"NOT OF THIS WORLD": CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE AS MINORITY

DISCOURSE

by

J. STEPHEN PEARSON

(Under the Direction of RONALD BOGUE)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation re-reads the history of Western Christianity in order to reconsider notions of Christianized culture and politics. Using concepts from contemporary ethnic studies, I examine devotional works from the Western Christian tradition to expose a thematic thread that depicts the Christian community as a cultural minority: Exile in Patrick of Ireland; Minor Literature in Richard Rolle; Borderlands in Catherine of Genoa; Nationalism in George Fox; Contact Zones in Thomas Merton; and Diaspora in Kathleen Norris. I try to demonstrate that works from mainstream Christian writers can be profitably interpreted using minority discourse: though the authors were not ethnic minorities, their faith gave them a minority position in the world. My analyses are built on scriptural teachings about minority identity from the Book of Daniel, in which the community must learn to live in a foreign culture, and from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus teaches the disciples that they are no longer "of" the world.

Alongside these analyses, I examine the multicultural aspects of Christian missionary work, showing how from its origins Christian history demonstrates a plurality of Christianities, as missionaries adapted their teachings for new cultures and as converts around the globe adopted Christianity on their own terms and developed new forms of Christian theology that use their historical and cultural situations to interpret the scriptures and vice versa. After arising in the poly-cultural Middle East, Christianity quickly spread into Europe, Africa, Asia and, eventually, the Americas, recasting its story for each new cultural context and thereby creating

multiple Christianities. At the same time, theologians such as Augustine, Luther and

Kierkegaard argued for radical distinctions between religious and political communities. For

these theologians, the community of believers differs in essence from the secular political-

cultural community; as a result, there can be no expectation of a Christian government or of a

Christian culture. It can therefore be said that Christians are commanded by their scriptures,

theologians and spiritual masters to embrace a minority status within their own cultures so as to

minister to the world without being compromised by it.

INDEX WORDS: Christianity; Devotional Literature; Minority Discourse; Book of Daniel; Gospel of John; Saint Patrick; Richard Rolle; Saint Catherine of Genoa; George Fox; Thomas Merton; Kathleen Norris; Saint Augustine; Martin Luther; Søren Kierkegaard; Exile; Minor Literature; Borderlands; Nationalism; Contact Zones; Diaspora

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DEDICATION

To the glory of God, who loved humankind enough to become one of us.

In honor of Jacques Ellul (1912-1994), whose books have been my spiritual directors for the past decade and have given me the vision to pursue this project.

For Max (b. 2004) and Lila Tate (b. 2007), that they may live in a world that celebrates the myriad ways humans express the joys and beauties of existence.

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Thanks to my family, for their generosity and encouragement, and for teaching me the importance of education and of pursuing your dreams to the best of your abilities.

Thanks to God, for providing both the dream and the ability to pursue it.

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<center>**CHAPTER 1:**</center>

<center>**"NOT OF THIS WORLD": CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE AS MINORITY DISCOURSE**</center>

I. Introduction

My argument develops an idea of Christian identity that has been put forth at various times throughout Western history, as, for instance, in the following passages from Europeans who fought in the resistance against Nazism. First, from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1937):

> In the world the Christians are a colony of [their] true home, they are strangers and aliens in a foreign land, enjoying the hospitality of that land, obeying its laws and honouring its government. [...] But they are only passing through the country. At any moment they may receive the signal to move on. Then they will strike tents, leaving behind them all their worldly friends and connections, and following only the voice of their Lord who calls. They leave the land of their exile, and start their homeward trek to heaven. (303)

Second, Jacques Ellul's 1948 discussion of the Christian's earthly responsibilities:

> The first condition is a well-known truth, but its reality is not sufficiently understood: <u>the Christian belongs to two cities</u>. [...] All this should be understood in the most strictly material sense: living in this world, he [sic] belongs to another, like a man of one nation who resides in another nation. [...] He is the citizen of another Kingdom, and it is thence that he derives his way of thinking, judging, and feeling. His heart and his thought are elsewhere. [...] Further, when we speak of "this world," we are referring to concrete realities: the nation, the State, the family, work. . . . To all this the Christian cannot swear an unconditional loyalty. (Matt. 10:37)

<center>1</center>

Now the two cities to which he belongs can never coincide, and the Christian

must not abandon either the one or the other. He may long to return, by death, to

his native city, to his own country, but so long as he is upon earth he cannot

possibly renounce the one or the other; on the other hand, he cannot be satisfied

with the fundamental dualism in which he is involved. […] Bound up with the

lives of other men (by economic and sociological laws, and also by the will of

God), he cannot accept the view that they will always remain in their anguish and

their disorder, victims of tyranny and over-work, buoyed up only by a hope which

seems unfounded. Thus he must plunge into social and political problems in

order to have an influence on the world, not in the hope of making it paradise,

but simply in order to make it tolerable […]. (33-35)

An American version of these comments was put forward in 1989 by Stanley Hauerwas

and William Willimon, who write in their preface to Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian

Colony: "The church is a colony, an island of one culture in the middle of another. In baptism

our citizenship is transferred from one dominion to another, and we become, in whatever

culture we find ourselves, resident aliens" (12). However, Hauerwas and Willimon see this idea

not as a constant theme in church history, but as an ancient ideal whose rediscovery marks a

recent change in the situation of the U.S. church ("between 1960 and 1980").[1] Despite the clear

resemblance of their ideas to those of Bonhoeffer and Ellul, neither European author appears in

Hauerwas and Willimon's book. The book's popularity implies a revived sense of Christian

separateness from the world, but its lack of historical connection suggests how little U.S.

Christians understand their faith tradition.

My project suggests ways to re-establish and/or re-claim the long tradition of writings

that remind the Church how much it has in common with sojourners, strangers, and aliens. I

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[1] This situation may hold in Europe as well. According to a 1992 poll, only 25% of
Germans were Christians (Wessels 5).

address these concerns by re-examining the Christian devotional tradition in light of the scriptural witness to Jesus' teaching that his followers do not belong to the world. I propose that because Jesus' statement is not a command but a statement of identity, it has played a fundamental role in Christian experience throughout the ages. Therefore, I seek to show that this theme can be found in Christian writings, even when it is not addressed directly, in ways that are analogous to themes explored in recent ethnic minority literature. In particular, I focus on devotional authors who were clearly part of their culture's ethnic majority, to show that even in the most homogeneous periods of Church history, Christian texts reveal crucial similarities to ethnic minority texts. Perhaps if the Western church could recognize that even in the Christendoms of Europe and America, it, too, has always been an alien, a foreigner, a sojourner, then it might realize how much more it has in common with ethnic minorities than with the power structures in Washington D.C., Paris, London, Berlin, Rome or Brussels.

Outline of the Dissertation

Each of the three central chapters of this dissertation covers a historical period in the history of Western Christianity; the introduction also includes two sections analyzing relevant scriptural texts. Each chapter includes four sections: a historical examination of how cultural diversity affected the church as it expanded into a new region; a discussion of contemporaneous theological distinctions between church and state; and analyses of two classic devotional texts from that period using modern multicultural models. These three historical periods are divided roughly according to the church's growth and maturation around the world: Chapter 1 covers the church's growth into Western Europe; Chapter 2 treats the period that starts when the church moves into the New World; and Chapter 3 examines the modern period of growth within the Christian communities in Asia and Africa.

The devotional authors examined here represent mainstream Western Christianity and include Catholics and Protestants, Europeans and Americans, men and women, religious and lay people. I have chosen three authors who would easily be considered "canonical" devotional

writers—Saint Patrick, George Fox, and Thomas Merton—and three who may be less known to lay audiences—Richard Rolle, Saint Catherine of Genoa, and Kathleen Norris. I have not chosen these six based upon any thread of influence or any thematic connections; if they have anything in common, it is that they all belonged to their cultures' ethnic majority. Therefore, they are useful here because of their diversity as a set, combined with their non-minority status. At the same time, I have not attempted to cover all the major movements in Western Christian history; nor do I claim that these authors are representative of their periods. In a sense, the texts chose themselves by making their connections to minority theory obvious to me.

The multicultural approaches have been selected to show the applicability of a wide variety of theoretical models: exile, minor literature, borderlands, tribalism (nationalism and integrationism), contact zones, and diaspora. I intend not to pin down any one theoretical model as the most useful for studying devotional literature, but rather to inspire our imaginations to make connections between two seemingly unconnected fields of inquiry. Each author discussed calls to my mind one particular method; other authors will no doubt suggest methods not explored here, and still others may not suggest any relation to minority discourse theory.

The three theologians, Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard, are canonical and extremely influential, though perhaps less influential for the texts studied here than for their other works. I have included these authors to supplement the literary analysis of the six devotional authors, to show how theologians have approached the ideas I find in the literature, i.e., that the Church, even though it may be the "official" religion, has a minority status within the world. I have also included discussions of the Book of Daniel, to show how minority experience is expressed in Hebrew Diaspora texts, and of the Book of John, to examine the how the idea is presented as one of Jesus' teachings. I do not claim that these five theological texts agree with each other, or even that they were written in response to one another. I claim only that the ideas explored in this dissertation have been presented by some of the most important Christian theologians.

The historical surveys should be read with the same disclaimers in mind. I have not attempted to uncover new historical evidence. What is important is simply the fact that there is scholarly evidence showing that in every mission field, Christianity has been modified in various ways and therefore is itself a multicultural structure. As will be seen, many different approaches were tried, many different problems arose, and many different forms of Christianity developed over the centuries. These surveys may best be read as collages of cultural encounters.

For instance, I examine the ways in which the early church altered its Hebrew tradition by adopting elements of Greek and Roman thought, adapting to Celtic contexts, accommodating Germanic traditions, and borrowing from Islam. Some of these changes strengthened the Church while others weakened it, but in both cases, Medieval Christianity was pluralistic in fact, if not always in theory. As the Church spread to the Americas, it encountered new philosophical and theological problems related to the discovery of peoples who did not fit into European understandings of humanity's origins. Yet while many explorers and settlers treated the indigenous Americans as less than human, a few individuals fought for their fair treatment and legal rights. At the same time, indigenous Americans developed their own relationships with Christianity and adopted elements of the religion for their own purposes. Much the same happened in Africa, which now contains one of the largest Christian populations on the planet. In Asia, a few enterprising missionaries were uncommonly respectful of their adopted cultures, becoming Brahminic and Confucian scholars in order to win their listeners' faith. In the twentieth century, Native American, Latin American, African and Asian Christianities came into their own, producing indigenous theologies that address what the Gospel of Jesus and the Bible say to their history and culture. In the analogy proposed by Gustavo Benavides, these indigenous Christianities are like linguistic dialects (201).

I want to make it clear that I am not attempting to dismiss the very real problems of Christian history. As the historical surveys will show, there is much that is unfortunate and debatable in the history of Christianity's expansion across the globe, so much so that such

European writers as Kierkegaard and Anton Wessels have wondered if Christianity ever truly existed on the continent. I do not deny of these problems. Rather, I want merely to revive a thread that can be traced throughout the tradition, from the Hebrew Scriptures through Jesus' ministry and into the work of missionaries, theologians, and spiritual masters. It is a thread that, while not always visible, has always been present and deserves to be recovered, if only to remind ourselves that there are differing ways to view the relationship between church and state. My hope is, as church historian Justo González has said, that "responsible remembrance" will lead "to responsible action" (79).

Devotional Literature

Although this project contains sections on history and theology, its main focus is on the genre of devotional literature. This genre has not received much academic attention outside studies in the history of spirituality, which are understandably more concerned with content and practice than with rhetoric and form. Only a few sub-fields of devotional literature have gained any substantial consideration in literary studies, most notably spiritual autobiography and Medieval mystical texts. One problem no doubt is the genre's non-fictional, didactic nature. Another problem may be that it is unclear what exactly defines the genre. These texts are not typical theological texts, since they are less concerned with theological concepts than with their application. But neither are they literary in the sense of being fictional, poetic, or focused on traditional Western notions of aesthetic quality; as is well known, Christian plain-style is a literary form unto itself, founded upon the literary qualities of the Bible as well as on the Christian virtue of humility and modesty in all aspects of life. Given this ambivalence to aesthetic trends, it is useful to approach the genre in the same way that Jace Weaver approaches Native American literature, i.e., by examining the total written output of the Christian community regarding practical knowledge without regard to literary quality (ix-x).

In truth, there is no easy way to decide which texts should be included, and there are many sub-fields to consider: in addition to spiritual (auto)biography and mystical literature,

there are monastic manuals, instructional treatises (on prayer, piety, etc.), letters and occasional essays, and the full history of hymnody, just to name some of the most well-known. In many ways, the genre is defined not by content or form but by reader reception, i.e., these texts have been canonized by their continued usefulness to readers. The most helpful indicators of which texts belong are often the anthologies devoted to the genre in its most inclusive sense, that is, not limited to either mystical texts or to any specific period/movement. For instance, in the preface to his 1948 anthology, The Fellowship of the Saints: An Anthology of Devotional Literature, Thomas Kepler explains his rationale for inclusion as follows:

> […] I have reserved three general qualifications for "canonizing" men and women in this anthology: (1) Their interests must have concentrated on the life of prayer and devotion. (2) They must have left among their writings significant interpretations of the spiritual life. (3) They must have written in prose rather than in poetry—an anthology of poet-mystics is a study by itself. (xix)

Kepler also includes longevity as a criterion; he hopes that he has included "All of the most notable devotional classics which have stood the test of the centuries" (xxi). In the updated edition of the anthology, James Earl Massey adds that although Kepler's selections take a variety of forms, from descriptive to prescriptive, from "how-to" to "why-to," and including "moral, intellectual and spiritual elements all intertwined, boldly addressed to the reader's mind and will, the head and heart," what is most important is that they "carry the open reader beyond formalism; they induce the reader to pray" (xvii). For Kepler and Massey, these texts have been canonized by their own power to inspire readers to a closer communion with God.

Similar criteria are offered by Frank N. Magill in the preface to his 1963 Masterpieces of Christian Literature in Summary Form. Magill states that the texts included were selected after "scores of professors of Christian literature at many leading universities and divinity schools […] were asked to name the three hundred books in the entire range of Protestant literature which, in their opinions, had been most influential in the development of Protestantism" (xxi-xxii).

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Although Magill's anthology focuses on the Protestant tradition (there is a separate volume for the Roman Catholic tradition), many Medieval masters and several post-Reformation Catholics were elected, including François de Sales, Cardinal Newman, Baron von Hügel and Teilhard de Chardin. The inclusion, by popular vote, of Catholic authors from both pre-Reformation and contemporary periods in an anthology devoted to Protestantism demonstrates the importance of influence, not only across centuries but also across contemporaraneous cultures.

A more recent attempt to familiarize the public with the genre has been a pair of anthologies by Richard J. Foster, who is himself the author of an extremely popular devotional work, Celebration of Discipline. In the first anthology, Devotional Classics, Foster and his co-editor James Bryan Smith explain (as Kepler and Magill did before them) that the title refers to "a kind of writing that has stood the test of time and that seeks to form the soul before God" (1). Foster and Smith claim that the "vintage" of their selections saves audiences "from the fads of the marketplace" by providing what C.S. Lewis called "a standard of plain, central Christianity" (2). This anthology is organized not chronologically, as are Kepler's and Magill's, but according to what Foster and Smith call the "five great streams of Christian life and faith" (3), i.e., the "Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, and Evangelical" traditions (the revised edition includes a sixth tradition, Incarnational). Foster and Smith claim that this diversity of focus is important if readers "are to have a balanced vision of faith and life" (3). Foster's second anthology, Spiritual Classics (with Emilie Griffin), organizes readings around the twelve disciplines outlined in Celebration of Discipline: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. By organizing the readings thematically rather than chronologically, Foster's anthologies suggest that the Christian encounter with God remains stable through all times and across all places insofar as the Kingdom of God is not defined by its worldly contexts.

All four of these anthologies focus on the authors' lives and contexts in addition to the content of their texts. Kepler relegates this information to his preface, offering a general

statement of the criteria according to which a person could be called a saint and therefore worthy of inclusion (since his anthology is titled "Fellowship of the Saints" even though it is goes far beyond Roman Catholic writers); the individual authors receive only an introductory paragraph. Foster gives each author a few paragraphs, but like Kepler devotes the most space to the texts themselves. Magill's contributors, who are writing summaries rather than presenting selections, integrate more fully the authors' lives with their ideas. This focus on authorship suggests that the writers' personal sanctity is as important as the content of the writing (both of which are more important than the literary quality). Although there are authors about whom we know nothing beyond the popularity and wisdom of their texts, authors' lives, when known, are often used as criteria for inclusion into the "devotional canon."

Minority Discourse

A great deal has been written about minority discourse and there is no way to summarize it adequately here; I can make only a few general statements about how I use it. First, I claim no single method or approach. In part, this is because I do not want to claim that the Church is an ethnic minority; even though many early Christian authors discussed Christians as a new genos, ethnicity or race (see Buell), I believe this strategy is not appropriate in a modern context. To do so today, when the Church has been in control not only of the West but of large portions of the South and East as well, would minimize the very real suffering that many people have experienced at the hands of Western civilization. At the same time, it would allow Western Christians who feel persecuted for their faith another opportunity to play the victim. Instead, I say simply that the Church shares many experiences with (and in many ways functions as) an ethnic minority. It is simultaneously in and not in exile, in and not in the borderlands, etc. Its power is very real and controls much of our culture; yet its foundation and teachings urge its followers to detach themselves from cultural privileges and to view themselves as aliens and sojourners on one hand, ambassadors and royalty on the other. My hope is that framing the

issue in this way will provoke the Church to rethink its connections to cultural power and to see its own history mirrored in the experiences of neighboring minorities.

Second, I am not working with postcolonial theory. Although aspects of colonialism are addressed in my historical sections and in my section on Merton, the majority of the texts I discuss are written within and about Western culture; five of the six devotional authors come from Britain and the United States. For this reason, ethnic minority theory is more suitable, as it deals with the issues facing peoples who have neither numerical nor cultural dominance. Much of the theory I draw on has been applied with great success in the study of U.S. literature, for, as Deleuze says, "Is not American literature the minor literature par excellence, insofar as America claims to federate the most diverse minorities, 'a Nation swarming with nations'? America brings together extracts, it presents samples from all ages, all lands, and all nations" (57). Because the United States is not yet a postcolonial nation, multicultural theory is more pertinent to my purposes than, say, the important work of Spivak and Bhabha. Even the essay from Said that I touch on is about a topic—exile—that applies to Western as well as postcolonial cultures. This is not to say that there is no need for a postcolonial study of the Christian devotional tradition; as I prepared these essays, I found several points where postcolonial theory, as well as feminist and Marxist theories—neither of which I employ here—could be enlightening. I simply mean that in this dissertation, I have stayed with ethnic minority discourse.

Third, I believe it is crucial in all discussions of literature—fictional, poetic or didactic—to allow the literature to be the theory itself. Therefore, although I suggest that the various theories discussed herein are useful for studying devotional literature, I make no claim that the theories explain the texts. Rather, I want to show merely that the theories open new avenues for investigation and exploration. In fact, the authors themselves will modify the theories, since the Christian worldview is very different from the worldviews on which much modern literary and cultural theory is founded. The Christian worldview rests on a belief in the activity of a just and beneficent God within the world, whereas modern academic theory is built around materialist

and deterministic theories that leave little room for any explanation that relies on supernatural activity. I do not say this to deny the value of academic theory—there is much truth and wisdom to be gained from its analyses of world systems. I mean only that these theories will need to be modified when applied to texts in which God is assumed to be acting. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has stated, "master[ing] the canon of criticism" is less important than returning to the traditions themselves in order "to develop theories of criticism indigenous to our cultures" (qtd. in Selden 233). Thus, Patrick and Merton present their own theories of exile and contact zones; the essays by Said and Pratt that inspired these discussions are useful simply because they are well known and because they provide a foundation from which to explore the Christian texts.

I would like to demonstrate this concept by examining one definition of minority discourse, that provided by Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd in their 1990 essay, "Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?" At first glance, it would seem that JanMohamed and Lloyd's definition would effectively exclude any consideration of the Church, as the first characteristic they list is that such a theory is "the product of damage— damage more or less systematically inflicted on cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture" (4). Certainly, the history of Western civilization would suggest that Christianity has in no way been systematically victimized and oppressed.

However, Kierkegaard argues quite forcefully that this has in fact happened. As will be seen, he argues that Christianity has been conquered by its own success and thus has practically ceased to exist. Seen this way, Christian history (as opposed to the history of the institution) could well exemplify JanMohamed and Lloyd's contention that minority cultures "continue to be subjected to 'institutional forgetting,' which, as a form of control of one's memory and history, is one of the gravest forms of damage done to minority cultures" (6). As noted previously, the contemporary American church is only now beginning to recognize ideas that were present in World War II Europe, no doubt because American success in the War created a triumphalist ideology that successfully incorporated the church within that discourse. If so, then history will

have demonstrated JanMohamed and Lloyd's observation, "the danger remains that these [minority] cultures will thus be recuperated, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, into 'performing a major function'" (7). As will be discussed regarding Rolle, the Christian tradition has historically played the role of a minor literature, elevating the vernacular languages into literary forms. Yet it seems that after the vernaculars became official languages, the Church was often assigned the "major function" of reinforcing political ideologies.

The danger of "recuperation" is especially strong when minorities gain access to the dominant educational system: minority critics who "have been formed within the dominant culture's educational apparatus and continue to operate under its (relatively tolerant) constraints, [...] are always in danger of reproducing the dominant ideology" (8-9). In particular, educational systems cut off minority individuals from their native communities, a practice that makes assimilation easier by impressing "the Western model of individual and racial identity" (9) over the individual's sense of communal identity; as a result, "minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically" (10). This problem will be seen in the ways both Patrick and Merton had to recover their Christian heritage in spite of being reared in nominally Christian environments; it will also be seen Norris's discovery of the benefits of monastic retreats, which enable a return to a sense of collective identity.

One of the ways majority cultures inflict damage on minority groups is to use violence to inspire minorities to assimilate (5); I would argue that this is very similar to what Fox and the early Quakers experienced. Similarly, majority cultures do not rely on syncretism, unlike minorities, who "are always obliged, in order to survive, to master the hegemonic culture" (7). As will be shown, it has been argued that this process occurred in the Church with both Greek and Germanic cultures; I suggest that it has happened again in modernity, as Western Christianity has increasingly incorporated within its thought and practice tenets of Marxism, socialism, evolution, nationalism, democracy and capitalism. Even the growing movements within the Western Church towards women's ordination, gay and lesbian affirmation and

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ecological sensitivity are in large part responses to movements in the world rather than movements inspired by Christians out of their commitment to equality and stewardship.

Thus, I argue that the differences between JanMohamed and Lloyd's criteria for minority status and the history of Christianized Europe are mostly superficial. It may be instructive to think of the Church along the lines of the numerous European ethnic groups who were persecuted in the United States before being incorporated into post-World War II notions of "whiteness." I would take this analogy further and suggest that Christians, having been seduced by the lures of cultural power, have learned to "pass" within the majority culture. However, as JanMohamed and Lloyd note, minority status comes not from an individual's sense of self but from the group's political situation (7-8); the fact that millions of Christians fail to see themselves as minorities does not alter the historical fact that the political and economic structures of modernity have assimilated the Church into the dominant agents of power.

With this connection between Christianity and minority discourse established, we can explore the positive side of JanMohamed and Lloyd's project, namely "the task of minority discourse, in the singular: to describe and define the common denominators that link various minority cultures" (1). They note how important it is for minority groups to be in conversation with each other despite their different histories and circumstances (3-4). This conversation would involve first, "drawing out solidarities in the form of similarities between modes of repression and struggle that all minorities experience separately but experience precisely as minorities" (9), and second, creating "a critical-discursive articulation of alternative practices and values that are embedded in the often-damaged, -fragmentary, -hampered, or -occluded works of minorities," an articulation that would demonstrate how "the very differences that have always been read as symptoms of inadequacy can be re-read transformatively as indications and figurations of values radically opposed to those of the dominant culture" (8).

I suggest that Christians need to join this conversation, and that to do so, they must learn to recognize their own minority status within the majority culture, as can be seen in the lives of

Patrick, Catherine and Fox. For as JanMohamed and Lloyd argue, "those who are dominated will understand the devastating effects of misused power; they are in a better position to document and analyze [...] how relations of domination can destroy the 'human' potential of its victims" (13). As Christians reclaim their minority status, they will be better able to meet the needs of those who are being mistreated by the culture. As will be seen, this argument has been made by Virgilio Elizondo and other ethnic minority theologians, who note that as a Galilean, Jesus was himself a member of a culturally suspect group, just as his disciples were commoners rather than members of the cultural, educated elite. Similarly, Paul writes that in the Kingdom of God there is no longer any difference between Jew and Greek. In learning to identify with the oppressed, Christianity will both return to its roots and profit from the emergence of what JanMohamed and Lloyd call "a collective subjectivity formed in practice rather than contemplation" (9).

JanMohamed and Lloyd argue that one of the most important activities for minority theorists is archival work, "the recovery and mediation of cultural practices" (6). Church historian Dale T. Irvin has suggested much the same idea in his book Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning: Rendering Accounts. Believing that the Christian faith has been borne by histories (plural), Irvin argues for an approach that "would allow us to narrate the diversity of its historical traditions [...] one that intentionally seeks to articulate its multiple origins, and uncover its significant ruptures, within a wider family of traditions" (xii). For Irvin, external circumstances combine with Christianity's internal nature to signify that "the re-creation of Christian tradition is not an option, but an imperative of Christian faith" (9).

I envision this study as an exploration of the territory common to Irvin's and JanMohamed and Lloyd's projects. My effort is to recover the multiple histories of the Christian tradition, not only in terms of its many geo-cultural histories, but also in terms of its multiple disciplinary histories—mission work, theology, and devotional experience. The project is archival, using the past to re-orient our understanding of Christian identity and of the Church-

State relationship. And it attempts to make connections to established minority discourse, in hopes of suggesting ways for the Church to reclaim its own identity and history, enacting its call to be peacemakers and healers (Matthew 5:9 and 10:8), working to ensure justice and kindness for all people (Micah 6:2), and bearing the burdens of all who are oppressed (Galatians 6:2).

II. The Hebrew Diaspora Experience: The Book of Daniel

The first six stories in the Book of Daniel present an interesting picture when read from a minority perspective: in each, a Jewish protagonist is tested regarding his cultural identity and not only passes the test but also receives a promotion. This exilic facet makes the book useful to minority communities in the church who seek constructive ways to maintain their cultural identities. It is also part of a larger portrayal of exile that frames not simply the exilic and postexilic biblical books, but the entire Hebrew canon: from the loss of Eden through Abram's journey from Ur, Jacob's years in Egypt, the Exodus, David's time in hiding, the Babylonian Exile and the return to Judah.[2] Thus, the exile-diaspora experience is a crucial component of Judeo-Christian faith, not merely for minority communities, but for the entire church.

This section first addresses what these texts from Daniel teach about the nature of politics in a foreign land, and then examines what relevance the texts have for the church today. However, it focuses only on three of them. The six stories fall into two genres: a set of contest tales in which the interpretive ability of the Jewish foreigner is tested against the ability of other interpreters at court; and a set of conflict tales in which the Jewish foreigners are attacked for their religious and cultural differences (Humphreys 218-221). In these conflict stories, the

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[2] Robert Carroll claims that in spite of the "meta-narrative of a 'homeland' occupied by the people, [...] the grand narrative of the Hebrew Bible (especially as constituted by Genesis-2 Kings) seems to reflect and to testify to a subtext of deported existence. [...] Deportation and diaspora are constitutive of the Jewish identity as it begins to emerge and evolve in the biblical narratives. The Bible is the great metanarrative of deportation, exile and potential return" (64-65). Similarly, Jacob Neusner suggests that the entire historical canon was put together to reflect the concerns of the very small population of Jews who lived in exile and then returned to Judah, so that the canon does not reflect the concerns of those Jews who either never went into exile or never left the diaspora (221-237).

Jewish protagonists must find a way not to compromise their religious beliefs, even though they risk their position and even their lives in doing so. It is these conflict stories, chapters 1, 3 and 6, that I will examine here.

The nature of the Jewish exilic experience has been interpreted in divergent ways, but recent discoveries about the harsh living conditions during the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic periods (Smith-Christopher, "Prayers") have refuted the long influential view that the Jewish exiles lived rather comfortably, with opportunities to advance in the imperial government (Humphreys).[3] These discoveries have brought out the subversive political elements of the Daniel stories and given rise to the interpretation that the stories constitute a form of "spiritual warfare" (286-288). My analysis assumes this antagonistic interpretation of the tales.

It should also be noted that the division between the religious and political realms of life is very often blurred in the book. The identity of Daniel and his friends

> has two important aspects. The first is religious: they venerate the God of the
> Judeans, who is the living God and is able to save from death those who remain
> faithful to him. The second aspect is political-patriotic: they belong to a people of
> their own, and serve as members of this people in the foreign government in a
> diaspora situation. (Henten 153)

Problems arise when these aspects of diasporic life come into conflict: although Daniel and his friends "are as loyal to the king as their religion allows them to be," they must at times choose one over the other. Hence "the stories of Daniel 3 and 6 may have offered religious as well as political guidelines for Judean readers who lived under a foreign government" (153). This section focuses on these political lessons.

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[3] Smith-Christopher provides historical evidence in "Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587-539 BCE)" (q.v.).

Political Lessons

An examination of the stories' political content shows that the political problems of exile-diaspora life are just as important as the religious ones. This fact is evident from the book's prologue, which reveals that "Adonai and Nebuchadnezzar have sought to accomplish the same thing—the defeat of Jerusalem—and thus are allies" (Fewell 35). This interpretation of events brings politics into the realm of theology: God controls foreign kingdoms and, insofar as he took part in Jerusalem's fall, provides his people a reason to hope that he will also participate in their restoration. The problem is that politics prefers to see itself as independent of theology, especially in foreign lands: "Nebuchadnezzar does not recognize Adonai as the source of his victory. He does not know this god; he offers this god no credit and thus the potential conflict is born" (Fewell 35). His refusal creates daily conflict for the Jews and prevents a solely theological interpretation of that conflict: since the Babylonians have turned their own state (and king) into an idol, all political action in the kingdom is theological and vice versa.

This conflation reveals the complexity of the king's purposes in bringing the young nobles to court. On the surface, their education into "the language and literature of the Chaldeans" seems harmless, perhaps even beneficial: since they were to live in this new land for a while, knowledge of its culture would help provide for their needs and perhaps be of use to the Jewish community as a whole. But the situation is not as simple as it seems, for the term "Chaldean" is sometimes used in the book "as an ethnic label [...] and thus allows the reader to associate the learning of Chaldean language and literature with instruction in Chaldean culture" (Fewell 37). The young nobles are not merely to be instructed about their new culture, but to be trained in it. Their education contains all the stages of a rite of passage: separation-seclusion, liminality-re-education ("a change of being, a change of identity," including a new name, as happens here), and reintegration (38). The young men are expected to lose their Jewish identity and adopt a new one. Thus, whereas being trained by the king appears to be "a promotion from prisoners to professionals," it is in reality "a descension from 'royal seed' to servanthood" (38).

Therefore, the text teaches its readers to be wary of being included in the political life of their host culture, which coaxes foreigners into dropping their beliefs and customs in favor of "assimilation," i.e., controllability. The fear raised by cultural difference is evident in the two other stories as well. When, in chapter 3, the officials who accuse the three young men before Nebuchadnezzar connect the statement "They do not serve your gods" to the claim "These pay no heed to you, O king" (3:12), they imply that the young men have no respect for the king, whereas a more accurate description would be that it is this one edict the youths cannot obey due to religious conscience. Likewise, in their speech to Darius in chapter 6, Daniel's accusers stress his difference, referring to him as an exile rather than as the government minister he is (6:13), treating his behavior as a personal affront to the king, and cautioning Darius that the stability of the state depends upon the stability of the law (6:15). The fact that in both cases these complaints are insincere[4] does not remove the problem, for in neither case does the king know the real motives. As far as Nebuchadnezzar and Darius are concerned, the accusers are sincere and these men are indeed threats to the kingdom because of their difference. It is therefore crucial that exiles and members of a diaspora watch for the ways the host culture both feels threatened by their difference and tempts them into assimilating.[5]

These stories suggest that difference is not truly a threat. Daniel's reply to Darius from the lion's den, "O king, live forever!" (6:21), shows that his allegiance is not conflicted but "dual": his allegiance to God makes him faithful rather than dangerous to the king (Fewell 151). In contrast, his accusers, claiming to seek the king's benefit, try to rob him of his best minister. In reality, those who claim loyalty to the king are his enemies, whereas the one who deliberately disobeys him is faithful. This same pattern is also found in the two other stories: by being willing

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[4] Fewell notes that the Chaldeans in chapter 3 probably hope to take over the young men's positions at court (72-73), and that the officials in chapter 6 are more interested in getting rid of Daniel than in preserving the stability of the law (149).

[5] A related issue is the possibility that the presence of foreigners in the kingdom poses a threat to economics and mobility by making it harder for natives to get ahead.

to die rather than to worship an idol, the three young men save their lives;[6] by disobeying the

king's regimen of food, the four young men actually prosper. The lesson seems to be that when

the culture fears foreigners because of their difference, faithfulness to God brings exoneration.

This interpretation of the texts is valid; since God reigns over all the kingdoms of the

world, faithfulness to God will in no way harm the foreign kingdom. Yet, it would be simplistic

to stop here, for Nebuchadnezzar and Darius's responses to the miraculous deliverances they

witness are complicated. Though they seem to be unambiguous confessions of God's reality and

power, a close reading shows that the kings have not truly grasped the lessons God intended.

Nebuchadnezzar's response to the three young men's deliverance has several difficult aspects: he

> defines and identifies the divine in terms of the human […] does not even ask the
>
> name or nature of this god […] never admits that his own power should be subject
>
> to this divine power […] immediately attempts to exert control over this deity by
>
> issuing a royal decree […] is again in the business of controlling the religious
>
> attitudes of others by wielding his political power [and] makes this god politically
>
> useful. (Fewell 82)

Rather than humble himself as human in the face of God's mighty power, Nebuchadnezzar "acts

as the god acts. Those whom this god delivers, the king makes prosper" (83); this may be his way

of keeping the trio indebted to him while claiming to respect God's revelation.

Darius behaves similarly upon witnessing Daniel's deliverance. Although his decree in

favor of God would seem to be a good thing for the exiles, it remains an attempt to legislate

religion, probably as ineffectively as the previous decree (Fewell 152). The decree also reveals

the impermanence of law in general and paradoxically becomes blasphemous in its attempts to

"out-power" God (153). In the end, Darius' decree defines God not on God's terms but through

Daniel, thus allowing Darius to fulfill his "original intent to place Daniel over the kingdom"

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[6] Consider the workers who were burned to death lifting the young men into the furnace.

(153). And because it brings Daniel to power by combining the two laws that the officials tried to bring into conflict—"The king's law embraces the law of Daniel's god" (153-154) —the decree makes Daniel more important than his God. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius refers to God solely in terms of the men whom God has saved: both kings stop short of assigning God full sovereignty over the world, preferring instead to define him in relation to his followers.

The implication of these actions is not simply that these kings never fully understand God or God's will for them, but that political power in general never truly understands God. Even when God performs miracles, political powers try to maintain their own authority and power, refusing to acknowledge that these come from God. Whereas those who hear the stories may want to believe the kings truly understand their own position before God, or even that they convert to the worship of this God, the texts teach otherwise: Though a king may confess the power of a foreign god and no longer view foreign customs and practices as threats, it is overly optimistic to assume he submits to God as to the true King. Even when a king issues a decree in favor of God, that decree is valid only as long as his government stands; once Babylon (or Persia, or Rome) falls, God's sovereignty will have to be proven all over again (161).[7]

Even if the king never understands God's sovereignty, his reign is not hopeless. Daniel's speech in chapter 4 presents Nebuchadnezzar as "capable of mercy to the oppressed," implying that "the empire is transformable and can become a place of mercy and righteousness […] when the God of Israel is accepted as the Most High, that is, when the empire is brought under the rule of the Lord" (Brueggemann, "Mercy" 15).[8] Although the text suggests that foreign kings will never do this, the exile-diaspora community must hope that it will happen, for the survival of the

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[7] This conception provides the title of Fewell's book: Circle of Sovereignty.

[8] John Goldingay suggests that these stories offer hope by reminding believers who are in politics "of the resources of insight on history's destiny" and "of God's commitment to seeing that it reaches this destiny in this world, and invite us to live in this hope" (114-115).

kingdom depends upon it: "The empire [or any nation] is a place which, in its self-interest, must host mercy. There is no alternative strategy for royal power that can possibly succeed" (15).

By claiming "that political power inherently and intrinsically has in its very fabric the reality of mercy, the practice of humanness, or as Daniel dares to say to Nebuchadnezzar, the care of the oppressed," and by asserting "that imperial rule is not rooted simply in raw power" (Brueggemann, "Mercy" 15), the Hebrew texts about exile radically subvert both Babylonian and Jewish ideas about empire. By asking "What happens to speech about Babylon when it is drawn into the sphere of speech about God? [and] What happens to speech about God when God is drawn into the sphere of speech about the empire?" (4, emphasis Brueggemann's), it can be shown that Israel "radically rereads the character of the empire, consistently subverting every conventional reading of the empire in which complacent Babylon and intimidated Israel must have colluded [in Marx's sense]" (4). This subversion goes both ways, for the texts not only admit the possibility of Babylon's being a merciful kingdom (even if it never achieves this), but also take away "Israel's rhetoric of complaint, which asserts that 'there is none to comfort' [,] 'the hand of the Lord is shortened' [and] 'my way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'" (18-19). These texts therefore combat "[b]oth the arrogance of autonomous Babylon and the despair of doubting Israel," attitudes which, left intact, can only "generate, authorize, and commend a politics of brutality and intimidation" (19).

However, just as it is unlikely that that the foreign king will ever truly convert to God, it is also unlikely that believers who commit their lives to creating this sort of merciful kingdom will live to see their hopes realized. In the final half of the book, whenever God suggests to Daniel that his visions will take place in the eschaton, he "faints or grows ill," as if unable to bear the thought that he will never see his efforts bear fruit (Fewell 158-159). Yet, believers must not abandon the political system in discouragement, for "political power is not just the concern of kings, but it is also the concern of the Judean sage" (155), e.g., Daniel, a political aspirant who gains political authority by resisting it and by affirming God's priority over the empire's (155).

The story of chapter 6 parallels that of chapter 4, so that Daniel truly moves into a kingly position (155-157). It as though the sage will be elevated by God to power within the foreign nation to help make the nation a more merciful state, both to protect God's people and to witness to the world God's power and desire for peace and justice. These stories' political lessons refute simple, religiously devout interpretations of the texts. In exile-diaspora, all religious activity carries political weight and will be seen as a threat to the larger culture; yet, true piety does not allow believers to maintain simple oppositions of us/them, good/evil, etc. The stories suggest that the foreign country can be redeemed, or at least reformed, in the image that God had always intended for Israel. Thus, political acts carry religious weight as well.

Given their odd combination of optimism and subversion, the stories of these four young men were popular with postexilic Jews, who probably found them useful for learning to live in a diaspora that became more comfortable the longer they remained there. The stories allow believers living in a foreign culture to hope that God is still with them and that they might even be allowed to play a role in bringing God's light to the world. But these stories were popular not only with diaspora Jews but also with early Christians, who found therein <u>figura</u> to such important images and events as Hell (the furnace), Jesus' tomb (the lion's den), miraculous deliverances of the apostles (such as those chronicled in <u>Acts</u>), the endurance of early believers, and the faith of the martyrs (Henten 167-168). Ironically, for all the young men's fidelity to the task of maintaining their Jewish identity in the face of political pressure, both that identity and its political implications were completely ignored by the early church: the four young men "were integrated into a group of Christian heroes, to the point of functioning as paragons of a Christian identity" (Henten 167-168). Once Christianity ceased to be a "minority" religion, such concerns were no longer important. But as the church today no longer has the power it once held, the questions these texts raise have become important again (Brueggemann, "Foreword" vii). It will be helpful, therefore, to examine what other lessons these stories may have for today.

Lessons for the Present

If the church has lost its status as a majority culture, then perhaps it needs to follow the lead of Bonhoeffer, Hauerwas, et al.[9] and redefine itself as an exilic-diasporic community. It has often been noted that Christians will always compose a small section of the population,[10] but only recently has the church begun to view itself as a minority.[11] In the mid-twentieth century, mainstream U.S. Protestants were influenced by the Niebuhr brothers, for whom the church's only option was to transform the political realm from within; any attempt to create an alternative society outside the sphere of formal government was seen as sectarian withdrawal from the world, and hence as immoral (Smith-Christopher, Biblical Theology 190-191).[12] Yet this position has been disastrous. As Hauerwas notes, "there is no limit to what [the church] will not do for the modern world. Alas, in leaning over to speak to the modern world, we have […] lost the [theological] resources even to see that there was something worth resisting" (qtd. in Smith-Christopher 193). Only by assuming "that violent power is the sole viable context that is characteristic of Christian morality" could the Niebuhrs interpret "a call to a normative ethic of exilic existence [as] merely an attempt to put a pleasant face on defeat and self-proclaimed irrelevance" (191). If the church is to maintain its God-promised transformative power (as opposed to political or economic power), then it must participate in society from the position of exile. As is evident from Daniel, this means navigating the narrow path between refusing to take part in political activity and participating in it uncritically and without resistance.

Other exilic and postexilic Hebrew texts may be helpful here. From a scriptural point of view, "Diasporic existence among alien peoples became […] for the Jews (the erstwhile people of

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[9] See the opening passage of this dissertation.

[10] See the discussions below on Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard.

[11] See Hauerwas and Willimon's Resident Aliens.

[12] Smith-Christopher writes on similar themes in "Prayers and Dreams" (q.v.). However, all further references to Smith-Christopher will be to A Biblical Theology of Exile.

Judah) their natural, god-given [sic] environment" (Carroll 64-65). The continued existence of the diaspora led to a new understanding of Jewish identity not only for the diasporic community, but also for those who never left Judah and for those who returned there after the exile: "Hurled into existence in foreign lands, the dispersed people found in diaspora permanent alienation and, in ways quite difficult to discern, a hurling into existence of the people in the sense of coming to articulate and construct identity and story as given in and through the experience of diaspora" (64-65). Thus, the Jewish homeland is no longer truly a homeland; even those who live in the land of milk and honey must learn to live as if still in the wilderness.

Two texts from Jeremiah are useful, especially as they are <u>not</u> thought to have influenced the Daniel tales.[13] In chapter 24, Jeremiah reverses the expected interpretation of Jerusalem's fall by making the surprising claim that those who escaped the calamity and now remain in Judah are <u>not</u> blessed with God's favor; rather, God will reward those who have been exiled from the Promised Land and its temple. Jeremiah echoes this idea in his letter to the exiles (chapter 29), in which he tells them to settle into their exilic existence, make a peaceful life, and pray for the city's welfare (29:5-7). Both passages must have been deeply offensive to his contemporaries in the remnant and in the exile alike. Yet, they suggest that exile and diaspora are not aberrant episodes in Jewish history, but a new ethical norm for the Jewish people and, in turn, for Christians: "exile is not merely a suggested paradigm, but a radically sobering diagnosis for the present reality of Christian existence in the world [...]. The present reality is an exile even if there is not much awareness of this exilic circumstance" (Smith-Christopher 191).

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[13] Carroll's observation that Jeremiah's view of exile-diaspora comes from Jerusalem (rather than from the exile-diaspora community itself) is important but does not negate his statements that exile-diaspora becomes the norm for scripture, and thus for the Christian church as well (77-84). To resolve the seeming problem of whose vision of exile-diaspora should be held to (Jerusalem's or Babylon's), an observation by Smith-Christopher is helpful: the Hebrew canon succeeds where Ezra fails because it places Ezra alongside Jonah and Deutero-Isaiah (itself an influence on Daniel) (200).

Where then is the church to locate itself today? Although the U.S. church exists in a highly religious, Christianized culture, many of whose ideals can be traced back to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, it must not accept its seeming success as a sign that it has any cultural authority. Rather, it must learn to see the ways in which its culture has, like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, paid lip-service to Christian faith and values by trying to incorporate them into (and therefore subordinating them to) its own power structures. The church should pay more attention to resisting the ways it has been tempted into participation and assimilation, and take pains to hold fast to its differences from the surrounding culture. With respect to the stories of Daniel, for instance, the church should remember that Gandhi saw the biblical hero as a forerunner of nonviolent resistance (Smith-Christopher 186).

One possible way to learn from Daniel is to see him as a trickster, a figure that has recently received a great deal of attention in its Native-American, African, and Near-Eastern incarnations (to name only the most common associations). Daniel successfully maintains his Jewish identity, avoids sectarianism, and participates in politics without losing his "theological resources for resistance" because he is "the figure of a wise trickster in the court of the conqueror" (Smith-Christopher 187). By refusing to accept Babylon's political myths and by firmly believing that Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius's power was in the hand of Israel's God, Daniel kept himself morally pure and still proved himself an asset to the empire. He succeeded precisely because he refused to obey. He is a "wisdom warrior," i.e., his "wise awareness that the empire, despite all its attempts to convince itself otherwise, is not of ultimate significance" enabled him to resist the empire through "radical doubt and irreverence to the self-proclaimed state power and piety" (187). Perhaps it is this "radical doubt and irreverence," coupled with an awareness of the proper (in)significance of the modern nation-state, that will help the church resist its host culture and maintain its true power as an agent of God.

This discussion has been vague, and it would be useful to prescribe specific actions and strategies. But as has been pointed out by such theologians as Walter Brueggemann and John

Howard Yoder (Smith-Christopher 194), the church's responses and strategies are necessarily "ad hoc"— the church must actively critique its setting, which is unique to each congregation and which will change over time. Therefore, there can be no set model for an exilic-diasporic approach to Christian living; the approach must always be fitted specifically to its immediate surroundings: "the biblical text ultimately leaves it to us to strategize what the radical gospel of Christian community means in this particular neighborhood of Babylon (Nineveh, Rome, Antioch, London, Los Angeles. . .), and in this particular year of its reign over humanity" (194).

The church may need to respond to the world using a careful reading of both the scriptures and current minority cultures within itself. Daniel Smith-Christopher has suggested several strategies, including learning from current critical studies of post-colonialism (especially on such topics as "borderlands," "nomads," etc.), examining the methods used by other minorities (though without uncritical acceptance), and analyzing the history of the host culture in order to critique its mythology and to highlight its past sins (197-201). He also suggests that the church strive to model its own ideal of societal life, redefining its concept of power away from violence towards "the integrity of our faith and practice" and pointing the world to the fact that being "not of this world" refers to "alternative corporeal, material, and social realities that refuse to accept the dominant mythologies and ideologies all around them." All this must be done, however, in light of the scriptural tradition, keeping in mind Simon Dubnow's comment about the exilic and postexilic scriptures, that "by reason of its exceptional qualities and intensely tragic circumstances, it [the second half of Jewish history] is beyond all others calculated to yield edification to a notable degree" (qtd. in Smith-Christopher 192).

The church needs to examine what it has been and what it should be in light of the biblical models of resistance offered in books like Daniel. If such scholars as Brueggemann, Ellul, Yoder, Hauerwas, Willimon, and Smith-Christopher are correct, what the church most desperately needs is to radically reinterpret itself. The U.S. church has lost sight of its way in two directions, both of which end up being the same: the mid-century Protestant church, following

the Niebuhrs, joined the political system too readily and lost its ability to resist when the state started making its own claims; meanwhile the contemporary conservative movement, while maintaining its religious traditions, has been seduced by its own political success and is now unable to see how the government, like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, has learned to use Christian vocabulary without truly repenting of violent and oppressive uses of authority. Both sides of the American church have been welcomed by the political structure, but only to control them and to preserve its own power.[14] The church must develop sophisticated forms of resistance, both within and without the formal political structure, that rely on "strategies of faith and wisdom [which seek] to assert nonviolently alternative strategies for human existence in the world that are lived out in conscious nonconformity to the world and its various value systems" (Smith-Christopher 194). Only then can the church hope to be like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah: prosperous through disobedience, and in a position to change the world in which they live through the wisdom and word of the God who rules over all the nations and whose real concerns are "casting out demons and performing cures" (188).

III. The Disciples' New Identity: The Gospel of John

A common saying among evangelicals, that Christians are to be "in the world but not of it," is a variant of the New Testament phrase "not of the world,"[15] which occurs three times,[16] each time in the "Farewell Discourse" passage in the Gospel of John (found in chapters 13-17): "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but

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[14] It should be remembered that political power is one of the temptations Jesus withstands at the start of his ministry; it is also one of the six powers (εξουσιαι) that rule the world, alongside wealth, deception, division, accusation and death (see Ellul, chap. 9).

[15] A similar phrase appears in early church literature, e.g., the second-century Letter to Diognetus (which may have been influenced by Johannine thought), which includes the sentence, "Christians dwell in the world but do not belong to the world" (Brown, Gospel 761).

[16] Using the online Bible search engine The Unbound Bible <http://unbound.biola.edu/>, I searched three common translations—New American Standard, New Revised Standard, and King James—for New Testament verses that contain both "not" and "world." The translations used here come from the New American Standard Bible.

I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (15:19); "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (17:14); and "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (17:16).[17] These verses reveal that the idea behind the phrase reaches far beyond its evangelical use. For while evangelicals treat the phrase as an ideal to be striven for, the idea was originally offered as a fact—Jesus tells the disciples not how they should live, but what they already are, i.e. he shows them their Christian identity. The concept of being "not of the world" is thus intrinsic to Christianity, extending far beyond modern evangelicalism and hinting at a radical reformulation of identity in which the believing community is, in all places and times, a minority community.

However, the "not of the world" teaching by itself offers the disciples no positive understanding of their new location: if they are not of the world, where in fact are they? The question is less about where they are from (e.g. heaven or God), than about where they are now. Jesus tells them their new location when he says, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (17:18): they no longer belong to the world, but are sent back into it. This information fills a gap in their understanding of themselves from the Farewell Discourse so far. At the same time, since this gospel generally uses the term "sent" only in reference to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the text equates the disciples' new identity with Jesus':

> On the one hand, they are now the bearers of the message, of the word, as was Jesus earlier (cf. 20:21). On the other hand, they thereby come to occupy the position vis-à-vis the world that Jesus had: it turns on them whether the hearers are won over and saved or not. The responsibility, but also the fatefulness, of the individual Christian becomes apparent. (Haenchen 154-55)

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[17] Similar verses in John include 8:23; 12:31; 13:1; 17:6; 17:15; and 18:36 (Moloney 60 n.55). Of these, only the two from chapter 17 directly refer to the disciples: the second is included in the passages under discussion here and the first echoes the sentiment of 15:19.

The disciples are told three times that they are not of the world, that they will be hated by that world, and that both their non-belonging and their being hated stem from their relationship with Jesus: he is the direct cause of their being not of the world and the indirect cause of their being hated (insofar as the hatred is in fact about Jesus, not about the disciples). Further, they will need to be protected and, even more, to be sanctified in this new situation. Lastly, this situation has a purpose: they are now to re-identify themselves as apostles, those who are sent into that world. Their identity has thus been given to them for the sake of the mission they are now receiving. But what does it mean to be not of "the world"?

Defining "World" (<u>Kosmos</u>)

Although the disciples (and the Johannine audience) gain a positive identity from Jesus' teaching that they are being sent into a world to which they no longer belong, neither this passage nor the gospel as a whole makes clear just what this world is: Does the term refer simply to the disciples' Jewish context? Or does the gospel mean "world" as it is understood today: people from every nation? This question is contested among Johannine scholars.

One interpretation restricts the term to those Jews who rejected Jesus' teaching and who subsequently expelled Christians from the synagogues. In this view, Jesus' references to hate refer simply "to intergroup competition" (Piper 300) and his teaching addresses the disciples' loss of unity. But though the references to "the world" certainly include church-synagogue problems, some verses clearly use the term "Judeans" (Ἰουδαιοι) to mean simply "some Jewish leaders" and not all Jews (Charlesworth 490-491). That a term as limited as "Judeans" does not refer to Jews in general makes it unlikely that the much broader term "world" (κοσμος) would be similarly restricted. Moreover, if these verses refer simply to the synagogues, we would expect the gospel writer(s) to continue using "Judeans."

The shift from "Judeans" to "world" may reveal that Israel was not the sole locus for the Johannine community's antagonism but was just one component of anti-Christian opposition (Zumstein 478). The shift therefore reflects the church's historical shift from Jewish to Gentile

audiences; textually, it occurs around chapter 12 and reflects the Gentiles' entrance into the church after its expulsion from the synagogues. Thus, "[t]he shift in opposition from 'the Jews' to the world may mean that now the Johannine Christians are encountering Gentile disbelief, even as formerly they faced Jewish disbelief" (Brown, Community 63). This interpretation explains the shift in textual terms: the text itself gives a reason for the change in terminology and reveals the historical processes that guided its composition.

