intellectuals who resided in the area.

According to the book, *Chesterfield Lives—1886-1986—Our First Hundred Years*, Dr. Westerfield was instrumental in the formation of the “Indiana Association of Spiritualists” and subsequently, Camp Chesterfield. It was during a trip to Michigan that he and his wife came up with the idea of forming an association in Indiana. At that time, Michigan had three functioning Spiritualist camps, but the journey to Michigan was long and arduous. Dr. Westerfield purportedly suggested (while attending Frazer’s Grove Spiritualist Camp, near Vicksburg, Michigan) that Indiana should have its own camp. Other Hoosiers who had also travelled to Michigan agreed with his proposal and the seeds that would later become the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* were sown.

It was further decided that Dr. Westerfield was the only one in their number in a position to enter into the preliminaries of the plan, as he had already retired from business and had the necessary means, ability and time to carry through on the matter.

In the next three years, he contacted Spiritualists in all parts of the state, reporting his progress concerning an Indiana Camp and also progress within the movement itself, and in the early fall of 1886 he called a mass meeting in his Hall in Anderson.

When all had assembled, and Dr. Westerfield had rapped his gavel for order, there were about two hundred men and women in attendance, many of whom manifested deep interest and took an active part in the deliberations. Dr. George Hilligoss was elected president; his wife,

⁷ Spiritualists believe strongly in the concept that all souls are redeemable, no matter how wickedly they behaved during their earthly incarnation. Also, the idea of “heaven” and “hell” being locations is not a belief of Spiritualists; instead, Spiritualists view the concept of “heaven” and “hell” as conditions, with humans creating their own earthly “heavens” and “hells” according to how they live their lives during this particular incarnation.

⁸ The Christian belief that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins of humankind is contrary to Spiritualist teachings which focus on inculcating the ideology that each person is morally responsible for his or her own transgressions on earth and must make amends for those when on the other side.

⁹ Spiritualists view the historical Jesus as a wonderfully gifted Master-Teacher, healer and psychic, who attained the “Christed” state as a result of his good works and teachings while on the earth plane. He is no more divine, however, than any other person before, during or after his earthly existence—all humans equally have the divine spark of God within them.

Caroline, secretary; and Carroll Bronnenberg, treasurer. (Harrison, *et al*, 10)

For three years, the association met at Dr. Westerfield's hall in Anderson. "During that time, on November 5, 1887, they drew up the Constitution and By Laws making the society an incorporated body, legally qualified to transact all business pertaining to the organization and the religion of Spiritualism." (Harrison, *et al*, 14) The next order of business was to find a permanent home for the association. Dr. Westerfield, in the meantime, was elected president of the association. He served one term and was succeeded by Dr. L.M. Blackledge, the association's third president.

The annual convention of 1890 saw Dr. Westerfield again elected as the fourth president of the association. The convention was held at a church picnic on the Carroll and Emily Bronnenberg riverside property at Chesterfield. This was an amicable and generous gesture on their part, and was an outgrowth of the original membership of Carroll, Henry and Fred Bronnenberg in 1886. (Harrison, *et al*, 14)

The grounds—with rolling hills and valleys, fresh spring water, and ample forest—were previously revered by the Native Americans who had once inhabited the area. In fact, not far from this acreage are ten distinct "earthworks" built by a group of prehistoric Indians known as the Adena-Hopewell people. (Werner, 121) Spiritualism, since its earliest beginnings, has had an affinity with Native American culture. Many Spiritualist adherents have a Native American guide within their band of Spirit Guides.¹⁰ The rich Native American history connected to the Bronnenberg property on the banks of the White River made it all the more appropriate and appealing to the membership at the time.

Dr. and Mary Westerfield were greatly instrumental in the ongoing negotiations for the grounds, and on August 12, 1892, the 34 acres of land was purchased from Carroll and Emily Bronnenberg for \$3,325.00. The Westerfields and Carroll Bronnenberg each gave large donations to the association enabling this purchase. (Harrison, *et al*, 18)

The *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* (IAOS) rapidly grew and expanded after finding its permanent home on the grounds of "Camp Chesterfield." Soon, however, problems arose as more and more people began to gravitate to the grounds in search of mediums to receive readings and attend séances, and to seek their own spiritual truth with likeminded people.

¹⁰ Spiritualists generally have five primary spirit guides who assist them: 1) a Doctor- Teacher who maintains a presence on the person's right side; 2) a Master-Teacher who is behind the person; 3) a Chemist (often Asian or Middle-Eastern) who is on the person's left side; 4) a Native American or Indian Protector who stands directly in front of the person; and 5) a Joy Guide (usually a child) who moves around the person but generally stays around the person's legs. (Leonard, T, 321)



Figure 1: A group picture of members and mediums from Camp Chesterfield, circa 1900. [Photo Courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*]

Horses had to be stabled, food served, and lodging facilities had to be made to accommodate all the people who were beginning to flock to Indiana's first and only Spiritualist Camp. In the early years of Camp Chesterfield, members and visitors were required to bring their own tents, hay for their horses, and firewood for cooking. The mediums would sit out in the grassy grove on chairs to meet with people wishing to have a reading.

By the 10th Annual Camp Meeting (the 15th Annual Convention) in 1900, the campground was free from debt and many improvements had been added. Fences, wells and natural gas lines had been introduced. More cottages, plus the original two Séance Rooms, the Dining Hall, the Lodging House, the Auditorium, the Bazaar, and the Store with a long watering trough in front of it, were actively in use. (Harrison, *et al*, 18)

It was not long until the tents began to take the form of small two-room shanties with outhouses where the mediums could live and work. One room was for general living; the other used for readings and séances. As more and more people came through the gates of Camp Chesterfield, it became apparent that a more substantial infrastructure was needed to accommodate the throngs of people who were making their way to this "spiritual center of light."



Figure 2: A View of the mediums' shanties on Broadway Street (now Parkview), Camp Chesterfield [date unknown]. [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*.]

The Growing Years

Singularly, the most important person to walk through the gates of Camp Chesterfield in the early 1900s was an unassuming school teacher from nearby Anderson, Indiana. The impact this woman would have on Camp Chesterfield and the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists*, as well as the religion of Spiritualism as a whole, is nothing short of prodigious. From around 1909 until her death in 1961, Reverend Mable Riffle steered Camp Chesterfield with a strong hand as Secretary of the association. Rev. Riffle's resounding mantra during her long years of service to the *IAOS* and Spiritualism was a simple question: Is it good for Camp? (Richey, 2009) This was her response to any proposal, idea or change that the Board of Trustees, mediums, residents or members would endeavor to implement. If the answer were "no" then it would go no further. Her lifelong dedication to the "good" of Camp Chesterfield is evident in the huge growth that occurred under her watchful guidance.



Figure 3: Reverend Mable Riffle, the longtime secretary of the Indiana Association of Spiritualists, circa 1930. [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's Hett Art Gallery Archives.]

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

Rev. Riffle, however, was not free from ridicule, disparagement and even the occasional piece of bad press. Perhaps being the “face” of Camp Chesterfield for so many years—coupled with her stalwart manner of running the administrative arm of the association—made her an easy target. A number of newspaper accounts¹¹ throughout her many successive terms as secretary detail numerous charges of humbuggery, fraud and

¹¹ The Hett Art Gallery and Museum at Camp Chesterfield has a plethora of archived documents from a wide variety of sources—some handwritten accounts, others published newspaper stories, as well as hotel registers, official correspondence and documents from the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists* day-to-day operations. Unfortunately, much of the information is not in any order (chronological or otherwise); the majority of newspaper accounts have no date or reference as to which newspaper originally published the article; due to humidity where the historical documents are stored, many documents are disintegrating. Even with these caveats in mind, the archives can still be regarded as a treasure trove of historical record, offering the researcher and scholar of Spiritualism ample clues as to how the Camp functioned and who were the principle participants in Camp Chesterfield's long and colorful history.

conspiracy regarding her mediumship. Banned from giving readings in parts of Indiana and Ohio, Rev. Riffle defiantly appealed court convictions and paid fines throughout her tumultuous reign as the all-powerful secretary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Payment of the fine and costs precludes an appeal.

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

Love her or hate her, Mable Riffle was a powerful force who—despite continued attacks from her detractors—did much for the betterment of Camp Chesterfield and the *Indiana Association of Spiritualists*. For every critical article that appeared in newspapers condemning Spiritualism, mediumship, or Camp Chesterfield, she made it a point to have numerous positive articles appear detailing the commendable work being done at Camp Chesterfield on behalf of the religion and its members. Rev. Riffle was (in modern terms) a master at “spin,” always counteracting any negative press with a favorable account of the many functions being held at Camp Chesterfield.¹²

¹² While gathering materials for this paper in the archives at Camp Chesterfield, I was amazed at the sheer number of newspaper articles detailing every possible activity that was taking place on the grounds during the time she was secretary. Whether it was Rev. Riffle's mother's birthday (who lived to be 100-years-old—upon her death, a number of newspapers ran her obituary); a workshop or class being offered in its seminary; a visiting lecturer speaking on spiritually-based topics; a guest-medium

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

The Later Years

After major wars, Spiritualism historically tended to rise in stature and scope, prompting bereaved relatives to search for some sort of sign or message from those whom they lost so tragically. These anguished times were actually heady days for the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield, as well, with crowds of people clamoring to get through its gates. The ongoing need for improving and constructing new public facilities to accommodate the hordes of people was an area in which Rev. Mable Riffle had much vision and forethought.¹³ She also was very adept at fundraising, which allowed Camp Chesterfield to prosper. After her death, this momentum continued for some time, allowing Camp Chesterfield to continue growing through the 1970s and 1980s.



CHESTERFIELD SEMINARY 1972
CHESTERFIELD INDIANA

giving messages; or the dedication of one of the many new structures she had a hand in constructing—all were covered in the newspapers around the central Indiana area. This constant barrage of good press surely counterpoised any negative publicity that occasionally plagued her and the other mediums working closely with her. Fraud and trickery within mediumship are well documented throughout Spiritualism's tumultuous history—and Camp Chesterfield is no exception, having weathered many storms that threatened to force it to close its gates. Today, strict guidelines are enforced at Camp Chesterfield to preclude any fakery by its staff mediums, with swift punishment being applied to any who might attempt such trickery with expulsion from the association and mediumship papers promptly rescinded. Not surprisingly, the IAOS is in its 124th year, serving as testimony of its allure and appeal for generations of Hoosiers.

¹³ As mentioned earlier, Rev. Mable Riffle was the impetus and catalyst in modernizing Camp Chesterfield's infrastructure. She oversaw the construction of the Cathedral, Chapel, Western Hotel, Maxon Cafeteria, and the Hett Art Gallery while on the Board of Trustees as Secretary.

Figure 4: A group photo of students and teachers attending the 1972 Summer Seminary at Camp Chesterfield. [Photo courtesy of Camp Chesterfield's *Hett Art Gallery Archives*].

The seminary arm of the association became well-known and quite renowned, attracting students from all over the United States, and beyond, in the study of Spiritualism, New Age Spirituality, and Metaphysics. Being one of a few Spiritualist organizations that offered formal certification in mediumship, healing, and the ministry set Camp Chesterfield apart from other similar associations which primarily relied upon affiliated churches to train and develop mediums and offer classes toward ordination. Camp Chesterfield gained a reputation for educating, training and developing Spiritualist mediums that were sought after for their intuitive abilities by not only Spiritualists, but also by non-Spiritualists alike. Camp Chesterfield's mediums were endearingly referred to as "name callers" because when a spirit would come through, it was most often by name, which offered confirmation to the person receiving the message.¹⁴

As with many denominations that experienced a crisis in membership, the 1990s¹⁵ laid witness to a drop in overall church attendance at Camp Chesterfield; a decrease in monetary donations; and fewer students opting to matriculate into the educational programs which offer certification as healers, mediums and associate ministers, as well as eventual ordination into the Spiritualist ministry.

Often, people initially seek out a Spiritualist medium due to a tragedy with which they need to find solace and closure. Once this occurs, many adherents move on to other spiritual endeavors—or return to their mainstream church from which they initially came. The original problem the person encountered which prompted him/her to seek out a Spiritualist medium is resolved (on some level) and interest in the religion then sometimes wanes. To Spiritualists, this is "divine order" and is as it is supposed to be in the larger spiritual picture. The practical, fiscal side of the religion, however, needs active adherents who do not view the religion or camp only as a spiritual Disneyland where one can get a reading, attend a séance, or take a class on how to see auras, but rather what is needed are dedicated members who will continue to support the church and its activities for the duration.¹⁶ Also, Spiritualism, which was originally the "anti-church" church, is much too

¹⁴ This made a huge difference in how Camp Chesterfield was perceived by the general public. Anyone of a certain age could safely be given a message by a medium from a "grandmother" in Spirit, but it was much more authentic and legitimate to receive a message with an actual name (and better to have several associated names the receiver readily recognizes). This ability of Chesterfield mediums to be so specific and confirming, allowed Camp Chesterfield to enjoy a wide and diverse following of adherents.

¹⁵ The embracing of modern technology and media (i.e. the Internet) may possibly explain why some churches experienced a drop in membership, donations, and participation while others expanded exponentially becoming "mega churches." Churches which are quick to embrace modern trends and initiate technology positively within their spiritual structure often are able to attract parishioners by adapting to the outside world. Spiritualism historically is not a missionary or evangelical-based religion, instead preferring adherents to come to the religion by their own volition (i.e. "Those who are meant to come will find it on their own"). Generally, Spiritualism has been very slow and hesitant to accept modern technology in spreading its message, preferring to take a spiritual attitude toward such endeavors. Spiritualism's peer religions, Mormonism and Christian Science, have been much more successful in maintaining their religions by proselytizing and conforming more rapidly to societal changes.

¹⁶ This issue has plagued Spiritualism from its earliest beginnings. Many "Spiritualists" historically were nominal adherents, at best, attending a mainstream Christian church on Sunday mornings, and then attending a Spiritualist service later (and maybe a séance). Many Spiritualist camps, like Camp Chesterfield, have a "high season" (from June-September) in which mediums are in residence to

“churchified” for people who want a New Age experience without the obligation of belonging to a church (which requires a certain amount of dedication, attendance, and participation). Modern society—through television, books, workshops, and the Internet—offers people quick fixes to their spiritual needs, precluding the need for them to be parishioners in a specific church.

Today, Camp Chesterfield continues to exist due in large part to the original vision of its founding members and the commitment of its longtime secretary, Mable Riffle. The current dilemma facing the IAOS and Camp Chesterfield, and many other churches, too will pass. Historically, Spiritualism has regularly endured times of great prosperity and times of near extinction.

Camp Chesterfield, as it modernizes its appeal to a new generation of spiritual seekers, will continue to offer confirmation of life after death to those who come through its gates. Although the number of visitors and members may not be the same as in its heyday, as interest in the paranormal and communication with the so-called dead heightens, so will interest in this “Old Age” religion. For well-over one-hundred and twenty years, Camp Chesterfield has been a “spiritual center of light” to many generations of Hoosiers, offering comfort and healing to all those who enter upon its grounds.

Biographical Note

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attend to the many people who visit for readings and séances. This seasonal arrangement has further added to people’s general attitude and confusion about what the church is and how it functions in a camp setting. Instead of it being a regular church they attend and support, it becomes a vacation where they can just visit a week or two in the summer and many feel there is no further need to offer financial or volunteer support because it is not during “season.” In the case of Camp Chesterfield, it is a year-round camp that has regular church services and functions throughout the year and not just during “season.”

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Anomia: How Religion has Justified American Injustices

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Abstract

The roots of justified injustices that have manifested themselves through inter-cultural and interracial incompatibility, along with the widening gap of class disparity, were legitimized through the intersection of American Civil Religion (Robert Bellah, 1967), and English Protestant connotations of Biblical sin. Drawing from classical social theorist Emile Durkheim's (1893) concept of anomie, and his conceptualization of sociology as the "science of morality, the explanation behind personal piety has prevailed in terms of supporting the egoistic interests of individuals at the expense of justice for a society.

Biblical studies reveal that twenty-four Hebrew terms were translated into the same single Greek word for sin, namely, *anomia* (see Lyonnet and Sabourin, 1970). These findings should be beneficial for religious scholars as they highlight the original denotations of sin from a pre-Hellenized perspective and how the truncation of its meanings has impacted Western Culture. In addition, social scientists should also re-examine the works of Durkheim on the relationship between anomie and not only suicide, but also economic crises, lack of professional ethics, and education (Mestrovic 1987). Durkheim was descended from six generations of Jewish rabbis and was himself trained in the rabbinical tradition. The importance of this fact is that he envisioned sociology as the "science of morality" (Durkheim 1893). Many of his social criticisms of anomie as the secular equivalent of sin or *anomia* continue to be unnoticed because of the widespread misunderstanding that he was just a positivist. I will review some of Durkheim's neglected works and reinterpret his concerns with social injustice, war, divorce, economic crises, political corruption and other social problems in the context of this re-reading of anomie as a form of modern sin. These works include but are not limited to *Socialism and Saint-Simon*, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, *Moral Education*, and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*.

Introduction

Religion overall has been beneficial for society, yet its misuse has produced disturbing effects such that unjust systems have subtle veneers of religiosity that produce a neutralizing effect. The emergence of the modern connotation of sin as a private transgression stands in sharp contrast with the various denotations found in its Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek origins. Max Weber's conceptualization of personal piety and how it has impacted U.S culture in his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, leads to the conclusion that the accumulation of capital has become a justifiable means to an end for the elect, with little regard to the means, or for those members of society on whose backs such capital has been attained. The misuse of American Civil Religion, utilitarianism, and egoism further supports turning a deaf ear to the downtrodden as a religiously justifiable attitude. When Durkheim uses the word anomie, he has the Greek word *anomia* in mind which is a testament to the conditions of corruption and immorality on a larger scale as a broader feature of society. The greater danger lies in the potential and near inevitability of the presumed normlessness of *anomia* becoming religiously justified such that it becomes the norm, thus negatively transforming society toward an irreversible trajectory of polarity, tyranny, and a few elite beneficiaries with disproportionate power.

Text

The Western connotation of sin has been tailored such that it can remain compatible with its relative cultural values. The overemphasis on individual sin problematically trumps

collective guilt, systemic injustices, obstruction of human rights, and grossly disproportionate distribution of the earth's resources. When the connotation of sin becomes downgraded to a private violation of rules and laws, it becomes tempting to overlook the construction of the modern meaning of the ancient laws. A literal interpretation of any law has an element of human subjectivity such that the interpreter's self-interest becomes suspect. The temporal dilemma in terms of hermeneutics must consider that a majority of all languages change over a five hundred year period alone further adding to the challenge. Civic and ecclesiastic conventions have acquired a perception of sin that acknowledge active wrongdoing, but not passive wrongdoing. For example, passive wrong doing includes reaping the benefits of the transgressions of others. Both church and society considers wealth acquired by overtly dishonest, immoral, illegal, or inhumane means as contrary to both Biblical commandments, and "the law of the land." However, inherited wealth that was originally acquired by the same means becomes exempt from guilt, and justifies the possessor of stolen goods, slave labor profits, or profits through the underground economy. The inability to recognize the relationship between individual and collective guilt functions as one of the greatest tragedies of the anomic state.

Max Weber uses personal piety as a central theme in his classic theoretical volume entitled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber supports the one dimensional view of personal character using a Puritanical framework that overlooks the potential nullification of piety due to the existence of structural imperfections that disable large sectors of society from meeting the standards for piety. Although *dikaiosune* in Biblical Greek can be translated as either "justice" or "righteous", US church culture has embraced the latter rather than the former. The teachings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth with respect to the classic "Sermon on the Mount" and several parables would have a radically different implication if translators chose to use "justice". "Even the Beatitudes, which are almost universally understood as pertaining solely to personal ethical behavior, instead become instructions in social and political activism."¹ Righteousness with disregard for justice in terms of affirming the worth of all humanity becomes justified with the ideology of meritocracy that makes no provisions for personal gain and achievement as a result of interdependence on others. The acquisition of property at the expense of the hard labor of others who lack adequate access to the fruits of their labors becomes justifiable through the ethical paradigm of teleological morality, such that right or wrong derives from the end result without respect to those who become injured in the process. This ethical paradigm is all the more disturbing when the consequences entail gross disparities in power and resources, unjust wars and violence, and obstructions of justice as a present phenomenon with the explanation of a promise of a favorable end result. In other words, through the use information control outlets, the masses become vulnerable to manipulation such that they remain in a state of prolonged "rising expectations" indefinitely. Hegel's model of situation-complication-resolution parallels the human creature's desire for resolution following a period of extended complication. However, due to gross power inequality, complication can easily be manufactured along side of an intention to withhold a resolution.

American Civil Religion² fuses elements of religious rhetoric and symbols with an Anglo Protestant bias into the sacred objects, practices, and moral community of the government. Non-mainline Protestantism exists with variations in distance outside the "mythical norm"³, within the context of implicit religious neutrality such that the First Amendment has not successfully ceased religious discrimination. Sociologist Robin Williams claims that

¹ Hendricks Jr., Obery, 2006, 160

² Bellah, Robert, 1967

³ Anderson, Cheryl B., 2009, 19

religiosity is among the top fifteen leading core values in the United States.⁴ Despite the civil liberties that have been granted by law to US citizens, it remains common for the society to remain trapped in structural shackles not by arms and coercion but through the use of ideas and information. The belief that America was founded on “Christian Principles” has been sold to the masses, yet the “Christian Principles” contains ambiguity because specific principles rarely accompany such rhetoric. If there was no substantive disconnect between “Christian Principles” and the founding of the nation, addressing the multitude of historical atrocities that played a significant role in terms of the dawn of this nation’s foundation that occurred from 1607 – 1786 becomes problematic. “The moment a person (or government or religion or organization) is convinced that God is either ordering or sanctioning a cause or project, anything goes.”⁵

At the surface, the denotation of anomie refers to a state of “lawlessness” (from the Greek a-nomos, or without law). An example of such a state of existence becomes evident in the lifestyles of the stereotypical male rock musician who has attained a degree of stardom that leads to a detachment from a common sense of normality. In line with Emile Durkheim’s theory of social integration, such attainment of unusual levels of personal autonomy leads to increased social isolation. One of the great ironies that accompany the human experience, can be found in the human creatures desire to resist restrictions, yet such restrictions continue to serve as the greatest buffer against the anomic condition. The command to the man in the garden of Eden, “you may eat freely of every tree of the garden: but the tree of knowledge of good and evil you should not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die”⁶ gives an a priori testament to the protective nature of life’s limitations. As parameters further wane, the “rock star” becomes increasingly vulnerable to an extreme lifestyle characterized by uncontrollable excess that consist of intense self-destruction, and an acute but often unforeseeable agony resulting from an insatiable “addiction to stimulation.”⁷

Durkheim shows that anomie contains greater dangers on a macro-level. Following the functionalists, Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton, Durkheim’s anomie has been and continues to be mistranslated as “normlessness.” On the contrary, “there is no etymological, historical, or contextual support for reading anomie as normlessness. Durkheim never used the word normlessness.”⁸ As a moralist, who was trained in the rabbinical tradition, Durkheim referred to anomie as evil and as the secular equivalent of sin. Descriptions of such manifestations include: eyes off the sacredness and true meaning of individual vocational and civic roles, the abandonment of life’s purposes and moral obligations, and the gravitation towards disillusionment over truth.⁹ When the connotation of sin becomes breaking rules or commands, then it can be prone to a separation from morality. Durkheim’s social theories were influenced by moral theology. Conventional morality including much of church culture has truncated morality to sexual conduct and abortion, without adequate consideration for justice. Based on the Great Judgment passage in the book of Matthew, Marvin A. McMickle precisely stated,

Thus, for Jesus, justice involves acts of compassion and concern that are extended to those in the community who are the neediest, the most vulnerable, and the most at risk of having no advocate. These issues constitute the ‘moral value’ of Jesus.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., 1965

⁵ Peterson, Eugene H., 2002, 1641

⁶ Genesis 2:17, New Revised Standard Version

⁷ West, Cornel, 2001, 55

⁸ Mestrovic, Stjepan, 1987, 75

⁹ Durkheim, Emile, 1954

How ironic that nothing was said by the advocates and promoters of Justice Sunday about these issues that Jesus explicitly identified as being of most importance to him.¹⁰

Sin also includes turning a deaf ear, or the abandonment of justice. The posture and conspicuous expressions of piety equate to sin if it accompanies turning a deaf ear on a neighbor's cry or the abandonment of justice.

The ecclesiastic use of the English word sin has produced a problematic effect on church culture that has impacted the essence of the Biblical message, the human experience, and society because of its selective use when translated from the ancient languages. The more common verb *hata*, a Hebrew transliteration in which the Greek *hamartia* derived, means to fall short of the mark.¹¹ When *hata* becomes the sole connotation of sin, then moral obligations to fellow humanity and unjust social structures become deemphasized. The sole use of the term does not question unjust laws. *Pasa* has another problematic effect, because the same word that means to commit an offense against God, also means to commit an offense against a human creature especially a ruler. However, it leaves a sense of unsettlement when choosing a higher loyalty when faithfulness to both becomes incompatible. The creation of the verb falsely assumes that God and rulers ontologically co-exist.¹²

Anomie comes from the Greek word *anomia* which means sin; however, it comes closer to the English equivalence of lawlessness and moral disorder. Even more disturbing is how the Greek *anomia* closely corresponds to the Hebrew 'awe/ which describes "a general state of hostility against God."¹³ In contrast to Herbert Spencer's social-Darwinist "live and let die" or "survival of the fittest" approach of deliberately turning a deaf ear towards the wailing of fellow humanity lacking in power and access to solve their own problems caused by a socially constructed complex system of stratification, Jesus describes such action as rebellion to him with the passage "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."¹⁴ Although, Spencer's approach towards social reform have been discredited by social scientists, economists, and political theorists, the ideology remains alive and well in the early part of the Twenty-first Century. Propaganda, sectors of partisan political philosophy, and contra-progressive theologies promoted by high profile clergy have provided avenues for sustaining and justification for such beliefs.

The present economic crisis in the United States has a direct link to a prolonged institutional anomic state. "Durkheim perceived classical economic theory, which emphasizes self-interest as opposed to the cosmopolitan religion of humanity, to be a fertile source of anomie."¹⁵ Despite, the polarizing ideologies of libertarianism versus egalitarianism, the economy as an institution cannot restrain itself with the absence of intervention from rational moral authority. Durkheim would explain that the economic crisis in the US would be a result of turning against civic and professional ethics for an anomic spirit that drives the unyielding pursuit of self-interest. Public officials favoring market regulation face the challenge in the difficulty in legislating and enforcing morality. Public officials opposing market regulations face the challenge of assuring citizens that rational authority will voluntarily uphold a standard of ethics such that individual will exercise necessary restraint without the threat of negative sanctions if deviating from such an ethic occurs. A

¹⁰ McMickle, Marvin A., 2006, 42-43

¹¹ Lyonnet, Stannislav and Leopold Sabourin, 1970, 12

¹² Lyonnet, Stannislav and Leopold Sabourin, 1970, 13

¹³ Lyonnet, Stannislav and Leopold Sabourin, 1970, 33

¹⁴ Matthew 25:40, New Revised Standard Version

¹⁵ Mestrovic, Stjepan, 1987, 67

conventional argument that supports unregulated markets have used “freedom” as an ideal of American Civil Religion out of context, such that to establish a moral, regulatory code would be a threat to the other top fifteen core values in US society. Instead of assessing the damage created by the lack of enforcing moral standards, the ideological manipulation makes contrary speech and action a form of American Civil Religion blasphemy. However, regarding an economy without regulations, Durkheim wrote that “if left entirely to individuals, it can only be chaotic and dissipated in conflicts.”¹⁶ Elsewhere, Durkheim wrote prophetically: “Government, instead of acting as the regulator of economic life, has become its tool and servant”¹⁷.

