

Songs of Love, Passion and Empire

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Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

[The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies](#) edited by Judith M. Lieu and Martinus C. De Boer [Oxford University Press, 9780198739982]

The contribution of the Johannine literature to the development of Christian theology, and particularly to Christology, is uncontested, although careful distinction between the implications of its language,

especially that of sonship, in a first century 'Jewish' context and in the subsequent theological controversies of the early Church has been particularly important if not always easily sustained. Recent study has shaken off the weight of subsequent Christian appropriation of Johannine language which has sometimes made readers immune to the ambiguities and challenging tensions in its thought. [The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies](#) begins with chapters concentrating on discussions of the background and context of the Johannine literature, leading to the different ways of reading the text, and thence to the primary theological themes within them, before concluding with some discussion of the reception of the Johannine literature in the early church. Inevitably, given their different genres and levels of complexity, some chapters pay most if not all attention to the Gospel, whereas others are more able to give a more substantial place to the letters. All the contributors have themselves made significant contributions to their topic. They have sought to give a balanced introduction to the relevant scholarship and debate, but they have also been able to present the issues from their own perspective. The Handbook will help those less familiar with the Johannine literature to get a sense of the major areas of debate and why the field continues to be one of vibrant and exciting study, and that those who are already part of the conversation will find new insights to enliven their own on-going engagement with these writings.

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Excerpt: The Gospel and three Letters traditionally ascribed to 'John' constitute a clearly coherent and distinctive body of literature within the New Testament. Although 3 John of all the so-called letters in the New Testament is closest in length and form to the myriads of ephemeral letters from antiquity recovered from the sands of Egypt, it is unmistakably part of the same family as the account of the life and death of Jesus which ever

since the end of the second century CE has been dubbed 'the spiritual Gospel'. Shared vocabulary and formulations point to a pattern of thought and a world-view which are immediately recognizable as 'Johannine' and which give voice to a unique theological voice. That voice is arguably one of the two most influential sources of subsequent Christian thought, the other being the Pauline corpus.

Yet from very early on the Johannine Gospel has been seen as a text to be fought over, startling in its differentness from the other Gospels and yet potentially their apex. Perhaps the earliest extended commentary on a Christian text was on part of the Gospel, that on the Prologue by Ptolemy, followed by one by Heracleon, both of whom were to be labelled heretical soon after if not within their lifetimes. A number of other Christian theologians who were to have lasting influence on the shape of Christian thought, including Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine, wrote commentaries on the Gospel, finding in its vocabulary resources to address the theological debates of their own age. John's Gospel in particular has most often appeared to resist being constrained by the historical circumstances of its genesis.

Although starting with the Johannine literature this introduction has quickly moved to the Gospel in particular. Despite the evident close links between the Gospel and Letters, and the questions to which these give rise, there is little if any explicit evidence that they ever circulated together as did the Pauline corpus. Yet the first author to make extensive use of the Gospel (other than those earliest commentaries), Irenaeus, already reads the first two Letters in close association with the Gospel, and assumes their common authorship, despite their actual anonymity, identifying the author with the Apostle John, son of Zebedee. That identification, long accepted despite some doubts at various times with regard to 2 and 3 John, is just one element in the search for the elusive origins of these writings and of their distinctive patterns of thought and language. This handbook will use 'John' of the author as of the texts without any commitment as to the actual authorship.

There is a particular irony in that a fifth writing, Revelation, which explicitly claims to be by 'John', and was early quoted as of apostolic origin (Rev. 1:4; Justin Martyr, Apol. 81.4, 'John, one of the apostles of Christ'), has had the most chequered history in Christian reception, with the consequence that its authorship by John, the apostle, has most frequently been questioned. As was already recognized in the third century CE, Revelation does not share the same distinctive style, vocabulary, and theological outlook as the Gospel and Letters, and for this reason it is not counted within the 'Johannine Literature' for the purposes of this Handbook. Almost every chapter would have to explain that Revelation does not fit alongside the (other) Johannine writings within the topic to hand, and rather warrants separate discussion and a different range of lead themes. There are other writings that claim a close link with the Apostle John, and that demonstrate to varying degrees some affinity with the thought-world of the Gospel, although perhaps indirectly or by imitation; most notable would be the Acts of John and the Apocryphon of John, both of which may go back to the second century in some form. These also are not discussed in this handbook.

Study of the Gospel and Letters of John has reflected, and has been a prime example of, most of the changing faces of New Testament study. Debates about the historical reliability of the Gospel's account of the ministry of Jesus have continued over much of the last two centuries, changing direction, occasionally as a result of new discoveries, but probably as much because of the different sets of questions or expectations brought to bear, as well as because of changing evaluations of the other Gospels. During the twentieth century, the tendency to see the Johannine literature as the clearest evidence of the move of the early Church into the Greek intellectual culture of the time was overtaken, especially following the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, by recognition of how well it fits within the diverse strains within contemporary Judaism, which themselves were being re-evaluated. However, as is often the case, the pendulum begins to rebound or stark binary alternatives are reconsidered. Yet those aspects of the Gospel, particularly its dualism

and attitude to the world, that attracted its earliest 'Gnostic' commentators, reinvigorated at points during the twentieth century by new discoveries, have ensured that its relationship with the 'heterodox' systems of thought that move towards Gnosticism, remains a point of lively debate.

As the scholarly focus turned more towards the specific circumstances of the writing of each of the Gospels, especially provoked by form and redaction criticism, the Johannine corpus as a whole has stimulated probably the most sustained attempts to trace a specific history of a community whose experiences and developing theology arguably lay behind the texts as handed down. Here each of the Letters has played a key role alongside the Gospel, allowing recognition of their distinctive notes alongside their common voice.

While the classic disciplines of source and form criticism, followed by more nuanced theories of literary genre and development, have been a major feature in study of the Gospel, and to some degree of 1 John, more recent methods of analysis have found the corpus particularly fruitful ground. Social scientific approaches have contributed to the study of its rhetorical strategies as well as to the socio-historical circumstances that may lie behind the Gospel and Letters, often in creative combination with attempts to recover and describe the Johannine Community as previously noted. At the same time, the recognition of the 'Jewishness of John' was accompanied by awareness of its, according to some uniformly negative, portrayal of those it calls 'the Jews', and of the long legacy of this portrayal. Made particularly acute by more profound reflections on the holocaust or shoah, debates about 'anti-Jewishness' or 'anti-semitism' in the New Testament have often started from the Fourth Gospel, and it is here that the discussion has become most nuanced. The Gospel and the community hypothesized as lying behind it continue to play a key role in the still active study of the history of the emergence of 'Christianity' from its Jewish roots, while its attitude to Temple, Moses, and Scripture provide a classic example of the complexities of describing what is sometimes short-handed as the 'relationship between new and old'.

It is a commonplace that ways of reading the New Testament have multiplied and become more diverse particularly since the 1980s, with none maintaining the dominant place once occupied by historical criticism. Again, the Fourth Gospel is a notable example of this; its style and method mean that it has lent itself particularly well to literary and narrative readings, both in relation to specific passages or themes, such as characterization, and in relation to the structure of the Gospel as a whole; it has also invited ideological analysis, while gender-focussed readings have proved particularly creative and fast-evolving. The literary alertness involved in such readings has often been associated with a new sensitivity to the richness of John's symbolic world, allowing for greater reader participation in its effect as opposed to attempts to find a single meaning. While there may be a tendency to categorize these different methods independently, in practice they often overlap and cross-fertilize each other, ensuring that the Johannine literature continues to be a highly energetic field of study. It has not been possible in this handbook to discuss the ways in which the creative potential of the Gospel has been explored in art, music, or film.

The contribution of the Johannine literature to the development of Christian the-ology, and particularly to Christology, is uncontested, although careful distinction between the implications of its language, especially that of sonship, in a first century `Jewish' context and in the subsequent theological controversies of the early Church has been particularly important if not always easily sustained. In other ways, too, recent study has shaken off the weight of subsequent Christian appropriation of Johannine language which has sometimes made readers immune to the ambiguities and challenging tensions in its thought. Chief among these have been those tensions between present and future eschatology, between individual and community, between the physical reality of Jesus's experiences and those points at which he appears 'like a God striding across the earth', and between the more conventional-sounding understanding of his death as 'to take away the sin of the world' (1:29) and Jesus' own declaration before that event that he had already fulfilled the task God

had entrusted to him, giving eternal life to those God had given him, `which is to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (17:2-3). Although much has been made of 1 John's statement, 'God is Love' (1 John 4:8) and of the Johannine emphasis on love as that which unites Father and Son, and believers in relation to one another, others have found in the Johannine literature a striking, and disturbing, ethical deficit.

These various topics in the study of the Gospel and Letters are discussed in detail in the chapters that follow. The volume starts with chapters concentrating on discussions of the background and context of the Johannine literature, leading to the different ways of reading the text, and thence to the primary theological themes within them, before concluding with some discussion of the reception of the Johannine literature in the early Church. Inevitably, given their different genres and levels of complexity, some chapters pay most if not all attention to the Gospel, whereas others are able to give a more substantial place to the Letters. All the contributors have themselves made significant contributions to their topic. They have sought to give a balanced introduction to the relevant scholarship and debate, but they have also been able to present the issues from their own perspective. The editors are grateful to all the contributors for the careful attention they have given to their task and for the stimulating insights they have offered. Inevitably, in a field that continues to provoke lively discussion, readers will find different points of view in the various chapters, including on issues where there is overlap between them. The editors have not attempted to hide such disagreements but where possible have directed readers to relevant discussion in other chapters. Readers have the opportunity, therefore, to encounter different approaches and conclusions and to gain a sense of how those differences arise, and perhaps to be helped to come to their own evaluation. The suggestions for further reading will be particularly helpful for those meeting these issues for the first time to explore them further or to hear some of the voices discussed at first hand. The more detailed bibliographies are limited to literature cited within the chapters, but will be a valuable starting point for those wishing to delve

more deeply into the topics and debates. No introduction or handbook can hope to be comprehensive, and no doubt there are topics that readers, and indeed the editors, wish could have been included. Even so, we hope that the handbook will help those less familiar with the Johannine literature to get a sense of the major areas of debate and why the field continues to be one of vibrant and exciting study, and that those who are already part of the conversation will find new insights to enliven their own ongoing engagement with these writings. <>

[A Basic Guide to the Old Testament](#) by Jean-Louis Ska [Paulist Press, 9780809154043]

A simple tool for a first reading of the Bible that answers the first questions that are posed by the reader who has little familiarity with the Bible and helps with the critical reading of the Bible, i.e., to maintain the right distance to avoid the problems that arise when the text is taken literally. Chapters
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Why Don't People Read the Bible?
 According to Umberto Eco, the Bible forms part of the GUB, the Great Unread Books. Clearly, he is not wrong. However, that leads to this question: Why is the Bible read so little? There are many reasons. One of these—which does not explain

everything—is that, for a long time, the ecclesiastical authorities of the Catholic world did not encourage the reading of the Bible, particularly after the Reformation. As is well known, the rallying cry of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura*, and the reaction of the Catholic hierarchy is equally well known. Things changed, however, especially after the Second Vatican Council. Yet developments are slow, and there is still a long way to go before being able to speak of a real "biblical culture" in the Catholic world.

What is the problem? In my opinion, it is twofold. First, our reading of the Bible is, for the most part, a reading that I would call "anthological." The method is simple: depending on circumstances or occasions, the individual or the group chooses the passages that correspond best to the needs of the moment. We do not read the Bible; we read only "selected passages." The problem is that the passage chosen already has a preestablished function. It must answer the question put to it by the individual or group that chooses it. When that question is answered, no one asks another. This is, therefore, a functional reading that aims at finding useful things in the biblical texts. It would be beneficial to complement this "anthological reading" with a "contextual reading." The principle is simple. When a text is chosen for whatever reason, it is useful to place it in its context. A start would be to read the material that precedes and follows the text, especially when it is very short and consists of one or two verses. Next, it is worth looking at the chapter, then at the whole book from which the text comes. Finally, one can read the notes and introductions to the book that can be found in the major editions of the Bible in modern languages (New Jerusalem Bible, New Revised Standard Version, etc.).

The second problem is more serious. The Bible remains difficult because of its language, which is not very accessible to contemporary readers. This is a problem not just for the Bible. We could say the same of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, Virgil's *Aeneid*, or the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. Moreover, a work nearer to us like Dante's *Divine Comedy* is difficult to read without the necessary explanations and notes. That is why there are many publications that aim to provide the tools necessary

to smooth out the rough path that leads to the ancient texts. The biblical texts are not completely inscrutable. However, there is a risk of understanding their meaning only partially or even of taking the wrong path altogether. It is obvious that erroneous readings of the Bible exist. There are also readings that can be examined again and enriched.

What is the aim, then, of this new, short introduction? It is meant to combine two objectives. The first is to provide a simple tool for a first reading of the Bible. It therefore intends to answer the first questions that are posed by the reader who has little familiarity with the Bible. The second is to help with the critical reading of the Bible, that is, to maintain the right distance to avoid the problems that arise when the text is taken literally.

An example will clarify what I mean to say. It is taken from the Book of Joshua, a book that is particularly difficult. We are in chapter 6, and, under the leadership of Joshua, the people of Israel are besieging the city of Jericho. They adopt a surprising strategy. For seven days, the priests march around the city walls, blowing their trumpets. On the seventh day, the priest and the people must complete seven marches around the city. They are waiting to begin the seventh march when Joshua addresses the people with the following instructions:

And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." (6:16-19)

The difficulties of this text are numerous. I shall list only the main ones. First, it is not easy to understand the strategy adopted by Joshua. The "trumpets of Jericho" are very famous. However,

military strategy manuals never speak of trumpets as a means of causing city walls to collapse.

Second difficulty: the order given by Joshua. It concerns destroying every living being in the city of Jericho apart from Rahab and her family. In contemporary language, this woman would be a "collaborator." In chapter 2, it is she who welcomes the two spies sent by Joshua, hides them, and allows them to get out of the city safe and sound. As has been said, the rest of the city will be "devoted to destruction." With a wealth of detail, the narrative describes what is meant by this:

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys. (6:20-21)

The modern reader is appalled by this. On the one hand, the order is given to massacre a population whose only fault is that of occupying a territory that the God of Israel has promised to his people, which Israel is beginning to conquer. Why massacre the women and children, even the old folks? All the animals are to be massacred too: oxen, asses, and sheep. Some people will be spared: those who have collaborated with the conquerors. How do we interpret such an account? Isn't what we have here a pragmatism without scruples and, furthermore, one that is being justified theologically? How do we reconcile a text of this kind with, let us say, the Sermon on the Mount and the love for enemies preached by Jesus Christ?

The difficulties do not finish here. Archaeologists have excavated the ancient site of Jericho and searched for traces of Joshua's conquest. After many expeditions, they have reached the conclusion that, in the period in which one can place the entry of Israel into the promised land, the city of Jericho was not inhabited. In other words, the biblical account is without historical foundation. For the archaeologists, the walls of Jericho never fell because they did not exist.

We shall attempt to resolve these three difficulties, one after the other. First: Why use the trumpets to demolish the walls of Jericho? An initial answer is obvious. Trumpets formed part of an army's arsenal, even if their primary aim was not that described in Joshua 6. For example, they were used to sound the attack. Elsewhere, we have some ancient accounts and representations of sieges, particularly Assyrian reliefs. In no ancient document do we have an equivalent of the trumpets of Jericho. The Assyrians, for example, employed mobile towers that came up to the walls and from which archers launched torches or flaming arrows against those who were being besieged. Others attacked the city gates with battering rams protected by huge shields. Finally, teams of sappers dug out tunnels under the walls to make them collapse. In the Bible, we have the accounts in Judges 9:45-49 and 9:50-55; 2 Samuel 12:27-30; 2 Kings 17:5-6; 18:9-10; 18:17—19:37; 24:10-15; and 25:1-7. These accounts are very concise and do not mention strategies, except for Judges 9:48-49, in which a citadel is burned, and 2 Samuel 12:27, in which Joab, David's general, seizes the "city of waters" of Rabbah, capital of the Ammonites, and then forces its inhabitants to choose between surrender or dying of thirst.

We must conclude that Joshua 6 is not a true account of a battle. This first conclusion is essential for understanding the passage. We are not in the "real" world because this is not a description of an event that happened just as described in the biblical narrative.

There are other accounts that highlight the role of the priests and the trumpets. They are found in some very late texts: 2 Chronicles 13:12-14 and 20:28, for example. In both cases, we are present, not exactly at a battle but rather at a liturgy. The enemy is defeated when the procession of priests begins to cause the trumpets to sound. Like the subsequent narratives in Chronicles, the account in Joshua 6 exalts the role of the priests and of the liturgical instruments. In a few words, the texts show that Israel is not to seek its salvation in a powerful army, which it does not possess, and not even in sophisticated strategies, which it does not have, but, rather, in the worship of its God. Without too much risk, one could say that the text of Joshua 6 must be

quite late because it reflects the mentality of a period in which the priesthood of Israel had become a key institution. This is certainly the postexilic period, the Persian period, or, perhaps, even the Hellenistic period.

Once we have set the text in its liturgical context, it becomes simpler to understand Joshua's instruction concerning the conquest of the city. We are not on a battlefield. The rules have, therefore, little to do with military strategies. In confirmation of this, here, instead, are the rules to be applied in the case of a siege according to the "law of war" of Deuteronomy 20:10-15:

When you draw near to a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace. If it accepts your terms of peace and surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you at forced labor. If it does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you, which are not towns of the nations here.

These rules in Deuteronomy are more reasonable and understandable. Why then does Joshua seek the destruction of the whole population of Jericho? Because we are in a sacred and liturgical world where the rules of the absolute are in force: all or nothing. This is about the conquest of the first city of the promised land. The conquest is being carried out in the name of the God of Israel, and all that does not belong to him must be destroyed. It is necessary to clear the field to allow the God of Israel to occupy all the conquered space. We are in a world without compromises.

At this point, it is not difficult to reconcile the interpretation just sketched out with the archaeological data. The text of Joshua 6 is not a historical account. It is quite possible to imagine that it arose to explain why the city was in ruins and uninhabited, and, above all, why there was no trace of its population.

The reader has probably still a question to ask. What is the "truth" of the account if it does not correspond to an event that really happened? Let us pull together what we have observed previously. The account describes the conquest of the first city of the promised land thanks to a liturgy celebrated with musical instruments sounded by the priests, the trumpets. The message is quite clear: the conquest of the land, like its possession, is due not so much to military acts of bravery as to faith in the God of Israel and his worship. We can also read in this passage a legitimization of the priesthood of Israel, which performed an essential role at the dawn of the history of the people in the land.

Finally, a brief review from the methodological point of view. The problems posed by the text have been resolved thanks to three main elements. First, a critical reading of the Joshua passage based on a comparison with other biblical texts and with some documents from the ancient Near East shows that the passage cannot be interpreted as an account of a historical event. Second, the same comparison with other biblical texts has allowed us to grasp the liturgical intention of the passage. Third, the historical and literary contexts do not allow a literal interpretation of the text. The massacre of the inhabitants of Jericho is a symbolic action that says something about the worship of the God of Israel, not the way to treat foreign populations.

To summarize, the meaning of the biblical texts is not always immediately accessible. What is needed is a certain familiarity with the language, the culture, and the mentality of the biblical world or of the ancient Near East. That does not mean to say that it is impossible to understand them. It means only that, without adequate preparation and a necessary effort to understand, many of these texts remain obscure, or only a small part of their meaning can be recovered. Therefore, we begin our journey through the Bible by starting off with some very simple questions. <>

[Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness](#) by Michael Card [IVP Books, 9780830845491]

God's identity is beyond what we could ever fully express in human words. But Scripture uses one

particular word to describe the distinctiveness of God's character: the Hebrew word *hesed*. *Hesed* is a concept so rich in meaning that it doesn't translate well into any single English word or phrase. Michael Card unpacks the many dimensions of *hesed*, often expressed as lovingkindness, covenant faithfulness, or steadfast love. He explores how *hesed* is used in the Old Testament to reveal God's character and how he relates to his people. Ultimately, the fullness of *hesed* is embodied in the incarnation of Jesus. As we follow our God of *hesed*, we ourselves are transformed to live out the way of *hesed*, marked by compassion, mercy, and faithfulness. Discover what it means to be people of an everlasting love beyond words.

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A comprehensive dictionary of the English language was what the world needed. It would be impossible to imagine a more erudite group of scholars, with specialties ranging from anthropology to zoology, but all masters of linguistics. (J. R. R. Tolkien, an inventor of languages himself, was on one of the

later committees.) These men (and regrettably, because of the time, they were all men) were experts in Sanskrit, ancient Hebrew, and Latin, readers of cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphs; but above all they were passionately devoted to their own language, English.

The first committee estimated that the project would take no more than ten years to complete and would fill four volumes. In reality, the dictionary was initially completed in 1928, over eighty years after the first proposals were made. Instead of four volumes, it covered forty.

I refer to it being initially completed because the fact is it never was finished and never will be. The editors of what would come to be known as the Oxford English Dictionary realized that since language is always growing, changing, and adapting, no dictionary is ever finished.¹ The fact that the greatest linguistic minds of the day could so monumentally underestimate such a task hints at the complexity I mentioned above—not just of the English language, but of language itself.

We can theorize about words and how they work. We can task the greatest minds with listing and outlining and defining them. We can analyze the structures we use to put them into language, but in the end the way words work is an inexpressible mystery. Almost without our awareness they do their thing, lighting up the neural pathways in our brains. We use words to define other words because words are all we have. But ultimately they are only clumsy bricks. Words are, in one sense, beyond words; even the simple ones are often indefinable.

Indefinable words—words that require paragraphs and parables to provide even a hint of all they might possibly mean. Love and hope are two of the most obvious examples. Of course the Oxford English Dictionary lists definitions for them, but they fail miserably because love and hope are bigger than words. Their meanings cannot be contained by syllables, cannot be fully expressed by the sounds we make with our voices. Groups of letters hint at the inexpressible; they are sounds we put to mysteries. They fascinate and amaze me.

Why Hesed?

You have every right to ask yourself how someone could become so obsessed with a single word that they would attempt to write an entire book about it. It's a fair question.

As I try to reconstruct the story of how I became enamored with the word *hesed*, I find that at each step along the way my memory fails me somehow. Some years ago, while working through the laments of the Old Testament, I encountered this remarkable word for the first time. I had studied Hebrew as an undergraduate at Western Kentucky University, but I cannot remember my professors talking about this word. The truth is, they probably did, but I simply wasn't listening.

One of the fascinating features of biblical laments, which so captured my imagination, was the way every one transitions. These psalms begin lamenting (which is still a form of worship), and then at some unpredictable point they transition and begin to praise. This shift usually takes place by means of the Hebrew letter *vav*, which is usually translated "and" or "but." It is as if the lamenter finally exhausts himself and turns back to the God he was complaining to or about. (The sole exception is Psalm 88, which laments all the way to the end.)

In three important laments, Psalms 13 and 69 and Jeremiah's Lamentations, the word *hesed* appears at this turning point. It marks the transition from despair to hope, from emptiness to a new possibility of becoming filled once more. It's as if David and Jeremiah had run out of doubt and despair, had run out of words—except for this one untranslatable word. They could not exhaust its bottomless supply of hope, and by grace it rose to the surface of their lament, transforming it to praise. Their self-centered "I" mercifully became the God-centered "Thou." The pain and frustration and anger were not wiped away but rather transformed by entering the world of this untranslatable, three-letter, two-syllable word, *hesed*. Here are those three transitions:

But I have trusted in your *hesed*. (Ps 13:5)

But as for me, LORD,
my prayer to you is for a time of favor.
In your abundant *hesed*, God,

answer me with your sure salvation. (Ps 69:13)

Because of the LORD'S hesed
we do not perish,
for his mercies never end. (Lam 3:22)

The next step in the process of becoming obsessed with hesed has also been lost to memory, which is hard to understand considering that my life has been so changed by it. As I remember, in the midst of a radio interview with one of my scholarly heroes, I mentioned my newfound fascination with hesed. I distinctly remembered him saying, "Oh, that is the defining characteristic of God." That statement, coming from someone whose scholarship I so admired, lit the fuse. A few years later in a follow-up interview I reminded him of this statement. He insisted he never made it.

The final step involved the discovery of a working definition of this indefinable word. Again, the details have been lost. Looking back through the articles and notes I have collected over the years (two fifteen-hundred-page notebooks full!) I cannot find a trace of it anywhere. I don't think I'm clever enough to have come up with it on my own, and so I do not claim it as my own original definition, though sadly I cannot give a proper attribution. It will provide our initial, ever-incomplete working definition:

Hesed: When the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything.

So in the midst of researching a different topic I discovered this remarkable word. (Perhaps it discovered me.) I learned about it in the course of discussions I might not have had and read about it in a source that might not exist. Like the members of the dictionary committee in 1844, I monumentally underestimated the task of writing a book on hesed. What I thought would take a year took ten.

In the course of working on this book I realized that understanding hesed is a lifelong journey. None of us will ever get to the end of it in this life. This book is just the beginning of an exploration, an invitation to join in the journey of the vast world that is the word hesed, the greatest sacramental word in the Hebrew Bible.

The Bible puts words to what is beyond words. Because it is God's Word, it perfectly achieves this impossible goal. It invites you and me to a new perspective made possible only by the Spirit and the Word, if only we will lovingly listen (in Hebrew, shema). Before we delve into a detailed examination of some specific passages that contain the word hesed, let's take a brief, broad overview of the way words work in general.

Traditionally the first thing readers do when they become interested in a specific word is look up its history or etymology in a dictionary. This is often interesting. For example, the word panic traces its origins back to antiquity and the pagan god Pan. If you were to come upon this half-man, half-goat creature in the woods (imagine a scary Mr. Tumnus), you would experience the "panic terror."

In the case of hesed, the etymology is interesting but ultimately misleading. Studying hesed reveals the frustrating side of word histories. Some dictionaries simply state that its etymology is uncertain. Others claim that hesed is derived from hasida (stork). "The stork," they say, "is known as the pious bird." (In contrast to the ostrich, which is used in the Bible to portray foolishness as the worst mother in the animal kingdom. See Job 39:13-18.) But an examination of the primary sources fails to reveal anything useful about storks that might help us understand hesed. Storks are not mentioned in the Mishnah, and a digital search of the Talmud does not show a single occurrence. In Leviticus 11:19 and Deuteronomy 14:18 storks are listed, along with bats, as unclean. So the dictionaries, with their etymologies of pious birds, don't come close to revealing the significance of hesed. One wonders whether this etymology was reverse engineered.

Scholars have realized that, though they may sometimes be helpful, an overreliance on word backgrounds or etymology can often lead to significant misunderstanding. Language is too complex and fluid. Words shift in meaning over time. This is referred to as "diachronic" meaning (through time). There are other, more reliable ways to determine the meaning of a given word in a biblical text.

The context in which a word appears is a more reliable way to determine its meaning. If I shout, "It's a bomb!" at a football game, you expect to see a long forward pass. But if I shout the same words in a crowded airport, you should expect a panic. The context determines the meaning. What does the word key mean? If I'm standing in front of a locked door, you assume I mean the piece of metal used to unlock the door. If I'm sitting at a piano, you know I'm talking about the key of a song. At a lecture, key probably refers to the central idea of a concept. The context allows us to understand the specific meaning of the word at a particular time. (We don't even know how to pronounce some words apart from their context. How do you pronounce lead or bow?) This context-derived meaning is known as "synchronic" meaning, the meaning at one specific point in time.

In the pages that follow we will listen to the word *hesed* in its immediate context in a number of passages and try to understand just what the meaning was for the author at that particular point in time. This will give us the best preliminary introduction to the world of *hesed*.

A Broad Overview

Let's begin with a broad overview of our word. It's composed of three Hebrew consonants, khet (כ), samek (ס), and dalet (ד), read from right to left. Its first syllable is pronounced with a hard guttural h. It looks like this in Hebrew: *lon*. Unlike most Hebrew words, which place the stress on the final syllable, when *hesed* is pronounced the stress is on the first syllable.'

It is tempting to say *hesed* is the most important word in the Hebrew Scriptures. One Bible encyclopedia calls it one of the most important theological words in the Old Testament; another lexicon describes it as the most sacramental word in the Bible. A good case can be made for the claim that it has the largest range of meaning of any word in the Hebrew language, and perhaps in any language.

Hesed occurs nearly 250 times in the Hebrew Bible throughout all of the three major divisions—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The majority of occurrences (127) are in the Psalms.

In a very broad, general sense, *hesed*'s meaning, as happens with many words, subtly shifts between chronologically earlier and later Bible passages. This does not override the meaning it has at any one specific moment (synchronic meaning), however. If we try to make the case that *hesed* somehow progressively developed over time, the evidence is against us. So the following examples are only generalities to help us get started.

In Genesis *hesed* indicates an exceptional favor from God, something that has not been earned but graciously given. For example, the first time the word appears in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 19:19), Lot is asking God whether he can flee to Zoar instead of to the mountains. He has no right to expect that God will grant this indulgence but in his desperation he asks, and God in his kindness allows it. In Exodus, where the word occurs only four times, it leaps ahead in meaning and is used by God himself to describe his character. This demonstrates the fact that word meaning is not a simple matter of growth over time.

In the vast majority of references in the historical books, *hesed* has to do with a reciprocal expectation between two human beings, most often in stories about David. The expectation is not, strictly speaking, part of a written covenant but rather an aspect of relationship, though covenants come from *hesed*. In Psalms *hesed* is celebrated in song and often magnified by several choice words that appear in close proximity to it. In Proverbs *hesed* is mentioned primarily as something lacking in humans, though in Proverbs 14:34 and 25:9-10 it is curiously translated "disgrace."² In the Prophets, where the word occurs only twenty-eight times, the abundant *hesed* of God is in sharp contrast with the fragile *hesed* of men and women, which disappears like the morning dew. But ultimately it is God's lovingkindness that is the source of the new covenant with Israel and Judah.

The vast range of *hesed* is also made evident by the staggering number of English words translators employ in a frustrated effort to render it (see appendix B). The King James Version uses fourteen different words. It even borrows an elegant new word from Miles Coverdale's 1535 translation: "loving-kindness." Coverdale made up this beautiful

word specifically in an attempt to translate *hesed*, and it remains the favorite choice of many. But all these words barely began to capture the semantic range of *hesed*. Later translations resort to all kinds of compound terms, which provide a clue to the difficulty of reducing the Hebrew *hesed* to a single English word.

Linguistic Gravity

To borrow a concept from the world of physics, we might say that *hesed* is a word with an enormous mass. The greater the size of the object, the greater the gravitational pull it exerts. Earth revolves around the Sun because its great mass pulls us toward it. (The centripetal force, which pulls our planet away from the Sun, is perfectly balanced to keep us in a steady orbit.) One of the fascinating features of *hesed* is its tendency to draw other words to itself by means of its "linguistic gravity." It's as if in struggling to express the inexpressible, the original writer was forced to enlist other words beside *hesed* to help convey its meaning. Sometimes the additional word is joined with the letter *vav*, usually translated "and"; hence, for example, "*hesed and truth*" (the most prevalent combination). In other examples the additional word occurs in close proximity, usually in what is referred to as poetic parallelism.

There are eight principal words that *hesed* draws to itself in this way:

1. truth, *emet* (Gen 24:27, 49; 32:10; 47:29; Ex 34:6; Josh 2:14; 2 Sam 2:6; 15:20; Ps 25:10; 40:10; 57:3; 61:7; 69:13; 85:10; 86:15; 89:14; Prov 3:3; 14:22; 16:6; 20:28; Hos 4:1)
2. mercy/compassion, *raham* (Ps 25:6; 103:4; Jer 16:5; Dan 1:9; Hos 2:19; Zech 7:9)
3. covenant, *berith* (Deut 7:9, 12; 1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron 6:14; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4)
4. justice, *mishpat* (Ps 100:5; Jer 9:24; Hos 12:6)
5. faithfulness, *amuna* (Ps 89:24; 98:3)
6. goodness, *toy* (Ps 23:6; 86:5)
7. favor, *hen* (Esther 2:17)
8. righteousness, *tsadik* (Prov 21:21)

In Genesis 24:27 Abraham's servant praises God for not forsaking his *hesed* and his truth. In

Jeremiah 16:5 the prophet, speaking for God, declares that he has removed his peace from the people, as well as his *hesed* and his compassion. In Deuteronomy 7:9 Moses proclaims, "The LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his covenant and *hesed* for a thousand generations with those who love him." Hosea, in presenting God's case against Jacob's heirs, says in Hosea 12:6, "You must return to your God. / Maintain *hesed* and justice." Ethan, in Psalm 89:24, records the Lord promising his "faithfulness and *hesed*" to David, who we will see was a frequent focus of God's *hesed*. David himself sings in Psalm 23:6, "Only goodness and *hesed* will pursue me / all the days of my life." In the book of Esther we are told that Esther "obtained favor and *hesed* in his [the king's] sight more than all the virgins" (Esther 2:17 ASV). And finally, Solomon in Proverbs 21:21 promises life and righteousness to anyone who pursues righteousness and *hesed*.

Hesed attracts words to itself in another way as scholars, attempting to translate it, are forced to use multiple English words. A single word is rarely enough in a given context to express all that *hesed* means, so translators are forced to pile on adjectives. When you are reading an English translation of the Hebrew Bible this is a good way to determine whether the word you're looking at is *hesed*. In modern translations it is rarely rendered simply as "loyalty," but as "covenant loyalty" or "unswerving loyalty." It is not just "love" but "merciful" or "loyal" or "relentless" or "enduring" or "extravagant" love. The list goes on and on (see the list at the beginning of this book). The meaning draws other words in an attempt to express the inexpressible. In the end, *hesed* is as much a world as a word. These other gravitational words help to define its boundaries and estimate the remarkable mass of its meaning.

It's important as we move forward to remember that the purpose of this journey is not to become preoccupied with a single word. Let's let go of the illusion that *hesed* can be reduced to one English "literal" word and instead see it as a key that can open a door into an entire world—the world of God's own heart, the world of loving our neighbor and perhaps even our enemies. As we begin, let's ask for strength to bring everything to bear in this

process of loving God by listening to his Word—all our hearts, our souls, and everything that we are (see Deut 6:5). Let's ask for the grace to be in awe of the God who, when he opened the door of his life to us, had this word consistently on his lips, remembering that even though we have no right to expect anything from him he is pleased to give us everything. He is pleased to open his heart and life to us precisely because he is the God of hesed.

So this is the word hesed. Two syllables we speak with our teeth and tongue, a word we put to the mystery of a God who gives us not simply a second chance but more chances than we can possibly imagine (see Mt 18:21-22). It provides a reason for hope, our only real reason for hope. Though we will never exhaustively define hesed, we can nonetheless begin the journey toward understanding it. We can listen to it in the pages of the Hebrew Bible. We can see how it was lived out in the lives of people like Moses, David, and Ruth, how they became the objects of God's hesed, and ultimately how it became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. It is an infinite but, paradoxically, not an endless journey, for we believe and hope and trust there will be a final destination. <>

[Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives](#) edited by Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica [Eerdmans, 9780802875457]

Pauline scholarship is a minefield of differing schools of thought. Those who teach or preach on Paul can quickly get lost in the weeds of the various perspectives. How, then, can pastors today best preach Paul's message?

Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica have assembled this stellar one-stop guide exploring four major interpretive perspectives on the apostle Paul: Reformational, New, Apocalyptic, and Participationist. First elucidated by a scholarly essay, each perspective is then illuminated by three sermons expositing various passages from Paul's magisterial letter to the Romans.

Coming from such leading figures as Richard Hays, James Dunn, Fleming Rutledge, and Tom Schreiner, these essays and sermons splendidly demonstrate how each perspective on Paul brings valuable insights for preaching on Romans.

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Excerpt: The apostle Paul's letters remain enigmatic for New Testament interpreters and for those who

preach on them. This book fairly presents major interpretive perspectives on Paul and offers insights into how these perspectives influence the preaching of Paul's letters and therefore how these perspectives might affect listeners in the pews.

The interpretation of the Letter to the Romans in particular is contested to such an extent that many pastors have become afraid to preach through Romans. If they are lectionary pastors, they may wander into a designated text, but they know they are wading quickly into deep waters. Many pastors wish they had more time to become familiar with Pauline scholarship and to patiently work through more texts in Romans.

This book provides an accessible sketch of the four major interpretive schools of thought on Paul today: the Reformational (old) perspective, the new perspective, the apocalyptic Paul, and the participationist perspective. Each approach to Paul is written by a leading proponent of that approach. The book then provides three sermons from well-known preachers that illustrate how a particular approach to interpreting Romans might play out in preaching Paul.

In addition to being for pastors, this book is for laypersons who want to know more the interpretive processes on the apostle Paul and Romans in particular, since Paul enjoys unique status in having many lay readers showing interest in academic work on his epistles.

Like the apostle Paul, we hope that your mind will be renewed (Rom. 12:2) by the scholarship and the pastoral sensibilities of this volume. <>

[The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs](#) by Michael V. Fox [University of Wisconsin Press, 9780299100940]

In *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, Mr. Fox offers the reader a boarder, clearer comparative approach not only to appreciating but also understanding the artistic views and the meaning of ancient Egyptian love songs. The author treats both works as love songs in the same genre, which speak directly of the individual feelings and experiences of love. The discussion on the composition, historical sources, social setting, and the voice and mode of

presentation of the Love Songs especially gives the reader a better grasp of its overall literary. It emphasis on the famously theme that stand out in *The Song of Songs*, which has supplied several useful terms related to understanding the overall literary structure of the Song, in so much as "Courting Songs" and the "Mortuary Songs: Love and Death" or "description song", etc.

The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs offers the readers the first comprehensive, comparative literary-philological examination of these love poems. Besides the refreshed understanding provided from the commentaries, this book also includes complete translations as well as a new transcription of the Egyptian texts.

Michael Fox has taken the liberty in this translation of trying to reconstruct what he thinks may have been the original shape of the book, which means occasionally moving verses around to make more convincing sense. Generally, however, his translation follows the Hebrew text's order.

The closest surviving parallel to the *Song of Songs* from the ancient world is Egyptian love poetry. These poems come from the world of entertainment. They may have been sung, accompanied, enacted, or danced to. They are the earliest examples of simple love poetry that have survived from the ancient Near East, and some scholars have argued from this that love poetry originated in Egypt. In any case, they are likely to be the first to have been written down. So when Lady Gaga sings about *Bad Romance*, she is just working out a theme from ancient Egypt.

Available once more, this is a comprehensive, comparative literary philological examination of two enduring bodies of love poetry from the ancient Near East.

For historical-grammatical interpretation (HGI) part pf the "historical" aspect is to seek to understand the biblical text in its historical context. That means looking at the biblical material in the larger context of ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature. Such an investigation affects most books of the Old Testament, but particularly the *Song of Songs*. The current consensus about the book, if there is one, is that the *Song of Songs* has a great deal in common

with ancient Egyptian love poetry. Thus a common treatment of the Song today is to deal with it as a collection of Israelite love poetry, similar in vein and in purpose to the love poetry of ancient Egypt. This view is presented, for example, by Michael V. Fox (not to be confused with Michael J. Fox) in his monograph *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*.

But those who have spent some time in the literature about the Song have heard this before. In the 1860s and 1870s, Ernest Renan and J. G. Wetstein, both specialists, in their own way, in *Near Eastern literature and culture*, proposed (Renan first, in the 1860s, Wetstein a decade or so later) that the Song had a great deal in common with the songs that were used in Syrian culture to celebrate marriage, over the course of a seven-day wedding festival. Thus, in the generation following, many commentators found strong parallels between the Song and these Syrian compositions, attempting to find the seven-day cycle in the arrangement of the Song, for example. But time passed, and the more closely scholars looked at the evidence, the less they were convinced.

In the 1920s, T. J. Meek of the University of Chicago discovered strong similarities between the Song and Akkadian (Akkadian was the language of ancient Assyria and Babylon) hymns composed in praise of the god Tammuz. He proposed that the Song was an adaptation of Akkadian hymnody to Tammuz appropriated for the worship of Yahweh. Again, a number of commentators over the next couple of decades reflect this view. But once again, over time the strength of the evidence waned, and scholars moved away from that view as well.

As noted, the current view is that of Fox, reflected in a number of commentaries. But Fox's book was published in 1985, and it is now probably approaching its sell-by date. So the reader begins to wonder where the next set of ANE literary connections with the Song will be found.

Meanwhile, some people still hold that the Song is a drama, although there is little agreement on how many characters there are, or how to divide the Song into acts and scenes. In general, there is little agreement as to the outline of the Song. I have before me four current study Bibles. Now the

advantage of study Bibles is that they try to present something of a consensus view on all issues. The reader can decide for himself how much agreement there is from these outlines.

Excerpt: Intimately, across millennia, the ancient Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs speak to us, saying things we can understand well about matters we care about deeply. They sing about pleasures, joys, desires, drives, confusions, pains, and hopes that we ourselves have known or can easily imagine. We enjoy vicariously the pleasures of the young lovers and smile at their frustrations with the knowing sympathy of shared experience. We can read the ancient love songs with the special pleasure of recognition that comes from finding our own most private feelings expressed in the poetry of far-off times and places. Evanescent emotions are made immortal in art.

Yet though poets can talk to us across eras and cultures about love, we must appreciate the variety no less than the commonality of human experience. Cultures, and for that matter individuals, differ in their perceptions of love as well as in their modes of expression.

While we cannot know that the views the ancient Egyptian and Israelite songs express are the Egyptian view of love or the Israelite view of love, they certainly do show some Egyptian and some Israelite views of love, and therein lies their importance for cultural history. For by transmitting, inscribing, and preserving these love songs, the ancient Egyptians and Israelites showed that they valued these views. These songs were transmitted and valued even though they do not speak of great issues of myth and religion, of questions of state or events of national history, of birth or death, of sin or salvation. They tell rather of individual feelings and private concerns, showing us how some sensitive observers with the gift of poetic expression saw sexual love and the behavior of adolescent lovers, matters that may not seem to bear on national history and religion but that were surely of profound importance in the lives of individuals in the cultures that gave rise to these love Poems.

Like Jane Austen's novels, the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs are delicate vignettes,

painted on a "little bit (two inches wide) of ivory" with a fine brush. The songs are about young lovers—no more than that, but that is a lot. The love songs unapologetically limit their scope to the human heart, the hearts of anonymous, young, "unimportant" figures. But precisely because the vista of these songs never goes beyond individual experience, they can reach deep into that experience to explore and reveal that most precious and peculiar complex of emotions: sexual love.

My goal in this book is to lead to a richer understanding of the literary treatment of love in Egypt and Israel: what the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs say about love and lovers and how they say it. I begin by translating and interpreting the various poems (Part One), for literary comparison and investigation of a genre should proceed from interpretation of individual works. The interpretation of these difficult poems involves the interpreter in many philological problems that must be addressed, even if many of the difficulties cannot be resolved.

In interpreting the Egyptian songs I am largely on my own, for there is as yet no comprehensive commentary on them, but only the brief notes in Müller's 1899 *Liebespoesie der Alten Ägypter*, the notes to White's 1978 translation, and comments scattered throughout the scholarly literature. In interpreting the Song of Songs, on the other hand, I am aided (and burdened) by the mass of commentary that has built up around the Song for two thousand years. Inasmuch as the Song is complex, beautiful, and difficult, it always repays renewed investigation. I am able to offer new insights because I have earlier commentary to start from and because studying the Egyptian songs gives rise to new ideas about what to look for in ancient Near Eastern love poetry. [Note: Landy's *Paradoxes of Paradise* (1983) appeared too late for me to take account of his intriguing conclusions and interpretations. Many of his arguments strengthen some of the conclusions I have arrived at, in particular with regard to the unity of the Song. His insights often heighten one's sensitivity to the literary texture of the Song. But although I can follow his analysis in many details, I find his main

conclusions farfetched, a considerable overreading of the Song's symbolism.

In interpreting these love songs I strive to look at each song in its entirety. I argue that several of what are commonly regarded as collections of songs among the Egyptian texts are really unities, single songs compounded of several stanzas, and further that the Song of Songs too, though often considered a loose collection of short songs, is in fact an artistic unity. Appreciation and understanding of these ancient love songs, particularly the Egyptian ones, have been hampered by an atomistic reading that fails to relate the parts of the poems to one another and thus quite misses the shape and sense of the whole. A holistic approach alone can lead to an adequate understanding of the artistry and meaning of these poems.

In Part Two I inquire into the literary treatment of love in ancient Egypt and Israel, discussing the following issues:

1. Language, date, and historical setting of authorship, and possible channels of literary transmission from Egypt to Israel.
2. Composition and structure: what are the boundaries of the songs and what are the thematic and structural relations among the units that they comprise?
3. Function and setting: why and where were the love songs sung?
4. Mode of presentation: whose are the voices that speak within the poems, and how do the speakers communicate with other persons in their world?
5. Themes: what do the poems talk about, and how does the Song of Songs differ from the Egyptian songs in its handling of those themes it has in common with them?
6. Love and lovers: Here I draw together and build on the conclusions of the earlier discussion for an overview of the types of love and lovers shown in the love songs. How do the poets perceive the nature and behavior of lovers and what ideas of love do they present? How do they think lovers interact with society and with each other, what do they perceive to be the emotions love comprehends, and what effect do

they believe love has on the way lovers see the world? The literary treatment of lovers' perceptions, implying a particular understanding of the relation between love and the world, leads finally to what we might call the metaphysics of love.

At the end of the book are appendices with some other Egyptian texts of relevance to the discussion, a concordance to the Egyptian texts, and a hieroglyphic transcription of them.

The broader literary discussions in Part Two grow out of the exegesis of the individual poems in Part One and are often dependent on arguments made there, but the book need not be read in sequence. I suggest that you first read the Egyptian love songs, referring to the notes at this stage only insofar as necessary for a general understanding of the poems. I offer my interpretation in a single literary comment after the notes to each poem. Become familiar with the Egyptian poems, and, above all, enjoy them. Then look over my interpretation of the Song of Songs. You can get an idea of my approach to the Song by reading the introductory remarks to each unit. Then proceed to Part Two, referring back to the commentaries as necessary. Chapter 8 can also be read alone, for although it builds on conclusions reached earlier, it should be comprehensible on its own.

In this book, literary comparison is not an end in itself, but rather a means to achieving greater understanding of the love poetry of two ancient cultures. I discuss the Song and the Egyptian love songs together because they throw light on each other. In particular, the purposes, techniques, and ideas of the Song are illuminated through comparison with its Egyptian predecessors, though sometimes the later work will cast light backward onto the earlier poetry.

Reading always requires models: we understand a text or an oral discourse by comparing it with other texts or discourses. When we come to a text for the first time, we ask ourselves what kind of text we are reading. We answer with a broad, "heuristic" genre concept, which we progressively narrow and refine as our understanding increases. [Note: On the meaning of genre and the role of genre-expectations in understanding a text. Genres, like

sets, may be defined broadly or narrowly. For my purposes it is adequate to define the love-poetry genre as those poems that express or speak about sexual love. Within this broad genre there are numerous narrower genres that may be variously defined, such as the Praise Song or the Wish Song (see chapter 7). I will call the narrower genres "types." An audience always has expectations about the type of discourse it is about to hear. Writers build on these expectations about the type of characters speaking, their setting, what they are supposed to be doing, what attitude we are supposed to take toward their actions, and so on. Genre-built expectations make possible the delight and insight of surprise, for there can be surprise only when there are expectations to be violated. The Egyptian love songs give us an idea of what an ancient Israelite audience would have expected in a love song, thus helping fill out the generic context lacking in extant Hebrew literature. [Note: I argue for their secularity in chapter 5. There are Mesopotamian texts that border on secular love poetry, as well as a fragmentary text that may be part of a secular love poem. Psalm 45 can hardly be called a love song. It lauds the righteous glory and martial prowess of the king, then officiously admonishes the Tyrian bride to forget her homeland and obey her new husband and master, enticing her to do so by promising that the king will take pleasure in her beauty and that she will receive gifts and her sons be given high offices. Ps. 45 shows us just how different wedding songs, at least royal wedding songs, could be from the sort of love song studied in this book.]

We must use the Egyptian songs for this purpose with caution, of course, for they are separated from the Song of Songs by time, language, and culture. But the Song and the Egyptian love poetry are appropriately read together because their similarities, which I will try to establish in the course of this study, run deep. Some of these we may summarize at the outset.

The Song of Songs and the Egyptian love songs explore the same subject—sexual love between human beings. They are, moreover, the only secular love songs to have reached us from the ancient Near East.¹ They are alike in the use of dramatic presentation; that is to say, they show personae,

whose words alone create the world of the poem (see chapter 6). The center of their interest is always the characters' feelings, personalities, and experiences rather than those of the poet. The personae they create are young lovers, not yet married. The eroticism in both the Egyptian and the Israelite songs is lush but delicate. Egyptian and Israelite poets alike seem to accept premarital sex with no hesitation. They are fascinated by love and delight in its intensity and variety. Both create worlds that are bright and happy, with few pains and shadows; the only pain recognized is that which comes from not having one's beloved present, and even that grief is never portrayed too gravely. The lovers are all intent on the present experience, giving no thought to the past and little to the future. The songs do not touch upon the great issues of sexuality and marriage that could so easily color any talk of love. Procreation, family ties, future well-being, social stability, and national prosperity—these poems ignore them all. In addition, the Song and the Egyptian love songs have several particular themes in common, though they treat them differently (chapter 7). There are also many minor motifs and usages common to the Egyptian songs and Canticles, which I will point out in the commentary on the latter.

It is not, however, the discovery of similarities alone that justifies literary comparison. Differences are no less important. Often the value of literary comparison is to offer a contrast, showing us where the work at hand diverges from similar works. In fact, as Richmond has shown in *The School of Love* (a study of Western love poetry traditions that has influenced and aided my understanding of the poetry I am examining), the significant character of related poems is defined neither by their similarities nor by their differences, but by the differences between them at their points of maximum resemblance (1964: 280). In other words, the often-remarked similarity of the Praise Songs in Canticles to their Egyptian counterparts (chapter 7) is what makes the difference in their use of imagery especially significant for understanding the Song's view of love (chapter 8). Discovery of sources and parallels is, therefore, not the end of comparative criticism but an aid to deeper interpretation, for we can best understand the

individuality of a text by discovering where it diverges from the works it most resembles. This is so even when we compare texts where there can be no question of influence of the one on the other.

There is additional value to comparison when we are reading texts connected genetically—that is to say, where there is an unbroken chain of influence linking two texts—the earlier work being heard or read by later authors who incorporated its ideas, attitudes, themes, or forms into their own work, which in its turn influenced later authors, and so on until we arrive at the second work being compared. When there is such a genetic link we can examine not only differences and similarities but historical development as well. In such cases we see poets building on their predecessors' perceptions and modes of expression, often surpassing them in breadth of vision, depth of understanding, and power of expression. Evolution of this sort has characterized the long and continuous history of Western love poetry, as Richmond has shown. In Western love poetry we can trace how poets continually took themes, ideas, and literary conventions from their predecessors and used them with greater psychological nuancing and increased self-awareness. We can show how in time a new understanding of love developed, one not negating earlier views but going beyond them, as, for example, the Stuart poets came to recognize that the modes and conditions of perception largely govern what is seen. When ample materials for literary history are available, one can follow developments spanning centuries. It can be shown, for example, that the similarities between the way Catullus treats the theme of the fleeing doe and the way the Stuart poets handle it are not due to spontaneous generation, nor are the differences due to a sudden and erratic jump, but rather the degree and type of divergence are the result of a continuous accumulation and reshaping of poetic resources. This is the type of evolution that I believe connects Canticles to the Egyptian songs.

In my opinion the similarities justify a hypothesis of at least indirect dependence, that is to say, the supposition that the Song is a late offshoot of an ancient and continuous literary tradition, one whose roots we find, in part at least, in the Egyptian love poetry. I do not assume that the author of the Song

necessarily knew Egyptian or borrowed directly from Egyptian originals (though that is by no means impossible). It is more likely that Egyptian love poetry was sung in Palestine, where it became incorporated into the local literature and developed there in new ways. In chapter 3 ("Channels of Literary Transmission") I discuss when and how this could have happened.

At the same time we must recognize that a genetic link between the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs cannot be proved. It is almost impossible to prove literary dependence in cases where we lack positive evidence of the author's acquaintance with the earlier works or with other works that were themselves shaped under their influence, and such evidence is lacking here. We can only argue for the likelihood of dependence by pointing out the possible channels of transmission and by observing the similarities between the works, as I will do throughout this book. We cannot add up the similarities and subtract the differences to arrive at a positive or negative answer to the question of dependence. Therefore the decision for or against the hypothesis of dependence is finally a subjective—and uncertain—one. If this book provides a basis on which to make that decision, it will prove of value, even if the decision is negative. I believe that most of my observations and interpretations can stand independently of the hypothesis of dependence. If you are not persuaded that there is a genetic connection, you can use the parallels for their heuristic value.

While fundamental similarities and probable genetic linkage make the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs suitable for comparison, there is a certain unwieldiness in this comparison because we are comparing one poem with a group of poems. The main corrective for the imbalance is to keep it in mind. The comparison is possible because Egyptian love poetry is sufficiently uniform to allow generalizations that apply to most of the poems and adequately characterize the extant poetic tradition as a whole. Isolated exceptions do not invalidate such generalizations, though these exceptions must be noted and evaluated. (Statements I make about all Egyptian love songs have to be understood, of course, as applying to

the ones we have. Future discoveries might invalidate some generalizations.)

A lopsided comparison of this sort requires us also to remain aware both of the individuality of the various Egyptian songs and of the accidental uniqueness of the Song of Songs. The Egyptian songs do not speak with a single voice in all matters. At the least they present different types of lovers, not a single stereotyped couple. Nor should we assume that Israelite love poets spoke with one voice. Canticles is a representative of Israelite love poetry, the only love song the culture preserved and raised to a special status of holiness. But since we do not know to what degree it was typical of Israelite love songs, we would not be justified in generalizing from it to the Israelite view of love. Our conclusions are for this song alone.

Another comparative approach one could take would be to look at the Song in the light of other biblical passages that speak of relations between the sexes, in particular the Garden of Eden story, Genesis 2-3. Tribble has done just that, both carefully and sensitively. Tribble interprets the Song of Songs as telling of the redemption of the love story that went awry in Eden. In the Song, man and woman are again in mutuality, harmony, and equality in a garden. While I am not persuaded by many of the parallels she draws between the two texts nor by certain elements of her reading of the Garden of Eden story, I find that the comparative route I have chosen has led to some similar conclusions about the concept of love and sexuality in the Song. In the private paradise of the lovers in the Song, as in Eden, there is no male dominance, no female subordination, no stereotyping of either sex. In the Song, pre-Fall harmony and oneness are relived in a private paradise. While the Song, in my view, does not respond to the Garden of Eden story or deliberately build on its themes, a comparison of the two can highlight the attitudes underlying both texts. I do not, however, think that it is redemption we see in the Song, but rather a love unconscious of any Fall, with never a hint that sexuality might be under a curse that would require redemption. I do not follow this path of comparison further, but leave it to the reader to weigh the results the two perspectives lead to.

In general, literary comparisons may give us ideas and add the weight of analogy to particular interpretations, but they cannot prove the validity of those interpretations. Even when the two works or groups of works being compared are demonstrably linked by a chain of influence, literary comparisons do not prove particular interpretations, because a certain literary usage may fulfill a function in the later work that is entirely different from its function in the earlier one. Rather, the comparison of structurally or thematically related works (whether or not the observed similarities are due to the influence of one work on the other) offers us models—of attitudes, concepts, forms of expression, literary devices, and so on—which help us fine-tune our reading of the texts. That is why I have chosen to study the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs together.

For reasons I will explain in chapter 5, I do not see a significant connection or a fundamental resemblance between the Song and the Mesopotamian Sacred Marriage liturgies. Nevertheless, my discussion of the Song does not require rejecting the hypothesis that the Sacred Marriage Songs—and others—left a mark on love poetry in Israel.' While I do not claim that Egyptian poetry alone constitutes the background of the Song, I do claim that of all the extant works, Egyptian love poetry is the closest in character to the Song and thus the most valuable for its interpretation. As evidence I offer the results of this study.

While my goal is twofold—richer interpretations of both the Egyptian love songs and the Song of Songs—my emphasis will generally be on the latter, partly because earlier works usually illuminate later ones more than the other way around, and partly because of a critical judgment that in artistry and insight the Song is a more significant object for interpretation.