However, even if the term "world" both "includes Jews and Gentiles without distinction" (Brown, Community 63 n.112) and refers to "those who reject the light" (63), the gospel identifies at least six kinds of non-believers: the world, the Jews, John the Baptist's disciples, Christian Jews who have remained in the synagogues, Jewish Christians of weak and/or immature faith, and Christians in apostolic churches (62-88).[18] The group labeled "the world" is only one of the "three groups of people who make no pretense of believing in Jesus" (62). In fact, it may not be important to label any specific group "the world," as the term may warrant a less concrete interpretation: "'The world,' when it used with negative connotations, characterizes all those who remain in darkness, who refuse to accept the revelation that Jesus brings" (Culpepper, "Inclusivism" 87). This reading allows for the greatest range of interpretation and applicability; instead of categorizing people's affiliations, it treats them as individuals who make their own decisions about who Jesus is and whether to follow him.

Why does the gospel describe three self-identifying Christian groups as non-believers? These groups thought they were following Jesus, so why was their discipleship discounted? This

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[18] According to Brown, the apostolic churches (Brown's term) are distinguished from the collective group of all Christians because of the way the gospel constantly opposes the Beloved Disciple to Peter. Brown adds these Christians to the list of non-believing groups, but also notes that based on the presence of the apostles at the Last Supper and at Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances, the apostolic churches should be considered valid. They are counted alongside synagogue Christians and weak/immature Christians because they are regarded as less perceptive than the Johannine community, especially with regard to their Christology (perhaps to Jesus' pre-existence and heavenly origin in particular), as well as to their less-institutional, less-conservative and less-sacramental ecclesiology (81-88).

problem could be explained as a Johannine sense of superior Christology and ecclesiology,[19] but a more general (and inclusive) explanation of "world" is more helpful (and more useful for interpreting the gospel in post-first-century contexts): as exemplified by the failure of the Jews in 12:43, "The claim that the disciples are not ek tou kosmou [...] does not indicate the 'other-worldliness' of the disciples. To be 'of the world' means to use historical, cultural, and religiously conditioned criteria to judge Jesus and the one who sent him, rather than acceptance of his being the revelation of God" (Moloney 60 n.55). This phenomenological view of the problem escapes the limitations of historical interpretation without contradicting them. It can easily be related to "the evil one" of 17:15, who is "synonymous with 'the ruler of this world' and [who] is the personification of the cosmic forces in the world that are opposed to God" (O'Day 793). Thus, to interpret Jesus according to "historical, cultural, and religiously conditioned criteria" is to do what the Jewish leaders were doing in John 8, when Jesus commented that they could not hear his word because they were children of the devil (8:43-44). Assuming that "the evil one" is still "the ruler of this world," this more general interpretation holds for all times and places.

Implications for John's Audience

Given the ambiguous meaning of "world," perhaps the gospel's audience was meant to apply the term to whichever group they were dealing with at the time: Jews, Greeks, et al. What would be the implications of these different interpretations? When the term is restricted to the synagogues, the passages show a concern for unity among the disciples, presenting discipleship as exile from the synagogue, i.e., from the community: Jesus' followers lose their religious identity, and their unity is transposed to a future realm, "more as something for which to hope than as a present reality" (Piper 306). It is also transformed into an ethnicity: the disciples are "the *true* Israel," as opposed to "the Judeans" or false Israelites (307-308). This ethnic bond ties diaspora communities together, allows for diversity within the community, permits those

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[19] See the previous note.

expelled from the synagogue to still consider themselves Jews, and provides non-Jewish Christians a "fictive ethnicity" (307-308). The text thereby inverts the conflict: the synagogues' problem is not that they rejected the disciples but that they have been rejected by God as the nation's foundation. Israel is now constituted by the disciples, and the nation's location is no longer a geographic area like Israel or even a constructed space/community like the synagogue, but the person of Jesus himself. The notion of nationhood has therefore been radically revised.

In contrast, when "world" is applied more generally to all who reject Jesus' teachings, the tension shifts from the synagogues to a broader, more abstract categorization. The disciples become not only the true nation of Israel, but also the fulfillment of humanity, i.e., those whose eyes truly see and whose ears truly hear. This interpretation includes the previous one in many ways, as the phrase "not of the world" can be read in light of both the expulsion from the synagogues and the rejection by the Gentiles. But it is politically radical in that it abandons the distinction between Jew and Gentile. It also explains the Gentiles' positive reaction to Jesus and assumes both their presence in the gospel's intended audience and the resistance of other Gentiles to the gospel. It thus re-locates the nation of Israel and re-defines "Israelite": If the synagogues no longer contain the nation of Israel, would not the larger community of Jewish and Gentile Christians replace them? At the same time, the disciples, as those who have been sent, are exiles not simply from Israel, but from everywhere. Yet they are not homeless: they are sent into the world as ambassadors or diplomats, always representing (as the Hebrew prophets before them[20] and as Daniel and his friends) a new kingdom with a new king who establishes embassies in every nation and every tongue. In this way, Christian community is diasporic.

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[20] In his book on the Hebrew prophets, Joseph Blenkinsopp discusses this motif: "The characteristic message formula ('thus says Yahweh') […] presupposes the mythic scenario of the divine court in session presided over by Yahweh as ruler, to whose presence the designated messenger is admitted, and from which the messenger sets out to discharge a specific mission. The claim implicit in this mythic-theological topos" seems to have been that prophets belonged to a kingdom other than that of Israel or Judah, "and it was inevitable that it would lead to conflict with established authorities and jurisdictions in the political and religious sphere" (34).

If so, what kind of diaspora, and how should Christians should live in it? One question for people in diaspora is how exclusive they should be. The sociolinguistic work of Richard Rohrbaugh is useful here. He shows two linguistic processes in the gospel: "over-lexicalization," i.e., multiplying synonyms; and "re-lexicalization," i.e., giving "new, insider meanings" to common words from "areas that are central to the protest of the subculture and which distinguish it most sharply from the surrounding society" (261). This "anti-language" is not a stylistic conceit but "a form of social protest" coming from alienated groups, "anti-societies," "the genuinely marginalized, who protest the values of the society in which they live" (260). Re-lexicalization gives words social meanings that confuse outsiders while creating internal cohesion; examples in John include "grace, truth, light, glory, door, vine, way, life, abide, shepherd, believe, see, above, and below." Similarly, over-lexicalization fosters originality for the insiders and displays their difference from the outside culture (261); examples include "spirit, above, life, light, not of this world, freedom, truth, love" and their opposites. This theory depicts the Johannine community, and by extension the Christian church, as a marginalized social group. [21] The gospel so defamiliarizes its audience's picture of the world that it must explain it to them. Thus, there are insiders, who understand this new worldview, and outsiders, who do not (Culpepper, "Inclusivism" 86-87). This idea extends beyond language to include communion and baptism as community boundaries (88). This diaspora thus functions as a closed-off group.

The fact that John's Gospel no longer stands alone but has been incorporated by the church alongside writings from the groups it tried to distinguish itself from puts it in a larger context that presents another picture of the Johannine teachings on community, one that remains "radically new" (Wieser 84) but that is universal and without rivalry rather than closed-off and alienated. Thomas Wieser, using René Girard's thesis that Christianity alone creates

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[21] Rohrbaugh observes that the Johannine anti-society may have been reacting to seemingly less spiritual Christian groups as well as to non-Christian groups (262); cf. again Brown's six non-believing groups, discussed above.

community without resorting to foundational violence, claims that Christianity reveals the violent mechanism of the scapegoat that supports other communities and thereby renders it "inoperative for the formation of the human community" within itself (83). John 17 suggests that by replacing the foundational violence of rivalry with the bestowal of <u>doxa</u> (glory), "the unity of the human community can be modeled on the union existing between the Father and the Son without placing the two into a position of rivalry" (93; see also Staton 294-295). This idea implies that Christian unity is limitless and radically universal and does not reciprocate the world's hatred (93). The lack of rivalry appears in the gospel's use of "very egalitarian titles" to describe the disciples (Staton 299); similarly, the church's universality is evident in the way the unity of an otherwise unlikely group of people witnesses God's power to the world (299). The concept of <u>doxa</u> is especially important, since the hatred that exists between the church and the world (here, the synagogue) is one-sided: the <u>doxa</u> given to the disciples causes the synagogue to envy their special relationship with God and in turn to hate them (Piper). Thus, antagonism is directed by the world against the church but not vice versa.

The apparent difference between the two readings—one that emphasizes a universalist, non-competitive community and one that sees the gospel effectively creating an insular, agonistic community—may be merely the difference between ideal and reality, between what the gospel wants to say and what it actually says, between what the community should be and what it actually becomes. The church cannot fully achieve its ideal of universality, for the ideal "reveals that the churches' identity is founded on exclusion," as seen by the many attempts "to create radical alternate communities in the name of true Christian unity and inclusiveness," all of which eventually fall back into exclusion (Wieser 94-95).

As it turns out, both positions are explicitly proposed within the gospel, as revealed by its social and theological standpoints. Socially, the gospel replaces the usual forms of exclusion—"gender, race, nationality, and social class"—with one "based on one's response to the revelation that has come through Jesus" (Culpepper, "Inclusivism" 90). This exclusion explains the use of

anti-language and of separation metaphors. Yet, the gospel also promotes radical inclusion and unity, e.g., being united "with God in spirit," "in mission to the world," and "with one another" (93-94). Theologically, the gospel is exclusivist in that all salvation comes through Jesus: on soteriological grounds, stressing God's choice in salvation; on christological grounds, because of "Jesus' unique relationship to the Father"; and on fideistic grounds, possible only through the cross (95-100). But it is also inclusive, allowing "that authentic or saving faith is possible apart from Jesus" (100), as seen in its affirmation of universal election (e.g., the constant references to the world, to Samaritans, to other sheep, etc.), its definition of "true worshippers" (e.g., the Samaritans' confession, which "reveals the inadequacy of all exclusive religious communities"), and its affirmation of the Word's redemptive work beyond the incarnation (especially as found in the "cosmic and eternal context" of Logos and Wisdom in which Jesus is placed) (101-105).

Ultimately, the gospel deliberately keeps the two in tension:

> John had the wisdom to leave the tensions and paradoxes unresolved. To resolve them either on the side of inclusivism or exclusivism would be to offer only one side of the truth. The believing community is therefore called to live with conviction in this tension, to be open to all who are responding to the Logos, and to maintain the uniqueness of the Incarnation of the Logos in Jesus. (Culpepper, "Inclusivism" 106)

Thus, John's Gospel (like Daniel) calls the church to walk the line between opposing the world and being open to it. The church must find a way to challenge the outside world, the world under the rule of the powers of evil, without hating the people in it, even as it expects them to respond with hatred. The gospel "remains a warning against naïveté. The world is not simply unplowed ground waiting to be sown with the Gospel; it is not simply neutral terrain. There is a prince of this world that is actively hostile to Jesus, so that the maxim Christus contra mundum ('Christ against the world') is not without truth" (Brown, Community 66). Moloney's reading of "world" becomes useful here, as it views the world not as a group of people vehemently opposed to the

gospel but rather as a set of approaches that prevent people from accepting the gospel. Though faith remains God's gift and not an act of human volition, a focus on the cultural suppositions that prevent people from recognizing the gospel will help the church oppose the world and all its ways while remaining true to the gospel of one who loved even those who put him to death.

It remains to explore the issue of non-Jewish Christians, as mentioned in the discussion of the church as the true Israel. This new version of Israelite nationalism allows those who were expelled from the synagogues to maintain their self-identity as Jews. But what about those who were never Jews to begin with, or who were Jews by conversion? Although the national metaphor allows diversity within the community, for non-Jews this identity is a "fictive ethnicity" (Piper 307-08). The question is essentially two-fold: how do non-Jews adopt Jewish history as their own, and how is Jesus made relevant to non-Jews? Clearly, this has been an issue since Paul's missionary journeys, and Christian history should have a wealth of resources with which to address the question. But Western society has been Christianized for so long that it is probably very difficult for it to fully understand the problem. Therefore, it will be useful to turn to a location where Christianity is still encountering strongly non-Christian communities. Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako has examined the way Christianity must work in Akan culture in order to fulfill the mission which Jesus gives the church in John 17.

Bediako notices a problem in his African church: Because of the importance of tribal membership in Akan culture, it is difficult for the Akans to understand "how the Jesus of the church's preaching saves them from the terrors and fears which they experience in their traditional worldview" (98); as a result, Akan Christians often "continue to be men and women 'living at two levels'—half African and half European—but never belonging properly to either." By ignoring the importance of the religious understanding of tribal membership, churches cause their Akan audience to fear losing their African identity. This may seem to be a false problem given Jesus' statements that Christians are not of the world, but paradoxically, by failing to address the real religious needs of the Akan community, the church prevents them from fully

entering into Christian worship. The church needs to show the Akan how Jesus, as true God, fulfills the functions they ascribe to their ancestors (just as the Hebrew writers pointed out the way Yahweh was the one true God who performed all the works that the pagan nations ascribed to their idols) (117). This is how to show the relevance of Christianity to a non-Christian culture.

In his approach, Bediako stresses universality:

> I therefore start with the universality of Jesus Christ rather than from his particularity as a Jew. By doing this I do not disregard the Incarnation; rather I affirm that the Incarnation was the incarnation of the Saviour of all people, of all nations, and of all times. […] We hold on to his incarnation as a Jew because by faith in him, we too share in the divine promises given to the patriarchs and through the history of ancient Israel. (99)

Thus, fictive ethnicity can make the church universal through the "adoptive past," i.e., the Akans' affirmation of Abraham as their own ancestor and the relevance of first-century church history for modern mission work (100, 110). If Bediako is correct, then the church's success in being "sent" into the world requires two things: showing Jesus' relevance to the real religious needs and understandings of the world's communities and allowing all peoples to adopt the foundational Judeo-Christian history as their own. In this way the church can oppose a culture with the word of God while still revealing to it the love of God that has been given for it.[22]

Implications for Modern Audiences

The questions Bediako raises about the Church's methodology in modern times and in non-Western cultures have also been raised with respect to the Fourth Gospel, viz., how to be relevant to modern concerns and how to allow people in postcolonial nations to experience God's love in Jesus. The gospel's value for the current age is unclear: some scholars claim that

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[22] Recall John 3:16 and other examples of Jesus loving those who reject him, as well as Moloney's comments that the Farewell Discourse shows the disciples and the audience that everything about Jesus' life and death is tied up in love.

the modern practices of scriptural literalism and of separating truth and fiction within history prevent modern audiences from entering into the gospel's world and from finding their own world reflected therein (Culpepper, Anatomy 234-236). Yet, this gospel is popular across a range of theological perspectives, from progressives who believe modernism rationalizes everything to the point of sterility, to conservatives (including non-Western critics) who fear that modernism undermines religion and traditional social roles by replacing tradition with relativity (Rohrbaugh 257-260). The notion of anti-language, for example, satisfies both groups, helping fundamentalists voice their opposition to overly humanistic culture while satisfying radicals and postmoderns with its version of play (262).

Read as a minority text,[23] John's God is "a God of dissenters, not establishmentarians," whose incarnation completely overturns social hierarchies (Rensberger, "Spirituality" 174). In this reading, the church is an anti-society, opposed to the dominant culture. The question, "What is 'spirituality' for a gospel that insists that the Logos became flesh?" (175), can then be answered as "the life in community, the willingness to believe in Jesus as God's astonishing act of downward mobility and self-revelation, the love for others that participates in this downward mobility, the resistance against the world's response of hatred and contempt" (186). Humanity's ability to enter and sustain a relationship with God is created by both parties: on God's part through the self-marginalization of the Logos (175-176), and on humanity's part through trust, abidance (e.g. imitating Jesus' public self-marginalization), and mutual love (through which we live out our relationship with God and which, through its emphasis on service and sacrifice, is closely connected to downward mobility) (176-182).

It is thus possible to enact counter-cultural resistance without competitiveness and hatred. The key elements here are voluntary self-marginalization and downward mobility. Though the church is inherently marginalized, it is not always voluntarily so—e.g., the expulsion

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[23] Brown claims that although the Johannine community is not truly a sect, this Gospel suggests sectarian tendencies (Community 88-91).

from the synagogues—and more often, it wields great cultural power. Against the extremes of unwilling alienation and cultural dominance, the church can follow Jesus' example and marginalize itself voluntarily. In this way, its anti-societal resistance evades the snare of hatred.

However, there remains the aspect of exclusivity in the gospel. Even much-loved metaphors like that of the vine in John 15:1-8 have been read as part of a

> discourse of power [that] advances a construct of citizenship for establishing positions of inclusion and exclusion. This construct configures nation-ness and assimilation as a selective reduction in diversity in order to found a larger and more dominant homogenized identity similar to that needed in the act of modern nation-building. (Glass 153)

Viewed in terms of "modern notions of citizenship," the Johannine community is not a frontier or boundary community, but a centralized community that "assimilates all diversity by expounding an imaginative political vision [that] merges the discrete identities into one 'people' and becomes the precondition for a new building project that requires a new civic identity" (163). Although this new civic identity succeeds in uniting diverse groups of people, Jesus' claim to be the true vine creates categories of genuine and false and raises the question of "the status of an unfruitful branch in the vine before it is removed from the vine" (162-165); thus, this passage could reinforce colonialism's binary of inclusion/exclusion. The fear is that although the Johannine community unites Jews and Gentiles against the surrounding non-Christian world, it "just as quickly [...] introduces 'difference' as an exclusionary category restricted to those not meeting the definition of membership" and thereby creates "a site of privileging" (166). This gospel can create a nation, but its community "is capable of generating authority through its claims of unity and by dispossessing the diversity of the 'real' community" (166-169).

These fears resemble complaints already mentioned, e.g., that the church fails to live up to its ideal of universality and constantly lapses into exclusion. Although some critics argue that the disciples' privileged position does not authorize the church to look down on others,

postcolonialist scholars demand the rejection of all hierarchies and privileged positions, regardless of their source. Colonialism may seem to be foreign to this discussion, but the fact is that "at the core of the imperial/colonial phenomenon […] lies the reality and experience of the diasporic phenomenon: unsettlement, travel, resettlement" (Dube and Staley 2, quoting Segovia). The question is whether to evaluate the gospel according to a postcolonial view of the world, or to appraise postcolonial thought according to the gospel. Certainly, this is a matter of faith, but either choice is a risk, either of using the world's criteria to examine Jesus or of failing to appreciate the ways the gospel challenges the modern world.

This second risk relates to the challenge of addressing Jesus to postcolonial cultures and to the underlying problem that critics are influenced by their personal history and setting, an issue that stems from the colonial practices in nineteenth-century Africa and Asia. As the Bible and modern biblical criticism both come out of imperial frameworks, colonialism pervades the texts, their scholars and their interpretations (Segovia, "Inclusion" 206-207). An example of this critical concern regarding unrealized influences is seen in recent responses to Mircea Eliade's emphasis upon Christian ideas of universal, transplantable space, viz., that Eliade separated the spiritual understanding of a community from its physical territory out of "the same utopian hope that motivated the Johannine community" (Swanson 31). To scholars concerned with the causes of colonialism, this separation was a mistake for both Eliade and the Johannine community: "By abandoning the boundaried world of ethnic territories, they also abandoned the private places and middle grounds needed to nurture diversity. In the spaceless world the Johannine Christians had hoped for, room for unity had actually shrunk, relatedness was asphyxiated, and divisiveness exacerbated" (28). These scholars suggest that Eliade was convinced, "like that Johannine community and like much of Protestant and Orthodox thought […] that the true meaning of sacred places was detachable from the places themselves" (29). This criticism illustrates postcolonial concerns regarding both unacknowledged influences and the role of land, space and territory. It also touches on such previously mentioned issues as the

transference of Christian homeland from a physical to a spiritualized location, a transference that may not be healthy, or even possible. Scholars note that historically, the Johannine community's attempt to spiritualize the Hebrew conception of wilderness led to the reciprocal rejection of Jews and Christians and, ultimately, to "the darker side of the Johannine myth," in which Johannine Christianity "remapped the world" and "staked out a new kind of Christian claim to all of the territories of this world" (Swanson 26).

This type of criticism productively reveals the difficulties these texts raise for today's world, but it often assumes the superiority of modern theories over the wisdom of the ancients. More helpful is the question of what "a political reading of the Fourth Gospel [would] look like if we were to attempt to read its ideology of geography in the context of other postcolonial situations" (Staley, "Politics" 271). It has been suggested that emphasizing the gospel's physical and incarnational aspects might refute the claim that it simply spiritualizes conceptions of land. Whereas Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman can be read as an oppressive Judean exploiting the Samaritans, it can also be read as an exchange between two victims of Roman oppression, with Jesus being a subversive liberator of the oppressed (Staley 274-276). In this reading, the gospel does not re-establish exclusion/inclusion dichotomies as some scholars fear (see Segovia, "Inclusion"), but promises liberation. Still, the text can be read both ways, depending on the reader's perspective: even if it "empowers certain travelers to invade foreign peoples and lands [...] these foreign peoples can re-read John for decolonization" (Dube and Staley 2-3). As Bediako suggests, it is not enough to discuss what the Bible says; the church must also see how it responds to the world. Perhaps this is one way of being "sent" without being "of."

It has been asked whether the Johannine understanding of place/space can free us from our fears and give us confidence in our movings (Staley, "Politics" 277). The notion of "not of the world" relates to modern times, since we, like the early church, are often un-connected to place. Even if human connections to place cannot be broken as easily as the gospel suggests, we live in

a culture in which everyone, Christian or not, has little connection to geographical territory. The church must learn how to use its scriptures to minister to the people in this situation.

Conclusion

The Johannine community composed this gospel for itself, but insofar as it was canonized by the church, its conception of the church as being sent into but not belonging to the world has always been part of Christian identity. This gospel depicts the church as a minority: an alienated, marginalized community existing on the outskirts of whatever culture it lives in. It can even be said that the gospel echoes the lessons of the Book of Daniel in showing that Christians, like the Hebrew heroes, live multicultural lives as expatriates from the world and exiles from paradise, envoys to foreign lands and protestors of oppressive regimes, belonging to a worldwide diaspora and residing in two cultures simultaneously. Their true homeland is not the daily world, neither as a geographical place nor as a cultural awareness of and approach to life.

This depiction is not without its difficulties. It is powerfully inhuman and easy to misapply. The gospel shows that Christians need protection and sanctification to have any hope of success (another similarity to Daniel). It shows that they must live in paradox, being at once inclusive and exclusive; to lean toward either side would be to fall back into the destructive ways of the world. The only proper way to proceed is to hold to the paradox. And to love. The gospel shows that Christian behavior must always stem from love. If Christians resist the dominant culture, they must do so in love. If they willingly marginalize themselves, they must do it in love. If they are hated by the world because of their calling in God, they must respond with love.

The gospel also shows twenty-first-century Christians that its story truly is their story. They are included, as those who follow the apostles, living in the between-time. The gospel asks its audience how they respond to Jesus' teachings, how they abide in his love, how they obey his commands. These questions require faith: faith that they truly are part of the gospel audience, no matter when or where it was written; faith that its teachings still apply, whatever the

situation; faith that it can be an instrument of liberation; faith that even when read with modern critical lenses and agendas, it can help its readers meet the world in love.

The church is a diaspora community, living an experience at the heart of postcolonial thought. Yet, unlike their Hebrew predecessors in Babylon, Christians enter this experience willingly, not as victims of oppression but as captives of love. They adopt a history that is not theirs in order to address their neighbors' needs. They resist the powers of the world but without violence. They set themselves apart from their culture in order to open their arms to everyone. Recognizing that they often fall short of their own standards, they continue to look for readings that will correct the errors of their past and transform them for the future. The gospel gives its audience a new, difficult, wonderful relationship to the world: sent ones, apostles.

CHAPTER 2:

THE CHURCH ADOPTS EUROPE

I. History: Multicultural Aspects of Medieval Europe

The history of the early church is amazingly multicultural: Christianity spread from Palestine throughout the Roman Empire and then beyond, reaching Africa, India, Arabia and China within a few centuries. The Empire itself was multicultural, and the Christian centers in the Middle East, Greece, Egypt, Northwest Africa and Rome displayed a wide variety of Christianities. This early diversity helps reveal how the church met each culture in its own place.

Among the northern outskirts of the Empire lay other cultural groups, e.g., the various Celtic and Germanic tribes, whose eventual inclusion into the European church would lay the foundation for the dream of a universal Christian church that continues still today, as is evident in the EU debates over the merits of formally acknowledging a common Christian culture and over the dangers of allowing Turkey into its communion. What has been forgotten in the face of this dream is that these early cultures were different enough from both Rome and from each other to have developed distinctive forms of Christianity: "The resulting synthesis of Christian, Roman, and Celtic/Germanic traits produced unique Christian societies in the British Isles and on the continent of Europe, generating regional versions of the religion that nonetheless shared some common traditions of conversion" (Jolly 184).

These new models of Christianity did not quickly coalesce into the universal religion of the Middle Ages. For example, with regards to the distance between the Celts and the Continent,

> there had been little contact between the Celtic Church and Rome in the years
> before and during the Anglo-Saxon Migration. As a result the Celtic Church had
> developed a number of idiosyncrasies that set it apart from the rest of Western

Christendom, or at least that is how those adhering to the Roman version of

Christianity, like Bede, saw it. (Boenig 7)

Another set of regional distinctions developed among the Anglo-Saxons, as Roman missionaries under Pope Gregory chose to accommodate rather than to destroy Germanic religion. The result can be seen in the customs that surround our celebrations of Christmas and Easter, customs that still bear the marks of their distinctively non-Christian origin (6-7).

Although Medieval Europe was almost completely under the control of the Roman church, it was not governed by a single Christianity. More accurately, Medieval Europe had several Christianities (Pluskowski and Patrick 30). Nor did Christianity eliminate its rivals; so many pre-Christian beliefs and practices remained in practice as late as the beginning of the Renaissance that Medieval Europe was "at best only superficially Christianized" (Wessels 4). Additionally, Christianity itself changed so drastically as it spread across northward that it has been said, "The whole shape of Western spirituality is a function of this radically new Germanic culture with a strong addition of Celtic culture" (Holmes 50; emphasis his).

This section briefly and broadly lays out the chief ways in which the Medieval European Church can be considered multicultural. I examine first Medieval Europe's polycultural features and then the ways contact with the various cultures changed Christianity. The facts presented here are well known; the information therefore serves as a historical version of a literature review. I hope that collecting these facts will accentuate the multicultural aspects of the era.

Polycultural Europe

The fact that Christianity became Europe's dominant religion shows its multicultural origins, for it is not European but descended from "the ancient Hebrews, whose roots have no contact with Europe" (Holt 14). It also arose in the midst of a multicultural society and began almost immediately to reach out to these cultures and to adapt its message for them. Because Christianity quickly extended into the three continents surrounding the Mediterranean, it "can as truly be claimed an Asian or an African religion as a European one" (14).

Christianity arose in a region governed by multiple cultural influences, with Hebraic, Hellenic and Roman cultures being three of the most significant. Judaism itself had long been affected by contact with its neighbors; in addition to the continued influence of Greece and Rome, it had been shaped by its earlier interactions with the Babylonian and Persian Empires. These influences affected the Judaism of Judea and Galilee, from which Christianity arose, but perhaps even more the Judaism of the Diaspora, to which Christianity spread. As discussed in the section on Daniel, one of the most important examples of this influence is the Hebrew canon, which was likely compiled and edited after the Persians permitted the Jews to return home from Babylon (see Neusner). The Hebrew historical narrative reflects this exile experience, opening with humanity's exile from the Garden of Eden and highlighting the exilic aspects of the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses in preparation for the telling of the Exodus (Carroll 64-65). If, as many scholars suggest, the Hebrew history narratives are a deliberate response to specific contacts with other cultures, then multicultural experience actively shaped the culture to which Christianity claimed most connection.

With the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, Christianity entered the Diaspora and began to spread throughout the Mediterranean, transgressing cultural boundaries as it did so (Holt 17). This aspect of the early church will be dealt with later, but it is important to note that there quickly arose regional centers of Christianity with very different approaches to the faith, as can be seen in the different theologies of Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Clement and Origen, who respectively represent Rome, Antioch and Alexandria (González 156). Eventually, these cities, plus Jerusalem and Constantinople, were recognized as major centers, known as the Pentarchy.

Many of these regional differences were due to their cities' cultural locations. The Roman church was naturally influenced by Roman culture and, since Rome was the major center for all of Western Europe and Western Africa, it significantly affected the formation of Christianity in the West, as will be discussed later. Although Alexandria and Antioch were geographically close—Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in modern-day Turkey—they were different enough

culturally that they developed different methods of textual interpretation and soon came into

serious theological conflict over the nature of Jesus. Antioch had played an important role in the

earliest days of Christianity and remained closely connected to Judaic and Syriac thought (Irvin

and Sunquist 64). As a result, Antiochene interpretation focused on Judaic thought and on the

importance of history (González 226). In contrast, Alexandria was known for hosting a mixture

of cultures and ideas and was amenable to theologies that looked for correspondences between

Christian and non-Christian beliefs. In addition, Alexandrian scholars were more influenced

than the Antiochenes by Hellenism; accordingly, they interpreted the Hebrew histories

allegorically. It can be seen from this simple survey that even in early Christianity, theology was

heavily influenced by cultural context and that different versions of Christianity co-existed.

Christianity did not long remain bound to the Mediterranean, but soon traveled not only

north into Europe, but also east and south, into Ethiopia, India and even into China. Thus,

Christianity is also multicultural as a global diaspora, a fact that is receiving more attention in

historical surveys, e.g., those by Hastings and by Irvin and Sunquist. Christianity reached the

Ethiopian court by the mid-fourth century and, by connecting itself to Alexandria while adapting

to non-Mediterranean African culture, became "for centuries […] a symbol of independent

African Christian faith" (Irvin and Sunquist 216). In India, Christianity began as a community of

exiled Persians, but was well-enough established by the sixth century "to have become a

separate local caste" including indigenous Indians (308). Christianity in China is traceable to

635, when Chinese interest in Persian religions brought Christianity to the Imperial Court under

the name Jing Jiao ("Illustrious Religion"). Very soon afterward, monasteries were established

and Chinese Christian texts began to appear, such as the Jesus-Messiah Sutra and the

Discourses on Monotheism, both of which are written in the style of Buddhist Sutras (315-317).

As Christianity moved into northern Europe, it encountered two major cultural groups,

the Celts and the Germans; since these three cultures met most powerfully in the British Isles, I

will focus on this location. Roman Christianity arrived in the Isles quickly enough that Britain

was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and perhaps at the earlier Council of Arles in 314 (as recorded by Athanasius; Marnell 8). There is also evidence that a non-Roman form of Christianity arrived in the Isles independently, perhaps via the Celtic connections in Spain (Snyder 106ff.). Roman Christianity weakened when the Romans left the Isles and almost completely vanished under the Germanic invasions (Dodd and Heritage 31), but the Irish church continued, becoming an important missionary community that helped convert large portions of Britain through its communities in Iona and, subsequently, at Lindisfarne in Northumbria.

Because of the intensity of Irish religious devotion, in terms of both personal sanctity and mission work, the Irish church had become by the sixth century the strongest church in Western Europe, influencing over fifty continental sites (Crawford 11, 17). In fact, it was Celtic, not Roman, Christianity that met the Anglo-Saxons on their arrival in Britain. Lindisfarne was particularly significant, briefly rivaling and perhaps eclipsing Canterbury in importance, and influential enough that Bede discussed it in the third book of his History (Crawford 29, 21). Through Lindisfarne, Irish learning entered England. This development had lasting implications (Greenfield and Calder 15), for although the Celts could not fully convert the Anglo-Saxons (Roman missionaries returned to Britain to accomplish the task), Irish influences remained in the church, as evidenced by numerical motifs in literature and by theological emphases on cosmology and eschatology, e.g., the genre of journeys to the Otherworld (Wright 10, 21-23). British scholarship is thus more indebted to the Irish than to the Romans (Crawford 34).

It should be noted, however, that the Celts were a group of cultures that did not always have enough in common to be considered "one" cultural group. The interesting historical puzzle of the Picts illustrates how different these related cultures could be: in spite of their conversion by the Irish, their scholarship never displayed the same quality as that of their Irish cousins (Hughes 270-271). This difference has been attributed to the possibility that Latin literature was too new in Pictland for it to take root there as a viable means of expression; instead, the Pictish church excelled at visual expressions of religious culture, such as sculpture (284). Similarly,

these Celtic cultures did not simply disappear into the eventual Roman-Anglo-Saxon culture. Several centuries after the Roman church regained dominance in Britain, the Welsh church renewed its desire to reflect its own history. Its methods for achieving this purpose included using Welsh shrines as bishoprics and using the eleventh-century Life of St. David as a manifesto asserting Welsh independence from Canterbury (Brooke 2, 6). By the twelfth century, the Welsh church had created "a remarkable mingling of old traditions and new ideas" (2).

Since Celtic Christianity, especially Irish Christianity, affected the Continent outside of Roman missionary efforts, it will be useful to examine some of its distinct qualities. Although one of the most historically important conflicts between the Celtic and Roman churches was the dating of Easter (as seen at the Synod of Whitby in 664), the two churches had temperamental differences as well. For instance, the Irish have been characterized as being more romantic and emotional than the Romans, as is seen in the practice of peregrinatio, when Christians would forsake their family and wander; this practice shows how Irish Christians gave up everything for the new religion and then publicly displayed their commitment (Dodd and Heritage 32). Accordingly, the Irish church centered more around personal faith than around ecclesiastical organization, which was favored by the Romans (Snyder 130-131). This difference may be one of the reasons the meeting between the Celtic leaders and the Roman missionary Augustine failed: while the Romans believed the Irish Church needed more structure to preserve the enthusiasm of their converts, the Irish could not understand why they should be governed by Rome rather than by the much closer community at Iona (Dodd and Heritage 84).

The Germanic groups in Britain were likewise loosely connected. The idea of an English people is a literary invention (Harris 3); even the seemingly more accurate term Anglo-Saxon fails to recognize that the Anglians and the Saxons remained very different groups as late as the tenth century (62). In fact, the notion of German-ness was foreign to the Germanic tribes, who viewed themselves—even in the late ninth century—as "inherently distinct, as ethnic collectives, races or families" (10). The Germanic notion of cultural identity (including that of the Anglo-

Saxons) was defined not by biological relationship but by ethnic identity and divine purpose (1, 8). Distinctions between Germanic groups remained strong enough after their conversion to Christianity that it can be said that there were several Germanic Christian churches in existence, with regional differences according to the specific practices and beliefs of the local tribe (42).

The use of the term "English" to unite the Angles, Saxons and Jutes under one common identity was in large part the accomplishment of Bede, who skillfully altered the meaning of the Latin word gens in order to help the Germanic groups "see themselves as part of a larger (religious) collective" (Harris 59). Rejecting the available words for national entities, Bede chose a word that suggested races or clans (9) and then played off two different notions of the word, one with ethnic associations and one associated with the biblical idea that all Christians are children of Abraham and therefore "people of Israel" (gens Iudarum), who were a federation of tribes much like the gens Anglorum (60, 64-66). This linguistic procedure allowed the Germans to acknowledge both their separate ethnic identities and their collective Christian identity (gentes Christianorum): they were children of both Woden and Abraham (65-66).

Bede anchors this understanding of "English" identity in his account of Saint Alban, a Christian convert who is brought before a judge and asked about his race. Alban does not tell the judge; nor does Bede tell the reader. Instead, "Bede emphasizes that Alban belongs to the whole island, rather than to a particular gens, or race, such as the Britons" (Harris 57). In fact, Alban chooses his Christian identity over his own ethnic background; he sees his Christianity not merely as "a set of practices" but as his essence (esse), that is, as "an aspect of his fundamental being exclusive of expressed allegiance" (57). Bede uses Alban's life to suggest several ideas, viz., that Christianity can unite different tribes (58), that Christian identity at times conflicts with traditional ethnic identity (59), and that Christian accounts of history differ from the world's accounts in being guided not by "objective" secular history but by the truth of the Christian faith (69). In this way, Bede not only creates English identity as an ethnic notion, but also creates a new sense of history based on religious conceptions of truth.

Before turning to the ways Christianity changed through contact with these many cultures, one more cultural influence on Britain's religious life should be mentioned: Greek culture, which came to Britain through the work of Archbishop of Canterbury Theodore of Tarsus, a Syrian Greek who introduced the diocesan system into Britain (Brooke 3). Thus, the British Church was an amalgam of Roman, Celtic, Germanic and Greek influences. This multicultural Church "inaugurated a new era in the history of the Western Church" through its mission work on the Continent (Crawford 31). This mission work sprang from two cultural sources: the Anglo-Saxons' desire to maintain connections with their European homeland, coupled with the Celtic ideal of "self-exile for the sake of Christ and the Gospel" (35-36). In turn, these missions had a threefold effect: they replaced the regional identities of the numerous Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in Britain with a sense of national identity as Angli (48-49); they inspired new forms of heroic tales, replacing such traditional heroic figures as Beowulf and Sigmund with saints[1] (33); and they helped restore Papal authority in the Carolingian Empire, an important step in the development of the Holy Roman Empire (62-63).

Christian Adaptation to Foreign Cultures

In each of the cultures it encountered, Christianity adopted different garments. This process is in operation as early as the Synoptic Gospels, which are commonly acknowledged as written for different cultural audiences because of the different ways they treat the same events. Although the identity of these audiences is still debated, the Church has long held that textual evidence supports an old tradition[2] addressing Matthew to a Jewish audience, Mark to Romans, and Luke to Greeks. Thus, regardless of the tradition's accuracy, the Church has long accepted the idea that the life of Jesus needs to be told differently for different cultures. This process,

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[1] Alcuin chastised his English colleagues' penchant for heroic poetry by asking, "What does Ingeld have to do with Christ?" (Boenig xi).

[2] A quick search through the Bible section of Barnes & Noble shows that many Bible publishers still present this tradition as factual.

known as "contextualization," is an act of translation in which the Church uses a culture's language, symbols, etc., to express its beliefs; these new expressions then become the language, symbols, etc. by which the culture expresses its new faith (Holt 17), e.g., the processes of over-lexicalization and re-lexicalization found in the Gospel of John. Contextualization is not simply an expedient means; it is modeled after the doctrine of Jesus as the Word, whose life set an example of the interaction of God's word with human society (17).

However, contextualization involves the risk of introducing incompatible elements. For instance, an important early alteration in Christian thought came from interactions with Greek philosophy. Greek thought is referenced in the Christian Scriptures, but this does not mean that the Scripture writers endorsed it, and later theologians, e.g., Tertullian, rejected any connection between Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures. Yet in Alexandrian theology, such as in Origen, the notions of God and truth are more Platonic than scriptural (González 226-227). This influence was partly due to the Septuagint, both because Greek ideas inevitably entered the text during the process of translation and because the prospect of Gentiles reading the Hebrew Bible forced Jews to learn Hellenistic philosophy for defensive purposes (42). It was also due to the use of the concept of Egyptian gold (the Egyptian treasures that the Hebrews took with them in the Exodus) to justify the adoption of Greco-Roman philosophy and mythology (Wessels 23). This process is double-sided: the Hebrew God personalized the Greeks' philosophical abstractions but became in turn less personal and immanent than he had been in the Hebraic tradition (28).

These influences were strong in the early apologetic tradition, which sought to overcome the objections of Greek philosophers; as a result, in what has been called "the progressive Hellenization of Christianity" (González 120), Western Christianity was heavily flavored by elements of neo-Platonism, stoicism, etc. While it is well known that Platonic and Aristotelian thought found its way into the mainstream Christian tradition during the Middle Ages through such figures as Pseudo-Dionysius and Thomas Aquinas, many lesser-known influences were equally important and perhaps harder to resist: The apologist Theophilus of Antioch employed

Philo's Hellenistic and Stoic understanding of logos in his conception of the second person of the Trinity; his conception "was soon accepted and used by some of the most influential theologians" (González 115). And Pythagorean astronomy dramatically changed Christian thought with its belief in the immortal soul, an idea that is both foreign to Hebrew thought, which taught that the soul dies with the body (as also in the apologies of Justin and Tatian), and at odds with the Christian hope of resurrection (González 108, 112; Ellul 25 n.4).

Roman influence was equally effective and hard to resist. The power of the Empire naturally affected Church organization, as well as its legal and theological discourse (González 60). On a deeper level, Roman culture influenced Western Christianity with "its practical character and its deep ethical sense," as seen in the "profound psychological perception" Augustine shows in his Confessions (60). These examples show that before the church left the Mediterranean, it had already been changed by its attempts to cross cultural boundaries.

As Christianity spread into Europe, it continued to adapt to the cultures it encountered, becoming so "indigenized" that both "Christian theology and spirituality came to be shaped by Europe's various cultures—Greek, Roman, Celtic, Germanic, Slavic, Norse" (Holt 15). This indigenization, which is evident in such examples as the "traditional" Christmas celebrations created through contact with Germanic peoples, occurred in part because of a series of events that forced the Roman church to turn its attention northward: the advances of the Germanic tribes from the North and Islam from the South,[3] and the Byzantines' abandonment of Rome. This process resulted not only in "a turning-away from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity," but also in "the beginning of the opening-up of a new, northern Europe, an Atlantic Europe [...]. A northern civilization was emerging as surely as an Arabic civilization of the Mediterranean" (Wallace-Hadrill 73-74).

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[3] The presence of Islam in the Mediterranean complicates the notion of a simple West-East divide between Christianity and Islam; Christianity was still flourishing in Asia Minor when Islam was in modern-day Spain and Portugal (Christopher Dawson, qtd. in Makdisi 640).

Christianity's contact with Islam went much deeper and was much more productive than is commonly acknowledged, especially in post-9/11 political rhetoric. Although it has long been acknowledged that Europeans adopted a great deal from Arab philosophy (e.g., the recovery of Aristotle), mathematics, science, technology, alchemy, music, military technique, architecture, etc., it is now thought that contact with the Arab world was so influential on the High Middle Ages that it was in fact Islam that "carried the torch of civilisation [sic] to Christianity's western, eastern and southern boundaries" (Boisard 447). Europeans may have "unwittingly imitated" certain Islamic social and theological practices, such as borrowing the law of serfdom from the Muslim <u>dhimmi</u> and parts of canon law from Arab law (Ellul 96-98). Even the scholastic method may have been developed under the influence of Islamic legal concepts (Makdisi 642). These borrowings come from the transmission of Arabic treatises on law, theology, philosophy, etc.

But evidence suggests that Northern Europe was born not only through the presence of Islam in the Mediterranean, but also by borrowing ideas learned through contact with Islam in the Crusades, ideas that gave rise to the great European "intellectual advances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (Fletcher 160). The West was so impressed by Islam's highly ethical legal standards that it borrowed such now-beloved concepts as the theoretical equality of all men, the presumption of innocence in court cases, the principles of equity and good faith, and the fair treatment and liberation of war prisoners (Boisard 439-443). Contact with the more advanced Islamic culture may have "stimulated Christian thinkers to a formidable criticism of the Catholic position and to intellectual attacks upon the priests and the doctrine of the Mass, and in this way played an important part in initiating the Renaissance" (Cash 115).

Thus, the Judeo-Christian origins of the West might be more accurately described as a Germano-Christian culture with a tinge of Islam, in which the term Christian includes Hebraic, Greek, Roman and Middle Eastern influence, and in which the term Germanic includes both Germanic and Celtic influences. Some aspects of Celtic influence on Christianity have already been mentioned, such as emphasis on personal faith and eschatology. Many Celtic cultural

artifacts and practices also made their way into Christianity: Monks in both Ireland and England

Christianized pre-Christian literary works (Calder and Bjork xviii), leading to the inevitable

syncretism of native Irish mythology with Christian ideas (Wright 27-28). Many of the monks'

vernacular works were also influenced by the continued presence of the druidic role of poet/seer

(filid) who functions as poet and prophet. In addition, monks "assimilated the functions of the

Druids, bards, and brehons, while their monasteries replaced the Celtic tradition of hillforts"

(Snyder 130-131). In fact, the Christianization of the Celts may be due to "the way in which

Christianity became attached to gods (Brigid), holy places (Armagh, Kildare) and holy times

(like Imbolc)" (Wessels 95). This continuity is so strong that "there can be no doubt that

Christianity is indebted to the 'pagan tradition of pre-Christian Ireland'" (95).

Perhaps the most important adaptations to Western Christianity came from contact with

the Germans; to repeat a quote from the start of this section, "The whole shape of Western

spirituality is a function of this radically new Germanic culture with a strong addition of Celtic

culture" (Holmes 50; emphasis his). The conversion of the Germans was a multicultural effort

on the part of a church heavily influenced by Roman, Celtic and Greek Christianities, but it also

had a reciprocal effect on Christianity that continues to be felt today.[4] As has already been noted,

the idea that Christianity was Germanized while evangelizing the continent accords with

historical observations regarding the half-hearted nature of pre-Renaissance Christianity. In

fact, this phenomenon was noted by the missionary Boniface in the early eighth century

(Chidester 168). If Medieval Christianity was a European folk religion, with veneration of

ancestors, fertility rites, and the glorification of war heroes (167), it is because it had already

become a Germanic folk religion (Russell 39). Thus, German cooption of Christianity became

the dominant mode of Christianization in Western Europe and, ironically, might have been the

reason Christianity survived in Northern Europe (39-40). This change had "momentous

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[4] A thorough summary of research on this idea is found in James C. Russell's The
Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity, which I use as my guide through this topic.

consequences [...] for Western religious culture in general," since from the tenth century, northern European culture influenced Rome and, through Rome, all of Western Europe (42).

Germanization resulted from a policy of accommodation that jettisoned doctrinal and ethical instruction in favor of a more gradual approach that allowed the Germans both to accept those elements of Christianity that were already compatible with German religion and to reinterpret the conflicting elements to make them compatible (Russell 38-39). This policy stems from a decision made by Pope Gregory I during the evangelization of Britain to shift missionary strategy from destroying native religions (as modeled by the Hebrew Bible) to cleansing and appropriating their holy sites (Chidester 167). One important strategy in the Germanic lands was to downplay the roles of eschatology and soteriology and instead to appeal to "the Germanic regard for power" by describing God as an omnipotent ruler who rewards—during this lifetime—those who obey the Church (Russell 23). The appeal to politics was evident in the first German-Christian encounter, that between the Visigoths and the Arians in 376 (135). Even a missionary like Boniface, who opposed the continuation of pre-Christian customs, appealed to power in his famous attack on the sacred "Thor Oak" at Geismar, whose wood he used to build a church to St. Peter on the same spot (194 n.38). Because of this appeal to power, Christianity entered the culture through the highest social classes. However, this practice allowed those who were far away from the court (culturally or geographically) to maintain their Germanic beliefs longer, thus allowing Germanic traditions to infiltrate Christianity (Cusack 178-179). By appealing to the conversion's political benefits of instead of trying to change religious viewpoints, missionaries succeeded more in hastening the process of syncretism than in spreading Christianity (18).

Another procedure that created problems was the contextualization of Germanic terms to present Christian concepts. For instance, the Old English root *hailagaz, whose Germanic connotation was "societal prosperity," was given the Christian connotation of "individual holiness and salvation"; however, *hailagaz and other Germanic terms for salvation retained enough of their original sense that they came to refer not simply to the soul but to "a more

general healing" (Russell 163). Similar issues occurred as the concepts of sin, holiness and

lordship were modified to fit the new German context. As was the case with the combination of

Greek philosophy with Hebraic thought, this process was not all bad. For example, in the ninth-

century German translation of the Bible, the Heliand, such Germanic ideas as loyalty to one's

liege "are expanded and deepened through contact with Christianity" (Wessels 139-140). The

same holds true for the Germanic myths, which were reinterpreted along Christian lines (133-

134). However, despite these positive changes, the practice created problems, especially since

post-baptismal religious instruction was so widely neglected that many people were probably

"unaware that the acceptance of Christian baptism implicitly committed them to the

transformation of their traditional value systems" (Russell 198, 202). This lack of instruction in

Christianity shows that sometimes missionaries not only failed to reorient the Germans towards

a Christian world-view, but also neglected even to try (182).

Although missionaries can be faulted for poor policy, much of the problem stems from

the considerable differences between Germanic and Mediterranean culture. It has been noted

that in spite of the cultural difference among the various Germanic peoples—Goths, Franks,

Anglo-Saxons, Saxons, Scandinavians and Icelanders—they shared a remarkably similar set of

circumstances at the time of their conversion, such as "a proto-feudal social organization

consisting of a sacral king maintained by a band of retainers, casual and incidental contacts with

Christianity preceding the arrival of agents of conversion who carry with them the threat of

political domination" (Cusack vii). Thus, conversion occurred "in circumstances where the

survival of the traditional culture [was] in doubt," resulting in corporate conversions that retain

(perhaps unconsciously) aspects of the indigenous religious traditions. From this can be seen

what has been called the "reciprocal nature of the interchange": Christianity changed alongside

the converted group (vii). An important example of this change can be seen in shifting Christian

attitudes towards warfare. For instance, St. Bernard's De laude novae militiae, a "recruitment

tract" for the Knights Templar, "justified, if not encouraged" putting non-Christians to death

(Russell 40). This shift was due to "the development of a concept of collective security" related to the Germanic institutions of family groups and of personal lordship, as seen in "the portrayal of Christ as a victorious Germanic warlord" (Russell 43, quoting Katherine Fischer Drew).

One key difference between the Germans and the missionaries was that whereas the Christians were world-rejecting, individualistic, and focused on soteriology,[5] the Germans were world-accepting and folk-centered (Russell 176). Although Christianity differs from most folk religions in that it "demands ethical conformity and doctrinal belief" and most especially faith-trust rather than behavior (180), it was often reinterpreted during missions as a folk religion. For example, the increased use of votive Masses, i.e., "supplementary Masses offered for personal intentions," suggests that the Mass had become a form of asceticism (180).

A more cosmological difference between the two systems is found in their concepts of time: the Germans, who were rural and attuned to nature, were more cyclical in their cosmology than the Christians, whose eschatological views of history were more linear (176). As can be seen by the lack of Christian eschatology in the Nibelungenlied, the Icelandic sagas, Beowulf, and the Chanson de Roland, Christian conceptions of history did not take hold in Germanic societies (178). Similarly, Germans had a strong conception of their own past and did not wish to be saved from the world; their refusal to interrupt their work to honor the saints shows that their acceptance of the world triumphed over Christian rejection of the world (176-177). Eventually, the Church incorporated these Germanic conceptions of space and time; as a result, the Roman Catholic liturgy became Romano-Germanic (Russell 42, quoting Cyrille Vogel). The liturgical changes that demonstrate the effect of Germanization include

> a decline in Christ's meditative role, an increase in private votive Masses commemorating Mary and the saints, the multiplication of signs of the cross in the Mass, and the introduction of silent prayer with hands folded, which was

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[5] It does not matter here whether this rejection of the world is biblical, only that it describes the Christians of the period.

derived from the posture of a vassal pledging fealty to his lord [...] an increased emphasis upon the dramatic and allegorical representation of events from the life of Christ in the Mass and in Scripture, as well as in the weekly liturgical cycle, and a simultaneous decline in soteriological-eschatological emphases in the liturgy and in artistic expression [...] the emergence of the Christmas festival cycle as a rival to the Easter cycle, and an increased stratification of clergy and laity, represented by the growing distance between the altar and the faithful, as well as by the introduction of a communion rail boundary at which communicants knelt. (Russell 42, using examples given by Josef A. Jungmann)

The difficulty of evangelizing the Germans can be seen by comparing the differences between missions to the Germans and to the Greeks. Where Germanic religion was national and political, Hellenistic religion was mythical and philosophical. In the Mediterranean, Christianity upset the careful balance between the religious and political components of Greek and Roman society; yet, this disruption "enhanced the appeal of an alternative Christian community in which the criteria for membership were belief and behavior, rather than ethnocultural identity" (Russell 172). In contrast, the religious and political aspects of Germanic culture were complementary and remained so after Christianization, a fact that may have been "the most significant long-term factor in the Germanization of early medieval Christianity" (175).

A similar comparison can be made between the efforts of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries and those of the Irish. A useful example is that of the Irish monk Columbanus and his followers, who arrived in Gaul c. 590 to work among the Merovingians, who were nominally Christianized under Clovis in the early sixth century but who had seen no substantial spiritual progress in the eighty years since Clovis' death (Russell 154). Columbanus succeeded in part by circumventing the Roman episcopal system to found a monastic network on land belonging to Frankish aristocrats (156). The success of these monasteries suggests that Irish culture matched the rural structure of Germanic society better than the urban-episcopal Roman structure did (158).