The anomic tragedy of the human experience partially has roots entrenched in psychological egoism. Under such a belief system, the human creature becomes entrapped in a near inescapable “bottomless pit” of chasing the unquenchable self-interests.¹⁸ The individual ethical egoist deems as unjustifiable for others to pursue their own self-interest. Group egoism describes anomie in its plurality such that the in-group becomes the sole group in which the pursuit of self-interest is permitted. Martin Luther King Jr. alluded to two concepts that explain how religion and anomie merge. King referred to the “drum major instinct”¹⁹ as the greatest of human desires, and because of its greatness it must be harnessed correctly. Such an instinct refers to “the desire to be first, surpass others, and achieve distinction.” The problem with the unchecked “drum major instinct” is that everyone cannot be distinct. In order to have superior status, others must have a subordinate status. Throughout the history of humankind, multitudes of atrocities can be directly linked to the unchecked “drum major instinct”. The conclusion to King’s premise was that a correct use such an instinct would be to become “drum majors for justice”. The second concept King referred to is “practical atheism”²⁰ that is characterized as professing a belief in God, it can include faith based membership and participation, reciting of the creeds, and usage of the Bible; however, the individual “lives as though God does not exist.” In conclusion, a form of practical atheism would use proclamation as a means to condone lawlessness in practice.

The anomic spirit receives further reinforcement from the adoption of the utilitarian paradigm. U.S. society has a variation of de facto segregation which results in minimal contact and exposure between the greater beneficiaries and the excluded. Through such separation, the upper classes become prone to disillusionment of the severity and concreteness of the degree of inhumanity endured in the state of exclusion. This exclusion becomes further justified through the additional illusion produced such that an individual’s surroundings equates to reality, as if all else is either imaginary or propaganda. The illusion becomes further intensified with the sharing of common civic activities and faith based memberships that tend to be further segregated. The statement that “Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week” further entails that corporate religious gatherings have a latent function of supporting the ideology of God’s favor for those within the group. Although the anomic condition or rebellion against God appears contrary to participating in civic religious activities, the state of anomie can deter individual and group awareness of their rebellion. Religious participation has the potential to further mask the injustices that have been constructed in the name of the given charge by means of highlighting conspicuous charitable acts. The counterargument to the utilitarian paradigm that justifies the neglect of a minority because the majority benefits would be that justice would be to do good for all with more good for those with the greatest need.

¹⁶ Durkheim, Emile, 1950, 24

¹⁷ Durkheim, Emile, 1897, 251

¹⁸ Durkheim, Emile, 1897

¹⁹ King Jr., Martin Luther, 1968

²⁰ King Jr., Martin Luther, 1954

Even though he is regarded as a respected classical social theorist, Durkheim's works centered on practical morality have been neglected by the academy. Such intentional neglect parallels his critique of institutional ethics that have been abandoned in praxis on a macro-level. Most legitimate institutions have a code of ethics with the intent of safeguarding the integrity, and the survival of the institution. If a constituency perceives illegitimacy within the institution then the probability of an institutional breakdown becomes increasing inevitable. The original purpose of the founding of such institutions is to fulfill a specific social need; however, the institutions exist under the guardianship of rational and moral beings. Therefore, Durkheim's neglected approach towards improving society was through the emphasis of practical applications of moral rules within professional groups. The root of institutional dysfunction whether the reference is to governments, religion, the economy, or marriage and families is an "anomic spirit" that desires no regulations. "The theories that celebrate the beneficence of unrestricted liberties are apologies for a diseased state."²¹ Societies and its supporting institutions become vulnerable to collapse as status-quo and deregulation mesh such that the passionate quest for unrestricted liberties of a few result in the diminishment and denial of liberty for everyone.

The Bible in U.S. society contains a dualistic function due its regard as the most sacred book in the context of Christianity and American Civil Religion. The Bible functions as a symbol that has been set apart for rituals such as taking an oath prior to taking a public office or giving sworn testimony the courtroom. Just as clergy in some denominations place a hand or both hands on the Bible as part of the formal ordination ceremony, the President-elects both past and present place the left hand on a closed Bible when taking an oath at an inauguration ceremony. Even in the midst of the aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, Lyndon Johnson used the Bible for his inaugural oath while on Air Force One during a time of escalated crisis. In the context of American Civil Religion, the original drafters of the U.S. Constitution have a patriarchal distinction, Presidents function as the Presiding Prelate while all members of Congress, Supreme Court, and the Cabinet would be equivalent to the priesthood with various ranks and different charges. However, such persons of office use the Bible as a sacred symbol without regards to its content, to ritualistically swear to defend a sacred document called the U.S. Constitution with absolute respect for its content. Durkheim defined the "sacred" as any social object which evokes feelings of respect.²² As a result, decisions that have derived from the policymakers since the signing of the U.S. Constitution have been presumed as just, because of its backing by the Bible. Therefore, opposition becomes blasphemous unless an area can be proven as illegitimate such that Amendments for further clarification becomes necessary in order to protect the document's validity as challenging circumstances arise.

Conclusions

Durkheim conceived of sociology as the "science of morality" and argued that "morality is the indispensable minimum, that which is strictly necessary, the daily bread without which societies cannot live"²³. His conceptualization of anomie as a social condition similar to sin which in turn affects individuals holds many parallels with the original understandings of *anomia* as sin. *Anomia* as sin is a general state of hostility against God, and Durkheim pointed out that society can serve as a substitute for the Biblical understandings of God. Sociologists continue to misinterpret Durkheim as nothing but a positivist, and ignore his

²¹ Durkheim, Emile, 1925, 54

²² Durkheim, Emile, 1912

²³ Durkheim, Emile, 1893, 13

rabbinical roots, training, and orientation. “Never forget that I am the son of a rabbi,” Durkheim said to his followers. The purpose of this paper has been to invite Biblical scholars and those interested in the scientific study of morality and justice to build conceptual bridges with Durkheim’s original understanding of sociology as the science of morality.

Biographical Note

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Spiritual Turning Points: Ages of Calling into Vocational Ministry

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Introduction

On a sultry day in July of the year 1505 a lonely traveler was trudging over a parched road on the outskirts of the Saxon village of Stotternheim. He was a young man, short but sturdy, and wore the dress of a university student. As he approached the village, the sky became overcast. Suddenly there was a shower, then a crashing storm. A bolt of lightning rived the gloom and knocked the man to the ground. Struggling to rise, he cried in terror, "St. Anne help me! I will become a monk."¹

Thus reads Roland Bainton's classic biography of Martin Luther's dramatic "call to ministry" in the midst of a thunderstorm. Luther's call experience came at the age of 22 not too long after he had completed his Master of Arts degree (January 1505). His decision meant turning his back on a promising career in law to the great disappointment of his father.

Martin Luther was certainly not the first to experience such a dramatic type of experience which propelled him into vocational ministry. Moses responded to God's call through the burning bush theophany (Exodus 3:2). Saul's conversion and calling was instigated through God's appearance in a bright "light from heaven" that "flashed around him" (Acts 9:3, NASB). Martin Luther is in good company. Moses leads the people of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt, and Saul—as the apostle Paul—becomes God's "chosen instrument" to lead the Gentiles out of their spiritual bondage (Acts 9:15).

A more recent example of this type of call experience became the primary message of testimony for an evangelist in Indiana.² He described how he had been physically taken up in a tornado, carried about 100 yards, and dropped down to the ground again without incurring any bodily injury. Through this near-death experience, he repented of the rather ungodly lifestyle he had been leading and dedicated the rest of his life to God through the sharing of his testimony about how he had been spared on that fateful day in which many had lost property and others, their lives.

Alice Cullinan would categorize each of these call experiences as *sudden* in nature as opposed to those which are more *gradual* types of calling.³ In a survey that she conducted of 365 ministry students, one-third of the participants identified their call experience as a sudden (and often dramatic) event which occurred at a specific time and place. The other two-thirds of the respondents identified their call as "one that was a gradual, growing conviction that the Lord was leading in that direction."⁴ William H. Myers has similar categories although he uses different terminology: *cataclysmic* (for sudden experiences) and *noncataclysmic* (for gradual experiences).⁵

In both cases, sudden and gradual call experiences, the recipients arrive at a point in which they make a commitment to some form of vocational ministry. Moreover, those who

¹ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), 21.

² This testimony was described in advertisement flier for a revival held in southern Indiana in 1986.

³ Alice R. Cullinan, *Sorting It Out: Discerning God's Call to Ministry* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999), 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ William H. Myers, *God's Yes Was Louder than My No: Rethinking the African-American Call to Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 71-71.

claim to have experienced their calling in a sudden manner do not make their decision to become ministers within a vacuum; that is, they know of vocational ministry as an option and may have been giving this prospect some consideration. In the case of Martin Luther, he was not only familiar with monasticism through the common presence of monks in Germany, but he also had substantial knowledge about theology as part of his academic coursework.⁶ Hence, the lightning of the storm may have simply become a catalyst for a decision that Luther had already been contemplating. As one biographer explains, Luther "had probably thought of becoming a monk before, even though he had not considered it intensively."⁷

The Apostle Paul likewise had a time of reflection about Christianity and its leaders prior to his seemingly sudden call experience. The persecutor Saul was present during the time in which one of these vocal Christian leaders, Stephen, was preaching about Jesus. Saul also witnessed the valiant manner in which Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:58; 22:20). This experience among others (Acts 8: 1-3) certainly provided a time of reflection before the dramatic circumstances that prompted a decision for Saul to become a messenger of the Gospel he had once despised.

While conceding that a commitment to vocational ministry may arrive after prolonged reflection, a specific age of calling is often identified as particularly significant in this process. In Jeter Basden's 2001 survey of Baptist pastors in Texas, 97.3 percent (1,158 of 1,190 respondents) indicated that there was "a specific time when they first sensed such a call."⁸ In a related study, Jon Loessin conducted a survey of senior pastors of Texas churches affiliated with three other denominational groups in which about 90 percent of these respondents also indicated a specific time when they first sensed God's calling or leading into pastoral ministry.⁹ Last year, Todd Jay Leonard presented the findings of his survey of students affiliated with Chesterfield Spiritualist Seminary. Although the percentage was lower, 67 percent of the respondents answered affirmatively to the following question: "Was there a specific time when you first sensed a higher calling that led you to pursue the ministry?"¹⁰ These times of calling are therefore key spiritual turning points for the vast majority of those who pursue vocational ministry.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of this paper is to offer further reflections on the ages of calling in light of data collected on this topic from a large number of ministry students enrolled in various schools across the United States. Three central questions will guide the study:

- 1) Are there significant differences between the various religious groups for the primary ages of calling?
- 2) Are there significant gender differences related to ages of calling?
- 3) Are there specific ages which are pivotal spiritual turning points for sensing and reflecting upon a call to ministry?

By using these three foci to serve as research points, the paper will inform current religious leaders about the key times of reflection for those committing to vocational ministry and

⁶ Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 27.

⁷ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 23.

⁸ Jeter Basden, "Vocational Calling: A Case Study of Texas Baptist Pastors," in *The Year 2003 Proceedings of the ASSR—SW*, edited by Jon K. Loessin (Dallas: 2003), 4.

⁹ Jon K. Loessin, "Factors Affecting the Call to Ministry Revisited: A Preview and Preliminary Findings of a Comparative Cross-Denominational Study in Progress," in *The Year 2004 Proceedings of the ASSR—SW*, edited by Jon K. Loessin (Dallas: 2004), 84.

¹⁰ Todd Jay Leonard, "The Gospel of Spiritualism: A Study of Seminary Students and Their Call to the Ministry," in *The Year 2004 Proceedings of the ASSR—SW*, edited by Jon K. Loessin (Dallas: 2009), 50.

perhaps provide some guidance about how these leaders may best nurture and facilitate those who may be contemplating future leadership roles within their faith group.

Methods

The data for this paper derives from a survey of undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in vocational Christian ministry. The project, *A National Survey of Ministry Students—2007*, consisted of a variety of questions to gain information about the students' religious practices, approaches to spiritual discernment, theological beliefs, and views about contemporary issues such as the appropriate role of women in ministry. The survey participants consisted of 2,604 students from 35 schools located in the United States and one in Canada. The schools were purposely selected in order to obtain a wide representation of ministry students from various geographic regions and denominational affiliations. All of the students were preparing for ministry-related vocations. All 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and 65 different countries were designated as home states or countries by one or more of the participants. Twenty-eight different Christian denominations (including Nondenominationalism) were identified by one or more of the respondents as their religious affiliation. One hundred sixty-three participants were international students. The survey was completed primarily through an online format (94% of the respondents) though some students completed a paper version of the survey (6% of the respondents).

The online survey was conducted in the following manner. A school administrator (usually the academic dean/provost) would send an email to the students, inviting them to take the survey. Most schools sent one follow-up invitation about one to two weeks after the initial invitation. All student participation was anonymous and strictly voluntary, without any rewards for participating or any penalty for lack of participation. Most schools chose to send the survey invitation to all ministry students who were enrolled in the 2007 spring semester. A few schools sent the invitation to a subset of their ministry students (e.g., those enrolled in summer courses). The student participation rate generally ranged from about 20 to 25 percent when the administrator sent both the initial and a follow-up invitation.

For those schools choosing to conduct the survey in paper format, a professor would administer the survey in ministry classes or regularly scheduled meetings for ministry students. Though the survey was still strictly voluntary, nearly all students in the classes or meetings chose to participate with a response rate typically around 90 to 95 percent of those present. While the response rate was much higher for the paper surveys administered in classes/meetings, the overall percentage of participating ministry students at these schools was not necessarily higher because not all of the ministry students were enrolled or present in these particular classes or meetings.

The results for this survey, whether administered through online or paper format, were unlikely to have any significant variance. Because the students at both undergraduate and graduate schools are accustomed to communicating through email and familiar with online surveys, the ministry student population at each school was readily able to respond if willing to do so. When a prototype of the survey was administered at a school using both formats (267 online surveys and 90 paper surveys), the findings did not reflect any significant variance between the two groups of ministry student responses.

A basic description of the ministry students who completed the survey is as follows: Classification – 582 undergraduates (22.5%), 1,759 masters level students (67.5%), 120 recent graduates of masters level programs (4.5%), 78 doctoral students (3%), and 65 others (2.5% non-degree or unspecified); Gender – 1,541 males (59%), 1,056 females (41%), 7 unspecified; Race/Ethnicity – 1,880 Caucasian (72%), 142 Black/African-American (5.5%), 93 Hispanic/Latino (3.5%), 115 Asian/Pacific Islander (4.5%), 10 American

Indian/Alaskan Native (0.5%); 364 others (14%); Religious Affiliation – 402 Mainline Denomination Christians (15.5%) and 2,202 Evangelical Christians (84.5%).

Findings

The central data from the survey for this particular paper is derived primarily from one open-ended question as follows: "At what age did you sense God calling you into ministry?" Out of the 2,604 students who completed the survey, 93 percent (N=2,418) identified a specific age in which they sensed that God was calling them into ministry. The other survey participants (7% or 186 respondents) either left the question blank or answered with a general response such as "during high school." Only those answers which identified a specific year were used to derive the findings for this paper. The survey also supplied the data for gender and denominational/religious affiliation.

Differences Between the Various Religious Groups for the Primary Ages Of Calling

In the Basden, Loessin, and Leonard studies, the findings indicate that the ages of calling vary from one religious group to another (see Table 1). The two Lutheran groups, in comparison to the other three groups (Baptists, Episcopalians, and Spiritualists), tended to have higher percentages of those respondents that indicated an age of calling at 12 or younger. The Missouri Synod Lutherans had the largest percentage with 18.2 percent of the respondents indicating an age of calling prior to their thirteenth birthday. By contrast, the Spiritualists had the largest percentage of those indicating a later age of calling with 50 percent sensing their call to ministry after age 30.

Table 1: Ages of Calling for Different Religious Groups¹¹

Age of Calling	Religious Groups				
	BGCT	LCMS	ELCA [#]	ECUSA [#]	Spiritualists*
12 or under	6.0%	29.0%	18.2%	11.3%	8.0%
13-18	39.5%	34.4%	39.0%	31.0%	0.0%
19-30	39.0%	30.1%	32.5%	35.2%	17.0%
Over 30	15.5%	6.5%	10.4%	22.5%	50.0%

Totals include 12 female ELCA pastors and 8 female ECUSA pastors.

* Some respondents (25%) did not specify a specific age.

When comparing the BGCT Baptist pastors with Baptists respondents in the *National Survey of Ministry Students—2007*, similar ages of calling become apparent (see Table 2). The entire group of Baptist ministry students participating in the survey had virtually identical percentages of those reporting a call to ministry during their preteen years (6.0% for the BGCT pastors and 5.6% for the ministry students) and those sensing their call after age 30 (15.5% and 15.3% respectively). The ministry students do have a slightly higher percentage in the teen years (43.4% vs. 39.5%) and slightly lower percentage (35.7% vs. 39.0%) during the ages 19-30. This difference is likely attributable to the number of undergraduates included in the study and/or the inclusion of those going into other branches of Christian ministry. Those going into youth ministry, for example, would be more likely to sense their

¹¹ This table is adapted from Loessin's Table 2 ("Factors," 85) with additional data from Leonard's study ("Gospel," 50). BGCT refers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas; LCMS, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and ECUSA, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. The Spiritualists are affiliated with the Chesterfield Spiritualist Seminary in Indiana.

calling during their high school years while they are in a youth group and being mentored by their youth minister. The Southern Baptist Convention seminary students, part of a more conservative group of Baptists, have a slightly higher percentage of those receiving their call to ministry during the ages 19-30. The BGCT seminary respondents, part of a more moderate branch of Baptists, have a larger percentage of those who experienced a call during their junior high and high school years (47.9%) and a relatively low percentage of those identifying a call to ministry after age 30 (only 9.6%). These differences are likely more attributable to the ages of the students at the seminaries rather than theological differences. The SBC seminary in question has a larger percentage of older non-traditional students than the BGCT seminary. Overall the percentages are fairly consistent between all four comparison groups of Baptists.

Table 2: Ages of Calling Among Baptist Groups

Age of Calling	Baptist Groups			
	BGCT Senior Pastors (n=1,168)	Baptist Ministry Students (n=961)	SBC Seminary Students (n=297)	BGCT Seminary Students (n=94)
12 or under	6.0%	5.6%	5.1%	6.4%
13-18	39.5%	43.4%	34.0%	47.9%
19-30	39.0%	35.7%	48.8%	36.2%
Over 30	15.5%	15.3%	12.1%	9.6%

The Lutheran groups share some key similarities, but they also have some distinct differences from each other (see Table 3) and from the Baptists described above. Their primary similarities include the percentages of calling in the teen years (ranging from 32% to 39% for all three groups) and the percentages in the 19-30 age category (ranging from 30% to 34% for all three groups). In the Loessin study, a much higher percentage (18-29%) of Lutheran pastors indicated a call experience in their preteen years, being three to five times higher than that of any of the Baptist groups. While the percentage of students at ELCA seminaries claiming early call experiences is not as high as the amount for the Lutheran pastors, the percentage (13.3%) still represents more than twice that of any of the Baptist groups surveyed. The key difference between the ELCA seminary students and the other two Lutheran survey groups is the relatively high percentage of those identifying a later call to ministry (19.2% over the age of 30).

Table 3: Ages of Calling Among Lutheran Groups

Age of Calling	Lutheran Groups		
	LCMS Senior Pastors (n=93)	ELCA Senior Pastors (n=78)	ELCA Seminary Students (n=203)
12 or under	29.0%	18.2%	13.3%
13-18	34.4%	39.0%	32.0%
19-30	30.1%	32.5%	34.0%
Over 30	6.5%	10.4%	19.2%

Some other groups of seminary students who participated in the ministry student survey reflect a curious variance in their reported ages of calling (see Table 4). Three of the four groups of respondents highlighted in Table 4 were from Nondenominational seminaries and had low percentages of students with preteen ages of calling (ranging from 4.2% to

5.6%) while the Assemblies of God seminary students indicated a high percentage of preteen call experiences (16.3%). The Assemblies of God students also reported the highest percentage of junior high and high school ages of calling (48.8% compared to the others ranging from 19.1% to 31.8%). Charismatic openness and encouragement of charismatic practices do not seem to correspond necessarily with higher or lower ages of conversion. The respondents from the seminary with openness to charismatic gifts, for example, have an unusually high percentage of call experiences after age 30 (41.3%) while the seminary that would regularly encourage spiritual gifts—the Assemblies of God seminary—has the lowest percentage of call experiences in this category (with only 2.3%). Other variables are therefore likely exhibiting greater influence over the ages of calling.

Table 4: Ages of Calling at Seminaries with Differing Levels of Charismatic Openness

Age of Calling	Types of Seminaries			
	Evangelical Non-charismatic (n=235)	Evangelical Mixed (n=192)	Charismatic Openness (n=126)	Assemblies of God Seminary (n=43)
12 or under	4.2%	4.7%	5.6%	16.3%
13-18	27.2%	31.8%	19.1%	48.8%
19-30	50.6%	41.7%	34.1%	32.6%
Over 30	17.9%	21.3%	41.3%	2.3%

Another method of comparing the ages of calling among the various religious groups is to examine the mean, median, and mode for each group. Most of the denominations (as reflected by the ministry student survey participants) have a mean age of calling within three years of 21, a median age at or close to 19, and a mode age of calling at or close to 17. The Assemblies of God students reflect a younger age in these categories than the others, and the Presbyterians have a higher mean, median, and mode (in part). The Seventh-day Adventists have a mode of 21 years of age, which is four years older than the average mode for all the groups.

Table 5: Ministry Student Age of Calling by Denominations

Denomination/Group	Mean	Median	Mode
Assemblies of God (n=61)	17.5	16	14 (n=7)
Baptist (n=961)	21.5	19	16 (n=108)
Church of Christ (n=55)	20	19	18 & 19 (n=9)
Church of the Nazarene (n=72)	19.5	17	16 (n=10)
Episcopal (n=33)	22	17	17 (n=4)
Lutheran (n=195)	22.5	20	17 (n=15)
Methodist (n=158)	24	20	17 (n=14)
Nondenominational (n=392)	21	19	16 (n=43)
Presbyterian (n=79)	24	21	17 & 21 (n=8)
Seventh-day Adventist (n=49)	21	20	21 (n=7)

Gender Differences Related to Ages of Calling

In both the Loessin study and the Leonard study, the female participants reported relatively late ages of calling. Loessin notes that 76.9 percent of the female respondents identified their call as having occurred after age 19 with 45.7 percent of them receiving their

call after age 30.¹² In Leonard's survey pool, 83 percent of the participants were female, and the vast majority of these participants reported ages of calling after age 19 with 50 percent of the participants receiving their call after age 30.

Does this propensity toward late call experiences for females hold true for the participants of the ministry student survey? In some of the seminaries, the female participants do report slightly higher ages of calling. For example, the female participants from the three Nondenominational seminaries and the ELCA seminaries (see Table 6) all reflected higher percentages than did their male counterparts for ages of calling over 30. Three of these four groups also reflected higher total percentages for females reporting ages of calling over 18. The lone exception to this group would be the slightly higher overall percentage for ages of calling over 18 reported by the males in the Evangelical non-charismatic seminary.

Table 6: Ages of Calling for Males and Females at Different Seminaries (Part 1)

Age of Calling	Types of Seminaries							
	Evangelical Non-charismatic (n=235)		Evangelical Mixed (n=192)		Charismatic Openness (n=126)		ELCA Seminaries (n=203)	
	M=168	F=69	M=105	F=87	M=51	F=75	M=81	F=122
12 or under	4.8%	3.0%	2.9%	6.9%	5.9%	5.3%	17.3%	10.7%
13-18	25.0%	32.8%	43.8%	17.2%	25.5%	14.7%	37.0%	28.7%
19-30	54.2%	41.8%	41.0%	42.5%	41.2%	29.3%	28.4%	37.7%
Over 30	16.1%	22.4%	12.4%	33.3%	27.5%	50.7%	17.3%	23.0%

In other seminaries, the evidence points to little difference between male and female ages of calling or younger ages of calling. The students at the two Baptist seminaries detailed in Table 7 reflect little difference in ages of calling for males and females although the males had slightly higher percentages reporting call experiences over age 30. The female Assemblies of God participants reported dramatically lower ages of calling than did the male participants with 80 percent of the females indicating an age of calling under age 19 and none over age 30. Due to the small number of female AG seminary participants (20), however, the resulting percentages may not be an accurate reflection of the female AG ministry students as a whole.

Table 7: Ages of Calling for Males and Females at Different Seminaries (Part 2)

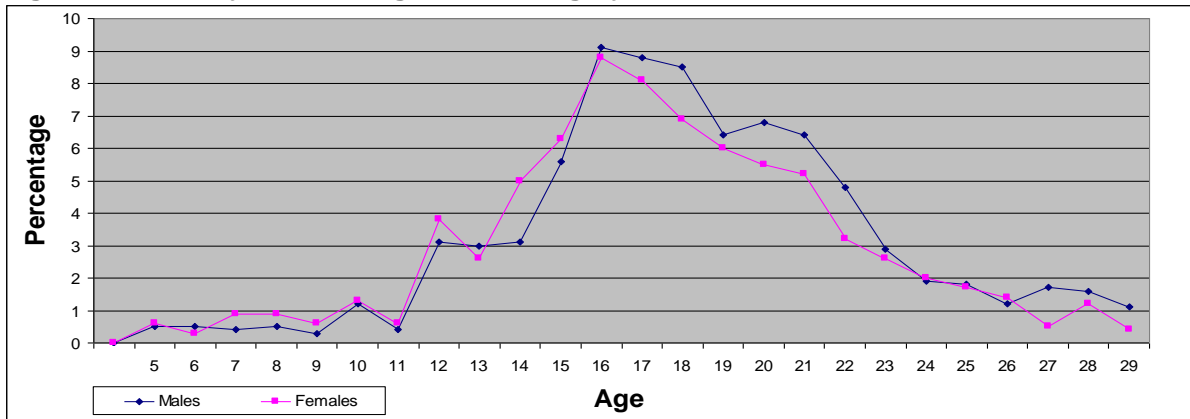
Age of Calling	Types of Seminaries					
	SBC Seminary Students (n=297)		BGCT Seminary Students (n=94)		AG Seminary Students (n=43)	
	M=240	F=57	M=61	F=33	M=23	F=20
12 or under	4.7%	8.8%	4.9%	9.1%	17.4%	15.0%
13-18	34.6%	31.6%	49.2%	45.5%	34.8%	65.0%
19-30	47.9%	52.6%	32.8%	42.4%	43.5%	20.0%
Over 30	13.3%	7.0%	13.1%	3.0%	4.4%	0.0%

Examining the percentages of males and females reporting younger ages of calling provides an additional means of determining if one gender tends to sense a call to ministry

¹² Loessin, 89.

earlier than the other. For all of the participants in the ministry student survey, more than 75 percent identified their call experience as having occurred prior to age 30 (see Figure 1). Of these students, the females generally have a slightly higher percentage of call experiences compared to the males through age 15. At this point, the females are more than four percentage points ahead of the males (22.9% vs. 18.6%). From age 16 to 29, the males generally have slightly higher percentages of call experiences. Sixty-three (63) percent of the male participants sensed a call to ministry during these years compared to 53.5 percent of the females. Prior to age 30 therefore, 81.6 percent of the male participants had sensed a call to ministry compared to 76.4 percent of the female participants. After this point, the females again report slightly higher percentages of call experiences (23.6% total) than do the males (18.4% total).

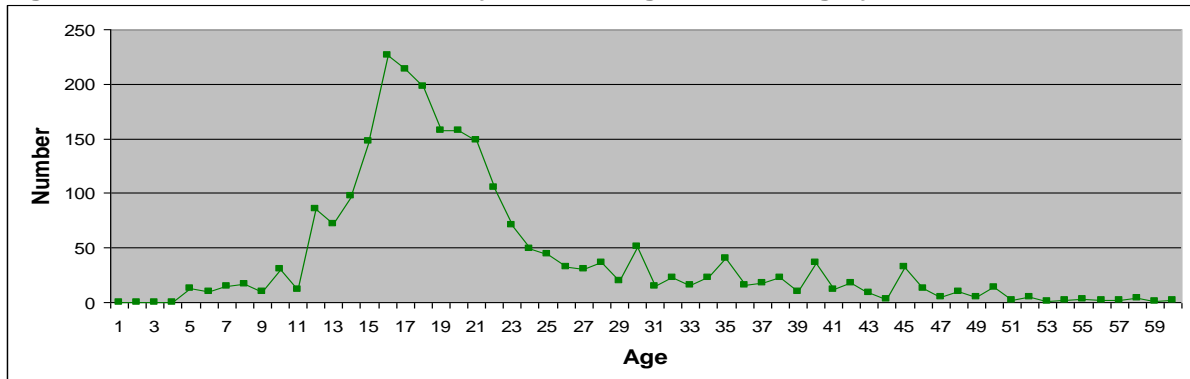
Figure 1: Ministry Student Ages of Calling by Gender



Pivotal Spiritual Turning Points for Sensing and Reflecting upon a Call to Ministry

When viewing the ages of calling for all 2,418 ministry students, several key points surface as spiritual turning points for sensing and reflecting upon a call to vocational ministry (see Figure 2). The largest percentage of students (32.5%) reported that their calling into vocational ministry occurred during their high school years, peaking at age 16 (9.45%). A significant percentage of ministry students (23.5%) also indicated that they received their sense of calling during their college years. Thus, the high school and college years together account for over half (56%) of the ministry student ages of calling. The third largest percentage of call experiences within a concentrated period of time are reported to have occurred during the middle school/junior high years (10.5% during ages 12 through 14).