The Egyptian songs are delightful. I have read them for several years with unflagging pleasure. I feel I have come to know intimately the young people depicted in them, for the poems are delicate portraits, drawn with simple strokes that yet suggest a world of detail. But the Song far

surpasses them—in the sensuousness of its language, the richness of its imagery, and the ardor of the love it depicts. The Song, in its perception of love as communion and as a way of seeing the world, goes beyond the Egyptian vision of love. Yet it can only enhance our appreciation of the achievement of the Egyptian love poets to see what the genre they founded developed into. Nor do we detract from the creative genius of the Song's author in recognizing that she or he was heir to the resources of a long tradition, shaped for centuries by unknown singers of lost songs, until it had evolved from its auspicious Egyptian beginnings into the masterwork of love songs, Sir hašširim, the Sublime Song. <>

[The JPS Bible Commentary: Song of Songs: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary](#) by Michael Fishbane [The Jewish Publication Society, 9780827607415]

Song of Songs is a wondrous collection of love lyrics nestled in the heart of the Hebrew Bible—songs of passion and praise between a young maiden and her beloved. It is religious lyric par excellence. But what is its true meaning? Is it an expression of human love and passion, pure and simple? A celebration of the covenant between God and Israel? Or something else?

The latest volume in the Jewish Publication Society's highly acclaimed Bible Commentary series, Song of Songs provides a line-by-line commentary of the original Hebrew Bible text, complete with vocalization and cantillation marks, alongside the JPS English translation. Unique to this volume are four layers of commentary: the traditional PaRDeS of peshat (literal meaning), derash (midrashic and religious-traditional sense), remez (allegorical level), and sod (mystical and spiritual intimations). Michael Fishbane skillfully draws from them all to reveal the extraordinary range of interpretations and ideas perceived in this beloved biblical book. A comprehensive introduction, extensive endnotes, a full bibliography (traditional and modern), and additional explanatory materials are included to enhance the reader's appreciation of the work.

This original, comprehensive commentary on the Song of Songs interprets historical, critical, and traditional sources drawn from the ancient Near

East, the entire spectrum of Jewish sources and commentaries, and modern critical studies.

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Excerpt: The Song of Songs has been my intellectual and spiritual love for decades, its rhythms entering my soul and its images forging deep figures of beauty. (It is a song of love and longing—expressed in poetic dialogues; it is also a song of rupture and loss—expressed in searches within and without.) Yet my love of the Song is a young love compared to all those who have studied and interpreted the work for millennia. The ones

who came before me have been my teachers and partners in private conversation, as I experienced the many ways this work has been understood and transformed by every sensibility of the Jewish soul: plain-sense, midrash, poetry, philosophy, and mysticism. The present work has tried to capture this great bounty via three main forms: the introduction (which presents the work and its creative regenerations in great detail over the centuries), the running commentary (which is built around all the forms of creativity that have emerged over the generations), and the excursus (which annotates the history of interpretation in its great depth and variety).

The introduction presents the nature of the Song of Songs and its interpretation in a linear and historical fashion. The story begins in antiquity and continues unabated into the twenty-first century. In the telling, the introduction presents the reader with many of the features that make the Song such a beautiful and powerful poetic work. It unpacks the various levels of interpretation that have rendered the Song a multivocal song of love over the millennia. The unfolding of these levels is grounded in tableaux of concrete human love (between female and male, reciprocally)—and its ongoing desire for fulfillment. In turn, this very concreteness has sponsored a spectrum of spiritual emotions (of humans for God—and God for humans), expressing many religious valences and values. Like a "rose of Sharon," the Song blossoms in delicacy and diversity.

Unlike the introduction, the commentary is arranged in an iterative and synchronous fashion. Its format allows it to operate on four levels at once. That is, each literary unit receives four levels of interpretation, in a consistently repeating sequence. The reader is invited to actively engage the discussions, verse by verse, allowing the text's plain sense to interact with other levels of meaning. For each of those levels, the full range of historical materials has been taken into account. Because those sources are sometimes arcane and complex, I have reformulated their content in contemporary terms so that the comments may address the reader in a clear and direct way.

As I surveyed and studied the works on the Song through the ages, one aspect stood out: when the comments were written by engaged authors, they intended the Song to instruct readers both intellectually and spiritually. Commentators drew from the wealth of historical traditions and formulated their words in a personal way for their audience's instruction. I have followed their lead. My readers are invited to learn facts; but more important, they are invited to engage the text and its many voices of understanding in a personal way. My goal has been to foster a creative readership so that the Song will sing anew.

Within all levels of interpretation in the commentary, my English rendition of the Song's text is based on the New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) translation, which is what appears with the Hebrew text. On occasion I use alternative English wording that evokes additional nuances that no single rendering can convey. Multiple renditions usefully highlight the interpretative dimensions involved in deciding upon a given passage's meaning. Meanwhile, in the textual comments I have also tried to help the reader observe the use of recurrent phrasing, grammatical forms, words, and sounds. These features are part of the Song's thick poetics; they contribute to its literary power.

As with every translation, some of the power of the original text is lost. The NJPS translation approach has led it to sometimes employ synonyms for the same Hebrew word or verbal form or to paraphrase an image or phrase. This is done for the sake of English idiom—so as not to sound too stilted or strange. To compensate for what the NJPS approach has obscured, my plain-sense commentary points out the Song's recurring terms and wordplays, and the resulting thematic cross-references.

With the other three levels of the commentary, the reader is encouraged to see how interpreters over the centuries have reshaped the Song's original meanings—sometimes focusing on a given word or phrase, but always transforming it by creative readings. On occasion portions of an interpretation are cited in the commentary, so that the reader can perceive how the commentators understood it; at

other times, the interpretation is condensed and the verse is reformulated to reflect its new meaning.

Finally, the interested student is invited to consult and study the detailed history of the interpretation of the Song of Songs by Jewish interpreters, as laid out in the excursus that follows the commentary. Those who have read the Introduction and the commentary will be ready to engage in this intellectual enterprise—a story of the ages, revealing the Song of Songs as an expression of every aspect of the Jewish literary and religious spirit.

Songs of Love

Israelite Songs or Songs of Israel

The Song of Songs is a wondrous collection of love lyrics—songs of passion and praise between a young maiden and her beloved, nestled in the heart of the Hebrew Bible. Scenes from the natural world abound, as the young pair make their way around the countryside and invoke all they see and smell in the world to express their inner feelings and laud one another's beauty. There are plants and fruit growing in the orchards, sheep and gazelles moving on the hills, and oils and spices in profusion. Each and all convey the impressions that the loved one makes on the eye and heart.

However, readers of this love and bounty will find no references to God and Israel, the Exodus and Sinai, or any other event of the sacred history recorded in Scripture. Nor will they find references to covenant obligations and religious observance—even the love of God—in these lyrics. How can we understand this? Do these songs of human desire and delight mean just what they say? Or might they conceal some hints of sacred history and worship, and not be as secular as they seem? Readers past and present have pondered this matter and taken different positions.

Some take these songs in their most straightforward sense and celebrate their occurrence in the Bible. What could be more wondrous, they say, than robust love lyrics between a young maiden and her beloved in the national literature of ancient Israel? The heart of the maiden speaks longingly of love's fulfillment—addressing herself, her beloved, and her friends. And the youth responds in kind, with his

own songs of praise—invocations to be with him in the fields, and exclamations of how her body stirs him so. Reciprocally, the pair express their love via images of flora and fauna, royal cities, and armored towers. The many expressions of love bloom and burst like the natural world all around, only to reappear in ever-new forms. In such ways the songs suggest the mysteries of love and longing, filled with pathos and possibility. How special all this is, a precious portrait of the earth and the emotions in ancient Israel!

So readers of the Song of Songs are bound to ask: How did these lyrics enter the Hebrew Bible? How were they sanctioned by the sages who culled the writings of the past and produced a sacred scripture? Did they regard these songs as straightforward outpourings of human love? Or did these lyrics convey some hint of religious love found elsewhere in the Bible? We cannot know for sure; but one may well suspect that some sages looked at these love lyrics and recalled similar expressions of covenant love in the prophetic literature. After all, the ancient prophets repeatedly rendered the theme of covenant love (between God and Israel) in terms of marriage tropes. For them, nothing so fully expressed the ideal of religious faithfulness as the bond of marriage, just as nothing so starkly manifested covenant disloyalty as "cheating" with foreign gods.

From the earliest times, this topic found expression in such prophets as Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. Hosea speaks initially of faithless Israel as a harlot, who betrays her husband and children and then formulates national restoration and covenant renewal in terms of the espousals of marriage (Hos. 1:2-8; 2:20-22). Jeremiah lauded Israel for her ancient devotion and faithfulness, called it bridal love (Jer. 2:2), and was puzzled how a bride could forget her adornments and slink off with other lovers (vv. 32-33). The prophet Ezekiel spoke of covenant marriage and idolatrous betrayal in even starker terms—adding bold erotic tropes to the mix (Ezek. 16:4-14). These themes of marriage and divorce also recur in the exilic prophecies of Isaiah (Isa. 50:1; 54:4-8). The topic thus penetrated the soul of the people. It provided the strongest similes of consolation for the people in exile: "(Just) as a

bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you" (Isa. 62:5).

In the light of these texts, which give explicit allegorical expression to the relationship between God and Israel in terms of love and betrayal, it was perhaps inevitable that some sages might suppose that the Song of Songs dealt with such matters as well—except that the tropes and topics found there were implicit, requiring explication for their covenant features to be seen. Thus, how the Song's earthy topics might be related to the covenant of Sinai, or to occasions of sin and rebellion, was a task for rabbinic exegesis.

Yet the possibility that the Song was a hidden allegory of covenant love would save its songs from their apparent surface sense, aligning them with various biblical and rabbinic themes. Sages imbued with this insight might even regard their interpretations of the Song as extending the concerns of the ancient prophets. Seen in this way, the Song of Songs offered a theological possibility otherwise missing in the Hebrew Bible. It offered the opportunity to present the entire history of Israel in terms of love dialogues between God and Israel. Arguably through these or similar considerations, the Song entered the canon of Scripture as the religious lyric par excellence.

The Song of Songs is included in the third major unit of the Hebrew Bible, called *Kethuvim* (Writings). This collection follows the other major units, *Torah* (Pentateuch) and *Nevi'im* (Prophets, which includes the narrative "history" from Joshua through Kings). Within the Writings, the Song of Songs has come to be grouped with the other so-called Five Scrolls: *Ruth*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Lamentations*, and *Esther*. (Actually, only the book of *Esther* is referred to as a *megillah*, "scroll," in ancient rabbinic sources.

The Song is one of three biblical books traditionally attributed to King Solomon, along with *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*. According to R. Hiyya Rabba, the king wrote all his works at one time, in old age, and while inspired by the Holy Spirit—and the Song of Songs was the final one. Another opinion, attributed to R. Yonatan, stated that the Song was written first, then *Proverbs* and lastly *Ecclesiastes*—a sequence explained by the proclivities of the human life cycle: "When a person is young, he

recites song lyrics; when he matures, he says parables; and when he becomes an elder, he speaks of vanities and follies." We thus have two conflicting views concerning the Song's character: a product of romantic youth, a spirited song; and a work of elderhood, of inspired significance. The difference is between a human composition (and expression) and a divine teaching (and instruction). However, each kind of song would have to be recited and understood differently.

Attribution to King Solomon is based on our work's title ("Song of Songs, by Solomon"), and on the statement in 1 Kings 5:12 that he composed 1,005 songs (along with 3,000 parables). This consideration would place the work's composition sometime in the middle of the tenth century B.C.E. Indeed, the Song's broad geographic sweep—from Ein Gedi in the south to the mountains of Lebanon and Amana in the north—accords with the vast kingdom of Solomon's reign. But a careful reader might also note the reference to the towns of Jerusalem and Tirzah in 6:4, and wonder whether this conjunction reflects a later historical time—when the first city was the capital of the south and the second the capital of the north (after the breakup of Solomon's monarchy in 927 B.C.E.).

Such a reader might also notice the many linguistic features in the Song that are rare or unattested in classic Biblical Hebrew. These include elements that became common only in the latest strata of Biblical Hebrew; or are known from Aramaic or Mishnaic Hebrew; or derive from Persian and possibly from Greek—the languages of postexilic conquerors. Such considerations, and the occurrence of many brief and often disconnected units in the Song, support the scholarly view that the Song of Songs is a collection of lyrics composed over many centuries—beginning (perhaps) in mid-tenth century B.C.E. and continuing to the fifth or fourth centuries B.C.E., when the Song achieved something like its present form.

In short, the Song is a collection of love lyrics that emerged in ancient Israel over a period of centuries. Only then—as a literary whole—did this work become Scripture. <>

[Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary](#) by Marvin H. Pope [Anchor Bible Commentary, Doubleday, 9780385005692]

The Song of Songs has been compared to a lock for which the key was lost. Traditionally ascribed to King Solomon, the book has a sensuous imagery that has been the subject of various allegorical interpretations, chiefly as relating to Yahweh's love for Israel or Christ's love for the Church.

Marvin H. Pope suggests that the poem is what it seems, an unabashed celebration of sexual love, both human and divine, rooted in the fertility religions of the ancient Near East, the sacred marriage rite, and the funeral feast. A distinctive feature of his interpretation is the correlation between Love and Death. Also discussed are parallel literatures, possible Indian influences, and the significance of the Song for women's liberation. Samples of traditional Jewish and Christian allegorical interpretations are cited for each verse.

Numerous photographs and drawings of ancient Near East origin illustrate and authenticate this provocative and controversial interpretation of Solomon's sublime song. <>

[The Song of Songs: A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or the Song of Songs](#) translation and commentary by Roland E. Murphy, S. Dean McBride Jr. [Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible, Fortress Press, 9780800660246]

The Song of Solomon or Song of Songs as has been until recently an often neglected book of Scripture, especially in evangelical commentarial circles. Perhaps that is due to a misunderstanding of its admittedly erotic material or perhaps it is due to a general oversight amongst believers as to the importance of grasping the beautiful message concerning proper male/female relationships let alone the message found throughout Scripture of the longing God has for His people. [The Song of Songs](#) by Roland Murphy seeks to rectify the misunderstandings and oversights regarding the Song of Songs.

Murphy also offers copious notes at the end of each section of the commentary. These detailed notes hide many jewels of insight well worth further

study. Do not ignore footnotes and endnotes in this volume. That is where the treasure is.

Overall, a thorough array of information compiled by Murphy. His commentary is scholar like and accessible. The volume is recommended for commentary to preachers, Bible College and Seminary students and anyone who wishes to gain by study the Song of Solomon. <>

[The Song of Songs: The World's First Great Love Poem](#) by Ariel Bloch, Chana Bloch, Afterword by Robert Alter [Random House, 9780679409625]

This new edition of The Song of Songs offers both a beautiful new translation and a definitive interpretation of this great love poem. The Blochs' translation, a combination of refined poetic resourcefulness and philological precision, brings us closer to the magical freshness of this ancient Hebrew love poetry than has other English versions. <>

[The Song of Songs \(Song of Solomon\)](#) by Othmar Keel [Continental Commentary Series, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 9780800695071]

In addition to a comprehensive introduction and an analysis of text and form, Othmar Keel focuses on the metaphorical and symbolic language of the Song of Songs. He makes full use of parallels-textual and iconographic—from Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. More than 160 illustrations, prepared by Hildi Keel-Leu, add to the interpretation of the songs. <>

[The Song of Solomon: An Invitation to Intimacy](#) by Douglas Sean O'Donnell [Preaching the Word, Crossway, 978-1433523380]

Our culture holds the megaphone when it comes to talking about sex today. Yet the church has maintained a reputation for keeping quiet, hesitant to teach people about this sacred aspect of life. The Song of Solomon, however, holds nothing back as it sings loudly about the holy practice of sexuality and pushes us into the conversation with godly theology.

While this biblical text has been subject to a broader range of interpretation probably than any other book in the Bible, Wisdom Literature expert Doug O'Donnell offers this comprehensible guide to

help uncoil its complexities and solve its riddles. He explores the poetry, themes, and wisdom of this song from a Christocentric perspective, and gives us a profound, rich, and witty reflection that encourages right thinking and behavior.

Showing how this “song of songs” is meant to teach us about biblical sexuality and God’s heart for his people, O’Donnell elucidates on the greatest subject of all time—love.

[Song of Songs](#) by Tremper Longman III [New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans, 9780802825438]

Relationships are a wonderful, mysterious, often elusive, sometimes painful part of the human experience. The most intimate of all human relationships, according to the Bible, is that between a husband and a wife. It is no surprise, therefore, that there is a book of the Bible, the Song of Songs, that focuses on this relationship. What is surprising is how little attention is given to the Song of Songs by scholars, by the church, and by readers of the Bible. With this volume Tremper Longman III unpacks for modern people what this ancient love poem says about the male-female relationship -- and, by analogy, about God's love for his people.

Longman's devout study begins with a thorough introduction to the Song of Songs and its background. Longman discusses the book's title, authorship, date, literary style, language, structure, cultural milieu, and theological content. He also canvasses the long history of interpretation of the Song of Songs, a history too often characterized by repression of the text. In the commentary itself, Longman structures the Song of Songs according to its twenty-three poetic units and explains its message verse by verse. The exposition is made clearer by Longman's adoption of an anthropological approach to the text and by his frequent comparisons of the Song of Songs with other ancient Near Eastern literature.

Learned and highly accessible, innovative yet fully informed by past scholarship, this commentary shows the beautiful Song of Songs to be a timeless celebration of human love and sexuality. <>

[The Arnhem Mystical Sermons: Preaching Liturgical Mysticism in the Context of Catholic Reform](#) by Ineke Cornet [Brill's Series in Church History and Religious Culture, Brill, 9789004372658]

In [The Arnhem Mystical Sermons: Preaching Liturgical Mysticism in the Context of Catholic Reform](#), Ineke Cornet presents the first in-depth study of this sermon collection from the canonesses of St. Agnes in Arnhem. Through a careful analysis of sources and parallels, this book demonstrates how the sermons creatively integrate both Rhineland and Brabantine mysticism into a unique commentary on the liturgical year. The sermons, which contribute to the Catholic Reform, systematically explore the mystical celebration of the liturgy which underpins every aspect of the collection's theology of inner ascent. Together with the Evangelical Pearl and the Temple of Our Soul, the sermons are part of a wider literary network that plays a significant part in the history of Dutch mysticism.

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Excerpt: The major religious and political transitions of the sixteenth century began to be felt in the city of Arnhem, the capital of Gelre, soon after Luther had nailed his 95 statements to the Church door in Wittenberg in 1517. Whereas the majority of the city council was still favourably disposed towards Catholicism during the first half of the century, especially during the reign of Duke Charles of Egmond (1492–1538) who arduously defended the Catholic Church, it had become predominantly Reformed after the instalment of Jan of Nassau as Duke of Gelre in 1578. He appointed several Protestant members to the city’s magistrate, and in 1581 the city council forbade the public exercise of the Catholic faith, which included a ban on religious communities accepting novices. In 1587, every citizen of Arnhem was legally obliged to attend at least one service in the Reformed Church, even the beguines.¹ It was during this roaring period of Reformations and Catholic Reform that at the canonesses of the St. Agnes monastery, a still-unedited collection of mystical sermons was copied, the so-called Arnhem mystical sermons. This copy should be dated in between 1540 and 1570, not long before the flourishing St. Agnes monastery was no longer allowed to take in new novices, and consequently was closed in 1634 by the last remaining sisters. This collection, which contains no explicit reference to the troubles taking place outside its walls, stands firm amidst all those changes taking place within the rich tradition of Late Medieval Dutch and Rhineland mysticism, witnessed, for example, in fourteenth century writers such as Ruusbroec, Eckhart, and Tauler, as well as in the contemporaneous Great Evangelical Pearl (1537/1539) and the Temple of Our Soul (1543). The sermon collection is one of the less than twenty known remaining manuscripts from St. Agnes. The Arnhem mystical sermons testify to a

vivacity of and interest in mysticism in the Low Countries at a time of crisis in the Church.

For a long time, the Arnhem mystical sermons were largely forgotten after the monastery closed, known only as “Ms. sermoenen G” in the Middle Dutch dictionary which draws more than one hundred hapax legomena from this collection.³ The Arnhem mystical sermons are in a manuscript that is currently kept in the Royal Library of The Hague with the shelf mark 133 H 13 without any explicit references to the author and the place and time of origin. The library acquired it in 1905 from the private collection of Barthold Jacob Lintelo de Geer van Jutphaas (1816–1903). In 2005, it was established that the manuscript was written by a scribe from the canonesses of St. Agnes in Arnhem, because the sermons were written in the same hand as scribe three of the Gaesdonck treatises (fol. 76r). This manuscript had just been attributed to St. Agnes in that same year. The sermons were subsequently referred to as the Arnhem mystical sermons.

Since 2005, the interest in this manuscript has grown, and it has, for example, been referred to in McGinn’s *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*. Currently, Kees Schepers is working on the publication of the critical edition and English translation. One translated sermon (128) is published as an appendix to this book. The Arnhem mystical sermons are well worth a thorough investigation, being the largest sermon collection in manuscript form found hitherto in the Low Countries. It contains 162 sermons for the liturgical year, and many of its concepts are only found in this collection according to in the Middle Dutch dictionary. Like any author, the author of the sermons inherited a vast tradition and moulded this into a unique synthesis, within the overarching theme on the mystical dimension of the liturgy. The readings from the Missal in particular are explained through the lens of the inner union with God, but underlying this is the concept of the mystical dimension that penetrates every aspect of the liturgy, including the sacrament of the Eucharist and all rituals of the liturgical celebration. This integration of liturgy and mysticism is shared with contemporaneous works such as the Great Evangelical Pearl and the Temple of Our Soul. The term mysticism is used in many

ways, and “mystical experience” was not used in this sense during the Middle Ages. Many authors described what they would call the *contemplatio*. The Arnhem mystical sermons are clearly embedded in the contemplative tradition which can be observed in its references to contemplation (at times in the context of *lectio divina*) and (indistinct) union with God.

The content of this collection has been presented in a number of articles and book chapters, but no in-depth study has been published to date. McGinn has indicated that this sermon collection deserves further study into its theological content and the sources that are used by the author. This book integrates scholarship’s discoveries to date, and is the first of its kind to elaborately synthesise its major theological themes. Central to this book is the question of how the commentaries on the readings from the Missal and the liturgy illustrate their mystical or contemplative dimensions, and how they invite the audience to celebrate the liturgy in such a way that one is aware of its mystical meaning. The sermons are structured according to the readings from the Missal, and the author explains how these readings and liturgy portray the mystical union with God in all its aspects, ranging from the inner ascent towards union and the *unio mystica* itself. The sermons, however, indicate that the readings and liturgy are more than mere metaphors for the inner life. They show that *lectio divina* and the liturgy are all pointing towards and leading to the contemplation of God and inner union with him. The real function of the liturgy, as also the author of the Temple and Pearl would state, is coming to the inner celebration of the liturgy, which takes place in “the spirit, where all solemnities are truly renewed and celebrated by God.” The main message of the sermon collection is thus the inner ascent of the soul to the contemplative union with God, which is facilitated through participating in the liturgy and in the Scriptures.

It has been established that the sermons are part of a wider mystical network in the sixteenth-century centered in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The sermons have been linked to the Cologne Carthusians, who not only published many mystics from the fourteenth century but also inspired contemporary mystics, such as Maria van Hout.

Moreover, parallels with the Temple and the Pearl have been pointed out. To understand the function of this sermon manuscript, the first chapter examines the evidence for the historical context and literary networks in which the sermons have been written. To that end, indications about the authorship, function, and audience within this anonymous text are carefully examined. This chapter is based on the current consensus in scholarship and analyses these aspects in the texts themselves. To understand the synthesis of mystical theology employed by the author of the Arnhem mystical sermons, this book examines both the sources used by the author and the parallels with contemporaneous authors. It is generally accepted that the sermons are highly influenced by Ruusbroec, Eckhart, and Tauler, but the exact relationships have not been hitherto established. Chapter 2 examines sources used by the author of the sermon collection with clear textual parallels or parallels in use of concepts. This chapter addresses long textual parallels with Ruusbroec and overlapping concepts with Eckhart and the sermons. Several passages of the Arnhem mystical sermons are by their use of concepts closely related to Eckhart. I discovered a textual parallel between sermon 111 and Ruusbroec’s *Spiritual Espousals*. This discovery is highly significant, as it not only proves the influence of Ruusbroec, but also shows that the Arnhem mystical sermons is an original Middle Dutch sermon collection and not a translation of a German or Latin sermon collection. The analysis of the textual parallel clearly shows not only how much the author is rooted in Ruusbroec’s descriptions of contemplation, but also provides insight into the ways in which s/he edited the source text and the emphasis s/he placed on the sermon collection. As the content of the sermon collection portrays a mysticism deeply rooted in the liturgy of the Church, Chapter 3 analyses the sources that informed the liturgical mysticism of the Arnhem mystical sermons. This genre is present in contemporaneous works of the Evangelical Pearl and the Temple of Our Soul, and in the sermons of the fourteenth-century German Dominican Johannes Tauler. The chapter also briefly touches upon two other sixteenth-century works that are influenced by Tauler and part of the literary network of the Arnhem mystical sermons, which are the *Institutiones*

Taulerianaë and the Gaesdonck treatises, a sixteenth-century mystical collection from St. Agnes in Arnhem. Relevant passages from these authors are discussed and compared with similar passages in the Arnhem mystical sermons. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of this genre in the mystical traditions of the Low Countries and neighbouring traditions.

There are also a few minor similarities from texts which are not contemporaneous to the sermons. They include similarities between Jan Mombaer's reference to Mary as a priest and sermon 138, and between the Church Dedication sermon and Ida of Louvain's visions. These are also no clear textual parallels, and therefore they are mentioned in the Chapters 4 to 6, in the relevant sections on the liturgy, anthropology, or union with God. It is remarkable that the sources and parallels of the Arnhem mystical sermons are to a great extent limited to the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that no major parallels have been established between the Arnhem mystical sermons and fifteenth-century authors of the Modern Devotion. Several factors may have influenced this. It is clear that many authors from the Modern Devotion focus less on mystical matters. That seems to be one of the reasons why other sixteenth-century authors and publishers, such as the Cologne Carthusians, also focus on the fourteenth- and sixteenth-century mystical literature. Evidence of this is also found among women mystics of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, who favoured the fourteenth-century authors of Jordanus of Quedlinburg, Eckhart, Ruusbroec, and Tauler. These were the authors on which these women mystics based themselves, more so even than on earlier women mystics. For example, Alijt Bake used Jordanus in her book *De weg van de ezel* [The Way of the Donkey]. These fourteenth-century authors are also among the main sources for the Temple.

Chapters 4 to 6 focus on the mystical content of the sermon collection. Nowadays, the term mystical is often used to refer to something esoteric or to private experiences. Nevertheless, mysticism originally referred to deeper spiritual meanings of the Scriptures and the liturgy, which all pointed towards God. In this sense, the Arnhem mystical sermons are mystical, as the sermons explore the

hidden meaning of the Scriptures and liturgy and apply the readings from the Missal to the relationship between God and the soul. In the sermons, the liturgy not only serves as a metaphor for the inner union with God, but also serves the inner ascent towards God. This mystical dimension thus includes a particular view on the inner ascent of the human and of union with God. Chapter 4 concentrates on mystical dimension of the liturgy in the Arnhem mystical sermons, particularly focusing on the readings from the Missal, the Divine Office, and the sacrament of the Eucharist. This shows that the liturgy provides the author with foundational metaphors for understanding the inner ascent towards God and union with God, and moreover, the liturgy is understood as the context in which union with God may be experienced. This chapter concludes with contextualising the genre of liturgical mysticism within the Christian tradition, focusing on the Low Countries and neighbouring Rhineland in particular. Within the context of the liturgy as interpreting and introducing the mystical experience of God, Chapter 5 expands on the anthropology in the Arnhem mystical sermons. The structure of the human person underpins the notions for the inner ascent towards God in the innermost being alongside the various dimensions of the human person. In its basic structure of the inner ascent, the sermons adhere to the ancient structure of purification, illumination, and union with God, which will be illustrated by an analysis of the sermons. This inner ascent culminates in the union with God, which is analysed in Chapter 6. This final chapter explores the predominant concepts used to describe the inner union with God and the relationship with major themes such as transformation, experience, indistinct union, Christology, and Trinitarian theology in the light of the Christian mystical tradition synthesised by the author of the Arnhem mystical sermons.

Chapters 4 to 6 follow a similar pattern in analysing the Arnhem mystical sermons. While integrating elements from the whole sermon collection, the analysis takes its starting point in fifteen selected sermons that represent the heart of the liturgical calendar. For this analysis, sermons from all three cycles of the Temporale (Proper of Time), Sanctorale (Proper of the Saints), and

Communale (Common) have been chosen. From the Temporale, all traditional major high feasts have been chosen, starting with the preparation for Christ's coming (Advent), and continuing with the Birth of Christ (Christmas), Epiphany, Christ's forty days in the wilderness (Lent), the Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday), the Crucifixion of Christ (Good Friday), the Resurrection of Christ (Easter), the Ascension of Christ (Ascension Day), and the Gift of the Spirit (Pentecost). In the late Middle Ages, the feasts of the Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi (the feast of the Eucharist) were added as major feasts to the Proper of Time, and therefore they have been selected as well. One sermon has been chosen for each of the feasts: Advent (1), Christmas (10), Lent (45), Epiphany (26), Palm Sunday (78) Maundy Thursday (82), Good Friday (83), Easter (85), Ascension (97) and Pentecost (99), Trinity Sunday (103) Corpus Christi (104).

From the Sanctorale, several Marian feast days were celebrated as solemnities, and local calendars differed in the celebration of saint days. The Arnhem mystical sermons include the five traditional Marian feasts, which are Mary's Conception (Sermon 132, Dec 8) Mary's Purification (sermon 138, Feb 2) Mary's Annunciation (sermon 141, March 25), Mary's Assumption (sermon 154, August 15), and Mary's Nativity (sermon 159, Sept 8).¹⁹ The Arnhem mystical sermons refer to the feast of St. Eusebius (sermon 156) as a solemn high feast. From the 32 sermons of the incomplete Sanctorale, two sermons have been chosen: Mary's Purification (138) celebrated on Feb 2, which also refers to the vows of the nuns, and St Eusebius (156). The Church Dedication (128) is the only feast taken from the Common. Not only is it an important feast in the Middle Ages, it also provides an excellent summary of many theological and liturgical themes of the Arnhem mystical sermons.

For this book I use the transcriptions and preliminary English translations of the Arnhem mystical sermons made by Kees Schepers, which are used with his permission, and which I have occasionally adapted. The full transcription and translation of a frequently used sermon (Church Dedication, 128) is provided in Appendix 1. For

the sake of clarity, all primary texts used are quoted in their English translation, and the original texts in the original language are referred to in the footnotes. However, every aspect of this study of the sermon collection including textual comparisons (for example, between the sermons and Ruusbroec) is based on the texts in their original language.

The Arnhem mystical sermons bear witness to the remarkable strength of the Dutch mystical tradition that continued to flourish in the context of religious conflict and after the Modern Devotion's emphasis on spirituality without contemplation. The sermons are part of a sixteenth-century literary network of authors and publishers, which includes the Pearl and the Temple, Maria van Hout, the Institutiones Taulerianae, and the Gaesdonck treatises. The Cologne Carthusians played an important role in the publication and distribution of mystical literature in this century. They were involved in the publications of the Pearl, Temple, and the works of Maria van Hout, and in the publications of mystics from the past such as Ruusbroec and Tauler. The Carthusian Blommevenna is also mentioned in the Arnhem mystical sermons which demonstrates clearly the interconnectedness of the Carthusians and this sermon connection. The sixteenth-century sermons fully appreciate the fourteenth-century works of Ruusbroec, Eckhart, and Tauler, including their terminology of "unity without distinction." St. Agnes was a pivotal location for the renewed purchase and production of mystical texts, the sermons being one of its pearls. The St. Agnes' library shows that the canonesses were particularly receptive to mystical texts from a wide range of authors. The author of the Arnhem mystical sermons was an innovative and creative sixteenth-century writer who was deeply familiar with the Scriptures and many authors from the mystical tradition. S/he was in a position of spiritual authority and wrote a collection of commentaries on the liturgical year for women in a monastery following the rule of St. Augustine. Traditionally, women were not allowed to comment on the Missal readings, albeit within monasteries women of authority did comment on the Scriptures. It would be exceptional indeed if the sermons had been written by a female author, though certainly not impossible. The sermons of

Hildegard of Bingen, written a few centuries earlier, clearly indicate the dangers in assuming that women usually were less educated and wrote different genres of texts. A study of more female vernacular authors is needed in order to establish if women did indeed not compose sermons.

Like any mystical text, the author presents a model of an inner ascent comprising purification of the senses, illumination of the faculties, and union with God in the spirit. Central to this path is the inner celebration of the liturgy, to which the outward celebrations of the liturgy point. The author describes the dynamics between the outer liturgy, celebrated in the church, and the inner liturgy, celebrated in the spirit of the person. The sermons intertwine these two systematically and in a way that encompasses the whole liturgical cycle.

For the author of the Arnhem mystical sermons, the usual way of attaining and understanding the heights of contemplation, which is a gift of God, is through the imitation of Christ who is made present in the liturgy. The author expands on the mystical dimensions of the liturgy, particularly of the Scriptures read in the context of the liturgical year, but also on other liturgical rites and the Eucharist. In the monastic context for which the sermons were written, the liturgy prepares for mystical experiences and interprets them. The foundation for the link between the spiritual union with God and the liturgy is the concept of the indwelling of God in the person. Because of this indwelling, the spirit is the ground for the inner celebration of the liturgy of worshipping God and receiving God's works of salvation that are experienced in the liturgy. The most important source used to prepare for contemplation and for interpreting contemplative experiences are the readings from the Missal. The references to the various stages of *lectio divina* show that the sermons were rooted in this practice of reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. The sermons were likely not only inspired by this practice, but were meant to be read as meditative texts so as to open the minds of the readers to the presence of Christ. The exhortative function of the collection lies in the invitation to a greater awareness of the inner celebration of the liturgy. Similarly, the Missal and the liturgy provide a rich set of metaphors for the

inner ascent towards and union with God. The sermons even liken the transformation of the soul by God to the transubstantiation of the bread and wine.

The Arnhem mystical sermons provide unique hermeneutical tools to understand the relationship between unmediated mystical experiences of God, which can occur universally, and the particularities of a faith tradition, in this case, the Christian tradition. Albert Deblaere defines a mystical experience as a "direct and passive experience of the presence of God." Direct means that one experiences God on a level that transcends mediated realms. Whereas the human faculties "normally exercise their activity in turning towards the exterior," they are "attracted to the interior" when God touches the human person. Thus, in contrast to inductive reasoning, which are activities of the faculties, this experience of God is given and is thus a rupture with one's normal awareness. Mystics also refer to the experience as being passive because it is not brought about by the person him/herself. This state of passivity should not be understood in quietist terms, however. Rather, because God works in the person, the person undergoes a "passive reactivation" in which "all the faculties of man, unified in a simple energy, work together with him [God]." Deblaere and others have rightly argued that an immediate experience of God is not irreconcilable with the tradition-bound aspects of mystical testimonies, as Christian mystics, for example, testify to "a very clear insistence on speaking of 'presence of God' more than of the 'divine.'" It is true that the experiential aspect does not permit a reductive understanding of mysticism as anti-intellectual, anti-doctrinal, anti-theological or universal, that is, without any link to the particularity of the Christian tradition. Every mystic will use words and symbols of his /her own tradition to articulate this experience; the passive and immediate experience of God's presence is communicated only through the instruments of the active and mediated realms. It must be emphasised that Christian mysticism is embedded in Christian doctrine, liturgy, community, Scripture, and tradition, and that the community to which one belongs therefore determines the reflection on the experience. The medieval

testimonies of mysticism show that a mystical experience is embedded in the practise of one particular religion; as McGinn puts it: “there is no such thing as ‘practised’ mysticism.” One needs to think of mystical experiences, which occur without linguistic articulation, and the conscious conceptualisation of these experiences, for which one uses language and tradition, together. The Arnhem mystical sermons feature an intimate relationship between the liturgy and the mystical experiences of God in the medieval monastic tradition. It is obvious that within the human person, the passive and immediate experience is integrated into the active and mediated experiences encountered in the liturgy. The liturgy prepares for these experiences and provides the linguistic tools to interpret them.

Though inheriting many themes from the tradition, it is clear that the Arnhem mystical sermons are the first Dutch sermon collection to so systematically intertwine mysticism and the liturgy with all its symbols, rituals, and the readings from the Missal. They do this more systematically than the Pearl and the Temple. The fact that no other sermon collection in the Middle Dutch Repertorium corresponds with this collection highlights its uniqueness even more. The vernacular sermons of Johannes Tauler are the only texts that display some similarities in this regard, as he also refers to the parallels between the outer liturgy and the liturgy celebrated within the person, like in his Church Dedication sermon and his sermon that comments on the priesthood of Zachary. Given this originality, further research into the origins of the genre of liturgical mysticism is necessary, with a particular focus on the Low Countries and the contexts of the Pearl and the Temple. To date, many studies on mystical texts contain no section on the integration of the readings from the Missal or a study on relations to the liturgical seasons, Scripture, or the Divine Office.

The author uses a wide range of sources. This study demonstrates important connections with Ruusbroec, Eckhart, Tauler, the *Liber de spiritu et anima*, the Gaesdonck treatises, as well as the Pearl and the Temple. The author probably envisaged a reformation of the Church through the revival of mysticism similar to the vision promoted by the Cologne Carthusians. Why particularly the Pearl

became an international bestseller and why the sermons seem to have been largely ignored, might have been a case of “historical accident.”

Currently, the exact relationships between many mystical texts have not been identified. Further research into those texts, including the Pearl and the Temple, will potentially establish clearer links between those important texts of the Dutch mystical tradition. Further research might be able to trace more aspects of this particular genre in other texts and authors of the Low Countries and beyond, both in Latin and in the vernacular. Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons, quoted once in the sermon collection and whose works were also kept in the St. Agnes library, as well as the works of William of Saint-Thierry might contain several texts that were used by the author of the Arnhem mystical sermons. Several sermon collections by the Cologne Carthusians might provide some similarities as well. Other authors and texts kept in their library that also touch upon the relationship between their personal experiences or contemplation in general and the liturgy are Gertrude of Helfta, and Hadewijch, and Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi*. Important, if minor, similarities have been established between the Arnhem mystical sermons and the Cistercian Ida of Louvain and the Modern Devout author Jan Mombaer. These discoveries clearly point to more possible sources.

Textual parallels and similar passages illustrate the themes that the author of the sermons chooses to highlight. The author is indebted to Ruusbroec’s anthropology and his Trinitarian theology. Compared to Ruusbroec, the author refers more explicitly to Christ’s mediation in union with God and the necessity of purification through the virtuous life. Also, the author pays more attention to the liturgical cycle and the readings from the Missal. Eckhart’s negative theology influenced the author of the Arnhem mystical sermons. The author is much more explicitly Christocentric and less intellectual when compared to Eckhart, emphasising more humanity’s sinful nature and the need for grace in every aspect. Though the author takes over the concept of union without distinction from both Eckhart and Ruusbroec, the author makes it very clear that there is no ontological union, and that Christ’s relationship to the Father is unique. His

enjoyment of God is beyond the comprehension of human persons, as he alone possesses the hypostatic union. Similarly, the sermons put more emphasis on the old adage that Christ's union with the Father is by nature, and humans are sons by grace. Compared to the contemporary classic of the Pearl, the author displays a greater level of creativity and a more detailed anthropology and Trinitarian theology. The sermons integrate more readings from the Missal and other Scriptural passages, and are less meditative and more theological. The Pearl does not reach the high theological level of the Arnhem mystical sermons. The Temple resembles the sermon collection more in its more systematic intertwining of liturgy and mysticism, albeit that the sermons integrate the whole Calendar and the Temple is limited to the main feasts of the Temporale and makes less use of the readings from the Missal.

The concepts used for the anthropology, inner ascent, and union with God demonstrate again a synthesis of multiple traditions. The traditional Augustinian faculties of the mind that encompasses will, memory, and intellect are intertwined with Ruusbroec's tripartite anthropology and definition of the spirit as the innermost dimension that both receives God and responds to God in love. This is combined with the concept of is-ness of the spirit, a term closely related to Eckhart expressing the unbreakable ontological connection between God and the spirit. Likewise, the concept of ground, often employed by Eckhart and Tauler, denotes that innermost dimension of the human person in which God dwells that can be attained through detachment. In its description of union with God, the sermons clearly indicate a passing over into experiencing God. While exhorting detachment and surrender to God, the author states that experience is a gift from God that may or may not be given. The most important aspect of union with God is its transformative power, and experience is subordinate to this. The author frequently uses the concept of divinisation, while making clear that no creature can become God, but can only be filled with God. To describe union with God, the author does not refrain from using the contested concept of union without distinction, often avoided in the aftermath of the condemnation of some of Eckhart's

sentences, though s/he carefully avoids misunderstandings by clearly embedding these references in a context of experiencing God in love. At the heart of understanding union with God is the alterity and oneness in the relationship. The author's Trinitarian theology, which is heavily based on Ruusbroec, illustrates this. As the Father and Son and Spirit are all one in love and retain their otherness as Persons, so God and the human person are one in love, but not ontologically.

It goes without saying that the unique character of the Arnhem mystical sermons illustrates the importance of this sermon collection for the fields of both history and the literature of the Low Countries. The rise of the genre of vernacular liturgical-mystical sermons needs to be investigated in the context of the Low Countries and even other European movements. Given the connections between St. Agnes and influential noble families whose daughters resided at St Agnes and famous institutes such as the Cologne Carthusians, it is probable that the sermons are part of a wider movement of vernacular mysticism than is currently known. <>

[Meister Eckhart, The German Works 64 Homilies for the Liturgical Year I. De tempore, Introduction, Translation, and Notes](#) by Loris Sturlese and Markus Vinzent [Eckhart: Texts and Studies, Peeters, 9789042936089]

This volume (based on Loris Sturlese's Italian collection from the year 2014) contains the vernacular texts and English translations of 64 of Eckhart's German sermons, which can be linked with the cycle of preaching during the liturgical year (De tempore). A second volume, currently in preparation, will be devoted to a further circa 55 vernacular sermons for the feasts of the saints (De sanctis). A further volume will contain Eckhart's Latin homilies (both De tempore and the few surviving ones De sanctis). Loris Sturlese and Markus Vinzent will thus provide both the entire vernacular and Latin legacy of 'authentic' homilies, totalling over 100 vernacular and almost 100 Latin sermons. The first volume on the homilies De tempore centres on the time between Advent and Trinity with a major gap in the cycle in the summertime (absent are the weeks V-XV after Trinity Sunday) and gives us

Eckhart's preaching in literary form. As the collection has been reconstructed, it seems to go back to a written, arranged, and to a certain extent textualized and published opus, most likely by Eckhart himself. The corpus of sermons that have been relocated into their liturgical place from the critical edition of Kohlhammer represents a work situated midway between oral texts and their professional editor. It opens a door to students and interested readers into the world of Eckhart's liturgical preaching, helped by a thorough general introduction, short prefaces to all homilies and notes.

Note to the abbreviated Table of Contents:

After the introduction each Homily includes:

- Introduction
- The content of the homily
- Editions, commentaries and notes
- Previous English translations
- Text and translation

For brevity these repetitive headings have been omitted.

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Why Eckhart?

The great specialist in medieval studies, Richard Southern, in his chapter on 'three stages of European experience', writes first about Bede, followed by Anselm, and finally about Meister Eckhart, but then feels obliged to begin by admitting that he is 'aware' that in the case of Eckhart his 'choice is more difficult to justify'. He explains:

I can imagine somebody complaining that, whereas Bede and Anselm each stand high above all other candidates in their own time, Eckhart is a minority candidate if ever there was one. Everything is against him. A comprehensive list of his doctrines was condemned by Pope John XXII in 1329; also, he was a mystic, and this is not a word which inspires much confidence; then to crown his misfortunes, six hundred years after his death he became one of the idols of Nazi propagandists, who saw him as founder of their absurd Aryan ethos. These are severe handicaps for any man; yet I hope to show that my choice can be justified, and that it opens a new world of thought and experience, and a new social background of the highest significance.'

It sounds as if Eckhart had drawn the short straw. Not only is he a 'minority candidate' in a crowd of other fourteenth century no-names, he is also a person of many other 'misfortunes'. What is worse, Southern's choice of Eckhart is as a prototype to illustrate his time as a 'situation of bewildering confusion and intellectual despair'. And yet, Southern has to admit that with Eckhart there is the beginning of something radically new, 'a new world of thought and experience'. With his 'doctrine of man's closeness to God, of the existence of an impregnable fortress in the soul where Southern saw that Eckhart 'in some degree called in question and threatened' all the 'features of medieval religion', and 'proved capable of overthrowing systems and states, and even perhaps of overthrowing religion itself'.

Today, in a new century in which the theories of secularization seem to have run out of steam, and perhaps one would hope that the cold war speech about revolutionaries of the West is ebbing too, the attraction of Eckhart for readers still persists. Despite all the noted odds against him, even today international societies are bringing together people from around the world to study Eckhart ([Eckhart Society, UK](#); [Meister Eckhart Gesellschaft, Germany](#)). The membership of these societies is made up not only of scholars, but also of a great number of interested individuals who at some point in their lives discovered the writings of Eckhart and were captivated by them and their author. Without doubt, Eckhart is the most read medieval philosopher and theologian today, his works available in the shrinking number of physical bookshops as on the growing platforms of online book and data sellers. He is outshining not only the great masters of his own Dominican order, Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus and Dietrich of Freiberg, but also those of other orders and backgrounds. Particularly in the English speaking world, be it in the Western or Eastern parts, Eckhart has a following, perhaps because he has long been seen as a bridge between past and present, between the Middle Ages and today, between East and West, between Christianity and the other Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions, and between religious and non-religious people.

The presence of Eckhart can also be seen from the available English translations of at least some of his works. There is no shortage of older and more recent such translations of his homilies. It was certainly as a result of continuous demand that the most comprehensive extant translation of Eckhart's vernacular homilies (including the papal bull of the year 1329 that condemned several of Eckhart's statements), an edition in three volumes by M. O'C. Walshe, was recently revised by B. McGinn and re-published in [one impressive volume](#). Yet, Walshe based his translation not on the critical edition of Eckhart's texts (Kohlhammer publishers), soon to be completed, but on the first edition of Eckhart's vernacular works, completed by Franz Pfeiffer in the mid-19th century. Between Pfeiffer and Walshe/McGinn other translations have been published, and these have been compared where necessary for our own translation. But no translator has undertaken to order the homilies according to the liturgical year.

The first of the selected translations is by C. Field, who in 1900 published his English translation of four homilies and three tracts. The next, more comprehensive, translation is that by C. de B. Evans, published in the year 1924, a most intelligent work in which the translator opted to make sense of many opaque passages rather than trying to remain close to the literal wording. This first volume was followed by another almost thirty years later, in 1952.⁸ In between falls the first smaller collection of translated Eckhart texts, by R.B. Blakney, published for the US market in 1941.⁹ A fuller collection of translated texts (homilies and the bull) was produced by J.M. Clark, published in the UK, the US and Canada in 1957 as volume one,¹⁰ followed by volume two, published a year later by J.M. Clark and J.V. Skinner.¹¹ And although R. Schürmann's [Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher](#), published in 1978, with his Heidegger—inspired translations and commentary, is rather a systematic work, some of his translations give excellent insights into Eckhart's thinking.

Similarly idiosyncratic, but good reads, are the translations embedded into M. Fox's spiritual reading of Eckhart in his [Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation](#), published in 1980. However, the text books used

most by students and readers today (except Walshe/McGinn, mentioned above), in both the East and West, are the following: B. McGinn and E. Colledge, [Meister Eckhart, The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense](#) (1981) and its follow-up volume [Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher](#) by B. McGinn and F. Tobin (1987), and the excellent Penguin collection of Oliver Davies of King's College London, [Meister Eckhart, Selected Writings](#) (1994).

Eckhart's preaching: the manuscript tradition and the question of authenticity

This volume contains the vernacular texts and translations of 64 of Eckhart's German sermons which can be linked with the cycle of preaching during the liturgical year (De tempore). A second volume, currently in preparation, will be devoted to a further 56 vernacular sermons for the feasts of the saints (De sanctis). A further volume will contain Eckhart's Latin homilies (both De tempore and the few surviving ones De sanctis). We thus provide both the vernacular and Latin legacy of 'authentic' homilies, totalling over 100 vernacular homilies and almost Latin sermons. It is appropriate to present them, albeit briefly, in their entirety, not just because the vernacular and Latin works belong to the same broader genre and the same author, but because they are definitely two instruments that, at least partly, address an overlapping audience. Indeed, as we shall see, a comparative view of the homilies in both languages can help us to better understand the shared characteristics, but also to differentiate between them and to present the many problems that remain open.

Let us begin with texts written in Latin. Among these we must first register the two reportations of Parisian origin and the four texts on Jesus Sirach 24, written on the occasion of a provincial chapter. The rest, a total of 96 homilies, represent a large portion of a collection of homilies, comprising the entire 'summer' part of the annual cycle of the liturgical seasons, handed down in a single version that is preserved in a codex belonging to the collection of Nicholas of Cusa (the Codex Cusanus). This is the second half of the De tempore, which begins with the Feast of the Holy Trinity and ends with the First Sunday of Advent, the start of the

next liturgical year. Hence, entirely lacking from the Codex Cusanus is the other, first half of the cycle *De tempore*, beginning with Advent and leading to Pentecost, but it is fully complemented by a cycle of 48 *Collationes* (discourses), which the editor Josef Koch deemed to be inauthentic and therefore did not publish in the critical Kohlhammer edition of Eckhart's works. Of the so-called *Sanctorale* cycle (or *De sanctis*), which contains the sermons given on feast days in memory of specific saints (the *proprium*) or of saints of common memory (*commune de Sanctis*), only a dozen scattered sermons are contained in the Codex Cusanus.

The authenticity of the edited Latin sermons has never been questioned: in content and style they are so congruent with other authentic Latin works of Eckhart, and their doctrines often reflected in the few parallel German sermons, that even Cardinal Cusanus gave them the final seal of authenticity, welcoming them and placing them into a representative folio codex commissioned for his library, as he was clearly dedicated to making the fullest collection of the Latin Eckhart that he could possibly find, in the Rhineland libraries and beyond, at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

We cannot pass over certain problematic aspects linked to the Cusanus corpus. First, as we have stated above, the sermons of which we speak are present only for the summer term of *De tempore*, yet style and state of development are quite different, ranging from a few lines comprising texts that look like schematic sketches, to substantially accomplished and worked out sermons. According to Koch, however, not one of them is in the final form for publication. Koch believes that the bases for this part of the codex were not reports or shorthand scripts from listeners, but 'notebooks of sketches' (*Entwurfshefte*), prepared by Eckhart himself for personal use that were maintained as such until they were copied. If this is correct, we are not dealing with the part of his Tripartite Work that Eckhart designated as *Opus sermonum*. To substantiate this theory we might point out that Eckhart seems never to have thought of making these texts 'public', on the assumption that these sermons had no circulation. Of course, if this were so, we would be faced with the strange case of an

author who planned to write and publish a dedicated collection of Latin sermons which he subsequently did not produce, while he did create a collection of Latin sermons that were neither intended to become part of a publication nor were indeed published.

Although such oddity cannot be discarded, two more points appear to make Koch's hypothesis problematic: the incompleteness of the cycle, and the status of *Collationes* judged apocryphal by Koch. The incompleteness of the cycle *De tempore*, with the simultaneous presence of some sermons *De sanctis*, suggests not so much that the mutilation was due to a voluntary editorial decision.

Orality and writing according to Eckhart

It is difficult to resist the temptation to read the sermons of Eckhart one by one as historical documents of something that actually happened on a particular day in a particular church. The texts themselves repeatedly suggest it. It seems entirely legitimate, therefore (at least in some cases, as with the sermons of Paris), to place them into a specific time and location, and imagine the listener who would sit at the foot of the pulpit and report what she or he could hear from the mouth of the speaker and teacher, and then draft what was hoped to be a fair copy. However, what little we have already said about the Latin sermons warns us against a naive 'historical' reading: if the texts of the Codex Cusanus were only sketches, hence, written not as a result of preaching and historical performances, but as preparatory notes prior to potential use, they would be the result not of an actual oral activity, but of a literary process at best in the light of a possible oral use.

If we then move to the vernacular sermons, the situation does not change much. Although the texts, as we have them, are mostly in more definitive forms and accompanied by a number of historical indicators, these are not frequent. Eckhart, in fact, does not like references to what he means by 'here' and 'now', and is extremely reluctant to give us details of current political, social and ecclesiastical affairs: all his sermons are held in a sort of ethereal or abstract ideal world, in which they unravel the deeper meaning of both the liturgical texts and the timeless reading, unfolding

almost always along the same structural lines. He usually starts from the liturgical reading of the passage — hence the great importance of the liturgical setting — and particularly from his chosen verse or verses, or even entire scriptural passage, to move on to his detailed explanation and end with his final invocation, which reflects the main thrust of what he wants to impart to his audience. Often the liturgical time is invoked, and in some cases the festive day underlined by a greater length of text. Yet, these sermons tell us little of the historical events taking place outside the church walls. The indicators are exhortations such as 'now, note...', back references such as 'as I have said before...', translation aids like 'the words that I read in Latin mean in German...'

The question is, however, does Eckhart give us historical information as the text suggests at first sight, or are we rather faced with rhetorical devices for a perfect or imagined audience gathered in an ideal place? In other words: what is the relationship between the displayed orality and the historical nature of the real preaching of Eckhart within the written sermons that constitute his legacy?"

To answer this question, it does not help much to insist on the importance of 'historical' orality, in particular with regard to the Dominican order. There is extensive literature on the subject of preaching as a 'mission', which is specific to an order that by no accident calls itself 'preachers', urban successors to St. Dominic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with a dedicated policy of settling in the busy city centres of Europe and creating a specific type of ecclesial architecture conforming to the requirements of preaching to masses. We are dealing with the orality of an army of professionals trained in the use of efficient oral and written media in order to have a deep and long—lasting effect on an environment where their message was pervasive and their presence noted by the lay people in a powerful new urban—oriented Europe. It is an army that has as an unique and non—violent weapon the strength of the word that captivates and persuades to change convictions and habits, or as expressed by Eckhart, that works 'great miracles'. If we want to stay with this metaphor, we could say that Eckhart, as an

intellectual of the highest level in his order, belongs to the leading staff of this army and for decades helps to develop their strategies. But these facts are widely known, for which reference may be made to the critical literature.

More fruitful for a better understanding of Eckhart's sermons may be a reflection of what Theisen called the 'communicative situation' of Eckhart's homilies, which is a subject much less researched by scholars. The sermon is framed by the Mass, the Mass is framed by the daily liturgy, the latter is aligned with the time of the year: this, Theisen points out, is the true place of Eckhart's orally delivered sermons, which therefore need to be understood 'starting from the original liturgical context'. And this is true even for the written texts of these sermons which, although removed from the immediate liturgical context, still very often refer to their original (or at least imagined) location. Theisen certainly voiced what others before him had already hinted at since the nineteen—sixties, namely a demand for a greater attention to the ritual aspect of Eckhart's homilies, for there had been a more general wish for a reading of these texts in a 'theological—religious' sense in contrast to them as 'philosophical' writings. Moreover, according to both Koch and Quint, for Eckhart the biblical text was a mere opportunity to speak especially of his mystical experiences. In his study of the liturgical embeddedness of these homilies, however, Theisen has shown how important the concrete frame was. By analysing for the first time the daily practices of the medieval Dominican friars, and the specific references to the liturgical texts used in the thirteenth century, he opened up new interpretative insights into Eckhart's sermons, which live in close dialogue not only with the audience, but with the audience celebrating a particular feast with specific expectations.