At the same time, Columbanus' approach was more genuinely Christian than that of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries. Unlike Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Columbanus and his colleagues used a more "personal, straightforward, and apolitical approach" (Russell 165). In particular, Columbanus focused less on worldly rewards and God's power and "more upon the attainment of 'moral perfection,'" e.g., emphasizing the sinfulness of desires (killing, stealing, etc.) over questions of ritual observance (159-161). Although Columbanus' influence is not as dramatic as the Anglo-Saxons'—Christianization slowed down as the Merovingians' power declined (160)—his focus on personal and moral development may well have paved the way for the ninth century reforms (159), since his monasteries introduced Christianity into the countryside more effectively than any previous missionary tactic (Russell 161, quoting Jacques Le Goff).

Conclusion

This brief survey of Western Christianity's first millennium reveals several multicultural themes: In addition to the multicultural aspects of the Church's origins, there are multicultural aspects to its globalization, contextualization, regionalism and adaptation. Christianity has been multicultural from its origins; it arose in the intersection of several major cultures and out of a Hebraic tradition that interpreted its own history in light of its past encounters with neighboring cultures, as can be seen in the historical organization of the Hebrew Bible around the theme of exile. This tradition was also diasporic, faced with the challenge of maintaining itself in the midst of new cultures, and Christianity adopted this challenge when it entered the Diaspora.

Similarly, the areas into which Christianity spread were themselves multicultural. The Mediterranean region was highly cosmopolitan, with such cities as Rome and Alexandria flourishing in the midst of the multiple cultures that gathered there. The Celts and Germans, while less cosmopolitan, contained a variety of cultural practices but no strong sense of national identity until people like Bede found ways to turn Christianity into an ethnic identity that provided a sense of cultural unity. Moreover, as Christianity moved into Africa, India and China, it took Mediterranean culture with it, thus making these new regions more multicultural.

The globalization of Christianity begins with its connection to the Diaspora. Christianity was established by the fourth century as the religion of Ethiopia and as a caste in India, and as a monastic and textual tradition in China during the seventh century. Compared to this rapid growth in Africa and Asia, its growth in Europe was markedly slower. It had a rough start in Britain, almost dying out after the Romans withdrew and surviving thanks to Irish missionaries, who made substantial progress in converting the Anglo-Saxons before the Romans returned to complete the task. From Britain, and from the twin impulses of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionary activity, the Germanic peoples were brought into the Church.

As the Church moved into new cultures, it used contextualization to translate its beliefs into its neighbors' languages. This process began before the rise of Christianity, e.g., the Septuagint, and is also seen in differences between the Synoptic Gospels. Soon, the church was debating whether and how to employ other philosophical traditions to explain the truths of the faith, using the concept of Egyptian gold. By this method, the abstractions of Greek Philosophy were reconciled to the more personal nature of the Hebrew God. Although many theologians and apologists either resisted this method or used it very cautiously, it soon became an influential method of spreading the faith, though not without consequences. By the time of the Renaissance, the Church had a long history of using Greek and, by extension, Arab philosophers.

In the German territories, the Church shifted from the use of philosophical reasoning to appeals to political power, relying on the particularly vulnerable condition of the various German peoples. It also changed its strategy from destroying foreign religions to Christianizing them. Missionaries overlooked cosmological differences, e.g., the difference between Christian linear time and Germanic cyclical time and their eschatological implications, as well as the differences in the ways the cultures viewed the individual's relationship to society.

Through contextualization, regional variants quickly arose in the church, like linguistic dialects (as noted in the Introduction). An early example is the different theological emphases of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, each of which reflects its cultural location: Rome as the center of

Roman culture, Alexandria as the cosmopolitan meeting point of Mediterranean cultures, and Antioch as a Hebraic stronghold. Whereas Rome stressed organization and pragmatism and Antioch stressed the importance of Hebrew history, Alexandria stressed comparative, speculative and allegorical approaches to religion. These regional differences created conflicts about biblical interpretation that led to church-wide councils regarding the nature of Christ.

Celtic Christianity differed quite a bit from Roman Christianity. Less concerned with hierarchy and organization, the Irish focused more on individual faith, devotion, learning, and sacrifice. They could not understand why they should be connected more to Rome than to their own regional centers. German Christianity, by contrast, was more concerned with social structure than either the Romans or the Celts and stressed the preservation of the social structure and the importance of collectivity. At the same time, however, it was more rural than the urban-centered religion of the Roman Church, which meant not only that it had a different sense of time than the Romans, but also that the common people were less affected by the Christianization occurring among the ruling classes.

In addition to these regional variations, however, came subtle changes in doctrine. This process was most pronounced with the evangelization of the Greeks and the Germans, although the influence of Islam played a substantial role as well. In trying to satisfy the Greek philosophical temperament, early apologists incorporated over time elements of Greek thought that may be incompatible with Christianity, such as the Pythagorean notion of the immortal soul and the Stoic notion of the inner and outer logoi. Many of these adaptations became widely accepted into Christian theology and remain current today. As a result, Christian conceptions of God, truth, etc., sometimes resemble the theories of Plato, Aristotle, et al. more than they reflect Hebraic scriptural teaching.[6] Thus, Christianity was Hellenized. Much the same happened with the Germanic cultures, as the missionary focus on converting the top classes of society and on

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[6] As will be seen, Thomas Merton makes the same claim.

appropriating religious customs, combined with a failure to educate converts about the differences between their new religion and their old one, protected many folk customs. This policy had enormous consequences, as Christianized Northern Europe became the Holy Roman Empire and Germanic culture influenced the rest of Europe. Thus, Christianity was Germanized. The rise of Northern Europe was aided by the spread of Islam into the Mediterranean, not only because Rome relied more and more on the North for help, but also because many Europeans responded to the intellectual superiority of Islamic culture and borrowed whatever they could, from math and science to theology and law. One result may be that Europeans became more skeptical both of their own culture and of the Church that governed it and became more willing to question the status quo, thus helping to initiate the Renaissance.

It seems clear that it is difficult to speak of Christianity as a fixed entity. It arose amidst a field of cultural influences and almost immediately thereafter began moving through this field, adapting itself to the various cultures it met along the way. On the one hand, this process is essential to the nature of the faith, as witnessed by both the doctrine of the incarnation and the example of the Synoptic Gospels. On the other hand, it is a risky maneuver that requires great attention and deliberation, as well as careful supplemental work, to ensure that it does not lead to the introduction of incompatible elements, since their effects will be felt for generations.

II. Theology: Augustine's Two Cities

While it is well known that Augustine wrote his City of God to refute accusations that the Roman Empire fell because Christians rejected the Roman gods, his concerns were also pastoral: Many church members who had converted because of Christianity's success in the Empire now doubted the faith (Mommsen 368), while those who had been injured during the invasions needed comforting and/or an explanation of why they should suffer alongside unbelievers (Heyking 20-21). His challenge was to show the superiority of Christianity without undermining the civil order and sending the empire further into chaos (44). He also needed to re-orient the Church's political views away from the common belief that Rome was an eternal

and universal capital (Mommsen 347), as this belief tightened the Church's bonds to the Empire (Ruether 256). Apologists argued that as Christianity blesses all humanity, its growth benefits the Empire; Constantine's endorsement thus raised the hope of tremendous blessings once all of Rome converted (Mommsen 357-359). Many church leaders accepted Eusebius' notions (363) that the Empire would eventually become a Christian state purified of polytheism and that "the achievement of a unified Christian empire [was] the goal of all history" (Cranz 220). Many also believed the Empire to be the fourth universal kingdom mentioned in the Book of Daniel, whose ending would usher in the age of the Antichrist (Mommsen 348-349).

Augustine dismisses these beliefs, noting that the scriptures deny both the idea of using worldly events to predict the end of the world and the possibility of any eternal kingdom other than Christ's (Mommsen 349-351). Instead, he describes the world as two cities, corresponding to those who love God and those who are proud, "preferring themselves to God" (XII.6). [7] This idea has scriptural roots: Augustine finds it in the Psalms (XI.1), but it also appears in the story of Jacob and Esau, in the Jerusalem/Babylon dichotomy of Revelation, and in the citizenship imagery of the Christian scriptures (O'Daly 53-54). Such authors as Clement, Origen, Hilary and Jerome equated the Church with the city of God; similarly, Lactantius and Tertullian associated Rome with Babylon (55-56). Augustine may also have been inspired by politically marginalized African groups (e.g., the Donatists), who viewed the imperial church "as the continuation of the evil Babylon" (Ruether 257). Augustine embodied many of these political tensions, growing up in Africa as a Roman colonist but rejecting Rome's values by becoming a monk; in spite of his Roman upbringing, "he nevertheless experienced most profoundly, fed from African, Christian and Greek sources, that deep sense of having no true home 'in this world'" (257-258).

Although Augustine's notion of the two cities is solidly dualistic, he is careful to distinguish the obedience/apostasy dualism that he uses from others that were often equated

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[7] I will cite City of God using Roman numerated book/chapter references.

with it (and with each other): spirit/matter, good/evil, church/empire and eternity/time (Ruether 261). He also rejects both Roman and Christian notions of cyclical history (e.g., Origen), instead placing the cities within a Christian timeline of Creation and Final Judgment that preserves the importance and meaning of events (Mommsen 355). This treatment also helps him refute notions of temporal progress, which he finds even more dangerous (356). Despite Constantine, he claims, there can never be a Christian ruler, since 1) the earthly city refuses to love God, and 2) the city of God is under God's rule (Cary 24). He argues instead that "the earthly kingdom is a perversion of the divine order rather than a reflection of it"; that the Empire "remains a part of the earthly kingdom"; that the Church is captive to the world's ruler; and that its authorities are "in bondage to Babylon" (Cranz 218).

As Augustine describes it, the city of God is a sojourner:

> This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adapts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. (XIX.17)

This metaphor has two important biblical referents: The Hebrew term is gēr, which refers not only to foreigners but also to: the Hebrews in Egypt and in Babylon; post-exilic Israel; and the Hebrew Diaspora, whose status as legal sojourners was the basis for the city metaphor in the early church (TeSelle 51). In Paul's letters, the metaphor is inverted, with Greeks and Romans being sojourners in Christ's kingdom (53). Augustine's conception echoes that of 2 Corinthians 5:6-7, in which God is the origin and goal of our sojourn on earth (55-56). However, God did not

banish us, but allowed us to wander away from him (58). Moreover, Christians are sojourners only in the flesh, for their life in Christ prevents them from being exiles anywhere (59).

The term sojourner (peregrini) originally meant resident foreigner or guest, more like modern immigrants and guest workers than exiles or aliens (TeSelle 46-47, 55-56). Historically, sojourners were free from political and military requirements (though they could not own land) and often helped mediate between their host city and other cities (TeSelle 46-47). Although the term had little political meaning in Augustine's time, since all free men had been granted citizenship and only two classes remained, free and slave (49-50), he revives the model of the resident foreigner: The host culture is good, but "its good is partial and fragmentary, and so Christians must resist the pressure the surrounding culture exerts on them to assimilate to what it loves. They must engage that culture without being defined by it" (Smith 199-200).

The two cities are mystical or hidden (Heyking 35), comprising all humanity and sharing physical space but not geo-political or determined by race, birth or any conventional marker of citizenship. Rather, their citizenry is determined by human will, i.e., by their different loves: one seeks glory from men, the other gives glory to God; one lifts up its head, the other waits for God to lift it; one loves to rule, the other loves to serve; one delights in its own strength, the other delights in God's strength; one seeks human wisdom, idolatry and profit, and the other seeks godliness, worship and heavenly reward (XIV.28). Moreover, citizenship is not ontological: The citizens of the earthly city are not inherently evil, since all humanity is created in the image of God and therefore partakes of God's goodness (XII.1). Instead, they are simply victims of their own vices (XII.3). However, rejecting much of the Church's anthropology, Augustine downplays human dignity and free will and stresses the Fall, original sin, and humanity's sickness, suffering and helplessness (Pagels 373). This shift was necessary after Constantine, since preaching free will was useful only while martyrs could rail against the emperors as antichrists (374).

Augustine emphasizes choice out of pastoral concern, intending his book to be "a weapon in the battle for the human will" (Kaufman 79). The importance of will is seen in the cities'

origins, which Augustine traces back to the division between the angels. This division occurs not because of any inherent evil among the wicked angels, since they too are created by God, but because of their choices (XI.1). Thus, the differences between the cities are historical rather than ontological. The same is true for humanity. As the Adam and Eve story shows, God created only one race of humans, making them social in nature and intending them to be united as one family (XII.27). That is, God did not create or intend two cities.

Humanity's social nature suggests that political life was present before sin as part of our (God-given) desire for wholeness, founded not on natural law or divine revelation but on a "right-by-nature" ethic that emphasizes practical judgment (Heyking 1). However, Augustine's conception of Edenic political life differs drastically from that of other church leaders (Pagels 374). John Chrysostom, for instance, taught that the image of God included "the image of government" (375) as a natural human quality. When this image was ruined by sin, unnatural hierarchies entered human relations, e.g., slavery replaced interdependence (377). In contrast, Augustine's Eden includes neither self-government nor human freedom (379f.). Human glory is found in obedience rather than autonomy (381); hence, Adam's attempt at self-government was "the first revolution" (383). In the same way, free will is not God's gift but Adam's creation and thus "the root of sin" and our greatest temptation (381). That is, sin is not the cause of human corruption, but its result. Adam and Eve were corrupted by pride, which causes the soul to reject the things that truly could satisfy it and to desire instead to be exalted beyond its worth, so that it "becomes a kind of end to itself [...] becomes its own satisfaction" (XIV.13). Since their disobedience is passed down, all of humanity is born under the taint of sin (XIII.14) and can be made good only by being grafted into Christ (XV.1). Accordingly, political life is tainted as well: both political sovereignty and property rights stem from the fall; even worse, they hide our fallenness and reinforce our sinfulness (Milbank 209). Humanity therefore needs to be saved from the <u>polis</u>; but this is possible only through the historical presence of the city of God, which, by emphasizing the public aspects of love and forgiveness, replaces exploitation with "unity and

peace" (209). As this view of sin implies, "the site of true human unity is not the State, but the Church, which is the part of the heavenly city that is still on its earthly pilgrimage" (Cary 16). As will be seen later, Augustine uses this idea to critique Roman claims of social progress.

The two cities divide with Adam and Eve's children Cain and Abel, and Augustine sees this division foretold in their names. Augustine translates Cain as "possession," and Enoch, the name of his son and of the city he builds, as "dedication." These names signify to Augustine that Cain's city represents "the earthly city," in that it "is dedicated in this world in which it is built, for in this world it finds the end towards which it aims and aspires" (XV.17). Abel, "grief," represents God's city: he builds no city but remains "a sojourner," since "the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives" (XV.1). The cities' separation becomes concrete when Cain murders Abel in envy of his goodness (XV.5) and without repentance, even when reproached by God (XV.7). Like Cain, the earthly city desires power; its offerings are only to gain God's support (XV.7).

Cain and Abel's lineages maintain the division between them: Cain's line ends as it begins, with murder (Abel and Lamech). Abel has no line of his own but is replaced by his brother Seth, "resurrection," and by Seth's son Enos (or Enosh), who hoped in God (Gen. 4:26, Septuagint). For Augustine, this verse signifies Enos as "the first-born of the father of those generations which were separated to the better part of the heavenly city" (XV.18). Hence, the history of the city of God is set up in Abel's story; its public actions of love, forgiveness, unity and peace stem from "the long history since Abel of identifying with the outcasts and refusing to draw defensive bounds against alien and excluded reality" (Milbank 210). It can be seen from this that God's city has a distinct history from that of the earthly city.

The two cities remain "together and yet apart from one another" through the lines of Cain and Seth through the generation of Noah, by which time the good city had died out almost completely (XV.8). These parallel lineages reveal how civil morality affects a community's religious health: Cain's city "infected the originally wholesome line" and led to humanity's

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destruction in the Flood (Burnell 178). Augustine spends several more chapters exploring the cities' histories, but this brief sketch of their origins will suffice for our purposes. We can now examine how he uses the model of the two cities to downplay the Empire's importance.

Augustine turns Roman history against itself to show that it belongs to the earthly city: Like Cain, Romulus and Remus founded their city on violence; additionally, their lust for power and domination turned them against each other. Thus, Rome's founding story teaches both that human nature is fallen and that the earthly city has always been divided against itself (XV.5). It is the desire for domination that leads to such sins as slavery; God intended humans to have dominion not over each other but only over "the irrational creation" (XIX.15). By using the Cain-Romulus comparison to show the role of violence in establishing order, Augustine subverts the cultural mythology supporting the Romans' social structure (Milbank 208). Playing on his readers' love for the Rome's past glory, he shows "that early Rome was corrupt" and that "Roman history and morality […] fails to live up to even its own standards" (Heyking 40).

One well-known example of Augustine's subversion is his use of contradictions within the popular story of Lucretia, a well-known symbol of Roman women's virtue whose rape and suicide was also said to have led to the overthrow of the Etruscan monarchy and to the founding of the Roman Republic. Re-evaluating her story from a Christian perspective, Augustine argues that her suicide was the result of "human vanity and a dangerous misunderstanding of sexual purity" (Trout 62). If she was innocent, then under Roman law her suicide was illegal and not virtuous. His argument removes the story's moral power and allows him "to confront his contemporaries with the culturally subversive implications of a Christian understanding which discounted the values that symbol had so long denoted" (55). In order to dissect Rome's "deeply entrenched imperatives of honor and shame" (64), he shifts the focus of the story "from the social to the personal, from the public to the private" (67) and from men's (i.e., males') judgments of outward actions to God's assessment of the inner person (66).

Through analyses of this type, Augustine exposes three hidden aspects of Roman virtue: first, that Roman virtue, although it has been internalized into restraint, is in reality "manly strength"; second, that its true god is "foreign injustice," since martial virtue in fact celebrates the chaos it supposedly tames; and third, that it is founded on class warfare, in that it assumes the common good is to maintain the status quo "of patriarchal and private property rights" (Milbank 209). From these factors, Augustine concludes that Rome never had justice, i.e., an order in which both God and persons are given their proper due. For Augustine, justice "consists in devotion to reunion with God and ultimately in nothing else" (Burnell 177). Justice ensures the proper behavior of love, and since love is founded upon our relationships, our goals and our methods for attaining those goals, any disorder in love has severe social consequences: lust, anger, etc. (TeSelle 74-76). Injustice, therefore, is disordered love and consequently, morality (including civil morality) is founded upon religion (Burnell 177-178). Logically, since Rome does not worship God, it does not love correctly and therefore lacks justice.

From the absence of justice, Augustine makes two surprising and subversive conclusions: First, Rome was never truly a republic. Second, Rome does not even have a people, for since a people are united by agreeing about what they love (TeSelle 86, referring to XIX.24), and since love is kept orderly by justice, where there is no justice, there can be no people (XX.21-20.23). In making this argument, Augustine modifies Ciceronian political theory, making love more important than law for holding communities together. Love requires will, since the soul must choose whether to gaze on God or on the world; but will is found only in the soul; hence, societies are built around souls, not bodies (Cary 4-5; Bourke 292). And, since all earthly objects of love eventually fall away, only love for God creates lasting happiness (Cary 7). Because the earthly city chooses to love ephemeral objects, its history is marked by instability and impermanence (Mommsen 373). While Augustine leaves "no room for a specifically Christian politics" (24-25), he contends that only the city of God contains justice, a republic, or a people.

But although Augustine rejects common notions about the glory of Roman social order, he does not dismiss civil society as evil or hopeless. In fact, he believes that: 1) even under Christian rulers, civil society lives "in the middle ground between perfection, stopping well short of perfection, and utter chaos" and always contains injustice; 2) even in unjust systems, all persons must perform their civil duties; and 3) through natural law and Christian influence, society can improve morally (Burnell 180-181, referring to XIX.6). Christians play an instructive role in society because they desire to serve rather than to dominate each other (XIX.15). In this way, the heavenly city reveals the connection between union with God and human unity: as its citizens congregate in love for God, they are drawn into love for each other (Cary 6).

It should be noted that in linking the histories of other cultures to biblical history, Augustine does not propose a global history or a theory of history (O'Daly 194). Instead, he provides a "prophetic history" of the world (XVI.2), one that explores the meaning of the Christian salvation narrative by examining history (especially biblical history) as simultaneously literal and symbolic, revealing "God's 'temporal arrangement' in history, and the order and coherence of significant historical events" (O'Daly 194). Although others had used the civic metaphor to describe the church/world dichotomy, Augustine's dialectical application of it "exposes the most fundamental forces at work in history" (57, 141; Milbank 213).

Having explored the nature and history of the two cities, let us examine the various layers of the metaphor. Compared to kingdom metaphors, the city metaphor focuses more upon the present and the real, just as the use of civitas instead of urbs puts the focus more upon the city's people than on its setting (TeSelle 23-24). Like the term sojourner, the city has strong historical associations: cities often supported the palace and military, dominated the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside and controlled their land and/or production (26-27). These violent connotations work with Augustine's goal of disillusioning his readers with their Roman citizenship by contrasting it with Christian community. There had been healthier versions of the city, e.g. the Greek polis (27-30), but the Athenian and Roman empires removed any viable

independence for cities and ensured the development of inequality by blocking reforms (31-32). Rome was following the expansionist policies of all empires since Assyria, and thus became a "second Babylon," whose true god is "Foreign Expansion" (31-33; IV.15, XVIII.22).

The city metaphor includes a religious component, as the names of many Mediterranean cities reflected their religious cults. Thus, Augustine sees the city as a site for "spiritual edification, becoming God's dwelling" (TeSelle 24). His critique of empire is "part of a much larger critique of the empire's sacral order" (Hanby 128), especially of the way in which human religion seeks "wealth, prosperity, health, power, and honor […] not the gods, but rather a certain notion of success" (Smith 191-192). In the earthly city, "imperial power itself […] is the real object of devotion" (Hanby 124); even those who see through the civic religion must honor it for the sake of its civic benefits (Smith 192). As well as being "intrinsically 'religious,'" Roman patriotism loves "foreign injustice" (Hanby 121), relying upon a Manichean dualism that forgets the enemy's humanity, thereby proving that Rome's history is not noble, progressive, or providential, and that "that Rome has forgotten its own humanity" (124). God's people, realizing the true horror of war, neither seek power nor celebrate a so-called progress built on war (127).

In subverting Roman glory, Augustine aims to change his readers' relations to the world and to politics and to redirect their love to God (Smith 189). He hopes that by seeing how Rome begets its own failure, his readers will prefer God's city (189-190), whose historical progress has been hidden by the search for human success and glory in view of Rome's ostensible success: "From the perspective of the City of Man, the City of God is hidden in shadow, for it is always threatened, insecure, powerless, and homeless, seeking goods that are risky and not physically manifest" (190). To reveal the city's glory, he critiques human loves and provides a new historical hermeneutic that "demands a reorientation that would employ fundamentally different standards for what would count as a central event in human history" (190). For example, he redefines the polis in several ways: he privileges human attachment over political boundaries; shifts humanity's highest hope from the polis to devotion to God; and denies divine

sanction to human institutions (Breyfogle 219). God's city rests on humility and forgiveness and rejects both "the conceits of temporal glory and [...] the empire's subtle celebration of death through blood sacrifice" (Hanby 127). In effect, Augustine makes politics only one part of human existence and thereby opens up new avenues for human destiny (Breyfogle 221).

Yet, he acknowledges that political institutions have their use, namely "as moral guides" (Kennedy 46). The two cities are inter-reliant in "that each side's virtues supplement the other, and that each side checks the other at crucial interstices" (Heyking 208-209). Each city should regard the other as providing models of virtue and pointing out shortcomings. The earthly city can support the Church by instilling values that help its citizens to better love God and their neighbors (209) and by restraining the Church from improper political activities and holding it to its proper sphere (217). In turn, "the Church will respect the particular ways in which each nation preserves civil peace, as long as worship is not hindered" (211). Christians must therefore be attached to and detached from both cities (Breyfogle 220).

Because the cities share geographical space and living materials, mutual peace becomes a goal for the citizens of both (TeSelle 108). However, their notions of peace differ: For God's city, peace comes from a proper ordering of all things and people under God, whereas earthly peace is built upon the people's desire to stand in God's place and force others to serve them (XIX.12). For Augustine, peace is literally essential to existence: it is the harmony of parts that enables a thing to be. Hence, all people by nature seek peace, though some use conquest and domination to attain it (Cary 19-21). Instead, true peace is happiness, in the sense of being well ordered through "the righteousness of faith and the vision of God" (18). This notion of peace constitutes a "different way of doing things" from that of the earthly city (Milbank 211), a difference so great that he refuses to equate civic "iustitia and pax" with biblical "righteousness and peace" and rejects the idea that the latter pair could ever be found within secular government (Mommsen 364). As long as the soul does not live in hope for the next life, where true happiness is to be

found, the best earthly peace is only "a false happiness and profound misery" (XIX.20). Even virtue does not provide peace, since it is founded upon a constant battle with the body (XIX.4).

Because the geographical city is located between the family and the world, it is a convenient site to practice loving one's neighbor in order to love all humankind. Neighbors provide the challenge that "cultivates the charity and forgiveness that is required for the Church" (Heyking 216-217). Because city life compounds the troubles of home life (XIX.5), the city's health depends on the health of its various associations (societas), concrete groups of people such as households (Breyfogle 223-224). These associations can transcend political boundaries and obligations and even subvert political injustice with the help of friendship (amicitia), since both friendship and association originate in truth, a foundation of justice (224-227).

Insofar as the city of God remains within the earthly city, relying on God's strength and forgiveness, its own peace is incomplete (XX.27). Yet, although its presence amidst the earthly city is unnatural and temporary, as long as it lives there, it must seek (and use) its host's temporal peace (Cary 17). But there is no "neutral" way to use earthly goods, as all use is determined by its end; therefore, whereas the earthly city seeks to enjoy its earthly peace (24), God's city loves earthly goods solely for God's sake (Smith 199). As seen in his famous passage on Egyptian gold, Augustine is confident that Christians are able "to take what is good in secular communities and their philosophies and make them contribute to salvation by integrating them into the context of Christian faith" (Kennedy 48).

It has been said that Augustine's book is "about being otherworldly in the world" (Kaufman 80): Faced with radical changes in the Church's political situation, Augustine found a way to accept the need for government without overlooking its problems, thereby providing a middle ground between Chrysostom's faith in believers' autonomy and Eusebius' faith in Christian government (Pagels 390). As representatives of the city of God, Christians must live in the earthly city as sojourners, deliberately setting themselves apart in voluntary marginalization. They must recognize that the earthly city is not intrinsically evil but is built upon a disordered

foundation that uses unjust means to secure selfish ends. At the same time, they must seek the earthly city's health and peace without seeking political power and without being deceived by myths of a Christian kingdom (nation, state, etc.) and of Christian rulers. As he stated elsewhere, "Christianity might expand even if the empire contracted," since the empire, while useful, "was not God's only instrument for the spread of Christ's kingdom" (Kaufman 87-88). Replacing the triumphalists' "claims" and "forecasts" with "[o]ughts and exhortations" that were "deliberately studded with subjunctives" (89), Augustine demonstrates that the city of God can show the world how to build a city on love by seeking God and God's ways in all things.

III. The Christian as Exile: St. Patrick

European Christianity has often used exile as a metaphor for Christian living. As noted earlier, exile was a major event in Hebrew history and an organizing principle for its scriptures. In the Christian scriptures, the concept referred mostly to the historical event,[8] often in terms of God's judgment for apostasy or of the nation's subsequent repentance and revival (McGrath 93). In the Middle Ages, exile became a metaphor for daily life, as authors described Christians as exiled from their true home, i.e., heaven and/or the kingdom of God. For these authors,

> life on earth was to be thought of as a period of exile from the heavenly Jerusalem. The world is not our homeland; it is the place to which we have been exiled. [...] On the basis of this model, medieval spiritual writers [...] stressed the importance of cultivating the hope of return to the homeland. Many writers of the period offered powerful visual images of the heavenly Jerusalem, in order to encourage their readers to set their hearts firmly on heaven. (McGrath 94)

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[8] My examination of the Greek terms used for the historical event suggests that several Septuagint terms appear either not at all in the Christian scriptures or only in reference to the historical event. I found only one Septuagint term (αιχμαλωτοσ, captive or prisoner) used metaphorically in the Christian scriptures; it is used as both a noun and a verb (αιχμαλωτευω) and refers variously to a) being led astray by sin or by false teachers; b) controlling one's thoughts; and c) end time events. Also, the metaphors used by Christian writers refer more to living in a foreign country, as in the Hebrews' sojourn in Egypt prior to the Exodus.

The Confessio of Patrick illuminates the ways exile functions as a metaphor for the Christian life. Patrick's discussion of his career is especially useful because he was exiled literally and figuratively. Kidnapped by Irish raiders when he was sixteen, Patrick lived in captivity for about six years before God led him home. His story recalls the experiences of the Hebrews during the Babylonian Captivity, as well as during their return to Jerusalem, since he eventually returned home. Later, however, Patrick went into "voluntary exile" (McLuhan 71) by returning to Ireland as an evangelist in response to God's call; in this way his life also recalls the formation of the Diaspora by those Jews who did not return to Jerusalem.

The figurative aspect of Patrick's exile comes from his view that, in addition to living outside his homeland physically, he is a spiritual exile, although he reverses the direction of the metaphor so that Ireland is a place of restoration instead of exile. Patrick realizes that before his kidnapping, he lived as if in exile from God, not heeding the teachings of the Christian faith his family ostensibly served (his father was a deacon). His willingness to blame himself for his captivity recalls the scriptural admonitions that blame the Hebrews' captivity on their unfaithfulness to God, as do his reflections on the effect of his time in Ireland, for through physical captivity, Patrick finds God and spiritual freedom. Later, the physical and figurative aspects of exile come together, as the evangelist Patrick accepts Ireland as his true home. Thus, he pits Ireland against Britain as a place of geographical exile while associating it with his spiritual homeland; Ireland becomes a truer home for him than his native land.

In this section, I explore Patrick's text by means of Edward Said's essay "Reflections on Exile." The two texts do not correspond completely, as Said rightly criticizes modern tendencies to romanticize an experience that has been brutal and often deadly for large numbers of people. Said worries that attempts to see exile as beneficial trivialize its horrors. Yet at the end of his essay, he considers possible benefits of exilic life, quoting Hugo of St. Victor's definition of the perfect person as one who views the entire world as a foreign land, an attitude that encapsulates the Christian tradition of viewing earth as a place of exile. Rather than try to reconcile the two

texts, I intend to use Said's thoughts to explore the use of exile as a voluntary, religious

metaphor. Said's essay is also useful because he categorizes different types of exilic experience

into voluntary and involuntary types, both of which (as has been shown) Patrick experienced.

Captivity in Ireland

I will start with one of Said's positive comments about exile, see how it connects to

Patrick's text (even where Patrick's use of the exile motif[9] departs from that of Said), and then

build a picture of exile's functions for Christian identity. Said's main concession to the benefits

of exile is that it allows self-awareness, "investigations of self that inevitably go far beyond such

simple and positive facts as 'ethnicity'" (184), e.g., attempts to understand the patterns of history

that recur even though they threaten to destroy nations. Patrick's text exhibits such a quality

when he blames himself and his fellow captives for incurring God's wrath:

> I was then ignorant of the true God and, along with thousands upon thousands of
>
> others, was taken into captivity in Ireland. This occurred according to our merits
>
> for we had pulled back from God; we did not keep his commandments; and we
>
> did not listen to our priests, who kept on warning us regarding 'our salvation.'
>
> And 'so' the Lord 'poured upon' us 'the heat of his anger' and dispersed us among
>
> many peoples, right 'out to the very ends of the earth,' where now my smallness is
>
> seen among these men of an alien land. (sec. 1)[10]

Echoing the Hebrews' admission of responsibility for their captivities in Assyria and Babylon,

Patrick blames not the Irish but himself and his fellow captives. This self-accusation exhibits

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[9] It should be noted that I am not relying on explicit uses of the term "exile" in Patrick's text; instead, I am looking for aspects of his life that <u>function</u> as exilic experiences.

[10] All quotations from Patrick are from the O'Loughlin translation in Davies' anthology (q.v.). The passages in single quotations are O'Loughlin's way of marking scriptural references.

Said's categories of self-investigation and of historical investigation. [11] The true causes of his captivity are his own inattention to God's teachings and God's punishment.

Patrick states that he was first exiled from Briton because of his own distance from God. Although he and his fellow captives had access to the church and therefore to the knowledge of God, they ignored this God-given opportunity. In a sense, he is physically exiled to Ireland because he was already spiritually exiled from God; as he says later, because of his sins, at the time of his kidnapping he "did not yet know what [he] ought to desire and what [he] ought to avoid" (sec. 10), and even what he did know had not fully sunk in. He accepts St. Paul's "notion of sin as spiritual slavery" (McLuhan 66) and therefore sees himself as deserving punishment. Already the physical and metaphorical senses of exile are compounded: his spiritual ignorance is revealed and punished by physical separation from his culture.

The land of Ireland is an important factor in Patrick's assessment of his guilt, as his British culture scorned the Irish, and he and his fellow captives would have been horrified both by being kidnapped and by their kidnappers (Thompson 6-7). Christianity at that time was primarily an urban religion (i.e., towns) with "little sympathy for the rustic boor, and no interest at all in the baptism of barbarians beyond the frontier" (Hood 2). The Irish were both rustic and beyond the frontier; their small population (probably less than 500,000) was scattered across the island, and there were no towns or cities, not even in the medieval sense (De Paor 23). Evidence suggests that the culture maintained some pre-Celtic beliefs (28). Being outside the Empire, the Irish were considered barbarians, and the church had no missions among such people; although it was widely accepted that God could convert "barbarians," such work had no institutional encouragement, on the grounds that such peoples were "unlearned, undisciplined" and "not fully human" (Thompson 63). For his part, Patrick was not rustic, coming from a

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[11] Said has no clear equivalent for the exile that comes from kidnapping, so I will borrow the Hebrew concept of forced captivity as a banishment enacted by God.

"good" family (O'Donoghue 64), perhaps even a slave-owning family (McLuhan 67). He would therefore have found his punishment all the worse because God used the Irish to perform it.

However horrifying it must have been, this punishment effectively became the best thing to happen to him, since it chastened and corrected him. After relating his capture, he confesses that God revealed to him his error "so that however late, I might become conscious of my failings" (sec. 2). Thus, his exile manifests not only God's justice, but also God's chastisement and mercy (McLuhan 70) in that God separates him from his earthly home in order to restore him to his true, i.e., spiritual home. Patrick even describes God's goodness to him as that of a father protecting and consoling his son (sec. 2). In this familial metaphor, he again inverts the notion of homeland so that his spiritual home and family matter more than his native land.

God's ability to use exile for spiritual instruction is evident throughout Patrick's opening sections. When he arrived in Ireland, he "was a rustic and a wanderer without any learning 'who knew not how to provide for what would come later,'" a stone that God raised out of the mire and set "on the top of the rampart" (sec. 12). This passage demonstrates his intention to thank God openly for all that God has done for him, but it also reveals three more aspects of exile: First, Patrick is effectively exiled from his own self-reliance, not knowing how to provide for his future and sustained only through God's provision. The story of his escape (secs. 17-23) shows that God alone rescued him. As the text follows Patrick's spiritual growth, God's provision becomes more evident, protecting him from "hail, rain, or snow" and from "evil [and] any other spiritual laziness" (sec. 16) while he prayed fervently throughout the day (and even this was God's work in him). Patrick matures not into self-reliance, but into God-reliance.[12]

Second, the passage shows Patrick to be a wanderer. The Latin word profuga, sometimes translated "exile" (Davies 479 n.60), is used in the Vulgate to describe: those who live in the cities of refuge for manslaughter; those who deserted into the hands of the Chaldeans; and those

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[12] We might recall Augustine's negative interpretation of self-reliance in the Eden story, as discussed in the previous section.

who have been scattered and therefore have become exiles. Patrick's use most closely resembles this last sense, as his separation from his homeland also separates him from all the sources of provision and instruction he would have received from his family and other support networks. His status as a wanderer is embodied in his eventual escape, which becomes a pilgrimage in which he wanders, with God's guidance, some two hundred miles through unknown territories to catch a boat with people he does not know and with whom he will wander still more upon arriving in Britain (secs. 17-19). He even models his account of their wanderings in Britain after the biblical Exodus story, thereby emphasizing the spiritual aspect of his physical journey.

Third, the passage shows Patrick as exiled (in the sense of alienated) from the knowledge that should have been his. His lack of education is an important part not only of Patrick's text (he mentions it as early as sec. 9), but also of his identity as a man of God and as a missionary. Scholars note that in Patrick's era[13] the Britons' system of education was such that at the age of sixteen, he would have begun advanced Latin, with training in writing, persuasion, literature and law (Hanson 21; Thompson 42). Although he probably spoke colloquial Latin at home (Thompson 40; Hanson 28), he clearly regrets his incomplete education, noting that he is disadvantaged compared to those for whom Latin is like a native language and that everything he says must be, as it were, "translated into an alien tongue" (sec. 9). He fears that his lack of fluency will be apparent to all who read his text and interpreted as a lack of wisdom, given the presumed connection between wisdom and speech (secs. 9-10).

He realizes, however, that his lack of linguistic fluency is not fatal, since his writing is guided by the Spirit who teaches stutterers to speak peace and who bears within the human heart testimony stronger than written words (sec. 11). If anything, God has raised him up "from the midst of" the wise and the learned and has inspired him "above others" for service (sec. 13). Thus, his incomplete education becomes an opportunity for God's glory to be revealed and may

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[13] I shall not discuss the disputes as to when in the fifth century Patrick lived. For more information, see Hanson's books and Dumville's analysis of Hanson ("Floruit").

have been one reason Patrick was sent to evangelize Ireland. In his writing, his lack of rhetorical training allows him to be "transparent," revealing "a sense of helplessness, of being vulnerable" (Hanson 36). His lack of literary Latin also forced him to rely more fully on the few Latin texts he knew, especially the Bible, which "supplied a considerable part of his vocabulary" and thus provided his spiritual and literary education (47). In the Confessio, he "wears his lack of human teaching as a badge of honour with the knowledge that his mission and his understanding come directly from God" (McLuhan 65). Had he completed his studies, his language might not have been enough to communicate all that he wanted; the language itself was "ageing" during the fifth century and Latin literature and theology were at a low point (Bieler 92, 96).

Patrick sees his captivity both as a corrective to his lapsed faith and, from the vantage of his later experience, as a training ground for what came after, i.e., his return to Ireland as an evangelist. He states that his time there was "very good for me for I was corrected by the Lord; and he prepared me for what I am today—a state I was then far away from—when I have the pastoral care, and many duties, for the salvation of others […]" (sec. 28). Thus, exile was an education for later work, "the catalyst for his spiritual rebirth" and an influence on "his sense of personal mission" as an evangelist (McLuhan 64). This view of history redeems the trauma of exile but requires faith in a God who sees the future as well as the past (something Said does not acknowledge). In this way, his text resembles African American spirituals, since "there is always in the religious expression of the slave-situation a sense of the Father as not only the Consoler but the Liberator as well," so that the slave's cry is both "a cry for liberation" and "a cry of fellowship and belonging'" (O'Donoghue 29). Paradoxically, Patrick sees his time in Ireland, away from church, as better preparation than his time in Britain in a supposedly Christian household.[14] In fact, his evangelical career may have depended upon his knowledge of the Irish language, which may have been an important factor to those who sent him (Hanson 32).

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[14] It has been suggested that Patrick's father became a deacon simply to escape taxation (Hanson 22); even if not, Patrick's comments imply a general lack of devotion.

Return to Ireland

Patrick's return to Ireland completes his exile, but in voluntary form: Said categorizes this as émigré life (181). Exile functions differently for Patrick now than it did in his youth; in fact, it becomes "a reenactment of his earlier captivity and a celebration of his personal redemption by God" (De Paor 71) and a means of serving humanity. Patrick validates his mission by referring to himself as <u>servus</u>, using the early Christian motif of "slaves to Christ," with which church leaders proved their authority by demonstrating how a godly exercise of power required them to take up their audience's lower social status (McLuhan 65). Like St. Paul, Patrick believes that freedom comes only from submission to God (66); thus, voluntary exile in God's service is the foundation of our truest freedom. Patrick's "slavery" allows him to imitate Jesus' full dedication to God's will and to join in God's liberating work (71).

Patrick welcomes the opportunity to spread the gospel both because it is a worthy calling in its own right and because he views Ireland as "literally the last country on earth" (Hanson 23). Therefore, he regards its evangelization as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies not only regarding the spread of the gospel (he quotes several verses to this effect in sec. 38) but also regarding the end of the world, e.g., in this comment:

> I—an ignorant man—should dare to take up so holy and wonderful work as this: that I should in some way imitate those men to whom the Lord foretold what was about to occur when 'his gospel [of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world] as a testimony to all nations' before the end of the world. And this is what we see: It has been fulfilled. (sec. 34; editorial brackets O'Loughlin's)

Patrick's views are influenced by at least two factors. First, it was commonly understood in his day that Jesus taught (in Matthew) that "the end of the world would come as soon as the Gospel had been preached to all nations of the world as far as the extreme borders of the inhabited earth" (O'Donoghue 75). Second, the Empire's collapse led to a "sense of a world grown old and in the process of dissolution" (76) and thereby to the belief in the coming end of the world.

Yet, Patrick's voluntary exile in Ireland changes his views of the people. His life there gives birth to "a new people of God" (O'Donoghue 64) and gives him a new conception of place. British prejudice against the Irish was not nationalist but imperial, i.e., it was against "barbarians," compounded perhaps by the Irish lack of desire to become Roman (Thompson 111-112). What nationalism there was in Patrick's culture was more localized, e.g., people were loyal to "the district where [they] had been born and bred and where [their] relatives lived," to larger city-states and perhaps to pre-Roman tribal territories, but felt "no sense of provincial loyalty or unity. A man [sic] was not committed emotionally to his province" (111). Patrick's cultural view of place would therefore be both localized—his "native land" was simply his "home and family" (111)—and broad—the Irish were undesirable only because they were outside the Empire.

As Patrick grows in his mission, however, his attention shifts from his culture's concern with British/Irish and Roman/barbarian distinctions to a concern for the differences between Christians and pagans (Thompson 110). His lack of details makes it clear that his focus is not on Irish life but on "the Community of Saints" (O'Donoghue 77). As is common in Christian writers, his "inner horizon, by which all facts and observations are put in their place, transcends the visible world of space and time" (77). His affection for the Irish may have been aided by the fact that during this period Ireland underwent "drastic internal change" that allowed Christianity to be accepted "without a sense of threat" (De Paor 36-37). This willingness to accept Christianity amidst extensive change may be evident in Patrick's vision of the "voice of the Irish" begging him to return (sec. 23). His voluntary exile in Ireland allows him to see a potential for faith unnoticed by the church and inspires him to reject the cultural prejudices of his youth.

His growing fondness for the Irish brings another metaphorical form of exile: he voluntarily gives up his autonomy. Although he wanted to return to his family and to meet other Christians in Gaul, he believes he is not free to do so, for God would hold him guilty should he make any such journey (sec. 43). No longer trusting himself, since his flesh would drag him to death, he instead trusts in God's love and assistance (sec. 44). Paradoxically, his exile is his

safety, since the Christ who sent him to Ireland "will guard [his] way from every evil" (sec. 43). By the time he writes his text, he is fully reconciled to his new home; as he writes, "may it never happen to me that my God should separate me from his 'people which he has acquired' in the outermost parts of the earth" (sec. 58; see also sec. 37).

Patrick's mission also separates him from many of his church colleagues, who find his calling odd; he thus experiences exile even within the church. When he is bribed with gifts to prevent him from returning to Ireland, he realizes that God's call goes "against the will [...] of some of my elders" (sec. 37). As noted above, the idea of converting the Irish was unusual, and the church may have seen his primary task (as opposed to his calling from God) as ministering to Christian Britons in Ireland (Hanson 33). Other colleagues opposed his journey entirely, believing that his rusticity would make the mission more dangerous than profitable (sec. 46). In acknowledging this allegation, Patrick displays his own concern over his lack of education and his corresponding trust in God's faithfulness to make up for it.

His elders' concerns were not groundless; Patrick acknowledges that their resistance comes "not from malice" (sec. 46) but from genuine and pragmatic concern for his ability to survive. According to his own testimony, in a geography characterized by forests, bogs, undrained valleys and lowlands that were practically inland seas (De Paor 23), he has gone to many out-of-the-way places (sec. 51). In addition, Ireland's fixed class hierarchy afforded Catholic clergy like Patrick no place or legal standing (Hanson 33), and he sometimes had to use his own money to obtain both personal protection and fair treatment for the Irish (secs. 52-53). He concedes that he has been insulted, hated, persecuted, enchained and held hostage by Irish kings (secs. 37 and 52) and that he expects every day "to be killed or waylaid or taken into slavery or assaulted in some other way" (sec. 55). Yet, he treats martyrdom as a homecoming in which he will "have gained [his] soul as well as [his] body" (sec. 59). His integrity makes his situation even more precarious: He claims that he neither takes gifts (sec. 49) nor charges for baptisms or ordinations (sec. 50), but instead "spends" himself for the sake of his flock (sec. 51).

It can be seen from these facts why Patrick's superiors in Britain were cautious on his behalf. His success thus demonstrates not only God's power and faithfulness, but also one way in which faith must exile itself from human reasoning and caution.

Patrick suggests his experience of exile can be universalized without leaving home, in that the Irish, representing all humanity, were likewise in exile from God but have now found their true home while staying in their native land. He even acknowledges the usefulness of the homeland experience he himself lacked. He rejoices that there are now native-born Irish clerics (sec. 38) and delights in knowing that many Irish, especially youths from the nobility, have exiled themselves into chastity and/or full monastic life (sec. 41). He notes the difficulty of these vows for free women, who face their fathers' opposition (sec. 42), and even more so for slave women, who are forbidden by their masters from imitating Christ (sec. 42). Fulfilling Jesus' teaching that they are no longer of the world they live in, Patrick's converts exile themselves from their cultural-political roles in order to serve the kingdom of God.

Conclusion: Christianity as Exile

Patrick's Confessio reveals several modes of exilic experience. At the literal level, he is exiled from his homeland two different times: involuntarily as a youth and voluntarily as an adult. Because Ireland was considered barbaric by Patrick's culture, his first exile would have been doubly traumatic. He also missed the formal education he could have used in his service to the church and in writing his text, becoming familiar instead with the "barbarian" language. He is thus exiled from his native culture and from the skills that would be expected of him. Back in Ireland as an adult, he travels to remote places through difficult geographical and political terrains—he sees himself as one step away from death, as if exiled from his own life, with no protection besides his own resources and God's faithfulness.

His physical exile, however, is the inverse of his spiritual exile. Growing up in Britain, he was unfaithful to God—exiled from truth and the source of his own life—and thus deserved to be punished through captivity, which becomes the means for his return to God and to spiritual life.

It also prepares him for the much greater work of bringing the Irish people out of their own exile into new life. In doing so, he finds himself at odds with church leaders, whose wisdom and prejudices produce resistance to God's will for Patrick and for the Irish; as a result, he must disobey his elders. In his voluntary exile, Patrick surrenders his autonomy, giving up the right to do what he likes and doing only what God commands. And yet, since what God commands is good, Patrick learns to love Ireland and renounces his desire to return home. In leaving behind his native culture, he also leaves behind its prejudices and its inability to see possibilities in other ethnic groups. Exile can therefore foster the genesis of new peoples, just as it can bring people closer to their spiritual home.

It remains to consider Patrick's text in light of Said. Although Said focuses on modern occurrences of exile, there are several points of contact between his text and Patrick's. Still, it will be useful to consider first some of the ways in which the two texts stand in tension. For instance, Said claims that literature and religion present exile in ways that "obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (174). Perhaps because the exile motif has become so common in the West, it tends to be romanticized, treated in terms of small groups of individuals who are educated enough to express their experiences thoughtfully; the experiences of subaltern exiles are not often addressed. Patrick's text certainly valorizes exile as a means of individual growth that has long-term social benefits, but it refuses to acknowledge it as "irremediably secular." Patrick attributes the captivity of "thousands upon thousands" of Britons (sec. 1) to the universal lordship of the biblical God; he thus rejects a secular interpretation of exile.

These differences may stem from the differences between the authors' cultures. Said is concerned with exile as a "motif of modern culture" (173) and with the mass displacement of millions of people, usually from political nationalism. He differentiates the modern experience

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of exile from that of previous generations by its "scale" and its "large, impersonal setting" (174). Yet, it is at this point that the overlap between the two authors becomes evident. Even though Patrick's world was not constituted around modern forms of nationalism, his actions seem to support Said's comment that exiles often "reconstitute their broken lives […] by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people" (177). Insofar as the kingdom of God is an ideology that proclaims its own triumph and the restoration of its people, Patrick's life fulfills both of Said's categories. He does not simply discover God while in captivity; he also attributes his situation to his own failure to honor God. God's righteousness is the triumphant ideology and the Britons' exile is the means to their restoration.

Said also claims that exiles make up for their loss of familiarity "by creating a new world to rule" (181), a world that is less about objects than about mobility and skill. Patrick's references to his wanderings and to the triumph of God's skill working through him speak to this aspect of exilic life. What is important for Patrick as God's servant is not belonging to Ireland (something he could never attain), but rather being open to going wherever God calls him. Said claims that this exilic world resembles fiction, and although an orthodox Christian perspective on Patrick would not accept Said's description at face value, all missionary activity exhibits textual aspects in that it seeks to realize a world that is invisible outside of scriptural witness. Similarly, just as Said claims that the novel arose alongside the growing instability of modern European life (181), it could be said that all genres of devotional literature depend on the tension between physical reality and spiritual life. In fact, devotional literature can combine all four of Said's major literary categories: exile, adventure, education and discovery (181).

Said states that exile is popular in modern literature because people believe that they can share in the motif's redemptive benefits (183). This is clearly the motif's devotional purpose, and the popularity of itinerancy in Celtic asceticism shows that people have long held this view. Said himself admits that these itinerant scholars had a "leavening" effect on their world (183), thus acknowledging the positive role of the motif in its combined spiritual-physical form. The motif

encourages readers to detach themselves from their native culture and even their native land. As God's kingdom is a universal kingdom that is possible everywhere yet (in geo-political terms) realized nowhere,[15] individuals must learn to recognize the differences between their own social order and God's as well as the potential similarities between foreign cultures and God's.

Said worries that exiles compensate for their uprooted condition by idolizing the state and/or by fetishizing exile to the point of rejecting all offers of community. It is unclear whether these problems arise in Patrick's text. He learns to love his new land, but more as a representation of God's kingdom than for its own sake. He rejoices in the growth and health of Christianity among the Irish: he speaks of his converts as "sons" (sec. 47) and is pleased at their progress; he celebrates when a convert becomes a nun over her parents' resistance (sec. 41); and he thanks God for raising up native clergy (sec. 38). Even his rejection of gifts may be less a refusal of community than a practical safeguard to ensure the integrity of his ministry.

Yet, if Said is correct, Patrick faces another danger as he becomes part of the Irish community, for exiles risk the loss "of critical perspective, of intellectual reserve, of moral courage" (183) when they join new communities. For Said, the profit of exile is the ability to critique the surrounding culture; there is, he says, "considerable merit in the practice of noting the discrepancies between various concepts and ideas and what they actually produce. We take home and language for granted; they become nature, and their underlying assumptions recede into dogma and orthodoxy" (185). This critical perspective becomes a moral imperative, an idea he supports by quoting both Adorno's maxim, "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (184), and Hugo of St. Victor's description of perfect persons as those who have "extinguished" their love for place and "to whom the entire world is as a foreign land" (185).

In examining his captivity and his mission, Patrick demonstrates this critical perspective on the world. Whereas being kidnapped by the Irish might have been a Briton's worst

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[15] Recall Augustine's notion that the city of God always lives within the earthly city.

misfortune, Patrick learns to see it as a judgment on the half-hearted Christianity of his British past. And whereas the Irish were considered uncivilized and barbaric, Patrick learns to see them as beloved by God, so much so that he opts not to return to his family in order that he might stay where God is working. Said concludes that through "an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is <u>contrapuntal</u>" (186), exile can lead to "originality of vision" in which the two cultures live within the exiled person at the same time, as two melodies might play off each other in a composition. For Said, these "contrapuntal juxtapositions [can] diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy" (186). In his ability to learn to love the Irish and to critique his native British church, Patrick illustrates just this type of contrapuntal thinking.

Said suggests that being able to see in two cultures is a skill that everyone could benefit from having. Patrick's text demonstrates this benefit, showing how he learns to rethink both his native distaste for Ireland and the superiority of his native upbringing. However, whereas Said believes that exile creates an "unhealable rift [...] between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (173), Patrick testifies to the opposite possibility. When experienced as a citizen of the kingdom of God, exile does not separate the self from its native land, but reunites them. Nor does it create an essential sadness, but brings eternal joy.

