Canadian Theological Review

2014
Volume 3
Issue 1

A Journal of Theology, Scripture, and Culture

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The *Canadian Theological Review* (*CTR;* ISSN 1198-7804) is published twice a year by the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association (CETA). Memberships, which include a CTR subscription, are available for the annual fee of $40 for individuals and for libraries. Student subscriptions are $20. A subscription form can be found at the end of this journal and is accepted by mail, fax, e-mail, or through our website (www.ceta-ctr.org).

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Foreword

This issue of *CTR* represents a collaborative effort between the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association (CETA) and the Canadian Theological Society (CTS). A call for papers was issued by CTS to the participants of the 2014 CTS annual conference. The six articles included in this issue were selected from among the papers submitted (via blind peer review) by the scholars from the CTS executive board.

Christopher Zoccali, editor-in-chief.

Friendship and Interpretation in Eberhard Bethge, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and John's Gospel

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Abstract

Eberhard Bethge's claim concerning his hermeneutical priority in the interpretation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology, on account of his personal presence to Bonhoeffer, are strengthened through a reading of John's Gospel. John's Gospel contains a Christology and pneumatology that makes friendship a possible site of revelation, of both the friend and of God. This validates Bethge's claims to friendship as a hermeneutical category. But Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in contrast to Bethge, forwards an approach to interpretation that values personal distance from a thinker and proximity to the text. This reading of Merleau-Ponty allows for an important move forward in Bonhoeffer interpretation that values Bethge's lasting contribution, without the necessity of being limited by it. Reading Bethge, John's Gospel, and Merleau-Ponty together lead to a claim for friendship as a category for generative theological interpretation that can be textually mediated.

Six years after the publication of Eberhard Bethge's biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bethge took an opportunity to defend his reading of Bonhoeffer's theological legacy.[1] Bonhoeffer's references to "non-religious interpretation" had been used in support of Bultmann's program of existential interpretation;[2] John Robinson's *Honest to God* used another slogan, this time "religionless Christianity," to other ends; and in the US, Paul van Buren and William Hamilton were using

1 I owe special thanks to Noesis, a University of Cambridge graduate society, and to the Canadian Theological Society, for conversations that contributed to the essay as it appears here. Thanks also to Jon Mackenzie, who gave some very helpful feedback on an earlier draft.

2 Eberhard Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr* (London: Collins, 1975), 21-23.

Bonhoeffer in their Death-of-God theology,[3] a movement that, as Bethge puts it, "had to do with extremely arbitrary developments whose consequences are untrustworthy in interpreting Bonhoeffer."[4] But Bethge knew Bonhoeffer, and this is the key to his defense of his own interpretation. So Bethge says: "To whom did he write? . . . Bonhoeffer did not send the letters and the outline of his manuscript to the world at large, nor even to his Church; he shared his thoughts with a theological friend in the Confessing Church. . . . what we have was addressed to a very limited circle of people who understood his intentions."[5]

This is not an uncontroversial hermeneutic claim for Bethge to make. Even Bonhoeffer wondered, in his poem "Who Am I?", if he himself, or anyone else really knew him, but for one exception: "Whoever I am, thou knowest me; O God, I am thine!"[6]

But Bethge does not stand alone in his hermeneutic confidence. In fact, this appeal to friendship is not uncommon in theological biography. Bethge is in the company of both Gregory of Nazianzus, who wrote a biographical encomium for Basil of Caesarea, and Possidius, Augustine's first biographer. During the continuing dispute over the deity of the Holy Spirit in the late 4th century, Gregory of Nazianzus wrote a panegyric on the recently deceased Basil of Caesarea. Where Basil was not entirely clear, Gregory wanted to make him clearer. According to Gregory, Basil was his friend. Because they were friends, they held private conversations where Basil "eagerly confessed [the divinity of the Holy Spirit] . . . he made it more clear in his conversations with me, from whom he concealed nothing [on] the subject."[7] At the end of his biography of Augustine, Possidius similarly connects his understanding of Augustine's theology with their friendship.[8]

Bethge did not wonder, in the same way Bonhoeffer wondered, about how well a person can be known. Rather, there are some who do understand Bonhoeffer and his intentions, and they are Bonhoeffer's friends in the Church, the ones who knew Bonhoeffer personally. What is of interest, however, is not Bethge's hermeneutic claim. It is his association of epistemology and hermeneutics with

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3 Bethge is forceful with his disdain for this line of interpretation, saying that van Buren and Hamilton "tampered" with Bonhoeffer's thought, "did violence" to it, and "destroyed his dialectical way of expressing himself. What was happening was at least made clear by William Hamilton once," according to Bethge, "when in the course of a discussion he remarked, 'We make a creative misuse of Bonhoeffer!'" Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr,* 24.

4 Ibid., 24.

5 Ibid., 140.

6 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison, vol. 8 of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,* ed. J. de Gruchy; trans. I. Best et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 460.

7 Gregory of Nazianzus, "Oration 43: The Panegyric on S. Basil," in *Cyril of Jerusalem; Gregory Nazianzen,* vol. 7 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2;* repr. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 401, 418.

8 Possidius, "Life of St. Augustine," in *Early Christian Biographies,* vol. 15 of *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation,* ed. R. Deferrari; trans. R. Deferrari and M. Muller (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1952), 124.

friendship. Friendship, according to Bethge, in a way reminiscent of his patristic forebears, offers a unique insight into both the life and the theology of his biographical subject. Bethge claims friendship as a mode of knowing another person in which one can speak to the shape of their theological thought, and the friend as the best interpreter of a person's work.

But let's compare this with statements made by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who needed to address a similar problem in his own way, in a different time, and about another thinker. In an essay about his interpretation of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty writes, paraphrasing Heidegger: "'When we are considering a man's thought,' Heidegger says in effect, 'the greater the work accomplished . . . the richer the unthought-of element in that work. That is, the richer is that which, through this work and through it alone, comes toward us as never yet thought of.'" This invocation of the unthought-of in Husserl, writes Merleau-Ponty, "will seem foolhardy on the part of someone who has known neither Husserl's daily conversation nor his teaching." The claim appears to be at odds with Bethge's. For Merleau-Ponty, It is precisely in not being personally present to another that allows one to perceive what he calls "the articulations between things said."[9] What is at stake, however, is very similar to what was at stake for Bethge: what effect does personal presence have on interpretation? What Bethge sees as necessary to interpretation, Merleau-Ponty wants to exclude, but each want to do so in order to interpret another appropriately.

On one level, both claims are common-sensical. When you spend a great deal of time with another person, gain a good grasp on the way they think. Alternatively, if there was no way of interpreting the thought of another through texts, there would not be much work left for philosophers and theologians to do. My question, however, is whether we can read these claims as more than common-sensical, and my proposal is to develop more fully a theology of friendship through a reading of John's gospel. This will lead me, on the one hand, to affirm Bethge's claim that friendship does offer a particular way of knowing another that can reveal the person and something of God, but to question his assumption that this kind of knowing is limited to immediate presence. To claim the priority of immediate presence was helpful in the effort to keep the sloganeers at bay, but to say "I knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer"[10] will not be sufficient to bring Bonhoeffer interpretation forward in the post-Bethge era of Bonhoeffer reception. This is where the things Merleau-Ponty has to say about the "unthought-of" in a thinker's work—and the particular kind of generativity that can arise out of distance—becomes a key interpretive move,

9 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," in *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1964), 160.

10 This was, indeed, the translated title of a book of essays on Bonhoeffer by those who knew him: Ronald Gregor Smith and Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann, eds., *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: Fontana, 1973).

without losing sight of the constructive possibilities for friendship as a mode of interpretation. Bethge, by way of John's Gospel, however, will press Merleau-Ponty in a distinctly moral direction. As such, reading Bethge and Merleau-Ponty together will provide a theological and philosophical foundation for the interpretive task of theological biography, and the task of theology more generally.

The first step, then, with the intention of giving some theological footing to Bethge's invocation of friendship, is to look to John's gospel. And, in John's gospel, I begin with John 15:12-15, a short text about love, crucifixion, revelation, and friendship. The key question about this text, for the purposes of this article, is about duplication or repetition; and the first observation to make is that this passage illustrates the intermediate stage of one of John's recurring structures of repetition, where the Father gives something to the Son, and the Son shares this with disciples (occasionally this structure includes the Spirit). But when Jesus uses general terms in 15:13, when he says that there is no greater love than a person laying down his life for his friends, he extends the possibility of repetition to the disciples themselves. The laying down of one's life for one's friends is something that is done by Jesus, and then by the disciples as well. The generality of the statement leaves room for both the original act and the improvisatory non-identical repetition of that act.[11]

But is revelation part of this non-identical repetition? In his commentary on John's Gospel, Aquinas offers some direction as we look at the ways in which God, and a person, is made known in friendship. Aquinas, commenting on John 15:15, writes that a creaturely revelation of "the secrets of [the] heart" is the true sign of friendship, understanding the sharing of oneself to be a repetition of what Jesus is doing with the disciples, though the "secret" is different. Creaturely friendship is friendship much like the friendship between the Son and the disciples, but *distinct* in that a person shares with another person what is hidden in the heart, while the Son reveals his essence.[12] On this reading, the repetition of friendship among the disciples is implied in Christ's befriending of the disciples, but the mode and manner of that repetition is not straightforward, just as, for John, "laying down one's life for one's friends" is not a simple repetition of the crucifix-

11 I have taken this term from Ben Quash, referring to Peter Ochs' description of what John Milbank means by "pleonasm," which is "not so much *excess verbiage as non-identical repetition,* a creative repetition that is at the heart of generative, historical, language use." See Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 21. Quash and Ochs use this to refer to the way forms of life in one tradition appear on other traditions. This is not far, however, from how I am using it here, as a pattern that is creative and generative, and not simply a *mimetic* repetition.

12 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21;* trans. F. Larcher and J. Weisheipl (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2010), 111. This is close to what is implied by more recent commentators, like J. Ramsay Michaels, who identify John's connections between love, imitation, and revelation. See J. Ramsay Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 814.

ion. It is a non-identical improvisatory repetition that begins with the Father's love for the Son, but is repeated in the Son's love of the disciples, a friendship seen in the laying down of one's life and bound with Christ's *revelation* of the Father. What has been made known to the Son is made known to the disciples in friendship and sacrifice. The sacrifice is repeatable, but non-identical, bringing with it an analogous personal disclosure.

A far more controversial question is whether this non-identical repetition brings disclosure of God as well. This reading of John would certainly come into critical contact with Karl Barth and Ruldolf Bultmann. Barth, despite the fact that his work is so concerned with revelation, overlooks the significance of John 15:15, where friendship and revelation are embedded together. Rather than considering the possibility of a kind of revelation that is non-identically repeated—implied when friendship is described as revelatory and as sacrificial act for another modeled on the crucifixion, but not identically repeating the crucifixion—Barth's doctrine of revelation is characterized by the word "only." The Word of God, for example, meets us only in the twofold mediacy of Scripture and proclamation.[13] Barth is not at all sympathetic to a kind of revelatory repetition in an ecclesiastical practice such as friendship, despite the Johannine association of the two in John 15:15. Barth will only say that Johannine friendship is unlike friendship as we know it.[14] This is a fair point indeed. But, when Barth calls the threefold revelation of the Word of God an analogue of the doctrine of the triunity of God, the result is bound to be a certain kind of crystallization of revelation understood as such: as the Word of God, mediated only by Scripture and proclamation.[15] Barth is, then, willing to think of revelation as a *kind* of repetition. For Barth, however, this is an *identical* repetition, apparently unaffected by its writtenness or spokenness.[16] As we have seen, however, John's gospel is more open to the possibility of revelation being non-identical, and, as we will see below, open to the possibility that this non-identical repetition is revelatory of God.

Bultmann's concern arises with the conflation of vertical-divine friendships and horizontal-creaturely friendships. For Bultmann, there is a radical disjunction

13 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* I/1, §4.4, 121.

14 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* III/2, §46.1, 329.

15 Barth, CD I/1, §4.2, 121. Arguably, by the time he comes to IV/3, Barth has developed his doctrine of revelation significantly. The criticism of Barth's less than fulsome reading of John 15:15, however, is never rectified, and is a significant missed opportunity.

16 John Milbank, in his chapter "Pleonasm, Speech, and Writing," referred to above, does speak in his own way on non-identical repetition, and the association we can make between what is spoken and what is written. Milbank is, for the most part, concerned with an argument for the theological significance of history as an event that is unfolding. His point, however, is well taken. For Milbank, there can be a superfluity of revelatory language that is not insignificant, and—in some agreement with Barth—the difference between the writtenness or spokenness of this language can certainly be overstated. See John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 55-83.

between the two. Recalling John 8:31-36, Bultmann writes that freedom in divine friendship is possible because of revelation. If the disciples continue in Jesus's word they are truly disciples, they will know the truth, and the truth will make them free. So when the "descendants of Abraham" make the claim that they have never been slave to anyone, Jesus answers: "The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues for ever. So the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed . . . you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." Receiving the word from the son, then, makes a person free, as we read in John 15. The Son speaks what he knows of the Father, and in doing so makes the disciples friends rather than slaves. Therefore, to be the friend of the son is to be free.[17] Revelation frees the disciple and makes the disciple capable of becoming a friend of Jesus, but because of the directionality of this revelation, the disciple cannot call Jesus a friend. For Bultmann, this means that divine friendship is not characterized by mutuality, and this is different than creaturely friendship which is characterized by mutuality. The disciples' "response to his love consists in the demonstration of the vitality of their faith, and the metaphor of bearing fruit is picked up again to make the point."[18] The fruit of faith, as a response to God's loving revelation, can be shared mutually. But because revelation is vertical and directional by the nature of it coming from God and to the disciple, Bultmann does not say that revelation can establish horizontal friendships aside from sharing the faith that arises from that revelation.

Bultmann, however, is being increasingly contested on this point. Others are not so concerned with the directionality of revelation, and this is because they disagree with Bultmann on the incommensurability of mutuality and revelation, and therefore there is a creaturely ability to imitate the revelatory aspect of vertically oriented friendship. Thomas Brodie, for example, thinks that this sharing of knowledge includes "genuine mutuality" without excluding the possibility of a "divine plan."[19] Friendship, for Brodie, gives an inside knowledge, but this knowledge "is not any kind of arrogant private domain". In this way, Brodie sees the vertical friendship between Jesus and the disciples as something that can be replicated horizontally because "the essence of the friendship is not in dominating knowledge but in a self-giving love."[20] Jesus's mutuality with the disciples conditions the revelatory knowledge as something that cannot be dominating, but characterized by a giving and fruitful love. Luke Timothy Johnson sees the disciples' knowledge

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17 Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* trans. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 543. Michaels, *The Gospel of John,* 814.

18 Ibid., 544-45.

19 Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1993), 483.