Figure 2: Total Numbers of Ministry Student Ages of Calling by Year



Interestingly, a fourth significant group emerges in this survey: the mid-career or mid-life group. Over 16 percent of the call experiences reported in the survey occurred from age 30 through 50. Of even greater interest, nearly half of these (7.2%) are noted at key age milestones during this time: ages 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50. The peaks during these significant age markers may simply represent a convenient reference point for those taking the survey, or the notation of these significant birthday years may indicate that—as commonly happens during midlife—certain years create rich times for reflection and assessment of what really matters in life and how we are going to spend our remaining years.

Discussion and Conclusions

The combined findings from the present study and previous studies do indicate that the ages of calling have some variance from one religious group to the other. Among Christian denominations, the participant responses in the present study indicate that ministry students affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination have the overall youngest age for call experiences (based on the mean, median, and mode) while the Presbyterian ministry student responses have the latest overall age for call experiences (also based on the mean, median, and mode). Leonard's study of Spiritualists—with 50 percent of the participants receiving their call to ministry over age 30—provides the strongest evidence that age of calling can vary dramatically from one religious group to another. Although beyond the scope of the current study, the reasons for such variances would be a productive area of research for future studies.

On the topic of gender and calling, the present study offers evidence to suggest that larger percentages of females experience calls to ministry during the earlier years (ages 5-15) and later years (over age 30) while males have higher percentages of call experiences beginning at age 16 through 29. Higher percentages of female call experiences during childhood and early adolescence align well with previous studies. Mark Washington conducted a study of ministry students affiliated with the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and concluded that female participants "became aware of ministry as a viable vocational option at a younger age than male participants and were less impacted over concerns with financial considerations of compensation levels."¹³ This phenomenon may be influenced by the general tendency of females to mature more quickly than males. As other studies have shown, females also have a greater capacity to experience earlier conversions than their male counterparts.¹⁴

The higher percentages of later call experiences for females also finds support in previous studies. Loessin's 2004 survey found that the female participants in both the ELCA and ECUSA groups tended to report later ages of calling than did their male counterparts.¹⁵ Leonard's study found that Spiritualists, who are predominately female, also report later ages of calling.¹⁶ The reasons for this phenomenon may include the following: greater opportunities for vocational ministry becoming available for some as time devoted to

¹³ Mark Washington, "The Factors Influencing Young People from the Evangelical Covenant Church in the Consideration of and Commitment to Pursue Full-time Vocational Ministry" (Masters Thesis, North Park Theological Seminary, 2002): 76.

¹⁴ See Dennis Horton's paper, "Spiritual Prodigies, 'Average' Ministers, and Late Bloomers: Ministry Student Ages of Conversion and Confirmation" in *The Year 2008 Proceedings of the ASSR—SW*, edited by Jon K. Loessin (Dallas: 2008), 101-11.

¹⁵ Loessin, "Factors," 89.

¹⁶ Leonard, "Gospel," 50. The participants in Leonard's study were predominately female—83% ("Gospel," 41).

childrearing responsibilities decreases; later conversion experiences for the Spiritualists thereby precluding earlier call experiences; and the relatively recent development of greater opportunities for female ministers within certain religious groups. This latter factor would be particularly applicable to Mainline Christian denominations which have welcomed women to minister at all levels of leadership. Because charismatic Christian groups tend to base leadership positions on spiritual gifts with less regard to gender, these groups are also more open to women serving in various ministry roles.

Opportunities for female leadership definitely play a strong role in the receptiveness of females to vocational ministry calling.¹⁷ Those religious groups which strongly affirm female leadership not surprisingly have much larger percentages of female students studying for careers in ministry. Female Spiritualist survey participants outnumbered their male counterparts five to one which is an accurate reflection of Spiritualist leadership.¹⁸ The Mainline Lutheran (ELCA) participants were 60 percent female as were those attending the seminary with strong openness to charismatic practices. This percentage contrasts sharply with the percentage of female survey participants at the sample Southern Baptist Convention seminary in which only 19 percent of the respondents were female. Southern Baptist policy strongly discourages any female leadership over men which thereby severely limits opportunities for female leadership roles.

Regarding the question about the possibility of pivotal spiritual turning points for sensing and reflecting upon a call to ministry, the present study again provides an affirmative response. Although ministry students identify ages of vocational calling throughout the spectrum, four different stages in life are particularly important as times in which the respondents sensed a call to a ministry-related vocation: high school, college, junior high school, and the major age milestones of midlife (ages 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50). These are all times of sensitivity to ministerial calling. Some of these ages in particular are times of serious reflection on life and therefore times of greater openness to vocational direction or redirection. Youth and college ministers, college professors, and pastors would do well to be mindful of these periods of openness and provide appropriate guidance.

Limitations

One of the key limitations for the present study is the lack of delineation about the stages of calling. Myers highlights six stages that may be part of a person's call to vocational ministry: (1) early religious exposure, (2) the call experience, (3) the struggle, (4) the search, (5) the sanction, and (6) the surrender.¹⁹ Washington limits his analysis of the call experience to two stages: the age of considering and the age of commitment.²⁰ Nogalski, like Washington, acknowledges various stages related to the call experience, but she focuses her research on the time of reflection about a call to ministry and the time of commitment.²¹ Because the primary focus of the survey for the present study was spiritual discernment, the survey did not contain an additional question to identify both the age of consideration and the age of commitment. The wording of the survey question—"At what

¹⁷ One of the findings of Washington's study is that a "perceived barrier for women to enter the pastorate may cause fewer of them to try" ("Factors," 21).

¹⁸ Leonard, "Gospel," 41-42.

¹⁹ Myers, *God's Yes*, 8-9.

²⁰ Washington, "Factors," 48-49.

²¹ Melanie Nogalski, "Vocational Imagination: The Spirituality of Vocation Among Baptist Participants in a Youth Theology Program" (D.Min. dissertation, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2007), 6. She also notes here that the more highly-defined stages often overlap and repeat "without being bound to absolute 'steps' that all individuals experience" (6).

age did you sense God calling you into ministry"—leads respondents to provide data for the age of initial considering/reflection rather than both important time periods unless the age of consideration and the age of commitment happened to be the same. In Washington's study, these ages were usually within about three years of one another but not always.²² Future studies would be able to provide more detailed data by properly identifying both ages.

A second major limitation of the study is a lack of detailed information related to the factors that influence a call to ministry and clarification of that call. While the survey did ask general questions about church involvement, devoutness of parents, and personal spiritual practices (such as prayer and reading of Scriptures), the participants were not given an opportunity to identify which factors were most influential on their call to ministry because this was not the primary objective of the survey. In a general sense, the data from the survey did suggest that having early church involvement, highly devout Christian parents, and frequent times of prayer and Scripture reading correlate strongly with higher percentages of younger ages of calling. Nevertheless, research on the level of importance for each of these factors individually among other factors would provide useful data for those desiring to help others who are seeking to identify and clarify potential calling into vocational ministry.

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Biographical Note

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²² Washington, "Factors," 60. In Washington's study, 19 percent of the participants indicated that the age of considering and the age of commitment were the same, another 19 percent having both over a period of one year, 24 percent over a two-year period, and another 19 percent over a three-year period. Thus, 81 percent of the participants moved from an initial age of reflection to the age of commitment within a three-year time period ("Factors," 60).

This Present Light: Exciting Students Using Fiction to Explain History and Religion

*Jerry Hopkins
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Abstract

This study will present the use of stories and historical novels in teaching and learning religious history. The paper presents important insights into the interesting ways that history, religion and fiction can be combined in the study of religion. The focus will be on the importance of interpretation, analysis, factual accuracy, literary techniques, and appropriate philosophical associations that can enrich, encourage and inspire students who have little interest in history or religion. Selected authors, novels and techniques will be presented and explained in such a way as to engage one's attention.

Have you heard any good stories lately? I'm always looking for good stories, stories that grip one's heart, that lift one's spirit, that encourages one's thinking. Most of us are looking for interesting stories to illustrate our lessons or messages that we might be using. It is an ongoing process for those of us who are engaged in teaching or speaking. Not only do we enjoy hearing good stories, we enjoy telling them to others.¹

As we have probed the development of artificial intelligence and thereby gained more insight and understanding of human intelligence, we have also learned the importance of how narrative stories fit in the development of intelligence. In fact, one of the characteristics of early human beings was the ability to experience and express stories. The story is an important "art form" for early man. It is intimately linked to ancient man's sense of history and heritage. It was part of his religious experience and of his religious expression. Before the development of written language there was the use of the oral history of individuals, families and groups in human society and the expression of religious experiences. This was history and religious experience in its most primitive and basic form. Early man learned by acquiring and telling stories. In this way history and religious experience was preserved and shared over time. Such stories are still shared and still shape the heritage of many people, modern and primitive.²

We still gain and retain information by the use of stories. What we know by our experiences or by exposure to the experiences of others, we more readily value through the development of stories and the telling of these stories over and over. In fact, retelling stories stimulates our memory and enables us to more readily communicate what we have learned and experienced. Reflecting on stories, expanding and enriching our stories, deepens our insight and enriches our experience as human beings. Gaining lots of stories to use builds our intelligence and our ability to communicate what we know. As we gain a collection of good stories we can learn how to apply our stories to new situations. Such knowledge as to how and when to use stories reveals the importance of wisdom. This is one of the things that marks Jesus Christ and the stories that He used during his life on earth. In the stories of Jesus we see great wisdom and great human understanding and insight. Jesus' stories form a bridge from Old Testament to the New Testament and then both of these together are linked to us today.

¹ Austin B. Tucker, *The Preacher as Storyteller* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008; Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992).

² John Schmalzbauer, "Telling Catholic and Evangelical Stories in American Journalism: The Impact of the Religious Imagination," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 20 (Spring, 2002), pp. 25-44.

The majority of the Bible is narrative, the sharing of stories. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are filled with stories. These stories not only give us a historical perspective, they also give us a basis of understanding who we are and what we are. Through such stories we learn a great deal about humanity. We also learn God, about the nature of man, and about our struggle as human beings. We gain insight into the problem that all of us must struggle with. It is called simply “sin” in this ancient book of stories. Evil is a great spiritual infection that troubles all of us. That problem we find solved in the New Testament and the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a great storyteller. He seldom taught without using a story. Then when Jesus wasn't teaching, he was doing things that were so unusual and extraordinary that they became stories that have been repeated down through history. Those stories are now contained in the four Gospels we know as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament. Think of the great stories that Jesus shared during his early pilgrimage – the calling of His twelve disciples, the rich young ruler, the sick woman who touched the hem of His garment, the prodigal son, and many other simple, profound stories. Such Bible stories are powerful and valuable.

These stories are often described as being “good for children.” They certainly are good for the little children, but they are actually valuable for all of us, young and old. Children and young people need to profit and benefit from these marvelous stories. Moses in the Old Testament insisted that God's truth and His stories should be shared in our homes and the truths of God presented. Children need these lessons, but so do adults. Adults need such stories as much as children.

Stories are all around us. They are valuable and vital to our thinking. Stories make history easier to remember and more obviously of value. There are stories that need to be read and remembered. Many of these stories find root in tragedies that tore the fabric of past societies. Judge Ben Z. Grant has written a dynamic story about the Scottish folks in the late 18th Century and early 19th Century that deserves to be read so as to gain an understanding of the suffering and sorrows associated with the Highland Clearances of the 1790s. *The Wolf Has No Pillow* is one of those good stories.³

Sometimes there are collections of stories that together inspire us to think about who we are and how we came to be what we are. Sometimes these stories are not fiction, at least in the traditional sense of fiction. A really good collection of such stories is Dr. Marvin Harris' autobiography (“*Gladly Lerne...Gladly Teche*”) that he interestingly titled from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.⁴ These stories are worth reading, remembering and retelling. Such stories as these by Ben Grant and Marvin Harris are examples of “story power” at its best.

Through history stories have been used to preserve important events and experiences for future generations. In later years those stories have been used to develop literature, including short stories and novels. Many of these literary pieces have contributed significantly to society. One of the important novels that communicated important facts and experiences in the period leading up to the Civil War was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁵ This novel's important role in the condemnation and dismantling of the slave

³ Ben Z. Grant, *The Wolf Has No Pillow* (Lancashire, U.K.: BeWrite Books, 2009).

⁴ Marvin Harris, “*Gladly Lerne...Gladly Teche*”: *The Autobiography of Maverick Marvin Harris* (Chelsea, Michigan: Sheridan Books, Inc., 2008).

⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe actually wrote a book answering a variety of questions and objections to her novel that she titled *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The original subtitle of the novel was *The Man Who Was a Thing*. See Joan D. Hedrick, “Commerce in Souls: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the State of the Nation” in Mark C. Carnes, editor, *Novel History: Historians*

system is one of the dramatic stories of the nineteenth century. It is a story that was fashioned out of the religious, political and social tragedies that divided the nation and resulted in the American Civil War. Stowe's novel presents in a very powerful way the experience of slavery and its dehumanizing and destructive force in individual and corporate settings.⁶

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) was the mother of seven children.⁷ She was the daughter of the minister Lyman Beecher. Her father became the president of Lane Theological Seminary in Ohio in 1832 and also served as the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati. Harriet married one of the seminary professors, Calvin E. Stowe, in 1836. She was not only the mother of seven children. She also gave birth to one of the most influential novels in the nineteenth century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The novel exposed the tragedy and sorrow of slavery. Harriet's work was extraordinarily successful, helping focus the moral debate over slavery and ultimately leading to the Civil War. She also wrote and published other novels and literary works—*The Minister's Wooing* (1859), *Old-Town Folks* (1869), and many essays and religious poems.⁸

Stowe upheld the value of all human beings, especially those who are poor and without a voice. She courageously told the story of slaves who could not speak for themselves. On a visit to Maysville, Kentucky, in the 1830's she had witnessed the cruelty and dehumanism of a slave auction and determined then that she would tell the story of the people who did not have a voice or way to object to their treatment.⁹

Slavery has often been treated as a marginal aspect of history, confined to courses on southern or African American history. In fact, slavery played a crucial role in the making of the modern world and the development of the United States. Beginning at least as early as 1502, European slave traders shipped approximately 11 to 16 million slaves to the Americas, including thousands to what is now the United States. During the decades before the Civil War, slave grown cotton accounted for over half the value of all United States exports, and provided virtually all the cotton used in the northern textile industry and 70 percent of the cotton used in British mills.¹⁰

In the decades before the Civil War. A third of the South's population labored as slaves. Enslaved African Americans performed all kinds of work, but slavery mainly meant backbreaking field work. Deprivation and physical hardship were the hallmark of life under slavery. Slave sales frequently broke up slave families. Nevertheless, enslaved African Americans were able—through their families, religion, and cultural traditions—to sustain an autonomous culture and community beyond the direct control of their masters. In addition, slaves resisted slavery through insurrection and a variety of indirect protests against slavery. President Abraham Lincoln commented to Stowe at a White House reception during the

and *Novelists Confront America's Past (and Each Other)* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), pp. 167-183.

⁶ Michael Borgstrom, "Passing Over: Setting the Record Straight in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *PMLA*, Vol. 118 (Oct., 2003), pp. 1290-1304.

⁷ Noel B. Herson, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Biography* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976).

⁸ Charles Howell Foster, "The Genesis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'The Minister's Wooing,'" *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (Dec., 1948), pp. 493-517).

⁹ Russell B. Nye, *Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), pp. 63-64, 100-101, 155-156; Holman Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1964), pp. 3, 170-171.

¹⁰ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), pp. 27-55; Herbert S. Klein, *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1967).

Civil War, “So this is the little lady who wrote the book that made this great war.”¹¹ Thus *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is part of this heritage.

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

Often these writers become more powerful than philosophers in shaping popular culture and thinking. C. S. Lewis, among such writers, has had a very strong influence on popular culture. His Narnian stories¹² and space trilogy¹³ has consistently portrayed powerful themes and recently contributed significant movies for popular viewing. His portrayal of such Christian themes have been done in good taste and good prose.¹⁴ In fact Lewis intentionally portrayed Christian themes in his novels. He complained in a 1939 letter, “You will be both grieved and amused to hear that out of about 60 reviews only two showed any knowledge that my idea of the fall of the Bent One was anything but an invention of my own ... any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people’s minds under the cover of romance without their knowing it.”¹⁵ The same has been true of Frederick Buechner. From the writing of both Lewis and Buechner we can gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual experience and how we should relate to things in that “unseen” realm.

In his books Buechner strives to emphasize the reality and redemptive grace present in one’s daily life. The London Free Press has described Buechner as “one of our great novelists because he is one of our finest religious writers.” *A Long Day’s Dying* (1950) was his first popularly acclaimed novel. He took his title from a conversation between Adam and Eve in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and continued to describe the struggle involved in alienation and association. Buechner authored a tetralogy *The Book of Bebb* (1972-77) about a minister named Leon Bebb which is full of earthy, clever and humorous episodes, both

¹¹ Nye, *Society and Culture*, pp. 100-101.

¹² *The Chronicles of Narnia* consist of seven books—*The Magician’s Nephew*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *The Horse and His Boy*, *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’*, *The Silver Chair* and *The Last Battle*. In reading order, it is preferable to read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* first. This series emphasizes a “great lion” that represents Jesus Christ (“the Lion of Judah,” “the Great Lion of God”).

¹³ Lewis authored this science fiction trilogy to portray the problem of good and evil in the world, in society and individual lives. The trilogy consists of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943, a “voyage” to Venus) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). *Perelandra* is complemented by Lewis’ study of John Milton’s epic poem in his book *A Preface to Paradise Lost* that deals with the fall of man and the emerging hierarchical theme. In another work, *The Problem of Pain* (1940) published before *Perelandra* Lewis discusses the nature of obedience in relation to good and evil. *That Hideous Strength* illustrates the point that he had made in *The Abolition of Man* (1943). He argued in this volume that when man rejects objective principles of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, those who do so reject what constitutes their very reason, creating thereby unhumanity, and consequently inhumanity. Such evil sows the seeds of its own destruction. It is thought that this novel was possibly preparation for Lewis’ best novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

¹⁴ See Mark Eddy Smith, *Aslan’s Call: Finding Our Way to Narnia* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Terry Glaspay, *C. S. Lewis: His Life and Thought* (Nashville: Inspirational Press, 1996); Devin Brown, *Inside Prince Caspian: A Guide to Exploring the Return to Narnia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2008).

¹⁵ C. S. Lewis to Sister Penelope CSMV (BOD), July [August] 9, 1939 (Lewis gave this letter the wrong date since it answered a letter dated August 5, 1939 from Sister Penelope). *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis: Books, Broadcasts, and the War, 1931-1949*. Volume II, edited by Walter Hooper (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2004), p. 262.

entertaining and witty. He also authored two historical novels. *Godric* (1980) was his novelized first person narrative of a medieval saint. This novel became a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 1981. A second historical novel about this saint's life was *Brendan* published in 1987. These novels are only part of a large number of other literary works that contribute to both historical and religious understanding.¹⁶ Buechner has argued, "All theology, like all fiction, is at its heart autobiography."¹⁷

Another writer who has surfaced in the same genre as Lewis and Buechner is Frank E. Peretti. *This Present Darkness* is a novel by Peretti.¹⁸ There are many things in this book that are good. It is a powerful encouragement to exercise the discipline of prayer as one faces challenges from unseen realms. It is a revelation of how evil uses people, works through them and in what we do as individuals. It is a picture of what happens in all too many communities where the very structure of the community is co-opted for the work of evil. In Peretti's Ashton the police, most of the churches, many college faculty, administration and business people are drawn into a massive conspiracy to take over an entire community for the devil under the guise of "modern enlightenment."

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

Peretti's work is important in the atmosphere in which we live today. The tragedy at the military installation of Fort Hood is an example of how this evil thing works itself out in reality. The news media today is now in the process, and shortly after the event was already "spinning" what took place as "not the work of a terrorist", but merely a "deranged individual" that wasn't associated at all with any movement. In reality, the individual evidently guilty of this tragic terroristic attack planned, prepared and executed his act deliberately and viciously. Many knew of his extremist views, but did not take them seriously

¹⁶ A list of Buechner's published works is impressive: *A Long Day's Dying* (1950), *The Seasons' Difference* (1952), *The Return of Ansel Gibbs* (1958), *The Final Beast* (1965), *The Magnificent Defeat* (1966), *The Hungering Dark* (1968), *The Entrance to Porlock* (1970), *The Alphabet of Grace* (1970), *Lion Country* (1971), *Open Heart* (1972), *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (1973), *Love Feast* (1974), *Faces of Jesus: A Life Story* (1974), *Treasure Hunt* (1977), *Telling the Truth: The Gospel As Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* (1977), *Peculiar Treasures: A Biblical Who's Who* (1979), *The Book of Bebb* (1979), *Godric* (1979), *The Sacred Journey* (1982), *Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation* (1983), *A Room Called Remember* (1984), *Brendan* (1987), *Whistling in the Dark: An ABC Theologized* (1988), *Telling Secrets, A Memoir* (1991), *The Clown in the Belfry: Writings on Faith and Fiction* (1992), *Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner* (1992), *The Son of Laughter* (1993), *The Longing for Home: Recollections and Reflections* (1996), *On the Road With the Archangel* (1997), *The Storm* (1998), *The Eyes of the Heart: A Memoir of the Lost and Found* (1999), *Speak What We Feel (Not What We Ought to Say): Reflections on Literature and Faith* (2004), *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith* (2004), *The Christmas Tide: A Story* (2005), *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons* (2006), and *The Yellow Leaves: A Miscellany* (1008). See also Dale Brown, *The Book of Buechner: A Journey Through His Writings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 46.

¹⁸ Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1986).

enough to take precautions or preventive actions. That resulted in many lives lost and many lives tragically injured. What drove him to do what he did?

That is a question that will likely be answered psychologically, but not much will be considered regarding the spiritual motivations. The nature of evil will not likely be investigated or considered in dealing with the motivations driving this individual. In a real sense there is a "spiritual warfare" that one engages in through such experiences. This individual did not need to do what he did, but he did it. He was "driven" by things that he thought and by forces that he yielded to beyond himself. We cannot know for sure what he was thinking or feeling, but we can see what he did, deliberately, viciously and tragically. We should in this kind of situation take the spiritual message to Peretti's hero Hank Busche who had to face the power and deadly force of "corporate evil" in Ashton, "Pray, Hank. Pray for these people. Don't let them escape your heart. The pain is there, the fear is there, the danger is there."¹⁹ This is what we must do likewise in the face of unseen evil and destructive hate. We need more than just psychological explanations and criminal investigations. It is in the power of story that we can come to understand and contend with such evil in ourselves and in others.

Conclusion

Stories and novels are far more than casual entertainment. They can be used to promote and proclaim a message, present a particular viewpoint. They are the product of a worldview that gives them a background, an intellectual underpinning and a means of propulsion. The works discussed in this paper have underpinning them some specific and serious assumptions, propositions framing their message and composing their basic content.

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

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

One very effective writer we have considered is Frederick Buechner who has produced a large number of best-sellers and creatively-written books, sermons and literary collections. He said to himself when asked to teach "creative writing" that the question for him "became ... what were they going to write effectively and powerfully about? Suppose they chose to write effective and powerful racist tracts or sadistic pornography or novels about warped and unpleasant people doing warped and unpleasant things? Or, speaking less sensationally, suppose they used the skills I had somehow managed to teach them to write books simply for the sake of making a name for themselves, or making money, or making a stir. It seemed to me and still does that to teach people how to write well without

¹⁹ Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, p. 71.

knowing what they are going to write about is like teaching people how to shoot well without knowing what or whom they are going to shoot at.”²⁰

In Buechner’s thinking, words are powerful. He says that it is an “intravenous” experience. “As you sit there only a few inches from the printed page, the words you read go directly into the bloodstream and go into it at full strength. More than the painting you see or the music you hear, the words you read become in the very act of reading them part of who you are, especially if they are the words of exceptionally promising writers.” Through the message presented in words a person’s life is changed, transformed, transfigured in numerous ways. This is especially true in the reading of Scripture, but it is also true in the reading of any text, particularly those that are True.

Buechner continues to identify the expression of word with deed as he writes. He said, “If there is poison in the words, you are poisoned; if there is nourishment, you are nourished; if there is beauty, you are made a little more beautiful. In Hebrew, the word *dabar* means both word and also deed. A words doesn’t merely say something, it does something. It brings something into being. It makes something happen. What do writers want their books to make happen?”²¹ That is the question for anyone who writes, whether it is books, short stories, newspaper columns, magazines articles, novels or even some non-fiction. What do we want to come of what we write? There are times when many people need a “transfusion” intellectually, spiritually and socially. In other words, we need a change in our thinking and that can come by thinking thoughts generated by what others have written. Authors need to both read and write with ardor, intensity and commitment. In such a way, writers are changed and transfigured, but so are those who read what they write transformed and reformed.

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

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

Think of the many stories, experiences and lives that will never be known by future generations because they have passed into “history” without anyone marking them or identifying who they are. There is a sadness in that loss which cannot be relieved by merely making a burial ground of nameless, unknown people known. The stories, lessons, lives are lost to future generations. The drama and inspiration of such stories communicate and intensify the good of religious experiences and physical places associated with them. Such stories as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Godric*, or *This Present Darkness* in different ways preserve for all of us the value and virtue of religious and redemptive work.

²⁰ Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life: Dailey Meditations With Frederick Buechner*, compiled by George Connor (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 189-190.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Biographical Note

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The Psychology of Totemism

Patrick Scott Smith
Republic, MO

Introduction: Vulnerability, Vicarious-Use and the Existential Situation

The susceptible and dependent nature of humans makes necessary the attribute of vicarious-use in answer to the material problems of survival. With no fur and diminutive senses; being slow on the run; with no natural camouflage or other physical abilities to survive, humans create and use material things and employ cooperative strategies to effectively hunt, fish, farm, and provide shelter and protection. Thus society and technology begins and mental capacity develops.

Since humans have few instinctual faculties to assist survival of physical circumstances, those instincts are instead replaced with a more complete complex of remembrances, constant logical deductions and conceptual associations which directs the vicarious-use of physical things. Thus it is to this primary state we owe our intelligence, our greater cognitive abilities, creative instincts and our desire to build and to fashion out of the elements, complex structures. All these developments are owed to the physical manipulation of things which are complex affairs.¹

That everything is accomplished vicariously forces learning, creating, remembering and the teaching of things learned and created. But uniquely, humans, because of our unique physical circumstance, not only accomplish infrastructure as other species, but build and landscape for aesthetics. Socially, we do not organize just for survival, but we have fashion and art; we perform sculpture; we have ideals, ideology, and religion, all for the same reason society, technology and mental capacity develops, because of the physical place we occupy in physical circumstance, one of acute vulnerability. It is at this connection we will draw conclusions about social organization and religious formation. In this survey I will purpose to show how totemic religion is formed and becomes an institution in reaction to physical conditions.

Characterization of Totemism

The word *totem* comes from the Ojibwa people (also known as the Chippewa) who were part of the Algonquin confederacy of Indians in the Great Lakes area. The expression *ototeman* generally means, "He is a relative on mine."² An alternative pronunciation, *ododam* is given by Francis Assikinack (1884), an Ottawa Indian. The term *totam* is first introduced into literature by J. K. Long, an Indian interpreter, in 1791.³ But it was J. F.

¹ The Tainos in the Caribbean evolved a complex form of agricultural techniques involving *conuco* mounds which helped to retard erosion, improve drainage and make easier the weeding and harvesting of crops. "Other crops grown from seed included squash, beans, peppers, and peanuts. They were boiled with meat, fish, and cassava juice, a procedure that detoxified the juice. "Pepper pots" containing these ingredients were kept on the fire to provide food as needed. Alternatively, meat and fish were roasted on spits (Irving Rouse, *The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus* (New Haven, New York: Yale University Press, 1992) 12)". Here we see the complexities involved, at a basic level of subsistence, of just two activities, agricultural and culinary arts, of a primary people about which every motion had to be remembered and taught.

² Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) 18.

³ J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, Vol. 1 (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968) 3.

McLennan who, in his 1869-1870 *Fortnightly Review* articles, "The Worship of Animals and Plants", first introduced totemism as a theoretical subject and defines it as fetishism plus exogamy and matrilineal descent.⁴

According to James George Frazer,

The reason why a clan revere a particular species of animals or plants (for the clan totem may be a plant) and call themselves after it, would seem to be a belief that the life of each individual of the clan is bound up with some one animal or plant of the species, and that his or her death would be the consequence of killing that particular animal, or destroying that particular plant.⁵

Obviously at some point primary people adopted totems to suit their social groups, but it was their belief they not only shared destiny and identity, but were descended from and were kin to them. This belief was so prevalent it sometimes took precedence in unlikely ways. In Australia, people of the Pelican stock in the north of Queensland believed they were related to tribesmen of the same totem in the southern most parts of the continent.⁶

Among primary peoples belief in descent from animal and plant species was a common assumption. According to Lang the chief creating force to the Bushmen of South Africa was a mantis or grasshopper whose name was *Cagn*. As told by Mr. Orpen, chief magistrate of St. John's territory, a hunter named Qing (who first saw white men through combat against them) describes *Cagn* as the maker of all things and was prayed to. Elsewhere, according to myth, *Cagn* struck snakes with his staff turning them into men and offending individuals into baboons. Among the Aryans it was a boar who was the creative force; among the Algonquin, a very large hare. According to the Gold Coast people a large spider made the world. Neighbors of the Bushmen, the Ovaherero, claim first man and woman and oxen came from the Omumborombonga tree.⁷

Complexities to the totemic system are evident in the Mount Gambier region of Australia where social groups were further subdivided into two main totems. So besides the local totem of a particular clan, members also belonged, at birth, to one of two other totem families or phratries, the Kumite (fishhawk) or the Kroke (black cockatoo). Thus smoke and honeysuckle trees belong to the Kumite family and are kin to fishhawk men. The kangaroo, summer, autumn, wind and the shevak tree belong to the Kroki family and are kin to the black cockatoo people. So any member of the Kroki division has for his brothers the sun, the wind, the kangaroo, etc., while any Kumite includes among his kin, rain, thunder and winter.⁸ Among North American Indians and the Australian Aborigines, common, though not universal⁹, totemic division would be similar to the Mount Gambier people, the tribe is divided into two phratries and within each phratry are the totem clans. Among other

⁴ Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 13.

⁵ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Collier Books, 1922) 799.

⁶ Andrew Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, Vol. 1 (1913; reprint, London: Senate of Studio Editions, 1995) 62-63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-171.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁹ In North America the Cayuga tribe of the Iroquois have two phratries and eight clans; one phratry included five clans (Bear, Wolf, Turtle, Snipe, Eel) and the other included three (Deer, Beaver, Hawk). Among the Tuscarora-Iroquois two phratries are evenly divided into eight clans, but among the Wyandot family of the Hurons their tribe is divided into four phratries (Frazer, *Totemism*, 57).

Australian groups the tribe is further divided into subphratries before clan designation.¹⁰ It is this social structure which regulates sexual, marital and dietary activity.

The strict taboo against killing or consuming the totem animal, except when absolutely necessary, also follows totemic social division; among the patrilineal clan of the Boontha Murra a person cannot on any account eat of his own totem; among the Yuin a man may not kill or eat his "Yimbar" and among the Thurawal and possibly the Thoorga tribe a person will never kill or harvest his totem animal or plant not matter the opportunity, believing this will augment the supply of the totem plant or animal.¹¹ While for some groups such decrees are absolute, for others, exceptions are allowed, but not without hesitation; under strict conditions, usually only small portions may be eaten. Thus among the Mount Gambier people,

A man does not kill or use as food any of the animals of the same subdivision (Kroki or Kumite) with himself, excepting when hunger compels, and then they express sorrow for having to eat their *wingong* (friends) or *tumanang* (their flesh). When using the last word they touch their breasts, to indicate the close relationship, meaning almost a portion of themselves.¹²

In Southwestern Australia,

A certain mysterious connexion exists between a family and its kobong¹³ (matrilineal, exogamic totem) so that a member of the family will never kill an animal of the species to which the kobong belongs should he find it asleep . . . indeed, he always kills it reluctantly and never without affording it a chance to escape.¹⁴

Among the Wotjobaluk, Buandik and Kurnai, killing the animal of the same subdivision is taboo except when hunger compels, after which much sorrow is expressed. But the Tatahi, Keramin and Wathi-wathi would eat their totem if it were killed by someone else.

Among the Central Australian Arunta tribe, as opposed to others, the taboo against eating the totem animal or plant is that the individual can only eat of it sparingly and not the best part. For example an Emu person cannot eat the fat of the Emu and the Kangaroo person cannot eat the tail¹⁵. But during the widespread *Intichiuma* ceremony, performed to insure the increase of the totem animal or plant, the individual must eat, but only a small portion.¹⁶

Though there is more to totemism than the practice of exogamy, i.e. marrying outside a defined social unit or clan, one could hardly discuss totemic character without mentioning its

¹⁰ Ibid., 56-62).

¹¹ Geza Roheim, *Australian Totemism: A Psycho-Analytic Study in Anthropology* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1925) 73.

¹² Lang, *Myth*, 4-5.

¹³ In Australia different words are synonymous with totem: In Southeastern Australia people also say *Kobong*; the Dieri say *Mundu*; the Narrinyeri, *Ngaitye*. Among the northern tribes of Central Australia the Warramunga use the term *Mungai* (Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995) 101).

¹⁴ Roheim, *Australian*, 73.

¹⁵ Frazer, *Totemism*, 110.

¹⁶ Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968) 167-169, 202.

practice. Some have debated whether exogamy and totemism are interdependent.¹⁷ Certainly the Eskimos practice exogamy without totemic feature. So while totemism certainly includes it, exogamy can be practiced without it.¹⁸ Yet for the most part societies that are largely totemic are also exogamic and most that practice exogamy are totemic. Undoubtedly an end result of totemic classification is marriage by exogamy with the purpose of avoiding incest. Henry Bergson saw totemism as a means of exogamy born out of an instinct to prevent biologically harmful unions between close relatives.¹⁹ Levi-Strauss and Frazer discount this assumption: Levi-Strauss on the basis that if animal instinct is the guiding principal, like animals, endogamy would be the practice.²⁰ Frazer, doubting the existence of an “instinctive horror” towards incest and suspicious of its harmful effects between two healthy parents, says simply it must have arisen “in some mistaken notion of cause and effect; in short, in a superstition.”²¹ Yet, in several instances Frazer shows,

The effect of the division of the tribe into two exogamous halves, with all the children of the same mother ranged on the same side, is obviously to prevent the marriage of brothers with sisters. The effect of the division of the tribe into four exogamous quarters, coupled with the rules that every person may marry only into one quarter, and that the children must belong to their mother is to prevent the marriage of parents with children.²²

The Dieri tribe has a legend which attributes the origin of tribal divisions to *Muramura* (Good Spirit) who, because humankind practiced promiscuous marriage, ordered the tribe to divide into branches which were to be named after animate and inanimate objects (dogs, mice, emus, iguanas, rain, etc.); the members of each division were forbidden to intermarry.²³

About the Banksian Cockatoos Frazer states,

The tribes of Western Victoria, whose totems are long-billed cockatoo, pelican, banksian cockatoo, boa snake, and quail, say that their progenitor was a long-billed cockatoo who had a banksian cockatoo to wife; their children, taking clan from their mother, were Banksian Cockatoos; but, being forbidden by the laws of consanguinity to marry with each other, they had to introduce “fresh flesh,” which could only be done by marriage with strangers; so they got wives from a distance, and hence the introduction of the pelican, snake, and quail totems.²⁴

Frazer also shows that though the social division of the simple two class totemic system among some tribes creates the theoretical possibility of father/daughter or mother/son marriage, such unions are still forbidden.²⁵ In my opinion, such anathema and purposeful social construction indicates neither instinct nor superstition, but a consciously invented and

¹⁷ Frazer on this subject says, “But the truth is, exogamy forms no part of true totemism. It is a great social reform of a much later date, which, in many communities, has accidentally modified the totemic system, while in others it has left that system entirely unaffected (Frazer, *Totemism*, 162)”.

¹⁸ Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 11-12.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 94.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 94.

²¹ Frazer, *Totemism*, 164-165.

²² *Ibid*, 163.

²³ *Ibid*, 64.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 65.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 400-401.

functional social devise. But whether exogamy preceded totemism or totemism was its consequence or if they were concurrent or interdependent, the practice of totemism certainly facilitates exogamy and they therefore are inter-functional.

Totemism in Religious Evolution

Some social scientists have wanted to simulate Darwinian evolution for the development of religion with a span of time and stages in a drawn out process where one form of religious practice, seen as basic and simplified, leads to another which then casts off the prior form which is seen as superstition. The early British thinker John Lubbock contrived a system of religious development which begins with lower form of development where humans held no concept about spirit or of right and wrong.²⁶ This was followed by a belief absent of deity to include an assumption of evil beings only.²⁷ Next was fetishism, a witchcraft which “has no temples, idols, priests, sacrifices, or prayer . . . and . . . involves no belief in creation or in a future life, and none in a state of rewards and punishments.”²⁸ Fetishism was followed by totemism where all aspects of nature: animals, plants, heavenly bodies, even animate objects such as a river and inanimate objects like stones might be worshiped. After this, significant progress came with shamanism where spirit beings live in a world to themselves, with which the shaman communicates and cajoles.²⁹ This condition would change into idol worship, then to anthropomorphism, to subsequently include a creator deity with the final sequence of advanced religion to include a moral code.³⁰

Another thinker to simulate Darwinian evolution for the development of religion was the social evolutionist Herbert Spencer. As Styers mentions “Spencer advocated a naturalistic account for the origins of magic which moved along a clear causal path of euhemerism into the more complex and differentiated forms displayed in modern society.”³¹

As Spencer states,

To the presumption that a number of diverse beliefs of the same class have some common foundation in fact, must in this case be added a further presumption derived from the omni-presence of the beliefs . . . Thus the universality of religious ideas, their great vitality, unite in showing that their source must be deep-seated. In other words, we are obliged to admit . . . they must be derived out of human experiences, slowly accumulated and organized.³²

To Spencer, religious ideas started with confusion about dreams where the figures in them are somehow extrapolated to become ghosts who are then deified to form what is known as ancestor worship. The stratification and movement towards a pantheon of gods comes from the importance given to powerful living leaders who then die and are given

²⁶ John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilization and Primitive Condition of Man*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879) 158-162.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 164.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 164-169.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 222-223.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 228-256.

³¹ Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic and Science in the Modern World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 74.

³² Herbert Spencer, *On Social Evolution*, ed. J. D. Y. Peel (1922; reprint, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1972) 207.

special veneration over one's own ancestors, thus setting a template for a hierarchy of supernatural beings, some more powerful than others.³³

To Frazer the evolutionary process moved from magic, to religion then to science.

In magic man depends on his own strength to meet difficulties and dangers that beset him on every side. He believes in a certain established order of nature which he can manipulate for his own ends . . . when he recognizes that both the order of nature which he had assumed and the control which he believed himself to exercise over it were purely imaginary, he ceases to rely on his own intelligence and his own unaided efforts, and throws himself humbly on the mercy of certain great invisible beings behind the veil of nature, to whom he now ascribes all those far-reaching powers which he once arrogated to himself.³⁴

Thus where magic is superseded by religion's interpretation of nature as chaotic and in need of supernatural intervention, science would usurp religion with its own construct of an ordered universe.

The problem with the causal line of social evolution in respect to religious development is the religious notions of a particular culture may hold many facets of religious construction with no indication of one aspect evolving from the other though one or more aspects might or might not be held in greater esteem than others. For example the American Indian, with complex social structure (the Powhatans as example) while advocating a creator being, also inculcated into their belief system anthropomorphic spirit beings³⁵, animistic elements to nature (the spirit in wind, fire and water) while at the same time practicing shamanism, and totemism as well.³⁶ Therefore it is not that religion or society evolves in the Darwinian sense. Rather what evolves is technology in answer to physical circumstance and increased knowledge which eventually accompanies that evolution, thus as technology and knowledge has evolved religion and society changes.

The basic constituents of religion, the idea of spirit, spirit beings, ancestor veneration, object or totemic veneration, sacred places, even leaders in worship and purveyors of magic were there from the start. The changes came with changes in technology and population increase which brought about at first a greater emphasis on one or more of the basic constituents. As changes in agricultural technology brought about population increase the necessity for a hierarchical and more defined social structure was also reflected in religious structure. Thus while still holding to the totemic vestige of animal veneration the Egyptians also began to reflect in their religious assumption the hierarchy of their own social structure with persons of more or less stature and defined powers as the objects of their veneration.

³³ Ibid, 208-212.

³⁴ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 824-825.

³⁵ For example, the twins, Born-for-Water and Monster Slayer, of the Navajo who killed monsters that harassed the Navajo after their emergence from the underworld. Or Morning Star, the war captain of some pueblos, which can be seen in petroglyph at Santa Fe, New Mexico, with shield carrying arrow and quiver (Ray A. Williamson, *Living the Sky: The Cosmos of the American Indian* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984) 172, 18th picture between 176-177).

³⁶ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 617; Edward Burnett Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958) 322. Frazer believed the Australians had no priests (Frazer, *Totemism*, 141). As ceremonial director, certainly the Alatinja conducted religious ceremonies making sure strict observance was maintained in which he was treated with great deference (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 168, 180).

Where totemism is concerned, in early primary societies the physical closeness humans had with nature, the geographical limitations of their known-world³⁷ and the precariousness of existence, made natural the assumption of kinship to animals and plants. The images from which to draw meaning about origin and identity would naturally be those that were ever present. The closeness and oneness which is felt towards them would be magnified by a limited known-world. Because existence depended on the animals hunted and the plants gathered this put humans in a psychologically dependent position because survival based on these means would be uncertain.

So with images of them constant and dependency on them prevalent and since life is shared with them and depends on them, tying identity and kinship to plants and animals would be an expected assumption.

When farming and herding techniques raised population levels and more egalitarian social structure was replaced by more hierarchical ones and settlements became increasingly urban, constant proximity and psychological dependency on animals naturally decreased. Animals and plants no longer held, in the mind of humans, a psychologically equal or superior position because humans no longer depended on them, but controlled them through farming and domestication, thus the psychological poignancy of dependency was mitigated. As urban societies grew the constancy of totemic images were naturally replaced with other-human images: fellow workers, craftsmen, soldiers, slaves and rulers. With population increase hierarchical rule was necessarily established and the images now used for identity and origin would mirror images seen. Individual and social identity would be tied to the ruling class and **their** religious interpretations about origins and meaning and less directly tied to totemic origins and meaning.

Common Elements to the Central Australian and Hopi Societies

That societies who are geographically and chronologically distant could make similar religious assumption indicates common psychological reaction to universal circumstances and concerns within physical existence. Disparate peoples throughout the world have constructed remarkably similar rituals and made analogous assumptions concerning the phenomenon of blood and the practice of sacrifice. The aborigines of Australia, distant by thousands of miles, with early cultural imprint, have also in common with the American Indians the inclination towards totemism. Interestingly the Central Australians and Hopi Indians, living in similar physical environments³⁸ may have emphasized in similar ways some religious inclinations. Both cultures, inclined to inculcate totemistic characteristics, one more completely, share many conceptual facets in common. The ones we will discuss are: totem origins, assisted emergence, the power of song and the one with unique emphasis and similarity: the importance of mythical and ritual journeying.

³⁷ Though some did traverse a fairly wide physical range, as did some Australian aborigines and American Indians and came in contact with other like tribes the knowledge of a greater world and disparate peoples and cultures was still limited. The limitedness of the Australian known-world is indicated when the natives of the Alice Springs area believe the evening star was an *Alcheringa* ancestor who, when she went into the earth, left her *Churinga* and her spirit part at a large white stone west of Alice Springs; they believe the star every night goes down into the stone (Spencer and Gillan, *Native Tribes*, 565).

³⁸ Central Australia lies in a desert zone with parched and barren table lands (Frazer, *Totemism*, 168; *Ibid*, 7). The Hopi also live in a dry arid region in southwest America.

Identification with and origins from the totem animal, plant or thing. Among different groups, to a greater or less degree, one of the common characteristics to primary cultures and a characteristic feature of Central Asiatic traditions is the belief that they themselves originated from some animal.³⁹ The Sea-Dyaks avoid eating certain animals because of supposed kinship to them by their forefathers. Among the Bechuana tribes the term *Bakatla* means, "They of the monkey." *Bakuena* means, "They of the alligator." *Batlapi*, "They of the fish." Each tribe has a superstitious dread of the animal after which they are called. The Patagonians of South America also believe they are descendents of animal deities. In North America the tribes of the Columbia River believe they are derived from the muskrat. The aboriginal inhabitants of California believe their ancestors were created from the earth and many believe these ancestors were coyotes. The Zapotecs, boasting of their valor, claim to be sons of lions and wild beasts. The Haidahs claim their descent from crows. The Ahts of Vancouver Island believe humans first existed as birds, fish and other animals. The Chippewa derive their origin from a dog. The Californian Indians believe they came from the prairie wolf and explain the loss of the tail due to sitting up right.⁴⁰ But of all groups it appears the Central Australians are as closely knit to totemism as a society could be. While there is some precursory emphasis on ancestor veneration and priestly function all religious considerations seem to be of totemic nature. Since the social structure itself is built on totem identification marriage ceremonies, even common customs, are not without totemic arrangement. Initiation ceremonies involve, in essential ways, identification with the totem animal and *Alcheringa* ancestors who themselves are of totemic nature. The essential purpose of the all important *Intichiuma* ceremonies themselves is to guarantee the proliferation of the totem plant or animal. Even the *Churinga* or sacred objects which seem to hold a power and mystique their own are given by the *Alcheringa*.

While Hopi legends incorporate ideas about time and space, human destiny, controlling the stars and include in their cosmology non-animal/non-human creating beings⁴¹ they include totemic characteristic. In their creation story *Taiowa* the Creator created *Sotuknang* his nephew who would carry out *Taiowa's* plan for creation of the physical universe. *Sotuknang's* helper on earth was Spider Women who created, from a mixture of saliva and earth, two helpers, *Palongawhoya* and *Poqanghoya*. *Poqanghoya* created mountains, hills and valleys. *Palongawhoya* created sound and earthly harmonic balance. Both were responsible for keeping the earth rotating smoothly on its axis.⁴² Though it was *Sotuknang* who gave humans their language, it was Spider Women who created animals, plants and humans. Realizing their dependency on the earth humans considered earth their mother, but they took the corn plant, having a similar body and built its flesh into their own, thus their mother is at the same time Mother Earth and Corn Mother. Of four periods of emergence, in the first world a commonality existed between people and between people and animals, but *Lavaihoya*, the Talker came and in the form of a bird convinced people of their differences. Then came *Katoya* in the form of a snake and led people even further away from natural harmony.⁴³ Consequently while the Hopi identify their origins with totem characteristic their social structure also reflects totemic systemization, hence the Spider Clan, the Blue Flute

³⁹ For totemism in China read *Totemism and Taboo in China* by Paul K. I. Chiu (Flushing, New York: Hsing-Hua Plublisher, 1997).

⁴⁰ Herbert Spencer, *Principals of Sociology*, Vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897) 344-345.

⁴¹ Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977) 3, 146-155.

⁴² The idea of supernatural beings helping the earth revolve on its axis is an interesting fusion of myth with science.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 3-7.

Clan, the Fire Clan, the Snake Clan, the Sun Clan, the Coyote Clan, the Bear Clan, the Badger and Sacred Spruce Clans, the Eagle, Corn, Water, Bow and Arrow Shaft Clans, etc.⁴⁴

Assisted emergence. The cultural motif of emergence in origin legend among primary people seems to be not an uncommon theme. The origin story of the Ojibwa has the five original clans descended from six anthropomorphic supernatural beings who “emerge” from the ocean to intermingle with humans.⁴⁵ Trobrianders in the South Pacific near the village of Laba’i believe their four clans emerged from the depths of the earth.⁴⁶ As we have seen with the Hopi, after the creation of humans by Spider Women, there is an assisted emergence into four different worlds. In the first world, a utopian one, humankind loses its way and except for a few, who retain wisdom in step and harmony with creation, all is destroyed. These few are kept alive underground by the Ant People. When the second world is re-created and prepared, the remnant, by the directive of the deity *Sotuknang*, emerges into it. Again people become wicked and so it is destroyed, by fire and again the Ant People help and *Sotuknang* orders emergence into the third world. Once more humans lose their way and the third world is destroyed, but a few are helped, this time by Spider Women.⁴⁷

For the Central Australians important totemic initiation ceremonies are bound up with the *Alcheringa* which refers both to a distant past and the ancestral mythical creative beings that lived during that time. The *Alcheringa* were semi-human totemic creatures endowed with powers not held by humans. They were responsible for bringing humans to the form they presently have. They could travel on, above or beneath the ground. They could flood whole tracts of land by opening a vein in the arm. They could cause pools of water to well up; or make gorges and gaps in the geography of the land.⁴⁸ The history of the tribe commences with the *Alcheringa*. At this time there dwelt in the *Alkira aldorla*, the western sky, two *Alcheringa* beings, *Ungambikula*, which means “out of nothing” or “self-existing”. They took knives to the *Inapertwa*, pre-human totemic forms that had no distinct limbs or organs and carved them into human form.⁴⁹ With the help of the *Alcheringa*, humans thus emerge from an amorphous mass.

The power of song. According to Lang in *marchen* or household tales the most miraculous effects are caused when the hero pronounces a few lines of rhyme. In Rome it was thought incantation could bring down the moon. In the Odyssey the kin of Odysseus sing a “song of healing” over his wound. Sophocles speaks of the uselessness of singing over wounds which need a surgeon’s knife thus revealing the prevalence of the belief. In the *Kalewala*, the epic poem of the Finns, a song heals wounds. In some of Grimm’s *marchen* miracles happen with the repeat of rhyme. Among Indo-Aryans *mantras* are chanted over the sick and are otherwise used when magic effect is desired. Primary people in New Zealand once employed incantations called *karakias* to, among other things, raise the wind. In the Maori myths the hero used them to split rocks, to assume the shape of an animal or to fly at will.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Ibid, 39-122

⁴⁵ Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 4-16.

⁴⁸ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 512-513, 316, 424, 437.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 388-389.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 102-102.

To the Central Australians any bone, stick or spear that has been “sung” has been endowed with *Arungquiltha* which is a magic poison.⁵¹ A person struck by such an object is sure to die whether the wound is severe or not without the countermeasures of a medicine man. Some who was thus struck and knew the weapon was “sung” refused food and wasted away until death. In one instance an Arunta man was hit with a boomerang that had been “sung” by an Ilpirra man. In this instance an Arunta medicine man would be unable to heal the Arunta man, but an Ilpirra man was in camp and by “singing” over him was able to heal him.⁵² During the *Engwura*, which is the final portion of initiation ceremony lasting four months, when the Arunta men become *Urliara* (a fully developed native privy to the most sacred secrets of the tribe) a considerable amount of time is spent in the first six weeks “singing the ground” at night which was directed at a long *Parra* mound of earth.

The young men who were passing through the *Engwura* for the first time stood up forming two or three lines . . . and led by one or two of the older men, either moved in a long line parallel to the *Parra* mound, shouting “*wha! wha!*” alternating this at intervals with a specially loud “*whrr-rr-rr,*” when with one accord they bent forwards and, as it were, hurled the sound at the *Parra* . . . The noise was deafening, and the loud “*wha,*” and still more penetrating cry of “*whrr-rr-rr,*” could be heard a mile or two away echoing amongst the bare and rocky ranges surrounding the *Engwura* ground.⁵³

After the initiate passes through the rites of circumcision and subincision and displays a general demeanor of self-restraint, not *irkun oknirra*, given to chattering or frivolous behavior, he is taken to the *Ertnatulunga* where the sacred *Churinga* are hid. There the *Churinga* are examined one at a time with much care and reverence while the old men explain to whom they now belong. While this is going on a low singing of chants referring to the *Alcheringa*, from whom the *Churinga* come, is kept up. In the end the initiate is given his *Churinga* name never to be uttered except among the men of his own group.⁵⁴

To the Hopi, song is also more than an expression; it is a power, a tool and an aid, a view which is revealed in their origin legends. According to one story when humans emerged from the underworld and organized themselves with priests as their rulers the rulers began to take the wives of the lower classes; this led to more promiscuous behavior, quarreling, fighting, murder, suicide and an overall breakdown of society. The Chief called a meeting of wise men and after making *pahos*, as prayer offering, they gathered them in a

⁵¹ Similarly, the *mana* of the Melanesians also empowers song. “The Melanesian mind is entirely possessed by the belief in a supernatural power or influence, called almost universally *mana*. This is what works to affect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature; it is present in the atmosphere of life, attaches itself to persons and to things and is manifested by results which can only be ascribed to its operation. When one has got it he can use it and direct it. . . The presence of it is ascertained by proof. A man comes by chance upon a stone which takes his fancy; its shape is singular, it is like something, it is certainly not a common stone, there must be *mana* in it. So he argues with himself, and he puts it to the proof; he lays it at the root of a tree to the fruit of which it has a certain resemblance, or he buries it in the ground when he plants his garden; an abundant crop on the tree or in the garden shows that he is right, the stone is *mana*, has that power in it. Having that power it is a vehicle to convey *mana* to other stones. In the same way certain forms of words, generally in the form of a song, have power for certain purposes; a charm of words is called a *mana* (R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folk-lore* (New Haven, New York: Hraf Press, 1957) 118-119).”

⁵² Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 537-538.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 292-293.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 139-140.

tray and blew smoke over them. They then performed a calling song and brought the canary. But to help the people the canary needed the assistance of mocking bird; without him and his magic songs nothing could be done. Then the two birds transformed into human form and sang over and made medicine water in a sacred water bowl. They then performed "calling" songs and called the eagle to go up into the sky to find a hole through which the people might pass into a better world. After the eagles failure they called the hawk and after his lack of success they called, with song, the sparrow, and then the shrike. After their unsuccessful return they called the chipmunk who with songs and pulling took a pine sapling, got it to grow, but only to its normal height. Finally though, the chipmunk found a bamboo plant and with much pulling and singing got it to grow through the hole and with much effort and accompaniment of song people began to get to the top, to a better world. When the Chief got there four very long songs were performed. As long as the singing continued people were able to pass through; when it ended so did the passage to the top cease and many were left at the bottom.⁵⁵

Elsewhere in Hopi legend when Spider Women created the two helper beings, *Poqanghoya* and *Palongawhoya*, and then humans, she did so by singing the Creation Song over them, the assumption being she could not have accomplished this without song.⁵⁶ In another account in one of their migrations the people carried a jar of water which continuously provided fresh water and a bowl of earth into which they planted seeds of corn and melons and when they sang over it, plants grew from the bowl and provided food.⁵⁷ In the Soyal ceremony *pahos* are sung over presumably to empower them to be effectual.⁵⁸

The importance of mythical and ritual journeying. Many of the extremely complex and drawn out ceremonies of the Australians involved a great deal of movement from one place to another; in this process the wanderings and actions of their *Alcheringa* ancestors were mirrored and memorialized. The *Intichiuma* ceremony of the Witchetty Grub people, which guarantees the increase of the totem animal, involved fourteen or more distinct movements.⁵⁹ First, they assemble at the main camp at Alice Springs, then secretly leave to a meeting place not far off. Everyone is to leave all personal weapons, clothing and decorations behind and a fast is held until the ceremony is over. This first leg of the journey is started late in the afternoon so the camp at Emily Gap can be reached by dusk. All are to walk single file except the *Alatunja* who sometimes leads and sometime walks at the side of the file to insure the line is kept uniform. The second movement starts at daylight when everyone picks and carries a twig from the gum tree except the *Alatunja* who carries the *Apmara*, as small wooden trough. They walk the path traversed by the celebrated *Intwailiuka* leader of the Witchetty grubs in the *Alcheringa*; their destination is the *Ilthura oknira* which is a shallow cave high up on the western wall of the gap. Inside the cave is a large block of quartzite surrounded by small round stones. The block represents the adult animal and the stones, the eggs. The *Alatunja* taps the block with his trough and the others with their twigs. This, accompanied with song, is supposed to coax the animal to lay eggs. The *Alatunja* then takes one of the stones and strikes each man in the stomach, saying, "You have eaten much food." He then strikes each man in the stomach with his forehead. The third movement begins with the descent from this place to the bed of the creek in the Gap. Here they stop under a rock called *Alknalinta* meaning "decorated eyes". At this place the *Intwailiuka* cooked, pulverized and ate the grub. The men then repeat the tapping and

⁵⁵ Edmund Nequatewa, *Truth of a Hopi* (Radford, Virginia: Wilder Publications, 2007) 8-22.