IV. Devotional Literature as Minor Literature: Richard Rolle

Sometime around 1330[16], a twenty-two year-old wandering hermit named Richard Rolle had an experience of far-reaching importance for life in England. While meditating in a chapel, he says, "suddenly I experienced within myself an unaccustomed and joyous burning ardor. But, although at first doubting from where this might be coming, I have proved through a long period of time that it comes not from a creature but from the Creator, because I have found it more burning and more agreeable" (ch. 15). This heat was "not in my imagination but in reality, as if it

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[16] According to the revised dating set out by Nicholas Watson (273-78).

were being done by a physical fire," so much so that "because I had never before experienced such abundance [...] I frequently felt my chest to see if this burning might have some external cause!" (Prologue). Nine months later, Rolle had an even more significant mystical experience:

> For when I was sitting in that same chapel and I was singing the psalms in the evening before supper as well as I was able, I jumped as if at the ringing, or rather, the playing of stringed instruments, above me. And further, when I strained toward these heavenly sounds by praying with all my desire, I do not know how soon I experienced the blending of melodies within myself and drew forth the most delightful harmony from heaven, which remained with me in my spirit. For my meditation was continually transformed into the song of harmony, and it is as if I have odes in meditating. And further, I have enjoyed that same sound in psalmody and in the prayers themselves. Then I have hastened before the flowing forth of that inward, indeed hidden, sweetness, to that singing I have described previously, because I have been hastening into the presence of my Creator alone. (ch.15)

Thus begins one of Western Christianity's most fascinating mystical experiences. For young Rolle began to experience God not in words or visions, but in heat (fervor), sweetness (dulcor) and song (canor), a trio of percepts that, working together, raise the soul to love:

> [...] I call it "fervor" when my spirit truly burns with eternal love, and my heart is felt to burn with that kind of love, not just in my judgment but in reality. For the heart, transformed in fire, causes the sensation of the fire of love.
>
> I call it "song" when already in the soul, burning fervor abounding, the smoothness of eternal praise is taken up and meditation is transformed into song and the mind lingers in honey-flowing melody.
>
> These two things are not experienced in idleness, but in the most intense devotion, and from them the third, that is to say, inestimable sweetness, becomes

present. For burning fervor and song cause marvelous sweetness in the soul, and furthermore, these are able to be caused on account of that excessive sweetness.

[...] But the soul in whom the three things mentioned above run together inwardly remains impervious to the arrows of the enemy while, meditating on love with an unchanged intention, she raises herself to the heavens and stirs herself to loving. (ch.14)

In time, Rolle began to write for others' spiritual edification, eventually becoming so popular that "[in] English or in Latin he was, during the latter half of the Fourteenth Century and the whole of the Fifteenth, probably the most widely read in England of all English writers" (Knowlton 12). Given that he died in 1349, this process must have begun during his own brief lifetime, an impressive enough accomplishment for "any writer who died in his early forties [...]. For Rolle, who had at most only two decades in which to evolve a mature style [...] it was nothing short of remarkable" (Watson 256). In these two decades, Rolle left such a mark on English literature that he "deserves to be thought of as a major auctor [comparable to Petrarch and Dante], not merely for his late-medieval popularity, but for the brilliance, resourcefulness and originality of his prose, and for the grandeur of the task he set himself and successfully carried out" (Watson 268-69).

Viewed in this manner, Rolle meets the criteria set out by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze for the "very few who can call themselves writers" (6). Consider these comments from Deleuze's preface to Essays Critical and Clinical:

But the problem of writing is also inseparable from a problem of seeing and hearing: in effect, when another language is created within language, it is language in its entirety that tends toward an 'asyntactic,' 'agrammatical' limit, or that communicates with its own outside.

The limit is not outside language, it is the outside of language. It is made up of visions and auditions that are not of language, but which language alone makes

possible. [...] These visions, these auditions are not a private matter but form the figures of a history and a geography that are ceaselessly reinvented. (lv)

Rolle's experiences of heat, sweetness and song are not linguistic, yet are made possible by language (praying and singing). Nor do they remain private, but rather reinvent the language and the spiritual geography of England. A Deleuzian reading of Rolle's mystical experiences and writings therefore deserves a closer look, especially in three areas mentioned in Deleuze's essay "Literature and Life": Auditions, Becoming-Other and Minor Literature.

Auditions

Regarding the mystical phenomena themselves, there is a danger of making too much out of their auditory aspect when examining them according to Deleuze's concept of auditions. Although Deleuze writes that the limit toward which all writing reaches "is made up of visions and auditions that are not of language," his notion of audition does not mean only what is heard aurally or passively. The point is not that Rolle heard heavenly music but rather that a spontaneously generated melody was added to his own recitation of the psalms, that his thought became song itself, a song which, as Evelyn Underhill notes in her classic work on mysticism, "is a mystic melody having little in common with its clumsy image, earthly music" (78).

In order _not_ to focus on the music's verbal element, it is helpful to categorize his experiences of heat and sweetness—sensations with no verbal component—as variant forms of auditions. This categorization may seem an odd use of Deleuze's terminology, but there seems no good reason to limit his discussion to two of the five senses. And it must be remembered that for Rolle, the three experiences went together: "The state of burning Love [...] was the state of Sweetness and Song" (Underhill 439). Understood as an analog to heat and sweetness, Rolle's music can be more properly interpreted as an audition that is neither "of language" nor, insofar as it activates Rolle into singing, a passive experience.

Deleuze notes that these auditions "are not fantasies, but veritable Ideas that the writer sees and hears in the interstices of language, in its intervals [...] not interruptions of the process,

but breaks that form part of it, like an eternity that can only be revealed in a becoming, or a landscape that only appears in movement" (5). Taking heat and sweetness to be auditions along with song, it becomes clear how Rolle's mystical experiences occur in the "intervals": they are non-verbal events that occur during verbal exercises without interrupting them and thereby become part of the process. Further, the Christian notion of mystical experience centers on a revelation of "eternity in becoming," i.e., the irruption of the eternal into the temporal. Underhill provides a useful context for understanding how this irruption manifests itself when she says that these experiences "arrive at moments of indecision, bringing with them authoritative commands or counsels, opposed to the inclination of the self" (269). The experience is thus neither a mere upwelling of repressed personality nor simply a realization of the connectedness of all things, but an encounter with an Other who opposes and directs the self.

Mystical experience still includes these other interpretations. Underhill herself interprets Rolle's gift of heat as "an unusual but not unique form of psycho-physical parallelism: a bodily expression of the psychic travail and distress accompanying the 'New Birth'" (193), and notes that his song "probably corresponds to the temperamental bias of the self, the ordered sweetness of Divine Harmony striking responsive chords in the music-loving soul" (277). Mystical experience thus reveals both the individual's internal situation and an exterior order, but only through a legitimate experience of the Other who stands outside both self and the world. For Rolle, there was "no closer reaction to Reality" than this "state of burning Love" (Underhill 439).

Deleuze's notion of writing is therefore analogous to traditional understandings of mysticism. The raw material of experience that the writer turns into literature resembles that which the mystic experiences. In the case of Rolle, his speech-acts, i.e., his prayers, meditations and recitations, are transformed through the processes of de- and re-territorialization into heat, sweetness and song. These common acts of speech and thought are reformulated along new lines of experience, given a new, non-verbal context that elevates them from actions to receptions of the divine. Along the way, it is revealed that the pairs—speech-song, devotion-heat,

and love-sweetness—all lie on the same line of continuous variation. Through the irruption of the divine into the human, devotion is taken beyond its human limits into a deeper fulfillment, its various components are unified, and the soul is lifted up to Love.

Becoming-Other

From what has just been said, it will be clear that mystical experience is transformative, leading the human beyond her own capacities through the aid of the divine. For Rolle, the "experience was one of ecstatic all-absorbing love of Christ, accompanied by an ardent longing for union with him" (Knowlton 21). The transformation here is two-fold: complete absorption in love and a longing for more. Union with God has frequently been the objective of Christian mystics, but the warning of Jacques Ellul[17] must be heeded: the desire for such union has in many cases been profoundly anti-Christian. There can be no pure union with God. The term union must therefore be carefully qualified in order to distinguish its value as a metaphor from its misuse as a description. In her discussion of the unitive life,[18] Underhill wisely avoids this difficulty by describing the experience as a participation "in that divine-human life which mediates between man and the Eternal, and constitutes the 'salvation of the world'" (433). It is not that the mystic becomes one with God, but that through the mystical experience, a new form of life is created, this "divine-human life" of which she speaks.

Here too, mysticism corresponds to Deleuze's notion of writing: "Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming" (1). Like mystical experience, the act of writing transforms its practitioners beyond human limits: "in writing, one becomes-

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[17] In The Subversion of Christianity, Ellul traces the growth of late Medieval Christian mysticism to Islamic influence in Western Europe (cf. the earlier comments on Islam in Europe). While he admits that there is a valid Christian mysticism, he believes that mystics have often run counter to the biblical revelation of God's activity in the life of humanity (105-7).

[18] Underhill devotes an entire chapter to the topic.

woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible." And just as mystical union can be taken too literally, so can becoming:

> To become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from <u>a</u> woman, <u>an</u> animal, or <u>a</u> molecule—neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form. (1)

The writer becomes not the other, but something new, something between subject and other.

What would becoming-other be in Christian terms? Underhill's term, "divine-human life," suggests a life no longer simply human, but not simply divine either. The Christian scriptures refer to becoming partakers of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of the divine nature,[19] a notion which mystical authors have picked up, "exhibiting it as the necessary corollary of the Incarnation—the humanizing of God" as interpreted by such authorities as Athanasius and Augustine (Underhill 419). The Incarnation provides the best model for understanding how becoming-other works within Christianity for, as Karl Barth reminds us, Jesus became human not simply to reveal God to humanity, but also to reveal humanity to itself: he is what humanity should be.[20] Seen this way, the natural form of human nature is to be human in the way that Jesus was human. Humanity must therefore become-human.

It can thus be seen how, in Deleuze's conception, becoming-other does not turn one thing into its other, but leads to a new form. For Deleuze, battling the primacy given to binary opposition, one cannot simply move from one identity to its opposite, but must undermine the

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[19] See Hebrews 3:14 and 6:4, and 2 Peter 1:4. Similar ideas are found in John's Gospel, when Jesus discusses a mutual abiding between him, the disciples, and the Father-Mother.

[20] To name only one modern formulation of the idea. Barth develops this idea in various places, including his <u>Church Dogmatics</u>; cf. this statement about Jesus from <u>Dogmatics in Outline</u>: "His humanity is humanity indeed, the essence of all <u>humanitas</u>. [...] Jesus Christ is <u>the</u> man, and the measure, the determination and limitation of all human being" (89).

opposition by becoming something new. It is obvious that a male writer does not become woman when he becomes-woman through writing; it is much more difficult to understand that (in Deleuzian terms) a woman writer must also become-woman. Woman, as commonly understood, is constructed in binary opposition to man; it is therefore not a valid term in itself, and any female writer who tries to become woman simply reinforces the man-dominated construct. Instead, she must aim to become-woman.

In Christian terms, the binary opposition would be God-human, with the weaker party misdefining the subjects: humanity first misdefines itself and then misdefines God in opposition to itself. Hence the need for God to become-human (something beyond-human which is truly the fulfillment of being-human) to show us the way out. Humanity must become-human just as female authors must become-woman. The problem is not that we are too human, but that we are not human enough, i.e., not enough like God. The mystic therefore becomes-human, becomes most truly human (after the model of Jesus), through union with God, which is less a true union than a process of synthesis in which God joins with humanity to create something new (which is really the perfection intended at the creation). This is the process of transformation toward which mystics aim. In Deleuzian terms, it is the line of flight away from the powers of death that (in the Christian mythos) rule the world, and into the kingdom of Life.

From a Christian perspective, this disjunction between what humanity is and what it was intended to be is due to sin: Humanity is not what it should be, needs to become-other in order to become-itself, because of sin.[21] Interestingly, Deleuze describes an analogous problem and explanation with regards to writing:

> The world is a set of symptoms whose illness merges with man [sic]. Literature
>
> then appears as an enterprise of health: not that the writer would necessarily be

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[21] Consider Bonhoeffer's comments on Adam's sin: "With the loss of the God-like nature God had given him, man had forfeited the destiny of his being, which was to be like God. In short, man had ceased to be man. He must live without the ability to live" (338).

in good health […], but he possesses an irresistible and delicate health that stems

from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him,

suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the

becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible. (3)

This passage abounds with biblical parallels: the world as a diseased place (ruled by the powers

of darkness), affected by and in turn affecting humanity; the prophet's delicate health; the

prophet's encounter with that which is too much for him; and the impotence of the dominant.[22]

The use of the term "prophet" as the biblical parallel to Deleuze's author is not

inappropriate: when Deleuze says that writers make language "delirious" (lv), he uses the

French word délirer, which is used in noun form in the French Jerusalem Bible's phrases for "to

prophesy."[23] Deleuze goes on to say: "Literature is delirium, and as such its destiny is played out

between the two poles of delirium. Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it

erects a race it claims is pure and dominant" (4). Certainly, any study of the Hebrew history

books will show how often the courtly prophets did in fact function as a disease in Ancient

Israel, and how often a purist understanding of Jewish identity led to a diseased state-

congregation.[24] Writing, when it behaves as false prophecy, is indeed a diseased delirium: it re-

affirms the established binary oppositions and keeps humanity from becoming-human.

More important, however, is Deleuze's description of writing-delirium-prophecy as "the

measure of health when it invokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath

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[22] See (in order): Romans 8:19-22; Paul's protestations of weakness to the Corinthians, or the autobiographical passages in Jeremiah; Psalms 131:1 and 139:6; and 1 Corinthians 1:27.

[23] A comparison of 1 Samuel 10 and 19 in the French Jerusalem and English New American Standard translations (using The Unbound Bible online concordance) makes this evident. (The Darby and Louis Segond translations, however, simply use prophétiser.)

[24] As for the prophets, Isaiah suggests that Jewish xenophobia is a problem; in the Christian scriptures, Acts provides a good picture of the same.

dominations, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons, a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process" (4). Consider what Rolle attempts to do in his English Psalter:

> [...] for someone who truly delights in the Psalter, the psalms—a written, and from a reader's viewpoint potential, form of canor—turn into actual experiential canor [...]. The first part of the [Psalter's] prologue is thus suffused on every level with images of canor—it is a song about how song turns into song—as Rolle strives to draw readers into the charmed circle of spiritual growth and delight which a life with song and psalmody at its centre offers. (Watson 244)

The texts that come out of Rolle's mystical experiences therefore function as "the measure of health" by attempting to transform individuals into full humanity through the process of becoming-human. But this transformation does not remain at the level of individual devotion; it also functions as a prophetic message to the world, stirring up the biblical promise of social justice for those who have become victims of the dominions and powers of the world.

Minor Language

For Deleuze, one of the functions of literature is to become a minor language: "As Proust says, [literature] opens up a kind of foreign language within language, which is [...] a becoming-other of language, a minorization of this major language, a delirium that carries it off, a witch's line that escapes the dominant system" (5). One aspect of literature, as noted earlier, is its use of visions and auditions, which "are not outside language, but the outside of language." Two other aspects of literature come from the way it creates a new syntax and in so doing "brings about not only a decomposition or destruction of the maternal language, but also the invention of a new language within language" (5). Literature, for Deleuze, functions as a machine, one that creates a new language. Yet, this is not simply an aesthetic achievement but also an act with political overtones: it wells up from beneath the dominating culture to release minorities from oppression: "The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life" (4).

Liberation is of course one of the key messages of both the Hebrew and Christian

scriptures: liberation from the powers of domination (internal and external, i.e., psychological

and political) that control the world. Hence the greatest mystics are often acknowledged as those

whose experiences have a distinctly practical component. The transformational quality of their

writings parallels the way Jewish-Christian scriptures have changed the way other cultures view

and write about reality.[25] In this way, the scriptures have acted as a minor literature, both in

their use of a major language (such as Greek for the Christian scriptures) and in their effect on a

dominant language foreign to their own (such as the Latin translation of the Hebrew scriptures).

In the practical intention of his writings, especially for women, and in his use of English, Rolle's

work as an author demonstrates all of these facets of minor literature.

Rolle's Latin works "must have been deeply exciting to read: a master of daring effects,

emotional and rhetorical colours, and ever-compelling subject-matter, whose words seemed

inhabited by an extraordinary sense of personal presence, and whose writing opened a window

on areas of experience which most could otherwise scarcely conceive" (Watson 268-69). This

last statement is important, for it might mean not simply that most people do not have direct

mystical experiences, but that before Rolle, they were unable even to imagine such experiences—

Rolle may have created new concepts of experience for his audiences.[26] Given that he did this in

the major language (Latin), his English works must have been of prime importance.

For instance, Mary Arthur Knowlton, analyzing the importance of Rolle's English lyric

poetry, notes that although vernacular lyric religious poetry was already popular in England

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[25] Consider Erich Auerbach's analysis of the effect of Jerome's translation of the Hebrew scriptures on classical Latin (70-72): Auerbach suggests that the Romans would literally have been unable to write in the style of the Hebrews.

[26] Think again of Auerbach's theory on language's relationship to reality: his suggestion that Dante made Italian do things it had not been able to do before implies that people did not see the world as Dante did until he showed them how: "But if we start with his predecessors, Dante's language is a well-nigh incomprehensible miracle." For Auerbach, this is a matter both of authorial genius and of the language being developed enough to express that genius (172-73).

during Rolle's lifetime, his immense posthumous popularity led to "a change in the tone and emphasis with which the traditional devotional themes were treated." Rolle's "lyric intensity [...] and the ecstatic joy and effusiveness with which he poured out his love for God enkindled in the hearts of his admirers a flame which found natural expression in the lyrical poetry of the period" (5). This is partly a matter of popular influence: Rolle's modification of the content of the "lyric of appeal" genre—shifting it from Christ's call to repentance to humanity's pleas for cleansing in hope of the joys of heaven—quickly became widespread. His influence continued into the next century as poets adopted his use of Christ's mental and physical agonies (115-16).

But this emphasis upon the physical aspects is not due only to Rolle's popularity. His lyrics also introduced new concepts into the minds of his audiences. Knowlton notes that in the earlier lyrics of appeal, Jesus' passion sufferings are described only as physical sufferings, and then without much detail, but purely as signs of God's love (113). It is as though the culture of Rolle's time simply did not connect the real, human agony of the cross to the individual's personal devotion to God. Knowlton attributes the growth of realistic descriptions of Christ's sufferings to Rolle's Meditations on the Passion, which "are filled with delicate and minute recollections of the painful and anguished moments of every incident of the passion, recounted with exquisite tenderness and understanding sympathy" (179). Rolle therefore introduced into devotional passion poetry several concepts: Jesus' mental agony, the importance of the physical details, humanity's desire for God, and the promise of heaven. And this is with regards to only one of Rolle's religious themes. In general, "The more orderly, formalized treatments of the contemplative life by [Rolle's] near contemporaries appear cold and abstract when placed beside his effusions of love and rapturous descriptions of the delights of union with God" (177). In Deleuze's terms, Rolle invented concepts in both Latin and English.

It is now clear how Rolle changed his culture's view of reality with his mystical devotions. But literature, in the Deleuzian sense, also has a political component, and Rolle's work has this

as well. The fact that Rolle was the first English mystic to use English (Knowlton 15) gives him a special historical place in the history of the language. As Watson notes:

> The second part of the prologue [of the English Psalter] is important to the
> development of English as a learned language, representing as it does one of the
> earliest attempts to render the structures of medieval academic commentary in
> the English vernacular. [...] Before embarking on the work, the reader is made
> aware of the strategies of translation and exposition Rolle has felt appropriate.
> His English is as simple as he can make it; yet his translation is also as literal as
> possible, in order to send the reader back to the Latin with some understanding
> of what it means. (244-45)

By forcing English to function with the fluency of Latin, Rolle transforms a minority language into a true minor language and gives it scholarly legitimacy. He also tries "to create a verbal equivalent of canor in English"—an experiment he continues in The Form of Living (Watson 252). [27] Rolle's influence on English can be seen in terms of Deleuze's view of the author as one who creates a new language out of the old. Though there are now two languages involved, Latin as major language and English as minor, the principle is in many ways the same: the writer forces the minor language to take on greater significance in the face of the major.

It remains to show the political implications of Rolle's work, which are evident in examining his purposes in using English. Since one aspect of his identity as a mystic-prophet is a desire to transform his audience by inviting them into the process of becoming-human, Rolle writes in Latin for his male audience. But this does not satisfy for him: "As a would-be modern auctor, with a special interest in contemplation but also a mission to incite everyone to fervent love, he is in principle concerned as much with women as with men throughout his works" (Watson 225). Watson notes that Rolle had a "private belief that he has a particular ministry to

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[27] Watson notes that "many of the manuscripts punctuate it according to aural, not grammatical or conceptual principles" (252).

women," and that "what gives many of the English works an atmosphere distinct from those of all Rolle's Latin writings is their status as the literary products of a particular, and it would seem to him precious, area of his life: his intimate friendships with and concern for women" (225, 224). In Watson's analysis, "it is the special achievement of these works to be demonstrations of the authority [...] Rolle has over women, at the same time as evoking a tenderness [...]" (225).

The phenomenon of vernacular language being used for women is not unique to Rolle: Descartes translated his Latin works into French for the sake of his female readers, and in Japan women had their own writing system (<u>hiragana</u>) and created an entirely new literature with it. Here Rolle reaches out to a marginalized group, a fact that gives his use of English a political implication in a manner loosely similar to Deleuze's understanding of the political implications of minor literatures. In addition to using literature to include the oppressed in his audience, Rolle introduces concepts into the language, pushes a major language to new uses, elevates a minor language as a serious literary vehicle—all characteristics of a minor literature.

Conclusion

As noted earlier, Underhill described the "divine-human life" as the "salvation of the world." On its face, this description seems hyperbolic. But in Christian terms, it is very serious, given that the divine-human life is modeled by Jesus, who is understood to be the world's savior. Insofar as Christianity posits the need for becoming-human as a process with individual and social implications, it is easy to see how this description makes perfect sense on its own terms. Christianity sees itself as a liberating force, a line of flight from a world dominated by powers of destruction. Perhaps the only substantial difference between its worldview and Deleuze's is that Deleuze does not posit the activity of a transcendent divinity within the natural realm.

As should now be clear, however, Deleuze's literary analysis effectively describes mysticism. It has been shown how Rolle's experiences of heat, sweetness and song function as non-linguistic percepts that are made possible by language and that represent the breaking-in of eternity. It was then shown how mystical experience in general functions within the Christian

tradition as a becoming-other, in which a misdefined binary opposition is escaped, the subject transformed, a diseased culture undermined and an oppressed culture set free. And lastly it was shown how Rolle's use of language invents concepts, includes minorities, and elevates a minor language to a rank closer to that of the dominant language. That Rolle was an important figure in English, or even in Western mysticism, has never been debated. It is hoped that both his status as one of the "very few who can call themselves authors" and Deleuze's usefulness for analyzing mystical literature can now be firmly established as well.

CHAPTER 3:

THE CONQUEST OF AMERICA

I. History: Cultural Encounters between Christianity and Americans

This section examines two aspects of the encounter between European Christians and Americans:[1] first, the role of those Europeans who acknowledged the Americans' humanity and rights, especially Roger Williams and Bartolomé de Las Casas; then, the ways Christianity adapted to American cultures. Although much of this discussion focuses on New England and New Spain, I have tried to include as much as possible about New France and Brazil.

Historical Overview

Just as European Christianity was multicultural in its origins, so was American Christianity, in part because of the innumerable ethnic groups living in the Americas, but also because of the demographics of the colonizers, which included no less than six European nations: Denmark, England, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.[2] These competing cultures were also distinguished by competing visions of Christianity: Roman Catholic missionaries had to contend not only against Protestant missionaries but also with their own divisions, as several religious orders, e.g., Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans, worked in the Americas and/or guided mission policy. Thus, the mission situation was extremely complex: what happened in one part of the continent did not always occur elsewhere.

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[1] There is no universally accepted term for indigenous Americans, even amongst themselves. The question is even thornier when dealing with the colonial period, since the term "Native American" implies the existence of other Americans, which makes no sense in context, as there were only Europeans and Americans. Therefore, I follow Roger Williams and use the term "Americans" to refer to the indigenous peoples; however, where my sources have used other terms, I have left them as is.

[2] We might also consider Germany's attempts to establish colonies in the Americas.

Europeans' encounters with Americans were deeply colored by Medieval discourses regarding barbarism and demonology. The reactions of Spanish and Portuguese missionaries to Americans reflect this problem: influenced by Medieval concepts, they branded warring Americans as barbarians and interpreted their dances, sexual behaviors and cannibalism as devil-worship. Mission work was viewed as a war between Christian and Barbarian worlds, and Brazil in particular as "the kingdom of Satan" (Dos Guimarães Sá 194-195).[3]

A similar situation held in New France, though with more complexity. Medieval conceptions of wild men who lived outside of community life and culture reinforced the "ignoble savage" concept (Jaenen 46) well into the Enlightenment. Though these conceptions were modified to fit new information about Americans, the modifications do not suggest a deeper understanding of Americans (43). Such notable writers as Montaigne, Rabelais and Ronsard viewed Americans more positively, and the concept of the bon sauvage was developed (46). Yet these positive assessments were often made to critique European culture (45), and even then the French, convinced that they, unlike the Spanish, had a special ability to interact with Americans, were unable to critique their own failures (45). These ideas influenced the French Jesuit missionaries, who were the sole mission organization for twenty-five years (Ronda 386). And as in France, Jesuit missionary assessment of American intelligence diverged greatly: some, such as Father Pierre Biard, believed Americans were merely wanderers who could never convert, while others, such as Fathers Paul Le Jeune and Charles Lalemant, believed the only thing Americans lacked was education (385-386). In fact, they allowed Americans to debate theology with them and got more than they bargained for—Americans used these opportunities to criticize the Jesuits for the gaps between their practices and their stated ideals (389).

Similarly, not all Spaniards concluded that Americans were unfathomable, and many recognized the complexity of their cultures:

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[3] To complicate matters, the Portuguese were also biased by their encounters with the highly developed Asian cultures they were colonising (Dos Guimarães Sá 195).

Those strange peoples lived their beliefs, not in the absurd disorder which the

Spanish wanted to attribute to savages, but in a coherence and harmony which

seemed, to the witnesses of the final moments, <u>worthy of ancient history</u>. All

those who later wrote on the mythical past of the Indians, from Sahagun and

Acosta to Boturini and Clavijero, would draw the same comparison, sometimes

establish the same relationships: <u>the Aztecs, the Maya, the Purepecha were the</u>

<u>Romans or the Greeks of the New World</u>, and their gods, their legends were the

expression of the same sort of paganism. (Le Clézio 94-95, emphasis added)

Though the Spanish were horrified by American culture, they could not dismiss it as primitive.

Besides these Medieval concepts, European interactions with Americans were influenced
by differing political ideas about the purpose of colonization, especially the connection between
conversion and Europeanization. In New France, the colonizers, including the Jesuits, hoped to
turn America into an idealized, purified Europe, "free of sin and vice" (Ronda 385, 393). This
policy was reinforced by the French government, including Louis XIV himself, who wanted
Americans to be educated in the French way of life (392), and affected missionary practice, as
the French Jesuits believed conversion would be easier if Americans were Europeanized first
(385). In contrast, their New England neighbors seemed not to consider conversion and
Anglicization to be separate processes (Axtell 38).

A related problem was the fact that mission work in America greatly depended upon
material support from Europe. Brazil provides a good example, as the Portuguese monarchy's
general approach to its colonial empire was to keep the spiritual and political powers combined
in an "indissoluble union of the Cross and the Crown" (Boxer 183). This policy benefitted from
the Vatican's policy of <u>Padroado Real</u> ("royal patronage"), which allowed the monarch tight
control over the colonies' religious life, bearing all the expenses but also mediating between the
colonies and the Vatican (183-184; a similar policy existed for Spain); this system held sway
until 1622 (Dos Guimarães Sá 193). One example of the policy was the practice of keeping

indigenous clergy subordinate to European-born clergy; such a policy obviously maintains royal control over church life (Boxer 194; again, the same was true in Spanish America).

In practice, however, the Portuguese monarchy, perhaps more invested in Africa and Asia, did not adequately support the episcopal structure (Dos Guimarães Sá 203). Brazilian missions therefore centered almost solely on the Jesuits, who were accordingly much stronger than their Spanish colleagues and whose early participation in the colonial enterprise[4] gained them a prominent role in the colony's intellectual and ecclesiastical life (Terraciano 342-343; Dos Guimarães Sá 192). Upon their arrival, they discovered they had not one but three mission fields: Americans (their focus), imported Africans, and Portuguese colonists, for whom there was almost no existing religious infrastructure (Dos Guimarães Sá 192). Complicating matters for the Jesuits, their mission work did not suit the colonists' desire to enslave Americans for work on rural estates. In resisting this plan, the Jesuits clashed with both the church hierarchy and the imperial government; the colonists succeeded only by using an exception to the anti-slavery position of "just war" theory to portray Americans as hostile to conversion (201; 195-196). Even when the Jesuits successfully prevented enslavement, the settlements they used to evangelize them required military assistance; as a result, these settlements were often strategically located as buffer zones between European and American settlements (200).

Another issue is that different religious orders had varying ideas and practices regarding mission work, as demonstrated by Jesuit and the Franciscan policies in New France. Whereas the Jesuits focused on rapid change through educating, disciplining and divorcing converts from their past, the Franciscans saw conversion and transformation as more gradual and therefore allowed "natural" behaviors to serve the process. They also focused on the converts' vulnerability, acknowledging European failures and stressing the importance of forgiveness, though this focus at times led them to both idealize and infantilize Americans (Goddard 58, 73). These differences

[4] They arrived in 1549, only nineteen years after Portugal taking Brazil seriously as a colony.

may be related to their different views of America: Franciscans were much more willing to see the supernatural at work around them, whereas Jesuits saw New France as desacralized (73). These differences echo those that occurred in New Spain, where the Franciscans believed "the conversion of the Mexicans would herald the renewal of Christianity and inexorable progress to the Last Days,"[5] whereas the Jesuits "embraced the modern colonial project and dispensed with thoughts of a chiliast utopia" (57).

In spite of these differences, however, both groups studied Huron language and culture, if only for the sake of more effective mission work. Franciscan Gabriel Sagard-Théodat's Huron dictionary serves as a good example (Goddard 73). And Jesuit descriptions of oral performance "are often richer than those provided by later, more scientific observers" who relied on interviews and dictation, although the Jesuits valued the genres differently than later observers, dismissing mythology in favor of oratory (which implies rationality; Clements 57).

As has been shown, many missionaries were willing to defend Americans from both cultural prejudice and physical enslavement. To explore this phenomenon in more detail, I will turn to a Dominican missionary, Bartolomé de las Casas, and an English settler, Roger Williams.

Respectful Voices: Williams and Las Casas

Unlike many English colonists, Williams had good relationships with the Narragansetts and developed friendships with many of them. His negotiation for settlement rights for Providence was much fairer than similar agreements, showing his "intention to protect the Americans' property interests from erosion by colonial expansion," an intention he put into practice on several occasions by mediating between the Narragansetts and the colonists in order to avert war (James Davis 50-51). He even incorporated many indigenous ideas into his thought, although this has gone largely unnoticed (Jack Davis 594). Williams also composed an anthropological study of Narragansett culture, A Key into the Language of America, which

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[5] Recall the Roman churches' similar views about the conversion of Ireland.

"became the standard by which subsequent generations of European Americans would come to know the Narragansetts" (Rubertone xiv). In this book, he examines Algonquian (the titular language of America) and provides a comparative commentary with American-British culture, often awarding the Narragansetts moral superiority (James Davis 50). In fact, this comparison was the reason for the book; it is Williams' testimony to his belief in "universal virtues of civility recognized by humans generally" (81, 109).

Williams opens his book with these statements (emphases are Williams' own):

> This <u>Key</u>, respects the <u>Native Language</u> of [America], and happily may unlocke some <u>Rarities</u> concerning the <u>Natives</u> themselves, not yet discovered.
>
> I drew the <u>Materialls</u> in a rude lumpe at Sea, as a private <u>helpe</u> to my owne memory, that I might not by my present absence <u>lightly lose</u> what I had so <u>dearely bought</u> in some few yeares <u>hardship</u>, and <u>charges</u> among the <u>Barbarians</u>; yet being reminded by some, what pitie it were to bury those <u>Materialls</u> in my <u>Grave</u> at land or Sea; and withal, remembring how oft I have been importun'd by <u>worthy friends</u>, of all sorts, to afford them some helps this way.
>
> I resolved (by the assistance of <u>the most High</u>) to cast those <u>Materialls</u> into this <u>Key</u>, <u>pleasant</u> and <u>profitable</u> for <u>All</u>, but specially for my <u>friends</u> residing in those parts [...]. (A2)

In spite of his use of the term "barbarians," his text hints at none of the malice that characterizes the anti-native attitude of such people as Daniel Webster, who called American languages "the rudest forms of speech" and claimed, "there is as little in the languages of the tribes as in their laws, manners, and customs, worth studying or worth knowing" (qtd. in Ziff 4). In contrast, Williams shows interest in learning about the Narragansetts, suggests that this knowledge is important (he feared losing it while apart from them), notes that his friends find his project worthwhile, and invokes God's aid in writing.

Instead, it is the English who come off poorly:

> Nature knowes no difference between <u>Europe</u> and <u>Americans</u> in blood, birth,
>
> bodies, &c. God having of one blood made all mankind, <u>Acts</u> 17. and all by nature
>
> being children of wrath, <u>Ephes</u>. 2.

More particular:

> Boast not proud <u>Euglish</u>, of thy birth & blood,
>
> Thy brother <u>Indian</u> is by birth as Good.
>
> Of one blood God made Him, and Thee & All,
>
> As wise, as faire, as strong, as personall.
>
> By nature wrath's his portiõ, thine no more
>
> Till Grace <u>his</u> soule and <u>thine</u> in Christ restore
>
> Make sure thy second birth, else thou shalt see,
>
> Heaven ope to <u>Indians</u> wild, but shut to thee. (53)

Williams structures the <u>Key</u> around these kinds of oppositions between Narragansett and British cultures, with Christ's teachings as a base; in each case, the Americans are more Christ-like than the British (Jack Davis 595-596): more harmonious, non-materialistic, democratic, spiritual and tolerant. Using these stark contrasts, Williams critiques New England's theocratic structure and suggests his own theory for a society that "would allow the native Indians [sic] and the colonial newcomers to coexist peacefully" (Jack Davis 594). He relies on the coherence and functionality of Narragansett culture to prove the feasibility of their ideas (595).

It is reasonable to ask how Williams recognized the worth of Narragansett culture when so many of his contemporaries could not. He was not a religious pluralist: though he understood American religion better than did his colleagues—many of whom collapsed indigenous polytheism into a European dualistic framework—he never accepted it as anything other than evil (Murray 49). Moreover, he committed translational errors. For example, he recognized that the term <u>Manitou</u> ("a god") refers to excellence but was enticed by the term's religious

connotations into assuming that Americans have deep religious sensibilities, which suggested to him a connection with Christianity (54-55).

Williams' ability to befriend the Narragansetts and value their morality has been attributed to his theological views on natural morality, views that allowed him to have similar relations with other peoples with whom he disagreed, such as Quakers and Catholics (James Davis 51). In particular, these views inspired his understanding of the role of Christians in public moral discourse, which he saw as both possible (from a public point of view) and justifiable (from a Christian point of view) (132). That is, Christians can partake in public discourse about morality without forcing their Christianity on others (134).

Moreover, Christian convictions are beneficial to public discourse. Besides keeping the discourse "in touch with the fundamental values of the common good," they serve critical functions, "deconstructing widespread assumptions, demonstrating how conventionally accepted institutions and practices are in fact morally problematic and detrimental," [6] and showing the values of other religious beliefs (133). By setting a good example within theological discussion, they serve as "a pattern for moral discourse" (133). The usefulness of Christian participation in public discourse led Williams to believe that "meaningful Christian participation in the ethical debates and endeavors of the civil community is an obligation not only of social belonging, but of Christian identity as well" (137). Perhaps this understanding of the Christian's role in public discourse—participating without dominating—allowed Williams to see through British prejudices and to recognize the value of American cultures. For if Christians need not impose their faith on their culture, why should they impose European behaviors on Americans?

Better known than Williams for his defense of Americans is the Spanish Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas, whose fifty years of work on their behalf earned him the title "Defensor de los Indios" from the King of Spain (Sevilla-Casas 17). His work deserves honor, but

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[6] Recall Augustine's deconstruction of the Roman Republic.

his historical importance also stems from his timing: he arrived in the Americas very early,[7] when the "discovery" of the "New World" was changing European views of human nature. Up to this time, humanity was viewed as culturally and religiously diverse, and the idea of "man as man, the subject of universal salvation, did not exist"; therefore, "the discovery of America is the discovery of man [sic] and of his universality. It is man becoming conscious of himself and of his dignity by the very fact of his being man, a son of God and capable of being saved by Christ" (Sánchez-Sorondo 60). The changes taking place in European thought are seen in the work of Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria, who developed the modern basis for international law and who introduced into Thomism "the idea of the world as a universal community of peoples, already organized by free people into free nations" (66).

Yet while Vitoria introduced new ways of understanding political relations, colonizers held to traditional attitudes and policies, as noted earlier. Thus, 1492 "marked a point of no return," as the trajectories of pre-Columbian America and Europe collided, creating "an irreversible historical movement in which the protagonists' behavior was determined by their culture, their ideas, their previous experiences, their vices, and their virtues" (Andújar 72). The tensions between the new ideas and the old behaviors are apparent late in Las Casas's life in the Valladolid debates, which mark the first modern "attempt to stigmatize an entire race as inferior, as born slaves according to the theory elaborated centuries before by Aristotle," and, at the very same time, due in large part to Las Casas's tireless efforts, the first time that "a colonizing nation organized a formal inquiry into the justice of the methods used to extend its empire" (Hanke xi).

Las Casas's ideas spread far beyond Spain and were soon used by other nations to debate Spanish policies; he is mentioned in sixteenth-century texts from Italy, France, the Netherlands and England (Keen 6-8), and he inspired Dutch, Italian and Yucatecan leaders in their struggle for independence from Spain (63). In fact, because of his influence among anti-Spanish groups,

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[7] In 1502—he was even "the first priest to be ordained in the New World" (Brading 119).

the Spanish accused him of aiding the enemy (9). He remained important for later American independence leaders, including South American liberator Simón Bolívar, Mexican revolutionary Servando Teresa de Mier, and Creole Yucatecan priest Vicente María Velásquez (23-24) and for the modern Indigenous Movement (Sevilla-Casas 15).

Much of Las Casas's passion for his cause comes from his experiences, beginning with his emigration under Commander Nicolás de Ovando, who quickly devastated the population of Hispaniola and who rewarded Las Casas with slaves (<u>Defense</u> xx). Las Casas had a "crisis of conscience" after he was challenged on his slave-ownership both by his confessor and by the scripture for his Easter 1514 sermon; he returned to Spain and fought at Court for the creation of a wage-labor system for Americans (Brading 119-120). Several years later, he founded a settlement at Cumaná, Venezuela to demonstrate a better model of colonial relations; but as this settlement was near a Spanish base that conducted slave raids, it gained no favor with either Spaniards or Americans (122-123). This failure caused another crisis of conscience, and Las Casas spent ten years in the study of law and theology in a Dominican convent. He emerged as a full defender of American right to self-determination and of "the subordination of all Spanish interests, including those of the crown, to Indian interests, material and spiritual" (Keen 66).

Las Casas's career can be divided into four phases that correspond to his methods. He began as a preacher but, finding this method ineffective, turned towards pragmatic political strategies at the Spanish Court, the most notable result of which was a short-lived abolition of both slavery and the <u>encomienda</u> system through the New Laws of 1542 (Sevilla-Casas 18-19). He also advocated the re-establishment (under Spanish authority) of the pre-colonial American states (20). Realizing that these methods would not succeed (the <u>encomiendas</u> were restored in 1545), he began using the church as a weapon, setting up strict penalties (e.g., excommunication and the denial of absolution) to Spaniards who mistreated Americans (20). This approach, however, aroused the colonists' resistance, and they financed his opponents (20-21). Eventually, due to the combination of the economic consequences of his pro-native policies, continued

pressure from the colonists, and the accession of Philip II, his authority dwindled and his reforms were rolled back (21). At this point, however, he went further than ever and argued that the Spanish monarch was himself subject to the Americans' well-being and that the American and Spanish leaders were equals who could exchange tribute only after negotiations (21).

Las Casas's career is often viewed through two moments: his participation in the debates regarding the legitimacy of Spanish colonial policy and his book <u>A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies</u>. The book provides numerous eyewitness accounts of the horrific treatment of the peoples throughout Spanish America, arranged geographically to show how patterns of destruction occurred systemically. It also shows that Americans in no way deserved it: Refuting the view that Americans are savages, Las Casas praises them for their hospitality and generosity, which often went beyond what they could afford (107-108). To support his claims, he quotes non-missionary colonists about how good Americans are (10-11), including Columbus, who admits that Americans had treated his party very kindly after the loss of the Santa Maria, "as if they had been back home and were all part of the same close family" (20).

In turn, Las Casas treats his Spanish colleagues with contempt, often inverting colonial views of righteous Europeans and savage Americans. Whereas Americans received the Europeans with kindness, the Europeans attacked them without provocation, sometimes being even more brutal to those who try to escape. These attacks were often rationalized as pre-emptive, based on the assumption that Americans would cause trouble. Such attitudes were reinforced by colonial officials: One commander explains that his orders were to capture Americans by any means necessary, including false promises of peace (88). Those colonists who, instead of attacking Americans, placed them into slavery were just as efficient at killing them through overwork. And, because many slave owners kept men and women apart, there were few Americans being born. In response to these horrific practices, Las Casas inverts the standard claim that Americans were being punished by God for their religious practices: instead, he credits Divine Retribution when disaster strikes the Spaniards (e.g., 21, 61, and 102).

Throughout his book, Las Casas refuses to identify Christian with European. The Americans were eager to receive the gospel, but the colonists had "done their level best to prevent missionaries from preaching" (126) and treated the Americans so badly that they finally resisted the religion. Similarly, slave owners failed to comply with the stipulation that they would convert their slaves (24). As the Bishop of Santa Marta (Colombia) complained, the Spaniards were so harsh that the local name for Christian literally means "demons," a term he believes "is amply justified, for what has been done to them by the Spanish commanders and by their men has been neither Christian nor indeed the work of rational human beings, but rather the work of devils" (82). Las Casas continues the analogy, claiming that the colonists "have sold their souls to the Devil" (104), that the officials' activities have been "worthy of Lucifer himself" (129) and that all involved have earned "the right to eternal damnation" (54). He even fears that the conquest has in fact given the victory to Lucifer (Brading 132).

Las Casas blames this behavior on the greed and ambition that attend the possibilities for social mobility resulting from the "discovery" of the Americas. He emphasizes the power of these forces by removing most references to the colonists' names, thus endowing "the train of conquest with the impersonal character of some infernal process" (Brading 132). Wealth was not the only enticement to cruelty, but it was strong; Las Casas claims it was the reason colonists prevented missionaries from preaching (Short Account 126). Americans understood better than the colonists the power gold had over them: Hatuey, an American who escaped the Europeans, told his followers that Christians worship gold (27-28). Las Casas notes with dismay that greed is reinforced by the officials, who, when notified of crimes against Americans, are less interested in punishing Europeans than in accounting for every cent lost to Spain by American resistance and in bringing Americans to justice for what they have cost the Spanish (100).

Yet, greed alone does not account for every problem, for the same Spanish officials who counted how much Americans cost the Spanish remained blind to the fact that Germans "have embezzled Crown revenues to the tune of over three million gold castilians" (100). Other factors

included power, ambition and upward mobility. In fact, some of the violence committed against Americans was due not to fears of American savagery, but to strategy: colonists sometimes killed Americans without provocation to make the survivors afraid to resist (45, 103) or to eliminate local lords and facilitate conquest and government (111). Las Casas sees his compatriots' behavior described in Augustine's discussion of criminals in <u>City of God</u>: the conquistadors were little more than gangs of criminals that had become kingdoms unto themselves (Brading 134).

Las Casas contends that because Americans are Spanish subjects, they have the same rights and freedoms as the Spanish (40-41). Therefore, the true criminals are the colonists, whose actions are immoral, illegal, and "contrary to natural, canon, and civil law" (6, 54). He develops these legal critiques more fully in his presentation to the debates at Valladolid (later compiled as <u>In Defense of the Indians</u>). Much has been written about this event, which (as noted earlier) was important for being a rare instance of colonial self-examination (Hanke xi); only a brief presentation will be offered here. The debate occurred in 1550, and King Charles V halted the conquests until a learned jury could decide the issue. Las Casas's opponent, Doctor Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, was a theologian, royal historian, royal tutor (to Philip II) and translator of Aristotle.[8] The two men had already battled, each trying to have the other's work condemned; as Las Casas notes in his preface to the <u>Defense</u>, Sepúlveda's intellectual authority was so great that the publication of his book justifying conquest would have been extremely harmful since it told the colonists what they wanted to hear (19). The Valladolid debates concerned the general question of Spanish policy in the Americas. Las Casas summarizes Sepúlveda's main arguments as: 1) Americans are barbarous; 2) their religious practices (especially human sacrifice) violate natural law; 3) they commit crimes against the innocent; and 4) war is a justified means to further the preaching of Christianity (11-16). Sepúlveda draws heavily on Aristotle, on medieval authorities, and on the idea that Americans fall into the category of natural slaves.

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[8] Note that no Americans were invited to contribute; even with Las Casas speaking for them, the discourse was conspicuously one-sided (Terraciano 94).

Las Casas uses his experiences to present a different picture of Americans: He calls them "remarkably adept" in the liberal arts and praises their mechanical and artistic skills as "ahead of all the nations of the known world," even quoting an Italian contemporary who favorably compares Tenochtitlan's construction to that of Venice (44-45). Las Casas makes similar comparisons elsewhere regarding their wisdom and governance, which he claims "exceed by no small measure the wisest of all these, such as the Greeks and Romans, in adherence to the rules of natural reason" (qtd. in Hanke 77). Even with the hyperbole in these comments, it is clear that his defense relies on showing that Americans are sophisticated and advanced. In demonstrating this idea, he counters Sepúlveda's assessment of Americans and his claim that war against them is a justifiable preparation for mission work—a claim whose Aristotelian grounding applies (as Las Casas interprets Aristotle) only to peoples with neither reason nor laws (Hanke 83-87). In rejecting the argument of barbarism, Las Casas also rejects the common notion that Americans must be Europeanized before they can be successfully evangelized (Alvira and Cruz 98-99).

The remaining arguments involve religious questions, and although Las Casas (like Williams) does not grant American religions equal validity with Christianity, his defense of them remains remarkable for separating Spain's political and spiritual authority. He notes that in his own lifetime, Spain tolerated the presence of Jews and Muslims, who had always rejected Christianity and were thus considered the worst of sinners (López Sastre 80). Thus, in practice, non-Christians are under Spain's authority only in political matters and cannot be punished for their religious practices (Hanke 87-88). He also rejects natural law arguments and claims that Spain has no political authority in America outside of that given by the Pope, i.e., for missions. Therefore, Americans are not Spanish subjects unless they convert (Alvira and Cruz 96-97); as noted earlier, he proposes restoring the pre-colonial American states (Sevilla-Casas 20). By rejecting Spain's political and spiritual claims over Americans, Las Casas in effect turns the colonial enterprise into a mission and limits the role of the colonists and their rulers to that of missionaries—an impressive rejection of politics in favor of religion (Alvira and Cruz 97). At the

same time, he acquits Americans of the charges of savagery, not on the grounds that human sacrifice and cannibalism are compatible with Christianity, but by examining these practices from Americans' perspective and seeing them as sincere practices of faith in the divine and perhaps even as evidence that Americans are more devout than the Spaniards (Hanke 94-95).

As with Williams, Las Casas defends the Americans' religious freedoms not out of relativism, but out of a theological belief that counters prevailing cultural attitudes. He believes that Americans are part of "the universal human community, which is founded not only on an ontological equality but also on the equality of men as God's children"; he even wonders if Americans might be closer than Europeans to the original state of human innocence (Andújar 77-78). His vision of Christianity focuses more on humanity's "metaphysical unity" and "essential uniformity" than on its cultural differences—on humanity's innate nature more than its historicized nature (Alvira and Cruz 109). As a result, he worries less than Sepúlveda about America's cultural distance from Spain (103) and rejects the notion that evangelization requires Europeanization (100-101). As can be seen by his defense of American religious practices, he relativizes and devalues everything not essential to the Christian faith, i.e., European culture (110). In his words, "Our Christian religion adapts equally well to all the nations of the world and receives all nations, and strips none of its liberty or dominion, nor does it reduce any people to servitude on the pretext that they are slaves 'by nature'" (qtd. in Keen 61-62).

Las Casas's ideas are often considered progressive for his time, but he was in fact more of a medievalist than Sepúlveda, who trained in Renaissance Italy (Alvira and Cruz 96). Though Las Casas shared some of the qualities of Renaissance thought—use of observation, scientific detachment and a focus on cultural environment—he was trained in the Spanish scholastic tradition (Keen 59). Yet, these traditional aspects may have allowed him to take "positions more advanced, more clearly pointing to the future, than positions that are superficially more modern in character" (59). For instance, he was interested less in theory than in concrete reality and therefore connected practice to institutions more directly than Sepúlveda did (Alvira and Cruz

90-92). Thus, his defense contains a critique of his own culture, especially of the way nationalism constructs itself. Because he believed so strongly in the Americans' humanity, he viewed Spain's dehumanizing ideology as a serious problem (Sevilla-Casas 23-25). Las Casas draws out the historical ironies of this ideology, showing how Americans behaved towards the Spanish just as the Spanish behaved towards the Romans; yet, these became national heroes whereas Americans were butchered as savages. Attacking the ideological asymmetry of the historical record, in which the Spanish are heroic regardless of which side they are on, he shifts the discussion from nationalism to ethics, in which the merit of resistance to enforced acculturation does not depend upon who is in power (Terraciano 108; López Sastre 75, 82-83).

Las Casas's critique of nationalist ideology (and its inability to recognize the ironies within its own principles) makes him "a chief representative of Christian cosmopolitanism" (López Sastre 86). Seen more broadly, he represents medieval Christianity against Renaissance classicism (with its borrowings from antiquity) in terms of whether human affairs are more effectively organized by metaphysics or by culture. Whereas the ancients focused on peoples' historicized, cultural differences, Christianity focuses more on humanity's ontological, metaphysical equality. Judged on which side best provided the basis for social equality between Americans and the Europeans, Christianity proved more useful (Alvira and Cruz 109-110).

Las Casas has been described not as a lone voice in the wilderness, but as "the voice of an entirely different Christianity that was arising," that of friars who lived among and fought for the rights and autonomy of Americans and black slaves (González 240). Because of the influence of such men, the Catholic Church in Spanish America has always been "dual" (245), divided between authorities who represent those in power and the "more popular church, formed by the masses and led by pastors who have ministered at the very edge of disobedience" (244).

The Indianization of Christianity

As is widely recognized, European-American religious interaction in the colonial period was "reciprocal, albeit asymmetrical" (Griffiths 1). Americans adopted aspects of Christian

thought and practice, even if they did not embrace Christianity. A well-known example is an apparent reference to the Trinity in the Mayan epic <u>Popol Vuh</u> (Tedlock 222-226, notes to p.65), whose transcribers learned alphabetic text from the Spanish. Other adoptions suggest that Americans found some Christian ideas preferable to their own traditions, e.g., the Nahuatl, who adopted the Virgin Mary and then adopted the Spanish genre of miracle narrative to talk about her—the same term refers to the miracles and their narratives: <u>tlamahuizolli</u> (Burkhart 91, 93). As for the Europeans, the Church, reiterating the processes of Hellenization and Germanization, changed as it encountered new cultures, sometimes deliberately but often unintentionally, and with the impetus coming both from missionaries' desires to translate Christian thought into indigenous terms and from Americans' need to preserve their cultural heritage.

As was seen with the Greeks and the Germans, missionaries often sought ways to explain Christian ideas in local terms, a practice that preserved indigenous ideas and thereby affected the understanding of Christianity. In some cases, the missionaries adapted to American customs. For instance, when Jesuits created settlements as part of the Christianization process (Ronda 390), they retained European ideas of organization but outwardly "attempted to replicate indigenous villages" (Terraciano 343). In fact, Jesuits in Brazil adapted so much to Tupi culture that Brazil's first bishop complained that they were "aping the customs of savages" and acting unworthy of Christian Europeans (Shapiro 280). These kinds of interactions might be better seen as "conversations" than as evangelization in the traditional sense (Griffiths 7-8).