20 Ibid., 484.

of what the Father has made known to Jesus as precisely the way the disciples can both do what Jesus commands and be friends rather than servants. The dominant feature of friendship-love is, for Johnson, "shared outlook" that can presumably be shared by Jesus and the disciples, as well as among the disciples.[21]

There are two consequences to Johnson's argument. One is that divine friendship, as "shared outlook", does not take seriously the significance of the difference between sharing an outlook and what is revealed of the Father by Jesus, nor the possibility of divine revelatory knowledge coming to light through the horizontally oriented friendship among the disciples. Shared outlook, however, as much as it is a feature of friendship in some ancient texts, does not have the same fullness of "all that I have heard from my Father." And Brodie's "divine plan" is a weak term indeed, especially when compared to Bultmann's divine revelation. The cost of a commensurate horizontality is a verticality largely devoid of what might be a distinctively divine revelation of God's self. It is the sharing of what Jesus knows of the Father that brings this friendship into being, rather than the sharing of an outlook or a plan. This is particularly true when this revelation is set beside the Old Testament exemplars of friendship with God. The revelation given to Moses and Abraham is far more than a "shared outlook" or a plan.

But there is an underlying pneumatological logic in John's gospel, in contrast to Barth's insistence on identicality, Bultmann's insistence on verticality, and the lack of revelatory robustness of the contemporary interpreters mentioned above. It is a logic that speaks to a kind of divine revelation, shared by the disciples, driven into the future, and towards an act of generative interpretation. In John 16:13-15, the Spirit guides the disciples into truth, glorifying the Son by taking what belongs to the Son and giving it to the disciples. Craig Keener, for example, points out the parallels between John 15:15 and 16:13-15, and argues that the work of the Holy Spirit makes possible a divine, dynamic revelation that can be shared among and between the disciples, but in the church. This repetition of Jesus's revelatory friendship with the disciples, now taking place among the disciples, refers back to the words and deeds of Jesus and yet extends them into the future. In this sense, divine revelatory friendship is not simply Christological but Trinitarian, maintaining the verticality of divine revelation alongside the pneumatic and ecclesial extension of this revelation. Just as Jesus heard and saw the Father (5:19-20; 8:38) his disciples would see and hear Jesus; and just as Jesus passed on what he hears (5:20, 8:26), the Spirit will now pass on to the disciples what he heard from Jesus (16:13):[22] As Keener puts it, "John therefore portrays

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21 Johnson, "Making Connections: The Material Expression of Friendship in the New Testament," *Int* 58, no.2 (2004): 168.

22 Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* vol. II (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1014-15.

friendship with Jesus as an intimate relationship with God and his agent, one that John believed was continuing in his own community."[23] At least with regard to revelation, this kind of pneumatology makes the vertical-divine, and the horizontal-creaturely axes difficult to distinguish. The verticality of the Son's revelation of the Father continues to take place within the pneumatic community of disciples, according to the work of the Holy Spirit, but now dynamically instantiated apart from the precise words and bodily presence of Jesus. John associates this pneumatic revelation, at least in part, with friendship.

We can plausibly say, then, that creaturely friendship is the site where personal disclosure and divine revelation intersect, in an improvised repetition of the friendship between the Son and the disciples, and through a Holy Spirit that discloses the Father and the Son. The friend has unique personal knowledge of his or her subject, and carried with that personal knowledge is a particular insight into God. Bethge's claim, then, that friendship offers insight into another is true; but on the terms I am developing here, more is happening than an amassing of data through proximity to the subject. Rather, creaturely friendship includes a personal revelation analogous to Jesus's own revelation of all he has heard of the Father—the patristic insight of Aquinas—and a revelatory repetition takes place between creatures that is dependent upon the originary divine revelatory friendship of Christ with the disciples, itself already dependent on the love shared between the Father and the Son.[24]

So I have maximized Bethge's epistemological statement, and we can affirm it, at least by way of this theological reading of John. Friendship is a kind of making-known where personal disclosure intersects with a theological revelation of God. But what of Bethge's assumption that friendship, as immediate presence, is necessary for the fullest disclosure of the thought of another?

Merleau-Ponty, in an essay on Husserl and intersubjectivity, suggests one way for interpretation to be both faithful to its sources and legitimately generative. Merleau-Ponty argues for a middle ground between an "objective" history of philosophy, what he calls "literal reproduction," and "meditation disguised as dialogue," where the interpreter both asks the questions and gives the answers. This

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23 Ibid., 1015.

24 While Aquinas succeeds in opening up the possibility of a creaturely friendship that is much like divine friendship, he does demur, in his commentary, from clearly saying that a friend might reveal something about God. But this difference is not absolute for Aquinas. For example, names of God, such as wise, or good, signify the divine substance, and can be predicated of God even though they are seen in the creature. These names, through creaturely representation, signify the divine essence analogously. Creatures, according to Aquinas, can indeed reveal something of God's essence through analogical creaturely qualities. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, Q. 13, Art. 2-6. This argument would need more detailed attention that I cannot offer here, but I think Aquinas could be read to say that the friend, as creature, can also make something known of God, and is perhaps particularly apt to do so.

middle ground is where "the philosopher we are speaking about and the philosopher who is speaking are present together, although it is not possible even in principle to decide at any given moment just what belongs to each." For Merleau-Ponty, the reason we think interpretation is restricted to either "literal reproduction" or "inevitable distortion" is that we want to make inventories of what is present and not present in a person's works. "But," continues Merleau-Ponty, "this is to be deceived about his works and thought."[25] As Sean Dorrance Kelly puts it, "the main feature of this principle [for Merleau-Ponty] is that the seminal aspects of a thinker's work are so close to him that he is incapable of articulating them himself. Nevertheless, these aspects pervade the work; give it its style, its sense, and its direction; and therefore belong to it essentially."[26] A thinker, in this sense, cannot always recognize where his or her own thought leads.

This is, for the most part, not particularly interesting or controversial. But the essay becomes most intriguing when Merleau-Ponty draws an analogy between interpretation and intersubjectivity, the pre-theoretical, pre-reflective, shared bodily engagement with the world, on which the theoretical is founded. In a clear reference to intersubjectivity and his interpretation of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty writes about that which is "wholly [Husserl's] and yet opens out on something else." Interpretation is

> not to possess the objects of his thought; it is to use them to mark out a realm to think about which we therefore are not yet thinking about. . . . There is no dilemma of objective interpretation or arbitrariness with respect to these articulations, since they are not objects of thought, since (like shadow and reflection) they would be destroyed by being subjected to analytic observation or taken out of context, and since we can be faithful to and find them only by thinking again.[27]

For Merleau-Ponty, just as we perceive the world, this perception being the foundation of theoretical articulation, so we read, discovering the unthought-of in the "articulations between things said." The thinker is relying on what is unarticulated, but which leads to theoretical articulation. While a thinker may not be able to recognize where his or her thought might lead, an interpreter can inhabit this same realm, and make connections and articulate what the thinker never did.[28]

There is a question about personal presence to another, and if we are not care-

25 Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," 159-60.
26 Sean Dorrance Kelly, "Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), 74.
27 Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," 160.
28 I am largely reliant on Sean Dorrance Kelly for this conclusion. See Kelly, "Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty," 102-103.

ful, Merleau-Ponty himself can mislead us because he relies on narratives of personal presence to describe intersubjectivity. One of Merleau-Ponty's recurring descriptions of intersubjectivity, for example, is of two friends standing before a landscape. For Merleau-Ponty, this narrative is employed primarily in order to illustrate that our pre-reflective, and pre-linguistic, engagement with the world assumes that the world is one, and that we do not operate as if there is "a flow of private sensations in relation to my old sensations that are mediated through some interposed signs."[29] Merleau-Ponty does not trigger for Paul (the recurring character in this short drama of perception) "some internal visions that are merely analogous to my own." Instead, Merleau-Ponty's gestures "invade Paul's world, and guide his gaze." For Merleau-Ponty, "we cannot account for the situation by saying that I see something in my own world and that I attempt, by sending verbal messages, to give rise to an analogous perception in the world of my friend." The perception is not "analogous" because there "are not two numerically distinct worlds plus a mediating language which alone would bring us together."[30] Our engagement with the world is for the most part pre-reflective, and conceptual knowledge is founded the knowledge that comes, unreflectively, through this being-in-the-world, breaking down the mediational picture of knowledge that assumes a divide from interior knowledge and sensory input from the outside.[31] Interpretation works much the same way. A shared world is inhabited by two, but the world itself, in this case, is the thought-world of the thinker, articulated in interpretation but an articulation relying on what is largely shared and as yet unsaid.[32] But the point here is not personal presence, but a pre-reflective experience of one world.

Merleau-Ponty addresses this potential confusion about personal presence, already nascent in his work in this landscape illustration, in his essay on Husserl. To assume the necessity of personal presence, as a way to have some kind of access to the completeness of the thought of another, is to falsely think that personal presence means access to thought at its completion, when it is actually presence to thought at its inception. To be *personally* present to Husserl would have been

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29 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. D. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 428.

30 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," in *The Primacy of Perception And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics,* ed. and trans. J. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1964), 17.

31 Charles Taylor, "Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), 30.

32 This is not only true of the thought world of a philosopher. For Merleau-Ponty, literature allows us to see the world anew, not simply illustrating intersubjectivity, but that literature, among other things, makes a world visible and an intersubjective event possible through the text itself. I owe this insight into Merleau-Ponty to Christina Chandler Andrews. See her doctoral thesis, "The Transfiguring Event: Phenomenological Readings of Ian McEwan's Late Fiction" (Ph.D. diss., University of St Andrews, 2011), 18-29.

to be present at "the continuing birth of a way of thinking." After Husserl's death, however, the task was to recover the full meaning of his whole work, even if you knew him, and therefore to return to the writings and the text and to "rejoin him across [the] past."[33] More importantly, though, the advantage of textual proximity is that the literary output of a thinker has come to a close, the realm marked out, and an interpreter can more fully inhabit that landscape. But it would still be an error to think that because the realm is marked out, that this brings "completeness." Rather, the as yet unthought-of still emerges out of this thought-landscape, just as the theoretical emerges out of the pre-theoretical. To read the works of a thinker, to inhabit that realm, to recognize hidden articulations, and to think the unthought-of in that person's work, is to faithfully interpret, neither making inventories of the objects of thought nor effacing the thinker.

The danger of bad interpretation is not about presence or lack of presence precisely. It is to be confused about perception. Just as, for Merleau-Ponty, perception properly understood breaks down any claim to mediation between ourselves and the world, we also do not read in order to conjure internal images or objects of thought. To read in order to conjure inventories of images or objects of thought would be to misunderstand that perception—of the world we live in, or of the realm laid out for us by a thinker—is, in the first place, unarticulated, and that the unarticulated is the foundation of the articulated. What is at stake, then, is a recognition that what is articulated is not complete on its own, but that it is dependent upon a shared, unarticulated engagement with the world. The same is true for interpretation. It too is founded and dependent upon "hidden" articulations, and as such is incomplete without them. And this is where Bethge is at risk of making a false claim: that friendship-as-presence allows a near-complete, objective inventory of the thought of another, when that kind of knowing is more likely to be incomplete, dependent, and inceptive.

What Merleau-Ponty accomplishes for this project, then, is to destabilize Bethge's claim to the primacy of immediate presence, and legitimizes a mode of interpretation that values personal distance and textual proximity. Distance is a help, not a hindrance, in recognizing that interpretation begins with hidden articulations, and proceeds to a thinking of what was unthought-of, because the unthought-of is *too* close to the thinker in question. If what I have said about friendship is true, however, I would not be so pessimistic about "daily conversation" as Merleau-Ponty. Granted, if an appeal to immediate contact with another leads to a false confidence in the friend's complete access to the thought of the person in question, on the premise that the other already knows where their thought will lead, then we ought to beware. But it is precisely the quotidian, in the reading of

33 Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," 160.

John's gospel presented above, which is inalienable from abiding friendship. Therefore the making-known of a person, what the person may think about God, and—most suggestively—a revelation of God, can all tied to the quotidian as well, incomplete and dependent as this kind of revelation necessarily is.

What I have said here has three implications for the theological task more generally. Firstly: if personal disclosure coincides with a divine revelation when it is pneumatically mediated in the church, then biographical descriptions of personal relationships offer a richness to the theological task more generally. Theological biography offers the possibility of a richer account not only of the theologian in question. If personal revelation is bound to the revelation of God, reading biographical descriptions of friendships may, in some circumstances, offer a richer account of God as well.

Secondly, Merleau-Ponty draws our attention to the necessary incompleteness of a thinker's work, properly understood. The task is not an inventory of thought, but to recognize that there are hidden articulations that can be discovered and articulated, and that this can be a way to faithfully, yet generatively, interpret the thought of another. This is not far, in many ways, from the Johannine possibility that friendship is a site of revelation, a pneumatically driven practice that can lead to the discovery of the as-yet-unsaid.

Thirdly, and most importantly, this kind of encounter with another, if it can be mediated textually, offers the possibility for friendship as a conceptual foundation for theological interpretation, and in so doing, opens Merleau-Ponty to the moral implications of his philosophy of interpretation. The theologian, and his or her way of thinking, through the text, is offered to the reader; and the reception of that offering can be characterized, or not characterized (as the case may be), by love. In the kind of hermeneutic suggested here, to be a good reader is to not press your subject toward your own ends. Rather, the textual encounter leads interpretation itself to be characterized by a friendship that has as its origin in God. To read may be to love, in its fullest Johannine, unitive sense. In this way, the task of interpretation is shaped by a certain kind of love, the laying down of ourselves that displaces us from the centre of the act of interpretation. It becomes, rather, a shared space of mutuality. This is where Merleau-Ponty's "middle ground" is cast into the moral light of virtue, where "the philosopher we are speaking about and the philosopher who is speaking are present together," where this unity is an act of mutual self-offering. This is not the laying aside our own insight, but rather an act of pneumatically charged interpretation.

And this is, indeed, what we see in an interpreter like Eberhard Bethge. After Bonhoeffer's death, Bethge collects letters between Bonhoeffer and others, inserting himself into those conversations and interpreting them; he writes his magisterial biography, interpreting Bonhoeffer anew; and spends a lifetime ensur-

ing Bonhoeffer's reception. Bethge is a man who lays down his life for the sake of Bonhoeffer, and what Bethge *does* illustrates a much grander theology of friendship than what he says about his hermeneutical priority. Rather, Bethge inhabits the landscape of Bonhoeffer's thought, thinking the unthought-of in Bonhoeffer in ways unlike the sloganeers of "religionless Christianity" or the creative misuse of Bonhoeffer by the Death-of-God theologians. Bethge reads Bonhoeffer to think what was unthought-of on topics like post-holocaust Jewish-Christian relations, for example. As such, Bethge offers us an instance of a friendship that reveals a person, a world, a particular vision of God, and through that, particular insight into God and God's work in the world—not only because we can read Bonhoeffer's theology because of what Bethge did, and now ourselves inhabit the landscape of the Bonhoeffer-Bethge theological project, but because what Bethge does, for and with Bonhoeffer, reveals something of God, in Christ, the one who lays down his life for his friends.

Ecumenism of Blood: The Martyrdom of Alfred Delp and Helmuth James Von Moltke

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Abstract

This article investigates the ecumenical dimension of the martyrdom of the Jesuit priest Alfred Delp and the *Evangelische* layman Helmuth James von Moltke. Delp and Moltke were leaders in the anti-Nazi resistant group the Kreisau Circle. They organized and planned a post-Nazi German society based on Catholic Social Teaching, Protestant social ethics, and humanistic socialism. Together they were imprisoned, tried, and sentenced. Moltke was executed on 23 January 1945, and Delp was executed on 2 February 1945. This article approaches the collaboration and martyrdoms of Delp and Moltke as an ecumenical phenomenon. It highlights the contribution of Delp and Moltke to the work of the Kreisau Circle. It then gives prominence to the spiritual collaboration between Moltke and Delp when they were imprisoned together from September 1944 to January 1945. The article concludes with a theological interpretation of Delp and Moltke's witnesses unto death as being guided by the Holy Spirit in common prayer and service. Delp and Moltke revealed that the road to Christian unity involves acts of prayer, self-giving, and suffering together. In their joint witness in life and death, Delp and Moltke show that Christians must remain anchored in Christ's love and open to the future of the Christian body under the guidance of the Spirit.