⁵⁶ Waters, *Hopi*, 4-5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 156.

⁵⁹ The *Intichiuma* of the Honey-Ant totem also involves various journeying. *Ibid*, 186-189.

singing ritual. At this spot the *Intwailiuka* threw up sacred objects called *Churinga* which fell back to his feet. Accordingly the *Alatunja* does the same with some of the *Churinga* brought from a storage place nearby while the others run up and down the face of the rocky ledge singing and gathering the *Churinga* stones. The fourth journey then begins towards another *Ilthura* about a mile and a half away in the direction of Alice Springs. There the leader digs out with his trough any dirt that may have accumulated and uncovers two stones, the *Uchaqua*. The larger stone represents the chrysalis stage of the adult animal, the smaller one, the egg. When the stones are exposed to view songs are sung referring to the *Uchaqua*; they are reverently handled and cleaned, then each person goes down into the cave and the *Alatunja* lifts one of the stones and strikes him in the stomach and again says, "You have eaten much food." The *Alatunja* then strikes the stomach with his forehead. There are some ten of these *Ilthura* which are all visited with the same proceedings enacted. After the round of *Ilthura* a start is made for home; within a mile they stop and decorate themselves with bands around their heads to which they fix twigs of the *Udnirringa* bush (which the grub feeds on). They also install nose bones and rat tails and topknots of cockatoo feathers. The totem *Ilkinia* or sacred design is painted on the body and the face is painted as well with ochre and pipe clay. The men then head home in single file keeping their twigs in constant motion. Every once in a while they stop and the *Alatunja* peers in the distance on the watch out for the women left at camp. While away an old man remained behind and built a long wurley called *Umbana* which is supposed to represent the chrysalis case of insect, the *Maegwa*. With much ceremony, singing and slow purposeful movement the men enter and exit this structure. When back inside the wurley the singing comes to an end and only then is food and water brought. A large fire is lit and singing of the witchetty grub continues until sometime before daybreak. During the night men and women of the other moiety, the *Purula* and *Kumara*, are made to lay face downward away from the *Umbana*. They are watched over to make sure they stay in this position by women of the right moiety who also peer about watching the *Intichiuma* party as did the women in the *Alcheringa*. When the singing ends and the *Alatunja* puts out the fire this signals the release of the *Purula* and *Kumara* who run to the main camp. The *Intichiuma* party throws away their twigs; remove their decorations which are given to the *Purula* and *Kumara* men the sharing which secures the success of the ceremony. Just before sundown the ceremony is brought to a close with the painting over of the *Ilkini* emblem.⁶⁰

Among the Hopi, ritual movements and mythical journeying were also important features. According to their legend, as people in the first world began to distance themselves from animals and each other *Taiowa* and *Sotuknang* saw this as evil and decided to destroy them. But some did live by the laws of Creation. These were chosen to begin a journey following a cloud by day and a star by night. After many days of travel the different groups met at the mound of the Ant People and lived with them underground during the destruction.⁶¹ In the second world people became greedy and unappreciative and war broke out, but those who sang the song of Creation, like the chosen ones of the first world, lived with the Ant People while destruction on the earth came about. After the earth was repaired the chosen ones emerged into the Third World. In this world humans multiplied rapidly and built cities which made it difficult for them to conform to the plan of Creation; war again broke out, but the few who retained the wisdom of Creation were sealed into the hollow of reeds by Spider Women and kept safe while the world was destroyed by water. After landing on top of a mountain they emerged from the reeds and built boats and traveled to a small rocky island. It being too small they moved on to a big island full of grass, trees and flowers. Some wanted to stay, but Spider women directed them east towards the other side of the

⁶⁰ Ibid, 170-178

⁶¹ Waters, *Hopi*, 13.

island. There they built bigger rafts and traveled east and a little north until they came to an even bigger island, fertile and productive. They stayed there for a few years, but Spider Women came and told them this was not the fourth world, it was too easy and pleasant and they would quickly fall into evil again. They trekked across the island and left again in rafts traveling east and a little north. After many days of hard paddling they came to a great land. Spending days looking for a place to land after they finally relied on their inner wisdom; the waters smoothed out and a gentle current took them to their place of emergence in the Fourth World, *Tuwaqachi*, World Complete. After going on shore they met the guardian spirit of the land *Masaw*. They asked him to be their leader. He said they would first have to follow their stars to the ends of the earth, make their migrations to the places they were to settle and not fall back into evil ways.⁶² In the fourth world the migrations were to follow specific directions given by *Masaw*. Each clan was to make four migrations to the ends of the land in four directions then back again, then over, duplicating a swastika pattern the center of which is *Tuwanasavi*, Center of the Universe. As they reached their final destination, before they were to settle, their migrations slowed into spirals and circles growing ever smaller.⁶³

In their ceremonies the Hopi adopt purposeful movements and types of journeying which holds present and past meaning hearkening back to the mythical emergence and migrations of the past. At noon on the sixteenth and last day of the Flute Ceremony the Gray and Blue Flute Societies gather at *Muyiovatki*, God of Germination well. Reenacting the destruction of the third world by water the leader of the Gray Flute straddles a raft and with a paddle splashes water in the cardinal directions. This is accompanied with a chorus describing the blessings the people had received. The leader then emerges from the water and to symbolize the hardships the people endured on their emergence onto the Fourth World he paints mud on everyone's chin from ear to ear. After this the Blue Flute people, while singing, journey to Flute Spring, two miles away. Carrying a small ring and water jar the leader starts running to Oraibi village; then on cue the men run after him, the fastest then takes the ring to Flute Spring and after circling it four times throws it into the water. The water jar he takes to Oraibi. At the well the women of the Gray Flute people race to win a blue ring; the winner then takes it to Flute Spring and after circling four times throws it into the water. She then receives a blue ring which she takes to Oraibi. Both races symbolize the carrying of water from the ocean crossed during the Emergence. The Gray Flute people now travel to Flute Spring to join the Blue Flute people. There they form a long procession to go to Oraibi. Old women of the procession sing a song,

We we lo lo,
There at the center of the universe
Blue Corn Girl came up
Growing and maturing beautifully⁶⁴

In the Soyal ceremony, which establishes life anew for the entire world, as with many other Hopi ceremonies, there are specifically prescribed and separated stages of movements which not only portray meaning, but induces effect. The ceremony held at the winter solstice lasts twenty days: eight days of purification and preparation; eight days of ritual; concluding with four days of feasting and blessing. The ceremony begins with the appearance of the Soyal Kachina spirit who comes from the Kachina Shrine to the east. Dressed in a turquoise helmet and white robe he enters the village staggering like a child

⁶² Ibid, 12-22.

⁶³ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 210-214.

learning to walk signifying new life is being reborn. He makes four stops. First at the door of one who participates in the Powamu ceremony, there he makes four horizontal lines with cornmeal. Then he moves to the Flute Kiva and sings a sacred song. From here he goes to the plaza and sings again in a low tone. Finally he plants four *pahos*, prayer feathers or sticks, at the Chief Kiva where he is blessed by the chief who in turn receives cornmeal and a prayer feather. After stopping at the Powamu Kiva for a last blessing he returns to the Kachina shrine. On the next day the Mastop Kachina appears with a black mask, blackened body with white hand prints and three white stars. He is supposed to come from afar⁶⁵; his appearance is to be frightening; he grabs one of the village women and simulates copulation. Running around a kiva he is invited in for a song which is sung over four *pahos*. Four members of the Soyal Society then encircle the roof entrance four times and carry the *pahos* to Flute Spring. After the Soyal Chief presents Mastop with a special *paho* he requests blessings for the coming year. Mastop then returns westward to his shrine. Next comes several days of complicated ritual purification and erection of alters.⁶⁶ The ceremony basically begins when the three stars of Orion “hangs down in the sky” and *Mui’ingwa*, a plant deity comes to offer his assistance. To the beat of a drum he moves to one cardinal point and throws cornmeal to the Above and Below that the Six-Point Cloud People may send rain from all directions. At the next point he tells about the reestablishment of life and dances again. At the third point he reaffirms the power of the ceremony. At the fourth he dances again, hands his crook to the Soyal Chief, saying, “May Mother Earth bless all your people and all life throughout the world, and may all seed come back for renewal.” The chief then directs a hawk maiden into the kiva where she is to sit on a mat of seeds and *pahos*. In times past she was chosen from the chief’s family and was actually sacrificed. The *pahos* and the seeds, which are now magically germinated, are gathered in proper sequence by the clan members, first the Bear then the Tobacco, Corn and Coyote members, who carry them home to plant the *pahos* in the beams of the house and sprinkle the seeds over stacks of corn. The Soyal Chief then takes down from the north wall of the Kiva the symbol of the sun. *Mui’ingwa* takes the shield and to the beat of drum and song spins it and dances towards the four compass directions with ever increasing tempo; the single purpose to help turn the sun back on its trail that all live may begin anew.⁶⁷

The Psychology of Totemism and Totemistic Features

Both Roheim and Frazer early on suggested the influence of physical environment on religious and cultural character. Roheim proposed a “proto-totemistic complex that is the psychical reaction to environmental stimuli.”⁶⁸ Frazer suggests societies who live under harsh environments because their existence is more precarious lean more towards the magical in their social structure and religious thinking.⁶⁹ Yet certain physical conditions are universal for all humans at all times (unexpected hardship, worry, boredom, catastrophes, the prospect of death, disease, loss of loved ones, etc.) and though changing technology changes the matrix of religion with greater emphasis on some facets as opposed to others, one has to wonder at the specific psychological influence specific physical environments might have. While retaining more widely held religious elements, the difficult physical

⁶⁵ In recent times “afar” to the Hopi means deep space. Again this could be a modern injection. The place of origin for Mastop at one time simply could have meant from a distant place or from the sky.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 154-156.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 160-161.

⁶⁸ Roheim, *Australian*, 72.

⁶⁹ Frazer, *Totemism*, 114-115, 168-172, 320-339.

environments of the Hopi and Central Australians might encourage some unique and shared emphasis on other facets of religious belief.

Specifically, as early observers of the Central Australians noted, life was immediately precarious; to add to their difficulties the practice of secret murder made it rare any male would die of natural causes.⁷⁰ That there was counteractive psychology to precarious conditions is evidenced in the *Intichiuma* ceremony of the Witchetty Grub clan. One of the requirements was the participants could take no food or water for the duration of the ceremony which involved two days of much walking, singing, climbing and lifting. At several points within the ceremony the *Alatunja*, the ceremonial leader, ritualistically strikes each individual in the stomach with a *Churinga* and says, "You have eaten much food,"⁷¹ What this saying exactly meant to the participants is unknown, but certainly the effect, if not the intent, was to assuage the concern and desire for food and water. That the *Alatunja* strikes with the *Churinga* is significant. The *Churinga* being sacred objects had emanating power of their own.⁷² This power came from *Alcheringa* beings. When they ceased to exist, they would enter the ground and leave behind their spirit part which was retained in the *Churinga*.⁷³ It appears this power could be spread in almost a curative way. In effect the *Churinga* was used as psychological salve. Besides striking the stomach, common ritual also involved pressing and rubbing it with the *Churinga*.⁷⁴ Another common ritual was the touching of the head to another's stomach.

The Australians in fact believed the stomach was where emotions come from. In one initiation ceremony, down feathers from a sacred *Nurtunga* pole⁷⁵ is removed and is rubbed on the stomachs of two old men who "become so agitated with emotion by witnessing the sacred ceremony that their inward parts, that is their bowels, which are regarded as the seat of the emotions, get tied up in knots, which are loosened by this application of a part of the sacred *Nurtunga*."⁷⁶ In one instance old men are honored when they, as part of a secret group, solemnly unpack *Churinga* and the *Alatunja* presses their stomach them. In another case an individual is made fit to carry on his duty in ceremony when the eldest son of the *Alatunja* rubs his forehead against the stomach, then hugs his neck, then rubs his stomach against his body. A tribal father then repeats the same process.⁷⁷

Given the precarious nature of survival coupled with the guarantee of premature death the anxiety for native Australians must have been poignant to say the least. With the

⁷⁰ The rationale behind the killing was that any death was caused by evil magic from another and must be avenged (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 47-48).

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 170-177.

⁷² Like the Australians, village farmers of the Mississippian period in Missouri (A.D. 900-1700) also had sacred objects which were imbued with power and could only be viewed by a select few. "Copper plaques still held extreme religious significance in the historic period and were revered by southeastern Indian tribes. The plaques seem to have been the most important of all contents of sacred bundles and could be viewed and handled only by irreproachable individuals. They were the holiest of objects . . . representing the welfare and well-being of the community. They were carefully wrapped in deerskin and enclosed in a sacred bundle consisting of a woven mat case or a woven bag (Carl H. and Eleanor F. Chapman, *Indians and Archaeology of Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1983) 81)".

⁷³ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 316, 513.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 174-175, 188.

⁷⁵ Spencer and Gillen alternately use the terms *Churinga* and *Nurtunga*; both are sacred and have sacred powers, but a *Nurtunga* is generally a pole and is constructed by humans; *Churinga*, mostly oblong, sometimes incised, wood or stone objects, were magically left by *Alcheringa* ancestors (*Ibid*, 122-123, 128-131, 144-145, 344-346).

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 285-286.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 289-288.

medicinal connection between anxiety and stomach ailments in mind it is logical primary peoples would attempt to use and find solace in the manipulation of a thing believed to take it away. So imagine an object perceived to emanate with real power: how its effects could be spread on like salve and how this would indeed provide comfort from distress.⁷⁸ In fact one could argue the weight of most religious assumptions and inventions are counterweights to life's uncertainties. For primary peoples, considering what was not known about physical origin, it is natural they would identify with the animals and plants with which they lived. Counteractive to monotony and meaninglessness, with totemic origin as a basis for meaning, added purpose is created through elaborate and complex ceremony, surreal costume and mythical and ritual journeying. Frazer describes the central deserts of Australia,

Here the characteristic feature of the landscape is the long succession of yellow sandhills dying down from time to time into dead flats covered with mulga scrub or, where all vegetation disappears, overlaid with brown and purple stones, which are set so close together as to form as it were a tessellated pavement that stretches away from the horizon. In this dismal and monotonous scenery a wretched diversity is here and there created by the remains of what once were lakes, but are now nothing but level expanses of white glistening salt hemmed in by low hills overgrown with dreary scrub. Around these waterless basins there is no sign of life, and the most perfect silence reigns.⁷⁹

With similar landscape, the Hopi like the Central Australians found meaning in desolation with places of remembrance,⁸⁰ which could also be included as points of destination in their ceremonial journeying. For the Central Australians, a path, or a group of rocks, or a tree, becomes a place of meaning because supernatural ancestors either visited or performed supernatural deeds there.⁸¹ The Hopi used specific locations to reenact their emergence into the present world, thus in one instance certain pools of water held sacred meaning because they represent their emergence from the third world, which was destroyed by water.⁸² It is in this way meaninglessness within and around oneself is abated when journeys to these locations are made. The ceremonial journey itself and the anticipated result are further imbued with purpose and expectation when performed with prescribed complex movements which must strictly be followed to achieve the anticipated result. All of this when accompanied with song⁸³ reinforces the process which provides solace and purpose.

⁷⁸ The common image we have today of primary peoples using body paint before going to war was considered by the ones thus adorned to provided a layer of protection. When taking the human psyche to the lowest denominator, the existential situation, the purpose for elaborate body adornment during times of ceremony would also have been for their empowering attributes.

⁷⁹ Frazer, *Totemism*, 317-318.

⁸⁰ For the Aurunta, *Oknanikilla*, local totem centers (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, 123).

⁸¹ For the Australians some of the most important locations of meaning were where the *Alcheringa* died, went into the ground and left the *Churinga* (Ibid, 122-124, 172-173, 424-425); or where they traversed (Ibid, 282-283); or where they sat (Ibid, 427-428). For the Hopi locations of meaning

⁸² For example the four pools including Flute Spring in the Flute Ceremony (Waters, *Book of the Hopi*, 213).

⁸³ I wonder if the basis for song is really a primal form of wailing or crying which developed into singing as we know it. While not all songs are sad certainly their purpose is to provide solace.

When it comes to the basics of existence the real guarantees humans have, and are aware of, is that life will ultimately provide cessation and anonymity, but counteractive to that humans invent purpose and meaning. Totemism is a system of meaning which provides individual and social value by the multiplication of uniqueness through differentiation and cohesion. Not only does a member have a sense of belonging because he is part of a clan, but because the clan has a totem identity wholly different from other clans (as uniquely different as a sparrow is from a bear) the individual more closely identifies himself with the clan to whom he belongs; he is unique as the totem clan is unique, because the clan to whom he belongs is uniquely different from others.

Not only is identity a concern, but the assurance of survival is also. The reason given by primary people for abstinence of the totem is doing so insures the life of the species. This thinking of course goes back to the like = like associative reasoning prevalent worldwide. With the species of the totem animal insured several things are at once accomplished. By not eating the totem animal or plant, but letting it live, a magical template is set in place which will necessarily be mirrored by the outcome desired. The idea of letting a totem animal or plant live is made cogent and the effect real by the abstinence of all individuals of the totem species by all members of the corresponding totem clan. This not only guarantees the life of the totem species, but the existence of the clan, which is part of and kin to the totem; so the real reason for abstinence of the totem is existence and identity of the clan is insured. Another consideration is the life of the tribe to which the clan belongs is also enhanced. By the guaranteed increase in population of all varieties of animal and plant species, which the tribe as a whole consumes, the tribe's chances at existence are also increased. But not only does the everyday rule of abstinence also insure the increase and existence of the totem and totem clan the purpose of the *Intichiuma* ceremony is specifically performed for the same reason. Curiously and what seems on the surface a contradiction, all members at this time are mandated to eat of the totem, however only a small portion. The explanation for this resides again in the like = like reasoning: to be a part of one must take a part of. If one wants to be fleet of foot eating part of a deer can make that happen, etc. By taking part of the totem one becomes the totem. Since the destiny and existence of the totem and totem clan are interdependent that interdependence and the success of both are insured when clan members become the totem through the *Intichiuma* ceremony.

Biographical Note

Patrick Scott Smith is a business owner, writer, and independent scholar. He has been working on the facet of psychology in religion from an anthropological/existential point of view and has been presenting material for the AAR and ASSR in the Central, Southwest, and Southeast regions. He recently has become a member to the Missouri Academy of Science and will be presenting his social-scientific views to that association. At present he is working on a book relevant to the religious interests mentioned.

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“Oh Lord, Won’t You Buy Me a Mercedes Benz”: Consumer Religion, Therapeutic Deism, & Declining Spiritual Capital in U.S. Evangelicalism

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God is something like a combination divine butler and cosmic therapist: He is always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps His people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process.

(Smith and Denton, 2009: 165)

Introduction

The ubiquitous nature of modern consumer capitalism has led to the growing dominance of consumer religion in American society. Consumer religion has led to changes in multiple types of religious structures, ranging from the growth of megachurches to the growth of alternative (non-traditional) religions. In response to the spiritual marketplace, contemporary evangelicalism has responded in a myriad of ways, as reflected in the church growth movement, the emergent church movement, and other fusions of popular culture and religious practice. This paper will examine the possible impacts of the concepts of spiritual or religious capital and the emergence of consumer religion in modern evangelical church practice. In addition, this paper will examine the concept of spiritual capital and its potential impact on religious practice and the social order. In particular, adolescent religious beliefs and perceptions of human rights will be examined as divergent “case studies” in decreasing or increasing spiritual capital in the context of a consumerism-based society.

One predominant outcome of consumer capitalism is the pervasive influence of advertising and branding associated with consumer products through the mass media. Branding, according to James Twitchell (2004), is not simply “commercial” storytelling. In his book, *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College Inc., and Museumworld*, he asserted that brands are part of a larger social narrative associated with specific products and lifestyles. Instead of having a negative impact on the larger society, Twitchell (2000) argues that consumerism paradoxically serves as a new source of social solidarity, as consumer products replace birth, patina, family background, social rank and religion as new touchstones of social identity. Adults, adolescents, and children immediately recognize the imputed status and identity exemplified by brands skillfully promoted as commercial products in popular culture. Thorsten Veblen’s concept of conspicuous consumption can now be practiced by the masses, not just the economic elite. Consumption, according to Twitchell, is now essential to the construction of self-identity; the symbolic value of the product exceeds its practical value in most cases (2004).

Max Weber’s (2002) classic cross-national analysis of the impact of world religions on economic and social development has continually generated a significant scholarly discussion of the origins of modern capitalist societies. Weber assigned primacy to society’s religious orientation as the prime mover in shaping culture to enhance or inhibit economic modernization. A number of scholarly works have worked to refined or restate Weber’s arguments. A sampling of these works include Peter Berger’s (1986) *Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity*, Michael Novak’s (1993) *Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Gordon Redding’s (1990) exploration of capitalism’s development in the religious

tradition of Confucianism. Loren Caplan's (1991) *New Religious Movements in India* examined Weber's thesis in light of Asian religious traditions, while David Martin (1990), in *Tongues of Fire* suggests that current pentecostal, evangelical, and fundamentalist movements in Latin America and parts of Africa are repeating, in a strikingly new key, what earlier religious reformers helped to orchestrate in Europe and early Puritan America. Finally, economist Robert Fogel (2000) asserted in the *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism* that even in highly developed economies, there is a strong correlation between religious renewal and economic robustness.

The process by which moral and spiritual energies combine with the laws of economics to generate is clearly not well understood, even though this Weberian view is widely accepted by scholars of religion. Stackhouse and Stratton (2010) described this issue in detail:

What intellectual, cultural, and social forces have driven the nations of the West and the Asian "tigers" to develop the forms of capitalism that generate wealth and mitigate poverty? What brought these forces into being? To approach answers to these questions we must investigate the moral and spiritual "externalities" that serve the dynamic social "conditionalities" that have made such developments possible. The deeper we dig, the more we find that these externalities are religiously and ethically laden. Those social scientists who think that in their work they can dispense with religious influences, or safely confine them to the privacy of individual hearts, must face this reality and not arbitrarily rule it out of their purview (Stackhouse and Stratton, 2005:26).

The Concept of Spiritual Capital

According to Shah and Shah, if religious belief, religious practice, or spirituality "serves as a resource for anyone, whether poor or non-poor, it can be considered as a form of 'capital' similar to financial capital, human capital, and the widely used concept of social capital" (2009:1). Conceptually, spiritual capital specifically references religious resources such as religious beliefs, practices, networks, and communities. Individuals thus draw on spiritual capital to improve their individual and collective welfare, including their economic, social, cultural and civic well-being (Black and Kaldo, 2001). Involvement by individuals in religious institutions provides not only an opportunity for practicing a personal faith; it also serves as a touchstone for both identity and community. Spiritual capital, then, is a unique form of social capital. Spiritual capital, however, goes beyond the bonds, bridges, networks, and an association created by routine social interaction. This concept also provides a framework to more holistically identify "value-added" social phenomena that are religiously generated in the larger society (Shah and Shah, 2009). Spiritual capital thus reflects the values, ethics, beliefs and vision which faith communities and individuals bring to civil society, and the emergent social order associated with civil society institutions (Redding and Berger, 2010). Fundamentally, the contributions of spiritual capital can serve to bring a religiously influenced sense of optimism and the potential transformation of individuals and communities (outside of faith communities), addressing injustice, community engagement, encouraging believers to work for community transformation in their local communities (Hall, 2006). An exploratory conceptual framework for spiritual capital is presented in Table One.

Table One: Conceptual Dimensions of Spiritual Capital

Level of Analysis

Individual	Collective (Micro & Macro Levels)
Moral & Ethical Development - influenced by doctrinal & theological beliefs resulting from the enculturation process associated with specific religious traditions	Creation of New Social Networks Related to Faith Communities & Trust - based on dispositions by created by participation in a particular religious tradition (Berger & Hefner, 2003)
Ordering of Personal Life - strong commitment to family, faith communities, & self-sacrifice	Knowledge, Power, and Influence - developed in association with a specific faith community (Chu, 2008)
Pro-social Behavior - commitment to a religiously informed service ethic & altruism	Building a Civil Society - support for collective action based on shared interests, purposes, and values, e.g., faith-based groups, NGO's & colleges/universities
Generativity - commitment to a larger purpose or perceived greater good, e.g., "serving God" or a specific faith community	Building a Pluralistic Society - the extent to which a faith tradition encourages multicultural social patterns and encouragement of other forms of diversity

The individual and collective dimensions of spiritual capital may operate independently or simultaneously. Redding and Berger (2010) noted that the collective elements of spiritual capital may also influence social patterns when they have left their original religious moorings. For example, economic activity may be "embedded in moral and religious convictions that are meaningful to economic actors, and in matrices of social institutions that are shaped both by such convictions and by material necessities" (Stackhouse and Stratton, 2005:28). Examples include the stewardly character of traditional management philosophies and the theological otherworldly view of the impact of technology.

An Example of Declining Levels of Spiritual Capital: Therapeutic Deism

Smith and Denton (2009), in a major national survey of religious beliefs and practices among U.S. adolescents, characterized the basic belief system of teenagers as "moralistic therapeutic deism" and noted that this "moralistic therapeutic deism" and noted that this "...ethos perfectly serves the needs and interests of U.S. mass-consumer capitalist economy by constituting people as self-fulfillment-oriented consumers subject to advertising's influence on their subjective feelings" (Smith and Denton, 2009:162). Moralistic therapeutic deism is based on a new form of radical individualism, whereby the self is the source and touchstone of authentic moral knowledge and authority. Individual self-fulfillment, then, is the ultimate purpose in life, and this culturally created perceptual filter determines how God is perceived, according to Smith and Denton, (2005). Other scholars have noted similar changes in the dominant culture. This finding - on the changing religious belief systems of adolescents - is a logical outcome of the changing social patterns described by sociologist James Nolan in his book, *The Therapeutic State*: "where once the self was to be brought into conformity with the standards of externally derived authorities and social institutions, it now is compelled to look within...no longer is society something a self must adjust to; it is now something the self must be liberated from..." (Nolan, 1998:3). Moral decision-making among teenagers is now largely based on "individual self-

referencing” and “not by external moralities derived from religious teachings, natural law, cultural tradition or the requisite collective social functioning” (Smith and Denton, 2009:173).

There are five other core beliefs associated with moralistic therapeutic deism: (1) A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over individuals; (2) God wants individuals to behave properly with each other, consistent with the Bible and other sacred texts; (3) God’s involvement in one’s life is not routinely needed, except to resolve a problem; (4) “good” people die when they go to heaven; and (5) one’s main goal in life is to be happy and to “feel good” about oneself (Smith and Denton, 2009). This emergent religious pattern, especially the last core belief listed, can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the emphasis on consumerism. This demographic segment of the population is highly attuned to and routinely targeted by mass media advertising. The adolescent population surveyed by Smith and Denton (2009) have spent their entire lives immersed in popular culture, so it is not at all surprising that their religious beliefs and practices reflect those socializing influences. The centrality of consumer goods, however, where “self equals consumption” wields a greater sway on the religious beliefs of adolescents, in contrast to earlier generations where church doctrinal teachings and parental influences played a greater role in religious socialization.

Moralistic therapeutic deism represents a logical outcome of consumer-based models of religious practice where the fusing of cultural beliefs and current religious practice lead to new forms of consumer religion. Hensen (2009) spoke of the potential transformational effects of these developments as “death by deism.” Recently, Mary Eberstadt, a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, writing in the journal, *First Things*, characterized such consumer religion-based beliefs as “Christianity Lite” (Eberstadt, 2010).