One interesting reason Europeans translated terminology into native languages was that they realized how different the sense of religion was among Americans. The Jesuits in New France at first believed Americans had no religion because they found nothing resembling European religious hierarchy or worship. Once they realized their mistake, they encouraged Americans to "express Christian dogma by means of Indian language and thought structure," as is seen in an Algonquin description of grace as "a beautiful robe of beaver fur, with which God our Father clothes the souls of his good children" (Ronda 388). A similar situation occurred

among the Tupi of Brazil and the Guarani of Paraguay: their missionaries thought they had no sense of religion, but saw in their beliefs an intuition of Christianity; they therefore adapted their terminology accordingly, connecting God with the thunder/rain spirit and the Devil with malicious forest spirits (Shapiro 278). They believed the Tupi-Guarini flood narrative proved that they knew about Noah and concluded (based on the similarity of the names) that the hero Zumé was the apostle Thomas, who they believed had visited South America (278-279).

At the same time, however, Americans adopted Christian ideas for their own reasons. It has become clear over the past few decades that one of the important questions for missionary historians and theorists is why so many Americans converted. In New England, for instance, there were 22 indigenous churches, 133 indigenous preachers and 91 praying towns by the time of the Revolutionary War (Axtell 36). One explanation for why some Americans converted is that in certain circumstances, "Christianity provided a better—comparatively better—answer to the urgent social and religious questions" (36). Since Americans preferred life over death, they unsurprisingly adopted Christianity, though to various degrees. This should not be seen as cowardice, since adaptation takes courage; to view American conversion as "a tragic loss of innocence" is nothing more than a "romantic view of precontact innocence" (37).

One way Christianity provided better answers to Americans' social problems was by preserving their ethnic identity. In New England, this survival was a result of English cultural snobbery and racism, which ensured that "no matter how 'civilized' or 'Christian' they became" (Axtell 37), Americans would always be considered "Indians." More materially, the English offered Americans a plan "for their moral rearmament, social reconstruction, and religious revitalization" (37-38). This plan enabled them to use Christianity to revitalize themselves; in particular, the English offered groups on the verge of extinction "political and military alliance, guaranteed land, economic aid, and trade advantage" (38). Interestingly, history shows that "those who accepted only political alliance or economic aid from the missionaries, while paying lip service to their religion" (39) fared about the same as those who accepted the plan.

However, when they converted, Americans often adopted only doctrines compatible with their beliefs (Griffiths 10-11). Missionaries presented the gospel as they understood it but "could not control, or even predict, how the Indians responded to and adapted [their] message" (Parker 80). In spite of the practice of coerced conversion—especially among the Spanish and Portuguese—many Americans maintained their agency (Griffiths 18, 13). Their reactions were just as complex when not forced to convert: some Americans could embrace the benefits of European culture without embracing Christianity (Grahn 271), while some converts changed only as much as needed to maintain their autonomy (though this change was often substantial; 256). Either way, American spirituality endured during the colonial period (256).[9]

Adaptation was not necessarily bad for Christianity. It can be argued that "Christianity has not really taken root in a community until it has fused with its culture sufficiently to make possible its appropriation in distinctively indigenous ways and on terms consonant with native modes of thought and relevant to perceived needs" (Griffiths 7). As already noted, some Americans saw Christianity as preferable to indigenous beliefs.[10] The adoption of Mary by various American groups illustrates this phenomenon. Mary's role in the Huron and Iroquois communities in New France (who connected her to the daughter of Sky Woman) illustrates the way that Americans could alternate between different religious practices and beliefs, taking on European or American connotations as needed (Griffiths 9-10). To the Huron and Iroquois, Mary was "a usable orenda, or spirit, whose power was accessible to meet native needs" (Hart 67); this practice, appropriately called "alternation" (Hart 84), was even promoted by the Jesuits (84). In Spanish America, the Nahuatl embraced Mary because, as described by missionaries, she seemed superior to many of their own gods and allowed them to maintain many of their

[9] The same holds true for the Africans in America, as is seen by the way Afro-Brazilians connected Catholic saints to the African orishas with the same associations, e.g. Jerome with Xango, who "were [both] associated with thunder" (Terraciano 346).

[10] However, others expressed resistance by desacralizing Christian symbols and rituals to show "a world turned upside down, the reversal of the colonial realm" (Radding 117, 126).

religious concepts beyond church control (9). Mary became a popular figure in the new Nahuatl genre of miracle narrative because her stories showed that her assistance was available to ordinary people and did not require the "ritual offerings or penitential precautions" (Burkhart 109) that were expected in native traditions. Instead, these stories demonstrated that "Devotion is a personal, even a private, matter, and is free of danger" (109). This concept was so "revolutionary" that it helped the missionaries break the power of family and community bonds, though it eventually undermined the church's authority as well (109). Such practices allowed the Nahuatl to retain so much of their own culture in the face of missionary activity that scholars now discuss "the 'Nahuatlization" of Christianity" within Central Mexico (Griffiths 8).

In addition to being adapted by American cultures, Christianity was changed by the success of colonization. Although conquered peoples often lose hold of their culture and subconsciously accept their conquerors' worldviews, including the supposed superiority of the conquerors (Elizondo, Mestizaje 10-11), the case of Latin America is different, as the Spaniards' willingness to intermarry created a new race of people and planted the seeds for a new form of Christianity which is now finding a mature theological voice. An example of this new Christian theology is found in the work of Virgilio Elizondo, who has developed a mestizaje theology around the idea that the American church (North, Central and South) is discovering an experience of God in Mexican American experience and is now "fashioning a new historical period in the Western Hemisphere" (Bañuelas 56). Elizondo sees the mestizaje as both a unique people in the history of the world and as a group marginalized by two cultures (Mexico and the United States). Both situations can be viewed as part of God's plan for Mexican Americans, as seen in the importance of the appearance of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe at Tepeyac, an event whose importance for Latinos is analogous to that of the Exodus for the Hebrews (57).

Elizondo's theology emphasizes Jesus' status as a Galilean, a people with no religious, intellectual or political power whose location at a valuable international crossroads made them simultaneously cosmopolitan and prone to invasion—both of which led to ethnic mixing

(Galilean Journey 51). Elizondo equates the Galileans' ethnic mixture with mestizaje and notes that as a result, the Jews in Jerusalem looked down on them as ethnically impure and as less devoted to religious laws and practices (51). Calling on the similarities between Galilean and Mexican American experiences, Elizondo asserts that Jesus' cultural background was an important factor in his ministry, helping him identify with marginalized groups (52-53); i.e., he ministered as a marginalized person challenging oppressive power structures and representing God's election of those whom the world rejects (Bañuelas 57-58).[11]

In explaining the benefit of this view for contemporary American theology, Elizondo translates it into what he terms "the Galilee principle: what human beings reject, God chooses as his [sic] very own," with the rejected-elected here being labeled mestizaje (91, emphasis his). Using the structure of Jesus' life, he then formulates the "Jerusalem principle: God chooses an oppressed people, not to bring them comfort in their oppression, but to enable them to confront, transcend, and transform whatever in the oppressor society diminishes and destroys the fundamental dignity of human nature" (103) and the "resurrection principle: only love can triumph over evil, and no human power can prevail against the power of unlimited love" (115, emphasis his). In this way, Elizondo elevates minority status from simply one aspect of Jesus' experience to a crucial aspect of Christian theology.

Another important Latino theologian is Justo L. González, who rereads the Christian tradition from the standpoint of the oppressed and urges Latinos/as to use their experiences of exile and pilgrimage to create a new reformation based on "their mañana hopes" (Bañuelas 60). González argues that the Church could learn much from comparisons between the horrible incidents and unsavory people of Spanish American history and those of the Bible (Mañana 77-80). He advocates reading the Bible from a minority perspective, since theology represents not individual theologians but the beliefs and practices of the church community. He illustrates this

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[11] Consider the earlier discussion about Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John.

idea using Lope de Vega's play <u>Fuenteovejuna</u>, in which a town rises up to overthrow a tyrant and thereby becomes an active agent greater than any of its individual members (28-30). González refers to this type of reading as "reading the Bible in Spanish" (meaning not the Spanish language but the experience of Spanish colonialism) and presents a "grammar": 1) the Bible "deals with issues of power and powerlessness"; 2) it was written mostly to be read in public to communities and 3) to be available to the poor and uneducated; and 4) it must be read "in the vocative," meaning that it tells us about <u>our</u>selves, not about itself (85-87).

González uses this perspective to reveal within the Bible a political agenda that addresses problems of power imbalances that persist to this day (Bañuelas 62). He also uses his reading methods to show how the Church's early doctrinal statements reinforced the status quo. This problem is evident in the Greco-Roman apologists' use of the changeless God of Platonism to develop the concept of an impassible and omnipotent Christian God, which González considers an idol (<u>Mañana</u> 96). The status quo was also upheld in the Trinitarian controversies insofar as they related people's theology to their socioeconomic beliefs (Bañuelas 62). For instance, the Arian heresy led to a general rejection of the Patripassian belief in God who suffers; González notes that although Patripassianism had many weaknesses, the idea of a suffering God appealed to the powerless because it made God more like them and less like the emperors (<u>Mañana</u> 109). Thus, the experiences of an entire sector of society were ignored and the status quo upheld.

González finds a useful corrective to these problems in the negative stereotype of the <u>mañana</u> Latino, since <u>mañana</u> spirituality focuses on our continued spiritual pilgrimage, allowing us to live in hope of God's future and to question the present world (Bañuelas 64). For González, the Christian eschatological hope in the Reign of God is a hope for a future renewal of the world. But it is not a hope for a heaven far away from earth; rather, it is to be lived out here and now in our daily actions through the presence of the Spirit (<u>Mañana</u> 157-163). González sees this eschatological hope paralleled in the experience of Latinos, who have often found that their hard work avails them nothing and so have placed their hope in <u>mañana</u>. For people who have

had such experiences, this <u>mañana</u> way of life (when not combined with resignation or despair) becomes a living hope that questions and even judges present conditions (164). González sees in this activity an echo of both the Hebrew prophets and the early church (166).

Similar work is being done in Native American communities, as seen in the book <u>A Native American Theology</u> by Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley and George E. "Tink" Tinker. The authors confess that it is difficult to define a Native American Christian theology both because there are numerous conflicting traditions (due to the large number of different Native American cultures) and because Native Americans have taken a wide variety of approaches to Christianity, ranging from complete acceptance to complete rejection, with the whole range of syncretic possibilities in-between. Because the organizing structures of traditional Christian systematic theology will never "neatly fit the experiences and needs of Native Americans" (ix-x), they have to be altered—as an illustration, the authors add the categories of tricksters and land. The authors describe the range of problems they face as both historical and conceptual:

> The degree to which Christianity represents a rejection of Native traditions is a function of history. It is also a function of changing models of what constitutes culture. It is, above all, a recognition of the fact that culture is a very fluid concept, that adaptation and change are part of the human historical experience, and that belief is a very personal thing. (10)

Kidwell, Noley and Tinker demonstrate these problems in their discussion of Christology. For instance, the idea of vicarious suffering is part of many American ceremonies and allows for common ground between the religious traditions. Yet, the use of the term "Lord" for Jesus does not match American concepts of "chief" and creates problems when applied to American societies. In fact, Amereuropean use of the term does not match its original Mediterranean meaning but instead refers more to a European-colonialist sense of lordship (63-70). European theology has unknowingly veered from its origins, and missionaries are either unaware of or unconcerned with fixing its mistakes. In such cases, American concepts can reveal aspects of the

Bible, e.g., the trickster figure, which Kidwell, Noley and Tinker add to the traditional categories of systematic theology. This figure can be used to interpret the stories of Jacob, who lives by cheating others, and even of Jesus, who turns the world upside-down, disrupts the status quo, brings healing, and breaks the boundary between heaven and earth (121-122).

An example of how Christian concepts can be expressed in Native American terms is seen in the authors' examination of Christ as Logos, God's creative function who pre-exists Jesus' incarnation. When Christ is viewed as the pre-existent creator, Jesus becomes "merely one, albeit very powerful, occurrence of the Logos in human history" (78). This perspective provides "a notion of Christ that Indian people can begin to understand naturally" by calling upon their "own experiences and memories of God's functioning among Indian communities throughout [their] history" (78-79). One of the most common American analogues to this Logos-Christ is the Corn Mother, whose self-sacrifice to become food for her children teaches vicarious self-sacrifice, the sacredness of food (cf. the eucharist), and the danger of violence (79-83).

Conclusion

As with the Christianization of Europe, the Christianization of America had multicultural origins that reflect globalization, contextualization, regionalism and adaptation. Although Christianity was long established in Europe by the start of the colonial era, its origins in America were just as multicultural as they were in the Mediterranean: six different European nations, innumerable American cultures, several religious orders and (after the start of the Reformation) competing denominations. So it is not a question of Christianity but of Christianities.

In this instance, however, globalization came less from missionary activity than from political conquest, on top of which religion either piggybacked or was brought into service. In Portuguese and Spanish America, under the Vatican-approved system of royal patronage, the monarchies tightly controlled religious life and worked to keep the cross and crown bound together, passing over indigenous clergy in favor of European-born clergy who, it was assumed, would be more loyal to the throne. In New France and New England, Europeanization was seen

either as necessary for or simultaneous with conversion. In addition, European treatment of Americans was influenced by centuries' worth of European imaginings about barbarism, about demon worship, and about a New World that would be a purified Europe.

There were exceptions: Some of the first Spaniards to explore America compared what they found to the glories of Greece and Rome, and many missionaries defended Americans from charges of being unreasoning and uneducable. The Jesuits in New France, for example, debated theology with Americans, who often used the occasion to criticize European hypocrisy. Some French followed their lead, using the notion of the <u>bon sauvage</u> to critique European culture.

Roger Williams did much the same thing in his book, <u>A Key into the Language of America</u>, using the phrasebook genre to remark the superiority of many Narragansett customs over those of his fellow British settlers. Williams, like his spiritual cousin Bartolomé de Las Casas, demonstrated the pragmatic value of a belief in natural morality, a belief that allowed him to befriend the Narragansetts and to defend them from his British colleagues. Williams' theology allowed for the possibility that Christianity could be a helpful participant in public discourse without having to control it. His life, like Las Casas's, demonstrates the growth of religious tolerance as a method favorable to force.

Las Casas's <u>Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies</u> and his contributions to the Valladolid debates witnessed to the horrible connection between Spanish political theory and colonial practice. In his life as well as in his writings, he sought to reveal the systemic problems that created massive injustice in America, to overturn the policies that created such problems, and to model a different possibility for working with Americans. In the process, he revealed a range of ironies and hypocrisies regarding the way his fellow Spaniards dealt both with the colonies and with their own history.

Still, Williams, Las Casas and their like were in the minority. As they had done in Europe, missionaries used contextualization to introduce the gospel into America, often with the help of military force. Europeans translated terms into indigenous concepts and encouraged Americans

to come up with analogies, as in the Algonquian analogy of God's grace as a robe of beaver fur given by a father to his children. Sometimes, missionaries found reason to believe that Americans knew something of Christianity, as with the Tupi and Guarani, who had both a flood narrative and a hero-figure named Zumé, whom missionaries believed to be the apostle Thomas. But as with the Germans, one of the most important reasons Americans converted was political vulnerability: For many Americans, conversion was the only way to maintain their ethnic identity. For peoples on the verge of extinction, acceptance of Christianity meant at least political and economic assistance (another example of European appeals to power) and at best new spiritual ideas that improved upon their own, such as the Nahuatl adoption of Marian devotion, which allowed much greater access to divine assistance than their own tradition had.

Of course, due to the wide variety of Christianities and Americans coming into contact throughout the hemisphere, there was a multitude of regional variations, and what happened in one area may not have happened elsewhere. Some of these variations resemble the differences between Irish and Roman missions to the Germans, e.g., the theological regionalisms of the Jesuits and Franciscans: Whereas the Jesuits preferred rapid conversion, with a clean break from the world and strong discipline, the Franciscans took a more gradual approach that acknowledged both the converts' vulnerability and the imperfection of the Europeans. The Franciscans had a more utopian ideal for their mission work and as a result were more willing to see signs of the supernatural around them.

However, as in Europe, the Christian message was altered in transmission. The process of contextualization, as before, preserved foreign concepts. And Americans were smart enough to adopt only those concepts that fit into their own beliefs, just as the Germans had; thus, scholars talk about the Nahuatlization of Christianity. As a result, American spirituality endured European attempts to eliminate it. And when Americans did adopt Christian concepts, a process of alternation occurred in which they would switch between traditional and European concepts at will, as with the Huron and Iroquois association of Mary with the daughter of Sky Woman, a

spirit who could be addressed for help. At times, Americans even used Christian symbols to show their resistance to colonization and conversion.

But whereas the Germanization of Christianity influenced Western Christendom for generations, the Indianization of Christianity has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves, especially as it can reveal the ways European theology has drifted from biblical concepts. In addition to Native American Christian theology, there is Latino theology, which bases itself upon the formation of the new race of people and their marginalization throughout the Americas. As theologians such as Virgilio Elizondo and Justo González argue, Latino/a experience both illustrates key aspects of the biblical and early church narratives and provides a hope and a sign of God's movement in the world, especially for downtrodden peoples. It may be that in coming to America, the Church inadvertently found valuable correctives to its own errors.

II. Theology: Martin Luther's Two Kingdoms

Although the Reformation saw several experiments combining church and state into one community, Martin Luther developed his theory of two kingdoms to distinguish the two. For Luther, both church and state are kingdoms created by God, but they come under different aspects of God's rule. While the church is ruled by the gospel, the state is governed by the law, which is derived from natural reason and can therefore be administered by someone outside the church. Because those within the church live in the other kingdom, they are no longer under the law except as they remain sinners (even while justified). This distinction has two practical consequences: first, the church "should not presume on the support of the state or of physical force for true religion," not even to create theocracy or to combat heresy; and second, "rulers should not make the church a mere tool of their civil government." (González 68-69)

In his tract, Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed (1523), Luther responded to "the challenge posed to Christians in ducal Saxony who were being ordered to hand over copies of the New Testament" (Cargill Thompson 13). Although it is an early political

tract[12] and does not always accord with his later political theories, it remains one of his most important political treatises: Luther himself "always regarded [this tract] as the definitive statement of his political ideas," and his "concept of the Two Kingdoms and Regiments becomes the criterion by which all political questions are judged and to which they are all related" (96, 12). Thus, it is a useful text for examining Luther's views on the social position of Christians.

Although all of Europe had been Christianized[13] at the time of the Reformation (Rémond 18), Luther does not assume that all Europeans are Christians. Instead, he conceives "Christian society" as one that can only exist within a larger, secular society. He therefore asserts that there are two kingdoms co-existing in the world, the "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of the world," and that all of humanity is divided into "two classes," each of which belongs to one of the two kingdoms (Luther 53). These classes do not overlap: The first group includes "all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ" (53-54), whereas the second group comprises "[a]ll who are not Christians" (55). This statement implies that the members of God's kingdom do not belong to the secular kingdom, even though it is the kingdom in which they were born, reared and/or now live—akin to what we might consider their nationality or citizenship. Although it is clear from his comments elsewhere in the tract that these people live within the realm of temporal authority and have temporal responsibilities, they—as Christians—do not truly belong to that community.[14] This distinction is "a question of perspectives; it is one and the

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[12] It was written shortly after one of Luther's first confrontations with the political realm, when Emperor Charles V enforced Luther's excommunication through the Diet of Worms.

[13] I am using the term in its most basic sense; as noted before, the success of Medieval Christianization is hotly debated.

[14] However, Luther does not reject or seek to abolish the national church. His position stems from his belief "that the word is and must be preached to all men, even if the majority reject it" (Cargill Thompson 129). Thus, he supports "private meetings of committed Christians" (29), but only as supplements to rather than substitutes for public worship. Because he believes that the Christian's dual nature creates dual roles, Luther sees both classes of humanity as established by God (42). However, this division does not represent a division between the visible and invisible churches, since Luther does not equate spiritual with invisible. The true church is

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same world, but seen from two different viewpoints, 'for me—for others,' which the Christian must always choose between in making fresh and living decisions" (Bornkamm 14).

The true community of Christians is therefore a minority group[15] within the general population, even when the entire culture is permeated by Christian thought, history and practice. For Luther, the kingdom of God is immensely small in comparison to the kingdom of the world, even among nations whose citizens have all been baptized. Luther explicitly agrees with the saying "Christians are few and far between," and believes that "among thousands there is scarcely a single true Christian," and that therefore "the world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian" (55-56). This group remains small because it originates not through birth or through any human act (e.g., instruction in doctrine or persuasive preaching), but by "a work of God in the spirit" moving amongst the people (61). This idea implies that Christian identity is not bound to political or cultural background. People can grow up in countries permeated by Christian traditions—and can themselves be permeated by these traditions—without being "true Christians" (Luther's term). Therefore, even in countries founded on Christian history, the Christian community is—and will always be—a minority community.

To emphasize the smallness of the set of Christians, Luther notes that among the citizens of God's kingdom, there are levels of spiritual maturity, so that the set of true believers, as small as it is, will still be larger than the set of those who live truly Christian lives: "There are few true believers, and still fewer who live a Christian life, who do not resist evil and indeed themselves do no evil" (55). This passage is meant to distinguish faith from works—Christians are justified by faith even if their works do not yet match their beliefs—but his distinction also reinforces the notion that the community of "true Christians" is and always will be small.

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invisible insofar as "only Christ knows who truly belongs to his church," but remains visible "wherever God's word is preached and the sacraments are truly administered" (123-134).

[15] This is my term, not Luther's. I mean it in its most literal sense, i.e., a numerical minority, but with many of its modern connotations as well.

Luther's understanding of the supernatural origin of Christian community implies that even in Christianized cultures, the state has no right to require its citizens to accept Christianity. For if faith is God's work, the state has no ability (much less authority) to command conversion. Since, as Luther believes, "spiritual error can only be countered by spiritual means, above all by preaching the word," it is completely outside the capacity of secular authorities to accomplish this task. Thus, Luther accepts Augustine's statement that "no one can or ought to be forced to believe," and adds his own comment that faith is "not something which outward authority should compel or create" (61-62). Even less should a state try to govern as though its citizenry is composed of Christians, as this policy is illogical and impossible. For one thing, it would require that the government "first fill the world with real Christians before [it could] rule it in a Christian and evangelical manner" (56). Yet as already noted, this plan will never succeed, since the "the masses will always be un-Christian, even if they are all baptized and Christian in name" (56). Presumably, if faith is a work of God, then this situation is due to God's decision <u>not</u> to move within the people's hearts and minds. As a result, "it is out of the question that there should be a common Christian government over the whole world, or indeed over a single country or any considerable body of people, for the wicked always outnumber the good" (56).

The existence of two kingdoms occasions a corresponding set of two governments. Both governments are ordained by God, who remains "active in both of them [...] actively and continuously govern[ing] mankind" (Cargill Thompson 48). However, Luther does not sharply distinguish between kingdoms and governments; the German terms he uses, <u>Reiche und Regimente</u> ("kingdom and government," for the Latin <u>regnum</u>) are "twin formulations" that "indicate the two inseparably intertwined aspects of the whole, the realm of lordship ('kingdom') and the mode of lordship ('government')" (Bornkamm 17). God ordains secular government to achieve peace by "restrain[ing] the un-Christian and wicked so that—no thanks to them—they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace" (Luther 55-56). This statement implies that the wicked are unable to restrain themselves and/or to live peaceably without

government regulation. This sentiment reflects another reason the world cannot be governed as though it is full of Christians, for in doing so, the government "would be loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts and letting them bite and mangle everyone" (56). Luther's pessimism regarding human nature without God is such that he believes that had God not ordained temporal authority, "men [sic] would devour one another" (55).

The second government ordained by God, the spiritual government, is that "by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ" (55). More specifically, the Spirit "both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of anyone" (54). Because of this process, temporal government has no effect on the Christian community—i.e., it has no purpose: because Christians are so loving and so willing to suffer mistreatment, there is nothing for temporal government to achieve among them. As Luther states, "it is impossible that the temporal sword and law should find any work to do among Christians" (54).

Another reason for this situation is that there is no hierarchy amongst believers:

> Among Christians there shall and can be no authority; rather all are alike subject to one another [...].[16] Among Christians there is no superior but Christ himself, and him alone. What kind of authority can there be where all are equal and have the same right, power, possession, and honor, and where no one desires to be the other's superior, but each the other's subordinate? Where there are such people, one could not establish authority even if he wanted to, since in the nature of things it is impossible to have superiors where no one is able or willing to be a superior. (63-64)

As should be obvious from this description, the spiritual government operates much differently than does the secular government: it has no use for force or coercion but relies "solely on

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[16] Luther here quotes Romans 12, 1 Peter 5 and Luke 14.

exhortation and admonition, and on the willingness of the members of Christ's kingdom to accept His rule" (Cargill Thompson 47).

At the same time, the gospel commands apply only to Christians, that is, to those whom God empowers to obey them. Referring to Matthew 5, Luther argues, "That Christ's words apply only to his own is evident from the fact that later on he says they should love their enemies and be perfect like their heavenly Father" (59). These teachings testify to the idea that "the Christian as Christian is drawn out of the secular kingdom, and that his [sic] actions are governed by a completely different law," and that he must be wary of "assimilating [...] into citizenship into the world" (Bornkamm 35). Luther may be worried that some Christians will fall back into worldly habits by failing to acknowledge the difference between the kingdoms.

Still, the ability of Christians to follow the gospel commands is the result not of their decisions or their good works, but of the presence of the Spirit empowering them to live in such a way that temporal authority is simply unnecessary. By the same logic, the masses, even though baptized, are not enabled by God to commit themselves to Christ's teachings; therefore, it is unreasonable to demand that they abide by His commands. From this situation it can be seen why the two kingdoms have little overlap: secular authority has no purpose in the kingdom of God, while non-Christians are unable to follow the gospel's commands.

As a result of this situation, Luther believes only in the rarest cases will a temporal ruler be a "true Christian": "[...] since the beginning of the world a wise prince is a mighty rare bird, and an upright prince even rarer. They are generally the biggest fools or the worst scoundrels on earth [...]. If a prince should happen to be wise, upright, or a Christian, that is one of the great miracles, the most precious token of divine grace upon that land" (62-63). The more usual situation is described in Isaiah 3 and Hosea 3, namely, that God raises up "boys [...] and gaping fools" to rule over the people, giving and removing kings in his anger (63). One corollary of this idea is that the Church should not look to temporal authority for spiritual instruction: "[...] one

must constantly expect the worst from [princes] and look for little good, especially in divine matters which concern the salvation of souls" (62-63).

Although the Christian community is a minority and not under the authority of the government (in effect if not in law), it generally poses no threat to the state. One reason is that it does not need temporal authority to establish or maintain peace—as stated before, it has no conflicts for the state to worry about. Another reason is that it is called to support the goal of temporal authority in establishing peace. Luther clearly believes that the Christian community plays a role in the governance of the non-Christian community,[17] even though it does not expect them to abide by the commands of Christ and therefore does not govern the society as though it were filled with Christians.[18] What the community can and should do is to "lend [its] help that these laws may hinder the wicked from doing worse" (59).

As is now evident, the two governments should stay separated: just as secular authorities should not use the same methods as the spiritual authorities, Christians should not seek the aid of the secular government. Luther was greatly concerned that "the confusion of the regiments is the negation of God's order for the universe and it leads inevitably to chaos" (Cargill Thompson 50).[19] Yet, since God ordains both kingdoms, it is not the case that God simply created the

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[17] Recall the discussion of Roger Williams.

[18] In fact, Christians may be better qualified for secular government than unbelievers, especially if Luther is correct that God occasionally places Christians in the government. The logic behind this idea is that "because through the Holy Spirit Christians are enlightened and renewed and can understand, from the experience of grace, that the severity of God is nothing other than his love, they are called and qualified above all others for service in secular government. [Luther] charges Christians, as those who have received more, with the higher obligation" (Bornkamm 15). In addition, Christians who believe that Jesus' commands prohibit them from certain actions regarding the secular kingdom (e.g., serving in the military), can find a solution to their dilemma through Luther's idea that God's sovereignty is active in the secular government and law as well as in the spiritual government (26).

[19] However, some scholars believe that this distinction is "only in the relation between church and state" and that "there is no such boundary in the relation of the Christian to life in the world," but rather, any "line of demarcation in his activity is drawn no less sharply, but it is hidden, and must be sought in repeated decisions of conscience" (Bornkamm 16-17).

kingdom of believers and left unbelievers to fend for themselves. Rather, God grants both

groups the government they need. Moreover, both governments are useful for all people:[20] Just

as the secular government protects the physical peace of the entire community and thus keeps

the Christian community safe from the attacks of non-believers, the spiritual government

benefits the kingdom of the world by proclaiming the gospel, which "is addressed to and for the

sake of all people" (60).

 Luther's distinction between true Christians and unbelievers was not new, even in the

highly Christianized era in which he lived. Augustine's formulation of the two cities was a major

influence on him (Dawson 206), as it had been on the Medieval period: "the mediaeval

interpretation of history is still based on the Augustinian conception of the two cities. But

whereas Augustine presents this opposition primarily as a conflict between the Christian Church

and the heathen world, the Middle Ages saw it above all as a struggle between the forces of good

and evil within Christian society" (Dawson 204). Luther, however, amends this theory by

making secular authority a different branch of divine authority from the ecclesiastical branch. In

doing so, he removes the branches' hierarchical organization, makes them complementary and

parallel, and connects this new organization "to the theological idea of how God governs the

world" (Cargill Thompson 46). Luther's innovation is that he "thought that the solution of the

problem as he confronted it required, on the one hand, the ruthless separation of the world and

the kingdom of Christ as well as, on the other hand, the governance of both of them by the will of

god according to the two modes of his love" (Bornkamm 18).

 Luther's contribution to us today is twofold. On the one hand, his doctrine of the two

kingdoms provides "the indispensable means of orientation which the Christian must again and

again employ when considering his role and action in the world" (Bornkamm 37). On the other

hand, he radically changed the way culture sees itself. Luther's use of dualisms—two kingdoms,

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[20] Consider Augustine's discussion of the same topic.

two classes, two governments—stems out of his dualistic understanding of faith and works. But his statement of this dualism was so drastic "as to leave no room for any positive conception of a Christian culture, such as had hither to been taken for granted" (Dawson 238). Luther reminds us that the Church should purposively live as a minority community without trying to gain political power over the culture at large.

III. Faith as Borderland Experience: St. Catherine of Genoa

Caterina Fieschi Adorno (1447-1510) is so often studied for her teachings on purgatory that she is sometimes called its "great theorist" (Bynum, <u>Fragmentation</u> 69). For Catherine, however, purgatory was more than a doctrine; as her vita reveals, it was also a metaphor for her daily life: "She saw the condition of the souls in purgatory in the mirror of her humanity and of her mind, and therefore spoke of it so clearly. She seemed to stand on a wall separating this life from the other, that she might relate in one what she saw suffered in the other" (<u>Life</u> ch.37). In her daily life, purgatory appeared as an enmity between her spirit and her flesh, an enmity so strong that it made her physically ill: "When the spirit found itself obliged to yield somewhat to humanity, if it had not been restrained by a divine power, it would have reduced that body to dust, to obtain the liberty to be entirely occupied with itself; and the body, on its side, would rather have endured a thousand deaths than suffer so much oppression of the spirit" (ch.38). Because this conflict kept her bedridden for several years before her death, it is fitting to say that Catherine underwent purgation in this life, rather than in the next.

Beyond its importance for theology, the purgatorial aspect of her life takes on renewed relevance for contemporary literary and cultural criticism when read as a borderlands metaphor. This particular reading stems from a juxtaposition of two well-known texts: The first is the Apostle Peter's metaphor of the church as a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). This metaphor, taken from the Hebrew scriptures (Exodus 19:6), recalls Jesus' teachings that his followers are a city on a hill (Matthew 5:14) and are no longer "of" the world (John 15:19); it therefore implies that every believer lives within two kingdoms simultaneously—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the

world (which will here be called the kingdoms of heaven and of earth).[21] The second text is Gloria Anzaldúa's preface to her book <u>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</u>, in which she notes that "the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands […] are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other." Anzaldúa is especially interested in how people within border regions maintain their "shifting and multiple identity and integrity" in the face of cultures that long "to uphold the old, to rejoin the flock, to go with the herd." Because the "confluent streams" present in the borderlands create a unique experience of consciousness, the border resident is truly a new kind of human being. Applying Anzaldúa's definition to Peter's metaphor, Christian faith can be seen as a borderland in which the kingdoms of God and of the world edge each other within the life of the individual. Insofar as the conflict between Catherine's soul and body represents the simultaneous presence of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, her life can be read as a border region.

Although the borderland metaphor is useful for reading Catherine's life, it is not necessary to explicate the saint strictly in terms of Anzaldúa. Catherine's experiences reveal the borderlands to be, as Anzaldúa described, psychological, sexual and spiritual, but it should not be assumed that they can be made to "fit" into Anzaldúa's framework. Since religious and ethnic identities function differently, the religious and ethnic borderlands will have different characteristics. For example, since the notion of race becomes complicated when applied to religious communities, Anzaldúa's definition of a borderland as a place "where people of different races occupy the same territory […]" (preface) will need to be reinterpreted within a religious context. Although Peter defines the Christian community as the heavenly "race," it is a race composed solely of naturalized citizens, of individuals (not families) who have converted by rejecting the culture in which they still live, seeking foreign citizenship without leaving their native land, and who spend all their lives learning how to be citizens of their new homeland.

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[21] As discussed in the sections on John, Augustine and Luther.

Insofar as the Christian "race" is never fully formed and exists only in response to the other culture, it is better to use Anzaldúa's ideas for inspiration with which to examine how this metaphor can be usefully applied to religious life.

For this project, I will focus not on Catherine's teachings (as presented in the Treatise on Purgatory and Spiritual Dialogue), but on her religious experiences as described in her vita. [22] The speculative aspects of the Christian tradition are less important here than the lived experiences of Christian faith and the ways these experiences perform the metaphor of the holy nation. Therefore, I will examine how Catherine's religious experiences create this borderlands situation in her life and apply these observations to religious experience in general. Catherine is useful in this regard precisely because her experiences are not unique; as will be seen, many of her religious experiences were common to women in the late Medieval and early Renaissance periods.[23] She is also useful because she is one of the most influential spiritual figures of her era. Her life and teachings have influenced such important writers as Juan de la Cruz, François de

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[22] The manuscript tradition for Catherine's vita is complicated, and at present there is no authoritative English translation. The tradition has been most thoroughly examined by Padre Umile Bonzi da Genova, who lists six chief recensions. This section will use the only English translation readily available, that made by Mrs. George Ripley sometime around 1874 and through which the past several generations of English speakers have come to know Catherine's life. This translation seems to be based upon the printed edition of 1551, with some re-arranging of the chapters. Even though this 1551 version is textually problematic (and so far unavailable for consultation), a comparison of passages in Mrs. Ripley's translation to more authoritative manuscripts shows that her translation of the Italian is fairly reliable. The only major concern is that the 1551 edition seems to include material not found in other recensions, although the re-arrangement of chapters makes it difficult to verify this in every instance. Since this section addresses the broad outlines of Catherine's life rather than the specifics of her language, Mrs. Ripley's translation should suffice. Further complicating this project is the fact that Mrs. Ripley's translation is likewise difficult to find in print, and is most readily available online. For this reason, quotations from the vita are referenced by chapter rather than by page number. Further, the online edition was typed in by hand and contains occasional spelling mistakes; I have corrected these when the intended word seems obvious.

[23] Bynum notes the problem of men writing women's vitae and argues that since men and women described their own experiences differently, it is very likely that vitae written by men express women's stories as filtered through men's own interests (Holy Feast 25-29). With respect to Catherine, Bynum suggests that even if some of the details of Catherine's life are inauthentic, they could still be "typical of late-fifteenth-century religious women" (182).

Sales, François Fénelon, Frederick von Schlegel, Phoebe Palmer, Cardinal Newman, Evelyn Underhill and Richard Foster, as well as women's rights groups and a diverse array of Christian groups, including Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Anglicans, the Oxford Movement, and the Perfectionist Movement (Groeschel 38-42). This combination of representativeness and influence make her life useful for examining faith as a borderland experience in which the kingdoms of heaven and earth edge each other within the individual.

Catherine's Life

Before analyzing Catherine's religious experiences, it will be worthwhile to describe briefly the salient features of her life as recorded in the vita, especially her religious tendencies, her conversion, and her work at the hospital. Catherine's religious tendencies were evident in childhood (ch.1): At the age of eight, disgusted with the privileges of her noble birth, she began practicing ascetic penance. At twelve, she received "a wonderful communion with our Lord," which manifested itself in prayer, in love for God, and in "a lively sense" of Jesus' sufferings. At thirteen, she attempted to join a convent, but although she impressed her spiritual advisor with her "supernatural and divine" replies to his cautions about the difficulty of the religious life, she was turned away by the superiors simply because it was not their custom to admit "girls of so tender an age." Thus, in an early manifestation of the way the two kingdoms edged each other within her life, her religious calling conflicted with the traditions of the world.

At sixteen, her family married her to a youth "entirely the opposite of herself in his mode of life, who caused her so much suffering, that for ten years, she could hardly support life" (ch.1). Although Catherine did not want this marriage, she endured it in her "great simplicity, submission, and reverence for her parents." According to the vita, however, God orchestrated the marriage to work out her religious calling, since "in his goodness [God] would not leave his chosen one to place her affections on the world and the flesh." Her husband's recklessness reduced Catherine to poverty and thereby enabled her to fulfill her childhood rejection of her

family's wealth. Yet even this undesired marriage came to a happy end, as her husband eventually converted, became a Franciscan tertiary and agreed to a chaste marriage (ch.35).

Ten years into their marriage, Catherine experienced her conversion, which occurred in the following manner (ch.2): During confession, "she was wounded so forcibly with the love of God, and received so clear a revelation of her misery and faults, and of the goodness of God, that she had well nigh fallen to the ground." She also received "all perfection," an experience that made her influential among nineteenth-century Perfectionists and established her alongside Fénelon and John Wesley. After returning home, she received a vision of Christ "with the cross upon his shoulder, dripping with blood which she saw was shed wholly for love." This vision was so strong that it remained with her for the rest of her life and became the foundation for both her mystical experiences and her charitable work. This vision had three particular effects worth examining, two of them mystical and the third charitable.

The first mystical effect of Catherine's vision occurred when, on the subsequent Feast of the Annunciation, she received a desire for the eucharist that remained with her for the rest of her life and that was so strong that she felt "almost insupportable pain" any day she did not receive it (ch.3). This desire had miraculous qualities, in that the host was at times the only food she could eat (e.g., during penitential seasons and times of illness), and in that since only priests received daily communion, her authorization to receive it was "a complete reversal of the discipline of the times" (Hughes 6). This daily provision often occurred miraculously as well: "her Love ordered it in such a way, that communion was given her, without any care on her part, for she was, in a wonderful manner, provided with it in one way or another."

The second mystical effect of her vision was that over time her mind became so "clear and free, and so filled with God that nothing else ever entered into it" (ch.6). That is, her outward senses were closed while "interiorly, in the divine light, she saw and heard many things, being wholly absorbed in secret delights." Yet, this withdrawal never interfered with her daily duties: "Whenever it was needful, she returned to her accustomed mode of life, answered the

questions put to her, and thus she gave no cause of complaint to any one." Thus, her mystical experiences seemed to enable her to fulfill her obligations.

The charitable effect of her vision was her work in the hospital (ch.8): Catherine began to work under the Ladies of Mercy, cleaning the houses and the clothing of the poor, but without, miraculously, ever getting anything unclean upon herself. She also cared for the sick and eventually took charge of the city's hospital; her miracles here included not only healing but also "never ma[king] the mistake of a single farthing" in the large amounts of money she administered. Her charitable work, like her mystical experiences, blended so well with her devotion that her colleagues were astonished: "her incessant occupations never diminished her affection for God, her sweet Love; neither did this love ever cause her to neglect her service in the hospital, which was regarded as a miracle by all who saw her." As with her death and her teachings, Catherine's life was consistently outside the bounds of what people could imagine.

Sexual Borderlands

As noted above, Catherine's life is useful for exploring religious faith as a border region in part because her experiences were common among female mystics. This fact suggests that religious experience is affected by gender differences. But it is important to distinguish two senses of this phrase: while "gender difference" often signals the idea of innate differences between women and men, it can also refer to the ways women and men are treated differently by society, e.g., the way women have been restricted from certain roles in the church. This second definition is the one used here. As will be seen, many aspects of women's religious experiences in the late Medieval and early Renaissance period reflected such cultural circumstances.

That Catherine's experiences are representative can be demonstrated by noting similarities between her experiences and those of female mystics from another historical period. For this purpose, it will be useful to refer to Caroline Walker Bynum's work on thirteenth-century religious women, especially her books, <u>Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages</u> and <u>Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body</u>

in Medieval Religion; reference will also be made to Bynum's Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women. The demonstration of longstanding differences between the ways women and men experienced Christian faith will show how women's religious roles created a sexual borderland for them within the church.

Catherine's illness shows both the nature of this sexual borderland and the usefulness of a comparison with thirteenth-century holy women. In general, chronic illness was accorded greater religious significance when it occurred in women than when it occurred in men. Further, women who had such illnesses were expected to endure their illness rather than to be cured of it; as Bynum notes, "although women were fewer than one in five of those canonized or revered as saints between 1000 and 1700, they were over half of those in whose lives patient suffering of illness was the major element of sanctity" (Fragmentation 188). Nor was this interpretation of women's illness restricted to men; a number of women considered illness to be a blessing and "prayed for disease as a gift from God" (188-89). Although Catherine healed both men and women, her personal illness displayed the same qualities that Bynum finds in the thirteenth century: having been shown by God "that she must die in great suffering," she saw her illness as something she needed to endure and therefore informed her doctors that she would take their medicines only to prove that her illness was not physical and thus "no remedy of medical science could reach it" (chs.38, 39). Thus, her illness is both an example of gender difference and a confirmation of its prolonged presence in the life of the church.

The other aspects of Catherine's life mentioned above can be interpreted in the same manner. Her desire for the host reflects the general increase in eucharistic devotion during the late Middle Ages.[24] Women were greatly responsible for this increase, as evidenced by their role in the establishment the Feast of Corpus Christi (Mother 18). Furthermore, women comprised all but one instance of "medieval miracles of surviving on the eucharist alone," as Catherine did

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[24] Bynum's Holy Feast traces the history of eucharistic devotion.

during Lent and Advent for twenty-three years (Fragmentation 140; vita ch.4). Although food in general was symbolically important to women in the late Medieval period (see Holy Feast), the eucharist was particularly important to them for several reasons: First, the eucharist, unlike mystical union, was a "repeatable and controllable moment of union with God"; devotion to it therefore enabled women to have some control over their experience of God (Mother 258). Second, eucharistic devotion functioned as "a substitute for clerical experience" and thereby gave women a way to respond to the decrease in roles allowed them in the church (Mother 257; Holy Feast 21). Third, devotion to the eucharist helped women counteract the fact that they "often could not control the disposition of their own bodies against the wishes of family or religious advisers" (Fragmentation 141-142). Finally, since the eucharist was often rejected by heretical groups, especially by those who denied transubstantiation, eucharistic devotion counteracted contemporary fear of female heterodoxy (Mother 256; Fragmentation 143; Holy Feast 64). It can be seen from each of these facts how women's religious experiences were shaped by their status in the church.

At the same time, women's experiences of religious faith sometimes served as a protest against prevailing practices within the church. Catherine's hospital work, for example, reflects the way women rejected the commonly accepted conflict between action and contemplation. The fact that her contemporaries considered her coordination of piety with charity to be miraculous suggests how strongly embedded this supposed conflict was in this period; contemporary theorists had even coined the term "mixed life" to refer to the combination of action and contemplation. Yet, as Bynum has found, religious women throughout Europe frequently mixed these vocations together; such a mixture characterizes the practices of the beguines and beatas as well as those of the tertiaries (like Catherine). Moreover, women mixed the two vocations so profoundly "that the contrast between the categories vanishes" (Fragmentation 69; Holy Feast 17-18). Catherine's understanding of the mixed life was based on her belief that the combination of human suffering with both Christ's suffering and purgatorial suffering indicates that

"mysticism and asceticism and charity are all finally one act" (Fragmentation 69). Women's rejection of the dualistic antagonism between action and contemplation suggests that female spirituality was not merely defensive (as it was regarding the eucharist and heresy), but could also be dissenting, protesting theoretical distinctions that may be too rigid.

Even Catherine's non-mystical experiences were shaped by church culture. For instance, her attitudes about herself were greatly influenced by the fact that she was not admitted into religious life in her youth. Throughout the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, a woman's self-image was greatly shaped by whether she went through adolescence as a member of a religious order. As Bynum explains,

> women who grew up in monasteries were less likely to be influenced by the
>
> contemporary stereotype of women as morally and intellectually inferior [and]
>
> were more likely to see themselves as functioning with a full range of male and
>
> female, governing and comforting roles, paralleling the full range of the
>
> operations of God. (Mother 185)

In particular, many women who sought to join religious orders came from affluent families, wanting, like Catherine, to renounce their families' wealth (Holy Feast 18). Many of these women also recognized their vocation in their youth, with a high percentage committing themselves to virginity well before the onset of puberty (24). These women thus came of age in an environment that supported their religious calling. The fact that Catherine lacked this opportunity sheds light on her mystical experiences, such as her surviving on the eucharist alone, for "Such reactions to food are found especially in religious women who experienced puberty in the world and whose conflict with family over vocation was intense" (Fragmentation 141). Thus, Catherine had a common religious calling, but, not being allowed to act upon it as she desired, came of age fully aware of the tension between her faith and the world.

The effect of Catherine's experience of adolescence upon her view of herself is evident in the fact that one of the few biblical figures she mentions within the vita is one of the most

marginalized characters in the Christian Scriptures, namely, the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at the well (John 4:1-42).[25] Because she was from Samaria, she was an outsider from the dominant Jewish culture of her nation; because of her marital history, she was also an outcast from her local community, as is evident by the fact that she does not go to the well with the other women of the town. Her appearance in the vita is as follows:

> On one occasion [Catherine's] heart was kindled by so burning a flame of love, that she could not endure it, and turning to a picture of the Samaritan woman at the well, she cried out, "O Lord, I pray thee, give me a drop of that water which thou givest to the Samaritan," and instantly a drop of that divine water was given to her, which refreshed her more than human tongue can describe. (ch.38)[26]

By connecting herself to the Samaritan woman, Catherine implies that she sees herself as an outsider. Given Bynum's descriptions of female religious experience, it is evident that she sees herself in this manner both because she was unable to fulfill her desire for a monastic vocation and because she happened to be a woman called by God. Hence, her religious experiences reflected not only the culture of the church, but also the differences between church and worldly cultures. Holy women were outsiders both in the church and out.

Spiritual Borderlands

Given the ways church structure and teaching influence how women and men experience their faith, Catherine's religious experiences clearly reveal the presence of a sexual borderland within the church. Yet, if her life were influential only for what it reveals about women's spirituality in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, it would be difficult to explain why she has been read in post-Reformation cultures. It would also be difficult to explain why so many men have been influenced by her. What is at stake here is no longer an explanation of her

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[25] This passage was also mentioned in the discussion of John's Gospel.

[26] This passage does not appear in many recensions.

connection to her culture, but an explanation of her devotional power. It is possible, however, to explain this power by reading her life as an experience of a spiritual borderland. Whereas the previous analysis of Catherine's life as a sexual borderland examined the ways in which religious experience is shaped by and responds to historical conditions, the following reading of her life as a spiritual borderland examines those qualities of her life that have continued to influence people far beyond her own era.

In order to do this, a few words must be said about how border experiences are translated into texts. Literary theorist D. Emily Hicks, who explores this question in her book, Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text, makes two observations about border writing that will be particularly useful with respect to Catherine's life. First, Hicks shows that in border writing, as in many borderlands themselves, conflict occurs not between opposites but between two different approaches to the same object: "Border writing emphasizes the differences in reference codes between two or more cultures" (xxv). Catherine's life shows that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world have different reference codes toward her body and, by extension, toward the entire physical world. Second, Hicks notes that border writing aims to reconstruct not objects but rather "the relationship to the object" and to create not representations but "an interaction between the connotative matrices of an object in more than one culture" (xxix). As is clear from the vita, Catherine's life is a product of the interaction between these two reference codes. In turn, by transcribing her experiences, the vita reconstructs the reader's relationship to life, which explains her far-reaching influence.

Using Hicks' conception of interacting reference codes, Catherine's illness can be interpreted as a literal manifestation of the soul/body (or heaven/earth) dichotomy. The vita explicitly suggests this interpretation: "God in his grace makes the body of some persons a purgatory" (ch.38). This type of literal manifestation of religious experience is part of the biblical prophetic tradition, present in the "action sermons" of Hosea and Ezekiel. The biblical tradition also acknowledges a tension between soul and body, evident, for instance, in Jesus' statement

"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38), and even in the creation narratives: God formed man's body out of dust but "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). Thus, according to both streams of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the tension between the physical and immaterial aspects of human nature is fundamental to human experience. Since this tension represents the border conflict between the matrices of earth and heaven, in which the demands of the soul conflict with the desires and natural functions of the body, Catherine's illness illustrates in a heightened manner what all Christians experience.

However, this spirit/flesh dichotomy is not a dualistic opposition since, as the vita records, they eventually reconcile: "at length the attraction of the spirit so far prevailed, that the two became reconciled and were satisfied with the same food" (ch.38). According to one Catherine scholar, Baron Friedrich von Hügel, the soul/body tension is not "a direct and pointed dualism of two distinct substances informed by all but incurably antagonistic principles" but rather "a direct conflict between two dispositions of the soul, and a but imperfect correspondence between the body and that soul" (125). This notion of imperfect correspondence is important here, especially since it agrees with Jesus' assessment of the disciples' condition: he describes the flesh not as too strong for the spirit but as not strong enough, i.e., as too weak to sustain the spirit's work. Therefore, body and soul are not locked in eternal conflict but are merely unable to support each other as they should—imperfect correspondence.

The non-dualistic nature of the soul/body dichotomy is also evident in Bynum's findings. Thirteenth-century theologians, she notes, stressed "the positive religious significance of physicality" as a way of resisting dualism; similarly, women rejected the long-held view "that physicality was particularly their problem" by focusing their understanding of redemption upon the supremely human aspect of Christ (Fragmentation 143-144). Women found in the doctrine of the Incarnation an affirmation of the human body, and in particular a positive valuation of the female body, drawing "from the traditional notion of the female as physical a special emphasis on their own redemption by a Christ who was supremely physical because supremely

human" (146-147). Christ was seen not as someone who transcended his humanity, but as the epitome of humanity, a person whose soul and body were in complete harmony. The redemption he accomplished therefore included both the female body and the female soul.

Given this perspective on the body, it is significant that Catherine's crucial vision of Jesus was set neither during his ministry nor after his resurrection, but rather on the threshold of his death, i.e., on the border between earth and heaven. Catherine's life thus exemplifies the way that the Christian community, when it emphasizes Jesus' Passion, concentrates on the border region between the two kingdoms. This is the region that believers spend their lives crossing through, without ever being fully inside either kingdom, and that they recreate whenever they accept Jesus' commands to take up their crosses and to die to themselves. In doing so, they illustrate Hicks' notion of the reconstruction of objects: by juxtaposing within their own life God's reference code concerning human life with that of the world, believers reconstruct their relationship to life. Likewise, they reconstruct their relationship to the world by focusing on his resurrection, which, by revealing the apparent defeat of the crucifixion as a victory, represents the utmost reversal of values. These reconstructions demonstrate the imperfect correspondence between the world and heaven with respect to life and death.

Catherine lived out Jesus' command to die to self in her work among the sick, i.e., among people who are themselves between life and death. True to her conception that asceticism and charity are the same activity, she also used this work for ascetic practice: when she cleaned houses, she encountered "the most disgusting filth, and she would even put it in her mouth, in order to conquer the disgust it produced" (ch.8). She continued these practices at the hospital, as is seen when she cured a female tertiary from a fatal fever by kissing her mouth (ch.8); here she was truly ready to die to self, since she contracted the fever and almost died from it. These accounts also illustrate that she accepted the body as part of the order of redemption; by taking the filth and the fever into her own mouth, she demonstrates the redemption of the world.

Catherine's charitable work recalls another aspect of her vision of Christ, namely, that he bore his sufferings voluntarily and out of love. According to her vision, therefore, the operating principle in the spiritual borderland is love, which enables border living by voluntarily bearing within itself the conflict between the kingdoms. It was love that brought Catherine's devotion and charity into a reciprocally beneficial relationship by closing her senses, and it is love that bridges the divide between action and contemplation in the lives of the faithful; in God's economy, action and contemplation augment each other.