Introduction

In a homily at the Roman Coliseum on 7 May 2000, Pope John Paul II points to the witness of the martyrs as the way for unity among Christians. He said, "The most persuasive ecumenism is that of the martyrs and the witnesses of the faith; to the

Christians of the twentieth century, it shows the way toward unity."[1] This article argues that one of the most significant cooperation between Protestants and Catholics in the Second World War occurred within the anti-Nazi resistance group—the Kreisau Circle. The article discusses the expansion of Christian martyrdom into an ecumenical phenomenon through examining the cooperation of Alfred Delp, S.J. and Helmuth James Graf von Moltke from the Kreisau Circle. Delp was a Catholic and Jesuit and Moltke was an Evangelical. Conjointly they planned for a post-Nazi Germany based on Christian values. Moreover, together they were imprisoned and executed as Christians in the winter of 1945.

This paper approaches the ecumenical phenomenon instigated by Delp and Moltke's cooperative sacrifice and their resulting martyrdoms through historical and theological lenses. My examination begins with Moltke and his role in the formation of the Kreisau Circle. Secondly, I will describe the contribution of Delp to the planning of post-war Germany's social and economic structures. Thirdly, I will examine the imprisonment and trial of both Moltke and Delp, focusing on the spiritual union formed between them (and other members of the Kreisau Circle) and their transformation through praying together during their imprisonment.

Theologically, Moltke and Delp's relationship exemplifies ecumenism in practice and prayer. In their work to establish a post-Nazi Germany, they collaborated as a Protestant and Catholic, and in their imprisonment and trial, they prayed, testified, and suffered as Christians. To their fellow Christians, Moltke and Delp stand as a reminder that the road to ecumenism does not necessarily have to go through controversial doctrinal discussions and debates from theologians and church hierarchy. Ecumenism can go through acts of self-giving, praying, and suffering in communion. In their lives and deaths, Moltke and Delp show in the midst of evil that persons of different Christian denominations can come together as an undivided Christian body. They reveal that what connects the Christian body is stronger than what separates it—Christ's love and service to fellow humans in the midst of chaos triumphs over a difficult history.

Helmuth James von Moltke and the Kreisau Circle

The mandate of the Kreisau Circle was the preparation and organization of a collection of people who stand by at the ready to take over the German government upon the demise of the Nazi tyranny (which they believe was inevitable). The new government would lead Germany back to the people of nations. Amid the conditions of wartime and totalitarian Germany, the Circle's members could not gather often. Even still, given their circumstances, the circle was a remarkably cohesive

1 Pope John Paul II, "Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century," May 7, 2000, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000507_testimoni-fede-present_en.html.

group, held together by friendship purpose, and danger. Moreover, the group had a center in the figure of Moltke, who by personal contact, correspondence, and conviction established himself as the crux of the entire enterprise.

Helmuth James von Moltke was born in Kreisau, in Silesia, on 11 March 1907. He was the first child of Helmuth Count von Moltke and his wife, Dorothy. As a young man, Helmuth embarked on studies in law, politics, and history. He studied in Breslau, Berlin, and Vienna. In 1931, Helmuth married Freya Deichmann. As Hitler was rising to power, Moltke did not hide his antipathy for the Nazis. He warned in 1933, "Whoever votes Hitler votes for war."[2] In 1935, Moltke went abroad and studied British Law at Oxford. He used the opportunity to meet and convince "Appeasers" in the British Camp both civic and church leaders about the true goals of the Nazis.

After Moltke had finished his program at Oxford, he returned to Germany in 1939, just as the war was breaking out. He made use of his knowledge of British law by joining the Foreign Division of Abwher (the German intelligence service) as a legal advisor to the High Command of the Armed Services. The Abwher, under Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, was a focal point of opposition to the Nazi regime. This job gave Moltke the justification for keeping in touch with the outside world. It permitted Moltke the opportunity to focus efforts on preventing the German military from betraying norms of war conducts as established by the international community. He also believed that Germany would lose the war from the outset and that it would be necessary to prepare established bureaucrats to rebuild Germany.

It was in the summer of 1940 that Moltke began assembling like-minded people to discuss the principles on which Germany should be rebuilt after Hitler's deposition, hence the creation of a group the Gestapo would coin the "Kreisau Circle." Moltke took care to include socialists and representatives from the churches, two groups he saw as building blocks for a new Germany. He was, also, acutely anxious about the harm done by the Nazis' exploitation of the Protestantism.

The participation of the Jesuits in the Kreisau Circle was due in part to one of the members, Baron Guttenberg, who encountered Augustin Rösch, Provincial of the Upper German Province of the Jesuit Order. In October 1941, while in Berlin to negotiate the dismissal of Jesuit chaplains in the German military, Rösch met Guttenberg on the street. Rösch had just heard a speech by Hitler over the loudspeaker in which Hitler claimed that the war in the Eastern Front was almost over. Guttenberg approached Rösch while he was reeling from what he had just heard

2 Michael Leonard Graham Balfour, *Helmuth von Moltke: A Leader Against Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 26.

and asked, "Why so serious, Father?"[3] Since it was difficult to talk in the open streets, Guttenberg led the Jesuit to a building on the outskirts of Berlin. Thus, Rösch met Moltke, who went on to predict that Germany would lose the war to the Soviet Union in a few years if Hitler was not removed. Rösch, however, exclaimed that he and his Jesuits would not participate in an act of tyrannicide.

Moltke, nonetheless, insisted on some form of resistance. He argued, "We must fight, we must do everything to save what can be saved . . ."[4] Moltke then expressed disappointment with the conflicting views between the Confessing Church and the Nazi supported Reich Church. The different orientations battered the Protestants, while in the perspective of Moltke, the unity and coherence of the Catholic Church were protected by the episcopacy and the pope. While discussing the differences between the Evangelische and the Catholic churches Moltke surprisingly added, "As a Protestant there is one thing I want to say to you: We must unite in order to save Christianity, which is still there and to make our concern the re-Christianization of the working world."[5]

On 4 December 1941, Rösch met with Moltke again to assure his cooperation in the Kreisau Circle. On the weekend of May 25 to 27 of 1942, the first large-scale Kreisau Circle conference was held at Moltke's estate in Silesia. The themes of the conference were education and the relationship between church and state. The participants agreed that Christianity is the most powerful force for the moral renewal of German and Western societies. They desired that a reconstructed German society would welcome the insights of all the churches. At the end of the conference, Moltke asked Rösch to suggest a Jesuit, who is an expert in the field of political science and could bring a Catholic viewpoint on the state and economy. At Rösch's suggestion, Delp was brought into the project. From July 1942 onwards Delp was thus engaged in the goals of the Kreisau Circle.

The Contribution of Alfred Delp

Prior to the second Kreisau conference, scheduled to be held on 16 to 18 October 1942, Alfred Delp conducted preliminary meetings with Moltke to understand better the issues that confront the Kreisau Circle. A text by Delp, dated 2 August 1942, shed light on the issues that concerned both Moltke and Delp.[6] They believed that the starting point for discussion was the dehumanization and disempowerment of peoples. In the second meeting of the Kreisau Circle, the focus was on the state and the economy. Delp facilitated the discussion based on the premises of two papal

3 Roman Bleistein, *Alfred Delp: Geschichte Eines Zeugen*, 1. Aufl (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1989), 257.
4 Ibid., 258.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 266–67.

social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* by Leo XII and *Quadragesimo Anno* by Pius XI.[7] In these papal letters, the Catholic Church expressed concern for the working poor and the world. Interestingly, the socialists and the trade unionists did not sense that Delp was providing the official teaching of the Church but was expounding his opinion. As a result, Delp later arranged talks between members of the Kreisau Circle and a German Catholic bishop. The socialists and trade unionists in the Kreisau were quite surprised at the Church's stance on the social issue. Due to Delp's exposition of Catholic Social Teaching and the bishop's confirmation, one of the surprised socialists exclaimed that the Catholic Church had made an irrefutable turn to Socialism. He wrote, "This is an incredible historical decision!"[8]

The third Kreisau meeting, which took place over Pentecost 1943 (12-14 June) dealt with foreign affairs and the international economic order in the post-war period. Delp participated at this meeting and contributed to the area of restoring the rule of law.[9] Handwritten drafts by Delp, intended for this meeting, indicate not only the trajectory of Delp's thoughts about these issues, but also that his suggestions were adopted in the "Declaration of Principles" of the Kreisau Circle. Moltke prepared the "Principles" on 9 August 1943.[10] He anticipated a revolt against Hitler by the generals and a power vacuum resulting from the coup d'etat; as such he hoped to shape decisively a new Germany and a European commonwealth with concepts that his group developed. The document makes Christianity the common reference point for the reorganization of Germany and Europe without regards to denominations. The document is the fruit of exemplary discussion among the persons of the Kreisau Circle, whose members span different denominations, political inclinations, and class distinctions. They believe that the Christian churches together can help humans overcome nationalism and ideologies. Moltke's biographer describes the document as a close partnership among Catholic Social teaching, Protestant social ethics, and humanistic socialism.

With that said, Alfred Delp played a crucial role in the planning. One of the surviving members, Theodor Steltzer described Delp as the most intellectually significant and open-minded figure among the resistors.[11] Another member, a Lutheran pastor Eugen Gerstenmaier, referred to Delp as the one who had the ability not to appreciate only different theological and political viewpoints, but could integrate them into a whole.[12]

7 Ibid., 269.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 270.
10 *Behind Valkyrie: German Resistance to Hitler: Documents* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 76.
11 Bleistein, *Alfred Delp*, 423.
12 Petro Müller, "A. Delp - Ansätze Einer Ökumenischen Und Praxis," in *Alfred Delp Jahrbuch*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 50.

Imprisonment and Trial of the Kreisau Circle

On 19 January 1944, as a part of a wider crackdown on conspirators and dissenters within Abwher, the Reich Security Office arrested Moltke.[13] The arrest had a decisive and negative influence on the development of the Kreisau Circle. Though Delp was the intellectual head, it was Moltke who held everything together and provided the stimulus. The center was now missing, and the work of the Kreisau Circle came to a standstill. Another blow came to the Kreisau Circle when Gestapo agents arrested Delp on 28 July 1944 after he celebrated Mass in Munich. It all appears, at least, on a surface level that the aims of the Kreisau Circle were vanquished. Gradually, a majority of the members were arrested; some were executed soon after their arrests while others languished imprison awaiting trial with Hitler's infamous judge—Roland Freisler.

Nevertheless, an important fruit did indeed emerge within the Kreisau Circle after their active planning ended. While awaiting trial, the surviving members of the Circle, including Delp and Moltke, learned that they were in adjoining cells. Their cooperation with one another, and more importantly with God, took on a different level. What was communicated among the imprisoned members of the Kreisau Circle was not a new social polity, but prayer. Prayer and worship were decisive and influential in their lives together in the prison. In these months of captivity, an ecumenical community emerged from the grace of God in a Nazi prison.[14] "We four pray here, two Catholics and two Protestants, and believe in the marvels of God,"[15] wrote Delp in a letter dated 5 January 1945.

The collaboration that had begun during the clandestine meetings of the Kreisau Circle was now deepened into a spiritual union, made all the more intense by their furtive communications. They whispered to one another their prayers or meditations on particular Bible passages. The thought of the wheat seed from John 12 (unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. Nevertheless, if it dies, it produces many seeds) as an interpretation of their impending death was employed by the prisoners. Moltke noted in a letter to his wife Freya that one of the members of the circle, a Lutheran pastor Eugen Gerstenmaier, shared with them Matt 14:22-33, where Jesus rescues the sinking Peter in the Sea of Galilee.[16] Besides individual prayers, Delp introduced his Protestant colleagues to Catholic devotions—the Sacred Heart—and led them in nov-

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13 Balfour, *Helmuth von Moltke; a Leader Against Hitler*, 296–98.

14 Müller, "A. Delp - Ansätze Einer Ökumenischen Und Praxis," 51.

15 Alfred Delp, *Alfred Delp: Gesammalte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, ed. Roman Bleistein, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1984), 88.

16 Helmuth James Moltke and Beate Ruhm von Oppen, *Letters to Freya: 1939-1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 406.

enas. In a letter to his brother Jesuits, Delp referred to his co-resistors in prison as "This praying *Una Sancta* in chains."[17]

Through the help of two social workers and the Lutheran prison chaplain, they could bribe prison guards with cigarettes and smuggle hosts and wine into Delp's prison cell so that he could celebrate the Mass. On October 1, 1944, Delp said his first Mass in the cell. The Eucharist became a lifeline for others in the prison through a method used by many other imprisoned priests in the Nazi regime. According to Mary Frances Coady,

> With his wrists, [Delp] knocked on his wall to the left and the right when Mass was beginning, and the others knocked on their walls, and so on, until the entire block of prison cells became alive with the great offering; the cosmic prayer of thanksgiving. Here, denominational differences were put aside. Gathered into prayer, [in Tegel prison], came all the misery, the horror, the evil, and the despair of all the suffering humanity. For Delp and his chained comrades, the Mass was not only a momentary consolation—a means of hanging on until the next day—but more importantly, a meeting place of the world's sinfulness and the purifying presence of God.[18]

The Eucharist had an ecumenical impact, at least on an existential level. In one of Delp's letters, dated 22 November 1944 he wrote, "Since the Blessed Sacrament is here, the world has become much more beautiful, and I want to surrender to God's freedom and goodness and to offer him my sufferings. So, that I do not deny him and always remain in his trust and that he can bring us across the sea, without whom we all drown."[19]

The trial of the Kreisau members, including Moltke and Delp, took place between 9 to 11 January 1945.[20] The common defence of the members was that they had not taken part in any direct activity against the Nazis, but were rather discussing constitutional possibilities. The judge was Roland Freisler, who was known as "Red Roland," because he usually worked himself into a state of rage. Freisler's judicial style was to act as both judge and prosecutor and to humiliate the defendants by shouting insults at them. For the trial, he ordered all the defendants to remove their belt and suspenders. As a result, the underfed defendants were compelled to hold on to their trousers to prevent them from falling.