Whether it was because of certain overstatements in Theisen's work, or because of the objective difficulties presented by the highly specialized field of the medieval liturgy, his suggestions unfortunately did not have the necessary impact that in our opinion they deserved. We need only to take a look through the *Lectura Eckhardi*, a series of now four volumes that represents the cutting edge of critical studies and commentaries of

Eckhart's homilies (Latin and vernacular), to realize how rarely interpreters incorporate liturgical aspects of a sermon in their explanations, and how little serious study has been devoted to them. After all, even the most recent editions of the German sermons, the praiseworthy bilingual publication edited by Niklaus Largier, or the latest translations into French and Italian, have never departed from the model Quint created and, following him, Steer adopted, namely a non—liturgically oriented presentation of Eckhart's homilies according to the law of moving from heresy (and authenticity) to orthodoxy (and inauthenticity).

Emphatic speech

Eckhart reflected on the function and characteristics of his homiletic textualities, both in his Latin and in his vernacular sermons. The most significant traces of this reflection can be found in his defence of the incriminated articles, drawn up and circulated in Cologne in the year 1326. His reflection is a landmark in the concept of emphatic speech (*locutio emphatica*) — a concept that appears in his writings only in this Response, but there he marks it out four times in a sequence of only very few pages.

In all four instances Eckhart is defending the truth and orthodoxy of phrases that his accusers have extracted from his vernacular homilies and that, in Latin translation, were presented as evidence to substantiate the accusation of heresy. The context of his reflection on emphatic speech is therefore defensive. It does not surprise us that the extracts are liturgically and otherwise decontextualized: The author of both the extracts and their defence is Eckhart, master of theology, who knows that it is common practice for the Inquisition to benchmark orthodoxy through the examination of text excerpts and text segments without interest in a broader argument or its situational setting. In his defence Eckhart accepts this method and then promptly explains the incriminated phrases (which are reported below in synopsis with the corresponding vernacular sermon text).

As can be seen from this comparison, Eckhart's prosecutors translated his texts with extreme care and loyalty — in a few cases even adding

alternative translations — to present his logical argument as cogently as possible. Moreover, where the vernacular text is corrupt (as can be seen from the many attempts by copyists to make sense of this passage), we can restore it from the Latin. The argument runs as follows: The one 'who searches for nothing, will find nothing, who can be blamed for this? He found what he was looking for. [The one] who searched and looked for something <other than God>, searches and looks for nothing, and whoever therefore searches for something, finds nothing. But whoever searches for nothing and looks out for Nothing except purely for God, to him God discloses and gives everything that He has hidden in His divine heart, so that this becomes his own just as it is God's own, neither less nor more, if he searches for Him alone without intermediary.'

The passage picks up a topic that is dear to Eckhart, namely the teaching of 'pure nothingness' of creatures compared to the all-being God. Other topics that will be taken up, although not explicitly, include the delegitimization of common forms of traditional devotion such as the proliferation of repeated prayers. But in the eyes of the Inquisition, the main reason for concern is definitely the sophistry of Eckhart's arguments and their rationalistic subtleties: that man in this life can be granted a full unity and oneness with God, a unity so perfect that no distinction of any kind ('neither more nor less') can be known. These are glimpses of the features that must have sounded demonic and devilish, an ontological deification or pantheism.

In his defence, Eckhart proceeds in three steps. He first firmly claims truth for his argument: 'It is clear already from what has been quoted, that it is true, pious and ethical' (*Verum est, devotum et morale et patet ex iam dictis*). Then he reformulates his doctrine of deification in an even more directly offensive statement with explicit reference to his teaching of the 'divine one'; and it is at this point that he makes use of the concept of 'emphasis': 'When we finally say that God belongs so properly to the divine man as He does to Himself, then this is a kind of emphatic expression' (*Quod autem dicitur in fine deus sic esse proprius homini divino sicut sibimet deo, emphatica locutio est*). Eckhart sees his emphatic expression rectified by Scripture itself, which, in a third step, he quotes:

'God, my God, I seek you' (Ps. 62:1). The expression 'my God' does not indicate possession in a material sense, but the presence of God 'in me' as 'me' as Him being 'intrinsically one's own'. If God were not inherently 'in us', fully 'ours', the works of God could not be ours, since no operation can be 'ours' if the action's principle is foreign to us, and if this principle is not 'ours' in us. Thus, Isaiah (26:12) says that 'God has made all the works of God to be ours in us'. When, therefore, the Psalm speaks of 'my God', it means to say 'my in me as a principle of my actions, intrinsically owned'.

We might then logically conclude — by completing the argument, which Eckhart, however, leaves unsaid — that the statement that God belongs so properly to the divine one as He does to Himself does not suggest a physical possession of God, but His presence as an intrinsic principle, owned by the divine one. This presence cannot be anything other than a total one, 'neither more nor less', because God cannot be or give 'more' or 'less', He is always His gift that is fully present in the one to whom He gives Himself. At the conclusion of the explanation, Eckhart adds a clarification on the concept of emphasis mentioned in connection with the formula 'Deus meus' (i.e. *deus proprius homini divino sicut sibimet deo*): The way of expressing something with emphasis is used frequently and suitably by the Scripture, the saints and the preacher, as an expression from the heart of the speaker, and the listeners become more excited to love virtue and God Himself, as St. Jerome (actually Peter of Celle) is saying: 'O tears, yours are the power, yours the kingdom ... you conquer the Invincible, bind the Almighty, you bend towards us the Son of the Virgin.'

Let us try to sum up: the *modus loquendi emphaticus* is, according to Eckhart, a feature of Scripture, the saints and preachers, hence, a traditional rhetorical device used to mobilize not only the emotions of the audience, but even more fundamentally the power of an emotionally engaged audience to overpower the all—powerful. In this respect, he ventures an embodied theology by which the Invincible becomes the emotional prey of his emotional creatures, who are able to bind the Unbound and engage the Virgin's Son. In a clever combination of Scripture and saintly preacher, he achieves his

rational—argumentative goal of a compelling explanation, which may not have persuaded the Inquisition, but certainly impressed Eckhart's readership, which preserved a copy of this text.

It seems clear from what has been said, that the 'emphasis' of which we are talking here is something quite different from the vague idea that can sometimes be found in Eckhart research, as if it were a deconstruction of language or a synonym for exaggeration typical of a preacher who is running out of rational arguments and has to appeal to the emotions of his audience: that is, emphasis understood as undermining logic, and overwhelming the listeners by an almost superhuman effort to express in words the sheer ineffable mystical experience. Instead, Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages knew of a rather generic and sober meaning of 'emphasis' as a 'rhetorical amplification' (Papias) or, more critically, as an 'improper statement' (Abelard, Thomas, Ockham), both in the sense of a 'rhetorical licence'. Its lack of precision was seen as a characteristic of enthusiasm and the language of the emotions and the heart! Yet, as we have just seen and as in a recent study Susanne Kabele has marvellously shown, Eckhart uses 'emphasis' in a rather different way, giving it a precise meaning: for him it is a technical device that belongs among the tools of the rhetoric of Scripture, also deployed by the classics of tradition and recommended to preachers, in order not only to strengthen the grasp of the audience, but even more to provide the key to unlock the door to the divine Himself. 'When compared to classical rhetoric, of the two types of emphasis that Quintilian distinguishes, namely emphasis as that which 'means more than what one has to say', and emphasis as that 'which also means what one does not say' (i.e. an elliptical speech), Eckhart seems clearly to be referring to the second, as emphasis leads beyond the given limits of any signifying language and stimulates those powers which he sees as congenial to and penetrating the divine.

The substance of emphasis: the philosophico—
theological demonstrative discourse In Homily 12*
[Q 14], Eckhart refers to one of his nocturnal

reflections ('I thought by night...'), which leads him to a powerful figure of emphasis: ein inthoeget got. The expression is difficult to translate and seems to be a hapax legomenon. It appears only once in the Middle High German dictionary: inthoeget is the opposite of verhoaget ('exalted', 'elevated'). The notion of a God who is 'exalted' and 'elevated', the Lord of heaven and earth, is commonly known, as is 'that I will raise as much as I humble myself'. But Eckhart's nocturnal idea plays on the contrary, developing further a kenotic understanding of God who is brought down, humbled, dethroned, even degraded. Yet, he also takes the prefix 'int', meaning not only 'un—', but also 'into'. Here is what Eckhart writes: 'Moreover, I thought by night that God should be brought down (inthoeget), not entirely, rather brought in, which means 'God brought down', and it pleased me so much that I wrote it down in my book. It reads thus: A God brought down, not entirely, rather brought in, that we may be raised up. What was above, that is within. You must become inwardly, from yourself into yourself, so that He be in you. Not that we should take anything from what is above us; instead we should take into us and should take from us into ourselves.' While the common Christian understanding is that those exercising humility and lowered before the majesty of God will rise with God, Eckhart suggests instead that it is better to 'bring God down' into our inner selves, and only through this internalization be raised. The image of God as an unreachable Emperor and King of heaven, before whom creatures have to prostrate themselves in faithful humility, Eckhart replaces by the idea of a lowered God who in total unity with his creatures resides in them to make them reside in themselves, instead of stretching out for somebody or something unattainable such as a higher God. The dethronement of an Emperor God is paired with the discovery of God's presence in humans which results in them being raised within and to themselves: 'What was above, that is within', a typical Eckhartian emphatic expression.

To sum up, when Eckhart preaches in an emphatic style, we are not faced with a friar who threatens with hell, shouts at his audience to repent, plays on the absolute power of the King of the universe, but calmly, not without excitement, reflects on himself

and the selves of his audience to arouse awareness (gewart werden) of the self's real substance: 'The spark of the intellect, taken naked in God, there the "husband" is alive. There the birth takes place, there the son is being born. The birth does not happen once a year, or once a month or once a day; rather: all the time, i.e. above time in the breadth, where there is no here and now, no nature or thought.' 'This eternal birth happens in the soul in the same way as it happens in eternity.' 'In the eternal birth where the Father gives birth to His Son, there the soul has flowed out into her being and the image of the godhead is being imprinted into the soul.' 'Of this birth' in oneself one has to 'become aware' (gewart werden).

In the biological metaphor of 'generation' and 'birth', which is very difficult to translate, as Eckhart often thinks of the two aspects as one and sometimes glides from the one notion to the other without any transition, other formulas are included such as 'eternal generation' (above), 'interior generation' (above) and 'spiritual union, when God is born in the soul and the soul is born in God'. Eckhart integrates into his teaching an old theological doctrine developed by the Fathers — the 'generation of Christ in the heart of the believer', today commonly known as 'God's generation' or 'birth of God' (Gottesgeburt), a formula studied in a special article by Hugo Rahner in 1935.¹⁰⁵ Yet the noun 'Gottesgeburt', universally adopted in secondary literature on Eckhart, occurs only once in the works of the Thuringian master himself, and then in a quite different context, but has been adopted for his emphatic teachings by many twentieth-century critics. Regardless of this historiographical reflection, it seems obvious that, as the classic study by Rahner persuades us, Eckhart had read this doctrine of a divine generation within human beings as part of the Patristic tradition, not, however, without giving it his own radical twist. Patristic authors, as Rahner shows, see the generation of Christ in the heart of the believer as a result of baptism, the integration and belonging to the community of the Church, understood as the Mystical Body of Christ. The temporal dimension, linked to conversion, between a state of 'before' and 'after' is crucial for this concept of birth...

Not knowing or the illusion of false self-reliance

'Man ... does not know what God is. Just like a man who has wine in his cellar, but has neither drunk nor tasted [the wine], he does not know which one is good. So it is with people who live in not knowing: they do not know what God is, but believe and are convinced that they know life.'" The man who lives 'in not knowing' is the man who is separated from God, reifying Him and placing Him as a stranger. It is the man who prays to God, instrumentalizes Him and wants to benefit from Him: 'Some people want to love ... God like a cow, they love for the sake of the milk and the cheese, and for their own benefit.'" 'How many are there who worship a shoe or a cow or another creature and are satisfied with this!' They are even good people who 'act well to honour God by, for example, fasting, staying up at night, praying and what else there is of good actions, yet they act for our Lord to reimburse them, or for God to do them a favour: these are all merchants.' They think they are good believers, but actually live without God, pursuing their usual trade's habit. They believe and are convinced that they are alive, but in reality — implies Eckhart — they are dead.

Because of this mistake, which, as we see, goes well beyond individual acts of sinful injustice, behaviours and motivations, Eckhart looks more generally at the whole of a 'good Christian society' and voices his criticism. People have got the wrong orientation by being directed not by their inner sense, their intention, their inner being, but outwardly through the senses, grasping for gain and the resulting exhaustion in their multiple and temporary foci: 'Three things keep us from listening to the eternal Word. The first is corporeality, the second is multiplicity, the third is temporality. If a person transcended these three things he would dwell in eternity, dwell in the spirit and dwell in unity and the desert, and there he would listen to the eternal Word.' 'The soul's outer eye is one that is open to all creatures, looks by imagination and according to its capability.'" An inevitable consequence of our constitutive bodily being is what theologians call the 'state of being travellers on earth'.

Eckhart has analysed this aspect of the human condition in depth, and the key word of his reflection is *underscheit* or distinction. Several passages, both from the German and the Latin works, present 'distinction' as the vital element that is created by individuals and is spatio—temporally determined. The concept of indistinct—distinct, has therefore been highlighted by many authoritative interpreters of Eckhart's metaphysics as its core. We believe that distinction plays a primary role when Eckhart is talking about a false self—reliance of the human self. With the help of some texts taken from Latin and German works we will try to highlight this point. The texts combine a first distinction (a), namely a metaphysical condition of creatureliness, and a second (b) that is the source of error by the self attributing to itself and to other creatures a misleading self—sufficiency. One passage from the German Homily 42* [Q 46] identifies denial with nothing (c) and shows that the self-centred principle of self—reliance is fuelled by a false distinction. Finally (d), further reflection suggests the negation of negation (and therefore the negation of the distinction) as the overcoming of the creaturely self and the taking of being as unity with the divine intellect.

In three texts taken respectively from the commentaries On the Gospel of John, On the Book of Wisdom and On Exodus Eckhart explains distinction as a condition characteristic of a created metaphysical entity. He places distinction at the root of the Augustinian paradox of the presence of God to man and the absence of man to God: 'It is proper to God to be non-distinct, and His exclusive distinction is His non—distinction, while it is the property of creatures to be distinct. What is distinct, however, does not properly receive what is non-distinct. For that reason, Augustine, speaking of God, says: "You were with me, but I was not with you.'" 'You were with me, but I was not with you': For God is with us, as being non-distinct; but we are not with Him, being distinct, because we are created and limited. 'By the very fact that something is created, it is distinct, and what is distinct is unequal and varied. Something is created for that very reason, namely, that it moves down from the one and non-distinct, falls off from the one and falls into distinction and consequently into

inequality. In contrast, something is uncreated, because it neither falls from anything nor does it move down, hence, it remains the same and stays in the source.'

In the following text, the next in our series, the focus of Eckhart's discussion progresses from metaphysical distinction as a key marker of creatures ('distinction' as 'to be this and not that other'), to distinction as a result of a false self—conception: 'Every created being that takes or conceives of itself as being distinct from God is no being, but is nothing. In fact, what is separate and distinct from God is separate and distinct from being.' Any concept of a created being that takes it to be distinct from God, therefore, according to Eckhart, ends up in self—denial and perhaps inadvertently does not come to self—affirmation, but falls into rejection of a creature's own being.

Next, Eckhart sees in distinction the denying of its foundation, and thus sees the possibility of overcoming it as dwindling: '... detach yourselves from every "not", because the "not" distinguishes. How? Note this! That you are not this person; the "not" makes the distinction between you and the other person. Hence, if you want to be without distinction, detach yourselves from the "not". In fact, there is a power in the soul that is detached from "not", because it has nothing in common with anything; because nothing is in this power except God alone: He shines nakedly into that power.'^o The something in the soul that is continuously and fundamentally working against any reification of distinction is the intellect. d.) Finally, Eckhart provides an important clarification on what we might call the overcoming of an empirical consciousness, transcending it into an absolute consciousness through a negation of the negation that positions a mutually relational unity that is characteristic of the 'birth of the Son':

Saint Paul says: 'One God'. One is somehow more pure than goodness and truth. Goodness and truth do not grow, they grow in a thought; when they are thought about, they come up. The One does not come up, as He is in Himself, before He emanates into the Son and the Holy Spirit. So He said: 'Friend, lift yourself up'. A master says: One is a

negation of negation. If I said: God is good, it would be adding something. One is a negation of negation and a denial of denial. What is the meaning of 'one'? 'One' means that nothing is added to it. The soul takes the Godhead as it is purified in her, where nothing is added, where nothing is thought about. One is a negation of negation. All creatures have a negation in them; 'one' denies being the other. 'One' angel denies being another. But God has a negation of negation; He is one, and denies anything else, because there is nothing except God. All creatures are in God and are of His own Godhead; and this means fullness, as I have already said. He is a Father of the whole Godhead. For this reason, I say 'one' Godhead, where no emanation has taken place and nowhere is anything touched or thought about. By denying anything to God — I deny the goodness of God, even though I cannot deny God —, by denying to God, I grasp something of Him, that He is not; this must go. God is one, He is a negation of negation.'

How seriously this self—defeating illusory autarky has pervaded and polluted human behaviour, becomes manifest through daily experience of people who deny their own ground: 'You do not purely seek God. ... you search for nothing, so you can also find nothing. That you do find nothing is nothing else than trying to seek nothing. All creatures are pure nothing. 'Whoever seeks nothing, how can you complain if you find nothing?' The illusion of distinction is nurtured by the assumed separate reality of things as quite distinct from God, albeit, as we have seen, this means in fact denying one's own real being.

At this point we can try finally to answer the question with which, at the beginning of the last chapter, we started the enquiry into the philosophical substance of the argument that might be underlying the emphatic formula of the 'birth of the Son in the soul'. Eckhart is consistent: his rational reflection shows that denial, to be 'not' anything else, and therefore distinction, lie at the root of a false self—perception and self—conception, which might look like self—reliance and freedom from God, but in reality is self—defeating. If this is

already the case with every creature that errs, it is particularly problematic in the case of the intellect, which cannot even be thought of as being separated from God, because the intellect is the image of God. A removal of denial and distinction shows how different corporeality and with it of the senses are in contrast to the unity of the intellect. The latter reveals one's being to be beyond temporality, a self that is 'beyond distinction', which is eternal and unchanging, the 'free and undivided human nature' which is an idea in God, of which the 'I' by way of birth is the voluntary being of a creature in a world of being and becoming.

In a dense text of the famous Homily 108* [Q 52], Eckhart deepens this already existent Augustinian idea of a double-edged nature of man by placing his soul 'somewhere in between time and eternity'.

For this reason I beg God to rid me of sod, as my essential being (wesen-lich wesen) is above God insofar as we take God as the beginning of creatures; because in that same being of God where God is above being and distinction, there I myself was, and there I willed myself and knew myself to form (ze machenne) this man. Therefore, I am the cause of myself according to my being, which is eternal, and not according to my becoming, which is temporal. Therefore, I am unborn, and according to my being unborn, I will not ever die again. According to my being unborn, I have eternally been and am now and shall remain eternally ... when I was born, all things were born and I was the cause of myself and of all things; and if I had wanted, I would not be, nor would all the things be; and if I were not, not even God would be. That God is God, I am the cause; if I were not, God would not be God.

The utmost unity with the Father which Christ possessed, I am able to get, if I manage to detach myself from what is this or that, and could take myself as humanity.

Human beings in their individuality seem to be only the realization in the 'here' and 'now' of human nature as it is understood in its ideal and eternal perfection...

The 'transformed knowing' and 'God's necessity'

The gewar werden, one's awareness and grasping of God's eternal presence in the intellect that forms the substance of the birth of God in the soul is, from a subjective point of view, a turning point from not-knowing to knowing, or, more precisely, 'knowing' becomes 'not-knowing' that can well be called a 'transformed knowing'. Although it refers to the intellect that realizes God and enjoys Him, it is, of course, also an existential turning point, where, when it has occurred, nothing remains any longer as it was before. It is an experience similar to an electric shock or a lightning strike...

The reconstruction of Eckhart's vernacular Temporale and the editing criteria

Of the 120 High Middle German homilies by Eckhart, presently planned to be included in the Kohlhammer critical edition, 64 texts are confined to the Sundays De tempore, with the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. The 56 remaining homilies are for the Saints' Days, mostly to commemorate individual saints, beginning with the Feast of St. Andrew (30 November). This De sanctis section will be published in a second volume to follow the De tempore. A third volume will then be dedicated to Eckhart's Latin homilies, as mentioned earlier.

The reconstruction of the series of vernacular homilies according to the Temporale, which has not come down to us in any manuscript tradition as a collection, but instead has been scattered among isolated and often randomly surviving homiletic texts, is not an easy undertaking. Hence, this venture had never been attempted by Eckhart scholars until very recently, when Loris Sturlese published his Italian Meister Eckhart: Le 64 prediche sul tempo liturgico. The present book is based on its Italian model, although the introduction and the introductory texts to the homilies have been revised, while the English translations are made from the vernacular Middle High German, always compared with the Italian translation of Sturlese (and earlier English translations). The most important reasons for the creation of this collection have already been articulated in the introduction

above. In publishing this 'reconstruction' we are not claiming that it represents a lost original collection of Eckhart's vernacular sermons (although we are confident that a collection like this one existed), but we would like to open the discussion about it, and more particularly to provide a reading path that is not conditioned by the ideological choices of the Quint edition and its inherent limits pointed out above.

Translating Meister Eckhart's vernacular language is a particular challenge, as not only is he one of the early preachers and writers to make use of their mother tongue, in his case with the particular colour, rhythms and interjections of the Thuringian dialect of the time, but the texts are also deeply influenced by his thorough command of Latin and steered by a highly creative mind. Eckhart constantly strives to extend both languages beyond their conventual boundaries, grammatically, terminologically and rhetorically. This would push the best native English speaker to her or his limits, let alone a translator who still has a better command of the languages of his childhood and youth (German, French, Latin and Greek) than he has of his adult language of English. Yet, if one were to limit oneself to render Eckhart's texts into a grammatically correct English with a rather short and clearly structured phraseology, a vocabulary defined by one of the standard dictionaries of the English language, and adapted Eckhart's rhetoric to William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce or J.K. Rowling, one would lose the spirit of the unmatched, the surprise effect that Eckhart must have had for his vernacular listeners then, and still has for those who have grown up in one of the German languages and dialects, albeit that today these languages are imbued with many of the terms coined by Eckhart. In what follows, there is hardly one homily, sometimes hardly a paragraph, where we do not encounter ad hoc newly created expressions. Particularly when Eckhart uses an emphatic locution, he works with words against words, leads with images on top of images, lifts one's understanding beyond grasping and knowing, he is not so much undermining the notions of grammar, terminology and rhetoric as sometimes claimed, and he is not a precursor of post—modern or deconstructive writing; rather he

is a very confident speaker, rhetorician and author who trusts that words are bound to their grammatical context and, standing either on their own or within a confined grammatical structure, are nothing but 'adverbs' of the one Verb, creatures constantly born of the one Word into which all language leads, a language that can never be reduced to a monotone silence, but which will erupt, emanate and diversify into limitless languages, cultures and accounts. This pluriformity of the one cannot be kept in any barrels of dictionaries, grammars, academies or schools, but will be driven into unexplored territories by poets, musicians, philosophers, theologians and artists.

The literal translation of this type, which at times forgoes a fluent reading and leads inevitably to a stylistic roughness, nevertheless aims to put into the hands of the reader a tool to reflect productively on a text that is littered with technical jargon, ambiguity, innuendo and internal references, but which is also motivated by a consistent terminology and a rigour that deserve to be preserved.

We would like to add a big thank to John M. Connolly, Ann Marie Wareham and Patricia Impey who read the entire translation and made numerous suggestions that improved the reading, and also Rudolf Weigand for the advice given.

Where possible, the terms used by Eckhart (in particular the technical terms) are translated by a single corresponding English term, although this cannot always be achieved.

One particularly interesting case is the use of gender of the term soul (séle). In High Middle German 'sae' is female, but in British English it is usually neither male nor female and also by some translators of Eckhart rendered by 'it', whereas many others refer to the soul by 'she'. Against common English, I have decided to join the latter translators, as Eckhart is particularly attentive to the gendered understanding of naming the divine, speaks of the soul's life and often equates the soul with the lover from the Song of Songs looking for the beloved or speaks of the soul as a widow' (with 'the intellect' as 'the man in the soul'). And yet, one could also make a case for a male connotation, when the soul (albeit as intellect) is called 'husband' who 'pushes into God without medium' and not a

fallen down `wife'; and one can argue for the common English use of 'it', as the soul, being God's image', is clearly beyond a gendered divide, even encompasses maleness and femaleness, being herself without names. The `she', however, helps in many instances to clarify the reference to the soul where 'it' would obscure the sense of a passage.
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New Studies in Biblical Theology is a series of monographs that address key issues in the discipline of biblical theology. Contributions to the series focus on one or more of three areas: (1) the nature and status of biblical theology, including its relations with other disciplines (e.g. historical theology, exegesis, systematic theology, historical criticism, narrative theology); (2) the articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular biblical writer or corpus; and (3) the delineation of a biblical theme across all or part of the biblical corpora.

Above all, these monographs are creative attempts to help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better. The series aims simultaneously to instruct and to edify, to interact with the current literature, and to point the way ahead. In God's universe, mind and heart should not be divorced: in this series we shall try not to separate what God has joined together. While the notes interact with the best of scholarly literature, the text is uncluttered with untransliterated Greek and Hebrew, and tries to avoid too much technical jargon. The volumes are written within the framework of confessional evangelicalism, but there is always an attempt at thoughtful engagement with the sweep of the relevant literature.

Few if any themes are more central to the Bible than atonement. The evidence depends on more than Paul's asseveration to the Corinthians, 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2). The sacrificial systems of tabernacle and temple, the significance of Passover and Day of Atonement, the dramatic way in which all four canonical Gospels climax in the cross and resurrection (some wag has said they are all passion narratives with

extended introductions), the nuanced arguments of Hebrews, the fact that the Apocalypse depicts the triumph (of all things!) of a slaughtered Lamb, all combine to provide powerful support for the centrality of the theme explored in this volume.

Even to begin to do justice to this theme one must attempt at least five things: (1) The way the theme of sacrifice and atonement develops in the Bible's storyline must be laid out. (2) Equally, the way this theme is intertwined with related themes (the holiness of God, the nature of sin, what salvation consists of, the promise of what is to come, and much more) must be delineated, along with (3) more probing reflection on a selection of crucial passages. These first three items belong rather tightly to biblical theology. Of course, (4) how these themes have been handled in the history of the church's theology must not be ignored. (5) Equally, if the volume is to speak to our generation, it must engage some of the more important current discussion.

Dr Graham Cole is well qualified to address all five of these dimensions. My hope and prayer is that this volume will become a `standard' contribution in the field, informing and enriching its readers as to what God achieved by sending his dear Son to the cross on our behalf. Eternity itself will not exhaust our wonder at these truths. This book, I am sure, will establish many in the right direction. D. A. Carsen Trinity Evangelical Divinity School <>

[God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom](#) by Graham Cole [New Studies in Biblical Theology, IVP Academic, 9780830826261]

What does God intend for his broken creation? In this New Studies in Biblical Theology volume, Graham A. Cole seeks to answer this question by setting the atoning work of the cross in the broad framework of God's grand plan to restore the created order, and places the story of Jesus, his cross and empty tomb within it. Since we have become paradoxically the glory and garbage of the universe, our great need is peace with God and not just with God, but also with one another. Atonement brings shalom by defeating the enemies of peace, overcoming both the barriers to reconciliation and to the restoration of creation

through the sacrifice of Christ. The "peace dividend" that atonement brings ranges from the forgiveness of sins for the individual to adoption into the family of God. Addressing key issues in biblical theology, the works comprising New Studies in Biblical Theology are creative attempts to help Christians better understand their Bibles. The NSBT series is edited by D. A. Carson, aiming to simultaneously instruct and to edify, to interact with current scholarship and to point the way ahead.

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Excerpt: We live in a troubled world. As I write, there are reports of a devastating cyclone in Myanmar, an earthquake in China, fighting in the Sudan and Iraq, shooting death after shooting death on the south side of Chicago. The list could go on and on. The waste of human life is enormous. Some of these troubles and calamities involve nature without any help from us. A volcanic eruption is an example. But other troubles are caused by human beings. Some of us behave appallingly. The holocaust comes to mind. Yet Christians believe in a good God who as the Creator has never lost interest in his world. The key evidence and the chief symbol of that divine commitment is the cross of Christ. This God, revealed in the canon of Scripture, has a project. Novelist Frederick Buechner sums up the project in these terms: 'God creates the world, the world gets lost; God seeks to restore the world to the glory for which he created it.' Central to the divine strategy is Christ, his coming and his cross. The troubles and calamities will end.

The cross is scandalous, however, and has been from the start. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that to the Jews of his day the crucified Christ was a stumbling block and to the Greeks (non-Jews) foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23). In fact, the earliest extant depiction of the cross in Christian art comes from the sixth century. By then Christianity was the religion of empire, at least in the East. However, there are earlier depictions, by pagan critics, that illustrate Paul's point. The earliest is scratched on plaster and is dated circa AD 200. It is found in the Paedagogium on the Palatine Hill and may have been scratched by a servant in the imperial household. A man with an ass's head is on a cross and is being worshipped by one Alexamenos. The graffito reads, 'Alexamenos worships [his] God.' How such a violent event can bring peace to creation is one of the questions this study will need to address.

A traditional theological code word to describe the core of the divine response to evil is 'atonement'. The word has an interesting history in English-speaking theology and in fact is as James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy suggest 'one of the few theological terms that is "wholly and indigenously English"'. William Tyndale (1494-1536) used it to translate Leviticus 23:28 (the Day of Atonement) and 2 Corinthians 5:18-19:

Neverthelesse all thinges are of god which hath reconciled vs vnto him sylfe by Iesus Christ and hath geuen vnto vs the office te preach the atonement. For god was in Christ and made agrement bitwene the worlde and hym sylfe and imputed not their synnes vnto them: and hath committed to vs the preachynge of the atonment.

In 1611 the Authorized Version replaced 'atonement' with 'reconciliation'. Christ and his cross bring peace.

Paul in a big-picture passage written to the Colossians shows how the concepts of the cross and peace are intimately connected. He wrote this of Christ in some of the highest Christology found in the New Testament:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness [plērōma] dwell in him, and

through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace [eirēnopoīēsas] through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (Col. 1:19-23)

Clearly, Paul's gospel is no narrow affair. His theological vision is cosmic in scope 'to reconcile to himself all things.' The cross touches the individual, the church and the wider creation. The cross makes peace.

Peace in Scripture is not to be reduced to a mere absence of strife, nor to a psychological state of mind. According to S. E. Porter:

The concept of peace in the Bible is different in many ways from modern ideas of peace. Peace as the absence of strife, war or bloodshed, so often sought by humanity at any cost, is far removed from the focus of the biblical teaching. The biblical concept of peace is one in which God's authority and power over his created order are seen to dominate his relations with his world, including both the material and the human spheres.

An Old Testament word that captures this idea is shalom. And the New Testament use of the term 'peace' (eirēnē) is an example of a Greek word used with rich Old Testament resonances. As T. J. Geddert notes, 'The Greek term eirēnē in classical Greek literature means little more than absence of war. In the NT, however, it incorporates the breadth of meaning conveyed by the Hebrew sālôm.'

Nicholas Wolterstorff adds to the picture, 'To dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one's physical surroundings, to enjoy

living with one's fellows, to enjoy life with oneself' (original emphases). As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the great enemy of shalom is sin (angelic and human).

The title of this book, 'God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom', attempts to capture this important biblical perspective on what God intends for his broken creation.

The big picture

From a literary point of view, the canon of Scripture presents a divine comedy. Literary scholar Leland Ryken defines a comedy as 'a work of literature in which the plot structure is U-shaped, with the action beginning in prosperity, descending into potentially tragic events, and ending happily'.¹³ The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery amplifies his point in relation to the Bible per se:

The overall plot of the Bible is a U-shaped comic plot. The action begins with a perfect world inhabited by perfect people. It descends into the misery of fallen history and ends with a new world of total happiness and the conquest of evil. The book of Revelation is the story of the happy ending par excellence, as a conquering hero defeats evil, marries a bride and lives happily ever after in a palace glittering with jewels.

From Genesis to Revelation we see the U-shaped structure working itself out: from the harmony of Genesis 1 — 2 through the disharmony of Genesis 3 — Revelation 20 to harmony again and albeit of a higher kind in Revelation 21 — 22. Theologian Stephen Sykes also explores the doctrine of the atonement from a literary perspective, complementing both Ryken's and the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery's analyses: 'In Christian narrative, God's world is the setting, the theme is the rescue of the fallen world and of humankind; the plots are the biblical narratives, from creation, election, to incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension; the resolution is the last judgment, heaven and hell' (original emphases). Crucial to the resolution is the cross of Christ.

The importance of the cross

The importance of the cross can be seen in the two key practices of Christian corporate life: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Miroslav Volf concurs:

A good way to make the same point about the centrality of self-donation [the cross] would be to look at the two fundamental rituals of the church as described in the New Testament: baptism, which marks the beginning of the Christian life and therefore determines the whole of it; and the Lord's Supper, whose reiterated celebration enacts ritually what lies at the very heart of the Christian life.

In these practices — as old as Christianity itself — it is the Good Friday and Easter Sunday stories that are accented. For Paul, baptism symbolically enacts our dying and rising with Christ (Rom. 6:1-7) and the Lord's Supper preaches 'the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor. 11:26). The Book of Common Prayer captures the Pauline note in its prayer of consecration in its Holy Communion service:

All glory to you our heavenly Father, for in your tender mercy you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death on the cross for our redemption; who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and instituted, and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue, a perpetual memory of his precious death until his coming again.

Important to observe is the fact that the centre of gravity in these practices is not the Christmas story but the Good Friday and Easter Sunday ones. Put another way, the incarnation is not central; the cross is. James Denney puts the point forcefully: 'Not Bethlehem, but Calvary, is the focus of revelation, and any construction of Christianity which ignores or denies this distorts Christianity by putting it out of focus.'

A useful distinction

The story of the cross and the one who died upon it will be at the heart of this study, but not the whole of this study. As R. W. Yarbrough suggests:

'Atonement' may be defined as God's work on sinners' behalf to reconcile them to

himself. It is the divine activity that confronts and resolves the problem of human sin so that people may enjoy full fellowship with God both now and in the age to come. While in one sense the meaning of atonement is as broad and diverse as all of God's saving work throughout time and eternity, in another it is as particular and restricted as the crucifixion of Jesus. For in the final analysis Scripture presents his sacrificial death as the central component of God's reconciling mercy. This explains why Revelation 22:3, for example, shows not only God but also the Lamb — slain to atone for sin — occupying the throne of heaven in the age to come.

Narrowly conceived this study would simply focus on the cross. However, following Yarbrough's insight, this work needs to set the cross in a much broader framework. This broader perspective reckons with God's grand plan to restore the created order, and places the story of Jesus, his cross and empty tomb within it. Thus this work takes the broad approach but hopefully not in a way that masks 'the cruciality of the cross'. As a way forward, when this study speaks of God's 'atoning project' or 'atoning work' it has the broader perspective in mind. But when it refers to 'the atonement' per se, it is the cross of Christ in view.

In terms of the broader understanding of the divine atoning project, the grand goal of the divine comedy is nothing less than to secure God's people in God's place under God's reign living God's way enjoying God's shalom in God's loving and holy presence as both family and worshippers, to God's glory.

Some crucial questions

- What then are the questions that animate this study?
- What, if anything, is there in God's character that requires atonement?
- Is God's love in conflict with his wrath?
- Is wrath an attribute of God, and, if so, what kind?
- What is so wrong with the human situation that it requires atonement?

- How do God's dealings with Old Testament Israel feature in the story of atonement?
- Is the cross of Christ the whole story of atonement?
- What place has the life of Christ and not just the death of Christ in the story of atonement?
- How important are the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ to the story of atonement?
- What are some of the controversial issues attending the atonement (e.g. violence and the cross, the cross as divine child abuse and so forth)? How might they be addressed?
- How central, if at all, is penal substitution to a theology of atonement?
- Did Christ bear the sins of the world without exception or without distinction?
- How is the atoning work of Christ to be embraced by us for our benefit?
- Is the gospel good news for those who do not welcome God's shalom?
- What flows from the atoning work of Christ at the individual, corporate and cosmic levels?
- Can shalom-making sum up adequately the divine intention in the atoning work of Christ?
- How then are we to live individually and as God's people in the light of God's atoning project centred as it is on Christ?
- What is the divine motivation informing the atoning project?
- What is the divine intention driving the atoning project?
- How does atonement bring shalom?

Assumptions

Having set up the key questions addressed in this study, what is assumed in doing so? This study assumes a high view of Scripture as God's Word written. Scripture in my view is the product of an asymmetrical double-agency. Scripture is God-breathed (theopneustos). Even so, the conclusive outworking of such inspiration does not mask the individuality of the biblical writers. Given divine

inspiration predicated on a doctrine of God who not only acts (creation, providence, redemption and judgment) but also speaks (revelation), and, given this view of divine inspiration, one should expect a unity to Scripture in the midst of its diversity. Leland Ryken expresses it well:

Although biblical literature is a collection of diverse works, it must also be regarded as possessing a high degree of unity. There is unity of national authorship, with only two books in the whole Bible (Luke and Acts) not having been written by [Israelites and] Jews. There is unity of subject matter, consisting most broadly of God's ways with people and the relationship of people to God and fellow humans. There is a unity of world view and general theological outlook from book to book. There is unity of purpose underlying all biblical literature — the purpose of revealing God to people so that they might know how to order their lives.

He develops this last important point:

There is, finally, a unity of literature texture based on allusion. Various biblical writers allude to earlier works in the same canon, or to the same historical events, or to the same religious beliefs and experiences, or to the same cultural context. The resulting unity of reference is immediately evident when one consults a modern Bible containing cross references in the marginal notes. No other anthology of literature possesses the unified texture of allusions that biblical literature displays.

Scripture is thus the touchstone, that which tests the quality of any theological proposal.

Touchstone is an interesting metaphor for Scripture's theological function in the life of God's people. A touchstone is a piece of quartz that can be used to test, for example, whether a piece of ore is really gold or merely fool's gold. Scripture as the Word of God is the norming norm (norma normans). If a putative doctrinal proposal is textless — that is to say, it lacks biblical support — then it may be held as a speculative possibility but not as a candidate for a nonnegotiable conviction expressing the Faith. Of course, other authorities such as tradition, reason and experience are operative in Christian theology

and life. But these lesser authorities are ruled norms (norma normata). In any conflict between authorities the appeal to Scripture is paramount since it is the touchstone and rules the others. In my own tradition, Article 21 of The Articles of Religion of the Church of England of 1562 expresses the point well: 'General Councils ... may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.' Similarly, reason (our ability to mount and demolish arguments) may err, especially if it is at the service of a world view that is inimical to biblical supernaturalism. And experience may mislead. It may, for example, be wrongly described theologically even if authentically of God. Some of the tongues-speaking that I have heard appears to be in this category. Those who practice it seem to benefit devotionally by it.

Another caveat is in order. Not all has been revealed. There are secret things that belong to the Lord, as Moses declared on the plains of Moab (Deut. 29:29). This should also remind the theologian that mystery or incomprehensibility attends the actions of God. Truth has been revealed, but not exhaustively so. An epistemic humility applies to any doctrinal construction or exploration of Scripture, including the present work. The theologian needs to distinguish carefully what proposals ought to be considered as non-negotiable convictions, what as opinion and what as speculation. In other words, some notion of dogmatic rank needs to be at work explicitly or implicitly.

Approach

This work is part of a series entitled New Studies in Biblical Theology, which raises the question 'How does the present study fit into the philosophy of the series as set out in the preface to it?' This study attempts the delineation of a biblical theme, which is summed up in the subtitle, 'How Atonement Brings Shalom'. The biblical theology dimension can be seen in the way the study broadly speaking follows the Bible's own plotline from the story of creation to the fall to redemption to the consummation, and not

merely in the adducing of biblical texts as evidence for the assertions made — although such evidence is of paramount importance. Appearances notwithstanding, the fact that the first chapter treats the doctrine of God is in keeping with the approach. How so? We begin the substantive discussion where the canon begins; namely, with God (Gen. 1:1). I have attempted to keep technical discussion to the footnotes as much as I could in order to leave the text as uncluttered as possible.

What is the value of biblical theology for our task? Biblical theology helps the reader to know what the accents of Scripture are when canonically considered. Its work is descriptive in the main. Systematic theology asks the prescriptive or normative questions of what is to be both believed and lived in the light of the Scriptural testimony and does so informed by biblical theology and with sensitivity to the history of discussion (historical theology) and contemporary application (practical theology). Put another way, at the heart of this work is the theological interpretation of Scripture. In this theological interpretation of Scripture, both the narrational and didactic portions of the biblical testimony have their place. With due apologies to Immanuel Kant — narrative without the didactic is blind, the didactic without the narrational is empty. This is not a new insight. In 1846 John Williamson Nevin put it this way:

All turns on the standpoint of the interpreter, and the comprehensive catholicity of his view. He must be consciously within the horizon, and underneath the broad canopy, of the new supernatural creation, he is called to contemplate; and then each part of it must be studied and expounded, in full view of its relations to every other part, and to the glorious structure in which all are comprehended as a whole. This is the true conception of biblical theology. Only under this form, can bible proof, as it is called, in favour of or against any doctrine, be entitled to the least respect.

Put another way, Nevin teaches us that the whole (the canon) and the parts (the various pericopes) need to be in constant dialogue.

The plan of the book

The first three chapters of this work deal with the human plight. J. Rodman Williams is right to argue, 'The basic problem to which atonement is related is twofold: who God is and what man has become.' Thus the first chapter examines who God is in nature. Understanding the shape of the canonical story, and why the need for Christ's life and death, is predicated on grasping that the righteous God is both love and light, or, to use P. T. Forsyth's pregnant expression, 'holy love'. Holy love is not indifferent to sin. The second chapter examines the paradoxical nature of humankind outside Eden or 'what man has become'. Taking a cue from Pascal it examines how we are both the glory and the 'garbage' of the universe. Some grasp of the multifaceted problematic created by human sin is a prerequisite for understanding the depths of the divine response. This problematic is explored in chapter 3.

The next three chapters focus on the divine provision for humanity in the light of the human plight. The fourth chapter looks at the foundations of the divine provision in God's own loving nature, the protoevangelium (first gospel) of Genesis 3:15, and the call of Abraham, as well as its foreshadowings in the experience of Israel. The fifth chapter considers the atoning faithfulness of Christ exhibited in the righteous life he lived *ceram Dee* (before God) as the faithful Son. The sixth chapter next looks at his atoning death on the cross, or the atonement *per se*, and some of the questions it raises. Sacrifice, victory, satisfaction and substitution will be key terms here. This chapter also focuses on how Christ's faithful life and righteous death are both vindicated and validated by his resurrection from the dead and his subsequent enthronement at the right hand of the Father. Without that vindication it can be said of Christianity (to quote from W. B. Yeats's magnificent poem *The Second Coming*), 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.'

Chapter 7 considers the 'peace dividend' — to use Rowan Williams's helpful phrase. In particular, it explores how the peace/shalom that comes through the cross works itself out at the personal, corporate and cosmic levels. Chapter 8 asks the 'So what?'

question. How then are we to live if these things are really so? Chapter 9 discusses the grand purpose behind it all and offers a theory as to why the divine desire for glory is not celestial narcissism. Chapter 10 concludes the study proper by reviewing the journey. Furthermore, this final chapter addresses the question raised by the title of the study; namely, how God the peacemaker brings shalom through atonement in both the broad and narrow senses of the term. An appendix deals with a range of controversial aspects of the cross, including the centrality of penal substitution, the morality of penal substitution, whether moral influence and exemplarist theories are really atonement theories, whether there is healing in the atonement, the Holy Saturday debate and evaluating a new family of theories commonly known as non-violent theories of atonement. An extensive bibliography rounds out the study.

How to read this book

Three reading strategies commend themselves. One is to read from beginning to end: the traditional approach. Chapters 1-9 actually follow in the main the biblical storyline. Chapter 1, for example, begins where the Bible does with God, and chapter 9 examines the divine desire (glory). In other words, the familiar contours of the biblical story are in view: creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Another way to engage this work is to use the questions listed previously as a guide and ask, as you read, to what extent and how successfully they are being addressed. The final way is to start with the appendix to get a grasp of some of the current issues under vigorous discussion concerning the atonement before reading the main argument.

A caution

This study is an exercise in theology drawing upon the disciplines of biblical theology and systematic theology with an awareness of the history of theological discussion (historical theology) and an eye on contemporary Christian life with its challenges (practical theology). As such, there is much conceptual map work, which brings with it its own fascination. However, it must not be forgotten that the reality is of the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Thus a caveat is in order and I know of no other writer who has put it as forcefully as J. S. Whale. He writes:

We have to get somehow from mandata Dei [the commandments of God] to Deus mandans [the commanding God] if our study of Christian doctrine is to mean anything vital. We want a living synthesis where those very facts, which the intellect dissects and coldly examines, are given back to us with the wholeness which belongs to life ... Instead of putting off our shoes from our feet because the place whereon we stand is holy ground, we are taking nice photographs of the burning Bush, from suitable angles: we are chatting about theories of Atonement with our feet on the mantelpiece, instead of kneeling down before the wounds of Christ.

Cool reflection ultimately needs to give way to worship. Again Whale is helpful: 'The need is obvious. Is it met anywhere? The answer is that it is met in the worship of the Church, where the Christian religion is given to us in all its living meaning.' Whale, writing last century, would be amazed to find these days that for many worship has shrunk to singing love songs to Jesus without reference to the cross. <>

['Return To Me': A Biblical Theology of Repentance](#) by Mark J. Boda [New Studies in Biblical Theology, IVP Academic, 9780830826377]

"Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you," (Zech 1:3 ESV). Repentance concerns the repair of a relationship with God disrupted by human sin. All the major phases of church history have seen diversity and controversy over the doctrine. The first of Luther's famous ninety-five theses nailed to the church door in Wittenburg in 1517 stated that 'the entire life of believers should be one of repentance'. In recent times, two divisive debates within evangelicalism over 'lordship salvation' and "hypergrace" have had repentance at their core. The theme of repentance is evident in almost every Old and New Testament corpus. However, it has received little sustained attention over the past half-century of scholarship, which has been largely restricted to word studies or focused on a particular text or genre. Studies of the overall

theology of the Bible have typically given the theme only passing mention. In response, Mark Boda offers a comprehensive overview of the theological witness of Scripture to the theme of repentance in this New Studies in Biblical Theology volume. The key to understanding is not simply to be found in word studies, but also in the broader meaning of texts as these communicate through a variety of words, images and stories. The importance of repentance in redemptive history is emphasized. It is fundamentally a return to intimate fellowship with the triune God, our Creator and redeemer. This relational return arises from the human heart and impacts attitudes, words and actions. Addressing key issues in biblical theology, the works comprising New Studies in Biblical Theology are creative attempts to help Christians better understand their Bibles. The NSBT series is edited by D. A. Carson, aiming to simultaneously instruct and to edify, to interact with current scholarship and to point the way ahead.

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Excerpt: Despite being an inheritor of the grand Reformation tradition of the sixteenth century I have to admit that until recently I had never read the ninety-five theses of Martin Luther, nailed to the wooden door of Wittenberg's Castle Church, let alone taken note of the order of the theses (Ferguson 1996: 131-132). Surprising to me was that the first thesis from the list, which would change the course of church history, reads as follows:

i Dominus & Magister noster Iesus Christus, dicendo poenitentia agite &c, omnem vitam fidelium poenitentiam esse voluit.

[1. When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'repent', he meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.]

The indulgence controversy that sparked Luther's concern did not prompt him to abandon his doctrine of repentance but rather to pursue a theological conversation with members of the university at Wittenberg and provide correction to the excesses of the medieval period.

Controversies over the doctrine of repentance can be traced throughout all the major phases of church history, and our present age is no exception. Two recent key theological debates have divided the evangelical church in particular, expressed first in

the 'Lordship Salvation' controversy of the 1980s and 1990s and now the emerging 'Hyper Grace' controversy since 2010. Repentance has been a core topic of debate in both controversies, and this is not surprising in the light of church history.

In this work I am not focused on the arguments mounted by proponents on opposing sides of these recent or ancient debates. Instead, my goal is to return to the Bible to offer a comprehensive overview of the theological witness of Scripture concerning the theme of repentance. The Old Testament will be given the coverage it deserves since it contains over 76% of the canonical witness, with due attention to the New Testament near the end of the study. Patient study of the Old and New Testaments brings to light the striking similarity in their expression of the theology of repentance. In a final chapter I will provide some reflection on the theological implications of the biblical theology of repentance.

Before moving to the biblical witness, I want to provide some insight into my approach to writing biblical theology in general and a biblical theology of repentance in particular.

Defining biblical theology

While the modern discipline of biblical theology is often linked to the inaugural lecture of Johann Philipp Gabler in 1787 and to key developments preceding this lecture in both Pietism and rationalism, the practice of biblical-theological reflection is as old as the Bible and its formative communities. The Old Testament is filled with texts that exemplify an impulse towards summarizing theological truth, whether synopses of the character (Exod. 34:6-7) or activity (Deut. 26:5-9) of Yahweh, or summaries of the ethical message of the prophets (2 Kgs 17:13; Zech. 1:3-4; 7:7-10). Even whole books such as Deuteronomy and Chronicles re-present earlier biblical materials, at times summarizing and focusing on particular emphases within the earlier books.

A similar impulse can be discerned within the New Testament with its short encapsulations of the character and activity of Christ (Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16) or its summaries of the ethical message of the Law and Prophets (Matt. 7:12; 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). Of course, the New Testament

is filled with allusions and citations from the Old Testament, showing its concern to rehearse the theology of the Old Testament found in specific texts. At times the New Testament will trace theological themes through the Old Testament in more concentrated ways, like faith in Hebrews 11 or sin in Romans 3:9-20.

The kind of biblical-theological reflection represented in the present book continues this biblical tradition. I have defined it elsewhere in the following way:

Biblical theology is a theological discipline that reflects on the theological witness of the Bible in its own idiom with attention to both its unity and diversity. In partnership with sound exegetical theology, understood as disciplined reading of the individual pericopae and books of the Bible that seeks after their theological messages to their historical audiences, biblical theology discerns macro level connections within the biblical witness without ignoring disconnections between these various texts and books. The emphasis in biblical theology is on the messages of whole books, canonical sections, entire testaments, and the Bible as a collection and the connections between individual texts and these larger literary-canonical units.¹

Underlying my approach to biblical theology lie six basic theological convictions concerning the Scriptures (Boda 2012a: 127-135). First, the Scriptures are communicative in character, that is, God communicated effectively through these texts to their ancient audiences (Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 1:16). Thus we can expect to understand these texts even though we are fully aware of the finite and fallen character of our human condition and our need for the illumination of the Holy Spirit and disciplined study of the texts to grasp the message of the Scriptures.

Secondly, the Scriptures are incarnational in character, that is, God communicates through human figures in human language and forms at particular times in history (Heb. 1:1; Acts 1:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:15-16). This means then that disciplined study of the texts will entail careful attention to the ancient languages through which

and the ancient history in which these texts were written. It will seek to hear the theological message of the text as it was intended for the ancient community of God first before reflecting on how this message relates to our communities of faith today.

Thirdly, the Scriptures come to us in 'inscripturated' form, that is, while the Bible contains much text that reflects an original oral form, like proclamations of prophets (2 Peter 1:20-21), the focus of biblical theology is on the written form, and it is this that is called 'God-breathed' and 'holy' in 2 Timothy 3:15-16 (my tr.; cf. Rom. 15:4). We are thus not focused on the study of pre-canonical forms of the Scriptures, that is, presumed oral or written sources for the biblical books.

Fourthly, the Scriptures are authoritative in their final canonical form, providing normative theological and ethical truth (e.g. Matt. 5:17-20; Acts 24:14; 2 Tim. 3:14-17). This means that the present study is not merely descriptive in character. The description of the theology of repentance is by nature also prescriptive, making demands on those individuals and communities who embrace these Scriptures as canon.

Fifthly, the Scriptures are cumulative and progressive in character, that is, the Bible assumes an overall eschatological perspective, a movement towards a climactic future sometimes referred to as 'the last days' and associated in Hebrews 1:1-3 with the era inaugurated by Jesus Christ. This eschatological perspective did not result in the elimination of earlier stages of inscripturated revelation, since the Old Testament witness fills the pages of the New Testament, providing the theological foundation for most of its message. The post-canonical early church also continued to embrace the Old Testament as their Scriptures, drawing their arguments from Old and New Testaments alike. Nevertheless, it is clear that the earlier cumulative witness of the Old Testament must be seen through the final and climactic level focused on Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Scriptures are cohesive in character. This cohesion is seen in the outer shape that comprises two testaments, each of which has its own subcollections and orders of literary units. The

present book follows the ancient Hebrew canonical shape of the Law, Prophets and Writings, taking the lead from Christ's description of the Old Testament canon (Luke 24:44; cf. 11:51).³ The New Testament order is that found in all major manuscripts. Cohesion is also seen in the inner core of each testament. The Old and New Testaments witness to a single true God, revealed as Yahweh in the Old Testament and the triune God in the New Testament. The triune God Yahweh is identified as creator of the universe and redeemer of humanity. The Old and New Testaments also witness to a common human community.

Obviously the human community reflected in the Old Testament from creation onwards reflects the same human community in view in the New Testament (e.g. Gen. 1; John 1). So also the redemptive community that gathers around Yahweh in the Old Testament and the triune God in the New Testament are treated as a single community of the people of God, evident in the use of identical terminology for both communities (e.g. Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9).

This theological foundation shapes the following agenda for biblical theology. The present study will remain sensitive to the diversity within the canon, that is, not trying to make everything sound the same, and so giving attention to the canonical units as discrete witnesses, whether biblical books or biblical sections (e.g. Law, Former Prophets, Latter Prophets, Writings, or Old Testament, New Testament). But it will also seek after unity in the midst of this diversity, and bring the various units into dialogue and ultimately provide some insight into the common witness of the canon. The present study treats the Old Testament as legitimate Christian witness, granting attention to the breadth and depth of Old Testament texts in order to hear the voice of the Old Testament fully. Ultimately this will be considered in the light of the New Testament witness and key climactic developments in the final phase of redemptive history and canonical witness. But the riches of the Old Testament as Christian Theology will be mined since it was the triune God whose revelation is preserved in the Old Testament.

As noted above our concern is to hear the theological message of the text as it was intended for the ancient community of God first before reflecting on how this message relates to our community of faith today. Recent scholarship has leveraged the shape of the canon to highlight the intention of the one(s) responsible for the Hebrew canon and the reception of the ones who first received this authoritative collection:

The canon had editors who redacted their text in order to provide a general orientation, keeping in view the main themes of the literature lest these be lost in the mass of detail, reflecting on the significance of previously written material (when possible) and providing transitions to important new developments. Such junctures would occur at the most natural places to mark orientation: introductions, transitions and conclusions. These 'contextualising' redactions would then serve as a pair of 'hermeneutical spectacles' with which to view the contents of scripture. These 'spectacles' provided a definitive vision of how the redactors understood the nature and function of their text and the role it was to have in the life of the community.'

The fact that the Torah ends with the community poised to enter the land (Deut. 1), hearing a speech that presages Israel's expulsion from the land (Deut. 4; 30; cf. Lev. 26), identifies its canonical audience as that generation who would return to the land from exile.⁶ This same canonical audience can be discerned in the other major canonical sections of the Old Testament (cf. 2 Kgs 25 in the Former Prophets; Isa. 40 — 66, Jer. 25 — 52, Ezek. 34 — 48 or Haggai-Malachi in the Latter Prophets; and Chronicles, Ezra—Nehemiah, Daniel, Esther or Lamentations in the Writings). For this canonical audience the theology of repentance was key, providing direction for the emergence of a community that had experienced the discipline of Yahweh and was seeking a new way forward. A strikingly similar canonical audience can be discerned within the New Testament. The Gospels picture John the Baptist and Jesus as restoration figures announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God, inviting the canonical audience to embrace this restoration kingdom by responding to their message. Acts pictures a restoration community

echoing this message of Jesus, beginning in Jerusalem and ultimately spreading to the entire world, again inviting the canonical audience to respond to this message. This same canonical audience, however, is reminded that while the restoration kingdom is breaking in through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, its full realization will not be reached until the second coming of Christ (e.g. Matt. 26 — 27; 1 Thess. 5; Revelation). The New Testament thus ends in similar fashion to the Old Testament canonical units, with a community longing for restoration, the realization of the kingdom of God on earth.