The liturgical recreation of this love is the eucharist, in which the host represents the borderland nature of Jesus' life by symbolizing heaven pouring down into earth through the inflowing of Christ's heavenly body into the host and thereby into the believer; it is the liturgical representation of way heaven "edges" into earth (to use Anzaldúa's term). Catherine's devotion to the eucharist thus represents the following aspect of the spiritual borderlands as found in Christianity: insofar as Christians remember Jesus through the eucharist, they enter the borderland between the two kingdoms. The church accordingly functions as a borderland site, i.e., as the geographical location within which heaven irrupts into earth. Likewise, the eucharist serves as the ritual site for the believers' recreation of this borderland within their own lives.

It is therefore symbolic that Catherine's desire for the host commenced on the Feast of the Annunciation, when Mary learned from the angel that she was to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This scriptural episode portrays another edging of heaven into earth, as the angel and the Holy Spirit both enter into the physical world. In the context of the feast day, the narrative serves two purposes: It reconstructs believers' understanding of their own lives by reminding them that they too can become instruments of God's salvation in the world. And, it rejects a dualistic antagonism between body and soul in favor of a more positive combination of the two: Mary bears God within herself, and Christ takes on the full form of humanity. The feast day, like the eucharist, defends against dualism by revering "the divine in the material" (Bynum, Fragmentation 143-144).

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This borderlands interpretation of Catherine's life extends beyond both her mystical experiences and charitable work to her social station. Her status as a married woman put her at odds with common understandings about the value of virginity, which, according to Bynum, was symbolically similar to the eucharist: "Into [the virgin's] body, as into the eucharistic bread on the altar, poured the inspiration of the spirit and the fullness of the humanity of Christ" (Holy Feast 20). Since at least the time of Jerome, virginity for the sake of Christ had been accepted as one of the highest forms of holiness. More specifically, virginity in women was understood to represent fidelity: unlike male virginity, which signified intactness, female virginity signified faithfulness to God.[27] Accordingly, married women could hope to become, at best, widows, a status that allowed them to attain the honorable status of handmaidens to virgins. Thus, as a married mystic, Catherine lived in a borderland even within her own church; it is conceivable that she was canonized and remembered in part because she lived during a time in which the percentage of female saints, married saints and lay saints was at its peak (Holy Feast 21).

Although many of her contemporaries saw her great sanctity as proof of the holiness of her married life, she was occasionally abused for her lay status. This prejudice is evident in her encounter with a friar preacher who informed her that because he had renounced both external and internal things when he became a religious, "therefore he was more free and better prepared to love God than herself" (ch.19). Upon hearing this argument,

> an ardent flame of pure love seized the blessed Catherine, with which her heart was so inflamed, that she rose to her feet and fervently exclaimed, "If I believed that your habit would add one spark to my love, I would not hesitate to tear it from you, if I could obtain it in no other way. Whatever you merit more than I, through the renunciation you have made for God's sake, and through your religious life, which continually enables you to merit, I do not seek to obtain;

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[27] I am grateful to Dr. Katharina M. Wilson for this information.

these are yours; but that I cannot love God as much as yourself, you can never

make me believe." (ch.19)

This exchange suggests a pre-Reformation debate over the redemptive values of grace and works:

Catherine does not need to be a religious in order to love God with divine force.

The exchange also reveals an interesting complication in the notion that the Christian

faith is a borderland between the kingdoms of God and of earth, for it shows that the church is

not always aligned with the kingdom of God.[28] As is clear from the vita, Catherine's sanctity and

miracles illustrate that the friar's sense of superiority does not represent the way God's kingdom

works. The religious community is not immune from misunderstandings about God's ways and

sometimes accepts the worldly beliefs that Catherine's life serves to correct. The commonly

accepted understandings of the relative value of religious and lay life belong, to use the Apostle

Paul's phrase, to the "commandments and teachings of men [sic]" that believers are to forsake.

(Colossians 2:20-23). Thus, one cannot always interpret the community of the church as

representing the work of the kingdom of God in the world, as the true church is not necessarily

coterminous with the visible church. Catherine's life illustrates the way in which true faith can

sometimes place the believer on the margins of the religious community.

Conclusion

Catherine's life shows how Christian faith can be read as a borderland experience from

several perspectives. Believers live within the space where the kingdoms of God and of the world

edge each other. This edging, however, does not imply that earth and heaven are directly

opposed, but simply that there is an imperfect correspondence between the way the two

kingdoms view the world. Moreover, the intersection of these two views occurs directly within

the life of the individual believer. The border experience, which Christians undergo through

faith, worship and service, helps them reconstruct their relationship to their body and, by

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[28] Recall Patrick's conflicts with his superiors over his mission to Ireland.

extension, to the outside world. This reconstruction is practicable because of the operation of love in their lives: love sustains them by voluntarily bearing within itself the conflict between the soul and the body. The practice of formal worship enables this reconstruction by recreating the borderlands experience within the believer through the recollection of Christ's Passion and commandments and through the efficacious celebration of the eucharist, within which Christ re-enters the world into and through the reception of the host.

At the same time, the institutional church is an unstable community on the border: it does not always side with God's kingdom. In these situations, believers are marginalized from both worldly and religious cultures. This can occur both because of the movement of God within the life of an individual and because of the individual's membership in certain groups: women, gays, ethnic groups, socio-economic classes, etc. With respect to individuals, faith puts them at odds with the generally accepted notions of holiness, merit, etc.; thus, Catherine's youth put her at odds with the convent and her marital status put her at odds with the friar preacher. With respect to groups, faith reveals itself in patterns that allow them to defend their orthodoxy and to critique the dominant group's theology. Thus, female mystics shared a set of experiences and values that defended them from accusations of heterodoxy and served to correct prevailing assumptions. Naturally, these corrections, on the part of both the individual and the group, are meant to be heard by the dominant group; they can be taken up by anyone who will listen; men, for instance, can learn a great deal from women's spirituality. In this way, Catherine's life has continued to be studied by men and women across the ages: her life illustrates in heightened form the experiences of every believer.

IV. Nationalism and Integrationism in the Church: George Fox

In January 1956, one day after being arrested for driving five miles-per-hour over the speed limit, a young African American pastor in Montgomery, Alabama, received a phone call at his home. The caller's message was simple but chilling in its anger: "Listen, nigger, we've taken all we want from you; before next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery." The

minister, shaken, began to pray. Soon, he received an answer to his prayer in the form of an "inner voice" that said to him, "Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever" (King 134-135). This moment was a turning point in the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., but it was not the first time he had received such a threat: During the 381 days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King and his followers were harassed by police, indicted by the authorities, threatened over the phone, and in several cases had their homes bombed (Cone 65). Nevertheless, they won the victory: the Supreme Court ruled that Alabama's practice of segregating buses was unconstitutional, and Dr. King was catapulted to the international prominence for which we now celebrate his birth.

Just over three hundred years earlier, in Mansfield-Woodhouse, England, a young man acting on a divine prompt entered a church during Sunday service and, after the priest finished, began teaching the congregation. For his ministry, he was rewarded with bruises—the people beat him "with their fists, books, and without compassion or mercy." The young man was driven out of the sanctuary, placed in the stocks and battered by stones. Even after the magistrate found him innocent and set free him free, however, the people remained in such a fury that they had to be restrained, and he was "allowed" to leave only under the threat that should he ever return, they would shoot him, even within the walls of the church. (Fox 44-45).

Thus began a series of persecutions against George Fox and his followers in the Society of Friends, a.k.a. the Quakers. Before the Toleration Act of 1689, some twelve thousand Quakers were sent to prison, where more than three hundred of them died. Fox himself spent six years in prison under eight different convictions (Etten 59). Quakers were persecuted under both Protestant and Catholic regimes, often receiving the worst of the harassment as the only group specifically targeted by a governmental act (Vann 90). Even though they professed Christianity, Quakers inspired "hostility and fear" among both the elite and the common ranks of British society (Reay 63). Yet, since the Toleration Act, they have become well respected for their ability to integrate Christian teachings into their lifestyle and well known for their pacifism. They have

been especially important in the quality of their devotional writings, producing such influential authors as John Woolman, Thomas R. Kelly, Rufus M. Jones, Douglas V. Steere and Richard J. Foster. Above all of these, however, stands George Fox, whose <u>Journal</u> has become one of the most influential modern devotional texts.

The early Quaker movement and the American Civil Rights movement both encountered hostile opposition from the dominant culture, both received government protection and both eventually won a place in mainstream life. Thus, the Civil Rights movement provides a helpful lens through which to examine early opposition to the Quaker movement. One particularly useful framework for examining such movements has been put forward by historian and theologian James H. Cone in his book <u>Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare</u>. Cone argues that African American history has always combined the contrasting doctrines of integrationism and nationalism, which are best known today as represented by Dr. King and Malcolm X, respectively. These two doctrines form the poles around which African American thinkers have always organized their responses to American racism. Yet, as Cone suggests, neither ideal can succeed on its own; both Martin and Malcolm are needed if there is ever to be true racial progress in the United States.

Cone's framework provides a way of interpreting early Quaker history, especially the paradox that they were persecuted by churchmen for views that stemmed from their attempts to be true to Christian revelation. Thus even within the church, Quakers functioned as an activist ethnic minority, challenging the dominant culture to rethink many of its customs in order to be truer to its founding principles. Just as the Civil Rights movement challenged America to live up to its constitutional ideal of liberty for all, the Quakers challenged the British church to live up to the biblical ideal of universal love and radical faith in God. Using Cone's framework, the survival of the Quaker movement stems from its combination of nationalist and integrationist policies.

This section examines analogies between the Civil Rights and early Quaker movements. First, it examines how Quakers positioned themselves in the face of public hostility. Then it

examines some of the social factors beyond the Quakers' control that played a role in the hostility. Finally, it examines two sets of analogies: those that can be made between Quakers and black nationalists, as seen in their brand of religious tribalism, and those that can be made between Quakers and black integrationists, as seen in their concern for social justice.

Quakers as a Persecuted Minority

Suffering was a major part of Quaker experience in the movement's early years. Beyond the twelve thousand Quakers who suffered imprisonment before the Toleration Act, it can only be speculated how many more were harassed without being imprisoned. At the time, a popular misconception about Quakers was that they actively sought out suffering. At least two facts contributed to this misconception. First, Quakers held scruples against such common practices as paying tithes and swearing oaths, practices often considered obligatory. Yet many of these scruples were held by other Nonconformist groups; the misconception was therefore not a result of the scruples themselves, but the particular resolve with which Quakers held them (Vann 90-91). Second, their patient endurance led many observers to convert. People concluded from this that their willingness to suffer was more effective at gaining converts than their apologies for their faith, and that they therefore sought out suffering. This belief was so common that the colony of Rhode Island deliberately tolerated Quakerism on the grounds that such toleration would deprive Quakers of their chief means of making converts (Knott 221).

Of course, this interpretation of Quaker attitudes to suffering is untrue; they did not seek it out. In fact, they "took steps to limit the prosecutions to which they might be liable under the law" (Davies 169).[29] They were, however, willing to undergo persecution when it occurred. Why? One reason is psychological: suffering created a sense of uniqueness among them that brought them closer to each other and farther away from the world (189). Thus, suffering built community and solidarity. In addition, they viewed suffering as an inevitable part of religious

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[29] This practice is common today with groups planning acts of civil disobedience.

experience. Fox, using early Christian conceptions of martyrdom, taught that suffering for Christ is the same as suffering with Christ. He also reminded his followers that because they were fighting evil, their kindness to their oppressors was the same as showering them with hot coals. As a result of such conceptions, submission to suffering became a Quaker ideal (Knott 228).

Social Causes of Hostility

Though Quakers willingly submitted to persecution for their religious convictions, not all their suffering was due to those convictions. It will therefore be useful to examine the social factors that aggravated public hostility before examining the particular Quaker behaviors that truly did create hostility. These social factors have been analyzed in detail by historian Barry Reay in his book The Quakers and the English Revolution. Reay notes (64-66) that public ignorance about Quakers played a substantial role in fostering hostility towards them. What little information people had about Quakers often came "from word of mouth, by rumour, speculation" and, regretfully, from authorities who used this ignorance to portray Quakers negatively, depicting them, for instance, "as little more than a band of dangerous criminals and atheists" or as the continuation of the Münster Anabaptists of the previous century, a group whose "fanatical principles not unlike those of the Quakers had led inexorably to levelling, bloodshed and anarchy." Historical comparisons later shifted from the excesses of Münster to "the excesses of the Interregnum," thus giving the hostility a more overtly political edge. It can be seen from these accusations how authorities riled up the people by linking their ignorance about Quakers to their vague knowledge of the excesses of Münster, their personal experiences of political excess, and their willingness to trust the authorities and other educated elite.

Related to the problem of public ignorance was the presence of both local and regional xenophobia (Reay 66-68). Locally, xenophobia meant that people were more likely to attack someone who was not part of their community;[30] thus, the brunt of the persecution was borne

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[30] Recall that in Patrick's day, local loyalties were stronger than nationalism.

by Quakers who were outside their home communities. As Reay concludes, "It was the idea of the Quaker that was hated and feared rather than the individual." This fact reveals another facet of the problem, namely, that ignorance about Quakers was due in large part simply to not knowing any. Regional xenophobia was affected by the fact that since mobility in seventeenth-century England rarely extended beyond the county border, most southerners had little contact with northerners. Yet, most early Quakers were northerners, and part of their practice was to visit remote areas. Reay therefore wonders whether "some of the hostility was a parochial reaction to what was seen as either an outside or northern invasion."[31] From these circumstances, it is evident that the close-knit structure of seventeenth-century British society played an important role in the way the public received Quakers.

Anti-Quaker xenophobia had socio-economic factors, such as commercial rivalry. Reay notes (71-72) that "most communities were paranoiac about outside interference in local trade [while] many of the early Quakers were traders, and [...] many combined spiritual with more worldly pursuits." The importance of economic conditions is underscored by the fact that attacks against Quakers were often committed by the lower classes, a fact that

> suggests that the motivation behind some of the attacks on Quakers was the kind of social protest that George Rudé had found in crowd activity in the eighteenth century and others have discovered in popular violence in fourteenth-century Spain and sixteenth-century France: "a groping desire to settle accounts with the rich, if only for a day, and to achieve some rough kind of social justice." (72)

Thus, the hostility of the lower classes was part of a sociological pattern of crowd behavior, stemming from a combination of xenophobia and economic tension.

From this sociological perspective, much of the hostility towards the Quakers can be interpreted as a reaction against social change. Quakers were prosecuted more often during

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[31] We might wonder if the same was true in Patrick's Ireland.

periods of heightened political tension (Davies 169, Vann 92). As Reay explains: "The Quaker was not only a 'foreigner' and intruder but also the very personification of the ecclesiastical and social upheaval so disliked by the provincial traditionalist who looked back nostalgically to the old order and [...] the 'pure religion of Queen Elizabeth and King James'" (77). By accusing Quakers of "removing traditional landmarks of social life" and of "unleashing unwanted social and religious innovation," attackers could see themselves as restoring order, effectively taking on the roles of the clergy and the magistrates, i.e., "defending true doctrine or ridding the community of defilement" (77). Quakers thereby functioned as scapegoats who "could be blamed for the tensions generated by a society in flux" (71). Thus, some of the hostility towards Quakers resulted from a general trend towards political and social conservatism.

Many of the reasons the public abused the early Quakers had little to do with their practices and beliefs, but were rather a convenient pretext for public exorcism of their social frustrations. Yet, there had to be something about Quaker practices and beliefs that made them such easy targets. In general, the problem was that Fox's definition of religion was much broader than was generally conceived in this period. Therefore, Quakers who experienced hostility were often attacked not for their actual religious beliefs, but for the way those beliefs played out in the religious and civil matters of daily life (Ingle 180). By defying commonly accepted attitudes about the importance of tithing and church attendance or about community life and social courtesies, Quakers openly rejected both Church authority and "a whole range of social behaviour which was officially and popularly sanctioned" (Davies 11).

Borrowing Cone's framework, I suggest that Quaker behavior led to public hostility in two ways. On the one hand, the Quaker practice of separation from the world led to hostility; this behavior is analogous to that of the black nationalist movements in the United States. On the other hand, Quakers continually challenged those social customs and laws that denied full equality among the people of Britain; this behavior is analogous to that of the integrationists.

Quaker Tribalism as a Form of Nationalism

Historian Adrian Davies describes the Quaker practice of withdrawing from society as "a form of 'tribalism' which led to a disregard of worldly customs and associations" and to a decreased importance of family and neighborhood ties in their daily lives (35). Davies finds this diminution predictable, since "Any group of like-minded people, whether religious or otherwise, is bound to shift the focus of its loyalties to some extent" (35). From the perspective of the larger community, however, such diminution creates conflict. Thus, Quakers functioned as "a godly minority in local society whose behaviour and convictions jarred sharply with the expectations and assumptions which regulated daily life in the parish community" (42). The very experience of conversion thereby transforms converts into foreigners within their own communities.

However, Quaker tribalism was more than a mere result of their conversion experience; it was also an active attempt to avoid contamination with the world. Their separation from the world was an attack both on the religious and cultural hierarchies and on "many aspects of plebeian culture which were […] tinged with paganism or showed too great a regard for human satisfaction" (42). Davies notes that "fear of spiritual defilement was so great that the Society issued a stream of instructions warning followers of the dangers which accompanied mixing with the spiritually impure, that is those not under the guidance of the inner light." The combination of this fear with an active avoidance of the unconverted led to an "us/them" mentality that was already evident to their contemporaries. (35-36)

It is important that Davies refers to the Quakers as a minority in their own society, as this illustrates one of the ways Quaker experience was analogous to that of black nationalists, who claimed "that black people are primarily Africans and not Americans" (Cone 9). Cone notes two important characteristics of the nationalist conception: First, it "was not primarily a Western, 'rational' philosophy, but rather a black philosophy in search of its African roots" (16). As a result, "resistance to America and […] determination to create a society based on their own African history and culture" became key elements of nationalist identity (9). Second, this aspect

of African American identity has been strong whenever African Americans have felt pessimistic about the possibilities of being accorded equal treatment with whites.

Translated from a racial to a religious context, this notion suggests that the Quakers, due to their pessimism about the possibility of living according to the inner light within the existing ecclesiastical structures, chose to identify as Christians rather than as Britons[32] and therefore rejected seventeenth-century British cultural identity for a Christian identity based on biblical teachings. That is, Quakers no longer acted as British citizens, but rather as citizens of God's kingdom. A comparison with Malcolm X is useful here, since his position—"separation was not a temporary, tactical position but rather an ideological commitment. God demanded separation […]"—seems to apply equally well to the Quakers (Cone 108).

This analogy to Malcolm's nationalism program is more apt than might be expected. The early Quaker movement had no problem with the military and at times saw the army as their only hope (Hill 26-29). They also included "tactics of demonstration and confrontation" in their arsenal, and Fox himself "was clearly understood by his hearers and followers as a political radical […] a zealot of the new social order" (Hill 30; Boulton 146). The similarity of the Quakers' understanding of separation to Malcolm's shows that their separatist mentality expressed their nationalistic conception of themselves as a minority community living within a culture to which they did not belong. In this way, their behavior as British expatriates (still living in Britain) is the practical extension of their ideological commitment to practice Christianity in accordance with the revelation of Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit.

The Quakers' nationalistic conception created problems because religion was more closely connected to culture then than it is today. In fact, religion was so generally accepted as the "foundation of government" that it was thought people obeyed the government only because of religion. This fact explains, for instance, why the competing religious claims of the

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[32] Recall Bede's account of St. Alban.

Reformation had such enormous political importance in Britain: everyone believed orthodoxy to be necessary for social order. (Reay 57) Therefore, by rejecting the Church's authority in both matters of salvation and matters of custom, the Quakers "seemed to challenge in a profound manner the social basis of authority" (Davies 63). It has already been shown how this challenge caused hostility among the public; at the same time, the Quakers were successful enough in gaining converts that the upper classes and authorities feared they were bringing about social anarchy by "stirr[ing] up the people against lawful authority and tempt[ing] the lower orders with dangerous doctrines" (Reay 59, 57). Because of seventeenth-century religious tensions and the commonly accepted connection between religion and social order, Quaker tribalism (like black nationalism) aroused great concern among the general public and the government.

Quaker Social Justice as a Form of Integrationism

Although Quakers removed themselves from society to be uncontaminated by the world, they did not simply abandon it. Instead, they strove to obtain social justice for all. Concerned about a wide variety of issues, including care for the poor, fair wages, work for beggars, judicial injustice, drunkenness, education, hospitals, poor-houses, slavery, and women's roles in church, Quakers demanded social, economic and political reforms (Etten 67-69; Gwyn 203). To accomplish these goals, they adopted the style and the message of the biblical apostles and prophets regarding God's justice and judgment, relying on the fact that biblical prophecy is "God's revelation of future implications for the concrete moral situation of the present" (Gwyn 129). This prophetic concern with the implications of concrete situations led them to "challenge the basic institutions and assumptions of the society in which they lived" with the biblical message that "justice and righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a shame both to rulers and people" (179). Part of Fox's power was his recognition "that social and economic dislocations associated with England's recent entry into the world of capitalism required new approaches" and that the Church's political power lay "less in an engagement with the political process than in its power to shift the social context of that process, thereby destabilizing sinful policies" (Ingle

179; Gwyn 203). Fox understood that modernization was at the root of many of the problems faced by the lower classes and that the solution to the problem was not so much in the political realm as in the ability of religious institutions to reorient politics.

Such activity, however, requires a hope that these goals can be achieved. Quaker efforts to obtain social justice thus reveal an optimism that aligns them with integrationists in the Civil Rights movement. Cone notes that integrationists believed that justice can be attained in the United States once whites truly take to heart the ideals put forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (Cone 3-4). This concern for justice was directed both locally and internationally: Internationally, King believed that freedom is not possible in America until it is achieved in the Third World (Cone 79), just as Quakers believed there could be no equality until the poor and needy are taken care of. Locally, Jim Crow laws disregarded blacks' legal rights and thereby created a complex system of demeaning behavioral expectations (35). King rejected this system as a true expression of the American project, saying, "If you're setting out to do a good Negro's job, you've already flunked your matriculation exam for entrance into the university of integration" (qtd. in Cone 31). British society had similar social codes with respect to class distinctions. Fox's version of King's statement would have been that if the lower classes set out to pay their respects to the upper classes, they have already flunked their matriculation exam for entrance into the kingdom of equality.

For Fox, the theological problem lay in the fact that average Christians "found it natural and inevitable that life should hinder the growth of the 'divine seed' in the hearts of men," whereas his own experience of God reconnected him with that "divine seed" and enabled him to "perceive injustices at once" (Etten 66). Fox desired to connect outward behavior with inward spiritual experience. Since he believed that equality was "the central expression of religion" (Ingle 180-181), he also believed that in a truly Christian nation, faith would lead to full political and social equality. The church must reject the attitude that daily life impedes spiritual growth and revive the radical nature of its original teachings about the power of faith in the world.

Fox's concern for equality had a concrete, practical component: the hungry and naked members of society could be taken care of with the money saved once people stop using jewelry, fancy clothes, etc., to display their wealth and station (Ingle 178-179). However, this concern was not only about raising funds for charity. His belief in the correspondence between the outer life and inner spiritual experience led him to believe that there should be no hierarchy of class in the culture either, since kings and paupers are equal before God. This belief naturally created many problems, since seventeenth-century Britain was heavily structured around class hierarchies, especially around what Reay calls "the hegemony of the elite":

> Early modern England was a society "classed by subordination," and the patriarchal doctrines of the state were imbibed (in theory at least) from the cradle onwards. Children, servants, and apprentices who understood their status in the household needed little political sophistication to grasp that the same applied to their place in the state. (58)

For Fox's culture, social justice included paying proper respect to the hierarchical class system.

In daily life, differences in social standing were signified through the way the body was represented in physical appearance and social behavior. Since it was very important that all people be treated appropriately according to their rank (or lack thereof), it was understood that social relationships should be mirrored in the way the body was used (Davies 44). Thus, by refusing to tip his hat before the authorities or to refer to his superiors with a formal pronoun, Fox scandalized his fellow citizens; yet, this behavior was for him a consistent application of his spiritual understanding of human nature. Like Rosa Parks on the bus, Fox was simply refusing to participate in a social code that kept large portions of the populace oppressed and unable to respond to God's love. Similarly, Quaker concern for social justice expressed a concern for the well-being of all people and a belief in the founding ideals of the culture.

Conclusion

It was suggested earlier that the key to the Quakers' longevity as a group—a group despised even by other Nonconformists—was its combination of nationalist and integrationist doctrines, which Cone suggests was key to the success of the Civil Rights movement. Perhaps this was because during the 1960s, the two doctrines were represented by men who not only "complemented and corrected each other" (246), but who also shared a great deal in common. Since the Quakers combined within their own movement the same tendencies toward integrationism and nationalism, the analogy with Martin and Malcolm may provide a way to understand the immense, positive influence the Quakers have had.

Like Fox, Martin and Malcolm presented strong critiques of contemporary Christianity, critiques directed at both black and white churches. King

> challenged white Christians to be true to what they read in their Bibles and affirm in their creeds, namely that God created all people as one human family, brothers and sisters to one another [and] challenged black Christians to be obedient to the God they preach and sing about, by refusing to obey laws that discriminate against them. (Cone 295)

For his part, Malcolm provided a "race critique of Christianity […] as important for genuine Christian living in the world as Marx's class critique" by revealing "the great difference between Christianity as preached and taught, on the one hand, and about the presence of white and black Christians in their communities, on the other" (296). The Quakers likewise provided an important critique of a Christianity that had more to do with maintaining an oppressive status quo than with being true to its own tenets of love, justice and equality. Like Martin, they told the upper classes to be faithful to the notions of equality found in their Bibles and creeds, and the lower classes to obey God by refusing to honor class codes. And like Malcolm, they recognized the difference between the theology and the practice of Christianity, and provided critiques of the way modernization effected culture.

Martin, Malcolm and Fox all believed in the prophets' teaching "that God is the ultimate executor of justice" (Cone 104). However, whereas Martin and Malcolm acted on this tenet in different ways—Martin working within the political system and Malcolm giving up on it—Fox and his followers held both approaches simultaneously. As Cone notes, both nationalism and integrationism are necessary if reform is to succeed: the community can never be completely integrated, for it would then lose its identity; but neither can it be completely separate, for it cannot survive in complete isolation from its political and economic context (15-16). Fox and the early Quakers lived out their critique of the church by doing both, i.e., separating themselves from the world's influence even as they challenged it to reform.

I suggest, however, that for both Quakers and African Americans, the reason goes somewhat farther than Cone suggests. Complete integration is dangerous, leading to corruption by the very system it seeks to change. However, compete isolation does not change the system either. If, as Fox was convinced, all humans are equal before God, it is imperative for the community of believers to promote that equality whenever and wherever it is not manifest. The implication for the church today is that it may be more effective if it separated itself from the political realm and aligned itself more closely with the cause of the undesirables: the poor, the sick, the immigrants, the queers, etc. [33] The church needs to reclaim its true calling to treat minorities with respect since it too has been a minority.

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[33] Recall the earlier discussions of voluntary marginalization and downward mobility.

CHAPTER 4:

CHRISTIANITY AS A NON-WESTERN RELIGION

I. History: Indigenized Christianity in Asia and Africa

As has been noted in such works as Philip Jenkins' The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, the church in the so-called "third world" (or "global south") is growing rapidly and may already be more populous than the church in Europe and North America combined. At the same time, it has also matured into independent and indigenized forms. African Christianity, for instance, is treated by some scholars as a separate branch of the church alongside Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy (3-4). Several issues arise from this growth: For one, it means that the churches in these areas are gaining power in the global church and will therefore guide the future of the Christianity. For another, it raises new questions about the Christian nature of Western societies, since some claim these areas are more faithful to Western religious traditions than Western culture is (5). In fact, the church in Africa has been called "a demonstration model" of contemporary Christianity (3-4). Yet, this model is very traditional, even though many Western scholars expected that because these churches matured after colonialism, their theology would grow along the lines of such progress-centered movements as Liberation Theology in Latin America. Instead, the greatest impact in these cultures has come from conservative forms of Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism (Jenkins 7). In some instances, these churches' teachings on matters of morals and belief are so traditional as to seem "reactionary" to Western observers (7).

This section provides only a brief overview of the topic. Since many of the issues facing missions to these cultures echo those discussed in the section on the Americas, I will set those aside and focus more on the developments I raised at the end of that discussion, i.e., the growth of indigenized Christianities. In particular, I examine three trends apparent in Asia and Africa:

1) missionaries explaining Christianity in local terms (rather than trying to Europeanize the culture); 2) indigenous church leaders and movements; and 3) indigenized Christian theology.

Adaptation by Missionaries

To start with Asia, it is unclear how much European missionaries knew about Indian and Chinese Christianity upon their arrival in those regions, e.g., whether they knew that a Chinese Christian had become the Patriarch of Seleucia-Baghdad, and another an ambassador to Persia and diplomat to Europe (Kitagawa 13). Unlike their counterparts in the Americas, however, many of these missionaries quickly recognized these cultures' sophistication and complexity and the difficulties created by their longevity and stability; they therefore strove to learn their languages and philosophies (Tiedemann 369). The process of adapting Christianity for Asian converts continued the process begun by the early apologists, who responded to the conversion of educated Gentiles by adopting from Hellenistic Jews the practice of looking for "the <u>logoi spermatikoi</u>, the 'scattered seeds' of truth found in every cultural tradition" (Kitagawa 8).

In India, this tradition was established by the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili, who believed that he could reach the Indians by adopting local customs (Chidester 453); he therefore became a Brahman, adopted the purity laws, learned Sanskrit and took an Indian name (Frykenberg 169-170). Similar work was done by the Jesuit Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi, a.k.a. Viramāmuni, the renowned Tamil scholar-poet whose work influenced the "radical mass movements of conversion" of fifty years later (170). In the eighteenth century, Beschi's scholarship was matched by Protestant missionaries who collected manuscripts (e.g., the Halle collection), set up printing presses, and translated scriptures and scientific texts into Tamil (174-175). Their strategy was outlined in a 1713 book by Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, who explained that such work requires a thorough understanding of Hindu culture (175). These missionaries also accepted the use of indigenous clergy and trained Tamil converts to be teachers and pastors (174).

Similar strategies were used in Japan by the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, who rejected the policy of imposing Western practices on converts (Tiedemann 375). In China, Valignano's

accommodationist policies were adopted by Matteo Ricci (378), who presented himself not as a religious, but as a scholar; instead of building a church, he followed the Chinese tradition of opening a "preaching house" or private academy (Chidester 434). Ricci's encounter with Chinese culture worked in both directions: while demonstrating Western achievements in astronomy, mathematics, technology and cartography to the Chinese Court, he became conversant in the Confucian classics; as a result, the Court retained Jesuits "as quasi-officials" (Tiedemann 378). Ricci also taught that Christian revelation supplemented the elements of natural religion found in classical Confucian texts (Chidester 435). For instance, he equated Confucius' term Shangdi, "Sovereign on High," with his own term for God, Tianzhu, "Master of Heaven" (435).

Although Chinese scholars were impressed by the Jesuits' scientific learning, they had trouble accepting Christian doctrines, which often seemed subversive (Tiedemann 381-382). They had problems, for instance, with the centrality of "Yesu" since he was human, born outside China and after Confucius, and executed as a criminal (Chidester 436). They also had difficulties with Aristotelian logical categories, which were "alien to Chinese patterns of thought" (439). These difficulties were so strong that Ricci's efforts to explain the Incarnation in Chinese terms "inadvertently transformed it into [a doctrine] that could be recognized as Confucian or Buddhist" (437). Ricci's problems were exacerbated by Rome's rejection of accommodation. Though he was careful in his accommodations, e.g., allowing Confucius and the ancestors to be shown respect but not prayed to (Tiedemann 380), his methods created problems for missionaries in the provinces, such as the Spanish Franciscans, who dealt with the popular religion of the lower classes and therefore were more aware of the dangers of accommodation; factors such as these led to the Rites Controversy (379). However, Catholic missionaries did recognize the need for indigenous clergy, and in 1688 the first set of indigenous priests to be ordained inside China were ordained by Chinese Bishop Luo Wenzao (383).[1]

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[1] Bishop Luo had been ordained in Manila rather than in China.

There is less evidence of European missionaries adopting African systems of thought. As they did with the Americans, Europeans believed that Africans had no religion, i.e., no way "to organize relations between the spiritual and material realms" (Chidester 413), but only superstitions and fetishes, a term popularized by the Portuguese in Africa and signifying the practice of magic (413). In addition, Europeans often linked cultural practices with religion: some missionaries required Africans not only to alter their religious practices but also to build Western-styled houses and plant flower gardens (415). There are exceptions, e.g., the Italian Capuchins who worked in the Kongo in the mid-1600s. Their work shifted Kongolese Christianity from being focused on court life and Portuguese culture to being "extensively acculturated to the rhythms and exigencies of Kongo life" (Ward 202). They adopted a Kongo term for themselves, <u>nganga</u> (healers), to suggest that they were replacing traditional religious practices (202).

The use of African ideas to express Christianity also occurred in the twentieth century when missionaries sympathetic to African causes defied European racism by publishing works on indigenous African religions. However, although this work has been useful, it is subject to the complaint that it "sees through distorting Christian spectacles, and, in the process, invents an African traditional religion that never existed, in a salutary reaction against a hundred years of missionary Eurocentricity" (Isichei 325). Another complaint is that missionaries often work <u>for</u> the people rather than <u>with</u> them (326). The problem is complicated and there is no clear answer: while some advocate withdrawing foreign missionaries in order to free up resources for churches; others fear that that missions are too dependent upon foreigners to remove them unless the mission concept itself is revamped (326-327).

Adoption by the Indigenous

While some European missionaries sought ways to express their faith in terms of non-Western culture, many Asians and Africans adopted it with little or no attempt to adapt its theology. In Africa, Christianity "was immediately and consistently translated into local African

idioms" (Chidester 416). As has been noted, Ethiopia early on developed "a Christian culture strongly integrated into African life and ideas of kingship, combined with a vigorous local presence based on a [hereditary] peasant priesthood [...]" (Ward 199). Another notable example was the sixteenth-century attempt by Nzinga Mvemba, a.k.a. Afonso I, to make the Kongo a "Christian kingdom" (201); his Portuguese-educated son Don Henrique was even ordained Bishop. However, the Portuguese held the rights to colonial appointments and did not choose an African as his successor (202). In the early eighteenth century, Kimpa Vita, a.k.a. Dona Beatriz, claimed to be possessed by the popular Saint Antony of Padua and urged the recapture of the former capital city of São Salvador; she was eventually burnt as a heretic (202-203).

Many Africans accepted Christianity out of their own cultural beliefs rather than because of missionary effectiveness. For instance, in 1485 a group of BaKongo was returned home from Portugal; because the BaKongo view water as the barrier between the living and the dead, their ocean crossing was interpreted by their community as a sign of initiation into deep spiritual knowledge and power and led the people to accept Christianity (Chidester 413). Even Africans who rejected Christianity interpreted its practices according to indigenous traditions (416). The early nineteenth-century Xhosa leader Nxele created a theology that taught that Europeans were being punished for killing the son of the European God (415).

Nineteenth-century African Christians made many important contributions to the Church. In Southern Africa, Ntiskana, councilor to the Xhosa chief, "composed praise songs and hymns to the Almighty, which were passed down and altered within the Christian community and became the core of Xhosa hymnody" (Ward 211). The Xhosa Church subsequently produced many important leaders, including several who helped found the African Nationalist Congress in 1912 (212). The development of an indigenous East African church took longer, except in Buganda (part of modern Uganda), whose entire "ruling class became Christianized and, within a remarkably short period of time, initiated a thoroughgoing Christianization of society"; this Christainization had such "a profound effect on the moral, intellectual and cultural life, both

nationally and locally," as seen in the deeply rooted "folk-churches" among the peasantry (215-216), that by 1939, Uganda had a fully African Roman Catholic diocese (228). In West Africa, the scriptures were translated into local languages and local history and customs were recorded, out of "a concern for the cultural integrity in societies undergoing profound transformations" and in order "to establish the validity and legitimacy of local culture" (206).[2]

Calls for an indigenous African church came from such figures as Edward Wilmot Blyden, who believed African Christianity needed an organic history like that of West African Islam (Ward 207). One popular call was for the "Ethiopian" churches foretold in Psalm 68.31: "Ethiopia shall stretch forth his hand to God." Ethiopia became a powerful symbol for several reasons: the Psalm suggested its independence; it was an un-colonized, Christian kingdom; and it inspired pan-African identity (Chidester 427). Many African Christians saw Ethiopia's 1896 defeat of Italy as confirming the Psalm's prophecy and affirming their work (Ward 216).

The use of Ethiopia as a symbol of pan-African identity is evident in the history of the Ethiopian Church, founded in South Africa in 1892 by Mangena M. Mokone and affiliated in 1896 with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, which was then working under Bishop Henry M. Turner to make a "highway across the Atlantic" (qtd. in Chidester 427). Another connection between South Africa and the United States came the following year with the establishment of Christian Zionism under the patronage of John Alexander Dowie's community in Zion City, Illinois (427-428). Zionist groups soon proliferated, and by 1990 around five thousand Zionist denominations existed, with a wide variety of beliefs and practices (429). This African adoption of American movements helped establish pan-African identity.

African churches have adopted contemporary Western theologies with varying degrees of interest. American Black Theology has inspired many African thinkers, but Liberation Theology has been surprisingly limited mostly to South Africa; it has even been called another form of

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[2] Compare this work with that of the Jesuits in New France, as discussed earlier.

colonialism (Isichei 332). While Teilhard de Chardin is admired by many for his "evolutionary optimism, scientific rigour and all-embracing humanism" (Shorter 6-7), Marx is often rejected as too impersonal and atheistic. Instead, Prosperity Theology is very popular; Nigerian minister Benson Idahosa, founder of Church of God Mission International, is cited by Prosperity Gospel proponents in the West "as a prime example of its effectiveness" (Isichei 335-336).

One interesting result of colonialism is that indigenous evangelists are credited with founding African churches, and not European missionaries; such attributions help establish the Church's "vernacular and local character" (Ward 221). Independent African Christianity began to prosper around the time of the First World War under the leadership of such men as William Wade Harris in coastal West Africa, Isaiah Shembe in South Africa, and Simon Kimbangu in the lower Congo (home of Dona Beatriz), and of such women as Christiana "Captain" Abiodun in Nigeria, Gaudencio Aoko in Kenya, and Alice Lenshina in Zambia (222-223). Many of these leaders found "novel ways of redefining Christianity as an African religion independent of white missionary control" (Chidester 417). Harris, for example, explained baptism "in specifically African terms as a ritual of purity and protection" (418) that washed away converts' loyalty to their indigenous beliefs and promised to protect them from colonialism; within his first year, he "had baptized over a hundred thousand new converts" (417). Similarly, the Yoruba Aladura ("owners of the prayer") movement "affirmed the power of both African ritual speech and Christian prayer" (419). These independent movements have impacted mission churches: Harris sent his converts to the missions for instruction, and the Balokole Revival in Eastern Africa spread into several denominations in several countries (Ward 224).

In terms of reclaiming an African identity for the Church, Ghanaian Rev. Carl Christian Reindorf's 1889 book, History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, was groundbreaking for being "an African history for Africans and about Africans" (Bediako 40). By interpreting African history from a Christian perspective, Reindorf's book recalls the works of Bede and Gregory of Tours as "national histories with, and arising from, Christian interest" (40-41). Reindorf was influenced

by Johannes Christaller and what has been called the "Akropong [Seminary] school of Christian historiography" (46), which proposed a national history and a literary language to unify the Ghanaian peoples. Christaller's project reached maturity with the 1937 publication of Clement Anderson Akrofi's grammar of Twi, <u>Twi Kasa Mmara</u> (52-53). By this time, Twi was no longer simply an oral language, nor was its use limited to religious literature: one Ghanaian scholar translated selections from Homer, Herodotus and Sophocles (53). Thus, a mission intended for religious purposes gave rise to scholarship that went beyond religion (54).

The role of vernacular languages has been linked by theologians to the Pentecost account in Acts 2, in which the proliferation of languages provides a way of "answering to the chaos of Babel and restoring harmony between God and humanity, and between human beings" (Bediako 60). As Indigenous Christianity depends upon having vernacular Scriptures, the presence of many translations in Africa may explain Christianity's success there (62). These translations illuminate both the Scriptures and African cultures (71), since "it is only through the vernacular that a genuine and lasting theological dialogue with culture can take place" (73).

Another movement that sought to recover African heritage was the Négritude movement, which was so admired by African Catholics that they were "well-prepared" for the reforms of Vatican II (Ward 231). Of special interest was Vatican II's call to inculturation, which shifted mission strategy from adaptation to "incarnation" by proclaiming that "Christ is at work in non-Christian traditions" (Shorter 23) and that people must seek "the incarnation of Christianity in African cultures" (Isichei 331). However, these reforms created new problems, e.g., many of the practices the church hoped to amend (shrines, statues, candles, etc.) "were closest to traditional religions" (327). Similar problems arose around European standards of poverty, which by African standards remained quite comfortable and even prosperous, and around Rome's insistence on monogamy (329). Even the call for vernacular languages created problems, for in multilingual cities, which language counts as the vernacular? (331)

Inculturation was also difficult to implement as many missionaries downplayed the role of spirits, which Africans take very seriously; missionaries become less effective when they deny what many Africans experience as reality (Isichei 330), especially as inadequate health care has prompted many Africans to rely on traditional healing practices (338). These issues have been used to explain the Marian visions in Rwanda, Cameroon and Kenya as stemming from the social disruption of African society and/or as signifying the people's response to the lack of indigenization by churches (328). For many African leaders, these immediate problems must be addressed before inculturation can have any positive effect (331). Fortunately, when these problems have been addressed, the Church has benefited, e.g., the Igbo, who see Christianity as providing things their gods could not provide, i.e., hospitals and schools (Dyrness 56).[3]

The question of how indigenous the Church has become is crucial for Catholics and Protestants alike. Christian evangelists in Africa have been accused of leaving converts dangling between two cultural systems rather than connecting the two (Dyrness 65). There is a fear that instead of emulating the Ethiopians, who fed their Christianity on indigenous roots, Africans will emulate the Donatists, who converted to Islam because church officials such as Cyprian and Augustine "did not seem to take seriously Berber spirituality" (67). This problem takes two forms: the problem of Europeanization, which has been compared to Paul's concerns over the Judaizers (66), and the many practical problems that lead people back to their traditional practices, such as the lack of adequate health care mentioned above. These two forms combine in various ways: many secular thinkers are optimistic about the potentials of modernization and urbanization, despite the danger of Europeanization, but many African theologians believe the dangers of these processes outweigh the prospects of better health care, etc. (68). Given these concerns from its own theologians, the Church may need to better articulate the possibilities that can come from modernization if it can avoid Westernization.

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[3] Recall the way the Nahuatl saw the veneration of Mary as an improvement over their own traditions.

In spite of these difficulties, the diversity of African Christianity testifies to the success of inculturation (Bediako 62). As of 1990, Africa had more Christians than North America (Dyrness 36). In addition, many African national leaders have Christian backgrounds, e.g., Leopold Senghor, President of Senegal, leading figure in the Négritude movement, and a Catholic seminarian influenced by Jacques Maritain and Teilhard de Chardin (Isichei 339).

African Christianity is characterized by its "associational" aspects: a high degree of involvement by indigenous members, lay people, and women (Ward 224). Women, especially in rural areas, "tend to be the backbone [...and] mainstay of Church life" (226), partly because the church supports them when their husbands are away at work and when their husbands need to change their behavior (226). Lay people are active because they are often better educated than the clergy (especially among Protestants) and because church councils have welcomed them when other organizations remained segregated (227). And, churches provided "a moral and spiritual focus of hope" during difficult times, as in the struggle against apartheid, "in which the Churches were seen to represent society as a whole" (229). Although churches were not free from corruption, they often provided stability and opportunities not available elsewhere (230).

Modern African Christian writers share the early church's view of spirituality as an encounter with the Spirit of God that transforms relationships and provides "a new way of living" (Shorter 4-5). Drawing from multiple traditions, they create "a larger-than-life African religious philosophy" (5) out of the many common themes, e.g., "the desire for abundant life, the emphasis on communitarian living, the effective memory of past events, the vital relationship between living and dead and the preoccupation with the human cause of evil" (6). These themes suggest that African Christianity is humanistic and revolutionary and that it rejects materialism and "shallow religiosity," structural injustice and dehumanization, passive consumption of Western culture, and the interiorization of religion at the expense of community (7). Correlated to these protests are commitments "to a world of the spirit, to man [sic] and his integral development to culture as a living tradition and to human community" (8).

This return to African heritages did not start with theologians; it has long been part of the people's daily lives, many of whom "had no idea that the tradition had been lost" and instead "regard Christianity as the indigenous religion of Africa" (Chidester 432-433). Many newer churches that analyze their theology from an African perspective have found ways to recreate their traditional world-view within a Christian perspective while turning away from so-called "paganism" (Bediako 66-67). Hence, the African Church "emerged out of complex local negotiations with indigenous religion" and relies on "African initiatives in finding new ways to relate to the spiritual resources of indigenous tradition" (Chidester 431). Some theologians even teach that Africans were worshipping the biblical God long before the Europeans arrived (432). As Archbishop Tutu states, this belief helps Africans reject "the lie that religion and history in Africa date from the advent in that continent of the white man" (qtd. in Chidester 432). It is said that the biblical God "could not rise up against the 'gods'" in Ghana (Bediako 55), because there were no gods to rise up against—the Ghanaians had always worshipped God. Because "the African experience of the Christian faith can be seen to be fully coherent with the religious quests in African life," Christianity has been called "an African's religion" (60).

Asian Churches were no less active in making Christianity their own. The early relationship between Syriac and European Christians was amiable, but the two groups soon began to realize their differences, as the Indians rejected the European practices of venerating images and of referring to Mary as Mother of God, while the Europeans, suspicious of the Syriac scriptural tradition that underlay Indian Christianity, accused them of Nestorianism and eventually invoked the Inquisition (Frykenberg 159-160).[4] The Indian Christians then

> saw their whole way of life, nurtured for untold generations, endangered. Told
>
> that their faith and forms of worship were flawed and their rejection of images—

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[4] Keep in mind the historical irony that scholars have pointed out regarding the thinness of European Christianization at the beginning of the colonial period: "There are those who see little difference between the French of the sixteenth century and, for example, their 'unbelieving' Indian contemporaries" (Wessels 4).

which had for so long made them distinct from Hindu communities surrounding them—was heresy; that everything handed down to them from their mother Church was unacceptable, and that their family ceremonies, customs and traditions were an abomination, Thomas [i.e., Syriac] Christians sought to defend themselves. (162-163)

In response to these accusations, the Indian Church under such leaders as Mar Joseph and Mar Abraham returned to its Syriac traditions and in 1653 reclaimed its independence by installing its own archbishop (164-165).

Protestant Indian converts continued the early tradition of scholarship, e.g., the founder of modern Tamil prose, Vedanāyakam Sāstri, who presented Christian ideas through traditional genres, idioms and music (Frykenberg 178-179). However, by the late nineteenth century, as Europeans embraced the inspiration of all religions and Western education for Indians became more common, individual conversions to Christianity became less important than Christianizing the culture (185). As a result, many Indian Christians proclaimed that Christianity is compatible with Hinduism and that conversion need not affect one's social customs, a teaching that accepted the caste system and thereby ignored the needs of lower-caste Christians (186.)

One Hindu-Christian movement was the Brahmo Samaj, begun in 1828 by Ram Mohan Roy to reform Hinduism into a monotheistic religion along the lines of Western Unitarian deism (Chidester 459-462). A generation later, Keshab Chandra Sen took up leadership of the Brahmo Samaj, restoring "the importance of religious devotion and divine revelation" (462) and supporting British missionaries' calls for social reforms, believing that colonialism was God's method of reforming India. For Sen, Jesus' physical miracles were less important than the miracle by which truth, prayer and divine inspiration raised him above his material difficulties— poverty, illiteracy, a corrupt culture and peasant comrades—to conquer the kingdoms of the world and to found "the kingdom of truth and God, of freedom and harmony" (qtd. in Forman 67). Sen merged Hinduism and Christianity into the New Dispensation, which centered on Jesus

Christ as the "Prince of Prophets" and the "ultimate revelation of what he called 'Divine Humanity,'" and which identified Jehovah with Brahma as the First Person of the Trinity (Chidester 463). He saw the New Disposition as both Christian and Hindu—as universal, in fact—claiming, "Christ is not Christianity" (qtd. in Chidester 464) but is available to all. Hence, he disliked the common practice of "denationalization" (qtd. in Forman 68), by which Indian converts rejected Indian culture and adopted European manners, forgetting "that Christ, their master, was an Asiatic, and that it is not necessary in following him to make themselves alien to their country or race" (qtd. in Forman 69).

This combination of Christianity and Hinduism is also seen in the use of Jesus as an object of Bhakti devotion, exemplified in the teachings of Ramakrishna (Chidester 464). Mixing religions is common in Indian popular religion; one recent study found that in a town where no one self-identified as Christian, fifteen percent of the people said that Jesus was their Lord (Ishta Devata) (470). Perhaps the best known example of Christian influence on Hindu thought is found in the work of Mahatma Gandhi, who was deeply influenced by Jesus' life and who believed the Sermon on the Mount to be universal (467). One Indian theologian regards Gandhi's concept of satyagraha, ("truth force") as "Christianity in action" (469).

In Japan, scholars shared the Chinese Confucians' concerns about Christianity discussed above and linked it to Western imperialism (Chidester 439); it was formally banned along with Europe in 1638. With Japan's 1868 re-opening came the discovery of the Kakure Kirishitan, "hidden Christians" who had secretly practiced their faith for over two hundred years, although it had become mixed with Shintō and Buddhism (Tiedemann 400). After the turn of the century, and especially after the Second World War, many Japanese Christians became more indigenous and less tied to foreign churches by forming independent groups (401). One such group was the Mukyōkai shugi or "nonchurch" movement, begun by Uchimura Kanzō in the belief that Revelation 21.22 teaches, "There is no organized church in heaven" (qtd. in Chidester 449). Hoping to bring the heavenly model of church into the present world, Uchimura fused universal

and local aspects: nature is the church and God the only preacher; but since the universal is always manifested locally, Christianity is compatible with national loyalty, as evinced by the national forms of Christianity in Europe (449-450). For Uchimura, "all Christianity is indigenous Christianity. Although representing a universal truth that requires no church to defend, Christianity necessarily assumes local forms that anchor it in the real world" (451).

The Second World War's affect on mission churches led to the promotion of Japanese Catholic bishops and the development of a unified Protestant body, the United Church of Christ or UCCJ (Tiedemann 401). Some of these groups aligned with the government: One American observer noted that the UCCJ often relayed government orders to churches, e.g., enforcing (on threat of arrest) the practice of opening worship with a bow to the Emperor and prayers for war heroes (Forman 110). UCCJ Executive Secretary Ebisawa Akira stated publicly that the goals of Christianity are compatible with Japanese imperialism (109). Christianity was also important in the development of Japanese socialism, especially in its interactions (both cooperative and antagonistic) with dialectical materialism (92). When Japan's first socialist political party, the Social Democratic Party, was founded in 1901, five of its six founders were Christian (95).

Christianity has been so important for Japanese social work that, in 1956, when the government listed the most important Japanese social workers, all four nominees were Christians (Forman 92). One of the most important figures is Kagawa Toyohiko, "one of the most creative persons in Japanese history in the area of social and political reform" (Drummond 227). Kagawa was persecuted during his life, but was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1955 and posthumously awarded one of the Emperor's highest civilian honors (227). A strong believer in the benefits of labor unions, Kagawa helped found Japan's first farmers' union (235), the Japan Federation of Labor (232-233), and the National Anti-War League, for which he was widely denounced (237). He worked to bring the improvement of working and living conditions and "the remaking of men and women as persons" (235).

Kagawa's social work rested on his beliefs "that God dwells among the lowliest form of men [sic]" and "that the Christian gospel demands the utmost concern and effort to liberate men from every chain and the betterment of their physical, economic, social, psychological and moral as well as spiritual conditions" (Drummond 230-231). Having attended seminary in Kōbe, his theology was "a conscious application of Schleiermacher" (236). In 1926, he helped found the Kingdom of God movement, an evangelistic campaign that also sought "to bring Christian perspectives and standards of value to bear on the social and economic life of the nation" (238-239); this movement proved an important resource to Japan as military domination increased. Kagawa has been called "the creative, dynamic initiator and promoter of almost every movement for constructive social reform in Japan for more than forty years" (240). His influence upon "the ethical awareness, the social ideals, and to a very appreciable extent the spiritual understanding" of later generations suggests that he "informed the moral conscience of a largely non-Christian nation probably more than any other of his countrymen in the twentieth century" (241).