Delp was the first defendant to be tried. Freisler asked how Delp had come to

17 Delp, *Alfred Delp: Gesammalte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, 4:60.
18 Mary Frances Coady, *With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 80.
19 Delp, *Alfred Delp: Gesammalte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, 4:29.
20 Coady, *With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany*, 159.

know Moltke and the others. What did he discuss with them? Why did the Kreisau meetings concern a future German society, but not a single National Socialist representative? Delp stood calmly with composure and responded to each question in a low, even tone. Freisler's voice gradually began to rise. What were the aims and purpose of such meetings? Freisler shouted, "And the future German society would be one after the defeat of the Nazi? Defeatism!" He screamed such talk amounted to treason. Freisler launched into a tirade against Delp:

> You miserable creep, you little sausage, you clerical nobody—who dares to want the life of our beloved Fuhrer taken . . . a rat—that should be stamped on and crushed. . . . Now tell us, what brought you as a priest to abandon the pulpit and get mixed up in German politics with a subversive like Count Moltke and a troublemaker like the Protestant Gerstenmaier? Come on, answer?"[21]

Delp calmly and firmly responded,

> I can preach forever, and with whatever skill I have I can work with people and keep setting them straight. But as long as people have to live in a way that is inhuman and lacking in dignity, that's as long as the average person will succumb to circumstances and will neither pray nor think. A fundamental change in the condition of life is needed.[22]

On the following day, it was Moltke's turn to face Freisler's interrogation. Once again, the initial questions were calmed. Moreover, next in expected fashion, Freisler began to raise his voice in the issues of why Moltke was anticipating a German defeat and planning for a new German society. Then Freisler targeted Moltke's collaboration with Delp and other Christians in a tirade. The decisive moment during the trial, according to Moltke's letter to his wife Freya, was uttered from Freisler, who said, "Herr Graf, we, National Socialists and Christians, have one thing in common and one only: we demand the whole man."[23] Moltke reflected on Freisler's remark,

> I don't know if the others sitting there took it all in, for it was sort of a dialogue—a spiritual one between [Freisler] and myself, for I could not utter many words—in which we two got to know each other through and through. Of the whole gang, Freisler was the only who recognized me, and of the whole gang he is the only one

21 Bleistein, *Alfred Delp*, 377-78.
22 Ibid., 378
23 Moltke and Ruhm von Oppen, *Letters to Freya*, 409.

> who knows why he has to kill me. We talked as if it were in a vacuum. He made not a single joke at my expense, as he had done with Delp and Eugen. No, this was grim earnest: "From whom do you take your orders? From the Beyond or Adolf Hitler?" Who commands your loyalty and your faith?" All rhetorical questions of course. Anyhow, Freisler is the first National Socialist who has grasped who I am.[24]

Overall, Moltke's last letter to his wife about the trial shows relief, gratitude, and joy. He recognized that in this trial Freisler had confessed to the incompatibility between Nazism and Christianity. It was the incompatibility that the regime had always been at pains to conceal, but now the hostility was in the open. He continues:

> Was it clear what he had said there? Just think how wonderfully God prepared this His unworthy vessel . . . [H]e humbled me as a great landowner as I have never been humbled before, so that I had to lose all pride, so that at last I understand my sinfulness after 38 years, so that I had to learn to beg for forgiveness and to trust in his mercy. . . . Then he lets me talk with Eugen and Delp and clarify things . . . and then your husband is chosen, as a Protestant, to be above all attacked and condemned for his friendship with Catholics, and therefore he stands before Freisler not as a Protestant, not as a big landowner, not as a nobleman, not as a German—all that was explicitly excluded in the trial . . . but as a Christian and nothing else.[25]

On 23 January 1945, Moltke was executed. Delp was executed on 2 February 1945.

Theological Conclusion: Ecumenism in Prayer and of Blood

The Kreisau Circle worked towards a new Germany and integrated Europe. The foundation of their documents is Christian values. When the members were imprisoned, their cooperation deepened into a spiritual union. They were tried as conspirators but were condemned as Christians. The "praying *Una Sanctum* in chains" points towards a new mission for Christians. As Delp wrote in a Christmas letter after he received a small Christmas gift from a fellow Protestant prisoner:

> This was a beautiful Christmas gift. And if we are outside again, we should show that more with it was meant. . . . History will have to carry further the burden and inheritance of the divided churches. Yet the division should never again become a scandal to Christ. I

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 410.

> believe so little in utopian ideas, but Christ is nevertheless undivided, and where there is undivided love, we are led to him. . . . The Lord dedicates us to a new mission.[26]

The term "Christ" for Delp stands above denominational differences. Both Delp and Moltke learned this in the Kreisau, particularly during their time in prison. For Delp as it was for Moltke, imprisonment became a transformative event because of praying together. In the Christian tradition, the Holy Spirit prays with human beings on their behalf. The Spirit transforms people by prayer, not that they change themselves and earn the Spirit and, then encounter Christ. Delp recognizes that transformative work of the Spirit in the praying person when he writes from prison:[27]

> [The Spirit] is the giver; through Him we can be shaped to the likeness of the Son. He gives us new life and makes us capable of living. He heartens us, strengthens our will, heightens our understanding so that we may believe and hope and love—that is we may draw nearer to God and live in unity with Him. . . . There is only one way to progress, and that is by praying, and praying in the right way.[28]

For Delp, the act of prayer and the conformity to Christ are the deeds of the Spirit. In Delp's prison writing, the Spirit enables persons to receive Christ by dwelling and working within the center of their being, which is represented by the heart:

> [H]ere, in the very center of our being, the temple of the Holy Spirit should be established. It is the very nature of the Holy Spirit to penetrate and blend with the life impulses, purifying and completing them and thus imbuing them with its own intensity and assurance.[29]

Authentic Christian prayer is an openness to the Other and involves an "unselfing" so that one can be remade in the image of Christ. The term "unselfing" signifies the Spirit dwelling within persons and preparing them to receive and become like Christ.[30] For Delp, this indwelling is not static but a dynamic process. The

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26 Delp, *Alfred Delp: Gesammalte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, 4:76.

27 While in confinement, Delp was able to write a series of meditations on the topics of Christian life that were dear to him. In his prison meditation on the Holy Spirit, Delp speaks of the Spirit as the one who enables and guides him to encounter the healing and transforming love of Christ. See Alfred Delp, *Alfred Delp, S.J.: Prison Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 115-45.

28 Ibid., 119

29 Ibid., 121.

30 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama V: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 334.

Spirit dwells in and conforms persons to Christ by drawing them out of their self-enclosure and leading beyond themselves and doing God's work for the world:

> We must not delude ourselves that we can find freedom by running away from history. We have to find freedom within this framework of history in alliance with God for the fulfillment of His purpose.[31]

Thus, prayer is not a monologue, where one addresses God with what God already knows about oneself, but rather authentic prayer, which is an act of self-emptying. In their imprisonment, trial, sentencing, and awaiting execution, their prayer became a sustained act of dispossession. The aim of prayer in a fallen world goes beyond self-fulfillment or self-growth. What is involved in authentic prayer is a going beyond the self, possibly breaking idols of the self, not to make Christ in our image but to allow the Spirit to re-create oneself in Christ's image. Prayer seeks transformation in Christ, who is undivided and holds all things together. Moreover, for Delp, Christ stands above denominational differences. Delp writes that disciples are men and women who are genuinely filled with the Spirit. They have prayed with all sincerity, and who have asked Christ to make their hearts like his.[32] He says,

> Only then will they see God's requirements with clear eyes even in the darkest of hours. Only then will their willing hearts beat with compassion that sweeps aside as negligible the old stubborn attachment to being "right after all." Their hearts will beat with one desire—to help and heal in God's name.[33]

Towards the end of their lives, the members of the Kreisau Circle held the conviction that the future of humanity lies in unified Christianity. In the face of Nazi terror and of impending death, Catholics and Protestants encounter the heart of their faith. Moreover, the unity of Christians will not be founded on great speeches or programs, but for Delp and the other members of the Kreisau, acts of service and prayer. For Delp, Christianity can reach the hearts of contemporary men and women in two ways. Firstly, Christians must heal the divisions among the different churches. The disunity of Christianity "impresses nobody nowadays. It is to our eternal reproach that we were not capable of preserving the heritage of Christ intact."[34] Secondly, Christians must return to and actualize Christ's call to

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31 Delp, *Alfred Delp, S.J.*, 48.
32 Delp, *Alfred Delp: Gesammalte Schriften: Aus Dem Gefängnis*, 4:321.
33 Ibid.
34 Delp, *Alfred Delp, S.J.*, 97.

serve others. Christ calls persons into a relationship with Him by asking us to empathize with others:

> By that I mean meeting the man in the street on his ground, in all circumstances, with a view of helping him to master them. That means walking by his side, accompanying him even unto the depths of degradation and misery. "Go forth," our Lord said—not "sit and wait for someone to come to you." I look on the spiritual encounter as a dialogue, not a monologue or an address, a monotonous drone of words.[35]

Through the approach of prayer and service, the members of the Kreisau Circle became a "sheet anchor" in the chaos and darkness of Nazi Germany. After Delp and he had been sentenced to death, Moltke employed the term "sheet anchor" in his last letter to his wife, Freya. He remarked that their Christian faith was like a sheet anchor in the chaos of Nazi Germany. The term refers to the largest anchor of a ship that is stowed away and used only in extreme danger. Moltke and Delp's Christian faith became a force of resistance against a culture of dehumanization and violence. Their prayer and friendship with Christ served as a last refuge to keep Christians, amidst the storm of Nazism, pointed to the homeland that is Christ. Furthermore, in their common witness, there is both a sense of being anchored in Christ and a simultaneous openness to the future of the Christian body under the guidance of the Spirit. They prayed with each other, to be transformed into an *Una Sancta* in prison and testified together before Freisler, not as Catholics or Protestants, but as Christians opened to an ecumenical horizon. Despite the divisions between the churches, Moltke and Delp have revealed that God Himself maintains, at a more profound level, the communion of faith among the baptized, attested by the supreme sacrifice of their lives. The lasting effect of Moltke and Delp's shared martyrdom, and the subsequent ecumenism that followed the war illuminates a way forward spanning further into the 21st century and beyond: theirs is a path to unity.

35 Ibid.

Theologizing with the Dog-man: Empathy and Ethics in Coetzee, Lévinas, and the Gospel Traditions

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Abstract

The transformation of the anti-hero David Lurie in John Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* represents Coetzee's enduring critique of Western rationality and its reduction of ethics to abstract calculation. Following Coetzee's narrative, and insight from Emmanuel Lévinas' ethics, I maintain that morality emerges not from abstract calculation, but from pathos deeper than rationality, an insight expressed more freely in literature and poetry than classical philosophy or theology. Further, I suggest that such an understanding of ethics, i.e., one guided by a feeling-for-the-other, also resides/hides within the earliest Christian traditions, suggesting a religion of embodied empathy acknowledging something deeper than tradition and reason. Such a hypothesis suggests, in contrast to existent animal theologies, a reorientation in theological ethics based on inter-species relationships and embodied feeling as a source of religious authority as opposed to a reliance on reason and tradition to guide moral behavior toward the other-than-human.

He and Bev do not speak. He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty calling by its proper name: love.

He ties the last bag and takes it to the door. Twenty-three. There is only one dog left, the one who likes music, the one who, given half a chance, would already have lolloped after his comrades into the clinic building, into the theater with its zinc topped table where the rich, mixed smells still linger, including one he will not yet have met with in his life: the smell of expiration, the soft, short smell of the released soul.

What the dog will not be able to work out . . . is how one can enter what seems to be an ordinary room and never come out again. Something happens

in this room, something unmentionable: here the soul is yanked out of the body. . . . It will be beyond him, this room that is not a room but a hole where one leaks out of existence. . . .

He can save the young dog, if he wishes, for another week. But a time must come, it cannot be evaded, when he will have to bring him to Bev Shaw in her operating room (perhaps he will carry him in his arms, perhaps he will do that for him) and caress him and brush back the fur so that the needle can find the vein, and whisper to him and support him in the moment when, bewilderingly, his legs buckle; and then, when the soul is out, fold him up and pack him away in his bag, and the next day wheel the bag into the flames and see that it is burnt, burnt up. He will do all that for him when the time comes. It will be little enough, less than little: nothing.

He crosses the surgery. . . .

"One more."

He opens the cage door. "Come," he says, bends opens his arms. The dog wags its crippled rear, sniffs his face, licks his cheeks, his lips, his ears. He does nothing to stop it. "Come."

Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. "I thought you would save him for another week," says Bev Shaw.

"Are you giving him up?"

"Yes, I am giving him up."[1]

Introduction

This scene, drawing J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* to a close, offers the reader a final glimpse into the life of the novel's anti-hero, David Lurie, a man coming to terms with the vulnerability of bodies infinitely other than his own. In the novel's final pages, we are compelled by a broken man embracing the diseased, dying, and unwanted canines of South Africa, carrying them into and beyond death with a pathos previously reserved for humans. This feeling-for-the-other-animal emerges, to David's surprise and annoyance, as parallel encounters with human and non-human trauma disrupt his ethical horizon, which had previously ignored transgressive forms of vulnerability, i.e., that of women and non-human animals. Through the disruptive non-power of Another's vulnerability-toward-death, David slowly and reluctantly embraces the moral authority of the other. In such face-to-face relationships with difference, a moral authority emerges; a non-symmetrical, affective authority located beyond his horizon in the body of Another, which possesses a weight and height that his own moral abstraction and calculation no longer retain.

In this essay, I suggest that David Lurie's face-to-face encounters with differ-

1 J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (New York: Viking, 1999), 219.

ent, though parallel forms of trauma emerging from a vulnerability-toward-death, represent a wider phenomenon of how human beings might come to see animal others (human and other-than-human) as morally considerable. My contention emerges through reading Coetzee's novel through the ethical framework developed in the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas. Following Lévinas, I contend that ethics emerges not from abstract calculation, or inherited tradition alone, but as in *Disgrace*, from a feeling of embodied pathos deeper than rational thought, arising in a subject's perception of a vulnerability-toward-death. Furthermore, and continuing to follow Lévinas, this time in his philosophy of religion, I suggest that such an approach to ethics also resides within the earliest Gospel narratives, suggesting that the Christian tradition is open to the trangressive embodiment of the stranger, acknowledging that its own theological framework ultimately arises out of such disruptive ethical encounters that transcend reason, calculation, and inherited tradition.[2]

David Lurie and Face-to-Face Encounter

Coetzee's *Disgrace* explores various inter-subjective power dynamics emerging within the life of the novel's central character, David Lurie, a dissatisfied professor of English in post-apartheid South Africa, reduced to lecturing in communications at a university in Cape Town. While initially the possessor of power, David's life dramatically changes throughout the novel in an increasingly pathetic spiral of humiliating falls. We see David loose his youth, virility, academic success, and independence after he, to quote the novel's narration, "not quite rape[s]" a student of his named Melanie Isaacs.[3] The public exposure of his assault puts Lurie face-to-face with a vulnerability that he ultimately refuses to recognize, choosing

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2 While the moral authority of pathos has historically been disregarded in theological ethics, in favor of abstraction, calculation, tradition, and divine command, conceptual frameworks since the 19th century recognizing the contingency of all epistemological starting points, call into question the reductive approach of classical theology, embracing more phenomenal approaches to the world. Literature, poetry, and the arts, being less constrained by such methodological boundaries in its search for truth, goodness and a means of coping with the traumatic, are thus potentially rich dialogue partners for contemporary theology, as they are more open to less explored dynamics of life and more ready to question inherited conceptual frameworks lacking coherence with contemporary experiences of the world. A prejudice toward the affective dynamics of the arts reflects philosophical attitude that seems to have been "canonized" as early as Plato who spoke of the "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry," and banished the emotion and speculation of the poets from participating in rational pursuits of the truth and the good (*Republic*, 607b5–6). For a summary of this "old quarrel" see, Anton Leist and Peter Singer "Introduction," chap. in *J.M. Coetzee and Ethics: Philosophical Perspectives on Literature*, eds. Anton Leist and Peter Singer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-15. While such suspicions have subsided since the 19th century, due to movements such as historicism and romanticism, they remain strong enough to require even the briefest caveats to justify a project such as this.