The present study focuses considerable attention on the shape of the biblical text and its message to its original canonical audiences. This will lay a foundation for a final chapter on the theological implications of this biblical theology for contemporary Christian individuals and communities.

Defining our biblical-theological topic

One of the greatest challenges in writing biblical theology lies in defining the topic. Biblical theologians have typically sought to express the message of the Bible in its own idiom rather than impose a structure based on the idiom of the modern reader of the text, especially as articulated by the *topoi* or vocabulary of systematic theology. Seeking to express this biblical idiom and distance themselves from systematic works, biblical theologians often erred by equating studies on words in the original languages of the Bible with biblical-theological reflection. Of course, sensitivity to the original language and its distinct vocabulary is relevant to expressing the message of the Bible in its own idiom, but research on vocabulary is only part of the task of biblical theology. The focus needs to be on themes that dominate the literature of the Old Testament and are expressed through a variety of linguistic means, including words, collocations, images, forms and related concepts. For instance, while 'covenant' is often seen as a key biblical-theological theme in the Old Testament, its study cannot be limited to an analysis of the Hebrew word *bérît*. While such a study would entail careful attention to the use of this Hebrew word within various texts in the Old

Testament, a thorough biblical-theological study would need to attend to the breadth of vocabulary and collocations associated with covenant, as well as the key familial and imperial imagery used throughout the Old Testament and the variety of covenantal forms found in biblical books. Such a study is necessary to lay bare the underlying conceptual frameworks for this theme in the Old Testament.

This process of defining the theme during the research stage of a project is not linear, that is, one does not begin with a clearly defined topic that remains unchanged throughout one's study. Rather, one usually begins with a certain definition of a topic drawing on a limited pool of vocabulary or texts and then begins the process of listening to the message of all the Scriptures related to that topic, slowly and carefully drawing in related vocabulary, images, forms and their related passages throughout the biblical witness. Such research demands sensitivity to the unique contributions of each witness, not imposing a conceptual framework from one book of the biblical canon onto another, even while discerning connections to one's larger theme.

A review of key words dominating the lexical stock of repentance in the Old and New Testaments, however, is in order as we begin this study (e.g. Marshall et al. 1996: 1007-1008). Within Hebrew the most common word associated with repentance is the verb *šûb* (gal; 'turn', 'return').¹ One can 'turn' (sub) to God or righteousness,¹ as well as 'turn away' (sub) from evil.¹ This root is employed in the hiphil to refer to turning away from evil as well as to the action of one to prompt repentance in another.² The noun *sûbâ* refers to repentance in Isaiah 30:15.¹² The second most common root is *sûr* (Fretheim 2006: 39, n. 37), both in the qal and hiphil stems. It is employed for turning aside from (gal) or putting aside (hiphil) foreign gods or sinful behaviour. A third root is the verb *nhm* (niphil), which is more commonly used for divine shifts. On a few occasions, however, *num* (niphil) is used for human change (Job 42:6; Jer. 8:6; 31:19).

There is some challenge in distinguishing between the meaning of the verbs *sub* and *nhm* (niphil) in the Old Testament. These two verbs are employed

several times alongside one another with the same actor." In a few cases the order of these verbs is *nhm* (niphil) then *šûb*. In Exodus 13:17 *nhm* (niphil) appears to refer to a change of mind ('The people might change their minds when they see war') and *šûb* to the outworking of that shift in terms of action ('return to Egypt'). Although in Jeremiah 8:6 *nhm* (niphil) is used for repentance from wickedness ('No man repented of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?") and *šûb* is used for apostasy ('Everyone turned to his course'), it is possible that *nim* (niphil) refers to a change of disposition reflected in the verbal declaration 'What have I done?', while *šûb* refers to a change in behaviour ('his course'). This may also be the case in Jeremiah 4:28, which also contains the order *nhm* (niphil) followed by *šûb*:

Because I have spoken, I have purposed,
And I will not change My mind [num,
niphil],
nor will I turn [sûb] from it.

But it is possible that *šûb* refers to an internal shift (turning away from God's purpose).

The reverse order of these verbs (*šûb* then *num*, niphil) occurs in a few other passages. In Jeremiah 31:19 clearly *nhm* (niphil) is an activity that occurs after *šûb* ('For after I turned back [or 'turned away'; *sûb*], I repented [n_{hm}, niphil]'). It is possible that *sûb* here refers to a return from exile followed by 'repentance' (*num*, niphil), but more likely *ûb* here refers to apostasy (turning away from God) followed by *nhm* (niphil) referring to repentance (cf. Jer. 8:4, 11:10 for *sub* as apostasy). In this latter case both verbs indicate a shift in internal disposition. This is most certainly the case in Exodus 32:12 ('Turn [sûb] from Your burning anger and change Your mind [n_{hm}, niphil]) about doing harm to Your people'). In the other instances where the order *šûb* then *nim* (niphil) occurs, no clear difference is discernible between the two types of change:

Joel 2:14 'Who knows whether He
will not turn [sûb] and relent [num, niphil]
And leave a blessing behind Him'

Jonah 3:9 'Who knows, God may
turn [sûb] and relent [n_{hm}, niphil] and

withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.'

Psalm 90:13 'Do return [sûb], O LORD; how long will it be? And be sorry [nhm, niph'al] for Your servants.'

In three cases at most nhm (niph'al) is used in connection with human repentance (Job 42:6; Jer. 8:6; 31:19). In Job 42:6 the change is a shift in perspective (see chapter 8 below), but neither Jeremiah 8:6 nor 31:19 makes clear whether this is a change in perspective or behaviour.

Other verbs used to express repentance include pnh ('turn'; Isa. 45:22; Jer. 2:27); sbb ('turn back'; 1 Kgs 18:37); sth ('turn away'; Prov. 4:15); hdl ('cease'; Isa. 1:16); rûm (hiphil; 'stop; Ezek. 45:9); zb ('forsake'; Isa. 55:7; Prov. 9:6); slk (hiphil; 'cast away'; Ezek. 18:31; 20:7); rhq (hiphil; 'remove [sin] far away'; Job 11:14; 22:23); prq (Aram. 'break away'; Dan. 4:27 [Hebr. 4:24]); bdl (niph'al; 'separate oneself'; Ezra 6:21; 10:11; Neh. 10:28) and zkr ('remember'; e.g. Ezek. 36:31; Ps. 78:35; Eccl. 12:1).

Since this study will also include reflection on the New Testament, a quick overview of vocabulary for repentance in the New Testament is in order. Key vocabulary for repentance includes metaneō, metaneia, strephemai, epistrephō, epistrephō, and possibly metamelemai.

It is difficult at times to identify the precise distinction between these various terms. The two key verbs metaneō and epistrephō appear alongside each other in Acts 3:19, and the same two verbs appear with the most common noun metaneia in Acts 26:20. While it is clear that metamelemai refers to an internal shift, there is a long tradition of defining metaneō and metaneia in terms of a change of mind. However, although metaneō can refer to a change in inner disposition (e.g. Acts 8:22: 'repent of this wickedness of yours ... the intention of your heart'), it is regularly connected to a change in external activity:

2 Cor. 12:21 'I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented [metaneō] of the impurity,

immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.'

Rev. 2:5 'repent [metaneō] and do the deeds you did at first'

Rev. 2:21 'to repent [metaneō] of her immorality'

Rev. 2:22 'repent [metaneō] of her deeds'

Rev. 9:20 'did not repent [metaneō] of the works of their hands'

Rev. 9:21 'they did not repent [metaneō] of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts'

Rev. 16:11 'they did not repent of their deeds'

At the same time strephemai is used in Acts 7:39 to refer to the apostasy of the Jewish ancestors who 'in their hearts turned back [strephemai] to Egypt', clearly an internal shift. The verb epistrephō is often used for a relational return to the Lord (Luke 1:16; Acts 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:20; 2 Cor. 3:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Peter 2:25), and in the citation of Malachi in Luke 1:17 it refers to an internal shift ('TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN'). Thus it appears that these words are not as clearly distinguished from one another as some studies would indicate. The focus of our study of the New Testament will be on the broader passages in which this vocabulary is found as well as on images, forms and concepts related to the vocabulary

As noted already such analysis is a key starting point but is not sufficient for studying this topic because the theological theme of repentance is expressed in ways other than through vocabulary, such as through images, forms and concepts. Additionally, the semantic range of the common Hebrew and Greek words extends beyond the theme of repentance, and thus these verbs are not always related to this theme. Thus, while Hebrew and Greek vocabulary is key at the outset of the research for this particular study, prompting a close analysis of texts such as Deuteronomy and the Prophets in the Old Testament, or the Synoptic Gospels and Acts in the New Testament, my study even of these books extended beyond these words to their larger literary contexts as well as the broader lexical, imagistic, formal and conceptual stock of repentance within these books and

ultimately within the rest of the Old and New Testaments.

The focus of this present book is on the biblical-theological theme of repentance. Two passages in the Bible, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, stand out as initial windows into this theme.

First, Zechariah 1:1-6 arises from a voice near the end of the canonical prophetic witness that gives the greatest attention to the theme of repentance in the Old Testament. Zechariah 1:1-6 contains a summary of the message of the 'former prophets', utilizing the dominant verb *šûb* to describe the prophet's message in the following way:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return [Nib] to me,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I may return [sûb] to you,' says the LORD of hosts. ... Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return [šûb] now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.'

Then they repented [sûb] and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'

Secondly, Acts 26:16-20 appears near the end of the corpus, with the most concentrated focus on repentance in the New Testament (Luke-Acts). This passage showcases Paul's climactic speech before Agrippa in which we hear not only Jesus' commission of the apostle but Paul's appropriation of this commission to both Jew and Gentile, employing the three most common words associated with repentance (*metaneeō*, *metaneia*, *epistrephō*):

'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn [epistrephō] from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus

first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent [*metaneeō*] and turn [*epistrephō*] to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance [*metaneia*].

Repentance in these two passages is presented as a (re)turn to God and away from that which is contrary to God. Repentance also involves a shift in behaviour. Therefore, repentance in this study refers foremost to a turn or return to faithful relationship with God from a former state of estrangement: 'Return to Me' (Zech. 1:3). This limits the investigation to the relationship between humans and their God. This human—divine relationship will have implications for other relationships, such as with other humans or aspects/members of creation, since the relationship with God is often estranged due to violation of his priorities for human relationships and for the creational order. The present study is focused on human participation in this relationship, thus not on God's 'repentance', but it will consider God's role in inviting and enabling human repentance. Zechariah 1:4, 6 and Acts 26:16-20 reveal, however, that there are other aspects to repentance. It will become clear that repentance involves several dimensions, the first of which is made clear in these two passages: the behavioural (actual change in lifestyle and patterns of living), the affective (full engagement of internal orientation, all one's heart) and the verbal/ritual (oral declarations expressing penitential desire whether in prayer or speech, including admission of sin and culpability, declaration of divine justice; various rites including sacrifice, fasting, sackcloth or baptism).

Placing a return to faithful relationship at the core of our definition means that passages which speak of admission of sin or remorse over sin are relevant to the topic of repentance. Of course, we will discover that at times repentance can be insincere, without full engagement of affections or a lack of sustained shift in behaviour. In addition, repentance is not always allowed, as we will see in Numbers 14 and the book of Jeremiah.

Any work of biblical theology entails highlighting one strand from a complicated tapestry of biblical

witnesses. Repentance is part of a much larger conceptual framework in the Old Testament related to sin and its remedy and constitutes only one of several strategies for dealing with sin in the Old Testament. It is also related to much larger theological themes ranging from soteriology to eschatology, and although I have sought to provide some insight into the broader theological tapestry of the Bible, at times I have had to limit my study through careful and disciplined selection.

Past research on the biblical theology of repentance

Although evident in nearly every corpus of the Old and New Testaments, the biblical theme of repentance has received little sustained attention over the past half century of scholarly research within the biblical guild. Some studies have restricted their considerations to the lexical stock of repentance. Others, while broadening their scope beyond vocabulary to encompass the theme, have limited their attention to a particular testament, corpus or genre (see below). A third group of investigations, the many works tackling the overall theology of the Old and/or New Testament, has given the theme of repentance little more than passing mention.

Most Old Testament research takes its lead from two key early studies on Hebrew vocabulary. Holladay's (1958) analysis of the root *šûb* focuses particularly on the meaning of this word in covenantal contexts. This then gives particular attention to the use of this word and its contribution to the theme of repentance in the Deuteronomic and prophetic literature of the Old Testament. Milgrom analyses the root *'šm* (guilt) and its function within priestly contexts, and through this offers insight into repentance within another key tradition of the Old Testament. Studies of repentance have largely been confined to the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, although some have reflected on its role in Job and Chronicles. In recent years particular attention has been given to the role of repentance within the community of Jews living in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem, especially as expressed through the genre of penitential prayer as showcased in passages such as Ezra 9, Nehemiah 1, 9, Daniel 9 and Psalm 106.

Repentance has been a key topic within New Testament research, even though treatments of this theme within the entire New Testament are largely restricted to the first half of the twentieth century, or to the theologically contentious debates within evangelicalism over soteriology. Most works have focused attention on a more limited corpus within the New Testament.

One can discern two key recent streams within New Testament research in relation to the study of repentance. The first stream is more socio-psychologically oriented, focusing on the phenomenon of religious conversion. Exemplary of this stream is Gaventa (1986) who traces the concept of 'conversion' throughout Luke-Acts, the Pauline epistles, John and 1 Peter, focusing on the language and narratives of conversion in these books. She uses the typology for religious change, alternation, pendulum conversion and transformation to help trace the different levels of religious change found within the New Testament. By attending to the broader topic of conversion Gaventa provides helpful insights into the theme of repentance, especially by focusing on a diverse group of texts throughout the New Testament witness. The other key New Testament stream is more historically oriented, focusing on the message of repentance in the context of Second Temple Judaism. Exemplary of this stream is N. T. Wright who emphasizes the eschatological dimension of the call to repentance in the Gospels. Thus for Wright, "Repentance" in Jesus' context, then, would have carried the connotations of "what Israel must do if YHWH is to restore her fortunes at last". Jesus, in announcing the kingdom, was declaring that Israel's fortunes were being restored.' This perspective is a helpful corrective to more pietistic approaches to the theme of repentance, even if we will soon see that one does not have to choose between the redemptive-historical/ eschatological and the ethical.

These streams of past reflection on the theology of repentance in the Old and New Testaments have prompted and enriched much of my reflection in this present book. As we set out on this journey through the canon I am aware of many debates over each passage discussed as well as the various perspectives on the overall shape of the theme of

repentance in the Old and New Testaments. I cannot possibly interact with these many voices in detail but only in limited ways as we progress through the canon. What follows is one perspective on the biblical-theological theme of repentance and its implications for Christian theology and practice today. <>

[Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus](#) by L. Michael Morales [New Studies in Biblical Theology, IVP Academic, 9780830826384]

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Excerpt: The glory of God's house: the lampstand and the table of the Presence
 What is the Sabbath? ... The Sabbath is an ascent to the summit. (Abraham Joshua Heschel)

The instructions for making the lampstand of the tabernacle's holy place describe it as a stylized almond tree, hammered out of pure gold and having a central shaft with three branches on either side - all made 'according to the pattern' that was shown to Moses on the mountain of God (Exod. 25:31-40). YHWH gives Aaron, the high priest of Israel, the particular duty of tending the lampstand in the following manner:

And YHWH spoke to Moses saying: 'Speak to Aaron, and say to him, "When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.'" And Aaron did so; he set up the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand,

as YHWH commanded Moses. Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which YHWH had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand. (Num. 8:1-4)'

In his commentary on this passage Gordon J. Wenham notes that the text is insistent on one point in particular, namely on Aaron's duty to direct the menorah's seven lamps forward, ensuring they give light in front of the lampstand. Why such emphasis upon this curious duty of ensuring the lamps beam their light in front of the lampstand? He explains that the meaning of this action becomes apparent when the design of the holy place is taken into account:

If the light beamed forwards it would have fallen on the table of shewbread, where twelve loaves of bread, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, were heaped up (Lev. 24:5-9). Light and fire represent the life-giving presence and blessing of God (e.g. Exod. 13:21-22). Thus Aaron had to arrange the lamps so that their light always illuminated the shewbread. This arrangement portrayed visually God's intention that his people should live continually in his presence and enjoy the blessing mediated by his priests.

Wenham further remarks that this priestly duty symbolizes what the Levitical blessing in Numbers 6:23-27 affirms verbally:

YHWH bless you and keep you;
YHWH make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
YHWH lift up his face upon you
and give you peace.

So shall they put my name upon the sons of Israel, and I myself will bless them.

This blessing, which in the Hebrew utilizes a threefold use of the divine name plus twelve remaining words, is itself not free of symbolic import. Here two brief observations are in order. First, the divine blessing, in both Numbers 6 and 8, is portrayed as God's shining his light upon his people, which is further explained as putting 'his name' upon them (6:27) — a significant gloss to which we will return later on in this book. Secondly, the significance of the lampstand should be

understood together with that of the bread of the Presence, forming one symbolic picture, just as the light of God's countenance in the Levitical blessing of Numbers 6 is cast upon his people. Indeed, the forward-facing arrangement of the lamps is an integral part of the instructions for manufacturing the lampstand (Exod. 25:37), intimately woven into its meaning, not to mention that these instructions follow immediately upon the directions to 'set the bread of the Presence before me always' (v. 30). Aaron's instructions require, then, the reader's awareness of the bread's position before the lampstand in the holy place: according to Exodus 26:35 (cf. 40:24), the golden table with the twelve loaves of bread was placed on the north side of the holy place, and the golden, seven-branched lampstand was set directly across from it on the south side (the tabernacle itself facing eastward).

In summary, the light of the lampstand represents the life-giving Presence of God, his blessed glory, while the twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Aaron's role of regularly arranging the lamps so that they shone upon the loaves summarizes the role and function of the priesthood to mediate God's blessings to his people. One might say, in short, that these references in Numbers summarize the role of the cultus for Israel's relationship with God, as it relates to the goal of the covenant. Numbers 6:23-27 and 8:1-4 present the blessing of God upon the people of God, mediated by the priesthood of God.

The arrangement of the holy place of the tabernacle, therefore, portrayed the ideal of Israel basking in the light of the divine Presence in the house of God, abiding in the fires of his glory. As we will come to understand in the following chapters, this cultic symbolism depicted the Sabbath day in particular, as Israel entered the renewing Presence of YHWH through the Levitical way he had opened for them — a foretaste of life at the consummation of history. Indeed, this glimpse into the glory of the house of God may be appreciated more fully when we recall that the paneled walls of the holy place were overlaid with gold, a feature that, together with the golden lampstand and golden table, would have caused the light of the seven lamps to be reflected in a wondrous manner. And so this symbolic picture of Israel abiding in the

blessed Sabbath-day Presence of YHWH is one that portrays life in the house of God, a prospect foretasted in Israel's Sabbath day worship.

Life with God in the house of God — this was the original goal of the creation of the cosmos (which, as we will see, may be thought of as a house), and which then became the goal of redemption, the new creation. The prophets offer glimpses of this reality in their descriptions of God's final redemption of his people, when, after he has purged and made them utterly holy, he dwells with them on his holy mountain:

Then YHWH will create over the whole place of Zion's mountain, and over her assemblies,
 a cloud by day and smoke, and the shining of a flaming fire by night —
 for over all the glory there will be a canopy. (Isa. 4:5)
 'For I will be to her [Jerusalem]' —
 utterance of YHWH —
 'a wall of fire surrounding her,
 and I will be the glory in her midst.' (Zech. 2:5)

In the closing pages of John's Apocalypse we are given a final glimpse of holy Jerusalem 'having the glory of God', a fire with such radiance from YHWH God that there will be neither night nor need of the sun (Rev. 21:10-11, 23; 22:5) as God's people dwell in the light of his glory. This consummation of the messianic kingdom of God is presented to us by John as the historical fulfilment of the divine intention, as expressed in the covenant formula

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Look! The tabernacle of God is with humanity and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.' (Rev. 21:3)

As the innermost aim of the covenant, dwelling with God in the house of God, for fullness of life in abundant joy and fellowship, is the great promise held out before God's people, and the ardent desire expressed in Israel's liturgy:

I will dwell in the house of YHWH for ever.
 (Ps. 23:6)

Those whom YHWH brings into his house receive divine hospitality. Much like a magnanimous ANE host, God spreads a table for his guests, anointing their heads with oil and pouring wine liberally into their cups (Ps. 23:5). Indeed, YHWH's house is described as the source of all life and abundance:

They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house,
 And you give them drink from the river of your pleasures [`dn].
 For with you is the spring of life;
 In your light we see light. (Ps. 36:8-9)

Note the allusion to Eden's river of life, with the word 'pleasures' being merely the plural form of 'Eden'. Dwelling in the house of God is, more deeply, a hope inflamed with the longing to behold YHWH himself — for he is the fountain of life:

You will make known to me the path of life;
 There is fullness of joy in your Presence;
 And pleasures at your right hand for evermore. (Ps. 16:9—11)
 O YHWH, I love the habitation of your house
 And the place where your glory dwells.
 (Ps. 26:8)

The same yearning, to dwell with YHWH in a life suffused by the beatific vision, is expressed as the 'one thing' the psalmist asks for in Psalm 27:4:

One thing I have asked of YHWH — that will I seek:
 That I may dwell in the house of YHWH
 all the days of my life,
 To behold the beauty of YHWH,
 And to contemplate in his temple.

But just here the question comes how can this be possible? How is it that God's own abode may become the end of his people's journey? How can becoming a member of the household of God be a real hope for creatures made from dust?

Considering that only the high priest had been allowed entrance into the holy of holies within the tabernacle and later temple, how is it songs could be sung about dwelling in YHWH's house 'for ever' and 'all the days of my life'? In many ways, this is the fundamental question of Israel's cult — and indeed of life itself:

O YHWH, who may abide in your
tabernacle?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?
(Ps. 15:1)
Who may ascend the mountain of YHWH?
Or who may stand in his holy place? (Ps.
24:3)

This question of ascending God's mountain to his house was probably recited by pilgrims upon approaching the temple on Mount Zion during the annual pilgrimage festivals, and is referred to as a gate (or entrance) liturgy. As we will see in the chapters ahead, the gate liturgy runs as an undercurrent throughout the narratives of the Pentateuch, and is found at the heart of its central book, Leviticus. Such a point comes as no surprise when we consider that the Pentateuch itself is a thoroughly Levitical work, a priestly torah, whose traditional author, Moses, was a thoroughgoing Levite (Exod. 2:1-2; 6:14-27). Its dominating concern, as well as that of the rest of the Bible, is the way in which humanity may come to dwell in the house of God. Under the Mosaic covenant, that way opened by YHWH was through the tabernacle and later temple, its priesthood and rituals — that is, through the Levitical cult. The advent of Christ would open a new and living way into the house of God; indeed, that was the goal of his taking our humanity upon himself, of his suffering, of his resurrection and ascension.

This biblical theology of Leviticus, then, is a book about the theme of dwelling with God in the house of God, and how that reality is finally made possible. Israel's deepest hope, to dwell in YHWH's house upon his holy mountain, was not merely a liturgical question but a historical quest. A gravely confounding quest, to be sure, for who may 'dwell with the devouring fire?' (Isa. 33:14). And yet Israel's destiny, nevertheless, is to become just such a wonder, akin to the burning bush, to be 'burning with fire, but not consumed', alight with the glory of the Presence of God (Exod. 3:2-3). In Exodus 15, having just seen the deliverance of YHWH through the sea, Moses leads Israel in song, perhaps the most ancient in Scripture. The theological heart and structural centre of the song, verse 11, is the adoration of God:

How lovely is your dwelling, O YHWH of hosts! My soul longs, even faints, for the courts of YHWH, My heart and flesh cry out with joy to the living God! ... How happy are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! (Ps. 84:1-4)

The primary theme and theology of Leviticus (and of the Pentateuch as a whole) is YHWH's opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine Presence. This theme will be found to encompass the narrative storyline of the Pentateuch, as well as the prominent role of the tabernacle cultus within it. Indeed, the theme of dwelling in the divine Presence, like a kernel sprouting up from the soil of the Pentateuch's heart, wends its way through biblical history and branches out literarily into various cluster-bearing vines, vines never severed from their root.

Increasingly, scholars have come to appreciate the significance of literary structure for determining the meaning of a work: that the form conveys meaning. In this chapter, therefore, we will consider the structure of the Pentateuch in its final form, examining how that structure contributes to the stated theological theme of Leviticus.

The structure of the Pentateuch

We will now explore the Pentateuch's overarching structure. I will argue that by examining the highest macrostructural level of the Pentateuch one is able to sound out the deepest level — the bedrock — of its meaning. In doing so we will find that the final shape of the Pentateuch sets up the priestly cultus quite literally as a light upon a hill.

The centre of the Pentateuch: Leviticus

Perhaps the most obvious structural feature of the Pentateuch is that it is a 'Pentateuch', a 'five-volume' or 'five-scrolled' book. Many scholars have noted that this five-book structure, with Leviticus at the And he showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb; through the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there will be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will

be in it, and his servants will worship him. (Rev. 22:1-3)

The throne of God had been in the temple's holy of holies, the counterpart to the mountain of God's summit. Both images coalesce here as the river flows from the summit of the new Zion, the throne of God. Access to the tree of life, whose leaves will heal the nations, portrays the reversal not only of the expulsion out of Eden, but also, again, of its reassertion, the scattering of the nations from the tower of Babylon — the drama of Genesis 12 to Revelation 22 comprises the long journey of resolution to the primeval inclusion of exile (Gen. 1 —11).

As the essence of that which the tabernacle and later temples were built to represent, recapture and re-enter, Eden was the archetype of the temple. Only as such is paradise called a temple — as its reality. And only as such is it said that the new Jerusalem includes no temple: 'But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light' (Rev. 21:22-23). In the new earth there is no temple in the sense that God through Jesus is humanity's temple; there is no temple in the sense that humanity is God's dwelling place; and there is no temple also because the cesmes, cleansed and consecrated, is finally the house of God, the context and stage for humanity's endless engagement with God. The end is life with God in Eden.

Leviticus, within the narrative context of the Pentateuch, unfolds how YHWH had opened a (Levitical) way for humanity to dwell in his Presence. That theme, I have endeavoured to demonstrate, is the drama and plot of the Bible, with the transition into the new covenant being most fully comprehended through the fundamentally new way of access opened through the mediation and priesthood of Jesus. Even the authority of his Davidic kingship is commissioned, in pouring out the Spirit and subduing his enemies, for the sake of his high priestly mediation, to usher God's people into the heavenly Presence of the Father — ultimately,

within the new Jerusalem of the eschaton. The prologue to this work began with the lampstand beaming its light upon the twelve loaves of bread, within the holy place of God's wilderness tabernacle. This set up, we saw, symbolized the blessing of God upon the people of God, mediated by the priest of God — within the house of God. In a similar manner, the Aaronic blessing

shone the light of God's face upon Israel, placing his name upon them. More particularly, given the Sabbath by Sabbath renewal of the bread of the Presence, the radiance within the holy place was a ritual theophany, presenting the Sabbath — as in eschatological — end for Israel: life with God in the house of God. John's Revelation yields the glimpse ahead: humanity dwelling within the fires of the glory of God, in the new Jerusalem whose lamp is the face of the Lamb. 'They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. No night will be there. They need no lamp or light of the sun, for the Lord God shines for them. And they will reign for ever and ever' (Rev. 22:4-5). This passage is the Sabbath. In the words 'They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads,' the light of his countenance shining upon them and his name placed upon them, we glimpse the culmination of the Aaronic benediction, the life of blessing depicted by the twelve loaves renewed in the Sabbath light of the menorah — in the house of God. What sort of communion and joy will they experience who see his face, who dwell in the blessed light of his countenance, whose foreheads bear his own sacred name? The fellowship with the Godhead we taste in the present age, through our union with Christ, must only be increased to the fullest measure and degree possible in the eschaton, when all flesh itself will be spiritual and, as it were, spiritized — when we will know beyond our present understanding the joys of divine hospitality, know that by the Spirit we dwell in the Son and through the Son in the Father, and that by the Spirit the Father and Son indeed dwell within us and sup with us. Though categories for such intimacy with God who is Spirit are bound to falter and fail, Congar makes a noble attempt:

Between God and ourselves there is, we may venture to say, reciprocal hospitality and indwelling, because there is between

us both communication and communion (keinōnia).... If there is one obvious direction in the great story of God's Presence to his creatures as it has been made known to us by Revelation, if this story has one overall movement, it is surely this — it begins by momentary contacts and visits, then passes through the stage of external mediations that draw God ever nearer to mankind, and finally reaches the state of perfectly stable and intimate communion

Whether it be through the temple, the sacrifice or the priest. hood, God's plan moves towards a communion of such intimacy that duality between man and God, and therefore their external separation from one another, are both overcome in so far as this is possible without a meaningless confusion of beings or pantheism.

Together united with the Godhead, there also are all the saints enjoying friendship with one another, bonded by the Spirit of love, seeing the image and likeness of God in each other's faces, radiant with the fires of his everlasting glory — the holy temple of God, the bride of Christ.

That is life in the new Zion, the final mountain of God. That is what it means to bask in the Sabbath-day light of God's countenance. That is what it means to dwell in the divine Presence.

Who, then, shall ascend the mountain of YHWH? By the loving-kindness of the Father, the redemption of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a sure answer has been found: even the church of Jesus Christ.

Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One, and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won. O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee. (Samuel J. Stone [1839-1900], 'The Church's One Foundation') <>

[A Saint of Our Own: How the Quest for a Holy Hero Helped Catholics Become American](#) by Kathleen Sprows Cummings [University of North Carolina Press, 9781469649474]

What drove U.S. Catholics in their arduous quest, full of twists and turns over more than a century, to win an American saint? The absence of American

names in the canon of the saints had left many of the faithful feeling spiritually unmoored. But while canonization may be fundamentally about holiness, it is never only about holiness, reveals Kathleen Sprows Cummings in this panoramic, passionate chronicle of American sanctity. Catholics had another reason for petitioning the Vatican to acknowledge an American holy hero.

A home-grown saint would serve as a mediator between heaven and earth, yes, but also between Catholicism and American culture. Throughout much of U.S. history, the making of a saint was also about the ways in which the members of a minority religious group defined, defended, and celebrated their identities as Americans. Their fascinatingly diverse causes for canonization—from Kateri Tekakwitha and Elizabeth Ann Seton to many others that are failed, forgotten, or still under way—represented evolving national values as Catholics made themselves at home. Cummings's vision of American sanctity shows just how much Catholics had at stake in cultivating devotion to men and women perched at the nexus of holiness and American history—until they finally felt little need to prove that they belonged.

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Excerpt: American Saints Are Rare Birds
Everyone loves a hero," wrote the American poet Phyllis McGinley in 1954, "and the saints are the best heroes of all." Saints, like most heroes, have extraordinary abilities. Summoned by the faithful, they can inspire re-pentance in the most recalcitrant sinners, heal the most acute suffering, and reverse

the most ravaging disease. These miracles, Catholics believe, are made possible only by saints' eternal union with God. The faithful recall this during the most sacred part of their liturgy, the consecration of the Eucharist, when they join their prayers with those of the saints "on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely for unflinching help." Yet the appeal of saints in the Catholic imagination derives not only from their closeness to God but also from their proximity to believers. As envoys from heaven to earth, saints make the divine manifest in the everyday lives of the faithful. Through what McGinley called "the miracles they made of their own lives," these holy men and women embody God's grace, as it flows through humans in particular times and places?

Catholics have devised an elaborate method for acknowledging their holy heroes, a series of intricate steps collectively known as the canonization process. Although this lengthy and tedious process often frustrates the promoters of a prospective saint, successes at its various stages also prompt exuberant celebrations, in which devotees marvel anew at the saints' capacity to bridge the human and the divine. "Heaven touched earth!" exclaimed a participant in a ritual marking one such milestone.¹ Canonizations and their precursors, beatifications, have special meaning for those who feel particular affinity with the new saint by virtue of a shared profession, state of life, or geographical location. Through a separate canonical process, the Holy See at times officially designates canonized saints as "patrons" of a distinctive occupation, avocation, or place.

In terms of the latter category, Phyllis McGinley, like many other U.S. Catholics before her, felt decidedly overlooked. Aggrieved by what she saw as Rome's "odd myopia" regarding the United States, McGinley chided the Vatican for failing to take notice of the "very American brand of holiness." The absence of American names in the canon of the saints left many U.S. Catholics feeling not only spiritually unmoored but also periodically subject to the condescension of their transatlantic counterparts. In 1953, for instance, Englishman Donald Attwater published *Saints Westward*, ostensibly to encourage his "American friends" to promote native saints. Whereas Catholics "in

Europe and the nearer parts of Asia" encountered saints "every day in the places where they lived," Attwater sympathized, U.S. Catholics had to content themselves with cities and towns named for holy heroes who had lived an ocean away. "Saint Louis the saint had nothing to do with St. Louis the city," he pointed out. "To be able to look upon actual buildings or scenes that the saint actually saw makes them wonderfully real and 'living.' The time will come when Americans will have this joy and privilege."

A Saint of Our Own is about U.S. Catholics' quest for that joy and privilege. It traces saint-seeking in the United States from the 1880s, the decade in which U.S. Catholics nominated their first candidates for canonization, to 2015, the year Pope Francis named the twelfth American saint in the first such ceremony held on U.S. soil.¹ As the book will show, U.S. Catholics' search for a saint of their own did indeed spring from a desire to persuade the Vatican to recognize their country's holy heroes. But U.S. Catholic believers had another reason for touting homegrown holiness. To them, saints served as mediators not only between heaven and earth but also between the faith they professed and the American culture in which they lived. Canonization may be fundamentally about holiness, but it is never only about holiness. In the United States, it has often been about the ways in which Catholics defined, defended, and celebrated their identities as Americans. Saint-seekers nominated candidates for canonization based not only on the virtues they were said to have practiced but also on the national values they were understood to have epitomized. If the Catholic criteria held constant, American ideals fluctuated dramatically between the 1880s and 2015—a factor that helps to explain both why the search for a U.S. patron saint is so revealing and why it ended in a way that would have surprised those who had launched it in the first place.

A Saint of Our Own focuses on multiple U.S. causes for canonization, including all the successful ones, as well as a few that are failed, forgotten, or still in process. The most illuminating causes receive more attention, and foremost among these is the one attached to Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton. Born in 1774 into an Episcopal family in New York, Seton

converted to Catholicism as a widowed mother of five and later founded the Sisters of Charity, the first Catholic women's religious community established in the United States without formal ties to a European congregation. Now a canonized saint, Seton is arguably the best known among the tiny subset of Americans who have received the church's highest honor. Catholic schools and parishes throughout the country are named after Seton—far more institutions are dedicated to her, in fact, than to any of the other eleven U.S. canonized saints. Seton's prominence on the contemporary American landscape notwithstanding, her path to canonization was beset with so many complications that at times its success had seemed unlikely. At one critical juncture in the mid-twentieth century, Seton's cause attracted the support of New York's Cardinal Francis Spellman. When making a case for Seton's worthiness as a candidate for canonization, Spellman praised her above all for being "wholly American." Sewn, he observed, had been a "charter American citizen" who had "breathed American air," "battled against odds in the trials of life with American stamina and cheerfulness," and "worked and succeeded with American efficiency." Her life, therefore, served as "a glorious tribute, by God's grace, to the health, zeal, and spirituality" of Catholicism in the United States.

Seton and other U.S. saints were canonized not simply because they were holy people. They were canonized because a dedicated group in and subsequently beyond their inner circles wanted them to be remembered as holy people—and were willing to expend a considerable amount of time, effort, and resources to ensure that they would be. The primary and professed motive for these efforts may have been spiritual, rooted in a desire to inspire imitation and veneration at home and to deepen their connection to Rome and to God. As Spellman's paean to Seton suggests, however, U.S. Catholics also relied on saints to advertise a particular "American brand" of holiness to Vatican leaders and to their fellow citizens.

The story of Seton's labyrinthine journey to canonization is one of several threaded throughout *A Saint of Our Own*. The same twists and turns that

exasperated generations of Seton's supporters provide a particularly revealing example of how the vagaries of personality, the complexities of historical memory, and the intricacies of the canonization process can combine to make it difficult for even the holiest of people to enter the ranks of the canonized saints. But Seton's saintly story can be fully understood only in tandem with those of the other potential patrons with whom she vied for paradigmatic American status, including ones who temporarily eclipsed her as well as those she ultimately overshadowed.

Because holy men and women gain popular support in specific contexts, studies of canonization can reveal as much about the priorities and interests of the people promoting the candidates as they do about the lives of the prospective saints themselves. Scholars of medieval and early modern Europe have long harnessed saints' interpretive potential, demonstrating that new models of holiness emerged in response to shifting papal prerogatives and developments in the larger culture.¹ By contrast, scholars of the Americas have only recently begun, in historian Peter Burke's words, to analyze saints as "cultural indicators, a sort of historical litmus paper sensitive to connections between religion and society." *A Saint of Our Own* is the first study of multiple causes for canonization in a U.S. context.² By examining the many historical figures U.S. Catholics have offered as powerful expressions of Catholic virtue and American ideals, this book brings into focus U.S. Catholics' understanding of themselves both as members of the church and as citizens of the nation—and reveals how those identities converged, diverged, and changed over time.

Canonization, by definition, institutionalizes a private devotion. *A Saint of Our Own* thus considers both popular piety and structures of power, subjects not often well integrated in scholarship on American religion. This has been especially true since the 1960s, when, in what Thomas A. Tweed has characterized as the field's "quotidian turn," scholars increasingly adopted as subjects ordinary people engaging in everyday religious practices. Influenced by social history and, in the case of Catholics, the Second Vatican Council, these historians offered a strikingly different

perspective on the American religious past from that provided by their predecessors, who, in focusing on the men (and very few women) who exercised power within the church's institutional structures, had overlooked "the people in the pews" almost entirely. In providing this much-needed revision, however, many scholars of popular or lived religion overcorrected and ignored church structures in a way that also distorts the experience of the U.S. Catholic faithful, who engaged with those structures repeatedly and in a variety of ways. The search for an American saint offers a fascinating case in point. All causes for canonization begin when a group of ordinary people lift up the holy heroes who populate their everyday lives; successful ones end when the holiness of the candidate is validated, first by local church authorities and finally by the Vatican. Canonization accordingly offers one model for developing creative approaches that integrate ecclesiastical and lived religious history and merge the perspectives of institutional elites and ordinary people.

Because canonization entails multiple back-and-forth exchanges between the Holy See and the country from which causes are proposed, it also lends itself extraordinarily well to a transnational approach. In particular, this study of canonization joins an emerging body of scholarship that encourages historians to "return to Rome" by acknowledging, as the first historians of the U.S. church did reflexively, the centrality of the Holy See to the American Catholic story. While U.S. Catholics' allegiance to the pope did not, as many of their fellow citizens alleged, compromise their ability to become full-fledged Americans, their ties to Rome did distinguish them from non-Catholic Americans in important ways. Here again, acknowledging this in scholarship runs counter to an approach adopted since the 1960s and 1970s by church historians who were not only disinclined to feature institutional structures but also, in contrast to scholars of earlier generations, more likely to limit their subjects to what transpired within U.S. boundaries! As a matter of course, the story of canonization in America toggles between the United States and the Holy See; moreover, because most U.S. causes were conducted on behalf of

candidates who belonged to religious congregations based in Italy or France, a third national entity was often involved. Examining U.S. Catholics' search for a saint of their own helps us interpret their history in local, national, and transnational registers.

Canonization is much more complex than any shorthand description can suggest, and it would be helpful to summarize its broader meaning and history before continuing with our American story. In the eyes of Catholic believers, canonization reflects a truth about an individual's afterlife in its literal sense. In raising a candidate to the "honors of the altar," the church affirms that the saint, having practiced certain virtues to a heroic degree, passed immediately upon death into the company of God and all the saints, where he or she is an advocate for and inspiration to the faithful on earth. To understand why the church elevates certain holy people and not others to the ranks of the canonized, as Peter Burke points out, we must look at both the periphery or local level, where devotion to the individual developed, and the center, where sainthood was made official."

In the early church, there had been no distinction between periphery and center on the question of who was a saint; men and women were recognized as such either by tradition or popular acclamation. Between the tenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the Holy See increasingly reserved to itself the right of canonization, and eventually beatification. In 1588, Pope Sixtus V created the Sacred Congregation of Rites (from which emerged the present-day Congregation for the Causes of Saints) to oversee regulations on divine worship and the canonization of saints, and by 1634 Pope Urban VIII established the formal procedures that compose the "modern" canonization process. The centralization of saint-making in Rome reflected broader Catholic reforms in the post-Reformation period and brought into sharp relief a key difference in dogma between Protestants and Roman Catholics. While Protestants insisted that, because the faithful have unmediated access to God, there was no need for saints, Catholics believed that these holy heroes could facilitate a relationship with the divine through channels unavailable to humans alone. As emissaries

between heaven and earth, Catholics held, saints helped devotees grow closer to God both by interceding on their behalf and by providing models of holiness that the faithful could emulate.

Whereas canonization changes nothing about the people so honored, merely certifying their heavenly status, it does transform the relationship between the faithful and the saint. While Catholics may privately invoke the intercession of any person they believe to be in God's eternal presence, acts of public veneration—novenas, celebrations of feast days, recitation of prayers, or building of shrines—are reserved for the canonized or, in a limited capacity, to those who have reached the penultimate stage of the process, beatification. Indeed, part of the motivation for formalizing the saint-making process was a desire to curb the public honoring of those whose sanctity—or in some cases, whose very existence—church authorities deemed questionable. A common geography was the decisive factor in U.S. Catholics' attraction to Seton and other prospective saints whose causes were introduced from the United States. Securing a national patron, in fact, was U.S. Catholics' intention in nominating their first candidates for canonization.

Yet a contradiction implicit in the canonization process made finding a U.S. patron more difficult than the early saint-seekers imagined. Viewed from the perspective of the center, the criteria for holiness are presumed to exist apart from time and place. "No popular acclaim, no national rivalry can make Saints," insisted one U.S. authority in 1925. "The process is slow, deliberate, and strictly judicial." Refracted through the lens of the periphery, however, sanctity appears much more fluid and historically contingent. Whether candidates would ultimately be canonized depended not just on how well their sanctity passed muster at the center but on how easily their lives could be framed to support U.S. Catholics' vision of themselves as Americans—a vision that would change, as we will see, between the late nineteenth century and the present. *A Saint of Our Own* thus also highlights a perennial dissonance in the experience of U.S. Catholics, who belong to a church that moves slowly—in this case through an often painstakingly sluggish process—but live in a culture that changes easily and rapidly. Even in the

exceptional cases where a cause for canonization moved quickly in Rome, the interval between its beginning and its successful conclusion could seem an eternity when measured by American standards. For most of their nation's history, U.S. Catholics' attachment to a newly canonized saint rarely matched the enthusiasm shown by the generation that had originally proposed the candidate. This dynamic helps to explain why the United States still does not have a national patron saint.

The two U.S. saints who came closest to being designated for this honor were Seton and Frances Cabrini, an Italian-born missionary who arrived in New York in 1889 and died in Chicago in 1917. Seton and Cabrini both have shrines in Manhattan, a coincidence that highlights the tendency of U.S. saint-seekers to foreground candidates with ties to the northeastern part of the country. (Of the twelve canonized U.S. saints, Seton, Cabrini, and four others had roots in New York, while an additional two had come from Philadelphia.) Seton and Cabrini shared similar saintly stories, but one critical difference between them is particularly instructive. From start to finish, Cabrini's cause for canonization spanned less than twenty years, while Seton's took almost a century to complete. The differential mostly derived from the fact that Cabrini's advocates had close ties to the Vatican while Seton's did not. Also contributing to the gap, however, was an unexamined provision in church law that lends itself to an exploration of how women in patriarchal religious traditions seek to become actors in history.

It is widely acknowledged that church leaders have long used models of female sanctity to control and contain women—and that Catholic women have, conversely, cited the example of female saints as justifications for expanding gender roles. While *A Saint of Our Own* considers the ways in which expectations about female behavior shaped models of holiness, its more innovative approach to the study of gender and sanctity lies in its examination of the role of women as petitioners, the group of people who initiate and sponsor causes for canonization. Until 1983, canon law stipulated that women could petition the Holy See only through male proxies. In charting U.S. Catholic women's struggle to maneuver around this

requirement and uncovering the surprises that followed success, *A Saint of Our Own* provides a fascinating glimpse into both the history of women in the Catholic Church and the complicated relationship between gender and power in the church in the early twenty-first century.

The above reference to canon law invites an important reminder about the daunting complexities of the modern canonization process. Peter Gumpel, SJ, an erudite Jesuit who worked at the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints for over four decades, captured them well: "I am not considered to be stupid," Gumpel observed, "and it took me six or seven years before I could begin to understand the whole business." Gumpel enters our story in our final chapter, but for now, his words are intended to remind readers that this book will not provide a detailed analysis of the convoluted procedures through which the church confirms the citizens of heaven. While *A Saint of Our Own* describes elements of the process as it tracks U.S. candidates through its major steps, it primarily considers saints' "afterlives" in a figurative sense, exploring how citizenship status in the United States affected both their journeys to the honors of the altar and their place in American historical memory.

This panoramic view of American sanctity broadens the scope of canonization to encompass not only "official" narratives but also the multivalent turning points along any saintly trajectory. An instructive case in point is the "beginning" of Seton's cause. Records of Seton's congregation, as well as documentation submitted to the Holy See, pinpoint 22 August 1882 as its definitive start date. On that day Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Gibbons of Baltimore visited Seton's community at its headquarters in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and, while saying Mass at Seton's tomb, was inspired to nominate her as a saint. After Mass the archbishop shared his idea with the sisters and asked them to consider opening Seton's cause for canonization, allowing that doing so might countermand their natural instincts. "I know," he told them, "that the Sisters of Charity do not love nor seek to be known" but "love instead the silences, the shade, the obscurity." Yet, he went on, "I wondered whether there would not be a day in which the Church

would bring [Seton] to the Altar, and whether it might indeed be our task to initiate the necessary steps toward her canonization." While volunteering to "gladly take the initiative, if I had any encouragement," he acknowledged that "the first movement must naturally begin here. Here Gibbons was referring to two customary practices in opening causes for canonization: that they be launched from the diocese in which the candidate had died, and that nominations were to come from the laity rather than the clerical hierarchy. Because Catholic sisters are not ordained and thus are members of the laity, Gibbons urged them to overcome their natural reticence and to contemplate opening Seton's cause, assuring them that its success would ultimately produce "the best results" for the women who carried on Seton's legacy. Multiple sources attest that the sisters agreed to follow his suggestion.

Upon closer examination, however, Gibbons's graveside vision appears less than inspired and decisive catalyst than the moment when national interests intersected with a long-cherished desire of Seton's spiritual daughters. It may well have been true that the sisters generally avoided publicity, but it most assuredly was not the case that they had never before considered proposing their founder for canonization. On the contrary, evidence suggests that Seton's closest companions had intended to pursue her cause for canonization long before 1882—and had in fact planned to do so from the very moment of her death in 1821. Seton's spiritual director, Simon Bruté, a French missionary priest who became the first bishop of Vincennes, Indiana, in 1834, enjoined the mourning sisters to be attentive at her deathbed: "Gather the fragments, lest they be lost." This was recognized as a sign that Bruté and others anticipated opening Seton's cause for canonization, as the founder's body, and anything it had ever touched, could serve as relics that her devotees could use to venerate and to invoke her intercession.

An episode at Seton's graveside a quarter century after her death further signaled that her congregation had intended to initiate her canonization process well in advance of Gibbons's prompt. On 30 June 1846, when Seton's body was exhumed in preparation for a transfer to a new

tomb, the sisters present prayed fervently to find an intact corpse. Sister Lucina Simms later remembered their "disappointment" and "emotion" at the scene: "For one moment we saw the blackened skull, eyeless sockets in the black skull—just for one moment, and then all sank to dust at the bottom of the coffin. Mother Xavier had expected to find the remains intact." Because incorruptibility is but one indicator of sanctity rather than an essential precondition of it, the discovery hardly spelled the end of Seton's chances for canonization. Still, one sister was so disheartened by their discovery that she "begged with irresistible earnestness" to be allowed a bone fragment for comfort. She received one of the small bones of the toes.

Given Seton's credentials as the founder of a religious congregation, especially one that represented a historic American first, it was not surprising that she emerged as a candidate for canonization. The canon of the saints is dense with founders and firsts. Yet as we will see, even as the sister comforted herself with Seton's toe bone, a chain of events was unfolding that would transform what is usually an advantage in canonization—membership in a religious congregation—into a dangerous encumbrance and jeopardize Seton's chances to a far greater extent than would her bodily decomposition. A rupture within her congregation would later generate competing narratives about Seton's founding vision and cast a long shadow over her life and legacy. The extent of this problem, though, was not yet apparent in 1882, when Gibbons spoke to Seton's Emmitsburg congregation—or, more precisely, to what was by then one of six separate religious communities that looked to Seton as a founder.

Just as those earlier events indicate that the sisters' annals were not entirely accurate in attributing the idea of canonizing Seton solely to the archbishop, the momentum building for a number of other U.S. causes also belied the apparent spontaneity of Gibbons's inspiration. His words to Seton's spiritual daughters that August afternoon made clear that they would not be the only ones to benefit should her cause succeed. Canonizing Seton, Gibbons maintained, would validate the entire U.S. church in adding one of their number to the roster of the

saints for the very first time. "American saints," he reminded them, "are rare birds," and thus "it would be great to see the name of Mother Seton on a list, alas, too short!"

Gibbons's lament was only one sign of a saintly inferiority complex that had developed in the U.S. Catholic Church. In the decades to come, Gibbons would often remind U.S. Catholics that holy men and women had lived not only across the ocean but among them on this side of the water. In 1891, for example, he admonished the citizens of Vincennes, Indiana, that they "need not go on pilgrimages to visit the tombs of saints. There is one reposing here in your midst, namely, the saintly founder of this diocese, the Right Reverend Simon Bruté."

Gibbons's effort to promote America's holy heroes was part of U.S. Catholics' larger attempt to secure, in the words of John Gilmary Shea, the era's leading American Catholic intellectual, patron saints who "lived and labored and sanctified themselves in our land, among circumstances familiar."

The search for homegrown holiness—nurtured in the United States, validated by the Vatican—knit together a number of impulses that shaped the church in the late nineteenth century. It reflected in part U.S. Catholics' desire to strengthen the bonds of attachment between themselves and the Holy See. Even as the church in Italy lost its sovereign power in the wake of Italian unification—thereby consigning the pope to "prisoner" status behind the walls of the tiny Vatican state, the remnant of the church's once-vast territory—it had increased its spiritual hold over Catholics in Europe and across the Atlantic. In the late nineteenth century, as one churchman put it, U.S. Catholics "turned Romeward, as naturally as the needle seeks the North."

Historian James O'Toole has described a number of phenomena that signaled this turn toward Rome. First, U.S. Catholics contributed more and more to Peter's Pence, a global collection taken up to support the pope's specific initiatives. Second, they looked approvingly at the rising number of U.S. priests awarded the title "Monsignor," an honorary title conferred by the pope for service to the church. Finally, U.S. Catholics increasingly recited special prayers intended to help the pontiff in his political distress 29 Nominating prospective patron

saints offered U.S. Catholics another opportunity to bind themselves spiritually to the Holy See.

U.S. Catholics launched their quest for a saint in the midst of a structural as well as a spiritual transformation in the American church. When Gibbons had visited Emmitsburg, the United States was still classified as a "mission territory" by the Vatican and operated under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith or, as it was often called, Propaganda Fide. Throughout the 1880s and beyond, correspondence between U.S. bishops and Propaganda Fide increased in frequency and treated more and more complex matters, prompting the Vatican to recognize the growing vigor and import of the American church and to increase its awareness of the singular challenges the church faced in a religiously pluralistic society. U.S. Catholics, meanwhile, were beginning to conceive of themselves as an organized, self-sustaining church on par with Catholicism in European countries rather than as a precarious mission territory. Pursuing a saint of their own helped reinforce

this identity. Practically, the quest proved that the church had the necessary financial and institutional wherewithal to sponsor a cause; symbolically, the effort implied that uniquely American expressions of holiness were tantamount to those manifest in European countries where nationalism and sanctity had long been intertwined. Even as U.S. Catholics proposed their first potential saints, for instance, their counterparts in France were looking to fifteenth-century Joan of Arc as both a national hero and a holy one. Using Joan's story to buttress their cause, French nationalists helped her advance to beatification in 1909. During World War I, Joan became even more potent as a French national symbol, and she was canonized in its aftermath.

The relationship between saint-seeking and nation-building was less straightforward in the United States, where Catholicism had long been a controversial minority religion, than it was in France or other Catholic nations of Europe. Anti-Catholicism's most violent eruptions in the United States, such as the convent burning in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and the 1844 "Bible riots" in Philadelphia, had taken place in the antebellum

period. Although regional loyalties were more pronounced than religious divides in the Civil War era, prejudice against Catholics resurfaced as a national force in the late nineteenth century, in part as a response to Catholics' growing influence and power in multiple realms. Members of the American Protective Association, for example, an anti-Catholic organization founded in 1887, vowed to never vote for a Catholic, go on strike with a Catholic, or hire a Catholic if a Protestant was available. In the minds of many Protestants, an alarming increase in migration from southern and eastern Europe magnified the Catholic menace. These newcomers were suspect not only because of their supposed allegiance to Rome but also because of their concentration in urban areas and industrial occupations. A number of U.S. Catholics looked to canonization as a remedy for this tense situation, believing that securing a national patron would help diminish anti-Catholicism, however dubious the proposition that one of the most provocative and exotic markers of Catholic difference could function as an agent of Catholic assimilation might seem. Cementing a connection to the Holy See, presenting the American church as well beyond its infancy, and affirming U.S. Catholicism's place in the nation: a great deal rested on a prospective patron, and for almost fifty years it would be more than Elizabeth Ann Seton's afterlife could sustain. The first U.S. saintseekers, in fact, did not look primarily to Seton to fulfill their high expectations. As well known as Seton's name was throughout the United States, her life story could not be easily crafted into the particular messages U.S. Catholics of that era wanted to send to the Holy See and to their fellow citizens. Indeed, two years after his visit to Emmitsburg, Archbishop Gibbons, acting on behalf of all U.S. bishops, would take an important step in launching the first cause for canonization from the United States but for a different candidate:

Tekakwitha, an indigenous convert to Catholicism born in 1656 in what became Auriesville, New York. Together with the Jesuit missionaries with whom her story was entwined, the "Lily of the Mohawks" would outshine Seton both as a holy exemplar and as an American icon, albeit for a limited time. This was part of the reason

why the Holy See did not even officially introduce Seton's cause for canonization until 1940, almost sixty years after Gibbons's visit to Emmitsburg. At that point, Rome would permanently register Seton as the "second flower" of American sanctity recognizing that she had first blossomed in the holy shadow of a "Lily.

New American moments generated new models of holiness. *A Saint of Our Own* reveals the "abundant" presence of holy heroes in U.S. Catholics' American story: during a landmark gathering of U.S. bishops in 1884, an exuberant public celebration in Chicago in 1926, a papal conclave in 1939, the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, and a charismatic pope's visit to Philadelphia in 1979. Saints were also present during another momentous occasion for Catholics and their fellow citizens in September 2015—the event that provides a capstone to the book. Welcoming Pope Francis to the White House, President Barack Obama gave the pontiff a gift intended to evoke a meaningful connection between the Catholic Church and the United States. The exchange marked a significant departure within the long sweep of the nation's history. For most of that history, the prospect of a pope visiting the White House would have been cause for alarm rather than celebration, and the notion that a U.S. president would extend to a pope the courtesies reserved for a head of state would have been considered anathema. The gift itself, however, signaled continuity, in that it relied on a canonized saint to express Catholicism's resonance in American culture. The carefully chosen artifact—a key that unlocked Elizabeth Ann Seton's home in Emmitsburg—affirmed Seton's status as a woman perched at the nexus of holiness and American history.