An Example of Increasing Levels of Spiritual Capital: Human Rights Advocacy

An important example of the influences of religion on global events is the notion of human rights (Stackhouse and Stratton, 2005). Human rights are often discussed in the context of international non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), governmental policies, and international diplomacy with little reference to its roots in major religious traditions. Human rights is increasingly a global concept influencing ethical, legal, and political discourse. As a result, human rights concerns directly influence contemporary economic market issues, trade policies, labor practices, and approaches to poverty alleviation in developing countries. In this vein, Stackhouse and Stratton (2005) astutely observed:

Neither the work ethic described by Weber nor the idea of human rights as a regulative ideal grew from anywhere else than from specific religious traditions embodied in politically defended and legally codified social practices. The very idea that all humans “are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,” as the Declaration of Independence has it, and as it is echoed in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, did not derive either from the ancient paganisms or from the modern secular Enlightenment. The source is the Old Testament notion that humans are made in the image of God, and thus have inviolable rights as well as a moral awareness that is, as the New Testament says, in some sense “written on the hearts of all.” The ideas of the “work ethic” and the “endowment” of all persons with an inherent dignity have developed well beyond their points of origin, but they have become critical to our assessment of the forces that shape current market practice and our view of poverty. In concrete terms, treating the supplier as a person with rights to a fair deal, establishing a policy of service to the customer (who may be a total stranger), and honoring the spirit of legal constraints that define liability are

among the ways in which economic practices may acknowledge the moral and spiritual dignity of each person and fulfill the logic and laws of sound economics. Where such practices become established, they tend to drive out the uncertainties of the old bazaars and barter markets, where one has no recourse if cheated and therefore must be constantly wary. Such principles demonstrate how religiously based moral convictions can permeate “secular” institutions, beliefs, and practices to affect the entire globe, as is now the case with what we call “globalization,” and particularly the globalization of the economy (Stackhouse and Stratton, 2005:29).

While some scholars might quibble with Stackhouse and Stratton’s (2005) specific observations on the linkage of religion and human rights in a Western context, their observations convey the notion that religion can increase spiritual capital by “informing” institutions of the social action needed to build civil societies.

Conclusions and Implications

A primary focus of this paper is to examine the utility of the concept of spiritual capital on the analysis of modern religions trends. While the conceptual view of spiritual capital as increasing or declining based on its “value added” to the larger society by religions activity is Durkheimian in origin, the notion of religious phenomena influencing societal development represents a Weberian view (Redding and Berger, 2010). The exploratory discussion of spiritual capital in this paper, then, is really a modest attempt to reframe this topic in reference to contemporary religious phenomena. While much has been written about the concept of social capital, there is a paucity of work on spiritual capital. This discussion has been primarily conceptual and speculative regarding the impact of spiritual capital. There are, however, a number of implications of this concept for empirical studies of religion. A number of specific research questions can be noted:

1. Does spiritual capital operate differently in specific religious belief systems? The discussion in this paper centered on U.S evangelicalism. Does spiritual capital operate differently in non-Western religious traditions such as Buddhism, Islam, or Shintoism?
2. Does spiritual capital development change in response to increasingly rational organizational structures used by religious organizations? In Weberian terms, one might predict a decline in spiritual capital in larger religious organizations (e.g., megachurches), but in any case, this question is in need of further empirical investigation.
3. How does the increasing predominance of consumer religion impact spiritual capital?
4. How does spiritual capital interact with other social variables such as national identity, race/ethnicity or social class? For example, does Judaism create additional social capital due to the interrelationship of Jewish ethnicity and Jewish religious identity?
5. Does spiritual capital operate differently at the micro & macro levels? It is possible that spiritual capital have an impact at the individual level than at the macro level.
6. What is the role of doctrinal and theological beliefs within religious tradition in building spiritual capital? For example, doctrinal beliefs about the poor have led to the development of liberation theology with the Catholic religion tradition. The result has been specific social action internationally to serve economically disadvantaged populations. Does spiritual capital have any explanatory power in religious developments of this nature?
7. What is the interrelationship of spiritual capital and other forms of social capital? How is spiritual capital qualitatively different from other forms of social capital?

8. What about negative aspects of spiritual capital? For example, how should negative social conditions such as racism, sexism, ageism, and classism associated with religion be analyzed in relationship to spiritual capital?

Finally, Berger and Hefner (2003) outlined the critical need for more cross-national research on spiritual capital. Though their observations were made seven years ago, there is still little research on the topic. Therefore their observations are still worth noting for scholars of religion in all disciplines:

A comparative research program investigating spiritual capital in different civilizations remains a matter of central intellectual and policy importance. This urgency is all the greater in light of the fact that, contrary to the forecasts of modernization theorists a generation ago, the past twenty years have seen an unprecedented religious revival in much of the world. The Islamic resurgence in Muslim countries; the diffusion of evangelical Protestantism across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and even China; the rise of a militant Hindu nationalism in India; and the growth of new varieties of congregational Buddhism in East and Southeast Asia - these and other developments show that modernist forecasts of religion's demise were premature, to say the least. Equally important, the recent course of global politics indicates that the spiritual capital engendered by these varied religious revivals differs, as do its implications for markets and democracy. These and other facts underscore the need for a sustained and cross-cultural investigation of spiritual capital (Berger and Hefner, 2003:1).

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The Emergent Church: Cutting Edge or 60's Redux

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Introduction

King Solomon once wrote, "what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again: there is nothing new under the sun." (Holy Bible, Ecclesiastes 1:9, NIV). Surely he conceived of a new and improved chariot, but, most likely he was making reference to human systems of thought such as philosophy, politics, and religion. Ideas tend to emerge, submerge, and re-emerge. Democratic ideals didn't originate with the American experiment, restitution as a criminal sanction appeared in ancient law codes, and plans for aircraft were found among the papers of Leonardo De Vinci. There is no question that mankind is progressing technologically, but the issue of whether human civilization is progressing or regressing is a matter of vigorous debate.

In any case, things are always changing, and rapidly, but they aren't always "new." However, if something appears to be new it draws considerable interest, because in American society, new is assumed to be better. The Emergent Church or Emerging Church is something "new" on the American religious scene and is generating a fair amount of interest and controversy. After studying this movement for several months through books, articles, tapes, and interviews, the author has concluded that no one, not even those in the movement know what it is about. Perhaps this is part of the appeal, the mysterious is intriguing. However, for those of us attempting to understand analyze, and clearly describe the Emergent Church, its amorphous nature is frustrating. Akin to nailing a slice of Jell-O to the wall, it is a daunting task. There is consolation in the fact that no matter what this author reports about the EC, it can't be any more confusing or contradictory than the information already available.

Models of Emergent Churches

One point of confusion is that the EC is actually not one movement but the convergence of several trends among contemporary Christian churches. Emergent theologian Scot McKnight humorously addresses the various stereotypes often assigned to those in the emergent "conversation" when he writes,

"It is said that emerging Christians confess their faith like mainliners--meaning they say things publicly they don't really believe. They drink like Southern Baptists--meaning, to adapt some words from Mark Twain, they are teetotalers when it is judicious. They talk like Catholics--meaning they cuss and use naughty words. They evangelize and theologize like the Reformed--meaning they rarely evangelize, yet theologize all the time. They worship like charismatics--meaning with their whole bodies, some parts tattooed. They vote like Episcopalians--meaning they eat, drink, and sleep on their left side. And, they deny the truth--meaning they've got a latte-soaked copy of Derrida in their smoke and beer-stained backpacks" (McKnight, 2010, p. 1).

In a more serious vein, McKnight goes on to identify five "streams of the emerging church" which are descriptive and helpful: prophetic (or provocative), postmodern, praxis-oriented, post-evangelical, and political (McKnight, 2010). While these terms serve to define the

direction of the emerging church, a topology offered by a doctoral student at Fuller Theological Seminary, C. Wess Daniels, helps to describe the differences among emergents. Daniels describes four types of emerging churches and their thinkers, the Deconstructionist model, the Pre-modern or Augustinian model, the Peace church or Anabaptist model, and the Foundationalist model (Daniels, 2008).

Perhaps the best known group of emergent churches would likely fit under the rubric of the Deconstructionist Model. According to Daniels, these churches are thoroughly postmodern. They are influenced by deconstructionist philosophers Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, and Caputo. While Daniels doesn't explain the philosophy of deconstructionism, he points out that this form of emergent church is focused first and foremost on accommodating postmodern culture. While deconstructionism may elude precise definition it can be characterized as an elimination of objective categories, extreme subjectivity or relativism, the absence of absolutes, a form of endless skepticism. Since reality is socially constructed it can be deconstructed and questioned, criticized, and reconsidered. This process has no end and can result in confusion, instability, and ongoing uncertainty. Critics claim that ultimately deconstructionism results in an "anything goes" mindset, a prison of perpetual uncertainty.

According to Daniels, this particular variety of the EC is largely focused on adapting Christianity to postmodern thinking, contextualizing the Gospel to contemporary society, rejecting the consumerism, materialism, and scientism of modern life, and challenging the assumptions of the institutional Christian Church. Daniels associates the names of Peter Rollins, Tony Jones, and Brian McLaren with this type of EC. Others not mentioned by Daniels that could be added to this list would include Leonard Sweet, Alan Jones, and Alan Roxburgh. When the news media reports about the EC they are largely referring to this particular expression of the EC. The so-called "Emergent Village" appears to be the hub around which most of those interested in all things "emergent" tend to gather, but it also appears to be the lightning rod for critics.

The second most influential variety of the EC, according to Daniels is what he calls the Pre-Modern or Augustinian Model. This particular expression of the EC appears to be less Nietzsche and more Toulmin (Cosmopolis), more interested in recovering ancient Church traditions. In a sense it is pre-modern, seeing value in recovering ancient wisdom and practices. Not surprising, many young Catholics are pursuing this path which explains the incense, candles, icons, chants, and symbols associated with the EC in general. This group appears more interested in purifying the institutional church, recovering its more pristine beginnings and less interested in deconstructing and reconstructing Christianity. Daniel identifies the representatives of this group as John Milbank (Radical Orthodoxy) and James K. Smith.

What Daniels calls the Emerging Peace Church Model see Jesus as a non-conformist who was non-violent, concerned with the poor, and given to social reform. Again a central theme is the contextualization of the gospel to contemporary culture. However, Jesus is seen as not only connecting with the culture, but, to a degree, challenging existing arrangements. Daniels believes this group is influenced by the writings of Wittgenstein, Barth, Bonhoeffer, Yoder, McClendon, and Murphy and represented currently by Jarrod McKenna (Peace Tree), Rob Bell (Mars Hill), Shane Claiborne, some Mennonites, and convergent Friends.

The fourth model and possibly the most removed from the first, Daniels calls the Foundationalist Model. He says that this group sees themselves as theologically conservative, though some would debate this description. Typically, they read Scripture; have "preacher-centered" teaching, and music for worship. However, they seek to be innovative in evangelism such as meeting in pubs, having tattoos, "cussing" from the pulpit, playing loud rock music, and so on. They seek to accommodate contemporary culture.

Some of these churches are very large and even are part of mega churches such as Willow Creek. Daniels lists parishioners of this variety of EC as Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, and Erwin McManus. While they may be critical of market-driven, corporate type mega churches, they may be more like them than they realize.

While these distinctions have a measure of validity, elements of each permeate all. Most expressions of the EC are concerned with reforming the institutional church, contextualizing the gospel to contemporary culture, and, to some degree, reinventing Christianity. There are many other typologies of the EC in the literature; most are more elaborate and identify many other different perspectives. Some include the home church movement and Renovare associated with Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. Daniel's typology may or may not be an oversimplification, but in trying to make sense of the EC any level of clarification is welcome.

By Their Quotes You Shall Know Them

Representatives of the Emergent Church have written and spoken extensively over the last decade or so. To summarize just one of their books is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, we will attempt to represent some of their ideas through a selection of quotes and commentary. However, there is always danger in wrenching quotes out of context and misrepresenting the intended meaning. This is especially true in the case of some EC writers who employ a syrupy thick, obtuse, obscure, and metaphorical form of prose. One might call this a "deconstructionist" style of writing that leaves the reader with the task of imagining and reflecting upon possible meanings. We will navigate through these murky waters with great care, but bravely.

The most quoted representative of the EC has to be Brian McLaren, who is a writer, pastor, speaker, and networker who currently resides outside of Washington, D.C. He holds several degrees including a Doctor of Divinity from Carey Theological Seminary in Vancouver, BC, Canada. McLaren is known for making compelling and controversial statements, which has made him the major target of those critical of the EC. In his book, *The Secret Message of Jesus; Uncovering the Truth that could Change Everything*, McLaren writes,

"Jesus seems to say that the kingdom of God doesn't need to wait until something else happens. No, it is available and among you now...invite people from all nations, races, classes, and religions to participate in this network of dynamic, interactive relationships with God and all God's creation....the kingdom of God will be radically, scandalously inclusive. As we've seen, Jesus enjoys table fellowship with prostitutes and drunks....He affirms and responds to the faith of Gentiles, Romans, Srophonecians, and Samaritans" (McLaren, 2006, pp.74, 94).

In this statement, it appears that McLaren may be endorsing religious universalism. In the following quote he appears to remove all doubt regarding his views on this subject,

"It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts,"..."Is our religion the only one that understands the true meaning of life? Or does God place his truth in others too?...The gospel is not our gospel, but the gospel of the kingdom of God, and what belongs to the kingdom of God cannot be hijacked by Christianity" (McLaren, 2007, p.194) .

These are not isolated statements, they are representative of similar remarks that McLaren has made in speeches, interviews, and other writings. He has actually argued that universalism may have biblical support (McLaren, 2003). Universalism, the theological idea that God is the father of all religions and that all mankind will be ultimately saved is a view that is hardly consistent with orthodox Christianity. In fact, many if not all of McLaren's views are quite unorthodox. He rejects the actual existence of Hell, and he considers the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross, the central teaching of Christianity, to be a distraction and false advertising for God.

Other Emergent leaders speak and write in similar ways. For example, Leonard Sweet in his book, *Quantum Spirituality*, declares that all of creation is inhabited by Divinity and that all religions, all peoples must come together in a "euphoric state of wholeness" (Sweet, 1991, p.250). He speaks of a "New Light movement" that will unify the diversity of human culture into a "world making faith" that will be the bridge between East and West (Sweet, 1991, p.10) Sweet claims that the "language of light" which "symbolizes the union of the human with the divine" binds all religions' together (Sweet, 1991, p. 10). Sweet claims that a new "globally in-formed gospel is capable of talking across the fence with Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim...without superiority and power" (Sweet, 1991, 125-130). This author finds Sweet's writings to be very mystical, metaphorical, and having little in common with historic orthodox Christianity.

Emergent leader Alan Jones has stated that the "Church's fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end." (Jones, 2004, p.132) He views the Cross as representing a "cult of suffering" and an image of God that is "vindictive" (Jones, 2004, p.132). Jones is clearly not interested in "beliefs" or doctrines because "there is no objective authority" (Jones, 2004, p. 83). The lack of objective criteria for drawing conclusions about faith and practice is common in EC literature. For example, Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones in their book, *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, write of the inability to understand God due to our human subjectivity (Pagitt and Jones, 2007, p. 156). They clearly reject any notion of *Sola Scriptura* a benchmark of the Protestant Reformation, the doctrine of original sin, and a coming judgment.

Some EC leaders seem even gleeful that the historic Christian Church is "dying" and being replaced with exciting new arrangements. Emergent leader Alan Roxburgh writes that "for quite some time" that amazing tapestry (Christendom) has been unraveling, until it now lies threadbare, like tattered threads on the cultural floor" (Roxburgh, 2000, p. 21). He continues that the Christian Church is going through a "dying experience." He claims that it has lost both traditions and institutions. He suggests that Christians are on the verge of losing faith in God "to those gods of the surrounding culture." Roxburgh, however, is not dismayed because he declares that "there is clarity in overwhelming ambiguity" (Roxburgh, 2000, p.160).

Though brief, this snippet of quotes from a few of the more visible and vocal EC leaders, most representing the Deconstructionist Model, is revealing. Clearly, this brand of emergent thinking is about radical change. The new and allegedly improved version of the Church presented is so completely different from historic Christianity that one can only wonder why those engaged in this movement even make a connection to Christianity at all. Why not just declare that you are engaged in a conversation about creating a religion for the new age, a completely different and unique arrangement, something never before imagined. Why even think within a Christian context? Furthermore, where is the empirical evidence that orthodox forms of Christianity are declining and aberrant forms of Christianity are thriving? Actually the opposite appears to be true. Studies suggest a growing interest among young people in reformed forms of Christianity, perhaps the most theologically conservative wing of the Christian Church (Horton, 2009). Furthermore, the number of members attending mainline denominations continue to decline. (Shiflett, 2005) The Mainline denominations

including United Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians embraced liberal theology in the 1960's and their memberships have declined ever since. Where is the data supporting the notion that large numbers of American youth are becoming part of the emergent movement? This author has been unable to locate empirical evidence to substantiate this view.

The Critics Weigh In

As one might imagine, critics of the EC are plentiful and vocal. Typically, they are focused on the deconstructionist model and its proponents. D.A. Carson's *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* is analytical, reflective, and representative of the chief criticism of the EC, which is that they (the deconstructionist model and its adherents) have "conversed" themselves out of the historic Christian Faith (Carson, 2005). Having eviscerated the essential teachings of the Church there is really nothing left but exploring an endless array of options. Carson begins with an analysis of postmodernism, perhaps the most significant philosophical shift of the last fifty years. Essentially, post moderns are suspicious of rationalism, socially created realities, and absolutes of any kind. In contrast, post moderns tend to embrace mystery, feelings, tolerance, inclusiveness, and subjectivity. Carson sees the change as an epistemological shift, a change in the way people view knowledge and how to acquire it. He seems to agree with the EC's view of the Purpose Driven/ Seeker Sensitive model of ministry so prevalent in mega churches as too business-like, manipulative, superficial, and consumeristic; however he takes the EC to task for creating either/or dichotomies or false choices, and their rejection of Biblical authority and penchant for endless speculation. He then extensively analyzes the works of two EC thinkers, Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy* and Stephen Chalke's *The Lost Message of Jesus*. By citing passages from both books in context he concludes that McLaren and Chalke view the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the central doctrine of the Christian Church as a form of cosmic child abuse. He then examines their views of hell (they don't care much for it), Satan (they don't believe he really exists), original sin (not fond of the idea), God's Holiness (not big fans), the coming judgment and wrath (don't share this view of the future), and he then concludes that "both McLaren and Chalke have largely abandoned the gospel" (Carson, 2005, p.186).

Many critics of the EC compare it to the theological liberalism that influenced the mainline churches especially in the 1960's. One writer described the EC as "the old mainline liberal movement with ripped jeans and guitars" (Neufeld, 2010, p.1). Another wrote that the "emerging church will largely vanish from the evangelical landscape, becoming part of the small segment of progressive mainline Protestants that remain true to the liberal vision" (Spencer, 2009, p. 2). Theologian and Seminary president Albert Mohler writes that there is a significant connection between the classic liberals or modernists of the early 20th century and the contemporary EC, both claim that Christianity must change or die. Both question the cardinal doctrines of the Christian church; original sin, divine sovereignty, substitutionary atonement, the doctrines of heaven and hell and so on. Both are "embarrassed" by the traditions and teachings of the historic Christian church. He states that the "current intellectual context allows virtually no respect for Christian affirmations of the exclusivity of the gospel, the true nature of human sin, the Bibles' teachings regarding human sexuality, and any number of other doctrines revealed in the Bible" (Mohler, 2010, p. 1). He concludes that "the lesson of theological liberalism is clear--embarrassment is the gateway drug for theological accommodation and denial" (Mohler, 2010, p. 3).

Another outspoken critic of the EC is pastor/scholar John MacArthur. In his book, *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception*, MacArthur portrays the EC as thoroughly postmodern and claims (they) "have transformed doubt, uncertainty, and qualms

about practically every teaching of Scripture into high virtue" (MacArthur, 2007, p.155). He claims that the headship of Christ is "likewise being challenged by those in the Emerging Church movement who have suggested that Scripture is simply not clear enough to allow us to preach its truth with any degree of clarity, certainty, or conviction" (MacArthur, 2007, p. 155). He claims that the debate is not over "disputable" issues but cardinal doctrines of the Christian Church. MacArthur is particularly offended at some of the emergent leader's views on the gospel, specifically, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, an issue MacArthur sees as the central doctrine of Christianity. In discussing a passage from the book of John in his multi-volume set of commentaries on the New Testament, MacArthur uses an incident from the life of Jesus to draw a parallel between the "false disciples" in Jesus' day and the "false disciples" of the contemporary church. Both, he claims, do not want the historical Jesus, but a "Jesus" of their own making.

In the Book of John, Chapter 6, Jesus has just finished describing His sacrificial death in behalf of mankind. Passages from this chapter are used in the Catholic and Orthodox practice of the Eucharist and in some Protestant communion services. For example, in verse fifty-five of chapter six, Jesus says, "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Holy Bible, John 6:55, NIV). Jesus' statements were apparently "too much" for his hearers and many of his disciples withdrew and "no longer followed him" (Holy Bible, John 6:66, NIV). In his commentary on this passage, MacArthur points out that

"As long as they perceived Jesus to be a source of healing, free food, and deliverance from enemy oppression, the self-serving disciples flocked to Him. But when he demanded that they acknowledge their spiritual bankruptcy, confess their sin, and commit themselves to Him as the only source of salvation, they became offended and left" (MacArthur, 2006, p269).

MacArthur continues,

False disciples do not follow Christ because of who He is, but because of what they want from Him. They have no problem viewing Him as a baby in the manger at Christmas; a social reformer with a broad message of love and tolerance; the ideal human everyone would emulate; or a source of health, wealth, and worldly happiness. But they are unwilling to embrace the biblical Jesus--the God-man who fearlessly rebuked sinners and warned them of eternal hell, and that salvation from that hell comes only through believing his words (MacArthur, 2006, pp 269-270).

MacArthur warns against deconstructing the words of Jesus and the Scripture in general. He points out that Jesus repeatedly rebuked the Pharisees for twisting Scripture and ignoring its clear meaning (MacArthur, 2007). Obviously, his implication is that the EC is doing just that.

A Few Social and Cultural Conundrums: An Essay

This author has wondered for years why every known culture and/or subculture in the world is careful to maintain boundaries, traditions, uniqueness, even a measure of exclusivity except Christianity. Apparently Christians must have no distinctive music, art, practices, rituals, or teachings. They must accommodate everyone and everything, they must take on the shape of their surroundings, they must imitate every hip and trendy fad in the popular culture. Christianity must become the ultimate cultural silly putty fully accepting any effort to be remade and redesigned according to the whims of whoever, whenever, for whatever conceivable reason. There is no hip hop version of Buddhism, there is no emerging Islam, no death metal rendition of Judaism. There are genres of literature, there

are schools of art, and the types of music are almost infinite. They are all easily recognized, well known to their adherents, distinctive, different, and unique. But Christianity must conform to them all. This is mystery.

Furthermore, for most of human history children were, essentially, little adults. They dressed like adults, walked like adults, talked like adults in an effort to become adults as soon as possible, because adults had status, standing, respect, and power. Adults could marry, build families, and futures. Clearly children for most of written history yearned for adulthood, though fleeting it might be. For example, in the coal smoke filled industrial cities in 16th century England, life expectancy was around 17 years of age. By the late 19th century things began to change and by the 1960's in America and ultimately around much of the world, especially Europe, the "youth culture" was born. People began to use the terms "adolescent" and "teenager." Eventually, a wide array of products, styles, and practices developed to promote this notion and profit from it. In contemporary society the "youth culture" is not only taken for granted, youthfulness is enshrined as the *Summum Bonum* of life. After the college years, the message of pop culture is that life is essentially over. Western societies perhaps have become the first societies in world history where adults want to become children. And who can blame them; elders are no longer seen as the patriarchs and matriarchs of their communities, the wise leaders of social institutions including churches. In contemporary culture, elders are seen as unproductive, out of sync, out of touch, passé, and consumers of too great a percentage of the health care dollar.

Furthermore, it has become a cultural axiom that each new youth cohort must create its own culture including music, art, dress styles, language, and religion. In addition, since changes in technology are seen as a form of constant and steady improvement, it is assumed that all change is positive. Therefore, all things must change, continuously. There is nothing worse in contemporary culture than being out of style, out of step, out of sync. Truly, the latest is the greatest and the newest is the truest. It is within this cultural context that the Purpose Driven and Seeker Sensitive models of church growth (1990's) were born and spread throughout the church world. Then, the youthful products of the megachurches predictably rebelled and began work on their own less commercialized, more authentic, more socially responsible, more reflective, mystical, and skeptical versions of the Faith. Interestingly, many emergent leaders got their start in the Willow Creek-inspired Leadership Network (Byassee, 2006). Inevitably what is "emerging" now will eventually spawn a new and improved generational version of Christianity, *Ad Infinitum*.

"To the Angel in the Church of Cappuccino-write this...I know of your aspirations to serve through crockery. Yet this I have against you, your lattes are lukewarm and overburdened with marshmallows, which I detest." (Ward, 2009)

Conclusions

In this author's opinion, the deconstructionist model of the EC is a slightly variant form of Unitarianism that is likely destined to be a footnote in the history of the Christian Church. A commitment to be certain about nothing ultimately produces nothing. The toleration of never ending ambiguity is not a trait common to the average person. The leaders of this form of emergent thinking will surely be part of the effort to bring about a new global religion that reconciles all differences and promotes universal tolerance and unity. While such a New Age religion is desired by some it will likely be resisted by many.

The history of the Christian Church has been marked by ongoing renewal, revival, and reformation. Even the apostles confronted many opposing views. Such conflicts actually created the historic creeds and statements of faith. Some argue that through the centuries the Roman Catholic Church has adopted many of the ideas set forth by the reformers of the

15th century, and the charismatic renewal of the 70's and 80's was a response to the spread of theological liberalism into the mainline churches in the 60's. Then the excesses of the charismatic renewal created an exodus into more conservative evangelical churches in the 90's and that the consumerism and superficiality of the megachurches has created the home church movement and the search to recover the ancient church, a form of the EC.

So far as the different models of the EC are concerned, it is the opinion of this author that the **Deconstructionist Model** will ultimately be considered too radical for many Christians and that the **Foundationalist Model** will be seen as too accommodated to the superficialities of American pop culture. However, it is likely that **Pre-Modern Model** of the EC and the **Peace Church Model** could resonate with many seeking a recovery of the sacredness, mystery, and transcendence of the historic Christian Church. The emphasis on historic Christian symbols, icons, art, sacraments, meditation, spiritual disciplines, social responsibility, and service are encouraging trends within EC and other renewal-oriented groups.

Biographical Note

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God Bless Texas: Religious and Postmodernist Narratives in the Texas Nationalist Movement

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God Bless Texas with His own hand
Brought down angels from the promised land
Gave em' a place where they could dance
If you wanna see Heaven brother here's your chance
I've been sent to spread the message
God bless Texas

First he let the sun shine
Then he made the water deep
Then he gave us moonlight for all the world to see
Well everybody knows that the Lord walks in mysterious ways
He took a risk then on the very next day
I've been sent to spread the message
God Bless Texas

--Alan Jackson ("God Bless Texas")

Introduction

On February 24, 1836, Colonel William Barrett Travis wrote his now famous "Letter from the Alamo" in which he conveyed that he had been under fire from cannonade for twenty-four hours and had not lost a single man, that the soldiers in the Alamo had virtually no food remaining, and that less than two hundred Texans were locked in battle with thousands of Mexican troops, but yet included a postscript which stated "P. S. The Lord is on our side—When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn—We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels [and] got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves—"

The same traditional belief in "God's will" permeated the entire history of early Texas and the Revolution, even finding its way into the worldview of General, President, and later United States Senator Sam Houston. Having come from Presbyterian roots but preferring to adopt Cherokee theology—described as the presence of a "supernatural that lived in the earth, air, trees and streams". Houston eventually sought baptism but was denied by two Tennessee ministers. He later would come to Texas, convert to Catholicism as a requirement to secure a land grant, lead Texas to revolutionary victory at San Jacinto, shun Catholicism after Texas statehood during the rise of and his participation in the Know-Nothing movement, and eventually be baptized a Baptist. He was one ballot away from being a Presidential candidate for the nation and frequently made Biblical references in his speeches both in Texas and Washington D.C. Houston fought the compromises which would eventually lead to the Civil War, casting unpopular votes against slavery in an effort to preserve the nation, and apparently even had a grand plan to establish a protectorate over Mexico, which may well today be a part of the United States had he ever become president. Religion played a pivotal role in the life of Sam Houston and of so many other figures of Texas history that it is only probable that somewhere within the fiercely independent streak of Texans today, there exist faith-based principles contributing to the meaning of being a Texan. But Texas is no longer a nation of its own, as it once was—and Texas is no longer enmeshed in a traditional historical period before the full development of American culture. Yet, the independent spirit remains, traditional beliefs still permeate Texan culture, and religious values injected into an increasingly postmodern America are resulting in the new

and growing movement toward Texas (Re-)Independence—the Texas Nationalist Movement. As John Steinbeck keenly observed and noted in Travels with Charlie, “Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in every sense of the word. And there’s an opening convey of generalities. A Texan outside of Texas is a foreigner.”