An important example of Chinese use of Christianity began with the publication of Liang Afa's Good Words for Exhorting the Age. This collection of key Christian stories prompted the conversion of Hong Xiuquan, whose God Worshipers Society quickly gained about ten thousand followers (Chidester 440-442). Branding the Manchu government demonic, the Society led the Taiping Rebellion, in which Hong named himself younger brother of Jesus and emperor of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, a theocratic state whose capital, Nanjing, was to be a New Jerusalem (442-443). Hong's heterodox theology—he allowed his followers to use shamanic oracular and spiritual healing practices and rejected the unity of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, the immateriality of God, and the authority of the Bible (445)—led to the persecution of other Christian groups (444).

Chinese Christianity matured after 1900. Chinese Catholics were active in social service, e.g., Ma Xiangbo, who helped found Aurora (now Zhendan) University and Furen (Fu Jen) Catholic University (Tiedemann 397). Numerous independent Protestant movements arose, one

of the best known being the Local Church movement led by Ni Tuosheng (a.k.a. Watchman Nee). Chinese Christians gained more freedom after the Vatican reversed its ruling against the Confucian rites and after Chiang Kai-shek married a Methodist (398). In 1950, Communist fear of Catholicism led the government to support the Catholic Three-Self Movement, based on the three-self principle of "self-management, self-support and self-propagation" (395). This policy successfully rid the church of foreign ties; by 1958, the Chinese Catholic Church had severed ties to the Vatican and become the National Patriotic Catholic Association under the oversight of government-appointed bishops (406). Chinese Protestants founded their own Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1954 and denounced groups and leaders who did not join, including Ni Tuosheng (406-407). Since the 1970s, Chinese Christianity has grown rapidly, especially among Protestant and underground churches (407).

Indigenous Christian Theologies

Although Christianity claims to be universal, the boundaries of its universalism have never been clear, as is plain from missionaries' tendency to equate Christianity with Western culture and force Western practices and worldviews on their converts. Many Asian theologians, re-reading mission history from their own perspectives, find that Westerners were so convinced of their divine election and political dominance that they assumed Asian cultures would die out; even those who admitted their racism supposed Asia would not revive to pass judgment on them (Kitagawa 28-29). As for pastoral and theological training, Europeans often preferred technical proficiency to original intellectual activity in their students (35). Although missionaries brought such non-religious benefits as medicine, education and social work, they raised suspicions and thus undermined their own effectiveness by focusing too much on evangelism (32). These problems were discussed as early as 1938, but solutions were put off by the War, which changed the contours of East-West relations so drastically that Western churches abandoned mission work for East-West dialogue, which then raised new problems and new suspicions (35-36).

Even though Asians have gained control of their churches, colonial attitudes remain. The former mission (or "younger") churches in Asia face three major remnants of colonialism: First, they must view mission work as part of European colonialism and the pseudo-religion of Western civilization (Kitagawa 20). Second, they suffer from the "mission compound mentality" (21) of Western bureaucracy, by which mission organizations remained unaccountable to the younger churches, uninvolved in Asian socioeconomic life, unable "to exercise bureaucratic control" (21) and yoked to false prophecies about the death of Asian religions. Even Asian Christians who associate mission work with colonialism are often more familiar with European theology than with their own traditions (Christian and non) and therefore "closer to Christians in the west than to their non-Christian neighbors" (21).

Accordingly, Asian responses to Western evangelism have been mixed. Although many Asian leaders completely reject Westernization, most Asians remain indifferent (Kitagawa 30-31). However, many embrace the Westernizing effects of Christianity, especially urbanites, who use Christianity to gain social mobility, and peasants, who are often excluded from Asian culture and valued only by the church (31). In India, for instance, missionaries have been successful among people who are left out of Hindu religion and Indian nationalism either for living in remote areas or for being in the lowest social classes and who accordingly embrace Christianity in order to escape their social conditions (Frykenberg 182).

A more serious problem comes from differences between Eastern and Western worldviews. Scholars suggest that whereas Westerners synthesize diverse cultural elements to create a universal culture, Easterners accept the juxtaposition and co-existence of cultures (Kitagawa 24). Eastern thought also depends less on propositional logic than on "symbols and parables" (Hargreaves 3). For instance, the tree metaphors in scripture (e.g. in John's Gospel) yield three main themes for the Asian Church: 1) rootedness, i.e., the need for indigenous theology; 2) growth, e.g., relational methods of evangelism; and 3) relatedness, i.e., "synthesis, inclusiveness and comprehensiveness" (3-6). Further, because Asian metaphysics stresses non-

duality, many Asians have trouble with the creeds' two-person formulation of "personhood in terms of localized interiority" (Dyrness 177). Instead, Asian theologians focus on "the larger cosmic dimensions of Christ's work" and "the final goal toward which creation moves [...]" (178).

Theologian Yeo Khiok-khng illustrates these challenges by exploring "the intricate relations between biblical narratives and the Chinese narratives" through the use of narrative theology, a theology that arises from the existential questions that inspire cultures to "retell their stories and traditions and relate them to the divine" (17). Yeo argues that Chinese cultural narratives are built on the "yin-yang philosophy" (18) of the fourth and fifth centuries BCE, which is characterized by the following concepts: 1) cosmology is prior to and therefore more important than anthropology; 2) reality is conceived as change rather than being; and 3) reality is perceived as relatedness rather than as difference (18-21). Yeo applies his argument to China's major religious narratives. The crucial element of the Daoist narrative is its precept that people see only parts of the truth; therefore, "The solution to cultural conflict and claim of superiority is 'nothingness,' that is, the act of letting or of putting down one's own presupposition and bias" (21). The Confucian narrative, looking to a stable past, finds social stability in the cultivation of music (i.e., emotional harmony), ritual (propriety) and love (22-23). The Buddhist narrative, formed "in the social context of racial diversity and polytheism" (23), attributes suffering (dukkha) to clinging (tanha) and hence teaches that reality should be understood as a "web of relationships" (Pratitya Samutpada, which is related to emptiness, sunyata) (23).

Seeking a better way to present Christianity to non-Western audiences, Yeo analyzes Paul's speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17) in light of Chinese concerns. Using Tertullian's famous question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"[5] Yeo sees five possible relationships between the Church and Athens (and in turn, China): the Church could 1) condemn Greek culture; 2) integrate with it; 3) segregate from it; 4) replace it; or 5) equate the two (191-192). Yeo argues

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[5] This question provides the title of Yeo's book, What Has Jerusalem to Do with Beijing.

that Paul integrates the two cultures but maintains clear distinctions about their religious differences (192). Paul replaces monologue with a dialogic approach that tailors his comments to his audience and thereby affirms their culture's insights and religious values before critiquing them (193). Paul also identifies with his audience, speaking to their level and needs and working to obtain their goodwill (195). Finally, Paul uses "proofs" to convince his audience; as an example, Yeo suggests that in speaking to modern Daoists, Paul might refer to God's activity in the world to challenge their belief that history is cyclical (196).

Since the 1920s, Chinese Christian theology has focused on character development and the imitation of Christ (Dyrness 135) and not on maintaining contact with Chinese traditions and identity (136). In addressing Jerusalem's relation to Chinese Daoists, Yeo recommends that Chinese evangelists: dialogue with Daoism's religious aspects; connect to their audience by stressing Daoism's benefits on virtue; and point out how the Christian belief in God's activity in history answers Chinese religious questions more satisfactorily than Daoist teachings, which the Chinese often ignore in practice (193-197). Though he focuses on Daoism, Yeo implies that these methods would work with Confucians and Buddhists and, presumably, any other religion.

Within a Confucian frame, one notable theologian is Song Choan-seng (a.k.a. C. S. Song). Song's theology is incarnational, focused on "the eternal presence of a powerfully creative force" (Dyrness 137) and on connecting redemption to the ongoing historical process of creation (138). The Incarnation makes God's purpose of "transforming chaos and dispelling darkness" possible for all cultures and times, as salvation is located "not primarily in political or cultural dynamics, but in the human depths" (138). From this perspective, revelation is tied to local culture, and Song suggests that God's kingdom may be illustrated more effectively by Asian mask dances than by traditional Christian images (138). Song's theology also shows how views of history affect Jesus' role: in cultures with "no sense of history as unrepeatable events" (140), Jesus' death becomes an exemplary pattern rather than the defining event of history.

In Japan, the persecution of Christians remains in the cultural memory (Dyrness 142). Some Japanese theologians respond to this memory by adopting elements of Zen Buddhism, as in Kitamori Kazoh's influential A Theology of the Pain of God. Kitamori connects Jeremiah's depiction of God's pain for the Hebrews with Buddhist teachings about suffering's curative value and with the Japanese concept of tsurasa, "a deep personal agony suffered for others" (144). Whereas Western spirituality values endurance, tsurasa valorizes empathy (145).[6] Kitamori also expresses the sorrowful aspects of hibiki, "the depth of nature and humanity" (146). But other theologians express the joyous side of hibiki, e.g., Takenaka Maseo, who argues that we must become sensitive to God's presence with us here and now (145-146). Takenaka connects this concept with wabi, the meek and harmonious expression of beauty that is found in the tea ceremony and in flower arranging (146).

Another influential book is Koyama Kosuke's Waterbuffalo Theology, which has been compared in importance to the work of liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez (Dyrness 146). Koyama stresses the use of the concrete objects of daily life (e.g., water buffaloes grazing in the paddies) to preach the Gospel. This emphasis reveals another difference between Western and Eastern theology: whereas Westerners assume an orderly universe because they start from a place of comfort, Easterners start with discomfort (147). Unlike many of his colleagues, Koyama sees Christianity's solution as opposed to Buddhism's, i.e., Christianity rejects detachment in favor of "attachment to history, which Scripture calls the covenant" (148). He is thus, like Yeo, one of the few Asian theologians who is not put off by the Western emphasis upon history (176).

One of the best known Indian Christians is Sundar Singh, the Christian sadhu (teacher) who in the 1920s addressed thousands of listeners on speaking tours of Europe and the U.S., but who also wandered through India, Tibet and Nepal to imitate Jesus' homelessness (Moore 23-24). Reared in a Sikh house with heavy Hindu influence, Singh did not condemn the devotional

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[6] This idea is also found in such Japanese Christian novelists as Endo Shusaku, whose Silence depicts Jesus' willingness to take on the suffering of others (144-145).

practices of Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, but, like Yeo, argued simply that Jesus was more satisfying (18). Though formally trained in both Hinduism and Christianity, he converted only after a vision of Jesus; based upon this conflict between religious education and religious experience, Singh taught that "the intuitive vision" of God surpasses "discursive knowledge" (Dyrness 127), which is often devoid of spiritual benefit. Singh influenced such church leaders as Bishop A. J. Appasamy, whose study of Singh's thought led him to enrich his Christian faith with the Hindu Bhakti devotional tradition, since Bhakti "focused one's love and adoration on a personal God, on whose mercy one can depend utterly [as] fulfilled in Christ" (127).

The loss of missionaries after the 1947 Partition allowed Indian Christian theology to flourish. In the decades since, the Syriac Church expanded and Roman Catholics adopted the reforms of Vatican II (Frykenberg 188-189). Perhaps the most crucial development in Indian Christianity occurred that same year, when several Protestant denominations merged to form the Church of South India (188). This Church was a response to God's call for Christian unity, not simply for India but as an example for the world. As one historian explains, "The union was intended to be the first step towards the reunion of all the Churches throughout the world, and to lead ultimately to the spiritual unification of the whole of Christendom" (Forman 139) by providing an example of unity for other churches to follow.

Some Westerners supported the move to a more Indian Christianity, e.g., missionary author E. Stanley Jones, known for his book Christ of the Indian Road (Bundy). Jones saw Christianity as part of a fulfillment and renewal of Indian spirituality and formulated it in Indian terms (Dyrness 128); to this end, he actively participated in the development of "Christian Ashrams" (Bundy). He also became friends with Gandhi, and Jones' biography of him played a key role in Martin Luther King Jr.'s adoption of Gandhian non-violence (Bundy).

Indian influence on Christian theology is found in the work of the Roman Catholic Raimundo Panikkar, who, having grown up in a bi-religious household, considers himself "a Christian-Hindu-Buddhist" (Chidester 469). Panikkar models East-West dialogue on the

Christian Trinity, with each religion grasping a different Person: Buddhists understand the unknowability of God the Father/Mother; Christians understand the Revelation of God the Son; and Hindus understand the spiritual experience of God the Holy Spirit (469). Thus, the full knowledge of God comes only when these three religions intersect and interact. Indian influence is also found in Samuel Rayan, who uses Hindu ideas of cyclical history to show that the Biblical notion of history requires belief in an active God, since love must be placed within us. Since the absence of love in social relationships, e.g., the Indian caste system, reveals God's absence from society, love becomes "public and political" (Dyrness 130). At the same time, history depends on the "personal response to the presence of Christ" (130), in that "whenever a person responds to Christ, time moves forward, and that person becomes a part of the eschaton on earth" (130). Thus, Rayan joins Yeo and Koyama in emphasizing Western views of history.

The nature and role of history has been important to African Christian theologians as well as to their colleagues in India, China and Japan. Some African theologians argue that many African peoples view history as neither progressive nor cyclical but as moving "'backwards' from the intense moment of the 'now-period' towards the increasingly distant past (Tene)" (Mbiti 56). With no traditional myths about the future, these people cannot understand why the eschaton does not occur immediately, a problem that also arose in the early church (56-57). Many breakaway churches have been founded because of these sorts of problems (61).

Harry Sawyerr's view of history echoes Rayan's: the Church does not have history but is history, just as theology is not about God, but about what God does for humanity (24-25). Thus, the value of any African Theology is not its content, but its function, e.g., whether it preserves community (24). Concerned that African ideas are being adopted out of the traps of exoticism and nationalism (24), Sawyerr explores the complexity of a valid African theology: "A Theologia Africana based on sound philosophical discussion need therefore not be a 'native' product, but a searching investigation into the content of traditional religious thought-forms with a view to erecting bridgeheads by which the Christian gospel could be effectively transmitted to the

African peoples" (23). Sawyerr argues that African theology must not import American Black Theology solely on the basis of black peoples' similar skin colors and/or ancestral heritages, and, conversely, that African theology must include whites and Asians living on the continent (25).

Sawyerr's ideas are shared both by Charles Nyamiti, who agrees that not everything African is good, e.g., "superstition, and [...] exaggerated types of this-worldliness and anthropocentrism" (59), and by John Pobee, who agrees about the benefits of a careful use of Western tradition, asserting that African theology must use the Bible, Biblical criticism, the methodology of history of religions, and Church tradition (31). He recommends that African theology be phenomenological, along the lines of Husserl and Tillich, and applied to the examination of African sources (since there are no African "scriptures") (33). And, it must stop complaining about the early missions, since these complaints waste time and solve nothing (34).

One way to downplay the history of missions is to stress the connections between African and Christian thought. In East Africa, John Mbiti is a pioneer; from West Africa, J. B. Danquah's The Akan Doctrine of God argues that African traditional religion is compatible with Christianity (Ward 232). Nyamiti notes that usable aspects of African thought include "African divine names and attributes," "rich symbolism," "God, the Source of all good things," and the "Fatherhood and Motherhood of God" (63-66). Many writers also focus on rural communities as representing closer connections to indigenous traditions: some writers argue that rural culture's lack of technologically-mediated relationships makes it more civilized than urban life; others find rural life larger and hence more spiritually demanding (Shorter 9). For such reasons, many writers feel close to scriptural Hebrew culture, and many churches are known as "Hebraist" churches for adapting Hebrew traditions to their own circumstances (10-11).

Many African Christian writers relate Christian ideas of community to the African concept of ujamaa, ("familyhood"), a familial sense of the ancestors and society; "ujamaa theology" is often connected to the Communion of Saints and the Mystical Body of Christ (Shorter 28-29). This focus on integrating persons into community helps African theologians

incorporate the need for personal autonomy without resorting to Western notions of interiorization and individualism (16). Many African cultures view life's "crisis points," e.g., "birth, puberty, marriage, illness and death" (Appiah-Kubi 69), as crucial moments in which earthly and spiritual forces meet and the individual finds direction (Dyrness 60). Indigenous churches use this concept to show that Jesus has gone through all the rites of passage and thereby "fulfills the conditions of a perfect member of the community" (Appiah-Kubi 70).

Jesus also plays several important cultural roles for African Christians. He is the Savior and strengthener who delivers people from bad circumstances (Appiah-Kubi 72-73). He is the Liberator who announces good news to the poor, addressing a large group of issues that includes "religious, political, socio-economic, spiritual and mystical, personal and societal concerns" (74). He is also the Healer against the mystical causes of illness, dysfunction, and the like (75). At the same time, however, Jesus' incarnation is less important for African Christology than "the process by which we ourselves become incarnate. It is we who have to become more human, to realize to the full our human potentialities" (Shorter 15).[7]

These attempts to unify African and Christian thought are not universally accepted. In Europe, church leaders such as Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) have argued that African theology threatens shared, universal Catholic identity (Isichei 330). Meanwhile, some African thinkers, such as the well-known poet Okot p'Bitek, are not convinced by claims that African culture is "saturated with religion, and [...] basically consonant with Christianity" (Ward 232). And even though Mbiti and other scholars find continuities between pre-Christian African religions and Christianity, they have not accounted for (and have been accused of trying to wish away) the "wider spirit world of African primal religions," e.g. diffused monotheism or the role of ancestors (Bediako 97-98). At the same time, these traditional beliefs are being altered by

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[7] Recall the discussion of "becoming-human" in the section on Rolle.

popular churches, which, for example, have effectively Christianized the "wider spirit world" by using angels both to demonize and to replace traditional deities (98).

As has occurred in Asia, other problems stem from disjunctions between European and African conceptions of the world and of religion. Scholars such as John V. Taylor, Alexis Kagame and Gwa Cikala M. Mulago suggest that African traditions focus not on a transcendent God but rather on humanity, both in the present life and as a collective (Bediako 100). Similar problems occur around the concept of sin. Among the Nuer in Sudan, actions are not inherently good or bad but are judged by their effect on the community (e.g., provoking the spirits); sin is thus pollution rather than immorality and is social rather than individual (Dyrness 53). Although this attitude resembles Paul's discussion of the universal results of Adam's sin (in Romans), Africans do not connect individual sins with a general human condition of fallenness (54-55).

The relation between spiritual and physical realms also causes problems. In African conceptions of a spiritual universe, "all created things have a symbolic quality and everything speaks, as [noted author] Camara Laye puts it, of 'the mystery of the union between heaven and earth'" (Shorter 12). Yet, many Africans believe the human world is closely linked to an active spirit world but not in the Christian belief that (in Christ) the worlds overlap so closely that "what is physical is eschatologically transformed into the spiritual" (Mbiti 153). Mbiti's analysis of the Akamba illustrates the problem: Whereas Christians want the worlds to overlap, the Akamba keep them at a carefully controlled distance (155). Analogies to the Communion of the Saints are also misleading, as the Akamba view the ancestors more "physically and anthropocentrically" (154) than do Christians, for whom the communion is spiritual and always focused through Christ; whereas Christianity teaches that the dead find their fulfillment and immortality with Christ, the Akamba believe that the dead go to <u>Tene</u>, "the distant past where, anthropocentrically, the departed becomes virtually uncreateable and entirely lost" (156).

Translation causes other problems. Though African writers differ about what the soul is, they generally agree that it is not the Western concept of "life force," but rather the existence

that logically precedes force and energy (Shorter 12). Thus, the European term does not denote the African concept. Similarly, many genderless African terms for humans become gendered when translated into European languages (30). As a result, translations have inadvertently created sexism against affect African women, who meet increasing resistance in their attempts to enter religious and political life in spite of better access to education; they thus find themselves "prepared for a role that they are not allowed to play" (30).

More translation problems arise around Christology, as in African cultures, Jesus' role as mediator focuses less on attaining forgiveness for the people than on communicating between God, the ancestors and humanity (Appiah-Kubi 71). The missionary practice of referring to Jesus as "chief" backfired several in ways:[8] "African chiefs were often ritual figures with highly circumscribed powers. They were often remote and inaccessible to their subjects. Even worse, chiefs became agents of the colonial administration and were identified with foreign oppression" (Shorter 17). A more useful analogy for Jesus is "elder brother" (17). Similarly, God the Father-Mother is not the same as the Supreme Being, who is real but does not actively intervene in daily life (Dyrness 59); a more useful analogy here is "ancestor" (Shorter 18).

Conclusion

The indigenization of Christianity in Africa and Asia has been a long process that began with the earliest missionaries, especially in Asia, where such Europeans as de Nobili and Ricci recognized the sophistication of the cultures and studied them respectfully. Over time, Christianity was adopted by the peoples themselves, often because of their own cultural beliefs, as in the BaKongo understanding of water voyages as signifying initiation into spiritual mysteries. Sometimes, this process created hybrid or heterodox forms of Christianity, as with the Brahmo Samaj in India, the God Worshipers Society in China, and the Kakure Kirishitan in Japan. But it often connected local church movements to movements elsewhere in the world, as

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[8] Recall the problem of Jesus as Lord in Native American cultures.

with the Ethiopian Church's affiliation with the AME church in the U.S., or the current popularity of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa. And in both continents, Christians have taken roles as social and political leaders, from the founders of the African Nationalist Congress and of the Japanese Social Democratic Party to such individuals as the politician Leopold Senghor, the educator Ma Xiangbo, and the labor activist Kagawa Toyohiko.

With the end of colonialism, the decrease in Western mission work and the support of Rome's calls to inculturation, African and Asian theologians gained more autonomy in seeking ways to express the Christian narrative in local terms. Scholars have sought to find appropriate translations for key ideas and to use local concepts to establish connections between traditional beliefs and Christian teachings. In the process, they have had to address the places where the biblical testimonies conflict with their cultural beliefs. For example, the differing roles of history have been problematic in both continents, as have differing views of Jesus' role as savior.

Still, in spite of both these problems with the biblical concepts and the different needs of African and Asian communities, the new Southern/Third World/Younger Church theologies share many characteristics. For example, they view theology more as a communal activity (e.g., South Korean <u>Minjung</u> ["people"] theology) than as an individual enterprise (Bediako 158-159). These new theologies focus more on the need for action, especially liberation, as seen in Rayan's comment that truth is known only through "its realization in life" (160). They also reunite theology and spirituality, making the Beatitudes the foundation of liberation rather than its result (161). Finally, they are less confessional and more ecumenical, "being Christian and true to context—Asian or Latin American or African, rather than being simply Roman Catholic, of Lutheran or Reformed" (162). In spite of the newness of these theologies, it may be that their ability to recognize the role of context makes them theology more universal than Western theology (163). Perhaps this is why they have been called "demonstration models" for the contemporary Church.

II. Theology: Søren Kierkegaard v. Christendom

Some three centuries after Luther's tract distinguishing the two kingdoms, Søren Kierkegaard published a series of pamphlets entitled Øieblikket (The Moment, 1855), in which he distinguishes the two by arguing that whereas the state depends on numerical support, Christianity is destroyed by it: "when all have become Christians, the concept 'Christian' has dropped out" (143). Yet as has been seen, church and state, failing to recognize this crucial difference, have often merged, creating a situation which to Kierkegaard "makes just as much sense as talking about a yard of butter, or there is, if possible, even less sense in it, since butter and the yard measure […] have nothing to do with each other, whereas state and Christianity are inversely related to or, indeed more correctly, away from each other" (143). For Kierkegaard, this notion is biblical; he sees the scriptures teaching that Christianity always stands in contrast to the world, so that believers are Christians in contradistinction to everything around them. Thus, it is ludicrous to believe that any nation, much less its culture, could be Christian, even though the practices of mass conversions, childhood baptism, state churches, etc. create the assumption that everyone in Europe is Christian. As a result, "what the state has done and is doing amounts to making, if possible, Christianity impossible" (95).

Like Luther, Kierkegaard understands that true Christians will always be a very small segment of the culture. But Kierkegaard attacks more fiercely than does Luther the idea that a culture (or nation) can be considered Christian at all. Perhaps this difference comes in part from the differences between the men's situations: Kierkegaard's pamphlets come at the very end of his life and reflect years of thought, writing and struggle, whereas Luther's tract comes early in his career and represents an early (though authoritative) formulation of his theories. And, whereas Luther situated his discussion within the context of political problems, Kierkegaard's discussion is situated largely within a set of cultural concerns.

Kierkegaard sees a rupture between Christianity and the institution of the church on a number of fronts. For one, he sees the current practice of Christianity as contradicting the

picture of Christianity presented in the scriptures: "what is understood as Christianity is the opposite of what the New Testament understands as Christianity" (160-161). In one of the early pamphlets, he describes the contemporary situation as that of a man who is forced to make his earthly life "as profitable and enjoyable" as possible on threat of torture and death (121); the threat is obviously unnecessary. Yet, this analogy describes what he saw in the European church: the fear of hell and the hope of heaven used to force people to "live just as [they] please" (121). What his culture accepts as Christianity is thus not Christian, and as a result, the culture itself cannot be Christian.

This mistake is then compounded in the practice of church education, which teaches childhood conversion, falsely believing that a fifteen year-old boy "is man enough personally to take upon himself the Baptismal promise made on the baby's behalf" (243) and then promulgating the idea that one is "too old to become a Christian" as an adult, even in one's 20s (237). Considering this idea to be "Christendom's basic lie" (237), Kierkegaard argues that "To become a Christian presupposes (according to the New Testament) a full human life, what in a natural sense would be called maturity—in order now to become a Christian by breaking with everything to which one is immediately attached" (238). Adulthood, rather than being too late, is the earliest that "there could be any question of becoming a Christian in accordance with the New Testament" (237). For Kierkegaard, the belief that children can convert to Christianity is "as impossible as it is impossible for a child to beget children" (238).

Kierkegaard sees the rupture between Christianity and the church occurring very early, so early that in effect Christianity "never went any further than the prototype and at most the apostles" (181). The difference between Christianity as introduced by Jesus and Christianity as practiced at the start of the second century was so strong that he believes "Christianity has not actually entered the world" (181) and "does not exist at all" (143). What then of the subsequent eighteen hundred years? As he sees it, Christendom is in fact "the fall from Christianity" (189), "a society of non-Christians" (241). In fact, Europeans live "a life of paganism (under the name

of Christianity)" (168). Thus, not only can Europe not claim to be Christian, but it also cannot claim to be built upon Christianity, since, as he understands church history, Christianity never existed in Europe. Therefore, he rejects the central European narratives of Christendom, "the Catholic form of a universal realm of temporal and spiritual sovereignty [and] the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic mode of a kind of cultural solidarity" (Perkins 49).

Kierkegaard understands one reason for this "fall from Christianity" to be that scripturally, Christianity is absolutely repugnant to human nature.[9] As an example of its offensiveness, Kierkegaard mentions the human instinct to propagate the race, which is "almost as strong as the instinct for self-preservation [...and scriptural] Christianity therefore tries to cool [it] down," specifically by reducing the status of marriage from a foundation of civil life to a convenient outlet for people who cannot control their libidos (186). In this way, Christianity presents itself as "what we human beings are most opposed to [...] it seems to such a degree to be calculated to incite us human beings against itself that as soon as it is heard it is the signal for the most passionate hatred and the cruelest persecution" (160). This comment captures the difference between the customs of his day, in which the threat of hell is used to "force" people to live pleasurably, and what he sees as New Testament Christianity: "the religion of suffering has become the religion of zest for life but has kept the name unchanged" (161).

This situation is not due to any obscurity in the scriptures, since in Jesus' teachings and in the apostles' own experiences and writings the viewpoint is promoted "as definitively and decisively as possible" (160). What astonishes Kierkegaard is that the offense has been so completely cleaned up. Humanity has worked very hard to get around Christianity, either rebelling against it "in wild passion and defiance" or trying "to get rid of [it] at any price" (169). Kierkegaard suggests that the latter method has been more effective, as seen in the perseverance of Christendom, which he calls "the human race's striving to get to walk on all fours again, to be

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[9] We might wonder how well this approach would work for missionaries who try to demonstrate that Christianity is more satisfying than local religious traditions.

rid of Christianity" (182). He attributes Christendom's long life to "skullduggery, calling the very opposite Christianity" (169). This comment reflects his claim that the church has traded suffering for zest for life: insofar as nothing has changed in society—save that the term "Christian" is now applied to what used to be "paganism" (185)—Christendom is in many ways the very thing that Jesus and the apostles preached against.

Another site of conflict between human nature and Christian teaching is the human need to be safe in the crowd: "we die, despair, if we are not safeguarded by being in the crowd, are not of the same opinion as the crowd, etc." (184). He contrasts this need with scriptural Christianity, which "is precisely designed for relating itself to this isolation of the spiritual person" (184). As he famously said, "the crowd is untruth" (Fletcher 47); even though he believes public policy can be successfully reformed through the popular vote (49), he fears "that such a principle will be extended to the ethical and religious as well. He is afraid one might end up deciding by vote what is the truth or whether God exists" (Nicoletti 188). However, the isolated individual is not removed from the social world of daily life. Rather, Kierkegaard's conception of the individual leads to an "interiority [...] that seeks to engender a notion of community existence" (Dooley xiii). The individual's rejection of the crowd resembles the life of an émigré (xxi). [10]

Kierkegaard's distinction between humanity's need for crowds and the scriptural teachings about spiritual isolation illustrates one of the key distinctions he makes between church and state, namely, their different relation to the question of number. For unlike the state, Christianity is strong in inverse proportion to its numbers. This notion comes early in the work and is worded quite strongly, as in the opening passages of the third pamphlet:

> "State" is directly related to number (the numerical); therefore, when a state dwindles, the number can gradually become so small that the state has ended, the concept has dropped out.

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[10] Think also of Patrick's adoption of Ireland and his rejection of his British culture.

Christianity is related to number in another way: one single true Christian is enough for it to be true that Christianity exists. Yes, Christianity is related inversely to number—when all have become Christians, the concept "Christian" has dropped out. (143)

Whereas the existence of the state depends upon the presence of a multitude, Christianity withers and dies from numerical success. The problem comes from the cultural importance of numerical strength: "When the criterion of success—of quantitative results, of power—is applied to religion, its essence becomes empty and worldly" (Nicoletti 185). Conversely, Christianity is stronger the fewer people there are to proclaim it, and even one person is enough to show its presence. Humanity's need for crowds and its desire to propagate the race run directly counter to scriptural Christianity. Hence, the very success of Christendom is the cause for the absence of Christianity: "Christianity has been abolished by propagation" (Kierkegaard 143).

The rule of inverse proportion reflects God's purpose for the Christian community. Whereas for Luther the Christian community protects people from their own vices by working alongside temporal authority, Kierkegaard's vision of community has a much more critical bent (in the sense of critique). He understands the scriptures to teach that the church is ordained by God to stand against the rest of the world in what he calls "a relation of contrast" (168; emphasis in the original), i.e., contrast to the world, contrast to self, and contrast to other people: "Because the concept 'Christian' is a polemical concept, one can be a Christian only in contradistinction or by way of contrast" (143). This relation of contrast is so strong that it qualifies as a "category of discord" in which God sets the individual and the crowd "at odds" (188). To truly embrace Christianity, one must radically reject the world, "breaking with everything to which [one] is immediately attached" (238), including not just the state church, but also one's race,[11] family,[12] and even humanity itself.

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[11] Recall Bede's account of Saint Alban.

Similarly, individual believers must not hope that society can bring the church to perfection: "Kierkegaard totally rejected the idea that Christianity is perfectible, that, through embedding it within institutions and collectivities and establishment it would realize itself in ever higher forms consistent with toleration and progress" (Perkins 49). This rejection is evident in his complaint against the idolization of family life by Christian education:

> The much extolled Christian family life is itself, Christianly, a falsehood; Christianly there is no family life, least of all in the sense that this is supposed to be the truest form of Christianity [...]. Itself based on a falsehood, Christian family life fills the child full of falsehood, then itself develops a taste for this kind of childish Christianity (which is not so strange, since it is paganism) and becomes sentimental at the thought that only as a child is one a true Christian. (252)

Having been appropriated by numerous institutions, Christianity has been lost; conversion requires that the individual break with these.

Kierkegaard does not stop with rejecting one's closest family members—parents, spouse and children. He claims that to be a Christian requires that one "love God in hatred of humankind, in hatred of oneself and thereby of all other people" (184). However, this hatred of humankind is not misanthropy in its selfish manifestations:[13] It is important to note that the hatred begins in the self, for if natural man is violently opposed to the Christian teaching,[14] then love for God can flourish only by rejecting our human, rebellious, disobedient nature. For Kierkegaard, the only spiritual people are those who can exist in solitude, apart from the crowds, that is, apart from their soul's greatest crutch. In fact, a person's spirituality is measured "in

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[12] Recall the familial obstacles that faced Patrick and his Irish converts.

[13] That is, misanthropy based on the sense that one is superior to everyone else.

[14] Recall Catherine's sense of the violent rebellion of the flesh against the spirit.

proportion to how strongly he [sic] can endure isolation" (184). He then suggests that this ability

sets the Christian apart from normal human nature, that is, that "The spiritual person is

different from us human beings" (184). Thus, the Christian is a minority in the most radical

sense of the term, a minority of one person, beyond human and alone against the world. [15]

These ideas of polemic, contrast and discord accompany the notion that Christianity is

actively repugnant to human nature: those who would proclaim scriptural Christianity will be as

one crying in the wilderness, preaching what is offensive to some and a stumbling block to

others. If this polemical understanding of Christianity is indeed scriptural, then it is clear why

Kierkegaard would say that Christendom's success has brought Christianity's abolition, since

Christianity has strength only insofar as people see it as something truly different. When every

person in the culture has been raised a Christian, no one can see it in its true, critical function.

But it is only possible for every person to be raised a Christian once Christianity no longer exists

in the culture, except as a name applied to "the merely human life, just as in paganism" (187).

Lurking beneath Kierkegaard's complaints about the cultural Christianity of his day are

concerns about the connection between politics and religion. He was convinced that state and

church are so opposed that any attempt to connect them (via a state church, as was the case in

Denmark) will inevitably destroy the church. But is should be noted that the connections

between politics and religion were more diffuse in his era: "The modern age, which Kierkegaard

saw as culminating in the social and political movements of 1848, eliminated the difference

between politics and religion and lived under the illusion that it was possible to anticipate

eternity in time and to realize heaven on earth. [...] In other words, politics is a masked religion"

(Nicoletti 187). As a result, religion was commonly used to "coat political reality," as seen most

prominently in the way the concept of the nation received what has been called a "sacred aura":

"All over Europe the nation is sacred and those who die for it are called martyrs of the

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[15] This could be an example of "becoming-human," although Kierkegaard uses a more
traditional definition of human.

fatherland. As we can see, this is religious language applied to political reality […] an attempt by political action to co-opt those characteristics that previously were exclusively religious" (187).

Here is Luther's fear come true: the church abandoning its God-ordained spiritual government and allying itself with the secular government. As a result, the church is (in effect) abolished. This event did not take place during Kierkegaard's day, nor did it occur only in Denmark; it was the inevitable result of centuries of tampering with Christianity in order to avoid its commands. The irony of the situation is that the culture had discovered that the best way to get rid of Christianity was to hide it in plain sight. When the teachings of Jesus become culturally acceptable, they have not been taught correctly. But when everyone is taught them, who would notice?

III. Contact Zones and Cross-Cultural Exchange: Thomas Merton

Thomas Merton was renowned not only in the United States—he was named by Time magazine as "the greatest spiritual writer of the century" (Souza e Silva 238-239)—but also in Europe and Brazil and among Jews, Protestants and Catholics. His autobiography, The Seven Storey Mountain, was popular and much-translated, and his numerous essays on social topics made him an "American social prophet who […became] famous the world over for his incisive critique of contemporary society" (Adams 159). Alongside these critiques, Merton reintroduced readers to pre-Reformation traditions, popularizing the works of the Desert Fathers and the practice of contemplative prayer. Because of the way "he rethought in contemporary terms the rich variety of the entire mystical tradition," he is often considered "one of the most influential proponents of the spiritual life in the twentieth century" (Tracy 160).

In addition to his work with Christianity, Merton was also a respected writer on Asian monastic traditions. In a set of four books, The Way of Chuang Tzu, Mystics and Zen Masters, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, and the posthumous The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, Merton compared Western practices of monasticism and meditation with those of Asia,

especially Zen Buddhism and the Daoism of Zhuangzi.[16] He has been called "a pioneer in ecumenical encounter" for creating dialogue between "groups of both Christians and non-Christians long before ecumenism had gained momentum and had become a respectable movement within the Christian churches" (Hart, "Ecumenical Monk" 211). His dedication to both East-West dialogue and Asian Christian monasticism was so widely respected that upon his sudden death, his colleagues "made a promise to God, in the presence of his body and in communion with his spirit, to carry on the work he loved and to which he had dedicated his efforts […]" (Leclercq 94); this promise led to the creation of the Union of Asiatic Monasteries.

Merton's dialogue with Asian traditions illustrates a Christian version of what Mary Louise Pratt has termed "contact zones": "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power […]" (173). Pratt examines the ways colonial Europeans misrepresented non-Western peoples and the ways these peoples resisted such portrayals in their own writings. She gives as an example the 1613 text The First New Chronicle and Good Government, written in a mixture of Spanish, Quechua and emblematic line drawings by the Andean writer Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. At twelve hundred pages long, this text is remarkable given "that the Incas had no system of writing" (177); Guaman Poma claims to have learned how to write from his mestizo half-brother, who had access to Spanish education (173). Therefore, the text's form relies on Spanish literary models (e.g., the chronicle) and on European representational art.

Yet, Guaman Poma does not imitate Spanish ideologies; instead, he uses his models to construct an encyclopedic text about Inca culture that presents "a picture of a Christian world with Andean rather than European peoples at the center of it—Cuzco, not Jerusalem" (174). For instance, he connects Andean history with biblical history by claiming that the indigenous

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[16] I have used Pinyin for Chinese terms as much as possible, even though Merton did not. When the terms might be unclear, I have used both versions, separated by a slash, e.g., Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu.

Americans are descended from Noah, that the five ages of Christian history are paralleled in Andean history, and that these histories reconnect when Saint Bartholomew arrives in the Americas (174). Guaman Poma then uses this history to criticize Spanish colonial practices and to lament the ruin of an encounter that could have benefitted both cultures (175).

In her analysis of Guaman Poma's text, Pratt identifies a number of practices that arise from such situations, e.g. parody, bilingualism, dialogue, etc. Of these, the two most directly tied to contact zones are autoethnography and transculturation. Transculturation is the process by which writers like Guaman Poma selectively adopt aspects of their European models for their own purposes; unlike acculturation, it represents not the loss of culture but an adjustment to the presence of another culture. As Pratt explains, "While subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for" (178). Guaman Poma's strategy uses Spanish forms to express Andean ideas.

Transculturation is a key aspect of the genre of autoethnography, in which "people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (175). The dialogic aspect of this genre distinguishes it from "autochthonous forms of expression or self-representation" (175). Autoethnographic texts are often bilingual (like Guaman Poma's) and often written in active collaboration with persons from the oppressing culture; Pratt believes many slave narratives embody this latter type of autoethnography in that they are written with the help of abolitionist sympathizers (175).

Christian mission work resembles this contact zone phenomenon. Even when the mission occurs within its home culture (e.g., inner city work), it assumes the coexistence of God's Kingdom.[17] More obvious, as shown in my historical sections, are the problems that arise when missionaries enter non-Western cultures. Like secular European explorers and settlers,

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[17] That is, the Kingdom of God as distinguished from earthly kingdoms, as in the political thought of Augustine and Luther discussed earlier.

Christian missionaries often commit the same cultural misreadings that give rise to Pratt's theory. Although Pratt focuses on encounters with a high degree of power imbalance, contact zones exist wherever two cultures meet; borderlands are an important reminder that contact zones are the inevitable results of cultural diversity.[18] The Christian mission need not be imperialist to create a contact zone; it need only be present as a second culture.

Viewed through Pratt's analysis of contact zones, Merton's work on Asian religion demonstrates a better way for Westerners to approach non-Western cultures. Merton earned the respect and admiration of Asian scholars by seeking dialogue with them; he entered "into the ideas and life of Buddhism to an extent possibly unequaled by other contemporary Catholic writers on the subject" (Cameron-Brown 167), and both Buddhist and Christian monks considered him "something of an expert" (Lentfoehr 119) in Eastern monasticism. In addition, he was uninterested in arguing that Christianity is superior to Buddhism and Daoism, preferring to show what the Church can learn from these. In fact, it was Asian scholars who convinced a young Merton to explore the Western mystical tradition. Thus, his work is founded upon his experiential knowledge that the study of Asian religious practices can help Western Christians understand their own tradition more fully and more deeply.

In this section, I provide a reading of Merton's essay collection Mystics and Zen Masters, which contains essays on both Asian and Christian traditions and therefore demonstrates rhetoric designed to persuade readers of the project's benefits and to navigate the task of being both respectful to Eastern thought and faithful to Western doctrine. Whereas his other books focus almost exclusively on Asian thought and practice, this book is clearly meant for Christian readers interested in Christian and Asian traditions. Although Pratt's essay will hover in the background, I do not aim to show that Merton's work illustrates Pratt's points about cultural clash, for I believe Merton avoids many of the problems Pratt reveals. Instead, I use Merton to

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[18] Recall how Catherine's life demonstrated this type of diversity.

show how cross-cultural dialogue (the kind that the West claimed to want with Asia after World War II) [19] can be carried out in a mature, healthy, respectful, and mutually beneficial manner.

Merton and Asia

A brief biographical sketch of Merton's studies in Asian religion will help explain his approach. Merton became interested in Asian monasticism in college after reading Aldous Huxley's Ends and Means, which points out similarities between the teachings of Buddha and Shankara and the mysticism of Meister Eckhart and The Cloud of Unknowing (Lipski 5). Merton studied translations of Asian texts by the Jesuit Leon Wieger (6), but his cursory approach caused a negative reaction that remained until he met Dr. Mahanambrata Brahmachari, a yogi whose spirituality impressed Merton. Brahmachari directed Merton away from Asian sources to Augustine, Francis of Assisi and Thomas à Kempis; he thereby prompted Merton's return to Catholicism (6). Brahmachari's "role in Merton's conversion to Roman Catholicism is a reflection of the ever increasing interplay between East and West which characterized Merton's pilgrimage through life and which in turn is symptomatic of the developing dialogue between Asian and Christian spiritual leaders" (6).

In the monastery, Merton returned to Asian thought; he was influenced by a visit from the Archbishop of Nanjing and by reading Patañjali (Lipski 8). His studies earned the admiration of Dr. John C. Wu, a Catholic convert who had written about similarities between Mencius and Aquinas and between Thérèse of Lisieux, Confucius and Lao Tzu, and who translated the Christian Scriptures into Chinese (10). The two men collaborated on The Way of Chuang Tzu (16), the book Merton considered to be one of his best and "the one he most enjoyed doing" (Lentfoehr 120), and Merton wrote the introduction to Wu's The Gold Age of Zen (Lipski 10). Their friendship led Merton to study Chinese culture, the history of the Jesuit missions to China, Confucianism and Daoism, and eventually Zen (12-13, 20).

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[19] As pointed out in the discussion of Asian Christianity.

Merton also learned about Zen through his correspondence with renowned Zen proponent Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki; their conversation began when Merton sent Suzuki his manuscript on the Desert Fathers (<u>The Wisdom of the Desert</u>), who he felt "had much in common with Indian Yogis and with Zen Buddhists monks of China and Japan" (qtd. in Lipski 8). Merton and Suzuki's extended dialogue "was viewed by scholars as a serious attempt at religious understanding" (Adams 158). Like Brahmachari before him, Suzuki helped Merton "become a more complete Catholic" (MacCormick 816); his influence can be seen in Merton's shift from John of the Cross to Meister Eckhart, whom Merton had previously shied away from (815) but whom Suzuki praised in his comparison of Buddhism and Christianity (Lipski 31).

Merton explored several non-Western traditions besides Chinese and Japanese. He was affected by Gandhi's rediscovery of Indian traditions through western education and his combination of spirituality and social concern (Adams 145). He liked the Sufi emphasis on the inward person over outward action and their belief in mysticism as the goal of human nature (154). He also wrote about pre-colonial Mesoamerican cultures, including "the Zapotecan culture of the Oaxaca Valley, Monte Alban and classic Mayan, and post-classic Mexican (Toltec and Aztec) [...]" (Lentfoehr 117). He was thus open to learning from all non-Western cultures.

Merton justified his study of these cultures by invoking Augustine's comment that Christianity has always existed, even "among the ancients" (Lipski 18).[20] He saw in Confucianism a principle of human relations founded upon love, i.e., <u>ren</u>/<u>jen</u>, and an ethical system similar to that found in the Hebrew Wisdom texts (13-14). He believed Laozi echoed Jesus with his teachings on detachment and <u>wu wei</u> (non-action) (15). And he was fond of Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu's use of paradox and reversals as well as his criticism of virtue for virtue's sake, which to Merton recalled Paul's teachings about the Hebrew Law (18-19).

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[20] This attitude may seem surprising for Augustine, but it makes sense given his notion that the two cities were present before the Fall, and that they are based on attitude, not birth. It would be interesting to know how Kierkegaard would have reacted to this claim.

Merton also justified his study by claiming that the use of Asian thought by the contemporary Church resembles—and is even more appropriate than—the use of Greek thought in the early Church (Lipski 11). As he states,

> If St. Augustine could read Plotinus, if St. Thomas could read Aristotle and Averroes (both of them certainly a long way further from Christianity than [Zhuangzi] ever was!), and if Teilhard de Chardin could make copious use of Marx and Engels in his synthesis, I think I may be pardoned for consorting with a Chinese recluse [i.e., Zhuangzi] who shares the climate and peace of my own kind of solitude, and who is my own kind of person. (qtd. in Lipski 16)

Thus, Merton privileges the traditions' resemblances over their historical evolution. Critics who complain about the entrance of Asian ideas into Christianity overlook the irony of their position, rejecting compatible traditions for one that is further from Christianity and has only the merit of habit. Christianity is not intrinsically Greek; the adoption of Greco-Roman thought was a historical accident that does not render Christianity incompatible with Asian thought.

Merton was deeply concerned about popular misconceptions regarding both Christian contemplative prayer and Buddhism. He realized that despite what many Christians thought, Buddhism neither negates the world nor denies the supernatural (MacCormick 808-809). Once he grasped that in Buddhism the line between natural and supernatural is vague and perhaps even permeable, he understood how Zen supplements social concern and how the "mystery of Christ is at work in all human events" (qtd. in MacCormick 814). Zen and Kerygma are not incompatible but "prepare the way for the other" (Cameron-Brown 168). His recognition that Asian and European monasticism share the goal of the enriching and transcendent experience (Leclercq 101) allowed him to "emphasize the distinctive points of his program as a Christian" (103) without adopting Zen on its own terms.[21]

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[21] This problem was noted in the discussion of indigenized Christian theology in African and Asia, especially with regards to the question of conflicting views of history.

Merton was also concerned about the Church's efforts in Asia. He was not convinced of the Church's ability to understand the world it hoped to reach. As he wrote to a Chinese priest,

> "I am convinced that a rather superficial Christianity in European dress is not enough for Asia. We have lacked depth. We have lacked the breadth of view to grasp all the wonderful breadth and richness in the Asian traditions, which were given to China, India, Japan, Korea, Burma, etc., as natural preparations for the coming of Christ" (qtd. in Hart, "Ecumenical" 215). [22]

He also noticed that some Christians appropriated Asian ideas too quickly. Although Merton's own understanding of Zen was not free from error—he oversimplified, overstated, and overconceptualized it (MacCormick 811-812)[23] and acknowledged neither Zen's historical connection with the samurai class nor its lack of substantial social effects (Lipski 36)—he recognized the rigors of Zen practice and the dangers of adopting it without understanding its principles and teachings, e.g., the 1960s problem of Zen becoming a fad and therefore being misunderstood and misapplied (35).

Merton's concerns about the Church's actions in Asia correlated to his concerns about Western thought, which he believed focused too much on explanation rather than experience (Adams 149). His examination of modern culture convinced him that Westerners need experience more than either political or religious doctrines (150). He even rejected theological comparisons between Zen and Christianity as "a blind alley" (Lipski 30) compared with the profitability of experiential knowledge. Though he admitted that concepts are needed to share mystical experience, he denied their necessity for mysticism (MacCormick 811). Zen could thus

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[22] These concerns resemble some of the problems addressed by the Church with regards to Asia both before and after the Second World War.

[23] One problem that complicates my analysis is that Merton did not always adequately distinguish Buddhism from Zen. Since I am more concerned with Merton's rhetorical strategies than with his accuracy, I have followed his admittedly imprecise terminology.

cure Cartesian dualism (Lipski 34) and, by differentiating faith-as-dogma from faith-as-transformative-encounter, illuminate the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (Adams 152).

Similarly, Merton believed that Zen's attention to the immediate present has important ethical implications in that it reveals the meaning of suffering, "faces squarely the problems of this life in this world," and protects "all beings against suffering by nonviolence and compassion" (Adams 152). Just as he rejected the escapist use of Christian contemplation, he rejected the notion that Buddhism was negative (Leclercq 101). Instead, noting that Zen shares with John of the Cross the call for the death of the "calculating and desiring ego" (Adams 151), he praised it for rejecting speculation about the existence of a divine being or beings. Western ethics, in contrast, fails with respect to action because it does not perceive correctly (152). Thus, whereas the Church claimed to deliver Asia from its unprofitable ways, Merton saw that Asia could deliver the Western Church from its weakness.

Rhetorical Strategies

This biographical survey should shed light on the ideas underlying <u>Mystics and Zen Masters</u>. Since Merton describes his book as a collection of "studies" (x), I will discuss the essays individually, examining how they create dialogue. In his preface, Merton notes the points of overlap between the two traditions, stating that his essays share "one central concern: to understand various ways in which men [sic] of different traditions have conceived the meaning and method of the 'way' which leads to the highest levels of religious or of metaphysical awareness" (x). He believes Catholic contemplatives after Vatican II can appreciate Asian mysticisms, since, like their Asian counterparts, they value self-renunciation and believe in the possibility for illumination regarding the meaning of life and the nature of Being (viii).

But Merton recognizes the difficulty of writing about any tradition from outside (the problem Pratt addresses); he accordingly asserts that even though his Western background impedes his understanding, he must make these traditions, "as far as possible, 'his own,'" by which he means, "to share in the values and the experience which they embody" (ix). Thus, his

first strategy for writing in the contact zone is to see the other culture from the inside, privileging experiential knowledge of cultures over propositional statements about them. As Las Casas had seen with the Americans, Merton realizes that any discussion of Asian thought must see it on its own terms.[24]

Opening Chapters

In the first essay of his collection, "Mystics and Zen Masters," Merton acknowledges the ways culturally constructed knowledge hinders any understanding of other cultures, noting in particular that Westerners have misunderstood and ridiculed Buddhism's "deep paradoxes and ambiguities" (8). Merton suggests that a better approach to cultural differences was enacted by the first Jesuits in Japan (e.g., Alessandro Valignano, mentioned earlier), who respected Japanese spirituality and studied it as part of their mission work. Although the Jesuits, with their Aristotelian/scholastic epistemology, struggled with the paradoxes of Zen, they appreciated and learned from its cultural aspects, using Zen ceremonies as models for their communal life and adopting the tea ceremony (9). Merton also compares the tea ceremony to the Eucharist and to Franciscan simplicity (10); following the Jesuits' example, he looks for what is valuable and usable in the other culture.

Merton recognizes the complexity of such cultural comparison. He sees resemblances between Western neo-Platonism and the so-called Northern School of Zen (the kind rejected in the Platform Sutra), which divides mind from matter, stresses the absence of concepts and motion, and proposes to liberate the soul from the body (19). Merton states that this form of Zen appeals to the West (19), comparing it to quietism and Hesychasm (21) and noting that the practices of Dōgen, one of the Northern masters, could easily fit into Christian meditative traditions (37). In these discussions, he uses analogies to familiar Western concepts to illustrate what Zen is not: his rhetorical strategy is that of negative translation between cultures. However,

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[24] This concern has also been raised by Asians, who saw that the colonial mission system allowed churches to avoid participating in the socioeconomic life of their host cultures.

his East-West comparison is not binary, but triangulated with two types of Zen practice—the Northern form discussed above, and the Southern form, which he implies is farther from Christian practice (33). This triangle is further complicated by his claim that, in spite of Northern Zen's resemblance to Christian practice, it is <u>Southern</u> Zen that is ontologically "rather close to the Gospels and St. Paul" (34). This confusing shift from difference to similarity suggests that there is a gap between the Christian scriptures and Christian tradition; in this argument, Merton uses his comparisons with Asia to critique the West.