A Saint of Our Own takes readers inside the stories of Seton and other U.S. Catholic historical figures who have occupied this privileged position, including some who did so only fleetingly. The afterlives of these saints are interspersed with those of other candidates who, despite their supporters' aspirations, never quite attained iconic American status. The book ends with a brief examination of a few pending saints who might qualify as quintessential Americans, were their sponsors

inclined to advance such an argument. That they are not so inclined points to a decisive shift in the U.S. Catholic story. Saint-seekers would spend almost a century proposing candidates whom they envisioned as embodiments of their uniquely American brand of holiness. The components of that American brand, however, changed far more rapidly than causes for canonization proceeded. Consequently it was not until 1975 that U.S. Catholics welcomed a saint who plausibly matched the moment in which they found themselves—and by then, a desire to prove and explain Catholics' Americanness had lost most of its force for U.S. saint-seekers. Once polarization within the church supplanted marginalization in America as the defining ethos of U.S. Catholicism, favorite saints would convey far less than they once did about U.S. Catholics' understandings of American identity. Instead, since the 1970s, candidates for canonization have increasingly emerged from debates over what it means to be Catholic and signify where their supporters position themselves on some of the most divisive issues in church and American society.

This situation highlights the deep irony at the core of this book's main argument. U.S. Catholics had originally sought a saint of their own in the hope that finding one would prove that they belonged in the United States. Ultimately, it would be the search itself, rather than its outcome, that proclaimed Catholics' Americanness most loudly. In each new moment, U.S. Catholics spoke about holy heroes in language that reflected not simply their sacred beliefs but the same secular developments—nation-building, urbanization, industrialization, depression, war, global politics, or social and cultural change—that were shaping the lives of all Americans. Officially, U.S. Catholics had to make the case that prospective saints had practiced the theological and cardinal virtues: faith, hope, charity, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice. Unofficially, it mattered a great deal to them that these men and women could also be said to have embraced American virtues and participated in American projects. Expressed as a Catholic initiative, the search for a wholly American saint unfolded as a history of the United States in the long twentieth century.

What follows is a complicated yet captivating tale that, while requiring occasional forays into esoteric regulations, demonstrates saints' potential to exacerbate and reconcile tensions between Catholics and Protestants and between Rome and America. *A Saint of Our Own* offers insight into the ways causes for canonization expose divisions within U.S. Catholicism, including those between men and women, between the clergy and the laity, and among religious congregations, ideological camps, racial and ethnic groups, and regional constituencies. This story takes us on multiple Atlantic crossings, as we shadow American holy heroes and interpret the lives of the Catholics who loved, invoked, and promoted them. <>

[The Mind of God and the Works of Nature: Laws and Powers in Naturalism, Platonism, and Classical Theism](#) by James Orr [Studies in Philosophical Theology, Peeters, 9789042937628]

Historians of science have long considered the very idea of a law-governed universe to be the relic of a bygone intellectual culture that took it largely for granted that a divine lawmaker existed. Similarly, many philosophers of science today insist that the notion of a law of nature is fraught with implausibly theological assumptions, preferring instead to treat them as theoretical axioms in an optimal description of nature's regularities, or else as robust patterns of causal connections or causal powers whose status can be reconciled to the stringent demands of metaphysical naturalism. Yet the metaphor of lawhood has proven more difficult to dislodge than the theistic commitments it once presupposed, not least because it preserves the widespread intuition that the task of scientific inquiry is not to stipulate the difference between a lawful and an accidental regularity in nature, but to discover it. Taking its cue from the repeated failure to find naturalistic alternatives to divine lawmaking, this book undertakes a retrieval and reappraisal of a high-scholastic philosophy of nature that grounds lawlike regularities in the conceptual and causal powers of God and, having done so, concludes that the metaphysical framework of classical theism yields a more powerful and parsimonious explanation of the rhythms and patterns of the natural world than its secular rivals.

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Excerpt: The Puzzle of Lawmaking
 Secular philosophers have long worried that the very idea of physical law is a fossilized survival from a bygone age dominated by belief in the existence of a divine lawmaker. For all of its suspect theological freightage, though, lawhood continues to be an apparently indispensable conceptual tool for the natural scientist. One obvious explanation for its persistence is that the notion of law preserves some of our core intuitions about the physical world. For nature surrounds us on all sides with regularities that few of us could dismiss as accidental without concealing a smile. That a fragile glass hurled hard from an upper-floor window shatters on impact with the ground, that every electron has the same rest mass, that there are no spheres of uranium wider than a mile in diameter — all these are facts that strike us as ineliminably law-governed features of the world. Conversely, nature confronts us with countless instances of what seem inescapably to be brute coincidences: that wombats are born in Australia rather than Asia, that no human being has run 100 metres in less than 9.57 seconds, that there are no spheres of gold wider than a mile in diameter — these are regularities that do not strike us as lawful even though they are no less uniform than the ones that do. Before considered reflection gets underway, at least, our intuitions press us not only to draw a principled distinction between these two kinds of regularity, but also to infer that this distinction is based on objective facts about reality.¹ More simply put: at an intuitive level, it is not up to

us where the line between law and accident is to be drawn. It is not even up to our best scientists. For the task of scientific inquiry is not to stipulate the distinction between law and accident; it is to discover it.

Intuitions such as these are so firmly entrenched that many are surprised to learn that the prevailing orthodoxy in Anglophone philosophy is that lawhood is a theologically inflected illusion that should hold us captive no longer. In the halcyon days of logical empiricism, few philosophers would have denied that every regularity is an accidental regularity or that theories of natural necessity that claimed otherwise were at one with a belief in fairies and unicorns. On this sort of view, all that could distinguish 'lawful' from 'lawless' regularities are the various classificatory schemes we adopt to render the physical world transparent to scientific inquiry.

More recently, however, the trenchant hostility towards realism has begun to wane. Dissatisfied with what they perceive to be the explanatory inadequacies of the alternatives, many philosophers now argue for a metaphysical basis for lawlike regularities that is independent of the conceptual frameworks within which they are situated — that is, for nomic realism. Representatives of this view can be divided, crudely but plausibly, into two camps. The division is nicely captured in the distinction drawn between the 'School of Immanence' and the 'School of Imposition' by Alfred North Whitehead, perhaps the first philosopher of the modern era to trace and classify the ways in which background metaphysical commitments — most notably with respect to objects, relations, and properties — account for the differences between competing schools of thought on the nature of lawhood.

Whitehead begins his taxonomy by identifying an approach he labels the 'School of Immanence,' an approach that assigns the lawmaking role to the intrinsic properties of objects. Natural order is grounded in 'the characters of real things which jointly compose the existences to be found in nature.' Translated into a more contemporary philosophical idiom, laws of nature are causal powers or dispositions, properties that dispose their

bearers towards specific forms of causal interaction. Nomological possibility is fixed by the natures of the objects that contribute to any kind of law-governed behaviour: it is, we might say, the 'bottom-up' realist theory of lawmaking. On this model, laws of nature — to borrow a judicious phrase from David Oderberg — are laws of natures. I shall refer throughout this book to this strand of nomic realism as the Powers Model.

The School of Immanence is chiefly to be contrasted with the School of Imposition. The latter approach offers a 'top-down' theory that takes lawhood to be grounded not in the intrinsic features of things themselves, but rather in the connections between them. Since it is relations rather than properties that do the explanatory work, one corollary assumption of the Relations Model is that properties are only contingently tied to the forms of behaviour that law-statements describe. If lawmakers are relations between things rather than the properties of things, it follows that in one possible world a liquid might be acidic, while in another a liquid characterized by exactly same properties might be alkaline. The causal profile of the properties of the liquid is, as it were, a metaphysical blank to be filled in by the ways in which their extrinsic connections configure its nomic behaviour to be acidic or alkaline.' Such a property is, to wield two technical terms, a quidditistic or categorical property.

At one level, both strands of this realist renaissance signal a return to what has been the historically dominant commitment to the existence of objective forms of natural necessity. The ancestor of the Powers Model is Aristotle's natural philosophy, which was fruitfully developed within the creationist metaphysical framework of Abrahamic monotheism. As this metaphysical picture came to be supplanted by the geometric and mechanistic ontologies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, forerunners of the Relations Model began to emerge. The most influential of these was the natural philosophy of Descartes, which was later assumed to derive considerable support from the discoveries of the Newtonian revolution.

However significant the shift in metaphysical outlooks inaugurate by the Cartesian and Newtonian revolutions, the elimination of powers or

'occult qualities' in favour of extrinsic geometric and mechanical relations did little to diminish the theological pedigree of the new framework. The 'top-down' approach to lawmaking was in fact to a large degree conceptually complicit with the voluntarist theologies that began to proliferate in late scholastic thought." Here the contrast with contemporary versions of the Relations Model could not be sharper: few contemporary philosophers consider the difference that theism's theoretical resources might make to advancing a convincing realist case for lawmaking. This has led some historians and philosophers to note that the effect of naturalizing the Relations Model has led its contemporary supporters to commit to the existence of metaphysical puppet-strings that, in the absence of a divine puppet-master, mysteriously animate the natural world as brute causal principles. On this view, the Relations Model is an ersatz theological analysis of lawlike phenomena, the grafting of an ineliminable theistic Cartesian-Newtonian model of lawhood onto a naturalistic vine that had long been growing without it.

Similarly, the resurgence of neo-Aristotelian accounts of lawhood in contemporary metaphysics has prompted remarkably few attempts to elaborate such an account within the theological terms that characterized the most sophisticated philosophies of nature to emerge in high-scholastic thought. Today, the overwhelming majority of realists would share the naturalistic presumptions of their antirealist rivals regardless of their preference for the Powers Model or the Relations Model. One of this study's central contentions is that the uneasy alignment between realism and naturalism has injected fresh energy into the ancient problem of universals. That universals should feature prominently in most contemporary realist theories of lawhood should hardly surprise us: they are obvious candidates to invoke for the purposes of securing the uniformity and systematicity of scientific laws. Yet preserving consistency with naturalism presses those seeking to combine realism about laws with realism about universals to posit 'immanent' or 'Aristotelian' universals — that is, entities that exist in space and time but that are nevertheless capable of being exemplified in multiple places at the same time, and that do not

exist for as long as they are not exemplified. As we examine naturalistic versions of the two realist models, we shall see again and again that these features of construing universals in this way generate some intractable puzzles for realists. I shall argue that the cumulative effect of these worries is to generate an unpalatable choice for the naturalistic nomic realist between a cogent realist account of natural necessity and a commitment to his background ontology.

Which of these two options should realists of this stripe be willing to abandon? The second part of this book invites the reader to persist with the quest for a viable realist theory with a contentious suggestion: relaxing an a priori commitment to metaphysical naturalism is a price worth paying for such a theory and our best hope of resolving the realist quest is to scrutinize the two most plausible alternatives to naturalism: platonism and theism.

Since many philosophers regard any explanatory appeal to theism as scandalous or even unintelligible, Chapter 4 undertakes a critical analysis of platonic approaches to the problem of lawhood. It argues that in breaking with naturalistic orthodoxy the platonist can accommodate many of the explanatory inadequacies that undermine his naturalistic rivals. Platonic versions of the Powers Model and the Relations Model can explain the intuition that there might be laws that are never instantiated.

They can explain what governed the emergence of the very first instances of nomic behaviour. They can also account for the vast mathematical ontology that scientific statements of law appear increasingly to presuppose. Theoretical achievements such as these are not insignificant. But the virtues of platonic nomic realism must be weighed against its vices.

For once lawmaking is transferred to an abstract ontological domain, it begins to be very difficult to see how any metaphysical traffic is possible between concrete instances of natural regularities and the spaceless, timeless, and causally inert denizens of the platonic heaven that supporters of this account purport to be their ultimate ontological ground. Furthermore, the metatheoretical price to be paid for any platonic proposal is high, since it

leaves the nomic realist with a revised ontology that not only strikes many as implausibly ad hoc, but also breaches important principles of qualitative and quantitative ontological parsimony by introducing a distinct ontological domain populated with vast numbers of abstract entities.

It may by now be clear that it is the cumulative difficulties of formulating a case for nomic realism in either naturalistic or platonic terms that animate this book's constructive case for a theistic solution, one that can deliver the explanatory goods that elude naturalistic accounts while avoiding the theoretical puzzles and ungainly ontology of platonic alternatives. Theistic solutions in philosophy tend to invite the objection that God is at least as mysterious than any problem he is introduced to explain. Many Humeans may view this move as a *reductio ad theologiam* on the part of realists: if locating lawmakers in the mental life and causal agency of God is the price to be paid for nomic realism, we would do better to abandon the realist quest altogether.

Nonetheless, theists may be forgiven for thinking that such incredulity is more justifiably directed at those accounts that sever lawhood from its theological context from which the metaphor derived its intelligibility. The claim that lawhood is an irreducibly theological metaphor is neither novel nor radical: whatever else might be said for the small handful of attempts to retrieve and revise a theistic version of realism, they can hardly be dismissed as arbitrary explanatory enterprises. Few, after all, would defend the claim that monotheistic traditions introduce God as a legislator *ex machina* specifically to meet the challenges of explaining law-governed behaviour. Quite the reverse, in fact: many philosophers take the very idea of lawhood to be ineliminably theological. In much the same way as Elizabeth Anscombe once called for the abandonment of law-based conceptions of ethics on the basis that they could not discharge their theological freightage, similar disquiet has been expressed more recently in relation to law-based conceptions of physical reality.

The animating assumption of this book is that these suspicions are well-grounded: metaphysical theism

and nomic realism are indeed historically and conceptually conjoined philosophical positions. As the difficulties of combining naturalism and realism are thrown into increasingly sharper relief by the failure of recent attempts to do so, it is my hope that the task of reviving and revising this theological synthesis will not appear to be quite as contentious as it would once have been. Patristic and highscholastic metaphysics grounded natural order in the creative agency and mental life of a maximally rational and powerful divine being: God's causal powers and intellective activity supplied a comprehensive and parsimonious explanatory account of the natural world. It is true enough, of course, that the rise of positivist and empiricist orthodoxies in twentieth-century analytic philosophy pushed this view to the outermost margins of philosophical respectability; yet the striking renewal of confidence theistic solutions to philosophical problems in the last four decades has begun to draw it back further towards the centre. For all that, it remains the case that remarkably few theologians or philosophers of religion have attempted a realist theory of lawmaking that draws on this tradition. Considerable attention has been devoted to the place of natural laws in discussions of teleological and cosmological arguments, but the question with which this book is chiefly concerned is neither the life-permitting content of lawlike phenomena nor their ultimate origination, but rather the question of what might motivate realists to ground the distinction between law-governed and accidental regularities in a theistic framework and what advantages might accrue to an explanatory scheme developed along these lines.

Briefly put, the strategy at the heart of this scheme involves replacing the lawmaking universals commonly invoked by naturalists and platonists with divine ideas — that is, those ingredients in God's mental life informing the creative decisions that provide the ultimate explanatory ground for the lawful regularities that order physical reality. However rebarbative this proposal might seem to secular philosophers, it is one that not only boasts a long historical pedigree in the intellectual traditions of Abrahamic monotheism but also offers a philosophically attractive alternative to standard

realist appeals to lawmaking universals on which naturalistic and platonic realist theories invariably rely. Once universals have been substituted for appropriate items in God's mental life (be these 'concepts' or 'mental events'), items that structure the regularities that God's causal powers ultimately originate and that scientific statements of law describe, a solution emerges to the puzzle of lawmaking that steers a careful and plausible course between naturalism and platonism.

The most well-known attempts at formulating a strategy along the lines proposed in this book are historical ones. The most notable of these can be found scattered across the writings of Augustine, Aquinas," and Leibniz. Yet there has been enthusiasm for this approach among contemporary philosophers of religion for some time now. One generally overlooked attraction is that it promises to accommodate many of the intuitions that motivate realists and nominalists on the question of universals that are typically thought to be in conflict. On the theistic conceptualist alternative to universals, it is decisions in the mind of God, together with the creative actions that perfectly correspond to them, that provide the objective basis for the resemblances between particulars that immanent and platonic realists invoke universals to explain. This is achieved, moreover, in a way that avoids any metaphysically awkward commitment to multiply localized entities or to the existence of an abstract ontological domain.

It will be clear from this map of the road ahead that every case for a theologically substantive realist theory of lawhood depends not only on the inadequacies of naturalistic and platonic theories, but also on the specific advantages of the constructive account it offers. It will need to explain how God's agency as 'primary' cause does not overdetermine the 'secondary' causal behaviour of mundane objects in a way that makes it vulnerable to the difficulties that occasionalism presents. It will also need to show how universals can plausibly be substituted for mental particulars without undermining the explanatory benefits of positing universals. And it will need to explain how any theory that places such primacy on the mental can account for patterns in physical reality without succumbing to a form of panpsychism. Before

addressing these questions in the final part of the book, however, we must first examine how more metaphysically modest naturalistic theories attempt to offer convincing solutions to the puzzles of lawmaking.

We have now reached the end of a difficult quest for an analysis of law-like regularities in the physical world that is at once internally coherent, explanatorily powerful, and metatheoretically attractive. The arguments examined in the course of our search have cumulatively pressed us towards elaborating a realist theory of natural laws in terms of the mental life and causal powers of God. To those convinced that the centrality of lawhood to scientific inquiry had long ago banished supernaturalistic explanations of the natural world, this may seem a disquieting development. Since metaphysical naturalism continues to be a dominant orthodoxy in contemporary philosophy, such a reaction would hardly be unsurprising. Nevertheless, it was precisely to anticipate this disquiet that we began the inquiry by paying close attention to the best naturalistic analyses of lawhood before turning to platonism and theism as alternatives.

The central philosophical puzzle that Jawlike phenomena present is the Modal Hybridity Problem — that is, the problem of reconciling the intuition that the laws of nature might have been otherwise (the Contingency Intuition) with the intuition that the regularities that scientific statements of law describe are not merely accidental (the Governing Intuition). How one responds to this problem largely determines whether one will endorse a realist theory of lawhood or a deflationary one. As I argued in Chapter 1, accepting the dilemma's first horn erases the explanatory strength of lawhood entirely. On the deflationary view, the most promising way of securing the distinction between lawful and accidental regularities is to suggest that the former have a theoretical role in an optimally systematized description of the world and that the latter do not. Conversely, we saw in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that those who take the dilemma's second horn bear the burden of identifying some ingredient in the natural world — or, as we

explored in Chapter 4, a platonic heaven — that grounds lawful regularities in a sufficiently objective way while leaving room for the Contingency Intuition.

We saw that by invoking God's libertarian agency — the theologically uncontroversial claim that God could have acted otherwise than he has — theists can dissolve this central dilemma at a single stroke. They can accommodate the Contingency Intuition with the straightforward observation that God was free to originate different laws from the ones he actually brought about. They can preserve the Governing Intuition by arguing that the difference between law-governed patterns of behaviour and merely accidental regularities consists in the fact that divine intent and agency underwrites the objective modal strength of the former. In other words, theists have the resources to avoid the Humean insistence that there is no halfway point between brute contingency and logical necessity.

Accounting for the weak modality of natural necessity is an advantage that accrues to every theistic account, including those considered in Chapter 5. But the theistic conceptualist approach advanced in Chapter 6 provided metaphysical resources for resolving a series of theoretical difficulties that rival theistic options could not. In the first place, by substituting lawmaking universals — whether construed as extrinsic relations or intrinsic dispositions — for items in God's mental life, the proposal enjoyed clear advantages over naturalistic renditions of the Relations Model and the Powers Model. In particular, it accounted for several classes of laws that were much less easily assimilated by rival versions and it explained how the emergence of the first lawmakers could have been a law-governed process. Moreover, when weighed against its leading non-naturalistic rival, the proposed solution avoided ungainly platonic solutions that struggled to elucidate how abstract lawmakers could govern the natural world from a platonic heaven. In sum, adopting the theistic conceptualist framework means that realists pay a cheaper metatheoretical price for a more cogent realist account of lawhood, an account that supports the central intuitions about laws of nature with which our inquiry began: their weak modal

force, inductive strength, explanatory power, and counterfactual resilience.

Although that basic framework left open the question of whether to identify relations or powers as lawmakers, it became clear that to adopt the categorialist ontology that the Relations Model presupposes would pressure theistic supporters of this approach to analyze God's causal interaction with physical world in occasionalist terms. Since eliminating creaturely causation in this way would fundamentally undermine a wide range of doctrinal commitments, I suggested that this would be an imprudent option for orthodox theists to pursue. When applied to the Powers Model, however, it emerged that theistic conceptualism can be reconciled more easily to theories of divine causation that make room for the autonomy of creaturely causes. On this account, nature is not mechanical but organic: it teems from below with causal energies of its own. Natural objects are intrinsically oriented to those forms of behaviour that law-statements aim to codify and not — as the Relations Model implies — constituents of a passive ontological landscape animated by extrinsic connections imposed from above.

So in the course of searching for a philosophically viable realist stance towards lawlike regularities we have uncovered a nomological argument for classical theism, an argument that has received scant attention in the annals of natural theology. Where might we locate it on the traditional landscape of theistic arguments? It is not a law-specific version of the cosmological argument, though some theists may wish to explore the claim that if laws are grounded in a network of powers that is (so to speak) dispositional all the way down, then positing a fully actual divine being offers the best way to halt an otherwise infinite and vicious explanatory regress. But it is not — or not quite — a law-specific version of the teleological argument either. Formulating the Powers Model did require us to construe the teleological characteristics of lawmaking dispositions as objective; to that extent, it would be accurate to classify the argument that theistic conceptualism is the best explanation for these features as a species of teleological argument.

Nonetheless, we should recall ourselves to the fact the proposed solution to the Powers Model begins from premises that differ considerably from those that typically provide the basis for teleological arguments. We did not, for example, need to infer our conclusions from contested claims regarding the purportedly irreducible complexity of biological phenomena or the life-permitting character of fundamental cosmological constants. In recent years, a consensus has emerged among metaphysicians in favour of the Powers Model that the goal-directed features of dispositional properties ('Directedness' and 'Reciprocity') are real and irreducible. As we have seen, theories that attempt to explain these features by grounding them in teleologically blank categorical properties simply restate the problem, since they cannot explain what governs the interactions between the two kinds of property without invoking the very lawlike regularities they were supposed to explain.

For all that, to classify this book's conclusions as a teleological argument would be to forget the chief impetus for its investigation, which was to find a theory of lawhood that could accommodate our most fundamental pre-philosophical intuitions about the patterned regularities we observe in the natural world. It would also fail to do justice to the fact that the difficulties that led us to adopt theistic nomic conceptualism were not confined to elucidating the teleological characteristics of lawmaking dispositions. For we were equally motivated by the challenge of finding an explanation of these features that could also resolve dialectically independent puzzles regarding the ontological status of unexercised dispositions ('Independence') and the standard view that lawmaking dispositions are intrinsic properties ('Intrinsicness'). Finally, we saw that theistic nomic conceptualism compares very favourably with rival versions when judged against metatheoretical criteria that are widely (if not universally) endorsed by analytic philosophers, in particular the qualitative and quantitative varieties of ontological and ideological parsimony, consistency with our best scientific findings, compliance with the principle of nihil ad hoc, and consonance with Moorean intuitions about lawhood, including the Contingency Intuition, the Governance Intuition, and intuitions regarding the objective

reality of the distinction between lawful and accidental regularities.

Neo-Humeans sympathetic to the deflationary accounts criticised at the outset of this inquiry may, of course, chalk up the theistic implications of the Powers Model as another reason for rejecting realism altogether. But, as we have seen, classical theism provides neglected but powerful solutions for realists who wish to deflationism's profoundly counterintuitive implications, but who recognise the weaknesses of the naturalistic and non-naturalistic options available to them. That is a conclusion that can be welcomed by anyone committed to the objective existence of the lawful regularities that order the world around us. <>

[American Priest: The Ambitious Life and Conflicted Legacy of Notre Dame's Father Ted Hesburgh](#) by Wilson D. Miscamble, C.S.C. [Image, 9781984823434]

Considered for many decades to be the most influential priest in America, Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, played what many consider pivotal roles in higher education, the Catholic Church, and national and international affairs. *American Priest* examines his life and his many and varied engagements—from the university he led for thirty-five years to his associations with the Vatican and the White House—and evaluates the extent and importance of his legacy.

Author and Notre Dame priest-professor Wilson D. Miscamble tracks how Hesburgh transformed Catholic higher education in the postwar era and explores how he became a much-celebrated voice in America at large. Yet, beyond the hagiography that often surrounds Hesburgh's legacy lies another more complex and challenging story. What exactly were his contributions to higher learning; what was his involvement in the civil rights movement; and what was the nature of his role as advisor to popes and presidents?

Understanding Hesburgh's life and work illuminates the journey that the Catholic Church traversed over the second half of the twentieth century. Exploring and evaluating Hesburgh's importance, then, contributes not only to the colorful history of Notre

Dame but also to comprehending the American Catholic experience.

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Excerpt: Father Theodore Martin Hesburgh—always "Father Ted" to me—died peacefully at Notre Dame late in the evening of February 26, 2015. He lived a long and full life. American Priest sheds light on this life and his many and varied engagements both at the university that he led for thirty-five years and far beyond it. The book has had a long gestation, and its form and content have evolved over the two decades since I first announced to Father Ted that I planned to write about him.

One fall evening in 1994, I called Father Hesburgh and caught him at his desk in his office suite on the thirteenth floor of the Hesburgh Library. I asked if I might see him and he invited me to come right over. Five minutes later I was in his office surrounded by all the special photographs, memorabilia items, and autographed books that gave glimpses of his associations, activities, and accomplishments over

his long tenure as president of Notre Dame. From its window we could see Our Lady positioned so gracefully atop the university's signature Golden Dome. Father Ted was smoking a sizable cigar and had been reading the New York Times with a magnifying glass and listening to classical music. Father Ted drew my attention to some of the first editions he had on his bookshelves. I then caught him a bit unawares when I interrupted him and said, as best I can recall: "Well, Father Ted, I have come to see you tonight about writing a book. I want to write a book about you." After paying a tribute to his best-selling autobiography, *God, Country, Notre Dame*, I explained that I planned to write a comprehensive biography of the "life and times" sort that would build on his memoir.

Father Ted was taken aback by this statement of my intentions. We sat down, and I must say that he momentarily was caught out for the appropriate words, definitely a rare occurrence for him. He knew I was a historian of some ability, but I was a student of postwar American foreign relations. I had no special background as a biographer, unlike my distinguished colleague Fr. Marvin R. O'Connell, whose terrific biography of Archbishop John Ireland Father Hesburgh so admired. Furthermore, he knew that I was heavily engaged in my work as chair of the history department at Notre Dame and would not be able to devote my full energies to this effort. Perhaps with such concerns in mind he puffed on his cigar, and after exhaling he offered a warning. He revealed an insightful sense of his extensive activities, and explained that it would be hard for a single historian to capture in a full and meaningful way the extent of his actions over the years since he had emerged as a prominent public figure in the United States. He even recited for me the extent of the holdings in his presidential papers housed in the University of Notre Dame Archives. Additionally, he asked, how could any single person, let alone a busy one like me, investigate with care the records of the various commissions and agencies on which he had served.

Having come to know Father Ted over the years since my ordination as a Holy Cross priest and appointment to the regular faculty of Notre Dame in 1988, I had expected something like this response. I had two rejoinders at the ready. First, I

explained that a trained historian did not need to read every document ever associated with a subject to get the gist of things. Otherwise, I continued, how would biographies be written of great figures like Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, historical figures with whom he knew I was well familiar. Putting that matter to the side, I readily conceded to him that it would be a major undertaking to write a definitive biography of him. I went further and told him candidly that I planned to write another book—a study of the transition from FDR to Harry Truman and its implications for American foreign policy—before I settled down to devote myself to his biography. After that work was completed, I assured him, I would give myself fully to what I knew would be a multi-year project. Then I introduced a delicate matter and explained that I had to announce my intention now so that I might ask his cooperation and help while he still enjoyed vigorous good health. I advised that I would need to speak with him extensively while his memory was still sharp and incisive. I did not seek to be his "authorized biographer" in any way, but I recall guaranteeing him that I would tell his important story well.

Reassured by my response Father Ted thereupon promised me his cooperation and suggested that we might have a drink to mark our agreement. We walked down the little corridor off his office to the kitchen area of his suite and he produced a bottle of Cutty Sark, the blended scotch whiskey that he preferred when the Manhattans mixed for him at the Morris Inn were not available. Some tumblers soon had ice in them and healthy portions of the smooth drink. We returned to his office and talked for over two hours, refilling our glasses once or twice. I produced for Father Ted from a folder I had brought with me a title page for the biography, a title that I subsequently varied slightly. It had on it: "AMERICA'S PRIEST: FATHER HESBURGH OF NOTRE DAME." He signed it and dated it in his clear handwriting: "Fr. Ted Hesburgh, csc-10.17.94."

Why I desired to write a biography of Father Hesburgh and why I believed myself capable of doing so deserves some explanation. I first had

come to know of Father Ted in a limited way when I arrived at Notre Dame from Australia as a doctoral student in 1976. I observed him at a distance, but I met him only once and that in the context of a gathering of graduate students. I focused on my own history studies and appreciated his leadership of Notre Dame from afar. I returned to Notre Dame a second time in August of 1982 to enter the Holy Cross order, and I met him occasionally during my seminary years. He kindly displayed some interest in me, knowing that I possessed a doctorate and hoped to serve in the higher education ministry of the Congregation of Holy Cross. He assured me of his satisfaction when I joined the full-time faculty of the history department after my ordination in 1988.

I began my service on the regular faculty of Notre Dame just after Father Hesburgh ended his decades as president and moved on to his new status as "president emeritus," which he held for a further quarter century. As he made his adjustment to this new role, and initially traveled far and wide, I set about my ministry as a priest-teacher. My early years on the faculty went smoothly. I loved my teaching and it was favorably recognized. My scholarly efforts reached some fruition in 1992 when Princeton University Press published my book *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*. The book was well received and assured my promotion to associate professor with tenure. Father Ted graciously noted my accomplishments and either in person or in writing extended congratulations. He also recognized that I was a Holy Cross priest interested in the broad direction of Notre Dame, and not one who focused only on my own scholarly interests. This was especially obvious after Father Ted's successor, Fr. Edward "Monk" Malloy, appointed me to serve on the university-wide self-study known as *The Colloquy for the Year 2000*, which did the bulk of its work in 1992.

The years of the early 1990s coincided with enhanced discussion of Notre Dame's mission as a Catholic university. The promulgation of Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution on Catholic universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church), in August 1990 gave a pointed focus to campus deliberations. Much of this discussion

emerged in debates surrounding the Colloquy's draft mission statement, which included the clear statement (in accord with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*) that "the Catholic identity of the University depends upon, and is nurtured by, the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals." Father Hesburgh had deep reservations about aspects of the apostolic constitution, but he was most interested in the efforts of a group of faculty, of which I was part, to promote serious discussion of Notre Dame's mission as a Catholic university. This group, dubbed the Conversation on the Catholic Character (CCC), organized a series of lively and (occasionally) even disputatious meetings in 1992 and 1993. Father Ted was very curious about these discussions and requested reports from me on them. Hoping that some of the heat generated in the CCC debates might produce some constructive light, Father Ted decided to request contributions from many of the folks who had participated in CCC debates along with some other colleagues. I advised him on contributors and wrote an essay of my own for this volume, which he edited in 1994 and entitled *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*.

My involvement in deliberations and debate over Notre Dame's Catholic mission and identity inexorably drew me to reflect on Father Hesburgh and his role in shaping Notre Dame into the institution it was in the 1990s. I began to think about writing of Father Ted and Notre Dame out of a presentist concern to understand for myself and, I hope, to explain to others, how events had come to pass that Notre Dame's mission as a Catholic university had become so contested. I wanted to understand better what had happened in recent decades such that there now existed a sizable element on the university's faculty that seemed determined to emasculate Catholicism's role in the academic heart of the university. Readers must be aware of this perspective at the outset because it still operates and unquestionably it influences the perspective of this book.

My interest in Father Hesburgh was in no sense restricted to viewing him through this lens. I realized at the outset that a study of him would afford a terrific opportunity to explore some crucial and fascinating areas, among them the growth of Notre

Dame in the half century after World War II and the nature of the relationship of the university to its founding religious community, the Congregation of Holy Cross, stood out. Addressing those topics provided an opportunity to shed further light on the wide-ranging developments in Catholic higher education and in higher education more generally in the United States. But I knew well that telling Father Hesburgh's story also would allow me to explore other and broader stories including elements of the postwar American story, including such momentous issues as civil rights, overseas development, and immigration and refugee policy. I wanted to understand the nature of Father Ted's relationships with presidents from Dwight Eisenhower onward. Furthermore, I knew that telling his story would enable me to understand better the journey of the Church in which we both served as priests.

Regrettably and somewhat to Father Ted's disappointment, I did little more than a rather haphazard gathering of materials in the initial years after my 1994 visit to his office to secure his agreement and support for my writing about him. I served five years as chair of the history department in the mid-1990s and found it difficult to balance these duties with sustained scholarly work. Nonetheless, we maintained a very friendly relationship and he always asked after my parents. He and his great collaborator Fr. Edmund (Ned) Joyce had kindly contacted them during their visit to Australia on their round-the-world cruise on the ocean liner QE2 in 1988. I lived with him as part of the Holy Cross community and enjoyed listening to him at the Corby Hall dinner table. I occasionally invited Father Ted to speak to my classes on his impressions of postwar presidents and on the Notre Dame experience during the Vietnam War era. He always graciously accepted.

For a variety of reasons I decided to resign my position as chair of the history department and to re-engage my scholarly work in 1998. I sought and was granted a sabbatical for 1998-1999 to work on my book on the transition from FDR to Truman. But I determined that I could no longer delay speaking in a systematic way with Father Ted, who after all had turned eighty on May 25, 1997. He still enjoyed robust good health, his memory

remained sharp, and the hints of the macular degeneration that would later beset him did not prevent him from reading voraciously. Yet I knew I should not delay. I asked Father Ted if I might engage him in extensive interviews that summer. After some discussion we agreed to gather at a place that was deeply meaningful for him, the Notre Dame property at Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin. The interviews I completed in June of 1998 with Father Ted in that beautiful place form an essential basis of this book.

It is important for readers to appreciate that at the time these interviews occurred my relationship with Father Ted was a fraternal one with a good measure of trust between us. In preparation for my encounter with Father Hesburgh I reviewed the extensive oral history interviews that Richard (Dick) Conklin previously had completed with him (in 1982 and 1989) and that the writer Jerry Reedy then had shaped into *God, Country, Notre Dame*. I conveyed to him that we must go beyond that information—to go deeper, if you will, and to pull back the curtain further on how he handled his multiple responsibilities. Perhaps Father Ted possessed some anxiety at having his story entrusted to a fellow religious who had emerged during the 1990s as a proponent of the vision for the renewal of Catholic higher education outlined by John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, but he never expressed concerns. I, in turn, downplayed any disagreements over such matters and focused on getting him to open up more than he had in his interviews with Dick Conklin.

In preparation for my interviews with Father Ted I dedicated weeks to reading not only the Conklin interviews and *God, Country, Notre Dame*, but a significant amount of secondary literature and some of Father Hesburgh's writings. His numerous publications—books, articles, essays, forewords, prefaces, introductions, newspaper articles, and much more—are listed in Charlotte A. Ames's extraordinarily valuable and thorough *Theodore M. Hesburgh: A Bio-Bibliography* (1989), of which I made good use.

Much of the literature on Father Ted leaned in a hagiographical direction, but I determined that he deserved a serious and critical examination of his

life. I did not want to add to the shelves of flattering (if rather superficial) summations of his life. I approached the interviews with a determination to move beyond the always positive persona of "Father Hesburgh" that he so effectively presented in *God, Country, Notre Dame*. Father Ted once explained to me that he kept discussion of divisions and disagreements and criticisms to a minimum in his memoir. The result was a charming work that neglected key conflicts and struggles. I concluded that a more authentic and honest account of his life must include them.

Father Ted and I flew up to Land O'Lakes in the university plane on a bright summer afternoon. He was most at peace when relaxing at that rustic and beautiful place. During his presidency he retreated there at the end of each academic year to unwind, enjoy the beauty of nature and the presence of God, and, so to speak, to recharge his batteries. While various faculty and students pursued their scientific endeavors on the part of the property occupied by the Environmental Research Center, Father Ted and I went to the Holy Cross retreat site. The wonderful caretakers, Gerry and Bonnie Schoesser, welcomed us. We were their only guests for the week from June 16 until our departure on June 22. We easily established a regimen for our work. Father Ted was very much a "night person," so we agreed to do the interviews in the late evening and to meet in the tiny cottage that was his special home when at Land O'Lakes and that, for reasons that escape me, was known to one and all as the "honeymoon cottage." We both slept late each day, although he slept much later than I did. I spent my day organizing my notes for the topics I planned to cover each evening and doing further background reading. He roused himself around noon and would read from a number of the books he lugged up with him. We came together for Mass in the small chapel on the property at 4:00 p.m. and then went up to Bonnie and Gerry's for a drink and early dinner. Then Gerry and Father Ted went off fishing for muskie, the still physically vigorous man's favorite freshwater fish for the thrilling fight it put up when hooked.

The fishermen returned somewhere around 8:30 p.m. each evening whereupon Father Ted and I connected. We made our way down a somewhat

rickety path to the honeymoon cottage. After getting my small tape recorder set up we would get under way. Father Ted would immediately pour himself a generous drink. Dewar's White Label was the brand favored by the Holy Cross fishing contingent, and the liquor cabinet was well stocked with the distinctive half-gallon bottles. At times, he would light a fire to take the chill out of the still cool air. He encouraged me to also work with a full tumbler of Dewar's in hand, but I declined initially, and clarified personally revealing. The travel diaries that I have read are interesting, and a fascinating compilation of them might be undertaken in the future, but they are not central to Father Hesburgh's life and the essential themes of this work. Thus I knew that in the absence of a personal diary, his Land O'Lakes reflections had a real worth for those who want to move beyond hagiography to understand more fully Notre Dame's longest serving president.

Father Ted had some appreciation for the import of the interviews. He told me on our final night that "you are hearing some stories that no one has heard [or] very few people have heard." Soon after our return to Notre Dame he wrote to me and told me that he had enjoyed our time together and noted that while "the written record is fairly complete ... at least now you can read between the lines." He also made a further generous offer. "If my life goes on for a few more years," he suggested, "you should feel free to continue taping it at whatever time you deem necessary." It was an offer I should have pursued more systematically, but I did not as I was pulled in other directions. Somewhat to my surprise I was asked to serve at Moreau Seminary and I moved there in 1998. Again I put my scholarly work on hold. Father Ted was perplexed by my agreeing to serve initially on the formation staff at the seminary and then as its rector. He believed that I should have maintained my full involvement in my university ministry, but in typically gracious fashion he wished me well.

Whatever the other responsibilities I assumed, I always made clear to him that I planned to write about him. He seemed glad of that. When Michael O'Brien's balanced and commendable biography of him appeared in 1998 under the title *Hesburgh: A Biography*, Father Ted welcomed the fact that his

life had attracted the scholarly attention of a good historian, but he regretted that the book neither captured his full accomplishments nor

drew much public attention to him through its publication. O'Brien's book is a fine study that I commend to serious readers, but in the words of Dick Conklin it is "workmanlike." The president emeritus felt he deserved better. After reading a generally favorable review of the O'Brien book by Sister Alice Gallin, O.S.U., which nonetheless suggested that it might stimulate further research, he dispatched a note to me on his "President Emeritus"

stationery noting that "Alice Gallin says there is a lot of work yet to be done," while adding for good measure: "Thank God I don't have to do it." Our relations remained friendly, but we viewed some developments at Notre Dame differently. He still sent congratulatory notes regarding my publications. But our contacts diminished as our views of the direction of Notre Dame diverged over the next decade. He found particularly troubling my public criticisms of the honoring by Notre Dame of President Barack Obama in 2009. While I spoke at a protest rally on that commencement day, Father Ted basked in the glory of praise from the nation's first African American president. I kept our occasional conversations rather light and away from controversial topics when I saw him at Holy Cross House, the Holy Cross order's retirement home to which he moved in 2005. I had no desire to upset or to argue with him. In my last brief conversation with Father Ted he inquired after my mother and promised his prayers for her and for my father, who had died the previous year. Then with a wry smile on his aging face he added: "I'll also say a prayer for you, Bill." I laughed and thanked him and promised him my prayers. By this point Father Ted had given up inquiring about progress on my study of him. Ironically, by this point and at long last, I had something worth reporting to him.

I now found myself ready to devote more serious attention to my study of Father Hesburgh. I decided that I would not try to write the massive "life and times" biography that I had once contemplated. I began to conceive of a more accessible

biographical portrait that drew on my interviews with Father Ted as well as additional research and analysis. I determined to use the material from my interviews with Father Ted to tell a compelling narrative of his leadership of Notre Dame and some of his most significant outside efforts.

In *American Priest* I first examine Father Ted's family background and upbringing and then his education and his formation in Holy Cross. These topics are covered in both *God, Country, Notre Dame* and in O'Brien's biography. I avoid lots of repetition from these works. Instead I aim to advance and deepen the Hesburgh story, and so to shed new light. The focus of the largest part of the book is on Hesburgh's meteoric rise to the presidency of Notre Dame and his notable leadership of the school from 1952 to 1987. Building Notre Dame into a "great Catholic university" was always his central mission, and the focus here is on how he operated and what priorities he established for Notre Dame, the struggles he faced in pursuing his ambitious goals, and the people he either enlisted or dismissed in order to reach them. Not surprisingly, Father Ted's attitude toward college athletics and his involvement with the fabled Notre Dame football program and the coaches who led it during the Hesburgh era also receive attention.

The second substantial section of the book moves beyond the campus to explore Father Hesburgh's numerous outside involvements. These involvements led some observers to deem him the most influential priest of the mid- to late twentieth century. This book concentrates on his contributions to presidential administrations from Eisenhower's through to that of Bill Clinton, along with an assessment of his relations with the men who led them. Father Ted loved the United States deeply, and he had reacted very positively to my proposed title for this book. He was a self-proclaimed American patriot who viewed the United States as the greatest nation on earth. He was deeply proud of his public service in the second half of the twentieth century, and I trust this book will provide readers with a richer sense of this service and the extent of his influence and real accomplishments.

Father Ted also was involved in a variety of contributions and controversies within the Catholic Church over a long period of great change and turmoil. He very much was a priest who favored the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and imbibed deeply of its spirit. He developed a close and fraternal friendship with Pope Paul VI in the years surrounding the Council and collaborated with him in a number of areas. Yet he proved very American in his service in the Church. He brought his American disposition and proclivities to how he served in the Church, and at times he found himself in tension with papal decisions and teaching on issues ranging from birth control to Catholic higher education.

A final chapter covers Father Hesburgh's years following his departure from the presidency of Notre Dame. They were not always easy years for him, as he struggled to define his new role at the university. Yet he remained very active for the next two decades and relished his election as chair of Harvard University's board of overseers, and his participation in the affairs of the nation's oldest and most prestigious university.

Father Ted received enormous recognition and many accolades during his life and benefited from very favorable attention from the local and national press. His appearance on the cover of Time magazine in 1962 and his being described as "the most influential figure in the reshaping of Catholic higher education in the United States" in the story that followed provides just a glimpse of the positive treatment he received over the decades. The pattern persisted, not surprisingly, in the obituaries and tributes that followed his death. Few reservations or criticisms were raised. This ability to attract such remarkably favorable treatment probably should be marked as a true Hesburghian accomplishment. At times it seems that Father Hesburgh cast a spell upon those with whom he associated in order to garner their praise, and that he carried an invisible shield to keep any criticism at bay. I do not claim to be fully immune to his "spell," but I have aimed to move beyond what might be termed the learned hagiography of his obituaries. Father Ted deserves a serious and critical assessment.

Soon after the completion of our interviews in June 1998, Father Ted wrote me of his gratitude for his years of service as a priest and with a flourish he explained: "Serendipity has been the order of the day and the Holy Spirit was at work mightily in most of the important matters." I hope that providence more than mere luck has guided this book, and that the Holy Spirit is at work within it such that it does justice to a very American priest, Father Theodore Hesburgh of Notre Dame. <>

[This American Moment: A Feminist Christian Realist Intervention](#) by Caron E. Gentry [Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations, Oxford University Press, 9780190901264]

According to this book, the United States is currently in a moment of crisis, fomented by anxieties around race and gender politics. Unlike fear, which is usually focused on a particular object, anxiety is indeterminate and uncertain. It is also the emotion that led to the election and continued support of President Trump. But Caron Gentry says that we can deal with this anxiety in a productive way. To do so, she turns to Reinhold Niebuhr, whose philosophy of Christian realism has been an abiding influence on foreign policy since the Cold War. According to Niebuhr "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." Anxiety is central to Niebuhr's ideas: an emotion that is abiding because we lack control over the circumstances of our lives. In turn, anxiety prompts a desire for unity, but also an intolerance for difference. Niebuhr suggests that anxiety can be dealt with destructively or creatively, and that power must be balanced to prevent destructive action. Gentry is critical of Niebuhr, saying that he gives in to destructive tendencies in humans by elevating power above other, more creative solutions. In *This American Moment*, she offers feminist Christian realism as an alternate approach to anxiety in international politics. Gentry's feminist Christian realism differentiates itself from Niebuhr's Christian realism by re-engaging the importance of love and relationships over power. It suggests that we can arrive at creative solutions to anxiety through a conversation about the imago dei and the inherent commitments to community borne of one's relationship with God, including the

recognition of obligation in the face of vulnerability. Throughout *Gentry* applies her ideas to the problems of police brutality, women's reproductive health, and the rise in fascist politics.

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Excerpt: To Act with Mercy or Complicity?

I was raised in a fairly conservative Protestant denomination but within a fairly progressive and, at times, liberal family. Yet, the church I grew up in is known for its conservatism and for its "women's problem," which translates to a doctrinal resistance to women as ministers, classroom teachers, or song leaders for any group other than women and children, and more. Churches and affiliated universities within the denomination have apologized for racist activities and exclusions in the past and they continue to grapple with the role of women. Congregations, in my experience, tend to be predominantly of one race or another—there is little diversity within various congregations. This denomination, like many others, has clearly had problems with power and with hierarchies. I have experienced these hierarchies, and I am sure that I have been party to them.

For most of my upbringing, my life revolved around church. It was my second home. The people there were my second parents, and I found my best friends at church. We spoke the same language and had the same priorities. Until we no longer did. As I grew up and increasingly became aware of my own privilege—as a white, upper-middle-class, cis-gendered, well-educated woman—I also felt more alone and alien in the church. I recognize that I am not alone in the church: I am not the only "woke" Christian out there. My alienation from the

church, however, has led me to think critically about my own denomination and has put me at odds with the place that taught me to believe, to hope, and to find, accept, and extend grace. My faith journey taught me to speak out against oppression, reject injustice, and hope for a better future where all people, who are beloved by the Creator, can be accepted and loved, no matter where or in whom they place their faith. And this perspective has seemingly separated me from many in my church.

There have been numerous times in my life where I have felt like a square peg in a round hole: at church, I could be outspoken and concerned with issues that my peers (and the ministers) were not. When Clayton Williams ran for Texas governor against Ann Richards in 1990, I was fairly clear, as a twelve-year-old, that he was not a candidate I could support. By that point I knew that I tended to support Democrats for their commitment to social justice issues, but the nail in Williams's coffin for me was the same nail for many others—just not for those I went to church with. During the campaign, reporters were gathered at his Midland ranch to watch cattle wrangling. The weather was poor, and Williams was told that "the reporters were getting restless" (Poole 1999). Williams "tried to make light of the situation by comparing bad weather to rape: 'If it's inevitable ... just relax and enjoy it'" (Poole 1999). This cost Williams his twenty-point lead over Richards, and she went on to win the governorship. I remember arguing with my friends at church that such a sentiment was outrageous, insulting, and a normalization and casualization of the violence of rape (even if I could not articulate it as such), and I could not fathom why the other girls did not see it the same way.

Thus, even though Williams lost and never reentered Texas politics again, this incident was the start of my thinking deviating from my church peers and those meant to minister to me. My teenage years were tense ones—I rejected the pressure to be the cute and compliant Texas Christian. I confronted my youth minister on his favoritism of the cute and compliant. I was outspoken and outraged over injustices: I never had the same problems with the then-LBG community that my peers did; I was never simply pro-life/pro-choice; I was uncomfortable with the limited role women

played in the church; I despised the strict gender roles. I refused to go to the university attached to my denomination, favoring an all-women's college in New England because I knew it would be the best place to nurture my voice. I know that this hugely disappointed another of my youth ministers.

How ironic then that my first academic position was at that university affiliated with the church I grew up in. While there, I received an enormous amount of support to continue with my feminist scholarship—most of this, thankfully, from the chair of my department and from one of the deans who later became the provost. Yet I also received some significant resistance on the campus and at the church that I was in part obligated to attend. Even though there were some political discussions and a serious commitment to social justice on campus and at this church, I was still a square peg in a round hole for many different reasons. I was a single woman; I was a feminist; I was an outspoken Democrat in an ultra-conservative city; I was actively committed to my career. Most of the people at the church did not know how to engage with me, and potentially, I with them.

It was my eight years at this university that drove me to write this book and my previous feminist political theology, *Offering Hospitality: Questioning Christian Approaches to War* (2013). Frankly, I was deeply troubled by four things. First, my feminism was frequently seen as something that undermined my faith. I was often asked how I could be a feminist and a Christian (that I also get this question from the feminist community is something that I understand more). I would explain these are not at odds: both Christianity and feminism are deeply concerned with the marginalized and the vulnerable. This is a basic sentiment that informs all of my scholarship, and it stems from my faith.

Second, I frequently heard suggestions or explicit comments that Christianity was under attack in America. To me, this is a naïve if not completely ignorant statement that is unaware of what true religious persecution is—violence and harm that results in the loss of life and freedom. The white Christian community in the United States does not face what Coptic Christians in Egypt do. The white Christian community in the United States has never

faced what the US Jewish community and Jewish communities elsewhere face—particularly now, after Trump's election and the dozens of bomb threats against Jewish synagogues and centers. The US white Christian community has not faced the same violence black churches have faced—from being burned, firebombed, or invaded by a white supremacist gunman. Christians in America have simply not faced the fear, derision, hatred, anger, and violence that American Muslims do on a daily basis.

Third, I was troubled by the militarization that I witnessed in my position as a professor in the political science department after 9/11, where my students often espoused a belief in a war solution for the security threats that faced the United States. Militarization is actually counter to the tradition I grew up in, which had been deeply pacifist for most of its existence. These concerns coalesced into my fourth concern: that these sentiments led my tradition, one that had been concerned with non-violence and ministry to others, to a place comfortable with the use of power. Such privilege led them to a place of complicity.

Complicity was a thread that ran throughout *Offering Hospitality* (2013). One of the main goals of that text was to confront and urge Christians to think about their (dis)comfort with power and the particular militarized power of American Christianity. When I began *This American Moment*, I actually did not think complicity was as germane to the argument of this book. As I write this prologue—after having written the main text—I realize that I am wrong. A critique of complicity is embedded throughout this text. As I write this, the full ramifications of Trump's "hard power" budget are being reckoned with. This is a budget that harms the least of us, and by this I mean those that are treated by society at large as less deserving of a good education, health care, clean water (as the travesty in Flint, Michigan, continues), and personal and communal security (such as ending the Dreamers immigration program or the assault on protestors and community members at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation). The budget shows no mercy, no love, and no commitment to ending oppressive economic hierarchies. Instead, it unforgivably perpetuates them. It does not just cut

the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Endowment for the Arts; it cuts Meals on Wheels, meal programs in schools for underprivileged children, and it cuts millions from Medicare. Simultaneously, the Republicans relentlessly moved ahead to replace the Affordable Care Act, removing health-care provisions for millions of Americans, which suggests that if poor people would stop buying iPhones they would have more to spend on health care (Willingham 2017). For someone with a chronic illness or someone facing chemotherapy, that's comparing a grape with a side of beef. Those economic costings do not compare.

Bluntly, any Christian who claims to care about the least of us and has no problems with these cuts or cannot realistically suggest a way for private donations to make up for these has seriously betrayed their Christian values. This is complicity. And all of those Republican senators, representatives, and other politicians that run so frequently as "Christians" who have failed to call these problems out have, in my estimation, some serious deficiencies to address. We should be seeing more politicians like Joseph Kennedy III and his reaction to Paul Ryan's description of the repeal of the Affordable Care Act as an "act of mercy." Representative Kennedy stated:

With all due respect to our speaker, he and I must have read different Scripture ... [.] The one I read calls on us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, and to comfort the sick. It reminds us that we are judged not by how we treat the powerful, but by how we care for the least among us ... There is no mercy in a system that makes health care a luxury. There is no mercy in a country that turns their back on those most in need of protection: the elderly, the poor, the sick, and the suffering. There is no mercy in a cold shoulder to the mentally ill.

Like Kennedy, as a Christian who deeply cares about this world and those within it, it is my duty and responsibility to call out harm. That's what this book is doing. I would like to see the church do better.

Thus, I hope this book has two audiences. The first audience is Christians in the United States. Some Christians may agree with me and see the same issues; some may not. I do feel compelled to address the complicity that I see within my own community, and it is a complicity that stems from a great deal of privilege. The second audience is politics and international relations (IR) scholars more broadly.

As previously stated, feminists and other constituencies in IR scholar circles have also queried how I can remain a Christian or even believe in God. Those discussions are not necessarily for this book except to say that I recognize the church, in its many denominations, doctrines, and practices, is a human institution corrupted by power hierarchies that have done incredible harm to vulnerable populations—from colonizing territories to sexually abusing children. If it was not clear above, I have a difficult relationship with church—it is my home but it is a home that I do not know how to enter right now. But I have faith and a relationship with God and this leads me and informs me. My faith has always been behind my interest in politics and international relations. However, I have often felt prevented from bringing my faith into my scholarship because it is not seen as relevant or valid. Writing as a feminist with a deep care and concern for power dynamics is the best way I have found for expressing my normative claims. Yet, there is a growing trend within IR to allow for spirituality to be a valid means of evaluating power dynamics.

There is an increasing desire for an approach to IR that integrates personal, holistic, and spiritual perspectives. This project attempts to be an integrative approach that allows people's moral framework to be an acknowledged ontological and epistemological framework in their scholarly discipline. Religious thinkers, like Reinhold Niebuhr, once had a place in IR. Religious voices have been replaced with approaches more dependent upon rationality and social science methodologies. There has been a resurgence, however, in the discussion of religion's place in the field, which has opened the door again to religious thought. Several key pieces looked at the role of religion in international politics, including Samuel Huntington's Clash of

Civilizations (1996), which posited that the bloodiest future wars would be fought along religious fault lines. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's *Sacred and Secular* (2004) investigated the continued influence of religion, which persisted in some areas even though this was at odds with secularization theory. Further importance has been given to studying religion with the perceived rise and dominance of 'religious' terrorism in the form of al Qaeda and IS (although these are such corrupted forms of Islam it is more accurate not to refer to them as religious). Additionally, the International Studies Association, the main IR professional conference, added the "Religion and International Relations" section in 2013.

The problem, however, is that these studies often treat religion as a variable or tradition that can be studied from afar, instead of allowing the perspective of a spiritual faith inform how one thinks about the field of IR and the subjects therein (for a deeper discussion of this see Lynch 2010). The importance of religion goes beyond a way of measuring or simply describing, religious voices also help us to take stock and to take a step back from the rational actor model that dominates some circles within IR. It allows those that are willing to engage with theology—of any stripe: Christian, Muslim, Hindi, Jewish, etc.—to see issues, such as security dilemmas, from a broader and deeper perspective that maximizes humanity's commonalities and minimizes our differences. It helps scholars to reflect upon our values and query whether our scholarship, in turn, reflects them. This is not to say that Christianity will hold the answer for all people—not by any stretch of the imagination. It is, however, to suggest that we should think about and integrate our deeply held values, no matter what perspective these stem from.