Just as the Bretons marched back into England under the leadership of the Norman king, William and Conqueror, singing nationalistic songs some five-hundred years after being dislocated to continental Europe by Anglo-Saxon tyranny, the Texas Nationalist Movement has the goal of returning Texas to its sovereign past—born of resistance to Mexican tyranny and expatriating from what Texans now consider a similarly tyrannical government in Washington D.C.

Background of Texas Independence and Statehood

Most Americans know well the story of the Alamo and the Battle of Sam Jacinto and how General Sam Houston defeated General Santa Ana to win independence for Texas. A few even know of the earlier years when in 1821 Mexico began granting land to Anglo-American settlers for the purpose of repopulating its northern province, controlling Indian populations, “civilizing” the region by bringing political and social stability to what amounted to a lawless hinterland at the time. Stephen F. Austin brought a group of 300 such settlers (known as the “Old Three Hundred”) and established the first colony (and seat of government) at San Felipe on the Brazos River in 1823, followed the same year by the establishment of Columbus, the oldest platted town in Texas (located at the site of an old Indian settlement named Montezuma) on the lower Colorado River.

What many non-Texans do not know is that by 1830, the population of Anglo-American Texans had grown to around 25,000 and this rapid colonization had rekindled the United States’ government under expansionist president Andrew Jackson to re-inquire about purchasing East Texas from Mexico who had no intention of giving up the territory. The settlers speculated that such a purchase would actually occur at some point after they colonized Texas—they had been able to purchase undeveloped land for four cents an acre in Texas compared to \$1.25 in the United States and believed that the United States would acquire the territory (and restore them as citizens by default). Mexico came to realize that not only was the population growing much more rapidly than they had anticipated, but the colonists immigrating to Texas were the same stock of Americans who had conquered the frontiers of Kentucky and Tennessee and were well-known as tough, independent-minded, fighting types. The Mexican government quickly put measures into place to stop colonization, even to potentially drive those who had come to Texas back to their native land including the imposition of customs tariffs and other taxes and fees, without providing any protection, services, or representation in government. What began as a minor few incidents between settlers and Mexican authorities grew to altercations, and eventually to outright revolution in 1836.

The cause of the colonial Texians against Mexico was a very popular cause among Washington politicians, and many Texians believed that the United States would intervene diplomatically or militarily on their behalf when the first battles began. They were to be disappointed yet again. While Andrew Jackson wished the best for the Texians, he wrote on the back on one of Austin’s appeals to the United States government:

The writer does not reflect that we have a treaty with Mexico, and our national faith is pledged to support it. The Texians before they took the step to declare themselves Independent, which has aroused and united all Mexico against them ought to have

pondered well—it was a rash and premature act, our neutrality must be faithfully maintained.

This act of indifference on the part of the United States President was tantamount to a declaration of independence, forevermore, not just from Mexico, but from the United States as well.

Though the independent Texans voted overwhelmingly to pursue annexation into the United States and elected Sam Houston its president in the first election held in the new Republic of Texas, reciprocation from Washington was not to be forthcoming. The issue of slavery, non-recognition of Texas independence, reluctance to act for diplomatic reasons, and the like all left Texas without standing with either of its neighbours. Houston reached out to the British for diplomatic recognition and cooperation, also to no avail. A different direction was ushered forth with the election of Mirabeau B. Lamar as President of Texas (the legendary hero of the Texas Nationalist Movement).

Lamar was a fearless visionary who saw the future of Texas as an independent power who could establish its boundaries all the way westward to the Pacific Ocean. His plans and ideas all but killed any hope of annexation by the United States and under his leadership Texas became viewed as “aggressive, ambitious, and unpopular” in the United States. He could not have cared less. He was able to establish recognition from France, Holland, Belgium, and even Britain, and the establishment of investments and trade agreements with all these nations soon followed. To compete, (and eliminate black market dealings) the United States was forced into allowing and participating in commerce with Texas. Wealthy and prominent Americans began investing in Texas and funding its government. By 1841 though, the developing nation of Texas was nearly bankrupt. Mexico was becoming a resurgent power, and global tensions cast an unsure future on the young nation of 75,000 residents. Again, no help from the United States was offered. The reaction was again seemingly the same in thought and action as it had been back when John Quincy Adams, the predecessor of Andrew Jackson had said:

Texas was nothing but the “misbegotten and illegitimate progeny” of the slaveholding South. Texas still legally belonged to Mexico...and he would fight any attempts to put the United States in the position of stealing part of another country. Moreover...Texas was the “Botany Bay of the United States,” a dumping ground for the dregs and castoffs of American society.

The government of Texas concluded that Britain was the best hope to save Texas. They were the wealthiest and most economically powerful nation on earth, and could help control the resurgence of Mexico in their desire to reclaim Texas. Agreements with the British were forged and Texas, Britain and Mexico entered into negotiations.

Each [nation] came looking to promote their own goals. The British government wanted to protect their investments in Mexico, develop Texas as a cotton supplier, and abolish slavery. Santa Ana’s government wanted to buy time; until it could settle a revolution in the rebellious state of Yucatán, it was not in a position to invade Texas. President Houston’s government wanted to preserve Texas independence and was prepared to throw itself into the arms of Great Britain to secure it.

With the death of President William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, a southerner, became President of the United States. Very unpopular, he believed a bold move could assure his political future and he placed his hopes on Texas. If he could somehow oversee Texas annexation, he could even out the population of the north and the south. He could provide a

new territory to America which allowed slavery—a popular notion in the south—and one that if left under British influence, would, in time, be forced to abolish slavery and provide a territorial safe-haven for runaway slaves in the south—a major southern issue of the time. He could also prevent Texas (with its British backing) from becoming an economic power that could eventually rival the United States. The states in the south began to make it clear that if Texas was not annexed, they would be forced to join Texas in a confederation rather than allow Texas to be forced to rely solely on British influence. But neither pro-Texas Tyler nor anti-Texas Van Buren became the next United States President. James K. Polk was chosen as a compromise candidate and the senate rejected Texas annexation yet again on June 8, 1844.

The issue was finally laid to rest on February 27, 1845. A joint resolution to admit Texas to the United States emerged as a tie vote in the United States Senate (26-26) when Louisiana Senator Henry Johnson changed his vote allowing the measure to pass 27-25. Other votes followed:

- February 28, 1845 - The United States House of Representatives passes the Senate version of the Joint Resolution, 132-76.
- July 4, 1845 - Texas Annexation convention votes to accept the United States offer, 55-1.
- October 13, 1845 - Texas voters approve annexation, 7664-430.
- December 16, 1845 - U.S. House votes to admit Texas, 141-58 (21 abstaining).
- December 22, 1845 - U.S. Senate votes to admit Texas, 31-14 (7 abstaining).

On February 19, 1846, President of Texas Anson Jones lowered the Texas flag and the flag of the United States was raised for the first time over Texas. James Pinckney Henderson was sworn in as the first governor of the state. Jones concluded the ceremony with the words, "The final act in this great drama is now performed. The Republic of Texas is no more."

A Note on the Historic Role of Religion in Early Texas

As stated in the Handbook of Texas,

Although cited in the Texas Declaration of Independence, religion was not a contributing factor to the Texas Revolution. But Texas independence definitely contributed to the advancement of Protestantism. Suddenly freed of all legal restraints, Protestants rapidly sprawled across the new Republic of Texas. By the late 1840s the state had become a grid of Methodist circuits and conferences, Baptist associations and conventions, Presbyterian presbyteries, and Episcopal parishes of the Diocese of Texas. Like those "upstart towns" described by historian Daniel Boorstin, these were upstart denominations that busily forged organizational structures and aggressively promoted themselves through camp meetings, newspapers, and schools. Methodists, Baptists, and Cumberland Presbyterians depended heavily upon protracted camp meetings to kindle spiritual fires. Playing upon the emotions, enthusiastic evangelists graphically contrasted the horrors of hell to the joys of heavenly paradise, and aroused penitents often were overcome by excitement.

Religious freedom (especially Protestantism) spurred independence, rugged individuality, and a staunch and visionary work ethic (as described by Weber in his "Protestant Ethic") among populations like those living in early Texas. For them, it likely had an enhanced effect having experienced the history and cultural development as an independent and sometimes (like John Quincy Adams considered them) spurned diaspora.

Still, the first institutes of higher education in Texas to emerge were affiliated with religious denominations—the first being Methodist-sponsored Rutgersville College in 1840 (now Southwestern University in Georgetown) followed by Baptist-based Baylor University in Waco in 1845.

So while religion was never a major contributor to revolution and regional independence in Texas, the climate of Texas fostered the growth of a significantly religious populace that still today may be enticed to resist certain cultural adaptations that the United States endorses, making the population of Texas much more resistant to creeping federalism, legislative efforts toward social engineering, and political liberalism in general.

Modern-Day Opponents of Initial and Subsequent Annexation

When historians observe the process of Texas annexation, they tend to see little evidence that the process was not correctly undertaken. There was a vote of the people of Texas, a congressional treaty that was approved, approval of the annexation committee, and a ceremony to make the act official. Opponents of original annexation and thus, supporters of Texas independence today, see the original act of annexation as unconstitutional and thus illegal. According to some Texas nationalists (and some scholars) annexation of Texas by the United States could never have been legally approached due to the lack of a provision within the United States' Constitution specifically allowing it to annex foreign nations. While the United States' Constitution allows for the annexation of territories and the granting of statehood to annexed territories, at no point does the document allow for the annexation of a sovereign nation. Legal scholars today do not necessarily disagree with this point, however, they state that when Texas seceded from the union to join the Confederacy, Texas had to be and legally was readmitted to the union following the Civil War, and that Texas today is a perfectly legal inclusion to statehood. Some Texas Nationalists still argue that if Texas was illegally admitted into the United States originally, Texas could not have seceded from a nation to which it did not belong, and therefore could not be forced into readmission following a war because technically, it was still legally a sovereign nation, and the same legal arguments would apply as those earlier. To this day legal scholars have not been able to adequately address the issue. As the Texas Nationalist Movement contends:

Texas enjoyed independent nation status from 1836 until 1846. The Republic of Texas disputes the legality of annexation in 1846 and claims the Texas government existed in de facto status from that date. Texas again established its status as an independent nation in 1861 by seceding from the federal union...

If one does not accept the claim that annexation was illegal Texas still enjoys the right of secession under the State-Federal Contract theory. Texas as an independent nation, freely joined the contract as a party, delegating only specified rights to the federal government (those outlined in the first ten articles of the Constitution). This contract is not perpetual and requires that each party uphold their duties and responsibilities for the contract to remain valid.

Regionalism, Balkanization, and Postmodernism

First described and significantly explored by columnist Joel Garreau in his book entitled, The Nine Nations of North America (1981), there exist regional differences throughout America that render certain parts of the nation different economically, politically, ideologically, and culturally. While Garreau does not separate Texas as a sole regional entity, he does offer some early insight into how America is not only fractured internally by the previously mentioned criteria, but identifies the growing issue of balkanization—and Texas is a primary epicentre of this progressing phenomena. Patrick J. Buchanan has also been noting the balkanization process. In one book review of Buchanan's State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America, the fears and concerns of residents and citizens of states like Texas are stated plainly:

Buchanan warns that unless immigration policies change, America as we know it will disintegrate by mid-century. Slowly but surely, everything from Nacogdoches to Monterey is being reconquered by Mexico.

Buchanan contends that many Mexicans believe these lands are theirs by birthright. They are being detached ethnically, linguistically, and culturally from the United States by a deliberate policy of the Mexican regime. Hard-liners from Mexico call this the "Aztlan movement." It is also referred to as "La Reconquista," meaning the recapture of the lands lost by Mexico in the Texas War of Independence and Mexican-American War.

Buchanan laments that we are steadily becoming the Third World dystopia that Theodore Roosevelt warned against when he said we must never let America become a "polyglot boardinghouse" for the world.

According to postmodern theorists, the balkanization process is a sign that a society has emerged from modernity and into a new state where multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-lingual (including technological languages), multi-media-messaging diversity has eroded conventional belief, social organization, traditionalism, and all concepts of correctness, morality, and truth itself. Just as "stream-of-consciousness" literature might be described as the first entry into the postmodern, the postmodern argument for secession might sound like this: What was once unthinkable—a deconstruction of the United States in this case—is no longer viewed as impossible—and furthermore, what would be wrong with doing it? Who says it is wrong or illegal? The rule of law...? Laws made by an unresponsive and oppressive federal government—a government who seeks to enslave the people of the states? Texas will show them exactly how powerful Texas is. Let them tax us and oppress us more. Let them attempt to kill our faith and force us to pledge allegiance to the United States—but we will never say the word "indivisible" for it is not true. As David Singhiser says, "I cannot and will not pledge allegiance to an indivisible nation!" God bless Texas! (Interestingly however, the Texas pledge also contains the word "indivisible" but in a state context only: "Honor the Texas flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible.")

The Current "State" of the Movement and its Narratives

Texas Nationalist Movement Vice-President Laurence Savage, in his article, "What's Best for Texas", states unequivocally,

Nearly everyone, liberal, independent, libertarian, or conservative has a reason and an agenda for seeking secession for Texas. Christians are feeling abused and ignored by the current governments and seek secession. Other religions are feeling the same way and are looking at secession as a solution to set things back to normal too...

When this movement was born in 1995, the memory of the Waco Massacre of men, women and children at their home and church by the feds was uppermost in many Texans minds. The proven tyranny of that event was then the hotbed issue...

Texas has the unique opportunity to bring sanity back to government. Texans can 'reset' the ticking time bomb that seems to keep approaching with crisis after crisis. We the people of Texas can put our own national government in place, in Austin, forcing that government back into the role of governing—thus eliminating the absurdities, the control, the interference in our lives, interfering in our places of worship, etc, that the current systems have evolved into over time.

Our Texas forefathers would condemn all of us for allowing Texas to submit to such oppressive measures. They would raise the flag of the Republic and chastise our Texas officials for submitting to tyranny.

Our Texas forefathers would lead us out of the wilderness, back into the promised land, by restoring the freedom we once enjoyed. They were not cowards...

Do what is right for righteousness sake... This old maxim from the Bible is important for any person of any faith or race.. Do what is right SIMPLY because it is RIGHT. The song is about Texas.. Will you be singing the song of freedom?

Savage depicts Texas as not only an independent future nation of freethinkers, he takes a decidedly anti-establishment tact on politics, calling conservatives CONservatives, and liberals (or Democrats) DEMONcrats...invoking still more religiously-attached connotations to the perceived opponents of the Texas Republic.

Such tactics embrace populism yet one might see them as contrived and calculated statements meant to take advantage of a divided nation, to advance an agenda based on the idea that the United States is in an epoch of political, economic, and cultural decline, and to forge a coalition of anti-status quo activists who may eventually have some glimmer of realizing an idealistic dream that miraculously comes to fruition out of deconstructive chaos through the means of presenting a postmodernist narrative of hope and change for a singular regional entity that has as its platform a potpourri of popular issues on which Texans usually agree. There is no doubt that issues ranging from secularism in schools and government, to immigration, to political correctness, to climate change legislation and health care reform all serve as ripe fodder for the Nationalist Movement. If the movement writes and presents a well-crafted narrative and controls the message carefully (including its already well-established use of social and conventional media), the hope lingers that their goal will one day come to pass. It is evident in their slogan—"Independence. In Our Lifetime."

The movement is also fuelled to some degree by the necessity of elected leaders in Texas who also must address the issues and positions that Texans want to hear. When Governor Rick Perry made national headlines for his Tea Party address in April 2009 that the federal government was strangling American taxpayers with taxation, spending, and debt and suggested that Texans at some point might get so disgusted with the political process in Washington that they may want to secede, the Texas Nationalist Movement applauded his comments and wrote multiple articles touting the idea and Perry's support for it. In the recent Texas primary on March 2nd, 2010 (ironically, Texas Independence Day), the Movement interestingly did not endorse Perry but Debra Medina (whose views are actually quite aligned with the TNM on many issues).

In fact, the following recruiting guidelines employed by the Texas Nationalist Movement are very similar to the characteristics of the grassroots recruiting efforts of the populist campaign of Debra Medina, (now former) candidate for the governorship of Texas. As recent surveys (posted on the Texas Nationalist Movement as well as other sources) show that about 18% of Texans enthusiastically and seriously support Texas secession, with some historic polls showing that in a referendum, perhaps as many as 40% of Texans might support the effort. Oddly, Medina's support in the Texas gubernatorial primary was 18.5% and her grassroots activists are certainly not friendly toward Washington, D.C. or the politicians who legislate there—even most of the Texas delegation.

TNM Recruiting Guidelines

1. Dress and conduct yourself as an ambassador for the TNM (Take this as serious as it really is)
2. Ask questions that let them tell their story
3. Listen.
4. Find their “hot button” and focus on that
5. Be knowledgeable
6. Recruit every day, and don't let people get you down.

WE ARE RIGHT, AND ARE WORKING TO PROTECT PEOPLE WHO DON'T EVEN CARE YET! GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR EFFORTS

To All, good recruiting, keep the faith and the passion, and

God Bless Texas!

Today, the Movement is headed by President Daniel Miller and Vice-President Lauren Savage and is headquartered in Nederland, Texas (between Beaumont and Port Arthur just south of the notorious Ku Klux Klan enclaves of Vidor and Jasper). The movement claims it has no political ideology other than standing for Texas independence and goes to great lengths to decry that it has any ties to a racist, Aryan, or Texas nativist agenda announcing openly that Texas citizens of all races, cultures, and religions are welcome in the movement—anyone who wants Texas independence now. The leadership and organization is unlike the former radical (and now defunct) past organization called The Republic of Texas, whose leaders (including the notorious Richard McClaren) are still today serving time in prison for fraud, kidnapping, and a host of other offenses akin to domestic terrorism. The new leadership appears reasonable, sophisticated, personable, and credible, having granted numerous interviews on popular television and radio programs including The Glenn Beck Show on Fox (though their new logo seems a bit unoriginal, having seemingly been formed as a hybrid of the old Texaco Oil star in blue with a Texas A&M University logo re-lettered and layered on top appearing as NTM).

Nonetheless, Texas, as a state and people, is unique and even quirky perhaps—so such movements do not surprise or even alarm most Texans. According to the Texas State Library and Archives' posted history entitled, *The Hard Road to Texas*:

Even today, Texans carry a fierce love of their home that transcends state pride and approaches (or sometimes even exceeds) national patriotism. Even the state tourism agency has used the slogan, “It's Like a Whole Other Country.” Much of the feeling

of Texas pride can be traced to roots in the Republic of Texas era, when Texans stood alone, facing big risks, big hardships, and big dreams.

Is there any surprise that the Texas Nationalist Movement today is growing in the face of federal power, control and expansion, a growing distrust of Washington D.C. and disdain for politicians in general, the erosion of traditional values (including religious values), the trend toward the postmodern deconstruction of culture, concerns with Mexican immigration policy (and the larger affiliated Aztlan and reconquista movements), the changing Texas demographic, the growth of the Tea Party movement, and the expansion of federal tariffs, fees, and taxes without regard to representation or consent of the governed? It all sounds too familiar. Perhaps Texans do secretly (and some not so secretly) wish for their ideal state—which is in fact a nation unto itself—and hospitably invite any willing hands into their promised land—just like before.

You say you're not from Texas
Man as if I couldn't tell
You think you pull your boots on right
And wear your hat so well

So pardon me my laughter
'Cause I sure do understand
Even Moses got excited
When he saw the promised land

That's right...you're not from Texas,
That's right...you're not from Texas,
That's right...you're not from Texas,
But Texas wants you anyway...

--Lyle Lovett ("That's Right...")

Biographical Note

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The Twilight Saga: The Path to Mormon Enlightenment

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Abstract

The Twilight Saga, a supernatural tale of vampires and werewolves, written by up-and-coming young adult author, Stephenie Myers is written in such a way that it is obvious to the resistant reader that Mormon ideology influenced her writing through her use of language and symbolism. According to Schaefer and Zellner, authors of Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles, the Mormon religion has established itself as a vital socioreligious organization and has become richest church in the world and worth at least thirty-billion. These books, which are targeted toward young adult females, makes abstinence sexy and the teenagers are never seen as having “bad” habits such as drinking, smoking, cursing, or even participating in pre-marital sexual relationships. Native Americans, a major part of the Mormon mythology are prominently given their own story. The vampires represent the Nephites and the werewolves represent the Lamanites. Major themes of the Mormon religion are present such as celestial marriage, eternal progression, and the general Mormon view regarding women and gender roles. Even a distrust of the Catholic Church is portrayed as the “sinister” Volturi, the resistant state apparatus of the vampire world with similarities to the Vatican.

“Of the nearly 1,200 different religions in the United States, none has had a more turbulent history than that of the Mormons. It would not be much exaggeration, in this respect, to say that the Mormons are in a class by themselves. Born in controversy and vilified throughout most of the nineteenth century, they have nevertheless succeeded in establishing a socioreligious organization of unbelievable vitality” (Schaefer, Zellner).

The American Heritage Dictionary defines ideology as “the body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture” (American Heritage Dictionary). An author may try and deny that his or her personal ideology is not a factor in the work they create, but unfortunately this would be nearly impossible. Close and resistant readers will immediately recognize Stephenie Meyer’s Mormon heritage as they read the Twilight series. The use of symbolism in this series closely follows the Mormon faith, and this supernatural series, based on vampires and werewolves, is openly marketed to young adults of all religions and backgrounds. While a close reader immediately finds similarities to Harlequin type romances and even classic young adult literature such as Its Not the End of the World, a book dealing with children and divorce, and Forever, a book about young adults and the exploration of sexuality, by Judy Blume, it becomes apparent to the resistant reader that Meyer’s use of language and obvious comparisons to several Mormon principles such as the celestial marriage, eternal progression, and the general Mormon view regarding women and gender roles define the Mormon ideology that defines Meyers as a person and an author. Occasionally, an apparent distrust of the Roman Catholic Church reveals itself throughout all four books. The Book of Mormon contains references to the Native Americans and they are deeply ingrained in the mythology of the Mormon religion. These books attempt to make abstinence sexy and lack any mention of the struggles that young adults have dealing with everyday vices such as drugs, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, unmarried sex, or even coffee as these items are strictly off-limits to any rule abiding Mormon. The Law of Chastity not only forbids any form of fornication or adultery, but also encompasses, “anything like unto it,” including pornography, immodesty, and masturbation (Bigelow, Reiss).

Starting in the 1820, Mormonism is increasingly the most successful, significant homegrown religion in the United States. The Church of Latter Day Saints is one of the fastest-growing religions (Bigelow, Reiss). Religion, simply defined by American Heritage

Dictionary as a “belief and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe” (American Heritage Dictionary), often creates controversy, especially in our country where we strive for freedom of religion and a complete separation of church and state. From the moment the reader first looks at the cover art of Twilight, the glaring white arms cradling an apple immediately bring to mind the book of Genesis in the bible and the story of original sin. From the first encounter with Edward, Bella notices that Edward seems upset around her, “he never relaxed his stiff position on the edge of his chair” (Meyer, Twilight 24). A glaring biblical reference is made in reaction to this scene, “It couldn’t have anything to do with me. He didn’t know me from Eve” (24). Bella refers to herself as Eve which is a strong hint at a biblical connection between this story and religion.

As the story progress and as Bella starts developing feelings for Edward, apples appear periodically in text, “As I watched, the small girl rose with her tray – unopened soda, unbitten apple – ” (Meyer, Twilight 19). In this example, Bella and Edward are still strangers and the apple has yet to be bitten. As the story progresses, there is a scene where, “I picked up the apple, turning it around in my hands,” (207) and this is the point where Bella and Edward are becoming acquainted and the decision is being made to follow her heart and pursue Edward. As this scene unfolds, “I put down the apple and took a bite of the pizza,” (207) the reader begins to get the idea that Bella realizes she is the center of attention while spending time with Edward and this makes her pause and put the apple down. The apple was touched, but it remained unbitten. According to the Mormon faith, Adam and Eve are the heroes of humanity. Despite the fact that Catholics and Protestants have given them a bad reputation for eating the apple in the Garden of Eden, Mormons believe that without this choice, no one but them would be on earth in the first place. By making the decision to eat the forbidden fruit, everyone now has the opportunity to experience a mortal life. They did not make a mistake; they made a necessary decision. This decision brought the world potential joy as well as pain. Both of these are essential parts of being human and God would not create a fallen world or force his children to inhabit one (Bigelow, Reiss).

Celestial marriage practiced by the Latter Day Saints (LDS) serves to “seal” a man and woman for time and ultimately for all eternity. These marriages are secret with rites and rituals never divulged to Non-Mormons. Having children is extremely important to Mormons. Seen as a “wifely duty,” sexual intercourse is not considered to be an activity for pleasure, the only purpose is for procreation and birth control is frowned upon by the Mormon Church and women are regarded as having a procreative function (Schaefer, Zellner). Mormons believe that people reach the highest level of heaven as families, not as individuals. The nuclear family has a high importance to Mormons as they believe it is part of God’s plan and must remain the basic unit of society. All men and women are commanded to “multiply and replenish the earth,” in other words, have children (Bigelow, Reiss). The Mormon social organization places a strong emphasis on family relations. All family members – young, middle-aged, old, or even deceased – have an important role in the kin system. Harmful to family life, premarital and extramarital sex, abortion, masturbation, indecent language, immodest behavior, birth control, and divorce are forbidden (Schaefer, Zellner).

Edward insists that he will only turn Bella into a vampire if she will first marry him as a human. While his intentions are not clear at first, the reader immediately figures out that this is the only way that they will be able to procreate and have a child. Almost immediately Bella becomes pregnant with a half-vampire and half-human child. Jacob Black, Bella’s best friend, has a hard time dealing with her pregnancy when it starts to threaten her life. Jacob asks Bella, “Since when are you desperate to be a mom?” (Meyer, Breaking Dawn 193). He is confused by this turn of events, “If you wanted that so much, why did you marry a vampire?” (393). He argues with her logic on carrying the pregnancy to term, “It’s a killer,

Bella. Look at yourself” (393). Bella tries to explain to Jacob why it is not that simple, “He’s not. It’s me. I’m just weak and human” (393). She feels she just needs to be stronger, “But I can tough this out, Jake, I can -- ” (393). As the pregnancy progresses, the situation does not get any better when Bella has to drink blood in order to keep her and the baby alive. It soon becomes time for the baby to be born, “Her body twitched, arched in Rosalie’s arms, and then Bella vomited a fountain of blood” (347). It becomes obvious that Bella will do anything to protect the life of her unborn child, even to the point of sacrificing herself.

The Mormon afterlife, or eternal progression consists of two main phases. Humans enter the first phase at the time of death and their spirits await resurrection. In the second phase, these resurrected people dwell for eternity in one of several levels of heaven as determined by the Lord’s judgment of their worthiness. In order for Bella to survive the ordeal of her pregnancy and childbirth she is turned into a vampire. When vampires, “die,” they are reborn as perfect godlike creatures. Bella finally had everything she wanted, “Not the pale and perfect son of my imagination? I felt a moment of shock. And then a flood of warmth” (Meyer, Breaking Dawn 372), not only did she have a child, but she was now a vampire, “My first reaction was an unthinking pleasure. The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful, every bit as beautiful as Alice or Esme. She was fluid even in stillness, and her flawless face was pale as the moon against the frame of her dark, heavy hair. Her limbs were smooth and strong, skin glistening subtly, luminous as a pearl” (403). Becoming a mother was the instrument to her fulfillment as a person and more importantly as a woman.