3 Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 25. The ambiguous phrasing of the assault in the narration seems inseparable from Lurie's perspective, as is the narration of the entire novel, and as such cannot be read as any kind of meta-narrative commentary tied to Coetzee.

instead to defend his action and ignore his power-over-the-other, rather than repent of his privilege, keep his job, and avoid exile from his life in Cape Town. Choosing a "martyr's" exile, as he sees it, Lurie moves to the Eastern Cape to live a burdensome, awkward, and unsophisticated life on a farm with his daughter Lucy and her dog Katy in attempts to flee personal scrutiny and regain artistic credibility.

Yet, while the novel primarily follows David Lurie, his disgrace and devastation is inseparable from a matrix of parallel instances of the same. Without the trauma of the other, beginning with Melanie Issacs, David's disgrace is incoherent and the story as a story has little vibrancy or meaning.[4] After his assault on Melanie Issacs, the disciplinary action taken against him at the university, and his departure from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape, the existential dynamics of David's life continue to unravel through his continued encounters with various forms of violence. The violence narrated throughout *Disgrace* is perpetrated against those lacking the protection of classic forms of dominant power related to race (i.e., whiteness), gender (i.e., maleness), sexuality (i.e., heterosexuality), and species membership (i.e., humanity). Chief among such acts of violence is the second rape perpetrated in the novel. This event, infused with radically complex issues concerning race, poverty, and speciesism, violates Lucy, David's daughter, during an attack on her farm. For a second time in the novel, David is confronted by the reality the trauma inflicted upon women by men with the power and will to do harm. Yet, the disruptive power of this event confronts David differently as its violence is not masked by the blinding effects of his own egoistic power-over the other. Lucy's trauma, while infinitely distant from David's experience, a point consistently brought up by Lucy in the text, nevertheless produces an emergent trauma within his horizon, arising in the distance created between a parent and a child when the former is powerless to stop a horrific violence against the latter.[5] David's experience of the event, however distant from Lucy's own encounter,

4 This is not to reduce the trauma of the other as if its goal is to evoke a change in others. The narratives of each singular other are not to be defined in relation to some outside subject, but the particular narrative here has its own focus, which while prominent, does not exhaust the meaning of the work. As such, I do not wish to reduce the trauma of the literary-other—in this case that of Melanie, Lucy, and Katy—to the impact it has on David. My focus in this essay does not exhaust the meaning of the narrative or the trauma of the other.

5 The rape is never described in the novel. The vantage point of the reader remains with David, who is brutally beaten, set on fire, and locked in a separate room, powerless to act (88-99). The event is recounted as a separation of one from the other, and the narration of the text lies within David's subjective experience. "His child is in the hands of strangers. In a minute, in an hour, it will be too late; whatever is happening to her will be set in stone, will belong to the past. But *now* it is not too late. *Now* he must do something" (94). A prevention of trauma in this instant relies on an inter-subjective connectedness, yet such is not the case in the narrative. As the event ends, David and Lucy's trauma and separation are complete, "'My child, my child!' he says, holding out his arms to her. When she does not come, he puts aside his blanket, stands up, and takes her in his arms. In his embrace she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing" (99).

devastates any remaining dynamism retained in his existence up to this encounter.[6]

The trauma arising from violent encounters within deeply established relationships where a feeling-for-the-other is already present is able to unveil how power dominates the vulnerable. Within the context of *Disgrace*, Lucy's disgrace reveals to David his own complicity in parallel instances of violence and domination, awakening him to a new horizon concerning power and vulnerability. The ethical orientation arising from such an encounter emerges from the feelings present for the vulnerable other, whose humiliation, loss, and pain shock the subject out of any delusion that power is neutral and that suffering does not concern the one who encounters it. Thus, for David, the relational closeness of a parent for a child with its implicit concern for the other's well-being begins a slow, painful conversion concerning previously dismissed vulnerability and any justification of coercion and violation.

What we witness in David and Lucy's relationship is akin to what is described by Emmanuel Lévinas as the face-to-face encounter, i.e., the ethical even upon which all conceptualist philosophy is premised. In such meetings, the embodied trauma of one creates a differentiated, though parallel trauma in the other, disrupting the egoism of a subject and any assumption that one's epistemological horizon is sufficient to understand the life and vulnerability of the other.[7] Lévinas is thus concerned to overcome what he sees as the fundamental flaw within all Western philosophy, namely, the reduction of the other to the same.[8] In the encounter with the face, the frailty and powerlessness of the other's embodied nature awaken a subject to concern for its vulnerability, demanding a change in the dynamics of an existent relationship. The summons is not something prepared for

6 The abyss is highlighted by Lucy's request to David after the event that he not speak of her part in the attack. "'David, when people ask, would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you?' He does not understand. 'You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me,' she repeats" (99). The trauma each experiences are one's own and David, while touched by Lucy's trauma, cannot access hers in any direct way able to absolutely embrace her pain. This point deserves more attention that can be provided here, but could be fruitfully discussed in dialogue with Lévinas' differentiation between the "saying" and the "said." "The pre-original saying does move into language, in which saying and said are correlative of one another, and the saying is subordinated to its theme. . . . The correlation of the saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology, is the price manifestation demands. In language qua said everything is conveyed before us, be it at the price of a betrayal. . . . Language permits us to utter, be it by betrayal, this outside of being, this ex-ception to being, as tough being's other we an event of being." Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 4.

7 The face may be manifested through the vulnerability of a literal face or through corporality in general: "the whole body—a hand or a curve of the shoulder—can express as the face." Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 262.

8 "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being." Ibid., 43.

nor rationally calculated by the subject, but emerges as epiphany without recourse to a priori principles; it is as an irrefutable non-power, able to reorient the dynamics of power between a subject and a stranger.[9] Ethics as first philosophy is thus the awakening of a subject by the vulnerability of the other, which possesses an authoritative weight and height beyond conceptualization and without circumscribing the other within any horizon but its own.[10]

The infinity of the face, i.e., its inability to be circumscribed by the horizon of the subject, is further understood by Lévinas to be paradoxically immanent within and yet not reducible to the body of the other. As such, the face, while manifest in the body can never be utterly contained within any one form of vulnerability, occurring in an infinite plurality of forms. The face is not reducible to the body at all, but transcends materiality itself as it retreats from the totalizing horizon of the subject, revealing itself as an infinite, transcendent reality irreducible to any normalized form. The face exists paradoxically within and beyond form, perceptible within a limited phenomenology but always retreating from the totalizing tendency of the subject through its openness to infinity.[11] As a result, the non-phenomenal reality of the face, from across an abyss that cannot be encompassed reveals the possibility of infinite manifestations within a borderless plurality of forms. Thus, despite the irreducible singularity of encounters with the face, and its ability to touch the material, its presence cannot be circumscribed within any one phenomenon as it always flees from the concrete even as it is manifest within it. In the context of our discussion then, while the assault on Lucy is one of the principle instances of violence and vulnerability in the novel, the face could not

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9 In contrast to the epistemic and ethical reductionism that takes place in any instance of interpretation, Lévinas suggests that the other must be allowed to reveal their difference apart from the bias of a subjective horizon, and thus takes on a revelation like character. Lévinas is after the "as such" or the "in itself" (*kath auto*) of difference. "Manifestation *kath auto* consists in a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, *expressing itself*" (Ibid., 65). While the epiphanous nature of the facial encounter should be maintained, and the alterity of the other not totalized by the subject, an unmediated encounter that bypasses any horizon, revealing the other *kath auto* seems impossible. Some mediation is required as the subject cannot view the world beyond their body, but this does not necessitate that alterity is thereby consumed by the totalizing power of the subject.

10 The height of the other is the means by which the trace of God is known on Earth. In the in interview, "the Paradox of Morality," Lévinas says, "there are these two strange things in the face: it extreme frailty—the fact of being without means and, on the other hand, there is authority. It is as if God spoke through the face. . . . For me, these two starting points are essential: the idea of extreme frailty, of demand, that the other is poor. It is worse than weakness, the superlative of weakness. He is so weak that he demands." Emmanuel Lévinas, Tamra Wright, Peter Hughes, and Alison Ainley, "The Paradox of Morality," in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988), 169-70.

11 Since there is no set form by which the face is manifest it is fundamentally a non-phenomenal reality that becomes embodied in the flesh. "The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is nether seen nor touched—for in visual or tactile sensation the identity of the I envelops the alterity of the object, which becomes precisely a content" (Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194).

be reduced to or contained within this one incomprehensible instance of trauma.[12] The face is manifest within Lucy's body even as it retreats from this phenomenon and transcends any reduction to form.

The potential for further epiphany awakens in the infinity of the face, and in *Disgrace*, while hints of David's openness to the other exist prior to Lucy's trauma, his encounter with the non-power of her vulnerability profoundly disrupts and re-orients his egoism, opening the door for concern within and beyond the human as the narrative develops. In this sense, Coetzee's narrative expands Lévinas understanding of the face.[13] It is at this point in the narrative that David begins to embrace material vulnerability in ways he had previously dismissed, and while we could continue to look at his relationships with women, especially in his perceptual change of his assault on Melanie Isaacs, I focus on how David's encounter with his daughter's face develops into a feeling-for-the-animal-other.

In describing David's embrace of the animal other in Coetzee's narrative, it is important to note that the three men who attack David and sexually assault Lucy, also target the farm's animals, specifically the canines housed in the kennel that Lucy operates on her farm.[14] The attackers, despite being unthreatened by the dogs locked away in their kennels, nevertheless murder them all, with the exception of Katy, a bulldog living with Lucy after her keepers abandoned her to the farm.[15] Katy, like David and Lucy, experiences her own trauma in the wake of the murders and the violence perpetrated against Lucy, manifesting itself in fear and depression much like the rest of the Lurie household. After the attack, she must be

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12 An openness to infinity is discussed briefly by Coetzee in his non-fiction essay, "Notes on Issues Raised by Matthew Calarco," in *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, ed. Paola Cavalieri (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 89-91. Here Coetzee discusses his affection for inoperable car that sits in his garage; a car he cannot haul away to the junk year so as to not "betray it." See Matthew Calarco's essay, "Toward an Agnostic Animal Ethics," 73-84, in the same volume for a more detailed philosophical account of Lévinasian infinity applied to the non-human world, or his larger work, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

13 While "non-power" is a Derridean term, it is rooted in Lévinas. "This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his [*sic*] face, is his face, is the primordial *expression*, is the first word: 'you shall not commit murder.' The infinite paralyses power by its infinite resistance to murder, which, firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the other, in the total nudity of his defenceless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent. There is here a relation not with very great resistance, but with something absolutely *other*: the resistance of what has no resistance—the ethical resistance" (*Totality and Infinity*, 194). This account demonstrates why an unmediated approach to the face is incoherent, as the reception of the face, and the possibility of resistance and summons, depends on a dialogue with a being who can comprehend the other. In this case, the face requires the interpretive horizon of the subject, guided by empathy at least, to express itself as face. There is more entanglement in these encounters than Lévinas allows.

14 Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 113. The murder of the dogs on the farm is not simple, brazen cruelty or pure species prejudice, but linked to the broader narrative of the racist South African matrix, "where dogs are bred to snarl at the smell of a black man" (110).

15 Katy is introduced in *Disgrace* (69) as abandoned, old and in poor health, struggling even to defecate with ease. Prior to the attack, Katy had been walking with David and Lucy, and was not present to the attackers to be killed. On the murder of the dogs, see p. 95.

"coaxed out of her hiding-place. . . . She is subdued and timorous, following Lucy about, keeping close to her heels. Life, from moment to moment, is not as before. The house feels alien, violated; they are continually on alert, listening for sounds."[16] Thus, there are parallel instances of violence and trauma resulting from the attack on Lucy's farm: David is beaten and set on fire; Lucy is raped; six dogs are murdered, and Katy lives on though in perpetual fear resulting from further uncertainty concerning her well-being.

Out of these parallel traumas experienced within the Lurie household, David's life and perception of the other are radically disrupted. While his focus during and immediately after the attack rests on his daughter, though peripherally noticed in Katy as well, the infinity of the face awakens David to new, transgressive forms of vulnerability. Soon after the attack, in preparation for a community wide celebratory feast for a neighbor, whom is suspected to have had a role in the attack on the farm, David has a surprising reaction to an encounter with two goats awaiting slaughter, "destined since birth for the butcher's knife."[17] After arguing with Petrus, Lucy's neighbor and owner of the animals, over whether the goats should be allowed to graze properly while tied up, David confesses to Lucy a sudden disapproval of "bringing the slaughter-beasts home to acquaint them with the people who are going to eat them," suggesting instead that they be raised and killed away from his gaze.[18] "A bond seems to have come into existence between himself and the two Persians, he does not know how. The bond is not one of affection. It is not even a bond with these two in particular, whom he could not pick out from a mob in a field. Nevertheless, suddenly and without reason, their lot has become important to him."[19] While discussing this feeling with Lucy, David maintains that his view of non-human animals has not changed, claiming that he does not worry about which of them lives and dies nor see them as having a concern for life, but "nevertheless," he says, "in this case I am disturbed. I can't say why. . . . I never imagined I would end up talking this way."[20]

The subtle encounter with Katy and the overt experience of the vulnerability of the goats prepares the reader for David's continued awakening, resulting in a full embrace of transgressive vulnerability within his volunteer work at a local animal welfare clinic; a task he undertakes upon moving in with Lucy to pass the time. David works as an assistant to veterinarian Bev Shaw, increasing his presence at the clinic after the attack take his mind off of the anxieties of life on the farm. While he volunteers for any job he can, David becomes engrossed in the Sunday

16 Ibid., 85.
17 Ibid., 123.
18 Ibid., 124.
19 Ibid., 126. His outward insistence on not changing is juxtaposed with his inner wondering if change is necessary: "Do I have to change, he thinks?" (126).
20 Ibid., 127.

afternoon task of euthanizing "the week's superfluous canines," who, because of neglect and their own frailty, can no longer find fulfillment in the Eastern Cape.[21] All are vulnerable; they are unable to care for themselves and suffering greatly as they wait for the end of the world. David "is the one who holds the dog still as the needle finds the vein and the drug hits the heart and the legs buckle and the eyes dim . . . dispatch[ing] it to oblivion."[22] Despite his familiarity with the process after carrying countless dogs toward death, his feeling-for-the-canine-other does not dissipate and turn to an anticipated callousness. On the contrary, his feeling increases with each subsequent encounter: "The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets," and on one Sunday, "driving home . . . he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. He does not understand what is happening to him. Until now he has been more or less indifferent to animals."[23]

David's "whole being is gripped by what happens in the theater. He is convinced the dogs know their time has come."[24] Despite the care given by him and Bev, David perceives the trauma of each dog that faces death: "they flatten their ears, they droop their tales, as if they too feel the disgrace of dying; locking their legs, they have to be pulled or pushed or carried over the threshold."[25] And so, David embraces the fear and vulnerability of these dogs: the ones who kick and buckle, along with the ones who sniff him and lick his hand. He carries them into the theater, accompanying, supporting, and remembering them in the wake of their trauma when the world is no more.[26] He carries them into death and beyond the end of the world. He carries them after their souls have departed, and so that their corpses might not be mangled to fit more easily in the local incinerator, he oversees their bodies as they are burned up, supporting his newly formed idea of "a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing."[27] In all of this, David Lurie, the dog-man, carries the canine-other when the world is gone, "once they are unable, utterly unable to take care of themselves."[28]

Several times David claims to not understand the transformation he undergoes, going so far as to think of his actions as irrational, characterizing them as "stupid,

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21 Ibid., 142.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 143.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Cf. Paul Celan, Große Glühende Wölbung. "Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen." See also Jacques Derrida's essay, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem," in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, eds. Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 135-63, esp. 157-59.
27 Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 146.
28 Ibid.

daft, wrongheaded."[29] Such statements display *Disgrace's* radical Lévinasian critique of popular Western ethics and rationality, focused as it is on abstract calculation and conceptualization after the primordial event wherein vulnerable bodies call humanity to new a new type of relationship. In contrast to such a conceptualist ethic, David's transformation is not rooted in abstract intellectualism nor calculated by reifying the other into a neat, mechanistic object for scrutiny. Rather, his change is as a sudden awakening, an epiphany drawn out by a new feeling-for-the-other, rooted in emotion as empathy arises in the wake of the trauma of a world that is perpetually toward-death. David's pathos is a visceral response to an irrefutable summons from the face of the other, who comes to him with an authoritative weight and height. By the end of *Disgrace*, the power David once holds, a power allowing the assault of both Mealnie Isaacs and Lucy Lurie, is disrupted, abandoned, and given over to the dogs.[30]

This reading of David Lurie is very non-Lévinasian in a sense, despite my reliance on his thought to explain his encounters and transformation.[31] I am claim-

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29 Ibid.