For some it may also be odd to write a book on the United States within IR scholarship. One of the predominant myths in IR holds that it began as a field of study after World War I at the University of Aberystwyth, Wales, with a view toward preventing war from ever happening again. Therefore, most of IR scholarship focuses on security, conflict, and war. The scholarship also tends to look at what is deemed the "third level." The first level looks at human nature; the second

level is on internal state dynamics; and the third is on the anarchic, or without an overarching governing body, international state system. Critiques of the narrowness of focus on the third level and the abstraction of international politics to state power and anarchy have broadened the notion of security within IR. However, unless one is looking at hard power (military, weapons) security concerns, or counter-terrorism and the terrorist threat, or the hegemony of the United States, then IR scholarship does not tend to focus on the United States as a subject of study.

This is problematic, especially when one is looking at identity politics in IR. Race scholars within the discipline note that IR's beginnings actually emerge from scholarship that aimed to make colonization and colonial governance more effective and efficient. Both Tarak Barkawi and Robert Vitalis (2015) clarified that one of the preeminent IR journals, *Foreign Affairs*, actually began as the *Journal of Race Development*. Additionally, most of my academic career has focused on women and terrorism with a wider look at gender and security, often identified as sitting within feminist security studies. Within mainstream IR, if we are looking at issues related to rape and women, domestic violence and women, or terrorism and women, the literature tends to look beyond the West and at issues within developing countries. Some of the literature goes even further still to reveal Western bias against "Muslim-majority" states, linking women's insecurity in these states with regional insecurity. In fact, the literature tends to deny or dismiss that there is a problem with violence against women in the West, particularly the United States. For instance, Hudson and her co-authors imply that the only problem the United States has with domestic violence happens within the African American community in the South. This is a gross misrepresentation of the problem with domestic violence in the United States. Others argue that rape in the United States has been largely brought under control and that rape was never much of an issue on university and college campuses to begin with. Instead, these texts tell us that the problem with women's rights and security are almost entirely non-Western and intersect substantially with race.

Women are used as 'standard bearers' to demonstrate just how progressive the West and the United States are/were and how atavistic and backward non-Western states and regions are/were. This was in force during the colonial period (see McClintock 2013; Chakrabarty 2009) when colonizing powers forced standards of women's progress on the colonized, even if these measures were not in place back in the colonizer's home territory. One need only to think of how the "plight" of Afghan women were in part used to justify the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 by the United States and allies (see Shepherd 2006). These comparisons continue today: as Cynthia Weber (2015, chapter 5) argues the rights of LGBTQI people are used to mark a difference between the progressive West and the non-progressive non-West. The West claims that LGBTQI rights are settled and normed in the West (and they clearly are not) and then uses these norms and rights to weigh the (lack of) progress in the developing world. These rights are instrumentalized, and the people who are affected by these rights (or lack thereof) become pawns in the game of power between Western "donor" countries and developing countries in need of aid.

The critique of IR as biased in favor of a Western, masculinist epistemology is not a new critique but the bias continues in force all the same. Therefore, my interest in it is part of the basis for this book: to demonstrate that racism and misogyny are very much alive in the United States and not only the purview of those deemed, through a neo-Orientalist and racist lens, to be less progressive, less democratic, and less moral (for how morality and legitimacy work along race and gender lines). Race, postcolonial, and feminist security studies within IR aims to dismantle the raced and gendered abstractions (such as the focus on the third level) and the gendered power hierarchies, such as those that prioritize hard security over everyday security (which is defined as "the recurring violence that happens in quotidian life"). Thus, I want to seriously investigate the continued insecurities of black people and women in the United States as inextricably linked to anxiety politics. At this point I should also acknowledge that blacks and women are not the only insecure population in the United

States. LGBTQI rights are very much unsettled still; Hispanics, especially if they are seen as "illegals," are vulnerable, and some live in areas that have experienced greater harm due to some of the political debates over health care and reproductive rights, as explored in chapter 4. And Muslims, and the wrongful association of Muslims and Islam with terrorism (as will be picked up on in chapter 5) are particularly susceptible to abuse and violence.

Thus, the insecurity of vulnerable populations, or "the least of us," is the concern of this book, and it goes back to refusing to see American (white) Christians as persecuted or vulnerable. The most vulnerable in the United States are "the least of us" because they have been treated with less respect, less attention, and less care by the government and society at large, and this is very much due to international hierarchical structures that privilege or subordinate people because of race and gender (and more). Where I once believed the United States was on the right path to fixing these egregious harms, I no longer can look at my home and say that it is. Since the 2016 election of Trump (it is now almost two years later), I have watched the news with horror, grief, and anger.

In this current moment, the countries of the world are drawing back into their corners. Instead of seeing international actors continue to cooperate (even if they did so reluctantly) and work toward the security, rights, and public good for the world as a whole, we are instead witnessing unions break up, ultra-nationalism rise, cosmopolitanism falter, and security become more precarious. Populist movements have a strong foothold across the planet—from the United States, India, Turkey, to the United Kingdom. These particular movements have all led to illiberal policies and have allowed physical and structural harms to be perpetuated. Where just a few short years ago we were applauding the emergence of "feminist foreign policy," in which the Swedish government links gender equality, human rights, and women's security with "peace, security, and sustainable development" (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2015), we are now reading news reports of the EU directing member countries deciding to spend more of their budgets on the military because the American contribution to NATO is no longer certain.

The idea for a book on anxiety politics in the United States was surprisingly timely. I began to write this book in June 2016 and had no way of knowing it would take shape alongside some of the most surprising and important political outcomes of the post-Cold War period. I could not have predicted that I would be writing about anxiety politics when Britain voted to leave the European Union at the end of June 2016. Nor could I predict writing a chapter on Black Lives Matter as another shocking use of police violence came to light (the shooting of unarmed Terence Crutcher in Tulsa), although it was not outside of the realm of the conceivable. Nor could I imagine the hope I felt about America turning a corner on women's issues being crushed as I started chapter 4 on 7 November 2016. Chapter 5 was once meant to focus on the racism and misogyny embedded in US foreign policy toward the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan after 9/11. Instead, I found myself writing the unthinkable—the rise of fascism in the United States—in January 2017 around the time of Trump's inauguration.

I have tried to make the confluence of timeline and writing clear in each chapter—even as I have gone back and made updates and changes as events have unfolded. I hope this brings a way of reflecting on the upheaval of the past year alongside the thinking I have done for several years on anxiety, politics, and intersectional politics in the United States. I would like to add that I recognize my ability to write this book and to have it published is also enabled by privilege and this is something that is never far from my mind. <>

[Call It Grace: Finding Meaning in a Fractured World](#) by Serene Jones [Viking, 9780735223646]

"Theology is a place and a story. Theology is the place and story you think of when you ask yourself about the meaning of your life, of the world, and the possibility of God." So begins Serene Jones's epic work of raw truth, fierce love, and spiritual teaching as muscular as the fractured soul of this century demands. From her abiding Oklahoma roots to her historic leadership of a legendary New York seminary, her story illuminates the deep fault lines of this age--and points beyond them. With a voice that is at

once frank and poetic, humble and prophetic, intimate and practical, Jones makes complex teachings around hatred, forgiveness, mercy, justice, death, sin, and grace understandable and immediately applicable for modern people. Excavating the wisdom of great theological voices--Soren Kierkegaard, Reinhold Niebuhr, John Calvin, James Baldwin, James Cone, Luce Irigaray, Saint Teresa of Avila--she brings them to life with an intimacy and vividness that illumines our lives and our culture now. At the same time, and with great beauty, *Call It Grace* reveals Serene Jones as a towering voice of a new, and urgently necessary, public theology for this century.

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Excerpt: What Is True

When people have asked me what kind of book I am writing, I have been tempted to name the four things that provide the foundation of my theology: the necessity of our interconnecting breath, the importance of struggling for justice, the beauty of mercy, and the ultimate power of love. I know, however, if I put it this way, most of them would politely change the topic to something more gripping, like a new favorite television series or the most recent political scandal. I'd probably do the same if someone told me this is what his or her book is about.

If I told them, instead, that this book is about the horrific lynching of a young woman and her son in my grandpa's hometown, or my mother's secret life, or a mystical experience I had in India, or the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building by Timothy McVeigh and my concurrent tumultuous divorce, their interest would likely instantly spark. Dramatic topics like these have the power to grab

ahold of us, make us want to hear the full story, provoke our desire to learn something we hadn't known or thought about before.

The most interesting thing to me about our innately human draw toward stories is the deeper truths they reveal about our conflicted human nature and our quest for meaning. In my own life, the most astonishing moments come when grace—that imponderable gift of God—breaks through the surface of life and shines its light on all that is. There is no bigger, more dramatic story than this. When the inner workings of our lives are laid bare before us and we see ourselves for who we really are, and in a flash, it all makes mysterious, transcendent sense—that's a truly amazing moment. It deserves our attention and is worthy of our questions.

Truth be told, everyone has dramatic stories to tell, if one dares to look closely at one's life: the tales of the horrible sins one's family has hidden, the shameful things one has done and regretted, the incomprehensible tragedies that knock out one's breath, the loves that have lasted and the loves that have failed. No question about it, the human drama is endlessly intriguing, disturbing, and quirky. Mine is not unusual in this regard.

But here's the rub. We can tell these stories till the day is done and then wake up tomorrow and tell more of them. That's not a challenge for us. The challenge is using our stories to explore the questions: So what? What do these stories tell us about ourselves and the purpose of our lives? What do our endless dramas reveal about our nature? What do they reveal about the possibility, the necessity, the reality of the divine? So what do they show about the future of our lives together? The fate of our planet? The intractable fact of suffering? The insistent corruptions of power? The sins we inherit? The glories we have yet to claim?

So what?

So what if there's God or not?

If there is, what does God have to do with me?
With us?

Look at your life and dare to ask, "So what?" If you can take this one small step, it sparks the divine

imagination into theological story-telling, and there begins the theological quest. Living this way inevitably helps us find our theological anchors by which to live with our eyes set on the divine even while—especially while—our feet tread this earth.

A CANTEEN, A CAMP SONG

Theology is a place and a story. Theology is the place and the story you think of when you ask yourself about the meaning of your life, of the world, and the possibility of God.

For me that place sits, windswept but defiant, on a plain in Oklahoma, a spot of red, dry earth in the middle of a farm on the outskirts of the small town of Billings. It has a population of one—a spirit, mine, who has dwelled there as far back as my imagination reaches. I go there again and again, to this dusty piece of land, to remember what is true—and to find God. I go there to find my story—my theology. I go there to be born again; to be made whole; to unite what I was, what I am, and what I will become.

One hot, hot summer day in 1910, "a devil's day," as I've heard it told, my six-year-old grandmother-to-be, Idabel, sat in that spot on a blanket beneath a horse-drawn wagon. She was thin, her skin sunburned beneath her small, white cotton dress. The horse's hooves kept shifting in front of her; the horse couldn't stand the heat. She knew the sun was torturing the creature. Her mother and father, two of the original Sooners who had migrated to that barren land from rural Pennsylvania in search of income and property, were working the arid sod with a mule-drawn plow. My grandmother was watching them work, the terrible sun surely making her realize even as a child that nature can be as cruel as it is beautiful.

And then, as she told it to me with such consistency and precision so many times, she reached out and wrapped her hands around the metal water jug hanging from the underbelly of the wagon. It felt cool to her, so gorgeously refreshing that she brought it closer to her and hugged the jug with her whole body. She forgot the impulse of thirst entirely and clung to the coolness of the metal jug. Every time, at the end of the story, she would tell me that she felt like she was touching God, that she

was hugging God and would never ever again want to let go.

She gave me this beautiful story. She told me it so many times that I feel like I lived through it myself—I am she, she is I, and we are one. For her—and now for me—God is coolness in the midst of the blazing heat; God is smooth metal pressing against your body; God is water that you don't so much drink as embrace. My best definition of theology is this story. In fact, I've realized over the years that this story gives me a theology deeper and richer and more accurate than any fancy European theologian from centuries past, despite his or her brilliance, ever could.

That place has for much of my life been my version of Rome, of Jerusalem, of Mecca, of Salt Lake City, of Tibet. It is the holiest of places, the place out of which my ideas and beliefs and understanding have grown, the place where suffering and joy and fear and faith are so interwoven and inextricable that I at last understand what it means—and what it takes—to accept life for what it really is, to let my body wrap tightly around the cooling love of God.

THEOLOGY, NOT RELIGION

My theology is also rooted in another place and story, almost seventy years later and a few hours down the road from the field with the wagon under which my grandmother sat. It was a summer night in July 1974, and I was sitting cross-legged at my family's local church campground not far from Guthrie, Oklahoma. It was a dry, cragged piece of earth beside a receding lake under infinite stars hanging over what seemed infinite prairie. There was a campfire, and the air was filled with smoke and the urgency and anxiety of teenage hormones—and the sound of a guitar.

Every summer as a kid I went to this Disciples of Christ campground, but this summer—the summer of my first taste of sex and fire and music—I was fifteen and raging with life. The hot fire was what I wanted to touch—not cool, holy water—and it was right in front of me, too. All around me, a yearning for more of—well—everything. Especially things forbidden.

The song of that summer—for us and for many people our age across the country in 1974—was that wistful, aching song "One Tin Soldier." Somehow it captured the sadness and hope that hovered over the whole nation.

But we hadn't gotten to that sing-along yet—the night was still young.

In this theological memory, we were singing along to Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." Looking into the fire's flames, I recalled that my grandfather Dick Jones, the terrible man who would marry my jug-hugging grandmother one day, grew up next door to the Guthries. "My mother wouldn't let me play with that poor white trash, those Guthrie kids," I used to hear him say, as if he were rich, white, and clean.

So we were singing the song his dirty neighbor had written, verses that I had sung a hundred times at school and at church, words my daughter still sings today:

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island;
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf
Stream waters
This land was made for you and me.

And so we sang well-known words for three more verses. Then we came to two jarring verses at the end that completely confounded me. We fell silent as the guitar player's lone voice sang:

As I went walking I saw a sign there
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,
That side was made for you and me.
In the shadow of the steeple I saw my
people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there
asking
Is this land made for you and me?
I had never sung or heard those verses
before.

The campfire blazed on and my momentary confusion subsided, the fire and Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" easing it. But later that night I asked the scruffy-bearded singer about those extra verses. He told me with barely concealed contempt, as if I were guilty of not knowing the obvious, "This country only wants us to hear the

pretty verses. Happy songs. But Woody Guthrie wrote about real life, which isn't so nice. We want to lop off the hard stuff."

I felt ignorant. And deceived. And angry. And yet somehow at fault. Why had I been unknowingly singing this shortened version all these years? What were the adults afraid of? What about those two stanzas was threatening and bad? What had made my hometown ministers want to hide them from us?

I often go back in my mind to this place and story not because it's particularly dramatic or mind shattering, but because over time it has become for me a metaphor for the America in which I have lived for sixty years and for the uniquely American theology that I practice. The religion I was officially taught was sunny, hopeful, and helpful. The version of American history I was officially taught was similarly bright and instructive. But, as my father taught me, official American religion, just like accepted American history, lops off the uncomfortable verses about our lives; about poverty, suffering, cold-hearted exclusion, and raw hatred. Official histories and religions also often lop off the sin and the despair. As Woody Guthrie so rightly knew, those verses are a core part of our identity as citizens—and as believers. He viewed Christianity, in his own words, as an "every day fight" and a faith that "had to be lived" on a daily basis. And singing the hard verses—and praying them—is the only way to live what is true and to believe in what can truly sustain us.

Finding your core stories and then reflecting on their greater significance is theology—not religion. Many people, I find, confuse this simple practice of theology with "religion" but the two are quite different. Religion refers to the official organizations, institutions, rituals, rules, and codified belief systems that human beings create over time in order to contain and manage the power of faith. The biggest concerns of religion are usually order, control, obedience, and maintaining the boundaries of the system itself. Theology, in contrast, tries to rise above religion's rules and structures in order to ask the perennially big questions about the meaning of all life, of the cosmos, of the full verses of the truth about God—or at least as much as we

can grasp or as much as grasps us. This book is about theology, not religion.

The word "theology" simply means "speech or words about God." In my experience, most people, at some point in their lives, ask themselves about the ultimate purpose of their existence: Why am I here? Is there a bigger point to it all? Is there a god?

Every time these questions are asked, theology is happening. Most often, these questions surface when we are faced with the loss of a loved one, or experience great tragedy, or are forced to face our own inevitable death. These questions arise, too, when we experience something utterly miraculous, like the birth of a child, or when we behold something that exceeds our normal ways of thinking, like a powerful work of art or an extraordinary sunset. Sometimes they also come amid everyday life when we quietly pause and wonder about the mere, odd fact that we are alive. Whatever the occasion for such thoughts might be, theology names both the questions asked and the search for answers, including those answers that never come.

For me, those questions and answers can be traced back to a canteen and a camp song—an experience of grace and a lesson in lies. Give some thought to what those core stories and places might be for you. And remember that theology, as a universal human endeavor, is not the special province of a few trained thinkers. It's something we all do, whether we are formed by a faith tradition or not, whether we come up with helpful answers or not, whether we finally believe in God or not. Theology simply names the human search for what is ultimately true. For me, that search for meaning brought me to an answer called grace.

GRACE: SIX CORE BELIEFS

People often ask me, as a theologian, if I believe in God. It is an odd question to ask an ordained minister who heads Union Theological Seminary, a famous, almost two-hundred-year-old school in New York City devoted to educating religious leaders to help people with their ultimate questions. A theologian like me has to believe in God—and

even have a pretty clear vision and definition of God, right?

Well, it depends. If by God you mean an entity that hovers somewhere above us, watching all we do and constantly judging if we are doing right or wrong, then no. If you mean God as a being, like we are beings, or as any kind of an object, or even an essence, as we understand those terms, then also no. But if you mean believing the universe is ultimately loved by a divine reality that is greater and more wonderful than we can begin to imagine, and that in this reality we find our ultimate destiny, the purpose of our existence, then yes.

Based on this view of theology, I can summarize the theology that unfolds in this book in six parts.

God is mystery. For many theologians throughout the history of the Christian tradition, God has been an intellectual problem to be solved through complex sentences filling large tomes of prose. They've lost sense of the idea that mystery is, by definition, unsolvable. A true mystery is something you never figure out because its mystery lies in the fact that it can never be fully known. So by saying God is a mystery, I am indeed recognizing that I don't know entirely what or who God "is." I admit it; I don't know and I never will. Plain and simple. As a believer, I am relatively dogmaless, if by dogma one means crisp fact-statements about God and an unwavering certainty you are right. I have neither in my belief about the divine. And yet—this is the interesting part—I actually do believe in God, strongly. I believe infinitely and with certainty that the mystery we cannot know is loving; indeed, it is Love, and that in this Love we find our true existence. If that's my dogma, then so be it.

This infinite mystery is our creator, sustainer, and ultimately, our consummator; our beginning, our middle, and our end. Divine love is the source of the universe and of the dinosaurs, the planets, the elements, and the air, the force that sparked us into existence and baffles us all while we exist, the current of love and joy and beauty that runs through the human experience. God is fertile, fecund, and eternally generative. Believing in God the creator, sustainer, and consummator also means, in turn, that I understand the world as God's ever-sustained creation and us as God's creatures.

Existence, in its entirety, from beginning to end, is dependent upon and always connected to and inspired by the source from which it flows, God. To be clear, this doesn't mean I think the world was literally created in six days or that God is up there somewhere carefully calculating the character of every person who springs to life and what he or she does. It's simpler (and more complex) than that. All life flows into being out of one source, Divine Love, and it is forever deeply related and responsive to that love. That love defines, holds, and promises to be present to the lives that God calls into being. That eternally present love is, most simply stated, my definition of grace.

3. Jesus stands as the truest and most vivid and profound human manifestation of that life force. For me, raised as a Christian, this is central to my belief. I am frankly skeptical that Jesus was, strictly speaking, the biological Son of God—it's too hard to fathom what that would mean if taken literally. I do believe, however, that in Jesus, Divine Love was fully present in a way that ordinary human beings rarely, if ever, experience and embody. He was completely full of God. Some traditional theologians would call me blasphemous for putting it this way. I call it part of the mystery. I try—and always fail—every day to live like Jesus, to follow him; every day Jesus makes Divine Love in the world present to me; and I know Jesus's story brings me closer to God than any story I have ever been told or any experience I have ever had. Indeed, I see the world through that story's eyes. It is also true that, for me, stories about Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Buddha, and others often echo these same Jesus-truths I hold. In fact, these other stories sometimes do a better job of making clear aspects of Ultimate Love than the Jesus story. And I'm confident that Jesus would not mind me saying this one bit, for the point of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection is to manifest love's fullness, not to make sure no one else ever talks about it or reveals this truth.

God does not stay at a distance from us but constantly seeks to transform our lives by asking us to awaken to the divine presence. God is a mysterious, creative, sustaining life force. Like my grandma's cool jug, God is there all the time. The challenge for us is to open our eyes, ears, hands,

minds, and hearts to receive the truth of God's real, persistent presence, God's grace. When we open ourselves to it, we are changed by it. The way we perceive the world shifts, like a radically refocused camera lens, and we experience life differently. You see everything around you as suffused with God's love. You see God's grace everywhere, saturating all existence. This process of awakening to what is already true, but you haven't previously seen it, is called conversion—a word that literally means "to see anew." Sometimes it happens quickly, like a bolt of lightning that suddenly strikes, brightening our horizon and exposing us to new realities that were right in front of us. Other times, it is a slow unfolding process, like watching an artist slowly scratch out lines and add color and form to a painting whose depth and brilliance grow more amazing with each new stroke of paint, making what is true about life ever more vibrant and meaningful. Most of the time, this awakening is a combination of both—lightning bolts and an artist's work—and it continues this way until the end of our days, ever clearer, never complete, always mysterious.

When you catch glimpses of this truth, you become painfully aware of how asleep you've been and how most of us spend our lives acting as if that brilliant love of God does not exist, oblivious to it, even disdainful of it. The traditional Christian words describing this contrasting reality are "sin" and "evil." Sin simply refers to all aspects of life where the reality of grace is not manifest and evil flourishes. It's what happens when we've got the wrong story about reality in our heads. If we do not recognize grace, we latch onto lies about who we are. These lies are manifest in an endless variety of godless dispositions: hatred, violence, greed, injustice, pride, despair, isolation, self-loathing, unbridled arrogance, a hardened heart, a cold soul. When these lies are aggregated over time, they get compressed into social systems and cultural patterns that look to us as if they are true, when in truth they are not. They are evil and profoundly destructive. This is what it means to be godless—to not be awakened to the light of God's love. It describes grace-asleep people as well as whole grace-asleep societies. Defined this way, religious people can be just as godless, if not more

so, than nonreligious ones. Indeed, religions have generated some of the biggest, not-grace-filled, evil lies about human life and about God that the world has seen. And many people who appear to be godless because they don't believe in God are nonetheless quite grace-filled in the loving lives they lead. This is part of the mystery.

6. The transformations that happen to you when you wake up to grace from sin are overwhelming and real. Your life is radically changed. You want to love yourself and others in a way that reflects the reality that God loves both you and them, completely and eternally. This doesn't mean, however, that the path back to sin miraculously shuts down. The power of sin and social evil are as strong as the false stories and lies that are pressed into our bodies and minds from the moment we are born. You never escape them entirely, and you're kidding yourself if you think you can. When you awaken to grace, you see sin, you struggle against it, but you recognize that it is endemic to the world you live in, the world that lives inside you. One needs to develop a kind of double vision about one's self and about human beings in general. On the one hand, we are blessed by the grace of God; on the other, we are still caught in sin's grip and left wrestling with its evil lies. This double vision is captured well in the great theological phrase: We are both saints and sinners, all.

This constant tension between sin and grace in our lived experience doesn't mean, however, that they are equal partners in determining our destiny. Because grace is of God, it ultimately wins. We are forgiven by God, whatever horrors we commit or are done to us, however unmeritorious our deeds and broken our lives, because that's who God is. Grace is free; we don't earn it nor are we required to deserve it. That's what makes grace grace. It comes unbidden to us all.

STATIONS

This is the sort of theology that runs through my life and through this book; it is built upon the insights and teachings of some of the world's greatest theological minds. John Calvin is the one who exerts the most influence on my own theology, his legacy passed along to me through generations of Joneses. There are also theologians who had

enormous impact on my early theological awakening: Soren Kierkegaard, Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth, and my own theologian-father, Joe Jones. And then there are the theologians who matured and deepened my understanding of grace as I grew older and my world expanded: Luce Irigaray, James Baldwin, Howard Thurman, James Cone, Teresa of Avila, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Katie Cannon. It's a great loss to our society that many of these theologians are no longer read or taken seriously. Their teachings make sense of so many of the troubles we face; to not read them is to close off access to the very truths that might save us. Time and again, they have saved me.

It never fails to surprise me, however, how many people in America today either look at this theology with elitist distaste or find it intellectually irrelevant. My ardently secular friends ask me for more evidence for all my Divine Love talk, thinking my assertions mere extensions of a liberal Christian fantasy life. Wishy-washy, they'd say. My liberal theological scholar-friends who have devoted their lives to parsing the intricacies of accessible God-talk find it intellectually weak and too experiential. Academic lightweight, I hear them whisper. Some of my evangelical Christian friends and family members quickly judge me a theological abomination, a heretical blender of Eastern and Western traditions.

But one of the many benefits of my theological grounding in Oklahoma is that I try to remain open to these questions and criticisms—as open as the wide plains of my childhood. Granted, I pretty much know what I believe when it comes to divine mystery and love and all the things I don't and never will know. But I also believe that theology is not just a personal endeavor; it is about truths that pertain to the whole of reality. With truths that big, conversation and openness are not just good, they're a theological necessity.

I came to this theology by way of key events in my life that I write about in this book. I came to it through suffering and joy, through doubt and clarity, through hatred and love, and through, most of all, my interactions with other people. I see the power, love, and goodness of our Creator in natural beauty, in food, in art, in music. I also see it

painfully revealed through its contrast to the mighty evils that assail our world: genocide, racism, virulent misogyny, violence, devastating poverty, destruction of the earth, corruption, despair, moral vacuity, and the triumph of unbridled greed. But I most see this power, love, and goodness when I feel grace from others, when I am graced by kindness, humor, creativity, striving, compassion. But even these experiences don't capture the fullness of God; they point toward it, not as an object or essence, but as inexhaustible, mysterious divine reality.

The book is divided into four stations that roughly correspond to four stages in my personal theological journey. The word "station" comes from the rather old-fashioned image of "stations in life"; it is a series of places and times that shape our minds and souls in distinctive and intense ways. They are our great awakening moments or our conversion times. Stations also echoes the "stations of the cross," which are used in the Christian tradition to mark stops along the path of Christ's journey to the Cross. As with Christ's stations, I pause at each of my own stations to reflect on the universal theological significance of each place and time.

The first station in this book, called "Sin and Grace," describes the theological story that I inherited from the "old-time religion" that ran through the lives of my forebears in Oklahoma, and through the theology of John Calvin, the old-school theologian who most influenced them—and still to this day influences me. The second station, "Destiny and Freedom," explores the key lessons about grace I learned in the 1960s and 1970s from my mother and father and from my teenage awakening to the injustices of life and the contradictions of theology. The third station, "Hatred and Forgiveness," traces my theological life from age twenty to forty-five, as I evolved through studies in India in 1984, through my family's close proximity to the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 and the execution of Timothy McVeigh in 2001, and through the separation that led to my divorce in 2002. The fourth station, "Redeeming Life and Death," chronicles events from 1996 to the present that led me to rethink the essence of faith.

These include my daughter's and my own near-death experiences, my years as president of Union Theological Seminary, and my struggle with legacies bequeathed to me by both my parents in their later years.

While these stations do follow the rough timeline of milestones in my theological life, they are not presented as a full-fledged memoir, nor do they pretend to track the story of a belief system evolving in a straight line. There is no unbending path to truth when it comes to ultimate questions and perennial wisdom, and my own life's winding road is no exception.

As I share stories about these moments of awakening in each station, it is important to remember that my theology came not only through my grandma's faith but through my own and others' experiences of terror and suffering; not only through my father's intellect but through my mother's unrealized yearnings; not only through the incandescent joy of motherhood but through the incomprehensible pain of divorce and the shock of death; not only through the thrilling freedom of feminism but through the horror-ridden truth of white supremacy and pervasive classism. The inevitable path to grace is through sin. That I know is true, too.

I came to this definition after roughly six decades on this earth, about forty years of which have been as a theologian. So I was a theologian long before I was able to articulate what I actually believed. I still live the stories that keep helping me discover the profundity of the mystery; I keep taking the leap of faith over the abyss, each time more confident that I will land on the other side, and each time less fearful of what lies below.

This theology of grace isn't just personal, however; it's also profoundly political and social. I believe this moment in our history is a unique one for embarking on the search for a new, more grace-filled American spirituality—really for a new (and ancient) American God who can heal and succor and inspire us in such a faithless time. I sense that there is a growing American longing for this theology. As a minister, teacher, friend, and administrator, I interact with people from all walks of life. Most are searching, longing, and yet so

many of us are in despair. No one believes in anything; some try, but fail, to believe in that foolish thing called "the self." Nihilism, hopelessness, and moral emptiness reign, on both the right and left sides of the political spectrum. We have grown godless. Especially, but not only, inside our faith communities. The ideas of mystery, grace, love, sin, and forgiveness need to be made available to people in an accessible way and need to become part of the public discourse again. With these concepts we can imagine a different future with a different public language. I believe a theology of grace can help us achieve the kind of honesty and openness—toward ourselves and toward others—required to banish the presiding despair and, as a culture, walk toward grace and global well-being. <>

[Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement](#) by Katherine M. Marino [Gender and American Culture, The University of North Carolina Press, 9781469649696]

This book chronicles the dawn of the global movement for women's rights in the first decades of the twentieth century. The founding mothers of this movement were not based primarily in the United States, however, or in Europe. Instead, Katherine M. Marino introduces readers to a cast of remarkable Latin American and Caribbean women whose deep friendships and intense rivalries forged global feminism out of an era of imperialism, racism, and fascism. Six dynamic activists form the heart of this story: from Brazil, Bertha Lutz; from Cuba, Ofelia Dominguez Navarro; from Uruguay, Paulina Luisi; from Panama, Clara Gonzalez; from Chile, Marta Vergara; and from the United States, Doris Stevens. This Pan-American network drove a transnational movement that advocated women's suffrage, equal pay for equal work, maternity rights, and broader self-determination. Their painstaking efforts led to the enshrinement of women's rights in the United Nations Charter and the development of a framework for international human rights. But their work also revealed deep divides, with Latin American activists overcoming U.S. presumptions to feminist superiority. As Marino shows, these early fractures continue to influence

divisions among today's activists along class, racial, and national lines.

Marino's multinational and multilingual research yields a new narrative for the creation of global feminism. The leading women introduced here were forerunners in understanding the power relations at the heart of international affairs. Their drive to enshrine fundamental rights for women, children, and all people of the world stands as a testament to what can be accomplished when global thinking meets local action.

Editorial appraisals:

In this compelling and impressively researched book, Marino makes a considerable contribution to our understanding of international feminism and transnational movements and does an excellent job portraying U.S. women's complicated participation in--and effort to dominate--the Pan-American women's movement.--Lynn Dumenil, author of *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I*

This book supersedes all previous treatments of Pan-American feminism between the 1920s and the 1950s as well as those of the international work of the National Woman's Party of the United States. It will also force critical revisions in understanding how human rights and women's rights were articulated in the United Nations Charter. Marino's stupendous research on two continents in three languages has uncovered and enabled her to write an entirely new portrayal of work for and against equal rights treaties by feminists of the Americas. She goes behind the scenes of international meetings and conferences to provide gripping and shrewd portraits of six leading women's lives and political evolution. We hear their voices; we feel we understand their emotions as well as their political stances; the narrative advances dramatically as personalities and politics alternately converge and conflict. This is the most convincing case I have ever seen for decentering the United States in histories of transnational or international work, in order to tell the full story.--Nancy F. Cott, author of *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*

Katherine Marino's brilliant history of *feminismo americano* gives Latin American women their rightful place in the history of the transnational women's movement. Crafting an engrossing narrative of individual lives and collective action based on exhaustive multinational research, Marino details the ways Latin American feminists fought on the global stage for economic and social, as well as legal, equality throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and made women's rights human rights long before Hillary Rodham Clinton was born.--Leila Rupp, author of *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*

Marino has produced an extraordinary book. Her deep and wide-ranging research brings to life some of the key figures and organizations that defined hemispheric women's activism in the first half of the twentieth century.--Jocelyn Olcott, author of *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History*

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Excerpt: *Feminismo americano*

The intense intellectual work that courses through *feminismo americano* reveals ... women's profound action, completely in tune with the social reality. The movement ... is energetic and decisive. ROSA BORJA DE ICAZA, *Hach' la vida*, 1936

In 1931, a conflict between two prominent women's rights leaders changed the course of feminism in the

Americas. From the United States, Doris Stevens wrote to her Cuban colleague Ofelia Domínguez Navarro with instructions to fight for women's suffrage.

Cuba was on the brink of a revolution, and forty-two-year-old Stevens, a veteran of the U.S. suffrage movement, believed that it spelled feminist opportunity. Over the past two years, the worldwide economic crisis had caused political and social tumult in the United States and throughout the Americas, from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego. In Cuba, it fostered the newly repressive dictatorship of President Gerardo Machado, who promised constitutional reforms as window dressing to his undemocratic regime. Stevens viewed it as the perfect time to promote women's political rights and did not hesitate to suggest as much to Domínguez. Failing to do so, Stevens indicated, would set back progress for Cuban women.'

Thirty-six-year-old Domínguez bristled at her colleague's unsolicited advice. She too believed this moment heralded women's politicization, but not through the vote, which would be "stale at the source" under a dictatorship. In earlier communication with Stevens, Domínguez had explained Cuba's current "regime of terror," propped up by the U.S. government? Machado had abolished habeas corpus, replaced elected officials with secret police, closed universities, curtailed free speech and free assembly, and jailed political dissidents. Feminists were leading direct action against the dictatorship, alongside students and workers, and were often the targets of violence. Domínguez had just endured two prison sentences. Stevens, however, offered no words of solace or solidarity, only instructions to push for suffrage.

Dominguez fired back with her own letter, telling Stevens there was much she did not understand. In Cuba, Domínguez explained, feminismo signified something broader than support for women's political rights. It meant radical transformation—not only women's political and civil equality but also social and economic justice for working women and the political and civil rights of all people—men and women who were suffering under a dictatorship and under U.S. imperialism. Domínguez had

recently founded a new feminist group in Cuba that espoused all of these goals. But now Domínguez was done pleading with Stevens. Her letter was a goodbye.

Stevens's missive was the last straw in the two women's strained relationship. Several years earlier, they had collaborated at the Sixth Pan-American Conference in Havana to found the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), a body formed to unite a hemispheric feminist movement and promote international women's rights. Since that time, Stevens chaired the organization unilaterally and focused its efforts solely on women's political and civil rights. She consistently ignored Latin American appeals to expand the commission's agenda.

Dominguez's letter, which brought an end to her collaboration with Stevens, became a call to arms. She reproduced their correspondence on a one-page broadside, front and back, adding only the header "To the Political Conscience of the Latin American Woman," and circulated it widely to Spanish-speaking feminists throughout the Americas.

The way Domínguez framed feminismo spoke powerfully to her many readers. Feminismo was becoming a hemispheric movement—what Domínguez's country-woman Catalina Pozo y Gato described as a "tightly-knit continental network"

in which the "Hispanic-American woman" sought the "conquest of her politicosocial and proletarian rights." While many of these feministas applauded Stevens's dogged push for women's legal equality, they promoted more expansive goals. They also resented Stevens's unilateral leadership over inter-American feminism, which, as they saw it, was an extension of U.S. imperialism.

Several years later, Domínguez's group called the dissemination of this flyer one of its greatest anti-imperialist acts. It inspired and helped unite feministas across the Americas. Over the following years, they organized as a bloc and asserted their leadership over American feminism. Their legacy of feminismo americano endures today in the global movements for feminism and international human rights.

This book tells the story of the movement that Doris Stevens claimed to lead and that Ofelia Domínguez Navarro and other feministas remade. Over the first half of the twentieth century, *feminismo americano* galvanized leaders and groups throughout the hemisphere who helped inaugurate what we think of today as global feminism—a fight for women's rights and human rights on a global scale. Working in coordinated campaigns that began after World War I and coincided with a new Pan-Americanism touting the cultural superiority of the Americas, activists moved women's rights beyond the domestic realm. Collaborating and clashing, they ushered in the first intergovernmental organization for women's rights in the world (the IACW); the first international treaty for women's rights; and, in 1945, the inclusion of women's rights in the United Nations Charter and its category of international human rights. In countries throughout the Americas, these innovations sped numerous changes for women—suffrage, equal nationality rights, rights to hold public office, equal pay for equal work, and maternity legislation.

Although U.S. feminists sought credit for this movement, Latin American leaders drove and dramatically expanded it. They assertively promoted a meaning of "feminism" that was broader than the term's definition in the United States at the time. Coined in France in 1880 by suffragist Hubertine Auclert, *feminisme* traveled throughout Europe and the Americas, connoting a modern movement that demanded female emancipation—economic and social justice, women's control over their bodies, and full equality with men in every sphere of life? In the United States, feminism reached a breakthrough in the 1910s, uniting a wide group of reformers and suffragists. However, the mainstream meaning of the term narrowed precipitously in the United States soon after the 1920 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women's suffrage, becoming synonymous with the Equal Rights Amendment. Introduced into Congress in 1923 by the National Woman's Party, the ERA promised to bring women individual rights under the law: rights to independent nationality and to serve on juries, engage in business, serve as witnesses to public

documents, and administer property. While supporting many of these rights in theory, wide swaths of progressive reformers in the United States opposed the ERA'S sweeping guarantee of "equal rights under the law" for fear it would eliminate hardfought protective labor legislation necessary to safeguard working women. The Woman's Party's narrowness of vision and explicit resistance to addressing raceor class-based injustices made the group and the ERA anathema to many other movements, as well.

It was, in part, this contraction of the meaning of "feminism" and lack of support for the ERA in the United States that made National Woman's Party leaders like Doris Stevens eager to engage in the inter-American realm in the late 1920s. The single-issue focus on legal equality that they deemed so successful in the U.S. suffrage movement defined their approach to inter-American feminism. Their Equal Rights Treaty, an internationalization of the ERA, proyoked concerted resistance from the network of U.S. women's groups opposed to the ERA. As a result, from the 1920s to the 1940s, the inter-American realm became a significant new battleground for U.S. women to play out their domestic ERA debate. Each side believed that it represented the rightful leadership over the Americas, where, aside from the United States and Canada, most countries still had not passed national women's suffrage.

In these years, however, more flexible meanings of feminism flourished in Latin America, where the ERA debate did not exist and where activists of multiple commitments took up the term with far greater ease than their North American counterparts. While Latin American feminisms were heterogeneous, large groups of feministas cohered around some common goals for *feminismo americano*.

First, *feminismo americano* demanded not only women's individual rights under the law—for the vote and for civil rights—but also economic and social rights. These rights included equal pay for equal work, extension of labor legislation to rural and domestic workers, and rights of children born out of wedlock and of the mothers of those children. Activists also called for paid maternity

leave, day-care facilities, and in some cases health care as "social rights."

Second, *feminismo americano* assertively promoted Latin American leadership and opposition to U.S. imperialism. Many Latin American feminists identified U.S. counterparts' presumptions of superiority as imperialist, especially since the United States had long used its perceived preeminence in women's rights as justification for its political and economic ambitions in the region.⁹ In inter-American feminism, the questions of who had the authority to speak and to assert common "American" principles became paramount. Feministas actively pushed back against a U.S. imperial feminism that often sought to squelch their goals. Their clashes with U.S. leaders helped produce a robust *feminismo americano* that pushed for liberation from multiple and overlapping forms of oppression—against patriarchy, U.S. imperialism, fascism, and often racism.

Debates over U.S. empire fueled the movement's hemispheric goals. The terms "American," "Pan-American," and "inter-American" were important identifiers for these women. But "Latin American" and "Pan-Hispanic," terms that emerged after the U.S. government annexed more than a third of Mexico's territory in 1848, were often more important. Pan-Hispanism was a regional identity based on a common *raza*, language, and shared history of oppression under U.S. economic, cultural, and military imperialism. Profoundly influenced by Pan-Hispanism, early-twentieth-century feminists urged each other to take inspiration from their own history and ideas, rather than from Europe and the U.S. Over the first four decades of the twentieth century, Pan-Hispanism also helped shape new forms of multilateral inter-American law that emphasized both international interdependence and national sovereignty. This *mélange* of thought, activism, and dynamism in inter-American jurisprudence facilitated one of *feminismo americano's* signal innovations and key contributions to international human rights: its push of "women's rights" beyond the purely domestic realm and into international law.

Feminismo americano's demands for international women's rights; its emphasis on social and economic

as well as political and civil inequalities; and its calls for a Latin American-led anti-imperialist feminism gained a groundswell of support during the global crises of the 1930s. The economic and political shifts of the Great Depression intensified many feminists' attention to social and economic rights. The Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932-35) focused new efforts by women on pacifism. Fascism's rise in Europe and Asia, along with the growth of related forms of right-wing authoritarianism in the Americas and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), helped generate vibrant transnational, antifascist feminist organizing. The global Popular Front movement that declared a "united front" of collaboration between communism and social democracy against fascism had profound national and inter-American iterations throughout the Americas. As feminists realized fascism's unique threats to women's rights, and as Popular Front leaders recognized the vital role that women could play in antifascism, the Popular Front gained a dynamic feminist counterpart, as well.

These new developments culminated in what I call Popular Front Pan-American feminism, during which *feminismo americano* peaked. This was a people's movement. It incorporated feminist labor concerns with equal rights demands and knit crucial connections between feminism, socialism, antifascism and anti-imperialism. A dramatic number of new antifascist feminist groups emerged in the Americas in these years that for the first time included meaningful numbers of working women. Popular Front Pan-American feminism also mobilized new campaigns for women's suffrage throughout the region. When in 1939 the famous Spanish Civil War leader Dolores Ibárruri, "La Pasionaria," applauded the vitality of the women's movement in numerous Latin American countries, she was referring to Popular Front Pan-American feminism.

Feminismo americano played a pivotal role in the development of international human rights. It produced a legal innovation in a treaty that sought to surpass national law and grant international women's rights. Groups throughout the Americas rallied around this treaty, as they expanded its meaning. In the late 1930s through the Second World War, Latin American feminists joined

religious, labor, antiracist, anticolonial, and antifascist groups to demand an interconnected set of "human rights" for all people, defined as rights regardless of race, class, sex, or religion. During the Second World War, *feministas americanas* also looked to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter and "Four Freedoms" as promises of *derechos humanos*—international commitments to social justice—that included women's rights.

In 1945, at the San Francisco conference that created the United Nations, inter-American feminists pushed women's rights into the UN Charter, over the express objection of U.S. and British women. Drawing on arguments and experience they had honed over two decades, they internationalized women's rights and proposed what became the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Immediately after the conference, feminists demanded a broad meaning for the UN Charter's women's and human rights promises and urged acknowledgment that inter-American thought and activism shaped their formulation. The idea that "women's rights are human rights" emerged not from the United States or Western Europe but from Latin American feminists enmeshed in regional conflicts over imperialism, fascism, and Pan-Americanism.

In spite of the movement's monumental accomplishments, few people know of it. The pantheon of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders usually include recognizable names from the United States and Western Europe but not from Latin America. The story usually goes that until the 1970s, Latin America produced minimal women's rights organizing because of Catholicism, conservatism, and unstable political climates that would have rendered the vote moot. Where Latin American feminism did exist, it is often characterized as maternalist—privileging women as mothers, wives, and sometimes workers—but not as men's equals. Such interpretations map onto larger narratives that place the United States and Western Europe at the apex of global "progress" and that measure feminist progress through winning the vote. These histories usually portray international feminism of the interwar years as a one-way exportation of ideas from the United States and Western Europe to the "South" and argue that feminism did not truly

become "transnational" until after the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City. These histories generally fail to recognize how transformative the international sphere was for feminist thought and activism in the interwar years, in part because they limit the scope of the international to the United States and Europe.

If we look south, and explore multidirectional flows of influence, a new hemispheric history of feminism emerges. Given Latin American countries' common histories of U.S. empire and Pan-Hispanic identity, the inter-American realm was a critical site of innovation for new forms of feminism in the early twentieth century. In these years, as the ranks of Latin American feminists grew, they envisioned themselves from the start in both regional and national units; transnational interdependence was the hallmark of their thought and activism.

This book argues that Latin American feminisms not only thrived but, in fact, took the lead internationally. It calls for the historical restoration of Latin American feminist leaders as innovators in global feminist thought and activism. In the interwar years, when dominant understandings of feminism in the United States and Western Europe fractured into two increasingly distinct and irreconcilable socialist and "equalitarian" camps, *feminismo americano* called for "equal rights" alongside social and economic rights and saw no incompatibility between these two demands. More than Catholicism or maternalism, Latin American liberalism shaped this supple definition of feminism. Popularized by the 1917 Constitution of Mexico, which became a model for constitutions in Brazil, Uruguay, and other countries in Latin America, this brand of Latin American social democracy upheld both the individual and the family as fundamental political units.

In the 1930s, communism and the Popular Front also helped to internationalize the social rights claims at the heart of *feminismo americano*. While demanding political and civil rights, feminists also acknowledged both the expansion of women's waged labor and the unwaged labor for which women were disproportionately responsible. They blazed new trails, urging international attention to maternity legislation as a "social right" in a way

that did not stigmatize working mothers and in a way that did not subvert women's political or economic autonomy or valorize motherhood above all else. Many also called for reproductive rights—including access to birth control and legalized abortion—even if they did not elevate those demands to the status of equal rights treaties. Drawing on an array of tactics, they utilized official inter-American conferences to promote international women's and human rights, while also launching informal, grassroots mobilizations through groups that operated on international, regional, and national scale.

The movement, however, was not monolithic. It was fueled by significant disagreements that often quenched its expansion and above all by a heterogeneous group of feminist leaders. At a time when feminist organizing was structured hierarchically around individual leaders who often became proxies for their nations' ambitions on the international stage, the interpersonal dynamics of *feminismo americano* were critical. This book focuses on the collaborations and conflicts of six remarkable activists who became its dramatic personae: Paulina Luisi from Uruguay, Bertha Lutz from Brazil, Clara González from Panama, Ofelia Domínguez Navarro from Cuba, Doris Stevens from the United States, and Marta Vergara from Chile.

The Commission on the Status of Women. Bertha Lutz wrote in the margins of Gildersleeve's narrative, "muita informação tendenciosa e errata" (much biased and wrong information) and "liar!" Yet many scholars of human rights have continued to use Gildersleeve's book as a definitive account of the San Francisco conference, of women's work there, and of the meaning of human rights at the time. U.S. and English-language sources have held disproportionate power over the meanings of human rights and our historical narratives about them.

Some, however, did remember Lutz. The year before her death, Lutz was gratified to be an honored guest at the 1975 UN International Women's Year (IWY) Conference in Mexico City, that gave her an award, acknowledging her work

at the 1945 San Francisco UNCJ that had paved the way for the Mexico City conference.

The IWY conference had been suggested by both the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the WIDF, and included 6,000 participants from all over the world. It marked a new generation of feminists on the international stage. Activists from Latin America and from newly decolonizing parts of Asia and Africa pushed international agendas alongside those from Western Europe and the United States and called for a feminism that addressed geopolitical inequality, economic marginalization, and racial discrimination. This conference, and the UN Decade for Women (1975-85) it launched, fostered unprecedented new grassroots and global feminist organizing. Coinciding with a new field of international relations and development studies that focused on women and gender inequality in the third world, topics concerning women—maternal mortality, female infanticide, sexual trafficking and forced prostitution, rape and violence against women—increasingly became legitimate areas of study and international policy discussions. In 1979, the UN General Assembly also passed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

During this period of feminist ferment in the 1970s, new nongovernmental organizations like Amnesty International and transnational protest against human rights violations by Latin American dictatorships also spurred what historians have called the "breakthrough" moment of human rights activism. U.S. president Jimmy Carter shaped international diplomacy around human rights more than any U.S. president before or after, promoting a particular definition—political and civil rights, and freedom from torture—that typically did not include women's rights.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, feminists pushed to make "women's rights" "human rights." Latin American feminists were at the forefront of these efforts. At the first *Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe* (Latin America and Caribbean Feminist Encounter) in Bogotá, Colombia in 1981, groups called for an "International Day against Violence against Women," in honor of the

Maribal sisters who were violently assassinated by the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, to bring attention to gender-based violence and state violence as interrelated harms. U.S. feminist activists Charlotte Bunch and Catharine MacKinnon promoted use of international human rights law to confront women's rights, and in the Americas the IACW, after having suffered major budget cuts, revived itself in the late 1980s and began to focus on sexual violence in an unprecedented way. In 1988, the IACW drafted the first international convention that defined gender-based violence as a violation of human rights in the Convention of Belém do Para, adopted by the Organization of American States in 1994. The IACW situated this convention within a legacy of its own advocacy for the Equal Rights Treaty in the 1920s and 1930s and of the human rights regime dating to the 1945 UN Charter. The following year, Hillary Clinton brought the greatest international attention to this movement at the 1995 UN Beijing conference for women in her famous speech that announced that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights."

While Clinton's speech has been celebrated as the apotheosis of this idea, it is important to remember that the meanings of "women's rights as human rights" were just as contested in 1995 as they had been decades earlier. At the same 1995 Beijing conference, Afro-Latin American feminists pushed for an intersectional notion of "women's rights as human rights" and demanded that antiracism measures be included in women's human rights conventions. Later, at the United Nations Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances, held in Durban in September 2001, Afro-Latin American feminists successfully pushed for human rights resolutions that were both antiracist and feminist.⁵² Latin American groups have also been at the forefront of pushing for the rights of lesbian, gay, bi, and transgender people to be considered "human rights." The landmark 2011 United Nations Resolution on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity stemmed from a 2004 "Brazilian Resolution," the first international effort

to include the LGBT community in human rights protections.

When activists from the late twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries announced that "women's rights" are "human rights" and pushed for broad, international meanings of these terms, they were standing on the shoulders of Pan-American feminists. Numerous scholars have been critical of this slogan and exposed the hypocrisy of U.S.-led efforts in which white U.S. and Western European women position themselves as the harbingers of human rights to oppressed third world sisters, sometimes while using them as justification for military interventions. Others point out the continuing paradox of the United States proclaiming leadership in human rights while resisting signing international treaties that promise women's and human rights, including CEDAW, which has been signed by every government in the world except the United States, Iran, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and the Pacific Island nations of Tonga and Palau.

The history of *feminismo americano* shows us that the idea that "women's rights are human rights" is not a product of only, or even predominantly, U.S. or Western European activism, thought, or state power. Its history illustrates the transnational, collective, and social movement-driven origins of human rights as well as the tensions surrounding it today. From the 1920s through the 1940s, *feministas americanas* were in the vanguard in their calls for a broad array of international women's rights. Many of them were also forerunners in understanding the complexity of power relations in international affairs and developing a feminism that embraced an analysis of political economy and that was sensitive to multiple forms of oppression. These *feministas* recognized the interdependence of women's rights, antifascism, antiracism, and anti-imperialism. Many knew that equal rights for women and men were connected not only to national sovereignty but also to equal rights for the most oppressed and impoverished members of their communities. Unpacking their politics and relationships and the limitations of their visions can help restore full meaning to the notion they imparted that lives on today—that "women's rights are human rights."

The six feminists who helped drive this ideal knew that history is about authority and about who has the power to tell the story. Their racial, class, and educational privilege enabled their sense of historical importance and made it possible for them to create their archives and write books. They were able to attend Pan-American conferences and write themselves into their national histories, even if their combined transnational efforts are only now being recognized. Yet the many more who made *feminismo americano* the vital movement it was rarely had the resources at their disposal to create their own archives or publications. It is important to more fully recover the histories of these activists—those who marched, who protested, who worked, who struck, who petitioned, who lobbied, who organized clandestinely, and who looked to collective international solidarity as a way to propel their own local agendas. Their voices and actions will help us better appreciate diverse, expansive notions of women's rights, human rights, social interdependence, and the various forms of oppression—local, national, and global—that make them necessary. Their ideals broaden our understandings of feminism in the past and point us to new possibilities in the future. <>

[Women Talking: A Novel](#) by Miriam Toews [Knopf Canada, 9780735273962]

A transformative and necessary work--as completely unexpected as it is inspired--by the award-winning author of the bestselling novels *All My Puny Sorrows* and *A Complicated Kindness*.

Based on actual events that happened between 2005 and 2009 in a remote Mennonite community where more than 100 girls and women were drugged unconscious and assaulted in the night by what they were told (by the men of the colony) were "ghosts" or "demons," Miriam Toews' bold and affecting novel *Women Talking* is an imagined response to these real events.

The novel takes place over forty-eight hours, as eight women gather in secret in a neighbour's barn while the men are in a nearby town posting bail for the attackers. They have come together to debate, on behalf of all the women and children in the

community, whether to stay or leave before the men return. Taking minutes is the one man trusted and invited by the women to witness the conversation--a former outcast whose own surprising story is revealed as the women speak.

By turns poignant, witty, acerbic, bitter, tender, devastating, and heartbreaking, the voices in this extraordinary novel are unforgettable. Toews has chosen to focus the novel tightly on a particular time and place, and yet it contains within its 48 hours and setting inside a hayloft an entire vast universe of thinking and feeling about the experience of women (and therefore men, too) in our contemporary world. In a word: astonishing.

Between 2005 and 2009, in a remote Mennonite colony in Bolivia named the Manitoba Colony, after the province in Canada, many girls and women would wake in the morning feeling drowsy and in pain, their bodies bruised and bleeding, having been attacked in the night. The attacks were attributed to ghosts and demons. Some members of the community felt the women were being made to suffer by God or Satan as punishment for their sins; many accused the women of lying for attention or to cover up adultery; still others believed everything was the result of wild female imagination.

Eventually, it was revealed that eight men from the colony had been using an animal anesthetic to knock their victims unconscious and rape them. In 2011, these men were convicted in a Bolivian court and received lengthy prison sentences. In 2013, while the convicted men were still in jail, it was reported that similar assaults and other sexual abuses were continuing to take place in the colony.

[Women Talking](#) is both a reaction through fiction to these true-life events, and an act of female imagination. <>

[The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future](#), Second Edition edited by Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, and Irena Steinfeldt, Consulting Editor: Yehuda Bauer [Studies in Judaism and Christianity, Paulist Press, 9780809153640]

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About the Editors

Excerpt: Dorothee Sölle says: I am a German citizen who grew up after World War II, with all the questions coming out of the darkest years in the history of my people. "Where were you when this happened? What did you do about it?" we asked our parents, relatives, teachers, neighbors, and later our textbooks, our songbooks, our history novels, and our families' memories. The longer we did so, the more often we asked about our own religion in all of this. We cannot avoid searching for the roots.

What does the Shoah have to do with Christianity? Was the Holocaust prepared in Christendom? Was antisemitism prepared in the New Testament? What are the roots for lying about Christ's death, the claim that the Jews had killed him and not imperial power and the law of the Roman Empire?

I studied theology and for a long time I asked myself why God didn't intervene on behalf of his people. Many people have lost their faith over this, both Jews and Christians. Today I would say that God was very weak at that time because he had no friends in Germany. According to the tradition, God has no hands other than ours, and during the Shoah, God was very alone. Because of the lack of friends, God is indeed "in need of humans," as the Jewish teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel phrased it.

"Today I would say that God was very weak at that time because he had no friends in Germany."

The quest for faith after Christianity's greatest catastrophe turned out to be a lifelong path of struggling and questioning many of the classical Christian traditions. It made us more critical about the institutional side of the Christian faith—the Churches. It led me into a radical criticism of obedience toward the leaders of the state. In the last twenty years, many people in the Churches started questioning even some parts of the New Testament tradition because of its latent anti-Judaism. The same learning experience moved us toward a better understanding of the Jewish man from Nazareth by the name of Jesus. He never gave up his faithfulness to his own Jewish tradition.

We should follow him instead of pitting the "Old" Testament against the "New" Testament.

My personal interest in the role Christianity played during the Shoah was not so much in the criminal evildoers, the guards in the concentration camps, and their Nazi leaders, but in the majority of the German people who claimed later not to have known what was going on.

I became suspicious about this denial of reality. Wasn't it rather that they did not want to know what had happened in their own country? We do not live alone. Some things are not understandable when we fix our eyes only on the innermost life of the individual. There are a few things in the world that are not "private property"—and God is among them.