The vampires of the Twilight series reach the highest level of the celestial kingdom and get everything they want, the joy of being with their families for all eternity, a perfected body capable of producing spirit children, and the right to continue in eternal progression, even to the point of divinity (Bigelow, Reiss). The Greeks immortalized their gods by creating marble statues to honor their likeness. There are many references to the vampires as being cold and marble-like. The reader is constantly reminded that Edward resembles a Greek god with his perfect features and marble skin, “A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal” (Meyer, Twilight 260). This reference carries throughout the entire series as Meyer constantly reminds the reader of the godlike qualities of Edward, “but I feel the cool marble of his body press against mine” (Meyer, Eclipse 187). A direct comparison to the Greek god, Hercules, is made as Bella tells the reader, “I could only imagine the Herculean effort behind this simple gesture” (18). The Cullen family is beyond perfection in their role as enlightened, vegetarian vampires. There are numerous references to the Cullen family as being “godlike” and “perfect.” Since the ultimate desire of all Mormons is to reach the highest level of the celestial kingdom, this seems to symbolize the life that they would live in this state of perfection.

The fact that the vampire embodies complete perfection inasmuch as they do not have to eat, they do not suffer illness, are immortal, and possess supernatural powers seems to imply that they have reached the highest level of the celestial kingdom which is the ultimate reward for followers of the Mormon faith. The patriarchal figure, Dr. Carlisle Cullen is seen as perfect and untouchable, “I’d seen Dr. Cullen before, of course, yet I couldn’t help but be struck again by his youth, his outrageous perfection,” (Meyer, Twilight 322) observes Bella as she goes home with Edward to meet his family. The matriarchal figure of the Cullen family, Esme is also just as perfect as her husband and as Bella describes Esme, “Something about her heart-shaped face, her billows of soft, caramel-colored hair, reminded me of the ingénues of the silent-movie era,” (322) there is reverence and a desire to achieve the same level of perfection. The language Bella uses to describe the maternal head of the Cullen family is full of softness and caring adjectives. Bella even goes on to describe how perfect this family is when she thinks, “It was like meeting a fairy tale – Snow White, in the flesh” (323). As the voice of morality for the family, Carlisle even chose the perfect

profession when, “he found he could interact with unsuspecting humans as if he were one of them. He began practicing medicine” (341). Being a doctor is one of the most respected and influential professions and Carlisle dedicates his life to helping humans. His perfection allows him to work around blood and still deny himself the pleasure of consuming it as the nature of the vampire would normally demand. Carlisle is the head of the perfect family and there are no doubts as to perfection of this nuclear family group.

Not only do the Mormons prize family groups, but they also emphasize the group when it comes to cultural and recreational activities such as team sports, organized recreation, dancing and ballet, orchestral music, choir work, and theater. All of these activities have a religious base and enhance group identification (Schaefer, Zellner). The Church encourages group activities in fun, recreational ways, particularly for the benefit of the teens (Bigelow, Reiss). The reader learns that vampires like baseball when Edward tells Bella, “We will be playing baseball” (Meyer, Twilight 379). In early history, thunder was thought to be created by the gods and was even seen as displeasure. With this knowledge, it is soon apparent that there is a reason why the Cullen family plays baseball during thunderstorms, “We have to wait for thunder to play ball – you’ll see why” (347). Bella learns why this is true when she goes to the family baseball game with Edward, “This time the bat somehow made it around in time to smash into the invisible ball,” and as the bat hits the ball, “The crack of the impact was shattering, thunderous; it echoed off the mountains – I immediately understood the necessity of the thunderstorm” (370). Baseball plays an integral part in the story of Twilight as the reader is introduced to the protagonists of the story, Laurent, Victoria, and James. These three vampires live a totally different life than the Cullen family and are surprised to find them with a human female. James asks with an incredulous expression, “You brought a snack?” (379). These visiting vampires are completely caught off-guard by the presence of a human with a group of vampires. “But she’s *human*,” (379) Laurent proceeds to protest this scenario and his shock is apparent. Even though the scene does not end in violence, this sets up the final showdown between James and the Cullen family at the end of the story.

Despite the fact that the Cullen family is willing to sacrifice their way of life for Bella, she never becomes anything more than a wife and mother. Mormon Church leaders feel that a “woman’s place is in the home.” LDS does not officially prevent women from working outside home, but as President Hinckley noted in October 1996, “I hope that if you are employed full time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries.” Women are not allowed to ascend in the LDS hierarchy; all Mormon leaders from ward bishop to church president have always been men (Schaefer, Zellner). Women have never held the priesthood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, although until the 1940’s they did perform healing ordinances for sick women and children (Bigelow, Reiss). The Book of Mormon as transcribed by Joseph Smith, the founding prophet, contains fifteen books such as Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, and so forth. It is much like the Bible and a number of Old and New Testament passages reappear verbatim. Around 600 B.C., Lehi, a Jewish prophet received a message from God that Jerusalem was doomed for destruction. He and his family, together with some friends and neighbors, built a ship and sailed eastward. They eventually reached the western coast of America. Soon this group began to expand and multiply and when Lehi died, the group split into two factions, one following Nephi, the youngest son, the other following Laman, the eldest. The Nephites and Lamanites eventually became adversaries and fighting erupted (Schaefer, Zellner).

The Nephites were industrious and well versed in the arts and prayed to God for guidance. As a result, they were more vigorous than the Lamanites. As the Lamanites were often in trouble, slovenly, and idolatrous, they incurred God’s wrath and as a result their skin became dark and were reduced to savagery. The Lamanites were, according to

the Book of Mormon, forebears of the Native Americans. As Mormon theology states that some Native Americans are descendants of the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon, they are part of the house of Israel. They believe that contemporary Native Americans are cursed because of their ancestors' shameful decisions which ultimately gave them their dark skin. Earlier editions of the Book of Mormons said that when Native Americans embraced their Hebrew heritage and became righteous, they would become "a white and a delightsome people" (Schaefer, Zellner). No real or lasting peace will exist between the Nephites and Lamanites until Christ returns (Bigelow, Reiss). The mythology of the vampires and the werewolves in the Twilight books is similar to the creation stories and myths of the Mormon religion.

The cold ones and the wolves have a treaty that kept the cold ones off the reservation. Jacob tells Bella the story of his tribe, "the cold ones are traditionally our enemies" (Meyer, Twilight 125). He further tells her about a group that came to the area during his great-grandfather's time, "They didn't hunt the way others of their kind did – they weren't supposed to be dangerous to the tribe" (125). Due to the fact that this group was not a threat to the tribe or the pale-faces, Jacob's great-grandfather made a truce with them, "If they would promise to stay off our lands, we wouldn't expose them to the pale-faces" (125). The two groups come together in the final book of the series when Jacob imprints on the child of Edward and Bella, Renesmee, "The gravity of the earth no longer tied me to the place where I stood. It was the baby girl in the blond vampire's arms that held me here now. Renesmee" (Meyer, Breaking Dawn 360). Of course the revelation that Jacob imprinted on a child was distressing to Bella when she first discovered this fact, "You *stupid mutt!* How *could* you? My *baby!*" (449) and she even with further, "How dare you *imprint* on *my* baby? Have you lost your mind?" (449). With this connection to the vampires, the wolves fight with them against the Volturi, "The wolves had joined us. On either side of our uneven line, the wolves branched out in long, bordering arms" (682). In order to fight the Volturi and have a chance of keeping Renesmee alive, the wolves and vampires join together to save their way of life and the peace that began with the birth of this half-vampire and half-human child that is now bonded to the wolves and the vampires. Renesmee will become the future mate of the alpha-male wolf and Bella's best friend, Jacob.

For the most part, Mormons treated the Native Americans more fairly than other white groups and a big factor was the common aggressor: the United States government (Bigelow, Reiss). In the Twilight books we have a similar pattern with the vampires and werewolves. The vampires are pale, white, and godlike, while the werewolves are dark and animalistic. When we get to the love triangle between Bella, Edward, and Jacob it is almost certain that the pale, white vampire, Edward, will win Bella over the dark, animalistic werewolf, Jacob. This seems to solidify the belief that the Native Americans are still being punished for the actions of their ancestors; they are not even portrayed as human-like. When it is time to fight the Volturi, the two groups, vampires and werewolves, form a bond to fight their common enemy, just like the Mormons and Native Americans bonded over their fight with the United States government.

A clear disdain for the Catholic religion is shown through the use of the Volturi in this series. The Volturi is an obvious allusion to the Vatican. It is most likely not a coincidence that the word, "Volturi" brings to mind the word, "vulture." Not only is a vulture defined as a large bird of prey that feeds on carrion, but can also be defined as a person of a rapacious, predatory, or profiteering nature. The word, vulture originated in Middle English from Old French *voltour*, and from Latin *vultu* (American Heritage Dictionary). The Volturi reside in Italy, are secretive, and have unlimited power. "The white-haired ancient vampire drifted away, gliding toward one of the wooden thrones" (Meyer, New Moon 470). The numerous references to the color black, hoods, thrones, and cloaks, "For a moment, I thought his long, jet-black hair was the hood of his cloak" (466) hint at power, secrecy, and more importantly

danger, "Felix was back, and behind him floated two more black-robed men" (469). The Volturi are not held accountable for their actions as they are the final decision making group for all vampires. The Volturi do not even walk, suggesting that they are even more godlike than the other vampires, "I was only more astonished as he floated closer and I could see his face" (466). As the reader sees how unfair their power is, one might come to the conclusion that the Vatican is just as corrupt and unfair.

Despite the fact that the Volturi is the ultimate authority for all vampires, Bella decides that she needs to save Edward from their judgment and asks Alice, "What makes them so much more dangerous than Emmett, Jasper, Rosalie, and you?" (Meyer, New Moon 427). Alice hesitates slightly and asks Bella what she knows about them from previous conversations with Edward. Bella tells her, "He just said they were an old, powerful family – like royalty," and goes even further to say, "That you didn't antagonize them unless you wanted to ... die" (438). Alice tells Bella that the Volturi are the ultimate ruling group of the vampires and there are no doubts to their endless power when she tells her, "There's a reason he called them royalty ... the ruling class," (429) and she further explains, "Over the millennia, they have assumed the position of enforcing our rule – which actually translates to punishing transgressors. They fulfill that duty decisively" (429-430). Bella is shocked to learn that the perfect vampire world that she is so desperately trying to join has "rules". She is in complete shock as she asks Alice, "There are *rules*?" (430) and in her shock, Bella further tells Alice, "I mean, I wanted to be a ... to be one of you! Shouldn't somebody have explained the rules to be?" (430). The Vatican is home to ruling power structure for the Catholic Church, and like the fictional Volturi, enforce the rules governing the Church and followers of the Catholic religion. Non-followers of the Catholic religion associate royalty, extreme power, and great wealth with the Vatican.

LDS is the richest church in the world and worth at least thirty-billion. Apart from individual wealth, the church has enormous organizational wealth (Schaefer, Zellner). The Church does not disclose financial information, but outsider estimates of annual tithing income usually fall in the four-billion to six-billion dollar range (Bigelow, Reiss). Stephenie Meyer is becoming an influential writer of young adult literature and has written a series with a large following with her Twilight books. This supernatural series, based on vampires and werewolves uses symbolism that closely follows the Mormon faith. Meyer, a graduate of Brigham Young University, is a Mormon and her books have become extremely popular with young adults of all faiths, especially females. Close readers immediately find the story to be similar to Harlequin type romances – full of love, desire, and passion. Bella, the human, is the quintessential heroine in love with the perfect hero, Edward the vampire. The resistant reader can go deeper into the story and find that through Meyer's use of language and symbolism there are obvious comparisons to several Mormon principles such as celestial marriage, eternal progression, and the general Mormon beliefs regarding women and gender roles. Bella becomes completely engulfed into the world of the man she loves and gives up everything for her love. A distrust of the Roman Catholic Church reveals itself in the fictional resistant state apparatus called the "Volturi," ironically named after the vulture, a bird of prey. Since the Book of Mormon contains references to the Native Americans, they are deeply ingrained in the mythology of the Mormon faith. The vampires are remarkably similar to the Nephites and the werewolves are similar to the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon. The Twilight books unrealistically create the illusion that abstinence is sexy and the struggles that young people deal with such as drugs, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, unmarried sex, and even coffee are not even addressed by the young characters in these stories. The teen-agers of the Twilight series never "hang out" in coffee shops, discuss birth control, talk about experimenting with drugs and alcohol, and of course our protagonist Bella has sex with the love of her life, Edward, only after they are married. Bella meets Edward, falls in love, marries him, gives birth to a half-human and half-vampire child that brings

peace to the vampires and werewolves, and she ultimately joins the Cullen family for eternity.

Biographical Note

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Desecration or Just Deterioration? How Religious Symbolism Shapes Perceptions of Old Cemeteries

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Abstract

This paper investigates the concepts of sacred and desecrated as perceived in old, out of use cemeteries in Nacogdoches County, Texas. As a part of a long-term goal of giving students both service learning and field based experience, SFA geography and anthropology faculty have been taking students to old cemeteries (African American, Old Spanish, and Caucasian) to observe folk funerary practices. Some of these cemeteries have been partially demolished, with headstones destroyed or removed. Others have returned to wilderness with no maintenance. While some are desolately remote, others are hidden in plain sight in over grown city lots. Students were asked about their perceptions of what makes a cemetery sacred (what religious rituals, symbols, artifacts or practices) and what could desecrate these areas? In particular, what consequences would desecration have for the cemetery as a place? Are the cemeteries dangerous, or do they hold negative religious power (i.e. evil, creepy, supernatural powers?) The perceptions and reactions to these places was measured in their actions, responses, and in visual data by letting students take images that they felt described their responses. Text and visual analysis of the student interviews and images reveal the criteria for considering a site desecrated as well as implicit beliefs about funerary ritualism and how it influences supernatural forces. Student perceptions changed as they worked with the sites, taking on a “caretaker attitude” focused on maintenance and preservation similar to that seen in civil war reenactors.

Cemeteries: Permanently Liminal Spaces

Cemeteries contain the bodies of our dead and represent our implicit perceptions and beliefs about the dead. If you ask someone, such as a college anthropology student, what a cemetery is, you will get a simplistic answer: “a place where we bury the dead.” Even this simple answer, however, is followed by a pregnant pause as the person considers the question and topic more fully. If probed, a slightly disturbed or disjointed topic is opened about cemeteries. Even the topic of cemeteries causes many unease. The students we worked with knew they had more feelings about cemeteries, but were uncertain what could be said or how to say it. The qualities of cemeteries that causes this unease is what lead to this paper. What is it about cemeteries? What feelings and perceptions are entangled with the rather simple concept of a place where dead bodies are buried?

It is proposed here that cemeteries are permanently liminal spaces. Liminality is a condition described by Viktor Turner as “betwixt and between.” (Turner 1964). Classically liminal spaces in Western folklore include crossroads, caves, bodies of water, and ritual or religious sites. The key to liminality in a sense of space is that the site is an intersection between two or more conditions, with neither completely defined.

Geography defines many liminal spaces. The crossroads (which many claim to be the origins of early uses of crosses as ritual symbols), is the junction between two or more roads, north and south, yet south and east as well. They were considered both dangerous and powerful spaces in European folklore. Criminals were hung at crossroads and buried there as well. Unshriven dead who were not allowed burial in the hallowed ground of a church cemetery were often buried at the crossroads, often secured in place with crossed stakes and other rituals to prevent them from escaping. Mysterious creatures encountered at crossroads were quite possibly ghosts, spirits, or other supernatural entities. Caves were some of the earliest ritual sites in human history, going back at least to early modern *Homo*

sapiens in Europe. The paintings of Lascaux Cave and Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in Southern France (dated to approximately 20,000-32,000 years ago) and Altamira in Spain (approximately 14,000-18,500 years ago) are ritual art capturing the use of caves as magical spaces between the above- and below-ground worlds. Bodies of water are also important liminal spaces in world folklore, as a threshold made especially powerful by the mirror-like properties of water's reflective surface. This property was used to create liminal space in rituals when a small bowl or chalice of water was used to create a reflective surface believed to be capable of capturing alternate realities to divine the future or see into spirit worlds. The Lady of the Lake in Arthurian legend, the belief in soul-reflecting waters in Greek legend, and the numerous human and artifact sacrifices in North/western European bogs and ponds by Celts, Gaels, and the Northern European Lowlanders all attest to the belief that waters were liminal spaces of ritual use.

While not naturally defined in the way that the geographic features were, humans have created other ritual spaces with liminality. Sites that are either used for rituals or altered by significant events can gain that betwixt and between quality in public perception. Sacred spaces in churches and temples consciously create this. Altars in Christian churches are consciously liminal as a way of marking their sacred nature. The architecture and layout of the church places the altar or pulpit at the intersection of the aisles and often even the intersection of the church's architectural elements. Medieval churches were carefully planned and constructed to create the liminality of the altar and apse areas. The old Jewish temple described in the Old Testament is carefully planned and constructed in a way that architecturally creates a liminal sacred space. Even modern megachurches use stage design with a backstage, curtains, and theatrical lighting to create a performance space that is contrived as liminal. This is a part of ritual planning. Rituals are stereotyped, repetitive patterns of behavior that are designed to contrive specific results. The ritual shapes behavior and organizes a community or personal response. It controls chaos or uncertainty by molding perception into a culturally-recognized and acceptable pattern. Carefully organizing the space or setting of the ritual is a part of this design, increasing the probability that the ritual will be successful.

These ritual, liminal sites are especially significant at times that are also full of liminal meaning such as twilight, dawn, midnight, and noon. All of these times have significance as turning points or intersections in how we construct the daily cycle. Twilight and midnight are typically considered dangerous, while dawn and noon ("high noon") are frequently viewed as safety zones or positively charged times that empower the forces of good. For this reason, funerals are frequently held either very early in the day (while the ground is still wet with dew, between dawn and noon) or at high noon. Executions, by contrast, are more often held at or just after dusk or approaching the midnight hour. The "witching hour", a time for mischief and negative supernatural activity, is sometimes interpreted as dusk, others at midnight or the deepest of night –3 a.m. Folklore combines the elements of time and space by having ghosts or restless spirits haunting cemeteries at dusk or in the dark hours (midnight is a favorite time for ghost-hunters). The perception of how time affects the liminality of cemeteries can also be seen in how certain times of the year are interpreted. For instance, the old Celtic end of the year falling on Samhain, or All Hallow's Eve, holds that the fall and these days in particular are liminal times when the dead roam the land of the living briefly as the old year dies and the new one is born. As a result, Halloween imagery is full of cemeteries and the unrestful dead.

Cemeteries, because they are the intersection between the dead and the living, are a liminal space. They seem to hold positive and negative potential, as they help us shape and control our perceptions of death and the dead. They provide a space to safely place the dead and send them on their way from the living community to their new status as dead or at least a new realm where they are ancestors.

When Turner defined liminality, he was referring specifically to a state that occurs midway in the process of ritual. During a ritual, three stages or states occur: Separation, Liminality, and Reintegration. Separation is the action or process of separating the individual or individuals undergoing the ritual from the everyday community and their everyday status. Once separated and beginning the ritual, the individual is between states. They are not what they were, yet have not yet completed the transformation to what they will be. During this liminal stage, the individual transforms, a dangerous and often uncertain time. The chaos and uncertainty of this time are carefully bounded by ritual guidelines to shape the desired outcome. Finally, the ritual is completed when the participants of the ritual are reintegrated by being given their new identity or reclaiming their normal roles and being eased back into normal life. The process allows for transformations under the guidance of religious or community sanctioned control. The liminal state is the dangerous portion of the process.

Cemeteries and their liminality are interesting for that reason. The portal to the liminal phase is never truly closed as long as the cemetery exists. Our perceptions of cemeteries and proper maintenance of cemeteries as spaces reflect our feelings that the cemetery remains an intersection between the living and the dead – and therefore that it remains a ritually-charged space.

Observation and Experiential Reactions of Students to Cemeteries

As a part of a long-term goal of giving students both service learning and field based experience, SFA geography and anthropology faculty have been taking students to old cemeteries (African American, Old Spanish, and Caucasian) to observe folk funerary practices for two years. Students were given several cemetery experiences. A rural, church community-maintained Caucasian “swept-Earth” cemetery near Nacogdoches was visited as well as a large, city-maintained Caucasian cemetery within Nacogdoches. Students studied symbolism and typical artifact and ritual patterns in each. They were able to learn about tombstone rubbing and see examples of typical symbols from headstones in the swept-Earth cemetery. In contrast, two African-American cemeteries within the “sanctified quarter” of Nacogdoches, Texas, were also visited. Both of the African-American cemeteries were neglected, partially destroyed, and even made bureaucratically invisible since the 1950s despite being within 20-100 feet of residences. One cemetery was partially destroyed in the process of rerouting the LaNana Creek, with most of the headstones removed and many graves destroyed. The cemetery is now part of a recreational trail and does have historical marker near the few remaining headstones. Students worked with two of our faculty to map out and identify the graves with GPR so that markers could be placed or restored. The second cemetery was attached to an African-American church with an aging population. City maintenance stopped a few decades ago, and the church congregation was unable to maintain the property, so it has been overgrown by a secondary growth thicket of trees, shrubs, and weeds.

The students have been working with the community to clear and revive the cemetery. The goal of the projects is to increase students’ feelings of ownership in their community, provide them with experience in applying learning to service, and teach them about community funerary traditions. Over the course of this time, data has been gathered on student perception and reaction through informal interviews, observations, field notes, debriefing students, and debriefing the involved faculty.

While the other faculty members involved are primarily focused on the impact of service and experiential learning, my interests are how the perceptions of the students are shaped by their experiences. What are their pre-conceived notions and interests in cemeteries? What curiosity led them to volunteer for this as opposed to other activities?

(Students had several volunteer and bonus point options in addition to the cemetery field trips and projects.) Indeed, what were their perceptions of what cemeteries are like?

Students were asked about their perceptions of what makes a cemetery sacred (what religious rituals, symbols, artifacts or practices) and what could desecrate these areas? In particular, what consequences would desecration have for the cemetery as a place? Are the cemeteries dangerous, or do they hold negative religious power (i.e. evil, creepy, supernatural powers?) The perceptions and reactions to these places was measured in their actions, responses, and in visual data by letting students take images that they felt described their responses.

Reactions: What is Needed to Keep a Cemetery Sacred?

Students were in agreement that cemeteries were sacred, or hallowed ground. Therefore, students were asked about rituals, symbols, artifacts, and/or practices that make cemeteries sacred. The question holds a deeper significance: *If cemeteries are liminal, then what rituals do communities use to control them?* What elements of ritualized control keep the cemetery a safe place?

Students fit the consensus model of knowledge about cemetery rituals. Responses were very repetitive and showed a high level of consensus. Headstones, or at least markers with either names or religious symbols like a cross, were considered a bare minimum by all students interviewed. The markers needed to be on the actual graves to work appropriately, and a majority of the graves needed to be marked for the cemetery to be properly maintained. Heaving or disruption of the tombstones through natural weathering was not considered troubling or desecrating. Covering with mosses or color changes to the stones from wearing or erosion was considered “beautiful” by a few students, who liked the “antique” and “natural” weathering. This sort of wear was even considered to make a few of the graves in the Caucasian cemeteries feel more “gentle” and “peaceful.” Students enjoyed taking rubbings of the markers and reacted to them as artifacts of beauty and interest. (This was before we were informed by one of the public history professors that this tradition is now frowned upon by conservationists, so rubbings were not taken of later cemeteries. Several students commented that this made them sad, they had felt a connection and a sense of accomplishment making copies to “preserve” the headstones.)

By contrast, damage to the headstones caused by others were considered desecration and vandalism. Removal by theft, or vandalism for pranks, or using the markers or graves in activities to disturb the dead were believed to damage the sanctity of the cemetery. In particular, several students remarked that “playing at ghost hunting” or “messing around” in the cemeteries were not only disrespectful but actually damaging to the cemetery’s feeling or spiritual environment. Interestingly, several of the students who participated in the field trips had previously engaged in these activities. A few had even given a class report on their ghost hunting forays into local cemeteries for a folklore class and had even said that their interests in shows like *Ghost Hunters* prompted their initial interest in volunteering. When asked about this change of heart, the students stated that they had a newfound respect for the cemeteries and their meaning for the local community. In particular, they reported that they would not feel comfortable doing anything disrespectful in the older African-American cemeteries... but that they may still occasionally engage in some recreational ghost hunting “where it was okay.”

Other artifacts and symbols were considered important for personalizing the graves and maintaining the sense of identity for the dead buried there. Names on the graves, symbols that marked the beliefs or group affiliations of the dead, and items that had “meaning” were considered important. Meaningful items or symbols that students remarked on were roses for beloved mothers; lambs for children; Masonic, Woodsmen of the World,

and military symbols; and religious symbols on the headstones. Flowers and plants, both artificial and real, were considered important. Several students remarked that “at least a few trees” were needed to make the cemetery feel peaceful and serene. When prompted about why, the students were uncertain, but repeated that the trees were “beautiful, peaceful.” A few artifacts troubled students. For example, benches were considered very nice, but not for sitting by one particular grave. It was perceived to be too morbid – too attached to the dead. Too many artifacts around a grave were considered troubling – a sign that the grieving ones were not reconciled to the death.

The most important ritual activities, stated again and again, were maintenance-related. “You need to keep it up” and “you need to keep it nice” were repeated themes in many variations. When asked for specifics, the cemetery needed to be a clean and well-groomed space. Short grass, no weeds, no trash or debris, and maintained vegetation. The graves or tombs weren’t seen as dirty, even when covered by dust, mud-splatter, or lichens and moss. Even very old and faded flowers were not really seen as messy, just in the process of decay. Weeds, however, or rust on markers were seen as signs of neglect.

The other necessary ritual for a cemetery – both to make and to keep it sacred – is grieving. The living needed to bring the dead there, “say a few words” over them, and then come periodically to come find peace with them. Even when a family member is not well known to all, the funerary rituals are seen as a last and lasting chance for the family to “learn something of the good in them.” The funeral allows the grieving to say goodbye. The cemetery is a physical space to leave the deceased behind – to make the goodbye real and final. It is not really final, however, for the cemetery also is a place where the dead can be visited, a place to take unfinished the unfinished business of grieving and saying goodbye that the living need to complete. The cemetery ensures that the dead can be revisited and remembered, preserved for the living at an intersection between this world and the next.

Most students who had volunteered multiple times stated that they now felt very comfortable in cemeteries and felt that they knew how to “act properly”, “with proper respect” in cemeteries. They quickly overcame the nervousness of their initial visits and developed a caretaker attitude that made them game to transfer their volunteerism to other cemeteries after completing the first project.

What Rituals are Needed to Control the Liminal Aspect of Cemeteries?

Text and visual analysis of the student interviews and images reveal the criteria for considering a site desecrated as well as implicit beliefs about funerary ritualism and how it influences supernatural forces.

The students all felt that headstones, tombstones, or at least markers (either purely symbolic crosses or name markers) were a fundamental artifact for keeping a cemetery sacred. When I asked students about why cemeteries needed to be maintained, they talked about respect, maintenance, lost markers, and even, in a few cases, the possibility that there would be damage to or loss of the souls of the dead.

Poor groundskeeping that allows overgrown plants, weeds, or debris to build up in the cemetery signal neglect of the cemetery as a whole. It is perceived as a place that the living no longer care for, and therefore a place where the living and dead no longer find peace with each other. The lack of interaction from the living is seen as the root of neglect and the ritual that leaves a cemetery vulnerable. Cemeteries which aren’t maintained are in danger of disappearing. “If no one’s there, watching, then it’ll be gone before you know it.” “You gotta keep it up, or that land will be cleaned up and it’s all gone.”

Sanctity seems to be a lesser concern than outright oblivion, particularly for the graves of the rural, the poor, or the minority populations. The loss of rural cemeteries was seen as sad but predictable, given the loss of complete communities in rural areas in the

last fifty years. More surprise was directed at the disappearance of cemeteries in town. Students repeatedly expressed surprise that “such a thing” could happen in plain view. They did gain confidence through their participation and the knowledge that they could make a difference. Student perceptions changed as they worked with the sites, taking on a “caretaker attitude” focused on maintenance and preservation similar to that seen in civil war reenactors in their work to preserve battlefields. They saw themselves as being members of a community and having responsibilities to preserve the traditions of that community.

Biographical Note

Karol Chandler-Ezell is an assistant professor in the Department of Social & Cultural Analysis at Stephen F. Austin State University. As director of the Anthropology Program, she teaches courses in Cultural Anthropology; Magic, Cults, & the Supernatural, and Ethnobiology. Her research interests are in paracultures, perception, and adaptive behavior.

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