30 While the sudden compassion for the animal-other is certainly tied to his feeling for Lucy in the wake of the attack, as well as his own horizon as a vulnerable person, it seems that what David feels is not a simple transference of feelings-for-the-human onto the animal, though they are inseparable phenomena. The presence of the animal other is necessary for such encounters to occur. The goats and the dogs in these events exercise their own subjective power over David, and while he conceptualizes them in a new light as a result of his own bio-historical experience of encounters with human vulnerability, this does not eliminate the vulnerability of the non-human from playing a dynamic role in the encounter, which takes place prior to conceptualization in the non-phenomenal, a-temporal reality of ethics.

31 Lévinas refuses to expand the face to the non-human. Throughout *Totality and Infinity*, he has two general lines of thought concerning non-human animals and why they ought to be excluded from discussions concerning the face. First, he claims that such animals do not transcend their biology by means of a genuine ethical response to others. Animals are categorically restricted to egocentric biological drives and the human transcends being and animality through abandoning egocentrism and expressing concern for the other. Second, he claims that non-human animals are not the kind of beings that are of concern to human ethical consideration. The non-human animal has presence only within the context of human concerns as objects and not presence that resists categorization. Non-humans lack any kind of expressivity *kath auto*. They exist passively outside of the scope of language and signification. Both of these claims are questionable and based upon dubious presuppositions. Concerning both claims, speaking in terms of a generic bifurcation of human and non-human animals is incoherent. Claim 1 is a misrepresentation of Darwinian biology and is ignorant of modern ethological literature. Additionally, a case can be made that human morality is not the radical break from biology that Lévinas claims.

Further, claim 2 defies much practical knowledge that non-humans do in fact concern human ethical sympathies. It likewise defies modern biological and ethological knowledge concerning the complex neurology of some animals, and the fact that our systems of knowledge cannot in fact know what happens within and beyond animal life. Both claims are grounded simply in metaphysical anthropocentrism, i.e., a thinking wherein human normativity is uncritically taken as the starting point for all epistemological inquiry. In light of biology, cosmology, historicism, and advances in other disciplines, such a metaphysic is no longer tenable. Lévinas' metaphysical anthropocentrism is also inconsistent with his basic philosophy that refuses to reduce the other to the same. His emphasis on the infinity of the other and the lack of restriction the face may take regarding physical form would serve as a guide opening us to the potential infinite ethical summons encountered in any given relationship with materiality. The spirit of Lévinas' work refutes

ing a much more inclusive understanding of the face than Lévinas allows, eschewing his idea that the face comes to us exclusively as an unmediated encounter through the body of a human subject. Moving beyond Lévinas' hegemonic anthropocentrism, I suggest that the face emerges amidst the impossible complexity of material entanglement, within a world that is always toward-death and unable to escape its own vulnerability as it strives toward fulfillment in a planetary and cosmic community. Such an immense vision of entanglement and vulnerability actually preserves the infinity of the face that Lévinas rightly embraces, though remains limited within the boundaries of his anthropic horizon. As the empathy of the human encounters the vulnerability of a world-toward-death, a feeling-for-the-other might emerge that, while parallel to our feeling-for-the-human, is not reducible to a species-specific horizon.[32] As such, the empathy of the human would become open to the infinity of the face manifest in an infinite plurality of forms, whenever we are awakened by the vulnerability of things. This does not suggest that we overcome the abyss between subject and the other, which is perpetually maintained in our inability to encompass the other as they perpetually retreat toward infinity. And yet, I suggest that David Lurie's feeling-for-the-other, arising in his perception of the infinitely other trauma Lucy experiences, understood as well as it can be within his bio-historical horizon, disruptively co-creates a sensitivity for vulnerability to the point where he becomes open to further disruption from embodied vulnerability previously alien to him.[33] The face of the

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his own prejudice. Still, his work remains crucial for ethics today, once rehabilitated from his own reduction of the other to the same.

32 We do not directly experience the trauma of the other, nor is it our feeling-for-the-other simply our construction. These would result in a reduction of the other to the same and/or a solipsistic horizon. Instead, the feeling-for-the-other is a construction resulting from an entanglement of bodies in which the experience of the other emerges from a "dialogue" in which all parties involved contributes something to the emergent feeling. Thus, a feeling-for-the-other is co-created by the subject and the other (as well as the impossible complex world in which the partners reside) and as such cannot be singularly linked to either party in the dialogue; it is not an unmediated revelation as its touches bodies that feel-for-the-other, nor is it a solipsistic construction because it cannot exist without difference. Instead, the event transcends both of these frameworks as well as the bodies that contribute to the dialogue. The difference of bodies prevents us from totalizing the experience of the other, but our construction is meaningless apart from some form of dialogue with difference occurring in embodied entanglement. Co-creation through relationship roots our ontology, and as such, the other is infinite, perpetually retreating, but is also inseparable from our bodies.

Because of this co-creative ontology, there is an infinite nature to subject and other, neither able to be reified, known "as such" or wholly responsible for revealing or creating knowledge. The other is necessarily "in" the subject, or else no experience could occur. This requires some level of sameness between subject and other, but it is not an absolute sameness to the point where it could be described a conflation or circumscription, nor is it a conceptualized reduction of the other to the same. The other is simultaneously and paradoxically "within" the subject, even as they are infinitely retreating to the "outside" from any totalizing horizon. So, while the subject cannot experience the feeling of the other neither can they have a relationship at all apart from the penetration of the other. Thus co-creation becomes a necessary, even if paradoxical image for understanding relationships, trauma, and a feeling for the other.

33 While we cannot avoid understanding within a framework, our horizons do allow for the idea

animal-other is thus recognized after the relational event in which feelings of empathy results from parallel and entangled vulnerabilities.[34] Regardless of form, David's compassionate feeling-for-the-other, occurring beyond time, conceptualization, and a priori principles, becomes authoritative for ethics, displacing notions of dispassionate analysis, calculation, and appeals to traditions as the only guides for moral considerability.[35] As such, *Disgrace* perpetuates Coetzee's enduring critique of Western rationality with its reduction of ethics to calculable processes, providing instead sublime insight into the event transpiring when humans are confronted with vulnerability. In this framework, the ethical is known

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of difference, transcendence and infinity, making it possible to embrace the parallel vulnerabilities without insisting that such vulnerability is manifested and experienced exactly how ours is. Mirror neurons and their role in empathy in the human and beyond may be a way to understand this phenomenon and the ability to genuinely feel the trauma of the other without reducing their experience to our own. Mirror neurons produce a parallel physiological feeling in a subject, as they perceive other vulnerabilities. Yet, parallel need not equate to sameness, but an overlap within a difference that cannot be separated from the unified matrix of materiality. As such, a body may understand the other prior to conceptualization, and as such only recognize the face, as Lévinas would have it, after the fact of encounter. The physiology of mirror neurons suggests that we feel something of the other, though the ultimate difference in embodiment and horizon would preserve the alterity of the other, who retreats toward infinity after causing a parallel feeling of trauma. The difference in physiology and horizon increases as we move from human/human relationships to human/non-human relationships, but this is perhaps overcome as we recognize that the human form is not the only way of being in the universe, and that despite the infinite separation between ourselves and the animal-other and beyond, our feeling-for-the-other need not be restricted to complete understanding of what it is to be other. I suggest that mirror neurons result in paradox: the subject experiences the pain of the other, as the physiological responses are biologically linked, even as the other retreats infinitely as they exist within their own horizon for understanding their own trauma. The trauma is parallel but not the same.

34 While I do not wish to suggest this essay sheds light on Coetzee's intent as an author or is anything more than a description of my own engagement with his novel, his non-fiction writings on animals confirms that my suggestions for Lurie's life and its applicability for other human is a possibility. "We (participants in this dialogue) are where we are today not because once upon a time we read a book that convinced us that there was a flaw in the thinking underlying the way we, collectively, treat nonhuman animals, but because in each of us there took place something like a conversion experience, which, being educated people who place a premium on rationality, we then proceeded to seek backing for in the writings of thinkers and philosophers. Our conversion experience as often as not centered on some other mute appeal of the kind that Lévinas calls the look, in which the existential autonomy of the Other became irrefutable—irrefutable by any means, including rational argument." John M. Coetzee, "Notes on Issues Raised by Matthew Calarco," in *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, ed. Paola Cavalieri (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 89.

35 Much animal philosophy and theology today is based on human judgment of what attributes count as morally dignifying (e.g., being the subject of a life, physiology allowing suffering, language possession, theory of mind) and what traditional authorities justify us being kind to the animal-other. The attributes focused on are invariably related to what human's prize, effectively determining who is "in" and who is "out" by conformity to some manner of human normativity. By attributing "rights" to some who meet the humanist criteria, new hierarchical boundaries are inscribed that might prove detrimental to non-human dignity. The circle of moral dignity is expanded, but those allowed in are done so insofar as they are like the human. While pragmatic on a certain level, it undercuts the goal of animal rights philosophy in the long run and is logically incoherent and philosophically suspect to combat speciesism with the logic of metaphysical anthropocentrism. For more, see the works of Cary Wolfe, esp. *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); *Animal Rites American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

beyond onto-theology, emerging prior to time and thought in the relational entanglement of transgressive bodies.[36]

Pathos for the Animal in Early Jesus Traditions

While this analysis has been literary and philosophical, it is not for that reason unrelated to theology and the rethinking of religious responses to the animal-other. Despite the Christian tradition's relative lack of concern for animal well-being, as well as the type of ethics described above, I suggest, continuing to follow Lévinas, that the tradition is in fact rooted in just such a feeling-for-the-other, which includes concern for non-human vulnerability and well being.[37] The seemingly odd pairing of a literary analysis and an examination of the Gospels follows from the recognition that what is present but lost in some frameworks is able to be re-vitalized through a wider engagement with one's world, wherein the interconnected truth revealed in one place demands a re-consideration of the truth revealed in other places. My assumption here is simply that human narratives found in literature, film, or any work of art, regardless of their cultural matrix, i.e., their time period, genre, communicatory medium, or subject matter, reveal truth, and often demand wider dialogue with various interconnected frameworks. I suggest that

36 The ethical does not emerge in a conscience awareness of linear events; once it is conceptualized it has already happened and retreated, transcending thought to eternity and infinity. The ethical event is always in the past, has always already happened, and as such it can never be experienced phenomenally. Once we begin to reflect the event is gone, and its trace remains; a trace that cannot be touched or circumscribed, but has left in its wake the feeling required to construct rationality and thought itself.

37 Concerning religion, Lévinas principally speaks of Judaism, but his philosophy of religion and ethics of the face-to-face encounter, more broadly understood, applies to theological thought as a whole in the same manner in which it applies to philosophical thought. Ethics is the starting point for subsequent theological and philosophical reflection. Speaking of Judaism in an interview entitled "Reality has Weight," Lévinas reflects: "There I rediscover the fact that every philosophical experience rests upon a pre-philosophical one. In Jewish thought, I encountered the fact that ethics is not a simple region of being. The encounter with the other offers us the first meaning, and in the extension of this encounter, we discover all others. Ethics is a decisive experience." Emmanuel Lévinas and Jill Robbins, *Is it Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 160. And again, when asked if he believed that "at the origin of philosophizing, there is an intuition of being which would be close to religion?," responded: "I would say yes, in fact, insofar as the relation to the other is the beginning of the intelligible. I cannot describe the relation to God without speaking of my concern for the other" (171). And such applies across the boundary of Judaism and Christianity: "When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25: the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor; in the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the word of God. It is not a metaphor. It is not only extremely important; it is literally true. I'm not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her face I hear the word of God" (171). Theology, like philosophy is not primary; it is a theoretical analysis of what transpires in and beyond the ethical event, which awakens the human subject to concern for the other when one is confronted by the vulnerability of the stranger. The event itself, however, is not theology, nor is it philosophy, but ethics, and it is from this pre-conceptual experience that theology, philosophy, and intelligibility itself follow. "The face is the beginning of intelligibility," and the "original ethical event . . . would also be first theology" (165, 182).

here that Coetzee's *Disgrace* draws out a common human ethical inheritance of morality rooted in a feeling-for-the-other. I suggest that ethical framework emerging from *Disgrace* is able to wake the Christian imagination from a dream world where the human is the center of moral concern and where ethics derives from an authority other than the divine vulnerability of the Another. The Christian tradition, I insist, shares in a deeper human heritage largely forgotten and as such must re-imagination itself.

Thus, in response to *Disgrace* as a revelatory work of art, I here engage the Sabbath traditions of the Hebrew and Greek bibles, as well as a late gospel fragment that constructs a picture of Jesus as one concerned with the animal other. What I hope to demonstrate is that such a feeling-for-the-other-animal is a basic human context, discernable across the boundaries of textual and cultural traditions. While there are several legislative texts in the Hebrew Bible that prescribe proper behavior during the Sabbath, I focus here on Exodus 23:10-12, as part of a larger proscription for right living in the land that includes the ten commandments and samples of related social justice laws.[38]

> You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your foreigner, may refresh themselves (Exod 23:10-12).