When I sing on Good Friday the moving song from the African American tradition—"Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they nailed him to the cross?"—I always think then about those children who were humiliated in their school classes, deported in trains, and finally gassed. Were you there, then? I ask myself.

"I always think then about those children who were humiliated in their school classes, deported in trains, and finally gassed. Were you there, then? I ask myself."

We can learn that the role of the spectator, the bystander, is not acceptable. Christians who love the Jewish man who was crucified in Jerusalem are to remain close to him. The whole story of the passion of Jesus teaches us to side with the victims. To become a Christian means to ask in any given situation, Who are the winners? Who are the losers? Where is our place? Where is Christ in all of this?

If we are serious in our wish to know, it is not enough to visit Gethsemane or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We need to go to Yad Vashem and see and listen and learn. Yad Vashem is a place not only for Jewish people to visit; it is a place for Christians to visit as well. There is no salvation without remembering. Remembrance is for all of us the secret of salvation.

It is a real challenge to teach a course on the Holocaust, with Christians, for Christians. It is a daunting task to sort through the sheer volume of information about the Holocaust, which happened in such a Christian place.

Over the past seventy-five years since the "Final Solution" was determined, a very large reference library of photos, documents, and stories has been gathered up and continues to grow. The weight and volume of history bears down on us all. It can become mind numbing, even soul destroying. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and lost in a sea of information.

Yet there is never too much information about this event that we have come to call the Holocaust. There are those who have taken up the task of continuing to gather the fragments of memory, the truths that refuse to disappear in the dust and ashes.

However, we also need to be able to stop and think, to ponder and to weep. For this we need the guidance of those who have sifted and sorted the shards of sorrow. I consider *The Holocaust and the Christian World* as a kind of guidebook to lead us in our reflections, pointing us toward the paths of repentance and resolve.

Through the generosity of the editors of this book, I was able to use it as the required textbook for a graduate course in theology entitled "The Authority of Those Who Suffer: Christian Theology after the Holocaust." *The Holocaust and the Christian World* was indispensable for the course and became the essential point of reference for the discussions in the class. The challenge to the Christian Churches was clear. The excellent and brief essays done by widely recognized experts gave an authority to this book. Each essay was obviously the distillation of intensive research and reflection. This allowed the students to proceed with confidence and humility as they began to examine the relationship between the Holocaust and the Christian world.

This book cleared the way for us to think about what had happened. The careful selection of writings moved us to think carefully, freshly aware that the teachings of our Christian Churches are

consequential, that they make a difference—for better or worse—in the lives of people.

The essays in *The Holocaust and the Christian World* helped us take up the challenge of comprehension, which Hannah Arendt described as "examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed upon us."

Nevertheless, this book also offers a way forward in the small, life-size lights of human solidarity that were present during the Nazi era. This new edition of the book also includes documentation of more recent efforts to repent and to change the teaching of contempt within various Christian Churches.

The editors quite rightly close the book by noting the challenges for the future. The burden of memory poses a challenge for action now. "What then must we do?" the people asked John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke.

In answering this question, we must now shift our point of reference to the suffering ones. Irving Greenberg articulated this shift when he said that we should examine our words and deeds in the face of children being thrown into the fire. *The Holocaust and the Christian World* carries what theologian Johann Baptist Metz calls the "dangerous memories" of suffering during the Holocaust. It reminds us what happens when we lose sight of the suffering ones, when we take our point of reference from the authorities, whether religious or political or professional.

What then must we do? This is the question we must ask after we finish this book. This is the searching question each of us must follow. There is no doubt that our answers will be different, many and varied, but they will be more consequential after reading this book.

The Holocaust and the Christian World seems an unlikely combination of ideas. Surely nothing could be further removed from the principles, ethics, and aspirations of well-intentioned Christians than to have Christianity linked to one of the greatest episodes of human hatred in history. Yet that is exactly what this book does.

During the Nazi era (1933-45) and the Holocaust—or Shoah—some Christians spoke out against the persecution of the Jews, others collaborated with the Nazis, still others remained silent, "neither for nor against," as Elie Wiesel, himself a survivor of the Holocaust, put it. Those Christians who risked their lives to help Jews during the Holocaust were very few, indeed.

What Christians did and failed to do during the Holocaust continues to haunt and challenge the Christian world even in the twenty-first century, which is why we have prepared this volume.

Those who wrote essays for this book include scholars and educators—Christians and Jews, Europeans, Israelis, and North Americans. They responded to our request to address some of the questions and issues about the Holocaust and the Christian world that they think we Christians and Jews should be thinking about and discussing today, in the twenty-first century, more than seventy years after the liberation of the last Nazi death camp. Each of our writers has thought about these issues and questions for many years. Some are theologians—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish; others are historians or sociologists; a few are survivors. Most have dedicated their professional lives to teaching, writing, and lecturing about the Holocaust.

The essays they have written are intended to inform, inspire, and challenge as you read and reflect on the subject. Included with the essays—in what we have called "sidebars"—are quotations from within the essays themselves, or from other sources; questions for reflection and discussion, as well as suggestions for further reading. We have also included texts—or excerpts from texts—of documents issued by the Christian Churches after 1945, details of videos related to the topic, and a few selected sites from the World Wide Web that we thought might be helpful to the reader who wants more information about this subject. We hope you will make use of these as you study and think about issues and questions you may not have thought about before.

This book is only a beginning. It is intended to raise questions, not give answers. We hope that reading it will encourage you to think about, study, and

reflect on the Holocaust and the Christian world. While we do not invite you to enjoy this book, we do encourage you to engage with it and to encourage others to do so as well.

And so, this part of your journey confronting "the Holocaust and the Christian world" comes to an end, but it is not over. There will always be more to learn, more to ponder, and more to discuss, which is why we hope you will continue your study of the topic, embracing the questions at ever deeper levels. We also hope you will reflect on what you have learned about the Holocaust and about what those who professed to be Christian did, and failed to do, in the 1930s and '40s in the very heart of Europe—Christian for more than fifteen hundred years—during Nazi Germany's Third Reich and the Shoah.

In compiling this volume, we have tried to put together an interesting and challenging set of short essays focusing on various aspects of what we know is a complex, sensitive, even volatile topic. From the beginning, we wanted to challenge and engage you, our readers, to encourage you to think about questions you may not have thought about before. At times, you may have found this daunting, as all of us do who confront the Holocaust and discover how we Christians—both individually and institutionally—failed, for the most part, our Jewish brothers and sisters during those years of terror and horror. Our purpose is not to discourage readers, but rather to challenge and encourage them to do things differently, now and in the future.

It is one thing to recognize and be scandalized by the action or inaction of people who were unresponsive to the cries of the Jews—and the other victims of the Nazis—during World War II and the Holocaust, easy enough to condemn the unresponsiveness of individuals and institutions who called themselves "Christian," easy enough to condemn the "power of political realism" that motivated action or inaction, care and concern, or neutrality and indifference toward Jews during the Shoah. But what about today? Have we learned anything from history, or are we condemned to repeat it? In saying this, we have in mind Cambodia in the 1970s, Rwanda in 1994, the

former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Darfur in 2005, and the civil war in Syria today. What have we Christians done to try to stop the mass atrocities, the rapes and killings, and the genocidal violence in those places? What are we doing?

[The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future](#) is a great title, but it must be more than that. It should be a spur to incite us to action on behalf of others.

If your confrontation with *The Holocaust and the Christian World* provokes you to do something today about trying to make the future more humane for all people, then our efforts in assembling this volume will have been worthwhile, for we believe that it will contribute to *tikkun olam*—the healing and repair of the world.

May your encounter with *The Holocaust and the Christian World* spur you to learn about living Jews and Judaism, about World War II and the Holocaust, and about all the victims of the Nazi regime and all other dictators in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—on the left and the right—who have demeaned, degraded, and dehumanized human beings, who, in the words of Genesis 1:27, are created "in the image of God." May your reading of this book encourage you to do your part to make this world a more humane place for all people. <>

[Slavery's Long Shadow: Race and Reconciliation in American Christianity](#) edited by James L. Gorman, Jeff W. Childers, and Mark W. Hamilton [Eerdmans, 9780802876232]

How interactions of race and religion have influenced unity and division in the church
At the center of the story of American Christianity lies an integral connection between race relations and Christian unity. Despite claims that Jesus Christ transcends all racial barriers, the most segregated hour in America is still Sunday mornings when Christians gather for worship.

In *Slavery's Long Shadow* fourteen historians and other scholars examine how the sobering historical realities of race relations and Christianity have created both unity and division within American churches from the 1790s into the twenty-first

century. The book's three sections offer readers three different entry points into the conversation: major historical periods, case studies, and ways forward. Historians as well as Christians interested in racial reconciliation will find in this book both help for understanding the problem and hope for building a better future.

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A History of Race and Reconciliation in American Christianity

The history of race relations covered in this book focuses not only on the ways Christians created, enforced, and sometimes opposed racism, but also on how the relationships between black and white people have shaped American Christianity and culture. In the early American republic, white and black individuals related to one another largely within the institution of slavery. Despite a new political atmosphere that stressed the sanctity of the (white, male) individual, the founding documents of America contained only the implicit suggestion that all people (including black people and women) had rights such as owning property and voting. Americans have been working out the implications of all people having inalienable rights ever since the founders put their signatures to the Declaration of Independence. In many cases, race relations, Christian unity and division, and the founding ideals of equality have combined or conflicted to push and prod American cultural and religious developments.

Evangelical revivalism provided one of the earliest challenges to inherited race relations during the early national era. Evangelicals in the revivals from the 1790s to the 1830s, collectively referred to as the Second Great Awakening, interpreted their times through eschatological lenses. They applied the new ideals of political liberty to the gospel, poignantly expressed in Elias Smith's religious periodical the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*. Christians from different denominations united in prayer and even cooperated in missionary endeavors around the world. Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others started massive revivals together, leading many people to experience new birth conversions during which they often engaged in religious experiences like falling, running, barking, and the jerks. They interpreted these unitive efforts in missions and revival in the context of new political freedoms as clear signs that they lived during the last days, a time when God would pour out his Spirit on his people. Furthermore, evangelical conversions challenged traditional boundaries, as some argued that individuals who experienced new birth became spiritual equals regardless of sex or race. Black people were converted alongside white

people, and both "races" exhorted those around them to seek the same cathartic cleansing that made them all one before Christ. Both the American ideals enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the energetic evangelical awakenings became foundations from which Christians challenged antiblack racism.

Freedom of religion in the new nation created a competitive religious marketplace, but a simultaneous postmillennial optimism fostered a broad ecumenical consensus in the form of a pan-Protestant "benevolent empire" that exerted enormous influence in American culture and transatlantic evangelicalism. Capturing the energy of the Second Great Awakening and the activist impulse of evangelicals, an antebellum reform movement sought to Christianize American culture and win the world to Western Christianity. 26 The unitive efforts of optimistic Christians targeted practices they saw as contrary to the gospel. One social ill these benevolent reformers sought to eradicate was slavery; that reform both united the church against slavery and divided the church largely into opposing North-South identities.

Among the most famous individuals to offer prophetic critique of Christianity from within the Christian tradition as well as illustrate the interconnection of race relations and Christian unity was Frederick Douglass. Douglass drew a careful distinction:

What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest, possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.

Douglass and many of his contemporaries used Christianity to critique the racist institution of

slavery, and in doing so, they drove a sharp wedge between Christians who supported slavery and Christians who opposed it. Although they led the abolition movement and struggle for racial equality, the pursuit of justice led to the division of the churches. In American churches, on the one hand, there has been no greater challenge to Christian unity than the struggle with antiblack racism. On the other hand, there has been no greater catalyst of interracial effort for justice against racism.

Despite the heroic efforts of individuals like Douglass, as Christians engaged a society that defined white and black people as different and unequal, the Christian church often accommodated or helped construct the racialized society emerging in America. In the years leading up to the Civil War, Christians largely separated into sectional constituencies—the South invoking the Bible to support slavery, and the North, to oppose it. As historian Mark Noll has argued, the Civil War was a theological crisis. Denominations formally and informally divided over the issue of slavery in the 1840s and 1850s, foreshadowing the nation's bloody conflict of the 1860s.

As the Civil War developed into the eras of Reconstruction and Jim Crow segregation, most African American Christians sought independence from white denominations by founding independent African American congregations and denominations. In the American South, many white Christians combined their faith with Southern culture to form "Lost Cause" civil religion, a response to the spiritual and psychological need among Southerners to reaffirm their identity after defeat in the Civil War. The hopes of political autonomy were lost, but the South fought for their cultural identity. The Lost Cause identified the Confederate cause as God's cause, Southern people as God's people, and the Southern way of life as virtuous and ideal. The South had lost the war not because of the impropriety of slavery or their way of life, but because God was chastening them for being a sinful people; if they responded faithfully, the South might rise again. The Lost Cause retained the thoroughgoing racism of previous American history, and therefore its advocates sought to minimize freedoms for black people and keep them as near to bondage as possible.

It is already clear that twenty-first-century American culture will continue to be shaped by the long history of the relationship of race relations and Christian unity. Among the best-known events culminated in March 2008 when presidential hopeful Barack Obama had to respond to his pastor's 2003 words, "God damn America." Jeremiah Wright, pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, where the Obamas attended, had spoken from the pulpit that God would damn America for her sins of injustice, for killing her citizens, and for treating her citizens as less than human beings. The "righteous jeremiad," as historian Paul Harvey calls Wright's words, was a common theme in the African American Christian experience and in the Bible, but the racial divide in the churches meant that most white people had no idea what Wright's comment meant in the black Christian vernacular. Therefore, Obama found himself explaining the black Christian tradition to the public as he sought to win the Democratic nomination over Hillary Rodham Clinton. In this moment, African American prophetic protest steeped in Christian tradition became a major issue in the 2008 presidential race. Whereas Wright utilized the jeremiad, Obama in his first inaugural address appealed to what Harvey calls "the gospel of hope," another central theme in the black Christian tradition: "Because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace."

Obama's subsequent eight-year presidency certainly ushered in a new era, but the black-white binary constructed in America's history continued to shape the experiences of many Americans. Rather than a "postracial" America, the eight years under the first black president were a period of extraordinary racial tension in which Christians often took sides based on their political leaning, the color of their skin, or both (and the two factors often correlated).

In 2017, when the United States transitioned from its first black president to Donald J. Trump, who made inflammatory racial remarks during his campaign for the presidency, Americans braced for a seemingly difficult period for race relations. It is our hope that this book provides a rich context from which Christians today might engage the issues of race relations and Christian unity. Perhaps it is again time for Christians to provide an example of what reconciliation and unity might look like in American culture by modeling it in their churches. At a time when American society seems at an impasse, perhaps Christians will find a way to work for Christian unity among the diverse "races" in their neighborhoods. As the world grows smaller, will Christians choose to highlight national and "racial" tribal lines to construct an "us-them" posture of fear and defense, or will Christians lead efforts to help American culture find a common humanity upon which not only Christians in local congregations but all people everywhere unite for the common good? We hope this book illuminates our Christian and national past to guide us into a future that is less divided and more united.

Developing the Case

To make that illumination possible, the contributors to this book consider the issues from several angles. The first section provides readers with an overview of race and Christian unity or division in major eras of American history. First, James L. Gorman studies evangelical revivalism and race relations in the early years of the American republic, showing that some of the basic patterns of racial division and resistance to it date to the period before and just after independence from Great Britain. Although for a brief time it appeared as if evangelicals would lead an emancipation movement in the late eighteenth century, evangelicals proved incapable of resisting powerful proslavery groups that opposed emancipation in the early nineteenth century. Then Wes Crawford picks up the story for the antebellum and immediate post-Civil War eras, demonstrating the complex story of the construction of race and subsequent racial division in Christianity. Crawford's essay offers an introductory examination of perhaps the most formative years in American history for setting the

trajectory of the impact of race relations on Christian unity and division.

Christopher R. Hutson next explores the complex, and often disturbing, relationship between religion and lynching during the era of Jim Crow at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Hutson's chapter offers important analysis of lynching culture and Christian use of the Bible to support it. Kathy Pulley provides an accessible introduction to both the civil rights movement and the Religious Right, with insightful analysis of opportunities both movements had to pursue interracial unity. Pulley shows convincingly that the rise of the Religious Right in the mid to late twentieth century, with all its attendant political ramifications, depended greatly on preexisting racial attitudes and racialized practices. To finish mapping the historical trail, Joel A. Brown surveys the state of race and Christianity in America today. Brown's incisive chapter delineates ways white Christians have often been complicit in the broader white American resistance to black civil rights, even while these white Christians typically believe themselves not to be racist.

One profitable angle into the study of race relations and Christian unity consists of singling out Christian traditions for examination. The four case studies in the book's second section utilize this approach by focusing on the Stone-Campbell Movement (SCM), which serves as an interesting example because it began as a movement focused on Christian unity. The founders of the SCM saw Christian unity as a vital and attainable aim, proposing that if Christians took only the clear teachings of the New Testament as a basis for Christian fellowship, Christian unity would be forthcoming. Although SCM adherents succeeded in their advocacy for Christian unity in many ways, they also failed, most visibly (and ironically) in their division into multiple denominations that themselves are mostly racially segregated.

Drawing from ideas and practices of the transatlantic evangelical missionary movement, political and philosophical currents emphasizing the innate potential of all people (regardless of family or education), and the democratic revolutions, the SCM arose on the US frontier in the early national

era (1780s to 1810s) of American history. Barton Stone led the "Christians" in Kentucky and surrounding states, whereas Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander led a group of "Reformers" in Pennsylvania. Although Stone Christians and Campbell Reformers were distinct, many in each group found enough in common to merge some of their congregations and unite for other endeavors by the 1830s. divisions arose that were rooted in America's sectional conflict, post-Civil War development, and various social and theological developments in the twentieth century. After less than two hundred years of existence, the SCM unity movement divided into three distinct streams. The largely southern group became known as the Churches of Christ, easily identified by their a cappella congregational singing. In the North, the more conservative group became known as "independents," or Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (because some congregations are called Church of Christ and others Christian Church), and the theologically progressive group as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Although these groups retained their regional majorities, each has congregations today throughout the United States and the world. Despite their agreement on the ideal of unity, the SCM reflected the broader American Christian trend of dividing at times of social (e.g., Civil War) and theological (e.g., liberalism) change.

SCM history also illuminates and corroborates the broader American Christian story of racism and reconciliation through interracial unity. For the most part, white SCM members did not oppose slavery until it became politically acceptable to do so. But there were important exceptions. Also, with important exceptions, white SCM members generally continued to exhibit racism after the abolishment of slavery, and, also with major exceptions, black SCM members and institutions sought independence from white SCM members and institutions because of the racism black people experienced when working with whites. For the most part, SCM members were divided about the propriety of participating in the civil rights movement.

Authors of the four case studies in the book's second section help readers learn from both the tragic and

the encouraging stories of the SCM's history of race and Christian unity, revealing the often subtle ways in which race and religion interact. Loretta Hunnicutt considers how Churches of Christ understood white women and women of color at the intersection of race, gender, and Christian unity. While some aspects of the problems she describes are unique to these Restorationist churches, most elements play out much more widely. Similarly, Lawrence A. Q Burnley describes how the Disciples of Christ related to the twentieth-century civil rights movement, which is a story of both courage and failure. Edward J. Robinson takes a very broad view as he considers attempts at racial reconciliation during the era of Jim Crow and the subsequent civil rights movement, demonstrating that oppression could also stimulate courageous efforts at redemption. Robinson's case study reveals the complexity involved in interracial cooperation through his analysis of one white and one black individual whose valiant and countercultural work together provides an inspiring example of interracial unity even as it reveals the influence of America's racial history on even the most well-intended Christians. And finally, D. Newell Williams and Kamilah Hall Sharp find twelve ways the Disciples of Christ have combated racism before providing results from a recent survey of Disciples of Christ leaders. The survey results reveal that, despite Disciples' efforts to combat racism and the election of an African American woman as their general minister and president on July 9, 2017, minoritized individuals continue to experience racism in the churches.

In the book's third section, three authors offer proposals for the future. Each writes from deep personal experience and commitment, seeking to bring an understanding of the gospel to bear on the challenges of race and religion. From different points of view, each calls all of us to a new way of being. Together they argue that while we must know the past in order to understand the present, we need not be enslaved to it; critical examination can lead to liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressor. Richard T. Hughes diagnoses the history of racial disunity in SCM churches as the result of the SCM's legacy of faulty understandings of salvation, and calls for a deliberate

reappropriation of the gospel of grace as its remedy. Tanya Smith Brice reflects on key events from the history of race relations in Churches of Christ, suggesting that the way forward entails not only learning from the past but may sometimes include revisiting it and seeking to fulfill its promises. Jerry Taylor analyzes the career of Douglas A. Foster, distinguished scholar and churchman dedicated to racial reconciliation, commending him to readers as a concrete model of professional and personal practice.

Each of the authors has contributed to this volume to honor Douglas A. Foster for his academic and ecclesial work for Christian and interracial unity. <>

[Christ on a Donkey - Palm Sunday, Triumphal Entries, and Blasphemous Pageants](#) by Max Harris [Early Social Performance, Arc Humanities Press, 9781641892872]

[Christ on a Donkey](#) reveals Palm Sunday processions and related royal entries as both processional theatre and highly charged interpretations of the biblical narrative. Harris's narrative ranges from ancient Jerusalem to modern-day Bolivia, from veneration to iconoclasm, and from Christ to Ivan the Terrible. A curious theme emerges: those representations of Christ's entry into Jerusalem that were labelled blasphemous or idolatrous by those in power were most faithful to the biblical narrative of Palm Sunday, while those that exalted power and celebrated military triumph were arguably blasphemous pageants.

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Excerpt: From Pomp To Donkeys

On Palm Sunday, 1558, a prosperous English merchant by the name of Anthony Jenkinson was in Moscow, representing both his queen, Elizabeth I, and an international trading enterprise known as the Muscovy Company. While there, he saw Moscow's annual "donkey walk," like many other Palm Sunday processions an elaborate outdoor liturgical rite recalling Christ's entry into Jerusalem on a donkey five days before his crucifixion. Despite the name of the event, no donkey took part. The metropolitan archbishop of Moscow and all Russia was led in procession seated on "a horse, covered with white linen down to the ground, his ears being made long with the same cloth, like to an ass's ears." The archbishop, in full pontifical regalia, played the part of Christ, while a white horse, wearing white linen ass's ears, played the part of the donkey. Holding the end of the horse's rein was no less a dignitary than Tsar Ivan IV

(1547-1584), also known to history as Ivan the Terrible.

Three centuries later, in 1865, a Russian realist painter, Vyacheslav Schwartz, completed a large oil painting called Palm Sunday in Moscow under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich: The Procession of the Patriarch on a Donkey.' The painting, which now hangs in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, depicts in meticulous detail a later instance of the same processional tradition (Fig. 1). A grey-bearded boyar guides the reins of the patriarch's horse, while Tsar Alexis I (1645-1676), holding the tasseled end of the rein in his right hand and a palm in his left hand, walks ahead. The metropolitan archbishop of Moscow and all Russia, whose predecessor had been elevated to the status of patriarch in 1589, sits atop the white horse. Crowned and richly vested, he holds a golden, three-beamed orthodox cross in his right hand and a gilded gospel book in his left. The animal's costume remains the same: a full-length white linen cloth, topped with long, white, pointed donkey's ears.

Moscow's horse with donkey's ears is one of the more colourful cases of historical dissonance between an enacted representation of Christ's entry and the biblical story it was believed to represent. The horse's false ears testified to the shared conviction of those taking part that Christ rode a donkey. The white horse bore annual witness to the fact that no archbishop of Moscow deigned to ride a real donkey in the city's Palm Sunday procession. Nor did a tsar ever lead one.

A more modest Palm Sunday celebration takes place each year in the village of San Jose de Chiquitos in lowland Bolivia. There, a life-size wooden image of Christ on a donkey, mounted on a low, wheeled platform, is the star of the show. In the late afternoon, a crowd of people accompany the image through the village to the church, where "Jesus of Nazareth" and "his little donkey" are received "with a shower of yellow flowers, the fluttering of palms, the chiming of bells, songs proclaiming him the son of David ...

[Christ on a Donkey](#) explores Palm Sunday processions and other public representations of Christ's entry into Jerusalem as both spectacular instances of processional theatre and highly charged interpretations of the biblical narrative to which they claim allegiance. Biblical scholars generally understand Christ's donkey as a sign that he came neither as a warrior nor as one drawn to the trappings of power, but in peace and humility. A wheeled wooden image of Christ on a donkey is arguably consistent with this interpretation. A Palm Sunday procession that gives pride of place to a high-ranking member of the clergy on a white horse is not.

Even more at odds with the biblical model are those triumphal royal entries that borrow the language and iconography of Palm Sunday, allowing a king to play the role of Christ while celebrating military victory. Charlemagne, king of the Franks, entered Rome for the first time on Easter Saturday, April 2, 774. Fresh from military victories against the Lombards, Charlemagne was met outside the city by young boys carrying palm and olive branches and singing acclamations. As Charlemagne and the pope entered the Basilica of Saint Peter, clergy and monks sang the Palm Sunday antiphon, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The ceremony's allusions to Christ's entry into Jerusalem not only set a precedent for subsequent appropriations of the language and iconography of Palm Sunday by rulers of church and state, but also for elite Palm Sunday processions themselves to appropriate the language and iconography of royal entries.

The narrative arc of my book moves from this dissonant mingling of elite genres toward the simpler and more congruent use of wheeled images of Christ on a donkey. Although I have respected chronological order within each chapter and, to a lesser extent, within each cluster of chapters, I have arranged the parts themselves according to their place in this thematic arc.

In the first half of Part 1, I evaluate the phenomenon of triumphal pomp in selective royal (and not quite royal) entries from the time of Charlemagne to that of Oliver Cromwell and in papal entries, some of them explicitly celebrating

military triumph, from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. In the second half of Part 1, I assess the same phenomenon in Palm Sunday processions. The first surviving record of a Palm Sunday procession comes from late fourth-century Jerusalem. Neither this nor any other record of such a procession during the next four and a half centuries betrays any sign of triumphal pomp. Palm Sunday processions only began to resemble royal entries some eighty years after Charlemagne rode into Rome.

Part 2 serves as the hinge on which my story turns from pomp to donkeys. It does so by focusing on two arguably unique moments in the entangled history of Palm Sunday and triumphal entries. The first took place in Bristol on October 24, 1656. James Nayler, a leader of the first generation of Quakers in England, approached the city on horseback, accompanied by a small group of men and women reportedly singing "holy, holy, holy." It was raining heavily, and the Quakers trudged knee-deep through mud in the part of the road where only horses and carts usually travelled. Charged with "horrid blasphemy," Nayler was tried in London by the Puritan-dominated parliament. Found guilty, he narrowly escaped the death penalty and was condemned instead to a series of painful humiliations: he was pilloried, his tongue was bored through with a red-hot iron, and his forehead was branded with the letter B for blasphemer. He was then returned to Bristol, where he was made to enter the city seated backwards on a horse, after which he was whipped through the streets and finally imprisoned. With few exceptions, historians have assumed that Nayler's entry into Bristol was a deliberate "reenactment of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday." The records, I believe, suggest a different reading: Nayler's entry is better understood not as a shabby imitation of the first Palm Sunday, but as a muddy parody of triumphal royal entries.

The second arguably unique moment is Jesus of Nazareth's own entry into Jerusalem. Biblical scholars have come to understand Jesus's entry as a parody of the imperial and other military entries of his own time. Stanley Hauerwas describes Jesus's entry into Jerusalem as "an unmistakable political act; one that "parodies the entry of kings and their

armies." Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan see it as "a deliberate lampoon" of such entries, including that of Pontius Pilate, who probably rode into Jerusalem "seated upon a horse or riding a chariot," and accompanied by "something on the order of one thousand" cavalry and foot soldiers' Jesus's entry was not the "triumphal entry" imagined by a long tradition of later Christian rhetoric and processional performance; it was "non-triumphal," "a-triumphal," or even "anti-triumphal", James Nayler's rain-soaked parody of royal entries may have been more faithful to the biblical story of Jesus of Nazareth's entry into Jerusalem than were any number of royal triumphs or elite Palm Sunday processions.

If not pomp, then what? One might suppose that live donkeys would have played a major part in Palm Sunday processions over the centuries, but to the best of my knowledge the earliest surviving record of anyone riding a live donkey in a Palm Sunday procession is found only in 1424. In that year, a brief entry in the chapter accounts of Udine cathedral records payment of "twelve soldi [pence]" on Palm Sunday "to the boy who went on the ass in place of Christ." The question naturally arises of why, if all Christendom believed that Jesus rode a donkey, so few live donkeys and so many white horses were ridden in Palm Sunday processions. The first half of Part 3 finds the answer at least in part in medieval bestiaries and in a forged papal document known as the Donation of Constantine. These chapters also note the absence of triumphalism from Palm Sunday processions under Muslim rule in Jerusalem, where a donkey was first ridden in liturgical procession in the late fifteenth century.

Life-size wooden images of Christ on a donkey arrived on the Palm Sunday processional scene nearly five hundred years before live donkeys. Gerhard of Augsburg's *Life of Saint Ulrich*, written within two decades of the death of Ulrich, prince-bishop of Augsburg, in 973, reports that Ulrich walked in procession each Palm Sunday in the company of "an image of the Lord seated on an ass" This is believed to be the earliest surviving record of a class of processional images known to English-speaking scholars by the German name of *Palmesel* (palm donkey). The timing is noteworthy.

Introduced less than two hundred years after Charlemagne rode into Rome and around a hundred years after elite Palm Sunday processions began to resemble royal entries, *palmesels* offered a strikingly different mode of representing Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Not only were they the first processional images to acknowledge that Christ rode a donkey, but they also avoided the urge to visual splendour evident in other processional images of the period. Moreover, they were mounted on wheels and pulled at street level rather than held aloft or carried in ornate portable shrines on the shoulders of their bearers. In the second half of Part 3, I trace the history of *palmesels*, which were for many centuries a popular feature of the processional theatre of Palm Sunday in Germany and its immediate neighbours. In many towns, children were given rides on the donkey behind Jesus. In Biberach, Palm Sunday with the *palmesel* was known as "the day of the humble king."

Palmesels were also victims of religious violence. Hussite radicals threw a *palmesel* from the battlements of Prague's cathedral in 1421. A century later, during outbreaks of Zwinglian iconoclasm in and around Zurich, *palmesels* were denounced as "idols" and burned, hacked into pieces, used as firewood, or drowned in lakes. During the late eighteenth-century Catholic Enlightenment, in southern Germany, Austria, and Poland, *palmesels* were condemned as "superstitious" and destroyed or forcibly retired by order of regional archbishops. Most of those that survive have found homes in museums; some are on display in their original churches. A growing number, including a few new models, are taking part in Palm Sunday processions as far apart as Tokarnia (Poland), Thaur (Austria), Ammerschwihr (Alsace), and lowland Bolivia. The final chapter of Part 3 includes an account of my own participation in two such Palm Sunday processions in the Austrian Tirol.

The narrative arc of Christ on a Donkey thus moves, not without its bumps and detours, from elite dissonance to a greater (but never complete) popular accord between professed beliefs and processional practice. A curious theme emerges: those embodied representations of Christ's entry into Jerusalem that were, at one time or another,

labelled blasphemous, idolatrous, or superstitious by those in power were arguably most faithful to the biblical narrative of Palm Sunday, while those staged with the purpose of exalting those in power and celebrating military triumph were arguably blasphemous pageants.

Christ Dismembered and The Bombing of Lübeck

In the early hours of Palm Sunday, March 29, 1942, the British Royal Air Force launched the most destructive bombing raid of the Second World War so far. Lübeck, a major German port on the Baltic coast and once the largest and most prosperous city in the Hanseatic League, was chosen as a target not for industrial reasons, but "because it contained many timbered buildings dating from medieval times" and was thus a suitable site "to experiment with a bombing technique using a high proportion of incendiaries." The resulting firestorm destroyed the cathedral and two of the city's main churches, along with much of the medieval city centre. Nearly two thousand buildings were destroyed, a thousand people killed, and more than fifteen thousand people left homeless. The timing of the raid, on the morning of Palm Sunday, was chosen to take advantage of the visibility provided by a full moon.

Displayed in the fourteenth-century monastery church (Klosterkirche) of Preetz, some forty miles north of Lübeck, is the lovingly restored remnant of a radically damaged palmesel. The headless, armless, and legless torso of Christ sits astride the equally mutilated torso of the donkey. Dated to around 1300, the remnant not only shows persuasive signs of the artistry of its sculptor but is also of remarkable historical value as the northernmost surviving evidence of the palmesel tradition. The damage to the image was almost certainly the work of Protestant iconoclasts. Markus Freitag, leader of the 2009 restoration project, reported: "The violent removal (Beraubung) of the figure's most important parts, as well as the marks of hacking on the robe covering [Christ's] right thigh, suggest malicious destruction." There is, of course, no historical connection between the Palm Sunday bombing of Lübeck and Preetz's butchered palmesel, but the coincidental juxtaposition of the

two offers a suggestive pair of mental images with which to close this book.

Consciously or otherwise, the bombing of Lübeck was a stark rejection of Jesus's choice of a donkey over the military option of a chariot or a war-horse. Whatever strategic (and even moral) justifications may (or may not) be offered in defence of the bombing of Lübeck, the scale of its violence reminds us that violations of Palm Sunday by nominally Christian leaders were not restricted to the long Middle Ages. Forty miles north, Preetz's truncated image of Christ on a donkey serves as a poignant reminder of the neglect or outright hostility suffered by so many palmesels between the Hussite Revolution and the twentieth century. The mistreatment of palmesels—whether incited by Zwingli's sermons, the decrees of "enlightened" archbishops, or mere changes in taste—is consistent with a widespread rejection, especially among the elite and powerful, of the implications of Christ's choice to ride a donkey. Zwingli, it will be remembered, died in battle, and archbishops still rode white horses in the eighteenth century. Together, Lübeck and Preetz serve as emblems of the violence with which Christ's Palm Sunday refusal of violence has too often been met, not only by the Romans and disappointed Jews who collaborated in his crucifixion, but also—and for much longer and with greater loss of life—by those who, for nearly two millennia, have invoked the name of Christ as a justification for triumphal pomp, sectarian violence, and full-scale war.

My book is a work of historical scholarship, but it is also a quiet protest against any repudiation, in the name of Christianity, of the model of Christ on a donkey. I have affirmed the verdict of biblical scholars that the gospel narratives present Christ's entry into Jerusalem as a parody of triumphal Roman pomp and a public refusal of armed Jewish rebellion. Early Palm Sunday processions were fairly simple commemorative local pilgrimages. Ostentatious embrace of triumphalism entered Palm Sunday observance only after Charlemagne had appropriated the language and iconography of the feast for his victorious entry into Rome in 774. Elite Palm Sunday processions followed suit by appropriating the language and iconography of triumphal entries. James Nayler's parodic royal

progress from Exeter to Bristol in 1656 may have been closer in spirit to Christ's entry into Jerusalem than any more dignified triumphal parade had ever been.

The conspicuous absence of live donkeys from Palm Sunday processions before the fifteenth century is another measure of the discomfort among those who wielded even small and local power in church or state with the practical implications of Christ's choice of mount. Even so, some found a way to celebrate Christ's preference without riding a donkey themselves. Sometime in the second half of the tenth century in Augsburg, the first recorded palmesel made its appearance in a Palm Sunday procession. Pulled on a wheeled platform at ground level rather than carried at shoulder height, palmesels embodied the intimacy and gentleness of the biblical Christ on a donkey. Palm Sunday in Biberach shortly before the Reformation was known as "the day of the humble king." Children could ride with Jesus on the wooden donkey.

Despite attacks on palmesels by Protestant iconoclasts and Catholic archbishops, and despite a tendency in Baroque Spain and Spanish America to elevate images of Christ on a donkey to complex and gilded splendour, the palmesel has survived. It is now enjoying something of a revival, prized by museums and displayed in churches and often lovingly restored. In a growing number of locations, as far apart as Poland and Bolivia, palmesels are active in Palm Sunday processions. Live donkeys are also belatedly taking part in Palm Sunday processions as far apart as the Czech Republic and Nicaragua. Christ on a donkey is again raising a quiet protest against those those who invoke false gods to justify the trappings of power or the glories of war. <>

[Transhumanism and the image of God: Today's Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship](#)

by Jacob Shatzer [IVP Academic, 9780830852505]

We're constantly invited to think about the future of technology as a progressive improvement of tools: our gadgets will continue to evolve, but we humans will stay basically the same. In the future, perhaps even alien species and intelligent robots will coexist alongside humans, who will grapple with challenges

and emerge as the heroes. But the truth is that radical technological change has the power to radically shape humans as well. We must be well informed and thoughtful about the steps we're already taking toward a transhuman or even posthuman future. Can we find firm footing on a slippery slope? Biblical ethicist Jacob Shatzer guides us into careful consideration of the future of Christian discipleship in a disruptive technological environment. In *Transhumanism and the Image of God*, Shatzer explains the development and influence of the transhumanist movement, which promotes a "next stage" in human evolution. Exploring topics such as artificial intelligence, robotics, medical technology, and communications tools, he examines how everyday technological changes have already altered and continue to change the way we think, relate, and understand reality. By unpacking the doctrine of the incarnation and its implications for human identity, he helps us better understand the proper place of technology in the life of the disciple and avoid false promises of a posthumanist vision. We cannot think about technology use today without considering who we will become tomorrow.

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Excerpt: In the early 1960s, Hanna-Barbera produced a space-age counterpart to its animated

sitcom hit *The Flintstones*. While that show had been set in the distant past, the studio set this new show, *The Jetsons*, in the "distant" future: the early 2060s. The Jetsons live in Orbit City, with its houses, stores, and office buildings rising into the sky on pillars. Cars fly. Robots clean and crack one-liners. Family life is filled with the same gaffes that make up your normal sitcom, but technological advances (and sometimes malfunction) provide fun distractions.

Even though we see that *The Jetsons* got a lot wrong, we're constantly tempted to think about technology this way. Gadgets will continue to evolve, but humans will stay basically the same. Michael Bess calls this the Jetsons fallacy and argues that it pulses through many influential sci-fi visions of the future. Alien species and intelligent robots coexist right alongside unmodified humans, who grapple with challenges and often emerge as the heroes. Yet this is a fallacy because radical technological change will radically shape humans as well. As Bess puts it,

The only problem with this comforting picture of the future is that it is probably not true! We are headed into a social order whose most salient new feature may well be the systematic modification of human bodies and minds through increasingly powerful means. The process is already underway today and seems unlikely to slow down in the decades to come. The prevalence of the Jetsons fallacy suggests that many people in contemporary society are living in a state of denial, psychologically unprepared for what is actually far more likely to be coming their way.'

In other words, technology changes us, so our future probably isn't one where humans are exactly the same and robots just come alongside us. The change will be deeper.

A Christian version of the Jetsons fallacy would go something like this. Discipleship is about following Christ, and we can direct any technology toward that end rather easily. As long as we avoid obvious sin (don't use your smartphone to watch pornography, for instance), technology will continue to be a blessed add-on to the life of faith. But one futurist puts the problem with this idea very simply: "Humans were always far better at inventing tools than using them wisely." Thinkers such as Bess would

say that this Christian version fails to grapple with the potential for technology to change radically the way we think about what it means to be human and what sort of future we hope for.

But is this just an overreaction, built on fear? Has this sort of change happened before on any scale? Perhaps we need to ask a different question.

Time

What time is it?

That seems like a straightforward question, doesn't it? One that we ask and answer routinely. But if we probe the question more deeply, we see that it is not so simple. In fact, technology has profoundly shaped the way we ask and answer this question. Let's follow this "time question" back through time.

We tell time differently than our parents did. Today, people more often wear watches for style than for need: we are more likely to check the time on our phone or our computer than on a watch. Not only are our devices different, but the level of precision we expect has changed as well. In a 2014 *Wired Magazine* article, Adam Mann trumpets accuracy: "Throw out that lame old atomic clock that's only accurate to a few tens of quadrillionths of a second. The U.S. has introduced a new atomic clock that is three times more accurate than previous devices." These atomic clocks synchronize time for much of our technology, such as power grids, GPS systems, and the Apple Watch. Sometimes when I am getting close to the end of a class and I'm unsure of the exact time, I'll query my students, "What time does Siri say it is?" When it comes to dismissing class, students expect precision.

The differences in timekeeping and time telling continue. Our parents told time differently from their Civil War-era great-grandparents. Clocks and personal watches entered mass production early in the twentieth century, so it would have been much more common for our parents to rely on them than those living in the nineteenth century. The timepieces aren't the only differences: time zones around the world were not standardized until the late nineteenth century—largely to keep the trains running on time and not into one another.

To jump even further back, those Civil War-era great-grandparents told time differently than Martin Luther did. After the Reformation, clocks got smaller and more accurate. In the 1540s the first public tower clocks came into use, providing an official time for villages and towns.¹ In the 1570s, inventors gave the world the minute hand, an advance over clocks marking only the quarter-hours.

Martin Luther told time differently than Saint Augustine did shortly before the Roman Empire fell. Augustine's options included sand clocks, much like the hourglasses that sometimes accompany board games today. But candles formed to mark the passing of hours did not see the light of day—or the dark of night—for another four hundred years.

And this progression relates solely to what we call clock time, which itself varies through history and between communities. It isn't the only kind of time.

We could multiply candidates for types of time, but let's just add two: natural time and religious time.¹ Prior to the spread of the mechanical clock and a more abstract calendar, hours were marked by natural time, and days by religious time. What time is it? Well, how many hours since daybreak? How much daylight left? What time is it? What part of the church year is it? Before Easter? After?

We're beginning to see how complicated the question "What time is it?" really is. Obviously, the answer depends on what type of technology is or is not available. But we need to push one layer deeper. How do these different ways of telling time, these different technologies of timekeeping, affect the way we experience time and think about time? How do humans live and love differently when we consider our days through different frameworks? As one writer puts it, "What kind of time you perceive really depends on what kind of clock you are reading." Fully answering these questions for the technology of time would take us too far afield, but raising the issue helps us see how deep questions about technology really go.

To take one example, standardizing clock time played an important role in unifying the United States as a nation. As scholar Thomas Allen has argued, standardized clock time "created a shared

'simultaneity' of experience that linked individuals together in an 'imagined community' moving together through time.'" According to some scholars, this standardized clock time competed with and triumphed over other forms of time: "The abstract rationality of the clock ... works to drive all other meanings out of time. Clock time supersedes modes of temporal experience based in religion, nature, or other 'premodern' cultural traditions. Both of these accounts make rational, value-free temporal structures central to modern nationhood."

According to this notion, the way we experience time influences the way that we feel connected (or disconnected) from others. Building a nation requires the ability to feel connected to a vast number of people, most of whom I will not meet or see. Religious time and natural time serve to connect me with those who share my religion or my location, and those times help me to see the world in a certain way. Abstract clock time, however, opens up a way of thinking about the world that makes it possible to imagine a nation, to feel connected to a larger group of people. In part this connection relies on the fact that early clock time, especially in early modern Europe, was mainly kept in public places—town clocks—rather than on private

devices—watches, phones. At the same time, the fact that timekeeping devices are now standardized to the same "time" reinforces this communal connection over large distances. Different ways of thinking about time encourage or make possible different ways of thinking about a community, a people, an "us." A community keeps common time.

Let's consider one more example: how the mechanical clock changed the human view of work. In a 1967 essay, E. P. Thompson argues that mechanical clocks altered factory work in England by restructuring work habits and similarly encouraging an inward notion of time. This restructuring "led individuals to accept the Industrial Revolution's basic premises of quantifiable wage labor and systematic production."¹ Mechanical time changed the way workers viewed time and the value of their labor. It hit them in the wallet.

Other scholars of time have noted a third example of the impact of standardizing clock time. This measurable change has been an important piece of a larger movement toward the importance of measuring and standardizing in terms of uniform operation. The development of standardized clock technology has made it possible to measure and value standardization.

These changes weren't met as a neutral technology that could be directed in various ways, either. For instance, as late as 1830, rebellious popular classes in Paris attacked clock towers all over the city because clock time was used to oppress them. Clock time is embedded in power relations, in property relations, in work relations. The mechanical clock was not merely a neutral tool but one that encouraged and made possible certain ways of viewing and experiencing the world.

In reality, our experience of time does not rely solely on clock time. Our experience of time is a complex web of clock, natural, religious, and other measurements of time." However, clock time did disrupt this web, and timekeeping technologies have shaped human experience. For example, scholars have noted the split that we can typically see between a rural natural time (which is slow and simple) and an urban clock time (quick, unsentimental, etc.)." Another difference between natural time and clock time is the public nature of clock time. These types of time overlap and influence one another, and the growing precision of clock technology affects this web of how humans experience time. In a way, humans make what time it is, because we invent and improve timekeeping. But in another sense, the way that we tell time turns around and makes us as well. It affects the way we think about a community, our work, and the passing of our lives. Our time devices shape us in certain ways, teaching us to value certain things and showing us reality in different lights.

There is an ambiguity here in "human making." We can read that with humans as either the subject or the object of the making. Human making can mean humans as the ones doing the making. We could also read it as humans being made. Humans as the maker or the made, as in "humans making technologies" or as "technologies making humans."

"Human making: what technology we create" and "human making: what technology does to us." This ambiguity is our reality.

Now, I'm not promoting a slippery-slope argument here, trying to scare you by saying technology use will inevitably lead to catastrophic outcomes, no matter what. The argument isn't "Technology shapes us, so avoid technology." We can't do that anyway. At the same time, we must avoid the slippery slope of "Tools can't tell us what to do, therefore we don't need to think about how they shape us; we just need to use them wisely." Rather, part of responsible, wise, faithful use of tools is analyzing the ways that certain tools shape us to see the world in certain ways, and then to ask whether those ways are consistent with the life of a disciple of Christ. If they aren't, then the answer could be to reject certain tools. Or it could be to limit tools in a certain way or to commit to other forms of life that can strengthen us in our resolve to pursue holiness in light of the many ways our world tempts us off that path.

To make this more concrete, I'll jump to two specific examples. We've all heard the line, "When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail." There is wisdom in that; when we wield a certain tool, it affects the way we see the world, looking for ways to use the tool. But we also all recognize that part of the wisdom in the line is that we can be holding a hammer, we can slow down, and we can think, "Now, is that really a nail? Should I really hit it?" Another specific example could be the way having smartphones in our pockets affects how we interpret, process, and experience our daily lives. Maybe the line could be "When you've got a smartphone with a camera and the ability to post something online, everything looks like a status update."

We see the parallel here: just like the hammer makes everything look like a nail, having a smartphone might encourage us to think more about what we can project into the world than perhaps we should. In both cases, we could imagine ourselves stopping and evaluating the situation: Is that really a nail I should hit with this hammer? Is this really a moment I should post rather than simply enjoy privately?

To add some technical language to these two examples, each tool pushes us toward the goal that the tool is best made for. The hammer pushes us, even a little bit, toward hammering. The smartphone, toward actions such as posting. We have to be aware of this, unless we think that our goals in life will always align with the goals that tools were made for. Here is where we can introduce a helpful and important distinction between these two examples. One of them is much more momentous because we engage with this tool much more often, on much more intimate matters, and in more immersive ways...

Our Path Forward

How can we understand human making: both in the sense of the tools that humans make but also in the sense of the ways those tools shape and "make" humans? I want to answer this question by exploring the world of transhumanism.

Transhumanism and posthumanism are two related philosophical movements tied closely to the promises of technology. Posthumanism argues that there is a next stage in human evolution. In this stage, humans will become posthuman because of our interaction with and connection to technology. Transhumanism, on the other hand, promotes values that contribute to this change. Transhumanism aims at posthumanism, and both are based to a large degree on the potential offered by technology. In a way, transhumanism provides the thinking and method for moving toward posthumanism.

Transhumanism leads to posthumanism. They share a common value system, and in this book I will refer primarily to transhumanism but also occasionally to posthumanism because of this connection.

Understanding the values of transhumanism is not an end in itself. Rather, I want to consider how our current use of technology might prepare us for such a future—whether we currently like it or not.

Chapter one braids three issues together. First, it defines technology and provides some background on thinking about it and its pervasiveness. Second, it introduces transhumanism and its vision for the future. Third, it draws on some key theological insights for framing these issues. I argue that our practices of technology use—like any practices—carry us toward certain understandings of what it

means to be flourishing human beings—we'll talk about these "liturgies" throughout the book. Proper assessment of any technology must identify and evaluate these connections between technologies and the ways they might shape us.

The next several chapters of the book define transhumanism and then examine four specific aspects of transhumanism that relate to particular technologies and bring up certain ways of asking questions of technology. Our goal here is to understand transhumanism and to come to grips with the way certain technologies tend toward transhumanist anthropology, or a transhumanist vision for human flourishing. In these chapters, the goal will be to introduce the concept, explain how it advances a posthumanist agenda, engage it critically, and then turn to current technologies that advance this type of an agenda. After defining transhumanism in general, I develop three chapters related to changing human biology, connecting human biology to technology, and "leaving" biology for nonbiological substances. The logic of this progression moves further and further from the physically human, and it parallels the options proposed by works such as Harari's *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Chapter two introduces transhumanism in general, chapter three explores morphological freedom, chapter four explains augmented reality, and chapter five turns to artificial intelligence and mind uploading.

The final chapters focus on particular questions related to how various technologies shape people to become more accepting of the transhuman future. Each chapter includes an illustration from particular technologies of the past and how they have shaped humans. We also treat the question of each chapter and relate it to transhumanism. Finally, we finish each chapter with biblical themes, counterpractices, and an image to orient the way we live with technology. These help us counteract the negative formative influences of some technologies without simply rejecting the particular technology.

Chapter six begins with medical technology and how it affects our view of the patient and the role of the doctor. We will then focus on technologies surrounding virtual reality, especially popular

versions such as those using smartphones. These technologies shift notions of experience in ways that make people more amenable to the sort of existence proposed by posthumanism. We conclude the chapter by explaining practices and concepts that can guide Christians to continue to value physical, in-the-flesh interactions and experiences. In this account we draw on the image of the storyteller.

Chapter seven begins with mapping technologies and how they have shaped human experience of places. We then focus on technologies that promote a sense of cosmopolitanism, along with elements of global capitalism, that downplays the importance of local place; this downplay is an important aspect of formation for a posthuman future. We conclude the chapter by looking at place as a theological notion and argue for the importance of face-to-face Christian worship (as opposed to virtual worship, televised worship, or remote preachers). In this portion we draw on the image of the neighbor to reorient the way we live in places.

We begin chapter eight with robotic technology and how it is changing human relationships. Then we focus on technologies that shift our notion of what it means to be in a relationship with people, including various social media, as well as virtual reality, again, with a focus on relationships as opposed to experiences. The chapter concludes by turning to Albert Borgmann's argument about the centrality of the table for maintaining strong, face-to-face relationships. In this section we turn to the image of the friend to guide and ground the way we consider relationships.

The ninth chapter begins with communications technology and the way it changes human experience of thought. Our focus then turns to technologies used for the construction and presentation of the self. This focus demonstrates how these technologies not only serve as tools for identity projection but also shape the way we think about ourselves and who we are. We explore the way that people often feel an implicit pressure to share socially any experience—almost as if it did not happen if it does not make it onto a Facebook page.

Chapter ten concludes the book by turning again to the practices developed in previous chapters to show that learning to focus on receiving others, rather than building one's self-image, is a more reliable route to a strong sense of self. We attempt to combine these practices into a practice of sharing meals together, in which we draw together notions of ecclesiology, the other, and table fellowship to give a substantive account of the good and how that account shapes the self. Here the images of storyteller, neighbor, and friend also come together.

If we are going to understand human making so that we can use tools well, make good things, and be shaped in faithful ways, we have to dive right into a fuller understanding of technology. What is it, exactly? What isn't it? It's time to search for answers to these questions. <>

[Balm in Gilead: A Theological Dialogue](#) with Marilynne Robinson edited by Timothy Larsen, Keith L. Johnson [Wheaton Theology Conference, IVP Academic, 9780830853182]

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Marilynne Robinson is one of the most eminent public intellectuals in America today. In addition to literary elegance, her trilogy of novels (*Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila*) and her collections of essays offer probing meditations on the Christian faith. Many of these reflections are grounded in her belief that the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformer John Calvin still deserves a hearing in the twenty-first century. This volume, based on the 2018 Wheaton Theology Conference, brings together the thoughts of leading theologians, historians, literary scholars, and church leaders who engaged in theological dialogue with Robinson's published work—and with the author herself.

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Excerpt: Every April for over a quarter of a century now Wheaton College has held its annual theology conference. It is a tribute to Marilynne Robinson's rarified place of intellectual significance in the world that—over all these years and decades—this conference has only ever once before been dedicated to the work of a living figure.' This book is the result of the twenty-seventh annual Wheaton Theology Conference which was held April 5-6, 2018, in Edman Chapel at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

Moreover, this theology conference was not the kind which interacts with a living figure only after they have ceased to write and their contribution can be assessed as complete. Rather, it was a gathering interacting with a living author, whose works, if discovered now, can only be encountered, as it were, in media res. Indeed, Marilynne Robinson is currently in a highly productive phase. Just weeks before the conference began, some of us at Wheaton eagerly obtained our rushed, preordered copies of Robinson's latest collection of essays, *What Are We Doing Here?* Likewise,

although this conference had been planned two years in advance, just a little over a month before it was held we were overjoyed to read in the press that Robinson had signed a contract for another novel. At the conference itself, she revealed in a public session that this novel would once again be set in the world of Gilead. In private, Robinson added that it would focus on the character of Jack and that she might be just a few months away from having a full draft. Throughout this present volume, contributors refer to the Gilead "trilogy" but, given this delightful announcement, future volumes on Robinson presumably will need to refer to the Gilead "quartet."

Tiffany Eberle Kriner, in her presentation at the conference and chapter seven in this volume, remarked regarding Robinson: "I have, I admit without shame, made the author's ability to complete a fourth Gilead novel a subject of personal prayer." It would seem that as soon as Kriner announced her heavenly petition she heard word on earth that it was in the process of being answered. In her chapter, Kriner speaks profoundly about how this series of novels provides us with multiple accounts of, and perspectives on, the same events: "It is as if one version of the story were not enough, one story not enough, one look at the place not enough, one angle on time not enough." Likewise, in his presentation at the conference and chapter nine in this volume, Rowan Williams reflected in a similar vein on Robinson's Gilead novels: "There are, as you all will remember, scenes in that sequence which are recapitulated in more than one narrative, as if no one telling of the story, no one perspective, can capture it all. I'm inclined here to open and close a bracket and simply add that perhaps that's why there are four Gospels (close brackets)." In her interview with Philip Ryken (see chapter twelve), Robinson spoke eloquently about belief in the doctrine of predestination, and one is tempted to believe that the Gilead novels were predestined to be a quartet. Indeed—taking up Williams's point—one might even be tempted to evoke playfully Irenaeus on the appositeness of there being four Gospels: "For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the `pillar and

ground' of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars." In any event, at the time of writing, we eagerly await seeing to what degree the fourth Gospel according to Gilead will be a synoptic one.

As Marilynne Robinson had so generously agreed to attend and participate in this theology conference, Wheaton's common core program decided to make Gilead its one-book selection for the college for the entire academic year (2017-18). In conjunction with this, Robinson arrived on campus a couple days before the conference itself began. During that time, she was interviewed by Wheaton's president, Philip Ryken, as part of this Christ-at-the-Core initiative. An edited version of that insightful and memorable conversation appears as chapter twelve of this volume. Likewise, the college hosted Gilead-related events throughout the year. One of these was an art exhibition by the painter Joel Sheesley, emeritus professor of art at Wheaton College. Like Robinson, however, Sheesley, though technically retired, has a body of work that can only be encountered now as one encounters a steadily flowing river that beckons onward to no one quite knows yet where. In his public conversation with Marilynne Robinson as part of the conference (see chapter eleven), Rowan Williams incidentally revealed the envy-inducing fact that he has a painting by Lucian Freud in his sitting room. Those of us in the biblical and theological studies department are proud to boast that we have a Sheesley in our main hallway. It is an original, powerful, and arresting depiction of the nativity of our Lord: *O Magnum Mysterium*. The address that Joel Sheesley gave at the opening of that art exhibition is included as chapter eight in this volume.