Merton is not afraid to use Christian scriptures to explain Zen concepts, as when he uses John 1:9 to explain <u>prajña</u> (25). In doing so, he shows that sacred texts can be used to explain other traditions, as long as the two traditions point in similar directions. He also uses familiar Christian names and terms, e.g., comparing Dōgen's teaching with that of Caussade (35), and Suzuki's catchphrase "zero equals infinity" with John of the Cross's "<u>todo y nada</u>" (39). He makes a very expansive analogy between Zen and Christian history, asserting that Zen Patriarch Huineng's[25] concept of void contains "a surprising Trinitarian structure that reminds us of all that is most characteristic of the highest forms of Christian contemplation, whether in the Cappadocian school, the Augustinians and Franciscans, Ruysbroeck and the Rhenish mystics, or St. John of the Cross and the Carmelites" (40). He even places Zen at the heart of Christianity, calling it an insufficient but necessary condition for liberated and illuminated love to converge upon "the transcendent and personal center" that "is the Risen and Deathless Christ in Whom all are fulfilled in One" (42). In each of these instances, Merton uses orthodox figures and terminology to link the two traditions and to fend off criticism that he is introducing something new into Christianity; quite the contrary, he is reminding his readers of lost aspects of their own Christian tradition.

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[25] Huineng's story is contained in the <u>Platform Sutra</u>, which sets out the origins of Southern Zen.

However, Merton acknowledges the dangers of such translation, as the terms used to translate Buddhist concepts are overloaded with Western connotations[26] and/or are too speculative to capture the concrete and experiential aspects of Buddhist concepts (16). And sometimes the traditions are truly incompatible. Merton cautions against explaining Zen in terms of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" mysticism, since Buber's formula maintains personal subject/object categories that are not present within Zen notions of void (29). In cases like these, the linguistic history of a culture's religious thought and practice obstructs its ability to understand other cultures.

Merton reconciles the benefits and disadvantages of translation by arguing that there are times when being slightly false to a tradition helps avoid problems. For instance, in discussing the concept of void, Merton concedes that although Buddhists neither affirm nor negate being, it is "more helpful for Western minds to call it a pure affirmation of the fullness of positive being" (27; emphasis his). Similarly, he describes the two main schools of Zen using traditional terms from Western mysticism: apophatic and cataphatic (31).[27] His argument is problematic, but the decision whether to use or reject Western terms may depend on whether the term is used as an analogy or as a definition. Whereas definitions tend to obscure differences, analogies (when properly used by both author and reader) remain at the level of resemblance and suggestion.

In his next essay, "Classic Chinese Thought," Merton asserts that the growing international role of Asia (along with Africa) makes it imperative that all educated people understand the three major Asian traditions (45). Rejecting the need to preserve Western dominance, he demands that his readers learn about other cultures. He refutes the West's assessment of its own progress by showing that Western ideas of "personality" are less modern

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[26] Recall the problem of sexism caused by the translation of genderless African terms into European languages.

[27] To complicate matters, these terms themselves come from Greek thought and not, as best as I can tell, from the Christian scriptures.

than commonly thought, having been present in the Confucian concepts of ru/ju and ren/jen (51). As if to distance himself from Eurocentrism, he replaces the Latinized forms of Chinese names with their Romanized forms—Kung Tzu and Meng Tzu for Confucius and Mencius (47). In addition, he again counteracts Western fear of Asian religions by pointing out similarities between traditions, as when he suggests that Benedictines can appreciate and admire Confucianism because the two systems share much in the way of "tradition and spirit" (65).

However, these similarities can be taken too far: Just as Buber's "I-Thou" concept does not fit Zen, the American triumvirate of Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism is not analogous with the Chinese triptych of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (46). Analogies should be based not on generalities but on the traditions' content. Taking a historical example, Merton shows that the early Jesuits who understood the differences between Confucianism and Western religion were the ones who believed one could be Confucian and Christian, whereas their colleagues who did not understand Confucianism mistook its rites for idol worship (47).

Merton reiterates the problem of translation obscuring cultural understanding. Not only do Western concepts filter into translations of Chinese terms, but there is also significant difference between the languages, with Chinese texts being more concrete and solid than their Western versions (60). Yet, Merton sees this same problem within Western traditions; he argues that Thomas Aquinas' conception of contemplation is, in spite of his use of Greek philosophy, Christian rather than Platonic, focused on things in the world rather than on the world of essences (62). At the same time, he sees ways to express Asian concepts in Western vocabulary: he uses metanoia for the Daoist emphasis upon transformation (50) and describes Confucianism as an expression of "natural law," though he admits this term is "rather vague" (58).

Merton uses these problems to critique the West's supposed "objectivity" towards its understanding of its history. Claiming that the Chinese and Japanese had good reason to treat Westerners as barbarians, he suggests that the West overestimates its superiority and that the study of Asian traditions helps "renew our appreciation for our own cultural heritage" (46), a

heritage that was itself built on cultural contact. In fact, the connections between European and Asian traditions are so obvious that a solid grasp of Confucian thought reveals "in a flash its implications for the meaning of Christian conduct" (62). For example, Chinese Legalist thought reveals our "pragmatic misconceptions concerning the development of the person: that is, the development of aggressiveness, of astuteness, of attractiveness, of diplomatic skills; in a word, the ability to <u>succeed</u>" (63; emphasis his). In these passages, Merton uses a rhetoric of profit, i.e., he claims that the cultures being discussed are beneficial and that the West is thus obliged to learn from them. For this reason, Merton considers the duty of Christian scholarship to be "to understand and even preserve the heritage of all the great traditions insofar as they contain truths that cannot be neglected and that offer precious insights into Christianity itself" (65).

In "Love and Tao," Merton suggests numerous Western analogues for Daoist texts and terms: the wisdom of the <u>Daodejing</u>/<u>Tao Te Ching</u> resembles that of the Sermon on the Mount (70), with section 67, with its emphasis upon mercy, being especially "akin to Christianity" (76); the Daoist critique of Confucianism resembles Aquinas' critique of <u>humano modo</u> (74); the Daoist sage, like Jesus, has no home (75), and his power is identical to that "revealed in the Gospels as Pure Love" (76). Merton also notes resemblances between the conceptions of canon: not only do the Chinese classics resemble the Hebrew wisdom texts (72), but the Chinese word <u>jing</u>/<u>ching</u>, like the Greek word <u>ta biblia</u>, means "classic" in the sense of written repository of <u>authoritative</u> books (72; his emphasis). Similarly, the Confucian emphasis on <u>ritual and music</u> (his emphasis) can be translated as "the liturgical celebration of the mystery of love" (79).

Merton continues to critique Western arrogance, calling the Confucian text <u>Xiao Jing</u>/<u>Hsiao Ching</u> "surprisingly 'modern'" and asserting that it reaches "substantially the same conclusions that were reached by Freud" (78). He accuses American scholarship of being too impatient to follow through on the study of Asian thought begun so promisingly by Emerson and Thoreau (69); a century later, it is clear how crucial this study would have been, as Asian countries become more Westernized and risk falling into the "spiritual, cultural, and moral

poverty" (69-70) of modern Western culture. The humanities can no longer focus solely on "the Christian and European cultural traditions" (note the distinction) but must learn to incorporate the Asian wisdom that is already a part of the global horizon (80). He again uses a rhetoric of obligation, this time in terms of responsibility: by jettisoning a much-needed project, Western scholars tacitly allowed the West's bad habits to infect Asia.

Merton's next essay, "The Jesuits in China," bridges his opening section on Asian thought and his middle section on Christian history. In this essay, Merton focuses on the success of the early sixteenth-century Jesuit missionaries to China (Ricci, et al.), who "earned the right" to wear "the traditional robes of the Chinese scholar" (81) and who successfully petitioned Rome for the right to translate the Bible and the Mass into literary Chinese (86). Seeing in this episode "the story of Christ in China: a kind of brief epiphany of the Son of Man as a Chinese Scholar" (90),[28] Merton reiterates the difference between those missionaries who studied and understood Chinese thought and those whose lack of knowledge led them to equate Confucianism with idolatry (even though the Chinese rites in question were "no more idolatrous than the respect we in America pay to the national flag" [88]), and consequently to be scandalized when the Jesuits were accepted as Chinese scholars (82). Many of these missionaries had bad motives, hoping to duplicate in China the "success" (82) of Christianity (with the military's help) in the Americas. In these complaints, Merton restates his belief that "Christian missionary work would be more effective if the missionary approached men of other religions with an attempt to discover Christ already present in their beliefs, in a hidden manner, rather than by thinking of themselves as bringing Christ to the unenlightened heathen" (Cameron-Brown 164). Merton here returns to the failures and ironies of history:[29] the early Jesuits were more culturally astute and better

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[28] Merton may be thinking of the call to inculturation, as his collection was published shortly after the close of Vatican II.

[29] Recall Las Casas' use of historical irony in defending the Americans against Spain.

respected than are many modern missionaries, and yet their promise remains unfulfilled even as the West fails to acknowledge within itself the very problems it sees elsewhere.

Merton praises Matteo Ricci, especially his ability to diagnose a foreign culture and apply his diagnosis to Western Christianity in order to jettison "all that was secondary and accidental" to it (83). Merton describes this tactic as the counsel of the Spirit, "a supernatural and Christian sacrifice" (83) along the lines of the scriptural commands to serve all people. The Spirit

> asks the Christian apostle to respect and preserve all that is good in the culture and philosophy of newly converted peoples. As Pope Pius XII said, "The Catholic Church is not one with western culture; she never identifies herself with any one culture, and she is ready to make a covenant with every culture. She readily recognizes in every culture what is not contrary to the work of the Creator […]."
> (85)

Merton sees this attitude in the early church, which, after converting thousands of people within a culture that had been prepared by generations of teachers and prophets, needed a different approach to prepare the Gentiles, who lacked the "preparatory teaching on the philosophical level" (85-86) needed to receive the Gospel. Merton restates the importance of appropriate language in translation; vernacular liturgies like those the Jesuits wanted to use in China must turn the language of daily life into a literary language that conveys the sacred character of the liturgies and scriptures (86-87). In this respect, Ricci and his colleagues simply followed the early church's example of preserving the best of Mediterranean thought. For why should China abandon its culture when the Church did not demand the same of Greece and Rome? (84)

Inner Chapters

Merton devotes the next seven essays to Christian history and themes. Since these do not directly address Asian concepts, I shall say only a few words about the set. Their unifying theme is the recovery of monastic traditions and ideas that could invigorate monastic life and perhaps Western spiritual life more broadly: Irish peregrinatio, patristic views of virginity, English and

Russian mystical thought, and Protestant and Shaker monasticism. Although he does not explicitly compare them, Merton's comments about the cultural formalism of mysticism echo his comments about Christian Confucianism. As he says about English mysticism,

> that which most genuinely glorifies God is a catholicity true enough to respect the manifold variety of races, nations, and traditions which seek their fulfillment and their raison d'être in Christ. [...] Just as Christ came to fulfill the Law, not to destroy it, so too He came to fulfill the authentic aspirations of the customs, traditions, and philosophies of the Greeks and "Gentiles" in general.[30] Catholicism should then be English in England, not Italian; Chinese in China and not French; African in Africa, not Belgian. The loss of the English mystical tradition would be, in fact, irreparable. (130)

These essays make clear that Merton is interested not in promoting Asian religions, but in learning from them how to revitalize monastic spirituality. It is interesting that he places his essays on Christianity in between two sets of essays on Asian thought; this structure implies the need to examine other traditions in order to understand one's own. It also suggests a process of defamiliarization through context: Western readers must work through his discussions of Asian thought to see Christianity anew in the middle section. Then, once they have re-learned (so to speak) their own tradition from the middle section, they are able to look again at the Asian traditions, to which Merton returns in his final set of essays.

Closing Chapters

The first of these, "Contemplation and Dialogue," functions as Merton's "theory" chapter, as he addresses the comparison and conversation between the two traditions and promotes the contribution of contemplative practice to interfaith dialogue (203). In particular, Merton believed that Zen's emphasis on contemplation over concepts and doctrines would foster

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[30] Recall that E. Stanley Jones believed the same thing about Christianity in India.

Christian unity (MacCormick 812-813). He was deeply committed to an ecumenical search for "the inner and ultimate spiritual 'ground' which underlies all articulated differences" (204), and believed that ecumenism demands the sharing of those "religious intuitions and truths" (204) that rest beneath doctrine and that may be more universal than the doctrines recognize. Merton uses this essay to assert the common ground that transcends (and perhaps precedes) the doctrinal differences that obstruct interfaith dialogue.

He again turns church history against itself, lamenting the way Protestants and even some modern Catholics dismiss the value of Catholic mysticism and contemplation (205). These skeptics in turn dismiss Eastern Orthodox and non-Christian mysticism as "due to the direct or indirect intervention of Satan" (206). Merton warns that this lack of respect for non-Christian religious experience prevents doctrinal discussions from having "any serious meaning" (206). However, respect does not entail ignoring differences; for all its emphasis on inculturation and dialogue, Vatican II did not assert that "all religious truths are equal and indifferently good" (206). Merton's strategies in this discussion are to counter fears that dialogue is tantamount to assimilation and to undermine one-sided, doctrinaire assertions of cultural authority by arguing that any effective dialogue must be grounded in mutual respect.

Merton notes that even if all religions seek the same ground of existence, Western terminology is not always acceptable to practitioners of other traditions, e.g., Zen teachers do not accept Jesuit descriptions of Zen as mysticism (207). He is also concerned with syncretism, especially when based on "purely superficial resemblances and without serious study of qualitative differences" (207). For Merton, syncretism and exclusivism (my term) stem from the same mistake: oversimplification due to "superficial consideration of the evidence" (208). Thus, religion is not mere subjectivity, but contains objective elements that can be analyzed and compared. Viewed in this way, it becomes evident that differences between religions can sometimes be smaller than differences between practitioners in the same tradition, e.g., the differences between those who are interested in inward discovery and those who are more

concerned with outward practice (209). Merton's strategy here is to undermine the supposed incommensurability of religious traditions by suggesting that the important differences lie not in historical continuity but in personal attitudes.

Merton recommends careful clarification of the issues involved in uncovering this common ground, such as determining the difference between doctrine, metaphysics, and experience (210). The attempt to embrace both Eastern and Western mysticism has often led scholars into the caricatures of contemplation that validate allegations of its uselessness (211). At the same time, Christians defending the value of Christianity tend to overstress its active elements and therefore dismiss Asian mysticism as overly passive and unworthy of dialogue (211). Merton finds the same problem in "superficial modern manuals which, themselves, take only a foreshortened perspective of the Christian mystical tradition" (212).

A more accurate analysis of Christian contemplation acknowledges "the full, liturgical, biblical, and patristic dimensions of Christian mysticism" (212), which is itself a response to the Incarnation. The great Christian mystics do not reject other traditions as ignorant, but rather provide "Christian answers to the profound questions raised by all these ancient traditions, which seem to have been grasping at the central truths in their own way" (213). Merton points out that this problem works both ways: once dialogue is established, Christianity will have to defend itself from similar accusations by Asian contemplatives (213-214). His strategy here is to use the Christian mystics to support his analogies between Asian and European practices and to suggest that the tradition itself demands dialogue.

Merton's final essays focus on Japan. In "Zen Buddhist Monasticism," he complains that comparisons between Zen and Cistercian monasticism are often superficial and misinterpret both Zen and its lessons for Christian monks (216). He laments that many Western monks, possessing a sincere interest in Zen but only a superficial knowledge, "underestimate the severity and ruthlessness of Zen discipline" and fall into "a very serious danger" (225) when they apply it to their own lives. He notes more translation problems: the difference between Buddhist

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asceticism and Christian grace cannot be interpreted in terms of the Pelagian debates (218). In the same way, the Zen concept of "no-mind" differs from the Desert Fathers' focus on purity of heart both because Zen does not seek purity of heart as an end in itself (221) and because Christianity depends on the "I" (224) and on the person of Christ rather than on the void (225).

In this essay, Merton highlights a problem quite the opposite of that discussed in the previous essay: not the rejection of Asian spirituality but the superficial adoption of Asian practices. This problem is a form of cultural appropriation in which one culture borrows indiscriminately from another, thinking that it is being complimentary but demonstrating its own lack of humility and its underestimation of the other culture. Merton's book attempts to demonstrate a better way of learning from other cultures; instead of trying to be Asiatic, he allows the Asian insights to nurture his Christianity. In doing so, he "exemplified in his own person what he himself gave as the monk's most important contribution to ecumenism: to reconcile various religious and spiritual traditions in his own person" (Cameron-Brown 169).

In "The Zen Koan," Merton returns to the question of what the Asian tradition can teach the West (227). As in other essays, he explores the problem of terminology and translation, in this case regarding the different views of consciousness (238). The Zen view of consciousness is "alien to the Cartesian and scientific consciousness of modern man" (241); yet, it resembles earlier Western ideas, such as John of the Cross's view of faith as unknowing (241). In fact, Merton claims that despite their theological differences, John's mystical night is an "exact" psychological correspondent to Zen emptiness (242). This example demonstrates the shared ground of experience that transcends doctrinal difference. For Merton, Zen's "phenomenology and metaphysic of insight and of consciousness" (254) makes it valuable to the West as a surrogate for the Christian apophatic tradition, which has been judged overly difficult and often ignored. In this essay, Merton mixes the rhetoric of benefit with the rhetoric of blame, claiming that Christianity has forsaken its own strength.

For our purposes, Merton's book ends here. His penultimate essay, "The Other Side of Despair," looks at the controversy over existentialism in the West. Merton finds that even though people reject the label and in spite of the evident weaknesses of atheistic existentialism, existentialism is alive and well and asking questions about modern society that can be addressed with the help of religion. Whereas in previous essays Merton turned toward a neglected past to critique modern society, here he turns toward a maligned contemporary movement and shows how it too provides a needed corrective that is compatible with Christian teachings. Merton's final essay, "Buddhism and the Modern World," is a review of three books about Buddhism that had been recently published, and seems to be included primarily to point interested readers to other books that relate Buddhism to modern society.

Conclusion

Merton's dialogue with Asia demonstrates that it is possible to write positively in the contact zone. When Pratt presented her first paper on the topic, she was concerned with the way European writers misrepresent non-Western cultures and, in so doing, arouse resistance. Judging from the support Merton received from Asian scholars and monks, he found a way to write about Asia that did not need to be resisted. His success depends in part on the unusual way in which he came to Christianity through Asian influences. It also depends on the positive example set for him by Ricci, Valignano and other missionaries in China and Japan centuries ago and on the growing importance of Asian culture on the international scale today, although Merton was ahead of the culture in his recognition of this growth and in his willingness to accept the situation calmly and to see its benefits.

Still, there is a difference between approaching Asia respectfully and writing about it in a way that avoids the problems of the contact zone. This discussion has focused on only a single book that covers Asian and Christian traditions, so it would be necessary to study his other books on Asia before making any authoritative claims about his success. However, some general observations may be ventured about how he approaches what could have been a spiritual

travelogue (in the tradition Pratt critiques) for Christians hoping to explore Asia. Merton's text reveals at every turn his active dialogue with Asian scholars and monks. He does not write about Asian thought from an "objective" outsiders' standpoint, but tries to understand it on its own terms. He repeatedly points out misconceptions that people use to dismiss Asian traditions, and argues that these traditions in fact provide vital correctives to the problems of modernity, especially within the Church: they are neither irrelevant nor evil, but beneficial enough to oblige us to study them. Merton echoes his rhetoric of profit with a rhetoric of blame, connecting Asian ideas to traditions that the Church has lost. He thereby establishes Asian culture as closer to Christianity than most people assume and critiques the developments in Western thought that have lost contact with these conceptions.

His text is dialogic as well. He does not simply report on Asian traditions, but groups them with Christian history, putting the two on the same level in order to show their similar foundations and allowing them to inform each other. His criticisms of Western culture and his rhetoric of profit implicate his readers, obliging them to examine their own ideas and practices. In a way, he avoids the contact zone by incorporating autoethnographic resistance within his own text, i.e., he resists Western culture from an Asian perspective. Merton writes not as a Westerner, but as someone alien to both cultures, someone who sees his own culture as a foreign land[31] and who sees his heavenly homeland as incorporating the best of all the worlds' many cultures. In doing so, he challenges his readers' notions not only of Asia, but also of Christianity and Western civilization. At the same time, he avoids the opposite error of embracing and appropriating Asian traditions uncritically, as this too would ruin the dialogue. Rather, he uses his study of Asia to correct the errors of his own modern Western education. He remains a Catholic and does not "convert" to Buddhism; yet, he hopes that his study of Confucianism, Daoism and Zen will make him a more perfect, more complete Christian.

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[31] Recall the passage from Hugh of St. Victor mentioned in the discussion of Patrick.

IV. The Church as Diaspora: Kathleen Norris

Kathleen Norris's memoir/essay collection <u>The Cloister Walk</u> provides interesting insights into the ways Benedictine life creates community. In the book, Norris discusses how two extended stays at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at St. John's Abbey and University, a Benedictine monastery in Minnesota (xii-xiii), helped her reconnect to her faith, from which she had been estranged for most of her adult life. She describes her presence in the monastery as odd, saying, "It is a wonder that I should be there at all. My faith was non-existent, or at least deeply submerged, for so long a time [...]" (68). In particular, she feels that she is "incongruous [...] someone with a checkered past, who until the last few years hadn't been to church much since high school" (265). Norris's incongruity is not limited to her spiritual estrangement; as she notes, "By the world's standards, this [the abbey] was a most inappropriate place for me to be: as a woman, married, a Protestant, a doubter [...] and despite the hospitality of the monks, I was acutely aware of my otherness" (161). [32] Yet, although she had the "wrong" gender, marital status, denominational background and level of spiritual maturity, Norris finds that her incongruity does not make her an outsider; rather, she is included in the community in ways that also bring healing to her life outside the monastery. She sees similar healing occur for others, such as a rape victim who comes to the monastery "to feel safe around men again," and an overweight college student who is surprised to be listened to "with as much interest and respect as to her conventionally pretty roommate" (120).[33]

Thus, Norris's book implicitly asks how the monastery fosters inclusive community. Norris openly credits two factors. First, she credits the liturgy, most especially the Benedictines'

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[32] We might contrast her situation to that of Patrick and Fox, who were also othered but for different reasons.

[33] One of the interesting things about Norris' experience is that she was involved with a monastery rather than a convent. This may seem strange, but we can recall Rolle's emphasis upon his ministry to women, the Quakers' interest in women's ministry, and the role of male hagiographers and spiritual directors in the lives of many female saints, including Catherine.

use of the Psalms as the center of worship. The Psalms both connect Norris to the monastics'
view of the world and help resolve her problems with faith:

> Experiencing the psalms [sic] in this away [sic] allowed me gradually to let go of
> that childhood God who had set an impossible standard for both formal prayer
> and faith, convincing me that religion wasn't worth exploring because I couldn't
> "do it right." I learned that when you go to church several times a day, every day,
> there is no way you can "do it right." (92)

As she immerses herself in the liturgical life of the monastery, the Psalms become the most
humanistic texts she knows, a true vision of the world both inside and outside the monastery:
"As one reads the psalms every day, it becomes clear that the world they depict is not really so
different from our own […]" (93). In this way, the liturgy helps her integrate religion into her
understanding of the world.

Norris has a similar reaction to the second factor she credits—the Benedictine rule of
hospitality, as found in this passage from Benedict's Rule:

> All guests to the monastery should be welcomed as Christ, because He will say, "I
> was a stranger, and you took me in" (Matt. 25:35). Show them every courtesy,
> especially servants of God and pilgrims. […] The greeting and farewell should be
> offered with great humility for with bowed head and a prostate body all shall
> honor in the guests the person of Christ. For it is Christ who is really being
> received. (Ch. 53)

This passage demonstrates the significance of Benedict's innovations on his sources, in that he
"seems to apply to all comers the rites conceived for the reception of monks. A daring extension
which results in a presentation to the secular guest […] of the mystery of Christ hidden in him
[sic]" (Vogüé 264). Here is the hospitality Norris sees at work with the rape victim and the
overweight college student who find healing at the monastery: they are greeted by the monks as
if they were Christ. Norris realizes from such incidents that the monastic vow of celibacy, when

practiced in a healthy manner (and she devotes two essays to this topic), is a key factor in learning to carry out Benedict's instructions.[34] She has "seen too many wise old monks and nuns whose lengthy formation in celibate practice has allowed them to incarnate hospitality in the deepest sense. In them, the constraints of celibacy have somehow been transformed into an openness that attracts people of all ages, all social classes. They exude a sense of freedom" (117). Because of Benedict's command to hospitality, those two women find comfort and safety around men, and Norris is accepted not only as a guest, but also as a participant in many of the abbey's important events.

Although Norris explicitly attributes the fruitfulness of monastic visits to the liturgy and to the rule of hospitality, the structure of her book suggests a considerably more complex situation. The book consists of essays inspired by her second nine-month stay at the monastery and from the three months that followed, i.e., one full year. Norris organizes these essays to illustrate a year of monastic life; as she says in her Preface, "I have tried to replicate for the reader the rhythm of saints' days, solemnities, and feasts I experienced […]" (xiii). She achieves this effect by the way she structures the temporal and spatial aspects of the book.

The essays are arranged calendrically, with many being named after the feast day that inspired them, e.g., "January 10: Gregory of Nyssa," "February 2: Candlemas/Presentation of the Lord," etc. (vi). This structure disrupts the historical sequence of the saints' lives—rather than looking at the saints according to their place in historical time, she discusses them in liturgical time, so that saints from widely separated centuries are placed side-by-side, e.g., her essay on the thirteenth-century mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg is immediately followed by an essay on the fifth-century Saint Mary of Egypt (vi). It is as though the saints are gathered in an

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[34] We might think also of the ways in which Catherine's experience of God made her more effective in her ministry to others: piety augments charity; contemplation augments action.

eternal present, following a chronology that, insofar as it is organized around a yearly schedule, is more cyclical than linear.

In addition to this yearly progression, Norris groups her essays as if they spanned one day; she punctuates the book with four essays named for traditional monastic worship times, opening the collection with "Dawn," moving through "Noon" and "Evening," and closing it with "Night." Thus, she organizes time according to both the daily and the annual liturgical calendars. This superimposition of cycles not only suggests the cyclical (a-historical) nature of liturgical time, but also places the routines of daily life and worship at the center of human experience. It is not the historical processes of time that matter most for humanity, but the repetitive cycles of daily life, for it is in these that individuals commit all their activities into the hand of the Creator of Life and thereby grow into their humanity.

Similarly, Norris's depiction of space branches out from the monastery. Several essays are named for cities she visits during the year—New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Kalamazoo, and Minneapolis—in each of which she finds connections to the monastic community. Some of these connections are quite literal, such as when she attends a Benedictine worship service in Los Angeles. Some are indirect and illustrate the often hidden ways that monastic life influences the culture at large, e.g., a bellhop in Chicago whose best friend has just joined a monastery. In a few of the locations, she re-encounters the mystery of monastic hospitality for the incongruous. In New York, a gay hairdresser who was no longer welcomed in his hometown Southern church and who had therefore "written off religion" (70) reflects on how important a short visit to a monastery in Massachusetts was for him. His comment testifies to the effectiveness of Benedictine hospitality: "Boy, did I love that, […] just sitting in that church, the way they let you come to church with them. They don't preach at you, they let you experience it for yourself. […] You know, I've never felt so close to God before or since. It blew me the fuck away" (70).

Thus, the structure of Norris's book reveals a community scattered across space and time but united through common practices and a common rule—a description that calls to mind a

diasporic community. She herself suggests this sense of the monastery by describing it as a "small, isolated town" (272), a tribe with an origin story (305), a "traditional society" (340), a group with its own heritage (309), and, quoting Merton, as "the only city in America" (378).[35] She also uses words related to diaspora in many of her essay titles: difference, other, exile, homeland, borderline, passage, road trip, displacement. In this section, I suggest that this diasporic quality of Benedictine community helps to create the kind of hospitality that can include the incongruous Norris.

Diaspora and Religion

The resemblance of religions to diasporas has been pointed out by political scientist Gabriel Sheffer, who notes in his book <u>Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad</u> that the term diaspora is often applied to groups that do not connect their identity to a specific geographic area or homeland, including "members of trans-national religious denominations and universal churches, such as the Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox churches" (10-11). He also notes that the intimate connection many ethnic groups have to particular religious beliefs makes global religions and ethnic diasporas "particularly difficult to distinguish" (65-66).

Yet, in spite of these similarities, Sheffer maintains several important differences between ethnic and religious communities. For instance, ethnic groups focus on practical, cultural and subjective sources of identity, whereas religious groups tend to center their identity upon transcendental ideologies (66).[36] For this reason, religious individuals and groups are usually attached more to their religion's "spiritual center" than to the birthplace of its founders (66) and are often better able than ethnic minorities to work in situations where religious and national identity are divided. For Sheffer, an even more important difference is that trans-

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[35] Recall Augustine's claim that the earthly city has no justice and therefore no people; we might stretch his claim farther and claim that it is a city in name only and that only the city of God is a true city.

[36] Compare this to Augustine's formulation that the two cities are based upon either love of God or love of self.

national religious groups become global through the spread of the religion's ideas rather than through human migration (66). The trans-national quality of Christianity, for instance, is due to conversion; its ideas have spread even without the movement of large numbers of people.

Sheffer's discussion of diaspora is useful for our purposes because it acknowledges important similarities between religious and ethnic diasporas. It is this assertion of similarity that I will build on in this section; I claim not that the Benedictine community is an "actual" ethnic diaspora, but simply that it resembles such groups through its trans-national qualities. However, since Sheffer is not interested in small communities like monasteries, I will draw more directly on the descriptions of diaspora given by Robin Cohen's in Global Diasporas: An Introduction. Cohen provides two different sets of criteria that can be applied to monasteries. First, he borrows William Safran's model for diaspora, which has six common features: 1) diasporic communities are dispersed from a central area to two or more areas; 2) they have "a collective memory, vision or myth" about that central area (23); 3) they feel they must remain separate from the foreign land because they cannot be accepted there; 4) they idealize their homeland and hope to return there; 5) they believe that all members of the diaspora are obligated to work for the welfare of the homeland; and 6) their relationship to this homeland actively affects their interactions with one another.

If the term "homeland" is adapted to refer to the Kingdom of God and/or of Heaven, these six features can be used to describe Christianity as a trans-national diaspora. Taken in the largest sense of Judeo-Christian identity, there is the dispersal from Eden; the mythos of the Fall; the perceived need to stay separate from the world/the nations;[37] the idealization of (in the most literal sense) and longing for heaven;[38] the sense of universal Christian responsibility in

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[37] Recall both the nationalist qualities of the early Quaker (and other sectarian) movements, as well as Kierkegaard's call to stand against the world.

[38] We have seen this longing occur in several degrees, from Patrick's hope to help usher in the end of the world, to Rolle's experience of heat, song and sweetness, to Catherine's physical embodiment of the tension between flesh and spirit.

embodying and building the Kingdom of God; and the sense that the church community is directed by the active government of God in the lives of believers. In a more restricted sense of Christian identity, the dispersal takes the form of the Great Commission, in which Jesus instructs his followers to make disciples wherever they go and promises that the Gospel will be preached to the ends of the world.

Cohen expands Safran's model by noting several additional possibilities (i.e., non-essential qualities) for diasporic communities, including, 1) that the homeland may have not yet come into existence; 2) that the group could be scattered voluntarily;[39] 3) that the tension between a diasporic community and its host culture could be positive and creative;[40] and 4) that there is a sense of community with members of the diaspora in other countries (24-25). These possibilities can be found in many Christian communities, but they are even more pronounced in monastic communities: The homeland, i.e., the Kingdom of God, is a future event, the promise of the eschaton; the monastery is a voluntary community, as its members have not been banished there but have joined of their own free will (albeit in answer to God's call); the monastics see their purpose as that of praying on behalf of the world; and their Benedictine tradition unites them across the languages of time, place and language.

In addition to adapting Safran's model, Cohen develops a second set of criteria for diaspora, which he uses to argue that the Caribbean is a cultural diaspora, "cemented as much by literature, political ideas, religious convictions, music and life-styles as by permanent migration" (xii). With the exception of political ideas, this set of criteria could easily be applied to the various monastic orders. I will use this second set of criteria to examine the ways the Benedictine communities in Norris's book effectively function as an ethnic diaspora. Again, I do

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[39] We might think of the apostle's status as being sent into the world, rather than being banished out of it.

[40] Consider the way the text of Daniel suggests that even empire is within God's reach. Likewise, Augustine, Luther, Williams and even (in a critical way) Kierkegaard accept that the Church can be a blessing to the world.

not claim that the Benedictines are an ethnic group; as will be seen, self-identification as an ethnic group may in fact hinder inclusivity. Rather, I will demonstrate how diasporic models can be used to interpret and analyze monastic communities, and how these models suggest ways for Norris's readers to create tactics that foster inclusivity in their own lives.

Diaspora and Monastic Communities

The relevance of two of Cohen's secondary criteria, music and religious convictions, is, I assume, plain enough that they can be passed over here. In terms of Cohen's criterion of a common lifestyle, monastic communities are connected across space and across time by their rituals—not only the rituals of worship, but also the procedures for the daily operation of the monastery (such as the reception of guests mentioned earlier) that come both from the <u>Rule</u> and from tradition. As Norris says, "Rituals bind a community together, and also bind individuals to a community […]" (369). The workday structure of worship, work, prayer and meals provides the focus for the community's sense of identity, and the structures and rituals created are often effective enough to last many generations. Norris tells of a conference on medieval monastic rituals in which the professional scholars, hearing from modern monks about current rituals, were "both shocked and intrigued to learn that so many medieval rituals were still alive and well" (371). In fact, these rituals are not simply alive, but are being actively revived. As Norris notes, "these days they're talking about it more, and setting about to reclaim some of the ritual aspects of their life that were cast aside in what I've heard more than one Benedictine call the 'mindless modernizing' after Vatican II" (369). This passage implies that rituals help communities remain stable during times of change.

As with monastic rituals, monastic clothing expresses the community's identity and purpose—indeed, monastics have long been associated with the habit. But the uniform is not simply a sign of their vow of poverty; when the monks officially receive the habits upon joining the community, they are commanded by the abbot to "see in it a reminder of our monastic

heritage, a sign of our life together, and a pledge of our hope to be completely clothed in Christ"
(312). Thus, the habit expresses the monks' connection across time—past, present and future.

Benedictine women, however, have had a more complicated relationship with the habit,
a relationship that, as clothing does in many ethnic communities, fulfills Cohen and Safran's
criterion by creating tension between diasporic and host cultures (26). Norris notes that
although monks have happily retained the habit after Vatican II, it has become controversial
among nuns, as it "came to symbolize for many Benedictine women one's political stance with
regard to the Vatican II reforms" (321) and thereby one's political stance towards the host
culture as well.[41] That is, whereas some nuns see the habit as an essential part of their monastic
identity, others feel that it suggests repressive patriarchal traditions. This tension regarding the
habit raises two questions: how the church views women and what role monastics play in the
church. Norris explains the problem this way: "Vatican II and its aftermath led to an identity
crisis. Were they monastic, or not? Contemplative nuns, or more active sisters?" (320). Whereas
rituals help maintain stability, monastic clothing has become a contested site between
modernist and traditionalist policies within the Church.

Cohen's claim that literature connects the Caribbean cultures also applies to the
Benedictine community, which, in all times and places, has used the Bible and Benedict's Rule
as founding and guiding texts. To give one example, Norris notes how the Psalms function in, on
and for the community:

> Internalizing the psalms in this way allows contemporary Benedictines to find
> personal relevance in this ancient poetry. Paradoxically it also frees them from
> the tyranny of individual experience. To say or sing the psalms aloud within a
> community is to recover religion as an oral tradition, restoring to our mouths
> words that have been snatched from our tongues and relegated to the page, words

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[41] A similar issue with clothing is found in the Quaker movement.

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that have been privatized and effectively silenced. It counters our tendency to see

individual experience as sufficient for formulating a vision of the world. (100)

Similarly, Norris's encounter with the Rule has a deeply personal effect that connects her both

with its author and with all the Benedictines who came before her:

> What happened to me then has no doubt happened to many unsuspecting souls
>
> in the fifteen-hundred-plus years that Benedictines have existed. Quite simply,
>
> the Rule spoke to me. [...] The Bible, in Benedict's hands, had a concreteness and
>
> vigor that I hadn't experienced since hearing Bible stories read to me as a child.
>
> [...] Benedict is refreshingly realistic in his understanding and acceptance of
>
> people as they are. [...] It surprised me to find that a sixth-century document
>
> spoke so clearly to our situation [outside the monastery], offering a realistic look
>
> at human weakness, as well as sensible and humane advice for us, if we truly
>
> wished to live in peace with one another. (6-8)

These two texts connect individual monastics with each other and with communities across

geographic and temporal boundaries; they create, as it were, a liturgical space for the universal

Benedictine community.

In addition to singing the Psalms and complying with the Rule, Benedictines include

lengthy recitations from the scriptures at every service and have books read aloud during meals.

Reading therefore becomes a communal activity. Norris believes that this emphasis on reading,

reciting and listening to texts also aids the development of hospitality, for she was attracted to

the Benedictines "because of the hospitality I've encountered in their communal lectio, a

hospitality so vast that it invites all present into communion with the text being read. I

encounter there [...a God] who invites me to become part of the process, the continuing

revelation of holy word" (217).

Norris is equally intrigued by the presence of oral literature in the monasteries and by

the ways it creates community. As already noted, the liturgy helps the monks "recover religion as

an oral tradition" (100). Another contribution to this recovery is the lives of the saints, whose contribution to monastic life she explains as follows:

> In any traditional society, stories are where the life is, where those in the present maintain continuity with those in the past. In the monastic tradition, from the fourth-century desert on, it is the stories that pass from monk to monk, long before they're written down, that have helped preserve the values, and the good humor, that lives on in the monastic charism. (340)

These stories therefore help create monastic identity.

This oral tradition is still being created. Each individual monastery has "a fabric of stories about people, living and dead, that make a living history of the community. And you are daily adding to it" (335-36). In fact, despite the central role of the Bible and the Rule in Benedictine life, Norris claims that Benedictine culture "is primarily oral rather than written," in part because the monastics "operate as families" (17). The monastery is a place where young monastics who "may never have known their own grandparents well [...] come to feel [...] that they've found many grandparents, guides to life within community, exemplars for the arduous journey" (364). Thus, the stories create a family atmosphere that for many monastics may be healthier than their own biological families; they also function in the way oral traditions function in ethnic minority communities, providing a connection to a tradition that is not taught by the mainstream culture.

Diaspora and Hospitality

The connection of monastic communities across time and space by the Rule, the music, the clothing, the saints' lives, etc., does not make the communities identical; in fact, they are remarkably diverse. For Norris, Christian monasticism is a "great experiment [that] has taken so many forms that it is hard to characterize [...]" (18). This experimentation continues as initiates from diverse cultures—Norris mentions Mexicans, Laotians and Vietnamese (21)—introduce their customs into communities established on European traditions. The question raised by

Norris's depiction is, how does the Benedictine structure support such a rich mixture of tradition and innovation, of community and individuality?

I take my answer from one of Norris's anecdotes:

> One monk, when asked about diversity in his small community, said that there were people who can meditate all day and others who can't sit still for five minutes; monks who are scholars and those who are semiliterate; chatterboxes and those who emulate Calvin Coolidge with regard to speech. "But," he said, "our biggest problem is that each man here had a mother who fried potatoes in a different way." (21)

The monk's joke points to a definition of diversity that may be at the root of the success of Benedictine hospitality. When diversity ceases to be an issue of race or of culture and becomes simply an issue of the individual differences that can come between family members, the way can be cleared for constructive interpersonal encounters. Norris suggests this view of diversity when she says, "Monasteries have a unity that is remarkably unrestrained by uniformity; they are comprised of distinct individuals, often memorable characters, whose eccentricities live for generations in the community's oral history" (63). The modern monastery is a collage of cultures and backgrounds. Yet, it is not an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's use of the term; in the monastery, everyone does know each other, and therefore each person's individuality contributes to the group's diversity.

Norris uses the story of Mary of Egypt to illustrate the way a monastic understanding of diversity operates. A fifth-century prostitute who became a hermit, Mary's life is now read in the monastery during the season of Lent. Norris says that the story "comes from a tradition of desert stories suggesting that if monks and whores can't talk to each other, who can? The monk who encounters Mary still has a lot to learn; his understanding of the spiritual life is facile in comparison to hers, and he knows it" (166). Such stories illustrate an important aspect of the Benedictine understanding of Christian identity: monastics do not necessarily see themselves as

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fully formed members of their community. Norris is reminded of this understanding of religious identity upon hearing theologian Karl Rahner's self-appraisal, "I have still to become a Christian" (115). Perhaps this sense of incomplete identity fosters the kind of hospitality that allows both whores and estranged Presbyterian poets to find their place in the world.[42]

The picture of Benedictine community woven through Norris's essays suggests the same idea. As one monastic tells Norris, "The basis of community is not that we have all our personal needs met here, or that we find all our best friends in the monastery [...]. What we have to struggle for, and to preserve, is a shared vision of the why, [...] why we live together. It's a common meaning, reinforced in the scriptures, a shared vision of the coming reign of God" (22). Perhaps the underlying issue is the voluntary nature of membership. Monasticism, at least in modern times, is not something one grows up in; rather, it is something one joins, conceivably out of a sense of calling, but nonetheless in agreement with that call. Thus, the community is constructed, which may be another factor that fosters hospitality.

The implications of this interpretation of Benedictine monasticism are twofold: theoretical and ethical. Theoretically, the implication is that current theories regarding ethnicity can be usefully applied to some religious groups. Although for scholars like Sheffer trans-global religions do not fully qualify as diasporas, it may be that subsets of those religions, such as monastic communities, meet his criteria much more satisfactorily. And again, it is not necessary to identify such groups as ethnicities; rather, the theory is a useful tool that may help reveal both the similarities and the differences between ethnic and non-ethnic groups.

Ethically, the implication is that it is possible for people both inside and outside of conventional minority groups to adopt modes of behavior that allow inclusivity to flourish, so that minorities and their host cultures can enter into creative relationships that foster the health of both groups. One way to do this is suggested by Karl Rahner's comment (above): if people in

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[42] Recall again the notion of "becoming-human."

the United States (to take one example) would stop thinking of themselves as Americans and start thinking of themselves as "still in the process of becoming Americans,"[43] they might learn to see themselves as foreigners in America and thereby become more hospitable to all people. Norris herself uses her monastic experiences for cultural criticism; in writing about the darkness and harshness found in many of the Psalms, she notes with sadness that "all-American optimism, largely a middle-class and Protestant phenomenon, doesn't want to know this world" (97). Although the phrase "this world" here refers to the Psalms, the center of monastic worship, it might well refer to the challenges of monastic life itself, with its rejection of both egotism and escapism.

Cohen suggests a method for living diasporically when he quotes Theodor Adorno's comment, "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's own home" (151). As noted previously, the same idea was expressed in the twelfth century by Hugh of St. Victor, who said that people attain perfection as they learn to see the entire world as a foreign land, and was lived out by Patrick, who learned to see his home culture as an obstacle in his path to God. It can even be traced back to Jesus' teaching about his followers no longer belonging to the world, in both the physical and spiritual senses of "world." Thus, the idea has long been part of the Western Christian tradition; all that is needed is to find groups who are modeling the idea and to learn from them how to accomplish it.

A similar tension is associated with the monastic (and Christian) version of a homeland. Cohen acknowledges that a diasporic homeland may not yet exist, and the Christian view of the kingdom of God fits that criterion. In the meantime, however, those who hope for that kingdom live (as was noted in the section on Patrick) in what many medieval writers refer to as exile: this world is not truly their home. Monastics, by leaving their native culture for the created

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[43] Recall the way Black integrationists held up the ideals of the nation's founding documents as the ideal by which to measure who is American, and the way this was also said to apply to the Quaker assessment of Christian identity.

community of the monastery, experience this dichotomy more starkly than most churchgoers do. As Norris says, "a Christian monastic seeks to experience what Paul Philbert has described in <u>Seeing and Believing</u> as 'the mystery of our living between two worlds, one of space and time, the other of promise and expectation'" (368). The first world connects monastics to each other and to the past, but the second world separates them from the world and unites them in their diasporic hope.

Norris sees in these Benedictine communities a possibility for life that she can integrate into her daily routine and that she can try to spread amongst her friends and her readers. Her book proposes the possibility that we can voluntarily choose to live as monastics, as exiles, etc., by adopting approaches to our identity (as Americans, Christians, Westerners, etc.) and to our communities that resemble the approaches developed by groups such as Benedictine monastics. As she says,

> In a world in which we are so easily labeled and polarized by our differences: man/woman, Protestant/Catholic, gay/straight, feminist/chauvinist, monastic hospitality is a model of the kind of openness that we need if we are going to see and hear each other at all. The radical, incarnational nature of that hospitality hasn't diminished at all since Mechtild's time, or St. Benedict's. It still has the power to effect conversion and to work miracles. (162)

Norris's depiction of Benedictine life suggests that its diasporic quality is what we most need to learn from if we are to create a hospitable culture within our own communities.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

In this project, I have tried to demonstrate from several perspectives the multicultural aspects of Western Christianity: historically, theologically, and devotionally. These three perspectives are not necessarily connected; although they overlap, there is no cause-and-effect relationship among them. The devotional writers need not be familiar with the theological texts discussed, and most likely were not aware of the historical events examined here. In fact, the three perspectives may well point in different directions and/or contradict one another outright. Even within the history of Christian missions, there have been contradictory approaches to the practices of accommodation and inculturation. How much less agreement can we expect between theologians, missionaries and spiritual masters?

In the historical surveys, I tried to show that in every place Christianity has spread, it has taken on aspects of its local context. In part, this process is due to the very nature of the religion, as it seeks to provide answers to the problems that threaten to destroy humankind. As each region has particular sets of needs, the Church will necessarily take on different appearances from location to location. Similarly, each culture has its own productive ways of addressing human problems, and the Church can use these as points of contact in spreading the gospel. However, at times this process has been used lazily, in order to make surface conversion easier, and/or carelessly, with little understanding of the dangers involved.

The process can be said to have started with the ministry of Jesus himself, who lived in a culture that was already the meeting point of the world's major cultures: Hebrew, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman. As seen in the Book of Daniel, the Jews of the Diaspora had to learn ways of living in foreign cultures without simply assimilating to them, but also without demonizing them as being beyond redemption. Although Jesus lived in the Jewish

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homeland, the Roman occupation made the lessons of Daniel relevant to daily life. And while his ministry focused on the Jews, the ministry of his disciples quickly moved into the surrounding cultures, and the differences between the gospels reveal the different cultural understandings and cultural needs faced by the early church. If the gospel accounts are true, then the first apostles were also influenced by Jesus' own teaching on the matter, a teaching that shifted their sense of belonging from the political world to the heavenly kingdom. They live in the same world as before, but are now sent into it rather than coming from it.

As the Church moved westward into Europe, and especially as it attracted the attention of educated skeptics and educated converts alike, it incorporated Greek and Roman ways of thinking, in order first to defend itself and then to advance itself. For better and for worse, this process continued as the Church moved into Celtic areas, becoming policy when it encountered Germanic culture. (And I did not even touch on the Church's interactions with Scandinavian and Slavic cultures.) The Church was also influenced by its encounters with Arab culture and, through the Arabs, was re-introduced to Greek culture. Thus, even European Christendom was an amalgam of Christianities, combined with influences from non-Christian cultures.

However, the Medieval illusion of a universal culture was broken open by the discoveries of exploration, as Europeans made their first sustained encounters with non-Abrahamic traditions. These encounters, memorialized with the aid of advancements in printing, literature and historiography and given new importance by colonial profits, met with mixed results. While some Europeans recognized the sophistication of these unfamiliar peoples, others rejected them as uncivilized, even less than human. Yet, while many missionaries tried to impose European cultural practices on Americans, Africans and Asians, there were some, such as Williams and Las Casas, who stood up for the fair treatment of these peoples, and others, such as de Nobili, Valignano and Ricci, who abandoned their European customs in order to reach their audiences.

At the same time, the inhabitants of these regions adopted Christianity for their own reasons, reasons that were not always consonant with the missionaries' hopes. In some places,

conversion allowed cultures to survive in the face of extermination. In others, Christianity connected to local belief systems. In still others, Christianity provided greater freedom and increased opportunities for self-development than the local traditions. In this mixture of approaches, we can see the emergence of a modern, culturally pluralistic Christianity that has more recently begun to bring forth a variety of culturally specific theologies, as peoples around the world consider how to incorporate the pre-Christian and colonial histories of their world into a Christian framework: What does Jesus have to say to <u>our</u> situation?

While missionaries were taking Christianity to new regions, theologians were trying to clarify Christianity's relationship to culture. Many theologians no doubt accepted the strategies of the apologists and the accomodationist policies of the Middle Ages, but several of the most significant voices (though not as influential as might be supposed) viewed Christianity as a culture unto itself, separate from yet in the midst of the world's cultures. Augustine rejected the triumphalism of Eusebius, and instead saw the history of humanity as the history of two cities, the city of those who love God and the city of those who love themselves. Martin Luther took a similar but less universalizing approach, rejecting the triumphalism of the Roman Catholic Church by positing two kingdoms within European Christendom. And Søren Kierkegaard rejected the triumphalism of European Protestantism, mocking its claims to have restored Christianity to its true forms by arguing that Christianity has become so much a part of culture that it has effectively ceased to exist. These three theologians may be in the minority with respect to Christian political theology-philosophy, but they are well-regarded figures who represent a view of the world in which the Church will always remain a minority.

In the meantime, while the missionaries and theologians wrestled with policies and practices, the vast majority of Christians were going about their daily lives. Yet, as the devotional authors discussed here suggest, the daily life of Christians (and perhaps of any religious person) is never the ordinary grind of worldly life, but is always marginal, marked by difference, separation, and a rejection of upward mobility. For three of our authors, the issues have taken

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quite literal forms. Patrick's life was a sermon on the Christian life as exile: he was forced by his circumstances to recognize the difference between his culture and God's, and to learn to love those whom his world despised. He also learned that his experiences endowed him with gifts that more than made up for the education and opportunities he lost during his exiles.

Fifteen hundred years later, Thomas Merton underwent a similar, if less dramatic and less traumatic, experience. His monastic life follows the notion of faith as an exile from the world, while his studies in Asian traditions expand upon Patrick's experience of learning to love the so-called foreigner. For Merton saw that Asian traditions were closer to Christianity than commonly assumed, certainly closer than many of the Greco-Roman influences that have so deeply infiltrated and bolstered the European Church. Where Patrick shows it is possible to love different cultures, Merton shows it is possible to learn from them as well. He also demonstrates a way to live respectfully and productively within religious contact zones.

George Fox and the early Quakers were less concerned with the problem of foreign cultures, if only because they themselves became the foreigners. They serve as examples of the tensions between church and world as pointed out by Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard, struggling to decide how best to live within their culture without becoming a part of it. As Jesus predicted, the world hated them because they were not a part of it. Yet, rather than simply reject the world and separate themselves from it, they actively engaged it, seeking to make it a safer, fairer place for all people. They stand not only as prophets to the Church today, but to the modern ethnic minorities that must choose between nationalism and integration.

For the remaining three authors, the issues have been more subtle and more symbolic, though no less physical. As Richard Rolle shows, even mystical experiences can have earthly effects. The sweetness he felt might have been a spiritual experience, but the songs he produced and the heat that burned his chest were decidedly physical manifestations of spiritual presence. Rolle also shows the importance of language, both elevating a vernacular language into a literary language and re-creating the dominant literary language as a minor language. In all this, Rolle

suggests that what we need most is to "become-human," that is, to take as our model Jesus, who was fully human insofar as he was fully reconciled to God.

Kathleen Norris writes a great deal about a related topic, namely, the need to turn common, daily experiences into opportunities to encounter and serve the divine. From her time in the monastery, she learns that laundry and baking are no less spiritual than worship and Bible study. She also learns that Benedictine life can be a wonderfully healing experience even to people who do not "belong" there. In part, this is because the Benedictine rule of hospitality rejects the idea that people could "not belong" there, and instead sees in all people the presence of Christ. But it is also because of the Benedictine community's diasporic qualities, which allow each community its local history and traditions while connecting it to the universal community that spans the continents as well as the ages.

But although Christian experience is found within the activities of daily life, the Christian belongs to another realm. Just as Patrick discovered that he did not truly belong to Britain, Catherine suggests that we live in the borderlands between earth and heaven, both of which affect us and to both of which we have responsibilities. This purgatorial life may put us in conflict not only with the worldly culture in which we live, but even with the churches we serve. For as Catherine's life reveals, God does not always obey the commands of the church leaders, but raises up individuals whenever, wherever and however God wants. The miraculous aspects of Catherine's life (and the lives of numerous other women mystics) may have been God's rebuke to the church. For her readers five centuries later, these miracles are a reminder that in the Christian life, eternity breaks into the present and the local to make people ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom. In this way, Christians remain in the world but are no longer "of" it.

I hope that these explorations will renew the study of the great Christian devotional works and inspire the Church to reconsider its claims to be the "dominant culture" of the West. Much good has been done by the Church, but we must remember that just as Christianity is not limited to Western culture, Western culture has never been limited to Christianity.

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