The first section of the legislation (Exod 23:10-11) focuses on the Sabbath year. During this time the land was not to be worked and crops were not to be harvested. The purpose of this practice was to ensure the vibrancy of the poor and vulnerable dwelling within the land. While other Sabbatical passages focus on rest and remembrance of the Divine (e.g., Exod 20:8-10), the concern of this text rests solely with the bodily well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, including the other-than human animals that live within and depend upon the human community. Despite the priority the human poor receive in this passage, the clear parallelism places non-human animals within the same category of vulnerability in need of protection. The other-than-human animal, alongside of the poor,

38 Not all of the laws included here can be seen in a liberative light. Some would need to be eschewed as irrelevant or inappropriate. Thus, the acceptance of the moral considerability of animals in the Sabbath laws need not provide justification for all laws encountered.

are those most likely to be overlooked in Israel and thus both find protection under the laws emerging from divine pathos.[39]

The second section of the legislation (Exod 23:12) proscribes action for the Sabbath day, wherein animals, slaves, and non-Israelites are allowed rest from their work. While there are likely echoes of other Sabbath proscriptions that point to the need for remembering the deity on this day, the purpose in this text is again overtly oriented toward justice for the vulnerable, suggestive that the treatment of all animal bodies, human and nonhuman alike, are a concern of Divine pathos. In the Sabbatical legislation then, animals are counted among the most vulnerable of the land, given special compassion and concern, placing them in a position of solidarity with other trangressive bodies, especially the poor and non-Isrtaelites. I stress here that ethics are determined not by rational calculation, but because some vulnerable body has revealed its need and demanded that those with power attend to such vulnerability.

These Sabbath related ethics are carried into the Greek Bible, which deepens the connection to vulnerability and human feeling-for-the-animal-other.[40] The Gospels continue the connection between animal vulnerability and the Sabbath as a day to exercise special empathy for vulnerable bodies. Although not the main thrust of the narratives, the voice of animal vulnerability and human pathos persists in these texts. The relevant teachings are found in Matt 12:1-14 and Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-14. I here examine Matthew's account.

Matthew 12:1-14 remembers the spirit of the controversial encounters arising between Jesus and a group of Pharisees in Judea regarding rules of conduct during the Sabbath. In Matthew's remembrance of the controversy, two different but entangled narratives are constructed, both centered on divine and human feeling concerning embodied vulnerability. Revealed at the heart of these narratives is the role Another plays in determining what is ethical in a given circumstance. It is the demand of a vulnerable body, which summon for a feeling for the other that determines right ethical behavior in a given context. The moral logic continues to assert the superiority of pathos as an ethical guide over tradition and dispassionate calculation about truth and goodness.

The first narrative (Matt 12:1-8) describes a conflict over the practice of picking grain on the Sabbath, an act contrary to certain Pharisaic law but not the habits of some. Jesus's defense of picking grain on the Sabbath is rooted in divine com-

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39 This is by no means a law code that resists all violence toward animals. The cult of Israel slaughtered animals on a regular basis. Yet, this law does take animal bodies seriously and advocates their general well-being.

40 For a more thorough examination of Jesus' teachings on animals see Richard Bauckham, "Jesus and Animals I: What did He Teach," and "Jesus and Animals II: What did he Practice," in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Ethics and Theology*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamato (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 33-60.

passion for one's basic need of food and emphasizes David's consumption of consecrated bread, an act ordinarily forbidden but accepted out of compassion for his vulnerability manifest in hunger. Jesus goes on to further root such a reaction to eating in the basic Divine orientation toward human beings as one of empathy, mercy, and compassion in the face of vulnerability as revealed in Hosea 6:6, indicating that God "desire[s] compassion, and not a sacrifice." A proper ethical orientation toward Another's frailty is not an abstract calculation of the proper application of tradition and law applied dispassionately apart from the peculiarity of context but a compassionate response to the weakness of the other. It is the frailty of David manifest in his hunger that faces Divinity and summons mercy. Divinity here embraces the authoritative height of David's weakness, a weakness so great that it demands, even in the face of God. The ethical in such cases, and the heart of the spirit of Sabbath celebration, is determined through relationships and the authoritative summons of the other's embodied vulnerability.

In the second narrative of the pericope (Matt 12:9-14), Jesus again breaks the custom of some by healing on the Sabbath. Prior to the healing, Jesus inquires about the nature of the Sabbath with its ethical demands and once more asserts that the tradition exists to promote compassion toward embodied vulnerability. As such, the Sabbath is a day entirely suitable for responding to needs of others who demand that we act on their behalf. In making this argument, Jesus employs a classic Rabbinical heuristic device that uses a lesser example to establish a more important point.[41] Here Jesus rhetorically asks who would allow an injured animal to remain in a well if it had fallen in on the Sabbath, implying that no one would refuse empathy to an injured animal on the Sabbath so there are no grounds for withholding one's empathy for humans even if it could be abstractly construed as work. One again, empathy and feeling-for-the-other is the key to ethical behavior, which arises in the space of concrete relationships. The intra-textuality of the pericope with Exodus as well as the appeal to Hosea demands that we see Sabbath as guided by the authoritative summons of the face-to-face encounter with human or non-human vulnerability.[42] While the human is the focus, the rhetoric of the passage assumes that one would be merciful beyond the borders of species.[43]

These Sabbath controversies, along with other New Testament narratives (e.g., Jesus's reference to the death of sparrows Matt 10:29-31; Luke 12:6-7), give evi-

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41 For other uses of the *qal wa-homer* argument see Richard Bauckham, "Jesus and Animals I," 44-45.

42 The fact that animal well-being is not the main point in this narrative is irrelevant. The "lesser" good is by no means unimportant in the *qal wa-homer*. The same is true of Jesus' teaching on divine concern for sparrows in Matt 10:29-31; Luke 12:6-7.

43 It is unlikely that Jesus is merely talking about a person rescuing an animal out of selfish economic concern. This would break the continuity between the parallel examples in the previous narrative concerning compassion, as well as the rhetoric of the *qal wa-homer*. Likewise, the mentioning of animal well-being and Sabbath almost certainly draws on the legal tradition of Israel as animals are mentioned alongside of vulnerable humans in the basic distillations of Sabbath law.

dence of a larger tradition of a divine pathos for human and non-human alike, based not in some ontological law of goodness, but an ethical metaphysic that defers to the authority of the vulnerable other. Though more transgressive bodies never retained a central importance in Christianity, and likely never had such a status, it is clear that the early Church and many since have told stories reflecting the Divine pathos for animal vulnerability that arose not from abstract calculation or a tradition that commanded kindness to the animal other. Instead, such stories reflected an appeal to the authority of Another and the subjective feelings arising from encounters with frailty in the face of transgressive bodies.

An enigmatic apocryphal story in written in Coptic summarizes the feeling-for-the-other-animal expressed in the lives of some Christians in the early Church.

> It happened that the Lord went forth from the city and walked with his disciples over the mountains. And they came to a mountain, and the road which led to it was steep. There they found a man with a sumpter-mule. But the animal had fallen for the burden was too heavy, and he beat it that it bled. And Jesus came to him and said, Man, why dost thou beat thine animal? Seest thou not that it is too weak for its burden, and knowest thou not that it suffers pains? But the man answered and said, What is that to you? I can beat it as much as I please, since it is my property, and I bought it for a good sum of money. Ask those that are there with thee, for they know me and know thereof. And some of the disciples said, Yea Lord, it is as he says. We have seen how he bought it. But the Lord said, Do you notice how it bleeds, and hear you not how it laments and cries? But they answered and said, Nay Lord, we hear not how it laments and cries? And the Lord was sad and exclaimed, Woe to you, that ye hear not how it complains to the Creator in heaven, and cries for mercy. But three times woe to him of whom it complains and cries in distress. And he came forth and touched the animal. And it arose and its wounds were healed. And Jesus said to the man, Now go on and beat it no more, that you also may find mercy.[44]

Narratives such as this, along with traditions related to the Sabbath and other texts from the Greek Bible, reveal some of the lesser-known stories the early Church told about Jesus, Divinity, and their own relationship with other-than-human-animals. These narratives reveal a deep-seated openness on the part of some

44 This text is found in Roderic Dunkerley, *Beyond the Gospels* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1957), 143-44. There is not much information on this text. The text is purported to come from "a Coptic Bible manuscript in the Paris Library. Search there however proved unsuccessful, and there the matter rests. It is usually considered to be an extract from some Coptic apocryphal work, of which there are many in existence" (143).

to the vulnerability of animal bodies, and the role empathy, relationship, and the suffering of the other to reveal ethics in the heart of such encounters rather than appeals to rationality, calculation, and tradition. These stories embody a largely forgotten ethical tradition in the Christian faith, and transcend appeals reason, calculation, and tradition in favor of the voice of Another. Such narratives are necessary to explore further as we are reminded of different ways of approaching ethical truth outside of the boundaries of classical theology. As these other sources consider transgressive forms of ethical truth, theology would do well to enter into a dialogue with their witness, allowing the fruit of such a conversation guide us in re-imagining our religious traditions to better cope with the disruptive trauma arising within contemporary experiences of the world.

Such accounts of healing on the Sabbath, a day devoted to the vulnerability of the other, including the vulnerability of the non-human animal, are best understood in light of Lévinas' appeal to the ethical as the grounds of theology. The ethic arising in such passages in the biblical texts do not appeal to rationality, calculation, tradition, but to the god-like voice of Another emerging in face-to-face encounters. It is this ethical event, when Another awakens the subject, that grounds not only the morality of the tradition, but the construction of the tradition itself. In such biblical traditions, Divinity is known in justice, and the ethical awakening of one to the vulnerability of a world that is perpetually toward-death in an infinite plurality of forms. Christianity I suggest, like Lévinas' Judaism, and Coetzee's literary world, is a tradition emerging from the ethical, beyond onto-theological appeals to truth that are set prior to the intelligibility that only awakens in concrete relationship, wherein "God comes to mind" in an infinite plurality of vulnerable forms.[45]

45 Lévinas and Robbins, *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 57.

A Sensuous Pursuit of Justice: An Examination of the Erotically Pleasurable and Morally Formative Practice of Yoga

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Abstract

This paper explores the suggestion that what feels good to our bodies has the potential to function as moral/spiritual power for being and doing what we discern we ought. Advocates for an 'ethical eroticism' include Christian theo-ethicists Mary Elizabeth Hobgood, Carter Heyward, and Marvin Ellison, as well as civil rights activist Audre Lorde. After examining the conditions by which the erotic might be considered a morally formative and ethically potent resource for moral action, that which thwarts and distorts pleasure and sensuality towards unjust ends will be surveyed. In response to the disembodied and anti-erotic conditions that many of us have been formed through, the acute need for ethically oriented embodied practices is recognized. The practice of yoga is discussed as one such possibility, wherein practitioners are encouraged to attend and feel fully into the affective-knowledge of being a fleshy body alongside the fleshy bodies in the rest of the cosmos. Yogic breathing is presented as one inroad towards orienting disciples into their bodies so that they might feel their way pleasurably towards justice/love.

Introduction

In Mary Elizabeth Hobgood's *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability,* the author advocates for an "ethical eroticism" as a response to the multiple and overlapping injustices that she wrestles with in this work.[1] An ethical eroticism

1 Mary Elizabeth Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2009), 134.

would nurture and trust in the embodied and sensuous experience of passion and regard this depth of connective feeling as a resource towards peace and justice. An ethical eroticism would be grounded in, considerate of and motivated by respectful touch, mutual pleasure, and the affirmation of the goodness of bodily life.[2] Hobgood suggests that moral agents who develop vibrant sensuous connections with self, human and non-human neighbors are more likely to be moved towards a sustainable engagement of seeking out and building the conditions for right-relations.[3] Being in touch with the affective-knowledge of one's own sensuousness and becoming sensitive to one's connections to the fleshiness of human and non-human neighbors, moral agents are emboldened to reject the abuse of any and all bodies.

Hobgood is certainly not alone in her proposal for an ethical eroticism as the foundation for the pursuit of justice. Christian theo-ethicists Marvin Ellison and Carter Heyward and civil rights activist and feminist Audre Lorde each suggest that erotic and sensual pleasure can be catalysts for justice.[4] Additionally, they each suggest that sensual pleasure can be a helpful guide in knowing what *is* just and can be experienced in and through the pursuit of justice.[5] Rather than being considered something frivolous in relation to the moral life, what feels good to our bodies can be "an important standard for judging what is worthwhile and useful for ethical living."[6] Ellison affirms that being in touch with what the body feels and alert to what the body experiences as pleasure, moral agents "are less likely to become numb to oppression or to ignore their own pain or the pain of others."[7]

What strikes me about Hobgood, Heyward, Lorde and Ellison's assertions is the notion that the shape of resistance to patriarchy, racism, ableism, sexism, heterorsexism and capitalism—or the practice of contesting all those systems and behaviors that create conditions for unjust relations—might be sensuously pleasurable and guided by the sensuality of our bodies.[8] I will examine what it means to suggest that erotic sensual pleasure might be employed as a guideline and cri-

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2 Ibid., 135.
3 Ibid.
4 Carter Heyward, *Touching our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), 27. Marvin Ellison, *Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 80. Audre Lorde, 'The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power', *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 53.
5 Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 3. Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 102. Lorde, 'The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power', 56.
6 Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 80.
7 Ibid., 81.
8 The focus of this paper is not on any of these systems or structures per se. Patriarchy, racism, ableism, sexism, heterosexism and capitalism are all subject to more thorough exploration than this paper offers. However, I write from the perspective that patriarchal, racist, ableist, sexist, and heterosexist relations demonstrate patterns of interaction and power, which prohibit the flourishing of right relationship between moral agents. I also write from the perspective that the capitalist economic order helps to create the systemic conditions for the flourishing of these unjust relations.

teria for the Christian disciples' practice of justice-seeking. Joining in creating a more moral world is what disciples of Jesus have been called towards; deconstructing and creatively resisting systems of privilege and oppression participates in what Hobgood suggests to be at the core of the Christian vocation.[9] This interpretation of justice-seeking as a cornerstone of faithful living is certainly not new; liberative Christian theo-ethicists and activists have over and over proclaimed that "to know God is to do justice."[10] If the sensuousness of the body has the capacity to enliven moral agents to their power for doing and being what they discern they ought, then Christian discipleship should be attentive to sensuousness and the pleasures of the body.

It is clear that not all pleasure leads to justice-seeking or is a sign that relations are just. People take pleasure in consuming materials that cause harm, and people experience pleasure relationally without that signifying that interactions are just. I will consider the conditions that thwart sensuous pleasure being employed as a norm towards justice, and as a response to these obstructions, I will propose and examine the practice of yoga as a means by which the foundations for an erotic justice might be cultivated. I am offering the tradition of yoga as a praxis in this direction because I have felt joyfully propelled towards right-relations through my practice and teaching.

Erotic Justice

In order to determine how in fact pleasure, sensuality and the erotic might move individuals and communities of disciples towards justice-seeking and might be indicators for what is just, it will be helpful to first lay out some rudimentary statements and claims as they relate to terms like *justice, sensuality,* and the *erotic*. I will examine each of these terms briefly in order to be able to use them fluidly thereafter.

Carter Heyward defines *justice* as the sharing of power: in just relations, each moral agent is related to and relates to others in such a way so as to be encouraged into being more fully who they are.[11] Contexts are just when all agents are in right-relationship, which is to say, when all are empowered to experience themselves and one another as intrinsically valuable and irreplaceable earth creatures. In just mutual relations amongst individuals, the movement of the Holy is discernible; for Heyward, the nature of God is justice.[12] Marvin Ellison uses the term *justice* to refer to the "ongoing, never-ending journey to remake community by

9 Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege*, 15.
10 Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 68.
11 Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 191.
12 Ibid.

strengthening relationship. . . . A commitment to justice means correcting whatever harms people, other earth creatures, and the earth itself."[13] In line with these definitions, justice here will be conceived of in the following way: a context is just when people relate to one another and to all earth neighbors in respectful and life-honoring ways.