In chapter six, Patricia Andujo draws incisively on the prophetic tradition of the black church, applying Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s indictment, "All too often the religious community has been a taillight instead of a headlight," to the complacent, trance-like townfolk of Gilead. Andujo finds this Midwestern town to be a white world with a Christian identity that has become marred and maimed by a theology of cheap grace. She observes unflinchingly of these white Protestants

that this cheap grace calls the integrity of their (and, by implication, our) Christian theology into question, "despite their good nature?" Rowan Williams, as if engaging in the call-and-response of the black church, seems to pick up on this theme in his chapter with his own timely and prophetic meditation on grace and "the insufficiency of goodness." And Williams himself recognized the affinities between the burden of his theme—namely, that we are all implicated—with the presentation earlier on the same day of his talk by Han-luen Kantzer Komline (see chapter two). In a brilliant application of Augustine's theology to the Gilead novels, Kantzer Komline centers the drama on the Reverend John Ames's need to see that he is implicated as well; that he is also in need of conversion; that he too is a prodigal; that Jack is like him and he is like Jack (John Ames Boughton is like John Ames) because we are all like Adam.

In a remarkable convergence, Marilynne Robinson herself, in her own address at the conference (see chapter ten) became a kind of fourth evangelist alongside Patricia Andujo, Rowan Williams, and Han-luen Kantzer Komline, also exposing our implicatedness and our sinfulness. Robinson pinpoints a kind of self-righteousness in which Christians too often assume that the grace of God is only "very narrowly channeled—through their own beliefs and practices, usually?" Moreover, even as they presumptuously categorize others as excluded from God's favor they simultaneously confer on themselves a cheap grace that is blind to how unchristian their actions (and inactions) have become. Robinson insists that to be indifferent to the plight of marginalized people such as the mentally ill is to spite Almighty God in whose image they are made. Her essay can be read as in the noble, American tradition of the Puritan jeremiad. To the extent that it is also a sermon, its text is Psalm 51:4: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned?"

While Kantzer Komline addresses Augustine of Hippo, the fons et origo of Western theology, Timothy George presents Marilynne Robinson's thought in relationship to the Protestant Reformer John Calvin (as well as his ablest theological descendant in America, Jonathan Edwards). George observes that, avoiding both the Scylla of

Calvinphobia and the Charybdis of Calvinolatry, "Robinson, like Barth, would make her own pathway through the brambles and brush of the primeval forest that is John Calvin. Her project would be one of retrieval, reclamation, and resourcement" Further downstream from Augustine, Calvin, and even Jonathan Edwards are America's mainline Protestant churches, especially as they developed in the twentieth century. In chapter one, Timothy Larsen argues that in the Gilead novels, Robinson has sought "to commend to us all a vision of an America in which Main Street is mainline?" Nevertheless, he insists, "Neoevangelicalism, Neo-orthodoxy and mainline Protestantism are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive categories?" Moreover, Larsen uncovers common roots in a form of nineteenth-century Protestantism that was evangelical and revivalist while also being deeply committed to radical social reform, abolitionism, women's rights, higher education, and the liberal arts.

Befitting Robinson's own longstanding appointment and identity as a professor of English, Patricia Andujo and Tiffany Eberle Kriner are also both literary scholars (albeit ones that draw learnedly and effectively on theological resources). Lauren Winner is a bridge person in this regard as she is both a faculty member at Duke Divinity School and a celebrated writer. Moreover, a third identity is on view in her chapter—Winner's vocation as a preacher. In a disarmingly contemplative mode, Winner ponders sermon writing as a spiritual practice and the elusive power of preaching to transform (or evade) its hearers. In the end, Winner reassures us that sermons that are not markedly defective—that is, when the preachers do not let their humanity overwhelm their office—are an act of "speaking in persona Christi?" As we have seen, the contributions of Han-luen Kantzer Komline, Timothy George, and Timothy Larsen all, to varying degrees, are situated within the discipline of historical theology. Rowan Williams's chapter offers a master class in the theologian as public intellectual, speaking to the wider cultural moment we find ourselves in. Finally, Keith L. Johnson, himself a scholar of Karl Barth, offers the most sustained piece in this collection, operating within the discipline of systematic theology. Johnson

commends the metaphysics of Marilynne Robinson for, among other things, her critique of reductionist views of human nature and for her grounding of human worth in God's love. Johnson also, however, goes on to augment Robinson's theological view with a more central and determinative account of the work of Christ on the cross, as well as with an insistence that human beings find their worth in being loved by God, rather than their being loved by God because he has discerned their worth. Taken together, these essays aspire only to do their bit to further along a rich and vital ongoing conversation. May appreciative and thoughtful scholars, intellectuals, and practitioners continue this theological dialogue with Marilynne Robinson for many years to come. <>

[Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq](#) by Thomas A. Carlson [Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, Cambridge University Press, 9781107186279]

Christians in fifteenth-century Iraq and al-Jazīra were socially and culturally home in the Middle East, practicing their distinctive religion despite political instability. This insightful book challenges the normative Eurocentrism of scholarship on Christianity and the Islamic exceptionalism of much Middle Eastern history to reveal the often unexpected ways in which inter-religious interactions were peaceful or violent in this region. The multifaceted communal self-concept of the 'Church of the East' (so-called 'Nestorians') reveals cultural integration, with certain distinctive features. The process of patriarchal succession clearly borrowed ideas from surrounding Christian and Muslim groups, while public rituals and communal history reveal specifically Christian responses to concerns shared with Muslim neighbors. Drawing on sources from various languages, including Arabic, Armenian, Persian, and Syriac, this book opens new possibilities for understanding the rich, diverse, and fascinating society and culture that existed in Iraq during this time.

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Excerpt: Unlike most premodern societies, which supported only a single or a few social groups with the ability to compose texts, the medieval Middle East's social diversity was expressed by a large number of literate classes whose works allow scholars to approach the dynamics of diversity from multiple angles. The Islamic learned elite (*ʿulamā*) represent only one class of authors, alongside Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian religious leaders, and exceptional members of the ruling, mercantile, and professional classes (especially physicians). Indeed, for questions of diversity, the works of the *ʿulamā* often give a clearer picture of how they thought society ought to function than how in fact difference worked in practice. Histories and chronicles authored by *ʿulamā* evinced decreasing levels of interest in non-Muslims." Sporadic exceptions are found in travel accounts by such authors as Ibn Battūta, yet his choice of details was haphazard and colored by his own normative interests. The literati of less privileged groups, such as Christians and Jews, recorded in much greater detail how religious difference was lived out in the medieval Middle East. To learn about religious diversity, scholars must attend to non-Muslim voices directly.

Nevertheless, the non-Muslims of the late medieval Middle East rarely inform modern historical scholarship. By convention, Islamic historians briefly acknowledge the existence of non-Muslims under Islamic rule, at least for the first millennium CE, while ascribing no historical significance to their continued presence. Almost forty years after his death, Marshall Hodgson's work is still characteristic of most of the field: after conceding that "of course, non-Muslims have always formed an integral, if subordinate element" of "Islamicate" society, he proceeded to tell a story of Muslim rulers and Muslim intellectuals. Jonathan Berkey's *The Formation of Islam* gives much greater attention to non-Muslims than most scholars, yet even his treatment segregates them into chapters apart from his main story, and only discusses them before the year 1000 CE. The result is that the study of the Middle East after 1000 CE often becomes almost exclusively the history of Islam and of Muslims, while silently excluding the many others who were in fact present.

Yet this confessional definition of the field is unwarranted: at no point before 1461 were all Middle Eastern rulers Muslims, and we do not know when Islam became the religion of a demographic majority even in lands under "Islamic rule." The only significant study of demographic Islamization remains Richard Bulliet's *Conversion to Islam*, which attempts to extrapolate demography from the "Who's Who" of Muslim *ʿulamā*, somewhat akin to trying to determine American population dynamics based on professors at Christian seminaries. As Tamer el-Leithy points out, our ignorance regarding the process of Islamization largely stems from the fact that medieval authors saw no political relevance in the relative demography of religious groups. In fact, such indications as do exist suggest that non-Muslims were almost as numerous as Muslims in portions of eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq into the fifteenth century. The confessional demarcation of Middle Eastern history as "Islamic" misrepresents the experience of ethnic and religious diversity in the medieval world between the Nile and the Oxus Rivers.

When historians do consider Middle Eastern Christian populations, they often privilege the more

familiar European forms of the religion. Studies comparing Islam and Christianity often take a narrowly European definition of the latter. Islamicists continue to deploy categories of Christian "orthodoxy" (and, by implication, "heresy") to Middle Eastern Christians from the normative perspective of European Christendom, which only slowly became the dominant form of Christianity in Eurasia over the course of the Middle Ages. Thus Middle Eastern Christians often find themselves in a "catch-22" of scholarly expectations. To the degree that their society and culture agreed with that of their Muslim neighbors, they are regarded as "authentically" Middle Eastern, but also as adulterating their (Western) religion. To the degree that their theology and religious practice agreed with those of European coreligionists, they are regarded as "authentically" Christian, but also as foreigners in their native lands. The discourse of authenticity is a dangerous yardstick for judging social and cultural integration, precisely because of the canonical status conferred upon Middle Eastern Arab Muslims and European Christians. To the Muslim inhabitants of medieval Iraq and Syria, however, European Christianity was bizarre compared with Middle Eastern forms of the religion. The study of the late medieval Church of the East, probably the largest non-Muslim population in Iraq, challenges Eurocentric definitions of Christianity and suggests the possibility of framing the late medieval Middle East as a diverse society mostly ruled by Muslims.

East Syrian Christianity and the Wider World

The breadth of terrain inhabited by the Church of the East is not readily designated by regional or national boundaries, whether medieval or modern. Mosul, the geographical center of this regional study, is now part of Iraq. Medieval Arabic geographers divided regions differently: to the south of Mosul along the Tigris River was the smaller region of Iraq, while to its west and northwest, as far as the headwaters of the Tigris, lay the region of al-Jazira, as Mesopotamia was then known. Further east and northeast of the Mosul plain lay the region of Ādharbayjān, and due north lay the mountains of Arminiya." The late medieval region of Syria, which ended at the Euphrates, was

at that time across an imperial boundary, under the control of Egypt's Mamlūk Empire. This study ranges from Baghdad in the south to the Kurdish and Armenian mountains in the north, and from Amide (modern Diyarbakir in Turkey) in the west as far as Tabriz (today in northwest Iran) in the east.

The Christian minorities of these regions were not negligible, although they have been neglected. John Woods cites European travelers' accounts demonstrating "[t]he large number of Christians relative to Muslims in the urban centers of Arminiya and Diyar Bakr" in the fifteenth century, a phenomenon also visible in early Ottoman defters. In the following century, Ottoman records indicate that the population of Mosul and its hinterland was around one-third Christian. Although no systematic information about the proportion of the region's population that belonged to Christianity or other religions is available from the fifteenth century, these limited data indicate that in certain areas the Christian population was substantial, to say the least. Despite this fact, the literary histories produced for Muslim rulers very rarely mention these subject populations. The modern historical narrative of this period, basing itself on these literary histories, has told the story of two nomadic Turkmen confederations: the Qarāqūyunlū, or "Black Sheep Turkmen," ruling Iraq from bases in Mosul, Tabriz, and Baghdad, and the Āqqūyunlū, or "White Sheep Turkmen," ruling what is now eastern Turkey from the area around Āmid and later Tabriz, after the Āqqūyunlū defeated the Qarāqūyunlū. The scholarly account of Muslim rulers and Islamic religious leaders ignores the large non-Muslim population, and thus misses the social and cultural dynamics of what was in fact a very diverse society.

It is probable that the largest non-Muslim population of Iraq and southern al-Jazira was the Church of the East, a Christian denomination whose patriarchs lived in Mosul or the surrounding plain at the end of the fifteenth century. Before the rise of Islam, this group had been the most prominent branch of Christianity in the Sasanian Persian Empire. It claimed a first-century foundation by the saints Addai and Mari, disciples of the apostle Thomas, although evidence for the existence of the

church in the first three centuries of the Common Era is very sparse. In the Christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, the Church of the East gained a reputation for "Nestorianism" by virtue of its refusal to condemn Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople as a heretic, although in fact their theology was influenced less by the ideas of Nestorius himself than by those of his teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). Under the early `Abbasid caliphate, the patriarchal residence of the Church of the East moved from Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the defunct Persian Empire, to Baghdad, and this community contributed to the intellectual culture of the caliph's capital with translations of Greek philosophical and medical works into Arabic. From the seventh century they sent missionaries to Central Asia and China, expanding so significantly among the steppe nomads that when Hülegü, the grandson of Genghis Khan, conquered Baghdad and destroyed the `Abbasid caliphate in 1258, his chief queen Doquz Khātūn was a member of the Church of the East. She persuaded the Mongol commander to spare the Christians of the city. Under Mongol rule, Middle Eastern Christians of all varieties enjoyed royal patronage again, and the Mongol rulers of Persia sometimes sent them as ambassadors to the Latin states of Europe.

The Church of the East was socially and culturally at home in the Middle East, even as it confronted the chronic political instability of the fifteenth century under Türkmen rule. Seemingly incessant wars were punctuated by bandit raids, mob violence, and insatiable tax-collectors, the symptoms of a society under stress. In this context, the Church of the East saw itself primarily as a Christian community, but it defined that in a Middle Eastern (and specifically Iraqi) manner rather than based on Western assumptions. They defined their Christianity by theology and ritual, through prayers to Christ as God, as well as socially and historically through their ecclesiastical hierarchy and their saints. Their understandings of Christianity reveal complex dimensions of diversity in the late medieval Middle East.

The Dimensions of Diversity

This study examines multiple social and cultural dimensions to religious diversity in al-Jazira and Iraq under Turkmen rule, from the conquests of Tīmūr Lang (d. 1405) to those of the Safavid Shah Ismā`īl, starting in 1501. To understand how social diversity functioned, it is necessary to understand the varieties of diversity present. Since the fifteenth-century history of these regions is unfamiliar to most scholars, Chapter 1 sketches the independence of local Türkmen and Kurdish rulers, lays out the different Christian groups present, and documents the social structure within the Church of the East itself. The next two chapters explore how social relations functioned across religious boundaries, first between Muslim rulers and their Christian subjects, and secondly among subjects both Muslim and non-Muslim. While scholars have typically studied the "status" of Christians in Islamic society through the framework of the Pact of `Umar's regulations on dhimmi (non-Muslim) populations, Chapter 2 suggests that there was no overarching framework structuring rulers' relations with their subjects in late medieval al-Jazira and Iraq. This lack of a shared script led to both unexpected opportunities for and extreme violence against fifteenth-century Christians. Chapter 3 includes the discourse of dhimmi status within the broad range of ways in which Muslim subjects (including `ulama') and Christian subjects interacted, relations which were occasionally violent and occasionally friendly but more often distrustful.

The cultural dimensions of this diversity include the ways in which different groups shared — or alternatively diverged in — ideas and values, as well as the broad-based concepts used by the people of the past to understand the diversity of the society in which they lived. To access these ideas and values requires interpreting sources which historians typically ignore, such as poetry, theology, ritual, and even manuscript colophons. A priest from northern Iraq named Ṭsbāq Shbadnāyā (fl. 1751 AG / 1440) composed the largest original fifteenth-century Syriac work, a long theological survey in verse, as well as several shorter poems for liturgical celebrations. Other liturgical poems were composed by his

contemporary ʾIshō`yahb b. Mqaddam, the metropolitan of Erbil in northern Iraq, as well as four poems for funerals. These sources reveal these authors' ideas not only about their indicated subjects, but about a range of other topics as well. In addition to such works, a nearly complete set of service books from the fifteenth-century Church of the East permits the use of ritual action as a historical source, although one with unique challenges. Communal liturgies not only influenced East Syrian clergy, including authors and scribes, through their familiar words, but the accompanying actions also communicated and emphasized certain concepts about the community to all present. Finally, there are nearly three dozen surviving colophons, notes at the end of manuscripts, which provide evidence for scribes' systems of values, beliefs, and concepts. In their plurality, colophons provide a large range of viewpoints on cultural and intellectual developments, if only very partially represented, to balance the more complete pictures given by the few named literary authors of the fifteenth century.

For the cultural historian these texts are veritable gold mines of meanings, understandings, frameworks, and concepts that were significant enough to this Christian minority in the fifteenth century to find expression in written texts. Chapters 5-9 examine in turn the widespread concepts of God, Christ, ritual, hierarchy, and history held by the fifteenth-century Church of the East. Cultural continuity or discontinuity, comparable ideas held by other Middle Eastern groups, as well as this religious minority's distinctive ideas and how they changed in the fifteenth-century, are legitimate questions for scholarly analysis. But more important than either continuity or difference is the question, difficult to answer definitively, how such concepts functioned socially. The topics of Chapters 5-9 are not haphazard, but are core concepts in how fifteenth-century Iraqi Christians defined their Christianity, not only theologically but also practically, socially, and historically. For this reason, cultural sources such as these texts likewise reveal how this group understood their communal existence and lived in a more diverse society. This approach generalizes the work of Benedict Anderson on "imagined communities," while

critiquing the assumptions and limitations of his framework, as outlined in Chapter 4.

The study of social and cultural diversity in late medieval al-Jazira and Iraq reveals a society that, despite the conflicting claims of apologists and polemicists, was neither ceaselessly persecuting minorities nor a utopian convivencia. It was instead a hierarchical and partially divided society, with mechanisms for living with difference and sometimes shared cultural values across social boundaries. To understand how this society functioned, and indeed how diversity works in any society, scholars need to identify the significant structures and divisions, the shared or divergent cultural values, and the manners in which these differences were lived out in practice. This book is offered as a first exploration of what might be found by striking off into the late medieval Middle East's terra incognita, with diversity as a compass.

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[Reading in The Byzantine Empire and Beyond](#)

edited By Teresa Shawcross, Ida Toth [Cambridge University Press, 9781108418416]

Offering a comprehensive introduction to the history of books, readers and reading in the Byzantine Empire and its sphere of influence, this volume addresses a paradox. Advanced literacy was rare among imperial citizens, being restricted by gender and class. Yet the state's economic, religious and political institutions insisted on the fundamental importance of the written record. Starting from the materiality of codices, documents and inscriptions, the volume's contributors draw attention to the evidence for a range of interactions with texts. They examine the role of authors, compilers and scribes. They look at practices such as the close perusal of texts in order to produce excerpts, notes, commentaries and editions. But they also analyse the social implications of the constant intersection of writing with both image and speech. Showcasing current methodological approaches, this collection of essays aims to place a discussion of Byzantium within the mainstream of medieval textual studies.

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Excerpt: If you desire to hear of the deeds of good soldiers, to learn and be instructed, perhaps you will make progress.

If you know letters, start reading; if, on the other hand, you are illiterate, sit down by me and listen. And I hope, if you are sensible, that you will profit, since many of those who have come after them have made great progress because of the stories of those great men of old.

With these lines at the end of his preface, a fourteenth-century chronicler imagines the fate of his work. There will be those who will pick up the book for themselves and peruse it. But also those who will gather together to listen to its contents, which will be read either by the author himself or by another reader who assumes the authorial voice. At the heart of this dual reception lies a paradox. As was true throughout the pre-modern world, possession of an advanced level of literacy was extremely rare in the Byzantine Empire. Only a handful of people were expected to attain higher education. Books, due to the materials and labour involved, were prohibitively expensive. Moreover, deciphering texts from handwritten manuscripts, despite the aid provided by the transition to the codex and presence of rubrics and marginal symbols, remained a demanding business. Even so, this was a society that laid great store by the written word.

It might be objected that ours is a distorted image of the past. After all, our sources reflect the truth of the aphorism *scripta manent*. Yet it is clear that medieval religion, government, and the economy all demanded of imperial citizens that they participate to the best of their ability —and according to the expectations of their class and gender — in a literate culture. Their Christian faith was based on the authority of revealed

Scripture. The grant of land, assessment of taxes, and deliberation of court cases all involved the issuing of documents. The value of coins was meant

to be guaranteed by their inscriptions. In these and other contexts, the written word was always a living thing: generative and transactional, it shaped individuals and bound them together in communities. Texts were authored, of course. But they were also copied and modified, as well as translated and transposed across languages and into other media. And above all they were read — frequently although by no means exclusively aloud, whether in a private or public setting. Imperial orations, where a complex relationship exists between what was delivered at court and what has been transmitted in manuscript form, are a case in point; so too are vernacular epic and romance. If we are to understand how Byzantines interacted with writing, we need to address questions of materiality and look for traces of transmission and circulation with the performative aspect of textuality kept firmly in mind.

Reading and Hearing in Byzantium by Elizabeth Jeffreys and Michael Jeffreys
The editors of this volume, when work was nearly complete, invited us to read the papers and write a summary chapter on the present situation and possible future developments in Byzantine research, particularly over the study of reading. Our initial reaction was surprise and delight at the number and quality of the articles, and gratitude to the editors and all the distinguished contributors who thought to include their work in a book linked to our names. Then, after some hesitation, we wrote these pages. Rather than summarise what has been well written elsewhere in the volume by others, we offer reflections deriving from our particular interests, before speaking of the future. We have written the text to stand alone unsupported by footnotes.

To any unthinking twenty-first-century scholar, nothing seems less problematic than the idea of reading. The reader, sitting alone at a desk or in an easy chair, silently absorbs standard pages of standard characters printed identically on well-made paper. Variations in font from book to book are soon dealt with. Reading is fast, because spelling is standardised and proofreading good: after practice it is possible to predict the word from a few letters and the phrase from a few words, and race ahead. Alternative electronic

media — e-books and material found on-line — are important, but still new enough to be easily disregarded in comparisons with the past.

It is only necessary to set out the process explicitly to realise that in the Byzantine world reading must have been quite different. Let us consider Byzantine Greek, since it was the most common language in the empire. Byzantine Greek letter-forms were subject to sharp changes of fashion. They also varied from writer to writer, and even individuals sometimes used different forms unpredictably. Writing was often untidy, often with abbreviations, frequently at the terminations of words, where meaning is determined. Spelling and orthography, sometimes very good, could also be atrocious, almost random. Changes in the pronunciation of vowels, diphthongs and consonants caused confusion, as writers used new phonetic values in an orthographic system based on the old. The average level of orthography demanded careful attention and did not allow much acceleration by prediction. The layout of the page was set by ruling, but control was sometimes loose and the general appearance could vary. Parchment, pen and ink were natural products, the first providing a surface which might include imperfections, even holes; the pen could itself be inconsistent in its breadth of strokes; ink could vary in tone. Because of all this, and despite the use of headings (often in colour), Byzantine reading must have been much slower than ours. All our instincts are set to the parameters of a print culture, but Byzantium, like all its contemporary societies, used manuscripts.

As well as difficulties caused by the pages to be read, the whole process of reading was different. It is clear from Byzantine descriptions that silent reading was rare. Most people, including the educated, sounded out words as they absorbed them, even when reading alone. Punctuation was rhetorical, to help readers articulate sentences aloud, not punctuation by syntax, aiming at silent and thoughtful comprehension, as in most modern languages. Literary work was often 'published' by reading aloud, even to learned audiences, as in the much-discussed *theatra*. Speeches and sermons plainly designed for popular performance before audiences of mixed education, including at least some without any schooling, leave modern scholars

puzzled as to how much would have been comprehended, for the language is often formal and the thought dense. There is evidence that less educated Byzantines absorbed text largely by listening to books being read aloud. Aural comprehension of difficult texts was probably a learnable skill. This extension of the meaning of reading probably applied even to many who would pass tests of literacy, but preferred the ease and sociability of an audience. More Byzantine reading was probably done by ears than by eyes. Only in the twelfth century and later were secular texts for wide oral distribution better designed for broad comprehension, with the adoption of political verse and later still of the vernacular Greek language. This was not a pure vernacular, but contained many informal features of phonology and morphology previously excluded from writing. Investigation of this language and its attraction to Byzantines at every level of education, whether they were reading or hearing it, should be a major task of future study.

Another strand of research should begin from the two or three centuries of nationalist ferment in Europe from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. During this time, there was great impetus in each country for the systematic creation of national identities, national histories, national literatures and national languages. Medieval manuscripts deemed relevant to such projects were collected and published. Histories were compiled and origins examined. But there was no nation ready to pay nationalist attention to Byzantium: not Greece, which shares a culture and language, but since the War of Independence has given priority to Ancient Greece; not Russia, which for some centuries aspired to make Moscow the third Rome, but then was sent by the Bolshevik revolution on a totally different track, from which the current renewal of interest is unlikely to return it; certainly not Turkey, which incorporates the Byzantine capital and much of the heartland of the empire, but has no intention of identifying with Byzantium, for religious reasons confirmed by centuries of wary contempt.

We do not mean to imply that Byzantine texts remained unpublished and Byzantine history ignored. But research on Byzantium has been much

less coordinated than that under nationalist motivation. Methodologies were often inappropriate and the conceptual framework was usually that of classical studies, or later those of the modern states established on territory that had once belonged to Byzantium. Byzantine Greek was condemned without discussion as a degenerate prolongation of Ancient Greek; Byzantine literature likewise. Some Byzantine texts were edited by classical rules, with corrections made to remedy the ignorance of the Byzantine scribes. But those scribes were not working on classical texts created a millennium earlier: they were copying literature produced, in some cases, in their own linguistic milieu during their lifetimes. The rules for correction should have been different. The development of Orthodox thought was often discussed by western theologians in ways which were unsympathetic and hostile. Byzantine history was discussed, particularly by historians of the school of Gibbon, through the prism of the values of the ancient world or the Enlightenment. Greek historians immediately after 1821 elided the periods between antiquity and their own lifetimes in constructing the history of their nation, as if the heroes of the War of Independence were born only a few generations after Pericles or Alexander the Great.

The first printed editions of major Byzantine historians were published with introductions recommending them as useful sources on the rise of the Turks, who were currently threatening central Europe. A subsequent French corpus of editions offered help in the conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean, as the French crown planned to reclaim the imperial title of Byzantium. Byzantine twelfth-century literature until recently was divided in Greek academia into two sections, one for texts using formal linguistic patterns, the other focusing on signs of the Modern Greek language and spirit. These two categories met at the Byzantine court, maybe involving the same writers, but, because of antagonisms over language in the nineteenth-century Greek state, they were taught in different university departments. In the twentieth century, discussions of Byzantine rural landholding mirrored disputes involving communist theory.

Many such projects were poorly conceived, if judged as attempts to understand and study

Byzantine culture rather than by the alternative motivations indicated. They were also not well coordinated. There was no central language or scholarly tradition, unlike, for example, work on French culture, which was naturally either in French or written to be attractive to French readers. We are anxious not to overemphasise these points: not all work undertaken in non-Byzantine nationalist frameworks was good — in fact nationalism itself was sometimes its besetting sin. Some studies of Byzantium were extremely impressive, especially magisterial surveys made with Germanic thoroughness that are still used to check the completeness of twenty-first-century work on Byzantium. But the most unfortunate feature of early scholarly forays into Byzantium was their lack of a united voice in the competitive matrices of cultural history, from which membership of the community of nations, the modern university and the diversity of its subject offerings emerged. Though Byzantium was marginally present in many European centres, it became an optional part of European consciousness, indeed usually absent at key moments. In the orientalist prism through which the world was inevitably viewed at that time, Byzantium was classed as non-Europe and therefore part of the observed (and subordinate) periphery rather than the observing centre. If research could have been better coordinated, Byzantium might have played an interesting and important role as a bridge between the two spheres.

Thus, at the level of sweeping generalisation characteristic of this chapter, Byzantine studies suffer from belatedness. As well as aspiring to cutting-edge scholarship to win (or keep) a seat at the different high tables of contemporary research, Byzantinists must still go back to provide or improve much of the infrastructure on which that research has to be based. Important texts remain unedited, or half-edited in scraps. Past editors have often only used one manuscript out of several, and often one of the worst. The many volumes of *Patrologia Graeca* include several that are veritable graveyards of mis-edited texts, mainly with theological content — productions over which, in many cases, modern scholars seem only now to be working out the appropriate research questions.

Important auxiliary disciplines like sigillography, epigraphy and numismatics are making great strides, but do not always present their results in ways which are useful to non-experts in those subjects, sometimes forcing the latter to read a century or more of bibliography to be confident in the use of a single seal, coin-type or inscription. Of course, it is not only textual scholarship which is affected, for research into the physical remains of Byzantium has also been hampered by a focus on the classical past or modern national interests.

Thus Byzantinists are often now faced with difficult choices. Should they follow and try to match the methodological advances of their colleagues in neighbouring disciplines, or fill gaps in the infrastructure of texts and objects without which the new methods may be seriously undermined? This dilemma is not exclusive to Byzantinists, but the number and importance of weaknesses in the infrastructure seem unusually high in this subject, especially in view of its huge chronological and geographical scope. It is tempting to try to advance on all fronts — to continue the production of basic infrastructure whilst introducing new ideas and approaches; but this may delay publication of results and do little to remedy the discipline's belatedness.

This book is a good example of the operation of these dilemmas. The chapters range from simple reporting of the readings of manuscripts to issues relating to authorship, performativity, literary sociology and the contextualisation of transmitted texts in a variety of different dimensions. Unease is sometimes visible over the quantity and completeness of the evidence available. Often there are marks of innovation in the research questions asked, the methods framing the answers, or both. But all these levels of research, with their different degrees of prestige and scholarly popularity, are essential for the future of our subject. Whatever else one may say about the future of research on Byzantine reading, it is certain that innovation needs to be fed with more and more reliable basic data, which will sometimes send us back to simple methods of collection.

For likely readers of this book, reading will seem almost as straightforward as breathing. But, as we

saw in discussing the physiology of the process at the start of the chapter, how we read now was not how medieval people read. Reading manuscript was and is different from reading print. The definition of reading should be extended to cover other ways in which a written page was transmitted to a receptive Byzantine audience, whether it was large, small, even just one person. This usually meant listening to a voice reading aloud: to a performance. Furthermore, Byzantine books were luxury possessions, owned by the rich or the church, much more expensive than modern books, and some (we shall look at the Old and New Testaments) had different contents and arrangement from their modern equivalents.

As a result, reading (or hearing) a book might have impressed a sensitive Byzantine in ways that are no longer obvious and need reconstruction.

Quotations from past literature will be picked up by well-informed modern readers, but the precise implications to be drawn from them are elusive. Differences in the impacts of prose and verse, of different verse-forms and of the various genres need to be assessed in Byzantine terms: do some styles, say, suggest performance at a rural festival, or before a large urban audience? Modern circumstances have made us all experts in the swift absorption of text. Research on Byzantine reading must alienate us from these skills in a Brechtian or Jaussian way, stopping our automatic construction of explanatory scenarios based on our own experience. We need to learn to read slowly, in part to experience the limitations of Byzantine technology, in part to pick up the contextual hints our modern reading proficiency overlooks.

The Bible is often the most frequent item in the quotations listed in the relevant register of the edition of a Byzantine text, yet the Byzantine Bible was not set out as a modern reader would expect. Biblical material was most commonly available in the form of lectionaries, arranged in various volumes constructed for liturgical purposes, not in continuous narrative as in modern Bibles. This privileged the book of Psalms, which played (and still plays) a major role in services and often formed a separate volume. Congregations would see, but not themselves handle, the books in use by

priests and others with active roles in the services — though priests and congregation alike would know prominent parts of the liturgy by heart. The biblical text was far from stable, and the alert hearer was likely to pick up differences in wording from one volume to another. Thus we must disabuse ourselves of the assumption that Byzantine congregations would have consulted their own critical texts of biblical books in regular narrative form. Virtually all Byzantine readers of works containing biblical quotations, and even some of their writers, are likely to have absorbed them only through their ears during services rather than by conventional reading.

Why did Byzantine writers include so many quotations in their work? What messages were they attempting to convey to their readers? Scholarly practice today, apart from the functional quotation of passages from a work being discussed, is to borrow attractive phrases to support an argument. We rely on the prestige of the writer whose words we use, or the impression made by the quotation itself. Some similar quotations may be found in Byzantium. But if we judge all Byzantine quotations by these criteria, we will be disappointed. Many, especially biblical quotations, add very little authority to the points made, and seem flat, uninteresting parallels to ideas already sufficiently expressed — apparently quotation for its own sake. We should probably see such cases as confirming shared experience between the writer and his audience, the regular Orthodox services which all experienced. The writer would be working on his audience's sympathy, aiming at cultivating trust.

When we move on from the Bible to quotations from ancient texts, the shared experience to which reference was usually made changes a little. The modern critic may assume that the writer is attempting to impress his readers with the breadth of his learning, and may be surprised that most of the references are to popular texts in the school curriculum, like early books of the Iliad. But it would be easy for a literate person to make more spectacular quotations. Maybe we should examine the possibility that the restricted list of quoted texts was due to the assumed audience, which was obliged to pick up the quotations to participate in

the shared experience, for quotations were most often neither marked nor attributed. What was being shared was a common experience of the first stages of education. There is, of course, a wide range of more complex patterns of quotation, where really learned men compete with each other in the breadth of their reading, but the parameters there are probably easier to parallel to modern situations.

When learned men wrote competitively for their peers, other issues arose. Throughout the Byzantine period, the ability to express oneself well was a qualification for administrative office, though proof of that ability was made in different ways. In late antiquity, the writing of good hexameters qualified a whole class of Egyptian poets as administrators all over the empire. Much later, the competition operated mainly through schools: in the tenth and eleventh centuries, schoolmasters competed in writing rhetorical texts, and there were set occasions pitting the students of one master against those of others. The Komnenians prized military more than literary skills, but many twelfth-century writers and poets became professionals, living off imperial and aristocratic commissions. The years after 1204, particularly the Palaiologan period, saw the climax of the prominence of literary men. Several held the highest offices of state, and their children were ennobled by marriage into the imperial family. The typical Byzantine writer, particularly after the eleventh century, was rarely an other-worldly artist but a competitive man of business, a spin-doctor looking for patrons to praise in prose or verse in return for money. His works were not only written for performance on specific occasions; they were also samples of his wares for purposes of advertisement, heard and read by Byzantine audiences in this spirit. This is a blunt description of a complex scenario, which was not without exceptions — but any modern discussion of Byzantine authorship should have these circumstances in mind.

The uses we have listed are far from exhausting the differences, large and small, between the Byzantine and modern practices of reading. Because of the temptations to assume modern situations with regard to books, education, literary art and other parameters of reading, one of the

best ways of clarifying the Byzantine situation is to study every dimension of its difference from modern reading, methodically paring away modern misconceptions.

Research on Byzantine reading will use a large and fast-growing range of tools based on the increasing complexity of electronic methods of analysis and internet presentation. In the fifty years of our association with research into Byzantium, the technology has changed very fast, just as that for playing pop music has progressed from vinyl and reel-to-reel tape to the plethora of current alternatives. Students of our generation paid to have theses typed for us, with three carbons to make smudged copies; the Greek for one of our graduate theses was written in by hand, while for the other the pages were transferred singly to a second typewriter to enter the Greek in spaces left by the first. We still have a heavy suitcase of printout in Greek represented by Roman capitals, produced by the biggest computer (then) in London University, made from data we had entered on punched tape. Some years later we typed a Greek paragraph into a Mac and at once generated a perfect printed page with full diacritics — an exciting experience. Important recent reading-based developments are coming thick and fast. A significant part of future research, as we suggest below, will involve integrating these tools in order to find appropriate research questions on which to use them, and to present and document the answers.

We shall look at the best of the modern tools, which, to avoid long-windedness, must stand for them all. The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) is owed to Classical Studies and the University of California at Irvine, but it has blessedly expanded into Byzantium and hopes to include all Byzantine (and even some later) texts, provided they are adequately edited. The *Thesaurus* is based on the full text of the best edition of any writer it includes, making a gigantic database, though the edition's apparatus criticus is not included. There are amazing search possibilities, like the ability to set (by century) the date-range of the material searched. Complexity is being added at every level: standard English translations of many works; the parsing of most inflected words; the addition of

searchable copies of several dictionaries, including the Viennese *Lexikon zur Byzantinischen Gräzität*, which is now almost complete. The TLG has often been used as a massive dictionary resource in itself, bringing together all Classical and Byzantine examples of the use of Greek words to enable the linking of several more limited dictionaries. A major misuse has been to lengthen the lists of sources and quotations provided in editions, with little attempt to determine the actual pattern of copying and imitation. In the future, the database could serve as a marvellously complete compendium of readings involving particular names, words, phrases and phrase-patterns, transcending the flexibility of any traditional dictionary.

The key to modern reading of manuscript texts from the past is the edition, which controls access to the text and gives direct and indirect hints on reading it. The critical edition is one of the foundations of humanist scholarship, and its traditional form and pervasive coverage of most periods and languages have done much to standardise the publication of texts found in manuscript, so that it is easy for readers of one tradition to understand how works in another tradition have been edited. But there are good reasons to experiment with other editorial methods, as we shall attempt to show in the rest of this chapter.

The first reason, which we have already mentioned, derives from the fact that the methodology of the critical edition is based on finding errors, common errors between the manuscripts, allowing editors to trace the copying history of the text concerned. The system originated in classical and biblical scholarship. The scribes of such manuscripts are usually copying material composed many centuries earlier, in a language of which they cannot count as native speakers. Thus errors are easy to find. However, when the same scribes copy texts composed by Byzantine authors, it is often harder, especially when the differences reflect developments in language use, to say which are "correct" and which are the "errors". How can a modern editor judge? In extreme cases all scribes may date from the same linguistic milieu as the original writer. Most editions involve a text of readings judged "good" accompanied by an

apparatus criticus below for rejected readings. Some rejections are self-evidently justifiable, others badly need supporting argumentation, which editions rarely provide. Often, in editions of Byzantine works, readings in the apparatus are as good as those in the text. The standard critical edition cannot express these varied situations: one reading has to be right and the rest wrong.

Critical editions usually standardize minor irregularities in spelling and grammatical orthography, indicating the fact by a sentence or two in the introduction. This avoids weighing down the apparatus with hundreds of tiny variations of no importance for understanding the text, where in any case there is little or no reason to accept one variant and reject another.

However these variations would often have made a considerable difference in the ways the text would be read aloud. Historians of grammar, particularly phonology, cannot use critical editions, because much of their most important evidence has been tacitly removed. In general, the critical edition is a modern creation, combining distinct manuscripts. This process of combination, together with orthographic standardisation, may sometimes produce results which would have been abhorrent to the original writer or to a medieval reader performing the text before an audience.

A Byzantine reader who saw one manuscript and read it would have been aware of these constant inconsistencies, as well as conscious of the fact that another copy of the same text might well have differences in wording — but, with the exception of rare cases, he would have considered these features normal and not be scandalised in the same way as a modern editor or proof-reader. All modern editions seem designed to impose modernity on something essentially pre-modern. Some editions go further, providing a translation into a modern language, notes to explain choices made in the text and apparatus, on the content of the work, its sources and linguistic peculiarities, together with identification of the names and place-names involved. These notes are sometimes on the same page as the edition, sometimes elsewhere in the book, for example in an index.

Recent developments take modern reading, especially scholarly reading, even further from the Byzantine experience. For more than twenty years there has been intense discussion of digital editions, trying to overcome the rigidity of the standard book, particularly over the black and white choice between 'right' text and 'wrong' apparatus. One common form of digital edition marks the lemmata of the apparatus and/or notes by highlighting them in the text or attaching superscript numbers. Notes then appear when the reader passes the mouse over these markings, or clicks on them. This may bring up a line or two of apparatus with comments over reasons for its rejection. It may take the reader to another site, a geographical gazetteer, grammar or prosopography. The basic page seems often too cluttered to be absorbed by any process resembling reading: it is more a table for the dissection of the text and the explication of its meaning. This information overload is far removed from the non-standard, bare manuscript of an often volatile text to which the Byzantine reader would have had access. We need the dissection, but it must first be contextualised by achieving a reading experience more closely approximating that of the Byzantines.

Fortunately, in the last five years or so large numbers of manuscript facsimiles have begun to appear on the internet sites of many major libraries. Librarians who had preserved their manuscripts from damage by readers, by locking them away and even restricting the circulation of photographs, changed their policy almost overnight. The cost of reproductions has decreased and many are now freely available on the internet for research purposes. As editions, especially digital editions, have moved away from the Byzantine reading experience, available copies of Byzantine original pages have increased exponentially. This suggests that it may now be possible for digital editions to offer richer and more direct access to Byzantine texts. But before that can happen, several other barriers — for example, institutional, financial and technical — need to be overcome. There is limited motivation for research on reading in Byzantium if its results cannot be shown in the edition of Byzantine texts. The exclusivity of the critical edition must be

opened up to change and competition on a level playing field.

A digital edition could begin from complete facsimiles of one or more manuscripts, perhaps with the same page or two from all available witnesses. Transcriptions would be needed, unless the manuscripts were very easy to read. Different kinds of punctuation could be tried and compared. Readers not fluent in Greek would require a translation into a modern language (or two), electronically attached to the facsimiles or transcriptions, so that the versions may appear side-by-side. The rest of the edition would vary according to its assumed audience and the importance of the text. Textual apparatus, notes on variations important to linguists, identification of names and all the rest could be included — with links to each of the versions provided, together with the possibility of hiding such facilities where they are unnecessary and hinder the reading experience. Many editors have individual agendas to pursue, appropriate to a restricted number of texts. One could dream of programs with templates of textual spaces to be filled and links to be added by the choices of the editor, tailored to an assumed audience.

The greatest of the problems created by the printed critical edition is the barrier it forms against innovation and experimentation of this kind. Its roots deep in the humanist tradition are supported by the rules of various dominant publishing houses and prestigious series. Though editors do not expect to grow rich through their editions, at least standard critical editions have a better chance to be published without special subventions from the editor than digital editions, which are by definition experimental. We have met several editors, most of them young, keen to innovate digitally but terrified that their labour will be wasted, because there is no standard for the digital edition that even begins to rival the authority of a critical edition in book form. The future of research on Byzantine reading depends to large extent on the solution of this dilemma. We do not presume to define the future of the edition, or of research on reading in Byzantium. Then will still be many printed critical editions in our future. But the way must be opened to try digital alternatives, which

may combine greater authenticity in the reading experience with increased flexibility in the provision aids to understanding and contextual information. <>

[The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers](#) by Jack Tannous [Princeton University Press, 9780691179094]

A bold new religious history of the late antique and medieval Middle East that places ordinary Christians at the center of the story

In the second half of the first millennium CE, the Christian Middle East fractured irreparably into competing churches and Arabs conquered the region, setting in motion a process that would lead to its eventual conversion to Islam. Jack Tannous argues that key to understanding these dramatic religious transformations are ordinary religious believers, often called “the simple” in late antique and medieval sources. Largely agrarian and illiterate, these Christians outnumbered Muslims well into the era of the Crusades, and yet they have typically been invisible in our understanding of the Middle East’s history.

What did it mean for Christian communities to break apart over theological disagreements that most people could not understand? How does our view of the rise of Islam change if we take seriously the fact that Muslims remained a demographic minority for much of the Middle Ages? In addressing these and other questions, Tannous provides a sweeping reinterpretation of the religious history of the medieval Middle East.

This provocative book draws on a wealth of Greek, Syriac, and Arabic sources to recast these conquered lands as largely Christian ones whose growing Muslim populations are properly understood as converting away from and in competition with the non-Muslim communities around them.

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Excerpt: This book is about the world the Arabs encountered when they conquered the Middle East in the mid-seventh century and the world those conquests created. The importance of the Arab conquests for the history of the Middle East and, indeed, for the history of the subsequent fourteen hundred years, needs no emphasis. Apart from the rise and triumph of Christianity, no other event in the first millennium rivals them in significance. A majority of the population of the world today is

affected in profound ways, daily, by these two events.

For all its importance, however, this period has been remarkably resistant to the writing of a compelling and persuasive unified account that does equal justice to the religious landscape of the region and to its changes under both Roman and Arab rule. On the Roman side, one easily gets lost in a thicket of ecclesiastical labels and rarefied Greek theological terms. The fact that these terms, when rendered into Syriac—a dialect of Aramaic that served as the literary language for much of the Middle East's Christian population at this time—might mean different things to different Christian confessions does not help matters, nor does the fact that many of the labels used to refer to various groups can be regarded as offensive. It is a period rich in historical importance but also abounding in opportunities for perplexity.

The appearance of Muslims on the scene adds another layer of potential confusion. The emergence of Islam along with its controversies and civil wars brings with it befuddling Arabic names, competing precedence claims, and tribal genealogical assertions and relations that seem, to the uninitiated, as arcane as they are apparently consequential. The Islamic tradition has left us remarkably detailed—even at times awkwardly intimate—information about the Prophet Muhammad, and yet accounts of early Islamic history have frequently been mired in interminable and intractable debates about how much, if anything, we can believe of the traditional Muslim account of Islamic origins. More significant than this or that report about the Prophet's behavior or activities are the bigger questions that haunt the field: Did the Qur'an actually originate in Muhammad's lifetime, in Western Arabia? Can we even speak of 'Islam' as a phenomenon before the late seventh century?

In the last several decades, it has become increasingly common for scholars to attempt to bring together the late antique and early Islamic worlds.' In this book, I will try to do this as well, but I hope to offer a slightly different approach from a number of previous attempts. I will proceed from a basic assumption that if we want to understand how

Arab conquerors related to the traditions of the populations they conquered and, more specifically, how Christians and Muslims interacted with one another, we must first understand Christian-Christian interactions, for the Middle East, in the several centuries before the birth of the Prophet, witnessed the irreparable fracturing of its Christian community and the development of rival and competing churches.

Looking at intra-Christian relations in the late Roman period will take us to a still more antecedent question: What did most of the population of the Middle East actually make of the disputes that had so divided the Christian communities of the region and which fill the pages of manuals of church history? What did it mean to be a Christian for most people, and what importance was accorded to intra-Christian religious differences? These questions will lead us to a whole host of further questions. Was there a layering of knowledge that could be found in the Christian community—that is, did some members know more than others? The answer to this last question is obvious, but it leads to a further question whose answer is not so immediately clear: What were the consequences of such a layering?

In order to understand the world that the Arab conquests created, I want to suggest, we need to first understand the world they found. And to understand that world, we need to attempt to understand the religious attitudes and behaviors of most of its inhabitants and how those attitudes and behaviors affected the leaders of the Christian churches. It is these leaders who have left us the texts we study in order to try to understand this world.

A great deal of this book will be an effort to put flesh on the unseen contexts that swirl around such texts. These contexts were there when the texts were written, but they escape our notice easily; once supplied, however, they cast many things into new light. The great majority of Christians in the Middle East, I will suggest in Part I of this book, belonged to what church leaders referred to as 'the simple.' They were overwhelmingly agrarian, mostly illiterate, and likely had little understanding of the theological complexities that split apart the

Christian community in the region. 'Simple' here does not connote 'simple-minded,' as it might in some varieties of English, nor should it be understood as a category restricted to the laity: there were monks, priests, and even bishops who were simple believers. The men who wrote the texts we study lived their lives among these simple believers: they fed them and ate with them, they prayed with them and for them, they taught and healed them, and they had the responsibility of pastoral care for them. A key to understanding the world that the Arabs found is the recognition that it was overwhelmingly one of simple, ordinary Christians; and that it was a world fracturing into rival groups on the basis of disagreements that most of those Christians could not fully understand.

I will attempt to show how this paradox can help explain the shape that Middle Eastern Christianity had in the centuries after the Council of Chalcedon took place in AD 451 and before the Arab conquests covered in Part II of this book. There was, during this period, fierce competition for the loyalties of simple, everyday Christians among leaders of the various Christian movements in the Middle East. This competition helped fuel debates, the composition of polemics, the translation of texts, the creation of educational institutions, and the development of a Syriac-language syllabus of study (among Miaphysites) in the seventh century. In this regard, it might be helpful to recall the competition between Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth-century Middle East and the educational consequences it had for the region, especially Lebanon. Because the question of continuity/discontinuity between the periods of Roman and Arab rule in the Middle East has been a topic of such great interest to so many, I will pause for a brief "Interlude" between Parts II and III to look at it more closely, focusing especially on the question of continuity when seen through the prism of Syriac sources and the unique non-imperial, nonstate-centered perspective that they offer.' The intense competition among religious elites for the allegiances of simple Christians led to a series of remarkable intellectual continuities in the Syriac-speaking world across the sixth to ninth centuries, a time that has traditionally been seen as one of great cultural rupture.

In Part III, I will arrive at the question of how Arab conquerors and settlers fit into the landscape sketched out in the first two sections of the book. Here, I will emphasize that when thinking about the history of the Middle East in the early period of Muslim rule, one needs to constantly supply another context often invisible in the Arabic texts we read about the period: that of the non-Muslims who formed the overwhelming demographic majority of the region for centuries after the Arab conquests. The Christian communities of the Middle East are the ones with which I am most familiar, and it is for this reason (as well as for reasons of space) that I have focused primarily on them rather than on Jews, Zoroastrians, or others; the story of how Muslims related to these other non-Muslim groups is an important one that I will leave to scholars more learned than I. Discussions of Christian-Muslim interaction have customarily focused on actual interactions—there is a rich body of scholarship that has located, classified, and analyzed instances of Christian-Muslim encounter—but in Part III, I will attempt to look first at what ‘Christian’ and ‘Muslim’ meant in the seventh and eighth centuries before asking questions about how Christians and Muslims related to one another. As in Parts I and II, my focus will be on the level of the ordinary, simple believers who were the great mass of both Christians and Muslims living in the Middle East in the early medieval period.

Crucially, in this early period of Muslim rule, we also need to recognize that most of the Prophet's notional followers, including many of the leaders of the early Muslim state, were people who had converted late in his life for apparently this-worldly reasons, often en masse. These late converts, many of whom rebelled against the leadership of the Prophet's community after his death and had to be forced back into the fold by means of military violence, likely had little deep understanding of Muhammad's message or the full implications of what it meant to belong to the religious community he founded. Indeed, those implications and Islam itself were still being worked out in this period. One of the keys to thinking about the earliest Christian-Muslim interactions, I will therefore suggest, is to keep in mind that we are dealing with a setting in which simple Christians were meeting

late mass converts and their descendants, even as Islam itself was being elaborated as a full-fledged way of living in the world.

Keeping our focus on simple believers, Christian and Muslim, will also give us what I hope is a different perspective on the question of the gradual conversion from Christianity to Islam of much of the Middle East's population over the course of the Middle Ages. Whatever the social and economic benefits and consequences—and these often will have been significant—when viewed from the standpoint of ordinary religious believers, a conversion from Christianity to Islam may not have been as momentous, in religious terms, as one might expect. We are dealing with a world, I will suggest, in which one could become a Muslim and still hold on to many Christian practices and even beliefs.

Here an obvious but basic point should be emphasized. We should resist the easy assumption that the beliefs and practices of the contemporary Muslim (or Christian) population of the Middle East in an era of printing, satellite television, the Internet, and attempted universal public education will have been substantially similar to those of most of the medieval Muslim (or Christian) population of the region. We need to think away the ability of the state and religious institutions to use modern mass communication and education to create a uniformity of religious belief and understanding. As a useful analogy, it might be helpful to recall that [e]ven in a country such as France, which had centuries-long traditions of political frontiers and where norms of proper usage had been developing for centuries, probably not much more than 50 percent of French men and women spoke French as their native language in 1900. The understanding and practice of Islam by most medieval Middle Eastern Muslims will have been quite different from that of the literate, television-watching, Internet and social-media using Muslim population in the cities of the Middle East today. It will also have been different from the beliefs found expressed in the medieval texts we study. As is the case also with Christian writings of the late antique and early medieval periods, when it comes to Islamic religious documents, we need to learn to see

the invisible context of simple, ordinary adherents swirling around the things we read.

The question of the motivations, meaning, and consequences of conversion will be a major focus of Part III of this book. At the end of Part III, I will take up the question of how Muslims related to the religious traditions of the people they now ruled. This was a world where, very literally, the mosque was in the shadow of the church. Following Albrecht Noth, I will suggest that the precarious demographic and cultural situation that conquering Muslims found themselves in led to attempts, reflected in a variety of /Judith, to limit contact with Christians and Jews and discourage imitation of their behavior and religious practices. Alongside such attempts at proscription, however, can be set other putatively Prophetic utterances, which seemed to grant approval to seeking information from Christians and Jews. What is more, it is possible to identify various figures who did just this. Furthermore, scholars have long noted a variety of wide-ranging continuities between late antique Christian practices and later Muslim practices and beliefs.

Part IV takes up the question of the process by which this great host of late antique ideas, habits, and at times even texts, entered into what Patricia Crone termed 'the bloodstream of Islam: The field of medieval Middle Eastern history is commonly understood to be Islamic history, an unspoken and sectarian conflation that relegates the non-Muslim population to what is usually, at best, the shadows of whatever image of the period we are given. Social history provides a key approach for recovering the role that non-Muslims played in making the world that scholars of the region in this period study. Moreover, the question of how Muslims related to the traditions of the religious communities they now found themselves ruling provides a vehicle for making the story of the Middle East under Muslim rule less overtly elitist and confessional—that is, one that focuses on more than just its hegemonic Muslim minority and concerns itself with all of the region's inhabitants.

In attempting to tell this story, I have made use of a large number of sources, in various languages, and belonging to a variety of genres. In order to keep

the book from becoming any longer than it already is, I have tried to keep issues of Quellenkritik to a minimum and have instead chosen to offer some reflections on my approach to the sources in Appendix I.

* * *

Much of what follows will be an attempt to tell the religious history of the late antique and medieval Middle East from perspectives that are typically not privileged or which are often traditionally ignored or relegated to some sort of inferior status. Chronologically, my main focus will be roughly the years 500-1000, that is, from the era of Anastasius and Justinian in the post-Chalcedonian Roman Empire up to the pre-Crusader Abbasid period, but I will use evidence from other periods as well; geographically, I will concentrate on the Fertile Crescent—Syria, Palestine, and Iraq—but other regions, most notably Egypt, will also appear. Before the Arab conquests, my main emphasis will be on the simple, uneducated Christian and how he or she related to the theological debates that occupied the leaders of their church. I will focus on the Aramaic-speaking Christian population of the Middle East, not just those authors who wrote in Greek. In the period of Muslim rule, I will be particularly interested in the Christian population of the Middle East, the population which must have been a large majority in much of the region but whose existence and importance often silently vanishes after the conquests.

The result of pushing these perspectives from the margins toward the center will be, I hope, a narrative that subverts deeply ingrained tendencies in the historiography of this period. This book has two fundamental goals: first, to argue against adopting a heavily theological understanding of the Christian communities in the post-Chalcedonian Middle East as well as against a strongly doctrinally focused understanding of Christian-Muslim interactions. And second, to de-center Islam within medieval Middle Eastern history and desectarianize the subject by undermining the common understanding that the history of the medieval Middle East is synonymous with the problems and questions of Islamic history. If modern European historians now commonly speak of

'transnational histories,' historians of the medieval Middle East should strive for 'transconfessional histories' that explicitly reject the unstated millet system which has traditionally governed how the field has operated, a system that gives Islam, a minority religion, pride of place in the region's medieval history and dissertations focused on Islamic topics distinct preference in hiring decisions for academic positions. Apart from distorting contemporary understandings—both in the Middle East and in the West—of the role and importance of non-Muslims in the history of the medieval Middle East, this historiographic millet system distorts how we view medieval Islam itself. For properly understanding the Middle East's politically dominant medieval Muslim population requires understanding that it is precisely that: a hegemonic minority whose members were descended from non-Muslim converts, one which elaborated and articulated its positions on a host of issues in conversation and competition with the non-Muslims whom they ruled over, lived alongside of, were frequently related to, and often explicitly defined themselves against ideologically. Another challenge should be kept in mind as well: the East Roman Empire, an overt and thoroughgoing Christian state, represented the chief ideological, political, and military rival of the state governed by Muhammad's successors in the centuries after his death. Both internally and externally, non-Muslims were competitors, and they were seen as such.

This book ultimately represents an attempt at writing a nonelitist, desectarianized religious history of the late Roman and early medieval Middle East, one that takes seriously the existence of a layering or continuum of knowledge and engagement in religious communities and which is concerned with the lived religious experience of all the region's inhabitants, not just that of select members of politically hegemonic groups. Scholars have written many erudite books and articles about learned Christians, Jews, and Muslims in this period. But these were figures who would have constituted a fraction of their respective communities. What happens if we ask about everyone else? <>

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