Heyward suggests that what connects us to one another and to the entire intertwined cosmos is our *sensuality.* Sensuality provides our relational grounding with the world, for it refers to the way we feel our aliveness as bodies with earth-neighbors. *Sensuality*, Heyward puts forth, "is the channel through which we feel, for example, either heat or pain. We are sensual persons: we touch and enjoy; taste and delight; hear and get angry; smell and are excited; see and fear."[14] *Sensuality* refers to what happens in bodies, to bodies and through bodies in the "mingling of our senses and emotions."[15] Sensuality has to do with the sensations of materiality as well as to the embodied emotional responses that arise in response to sensations.

Audre Lorde advocates that the *erotic* has to with "how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing" rather than a question "only of what we do".[16] *Eroticism* has to do with our body-selves' capacity for living fully as sensual beings. It is our ability to recognize, pay attention to, and thrive in the movement of feeling occurring within our bodies, as we engage in any act.[17] For Lorde, the erotic is an experience of "life-force energy", which enlivens moral agents towards what she terms, "our deepest knowledge", or our sense of and appreciation for what it means to be fully alive.[18] This depth of feeling becomes the lens through which all aspects of life are evaluated; that which frustrates these feelings of being fully alive, or diminishes this erotic engagement with the world, is scrutinized and can be actively challenged via the energy of the erotic.[19] The experience of the erotic drives efforts towards justice insofar as moral agents become dissatisfied with all that works against the erotic in their own lives and in the lives of their neighbors.

Heyward defines the *erotic* with similar emphasis on the moral dimension: the erotic is the deep yearning that exists for bodies to connect sensually with one another and with the world in mutual ways.[20] The erotic is "the flow of our senses, the movement of our sensuality, in which we experience our bodies' power and desire to connect with others."[21] The *erotic* is our most "fully embodied experience of the

13 Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 2.
14 Ibid.
15 Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 193.
16 Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power', 77.
17 Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege,* 117.
18 Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power', 55.
19 Ibid., 57.
20 Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 187.
21 Ibid.

love of God"; the erotic, as an experience of God, propels us towards mutual and just relations.[22] The erotic moves us out of the cult of individualism and towards mutuality (which for Heyward, refers to respectful and responsible relation—where two or more individuals share power equitably).[23] At the same time, the erotic draws us more fully and deeply into ourselves. *Eroticism* as it will be used here includes sexual connection, but like Lorde and Heyward, I wish to use the term *erotic* to embrace all activities that are charged with an experience and awareness of sensuous fullness as we act and engage as body-selves with other and towards other earth-neighbors. The erotic is the feeling of being fully alive in one's body alongside of and with earth neighbors. The erotic is the opposite of numbness and objectification; this affective energy empowers us to become subjects of our own lives, and enables us to respect the fleshy subjectivity of our neighbors.

Sensuous Disconnect and Body Disrespect

While Ellison, Hobgood, Heyward and Lorde all turn to the sensuous and erotic as a vital source for moral affective-knowing, they also each recognize that the conditions of the patriarchal, racist, ableist, sexist, heterosexist and capitalist order in which we find ourselves make it difficult for individuals and communities to engage the erotic as an instructive ethical gauge. Two features characterize this difficulty: we have lost the capacity to be attentive to and thrive within our own bodies and with other's bodies, and our body's desires have been deployed towards unjust ends. That is, we are often suffering from a disconnect to our sensuous body-selves and the body-selves of our neighbors, and this disconnect has fostered conditions in which we have come to desire materials/relationships that work against right-relationship.

Disconnection from our sensuous body-selves occurs with the dulling and disavowal of sense-wisdom. Disconnection from our sensuous body-selves is discernible in all practices and systems that reify and distinguish reason, and hierarchize particular kinds of reason, over sensual experience and body-knowledge, as well as in systems and practices that idealize particular kinds of bodies rather than others. Whenever and wherever the sensuous experience of particular body-selves is disregarded for the sake of objective and reasonable truth or in relation to what the idealized body should look like and be able to do, pathways for unjust relations through disembodiment and alienation from the senses are created. The moral wisdom that is discerned through our bodies is a unique kind of knowing that cannot be substituted by other means; when what we learn through our senses is marginalized, oppressed or negated, Heyward suggests that the effect is a pull-

22 Ibid., 99.
23 Ibid., 21.

ing "away from one another and hence from ourselves."[24] If our sensuality is our capacity to connect with the world, the dulling or denial of sense-wisdom leads to alienation from our embodied experience and therein to disengagement with the world.

Heyward and Ellison each suggest that disconnection from our own sensuous body-selves and from the bodies of others leads to moral insensitivity and body-disrespect.[25] Disrespect for bodies is a primary quality of unjust configurations of social relating, and "at its worst, body disrespect becomes contemptuous and hateful toward the body and toward concrete, particular bodies."[26] Heyward says that being alienated from our sensuous desires and feelings is attributable to, and creates the foundation for, the perpetuation of relationships that dominate, coerce and are marked by violence.[27]

Disconnection from the sensuous erotic experiences of being alive leads not only to moral insensitivity but also to the fostering of explicit and embedded pleasures in and desires for that which is unjust.[28] Explicit antierotic desire is manifested in the pleasure some bodyselves take in being cruelly, and non-consensually, controlling in relationships. Explicit antierotic desire is witnessed to in abusive interactions between body-selves—between those who have power to control other body-selves without their permission. Embedded antierotic human desire is observable in unintentional and oftentimes invisible abusive, over-consumptive and objectifying relations between earth neighbors. Embedded antierotic desire is witnessed to in many of the consumption cycles operative in the North American context; where one's buying and desiring habits frequently have hidden and inadvertent consequences on human and non-human neighbors.

In light of this context of disconnection and anti-erotic desire, the invitation to respond to sensuous pleasure as a way to discern living ethically is not a carte blanche claim that whatever feels good and right is in fact good and right. The sensuous erotic pleasure that might lead to justice is not the same as the anti-erotic desire for material and monetary accumulation, nor is it an explicit pleasure in harming neighbors. Marvin Ellison suggests that real "soul-satisfying pleasure" is "found in pursuing justice as right-relatedness in all our connections, from the most intimate to the most public."[29] In consideration of the ways that this real "soul-satisfying pleasure" has been subverted through disconnection and anti-erotic desires, practices or behaviors that might help nurture an ethical eroticism must be pursued if sensuous pleasure is to be understood as a guide towards justice. We

24 Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 95.
25 Ibid., 106-108. Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 40-43.
26 Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 41.
27 Heyward, *Touching our Strength*, 95.
28 Ellison, *Erotic Justice*, 30-58.
29 Ibid., 3.

will have to engage in practices that bring us into our fleshy bodies if we are to feel our way towards just relations with the fleshy-bodies of our neighbors.

Yoga as an Erotically Ethical Moral Praxis

The practice of yoga is one distinct avenue that may assist in re-orienting moral agents away from body-disconnection and the desire for cruel and non-consensual control and towards an erotic justice.

In turning to yoga as a means towards getting back in touch with our senses so that we might feel our way pleasurably towards right-relations, a few caveats must be named. First, I will not be providing a fulsome history of the development of yoga; as a 5000-year-old tradition, this is clearly beyond my scope. Second, this is not a work of comparative theology, and so I will not be examining and mining distinct worldviews for parallels or conflicts. Rather, I turn to yoga as a praxis through which disembodiment and moral insensitivity might be sensuously destabilized. Third, the practice of yoga in the North American context is certainly not always just. The eruption of yoga in Canada and the United States has oftentimes been culturally imperialistic. The use of Indian and Hindu (which is itself a problematic and indiscriminate religious category) identities and concepts, or the disassociation of these from the practice of yoga in studios, gyms, and businesses across the continent, is very often appropriative and insensitive to the rich and ongoing history of this tradition. Additionally, the accessibility of yoga within the North American context is problematic. Because it exists within a patriarchal, racist, ableist, sexist, heterorsexist and capitalist context, there are certainly instances and trends within the practice and business of yoga that betray and participate in these hierarchies of access and privilege. Yoga is not a neutral phenomenon, nor is it always used towards the seeking of justice. In recognition of all of the aforementioned, my treatment and exploration of yoga will inevitably be wanting. Nevertheless, I will proceed in turning to yoga as a physical and philosophical tradition as interpreted from my position of practicing and having been trained in the lineage of Krishnamacharya—one of the most prominent teachers of modern yoga. I do so because it is clear to me through my own practice and teaching that yoga has something to offer to our disembodied and anti-erotic condition. The practice of yoga has the potential to guide practitioners into their flesh—into the sensuous breathy experience of being embodied alongside other bodies.

Yoga is often translated as the act of union, or yoking, but as Michael Stone—a well-known yoga teacher and writer living in Toronto—suggests, rather than a set of *practices* or *actions* as such, wherein we are actively joining two seemingly disparate things, yoga is primarily a state of being in which one is able to occupy the present moment unremittingly, and in this state, come to the felt knowledge of

the deep continuity of all life.[30] The state of yoga is one in which past and future are not at the forefront of consciousness; yoga is the experience of stillness within the subtleties and intricacies of the present moment. Awake to the present moment, Stone suggests that the basic unity and interconnectedness of all of life is exposed.[31] The techniques of yoga—including physical postures and breath work—are means by which practitioners might sensuously and mindfully orient themselves through present moment awareness to this very deep knowing of the continuity and interconnectivity of all life.[32] What is significant to note here is that while yoga offers means towards inhabiting the present moment for the individual practitioner, this embodied sense of being here now is in fact a being here now together, as a particular moving and breathing corner within the whole wide web of the cosmos. Coming more fully into one's experience of the present moment through the tools that yogic practice offers, the practitioner drops into their own fleshy body, and in so doing, into the felt knowing that all bodies are related.

This state of fully inhabiting the present and interconnected moment of experience can happen on the yoga mat, but it can also happen at the dinner table, on the way to work, and while stuck in traffic. The practices that we call yogic are ways of making the state of yoga—or union in the present moment—more readily at hand for the practitioner in all arenas of their life. Yogic practice is a rehearsal for life off of the yoga mat.

There are many aspects, various interpretations and eight limbs of yoga, but the piece that I will focus on here is *prāṇāyāma*, or the practice of conscious breathing. The word *prāṇāyāma* is comprised of two Sanskrit roots: '*prāṇa*', meaning 'vital energy' or 'life force' is the first. *Prāṇa* is "the energy that animates life, and in human form it is most perceptible as the breath."[33] '*Ayāma'*, the second root, means to expand or draw out. *Prāṇāyāma* is the practice of engaging in techniques whereby the movement of life force energy in the present moment within a person's body is drawn out and made conscious.[34] Various methods and breath ratios are suggested in the practices of *prāṇāyāma*, all with the goal that the mind might be drawn into the activities of the breath. The objective of *prāṇāyāma* is precisely this consciousness of the flowing of life; when we follow the breath, the mind is invited to rest into the sensations and specificities of the present moment of being alive.[35] Inhabiting the present moment with awareness

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30 Michael Stone, *The Inner Tradition of Yoga: A Guide to Yoga Philosophy for the Contemporary Practitioner* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2008), 7-8.
31 Michael Stone, *Yoga for a World out of Balance: Teachings on Ethics and Social Action* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2009), 2.
32 Stone, *The Inner Tradition of Yoga*, 8.
33 Ibid., 123.
34 Ibid., 125.
35 Ibid.

is deeply challenging; consciousness of the breath is a means by which the mind might begin to anchor and sink in to the instant at hand, even if just briefly. With the mind entwined into the present moment through the breath, what becomes apparent is that our breath exists with specificity and uniqueness in each instant, we do not cause our own breath, and we do not breathe in isolation. Our breath, as we notice it rise and fall, is a constant reminder of our relationship in this very instant to all our earth neighbors. We simply cannot breathe in seclusion; it is a biological impossibility. When attention is paid to the breath as a method of occupying the present moment, the practitioner is drawn in to that entirely mystical feeling that we are sensuously bound up with the rest of the cosmos.

This sensual connection through breath to the rest of the cosmos might be a perspective on embodied reality that the yoga teacher or instructor names, or the practitioner might come to this awareness on their own. In many if not most yoga classes in the North American context, however, this deep sensuous and breathy connection may not be emphasized. Nevertheless, even when it is not named or encouraged, the physiological effects of conscious breathing have the potential to effect the practitioner in remarkably erotically ethical ways. When deep breathing is practiced, the autonomic nervous system—which is connected to physical processes such as digestion, respiration, heart rate, and immune function, and which regulates the mindbody's stress response in all of these areas—is being engaged.[36] There are three branches of our autonomic nervous system: the sympathetic, the parasympathetic and the enteric. When the body senses stress, the sympathetic nervous system—which is our fight-or-flight response—mobilizes. Trauma survivors, people with anxiety disorders and many with ongoing low to high-grade stress in their lives have sympathetic nervous systems that are chronically overextended.[37] The functioning of the parasympathetic nervous system—often called the 'rest and digest' or calm and connect system—is what allows our mindbodies to recuperate from the stressors of life. For those with overworked sympathetic nervous systems, this parasympathetic response of resting and calming is often impaired. Yogic breathing triggers the parasympathetic nervous system into action for physiological reasons that are the subject of ongoing scientific research. By engaging in deep conscious breathing, what is essentially being communicated to the whole mindbody is that it is safe, and that it is okay to be at peace with one's surroundings. With the mindbody at peace, practitioners are readied for sensuous connection to self and perhaps even for a renewed openness to neighbor in the present moment.

I'm focusing on *prāṇāyāma*, or the conscious breathing aspect of yoga, for a

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36 David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2011), 108-109.

37 Emerson and Hopper, *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga,* xv.

few reasons. First, because the physical aspects of yoga are those that have come to be conceived of in the North American context as the whole of yoga, it is helpful to stay with the physical aspects to examine how they might intersect with the disembodied and anti-erotic state that I've briefly outlined. Second, by focusing on *prāṇāyāma*, and not on *āsana*, or the physical postures and movements of yoga, I'm pointing to the fact that the breath is really at the heart of all physical yoga practices. Krishnamacharya is quoted as telling his students "if you can breathe, you can practice yoga!" To practice yoga, students do not have to be able to contort their bodies or look a certain way; they need to be able to breathe, and they are invited to do so with increased awareness. Third, in the tradition that I'm trained in, it is said that the quality of our breath influences the state of our minds, and vice versa. By attending to the breath and bringing in directions and patterns into its waves, we have the capacity to influence the thoughts of the mind. If the breath is agitated, Krishnamacharya suggests that the same goes for the mind. By bringing steadiness and softness to the breath, we introduce these qualities into the mindbody. In so doing, we make the mindbody a fertile ground for new thought and sensation patterns, breaking with antierotic affective-perception cycles. The stories of the mind and the body, and the codes of disconnection and anti-eroticism that are heaped upon our body-selves, are halted, even if for just a moment.

I'm convinced that this embodied experience can have direct ethical implications that are pertinent for the Christian disciple; if we sensuously awaken to our own erotic life force energy and come to feel this erotic charge as permeating the bodies of all our earth neighbors, we will, as the suggestion for an ethical eroticism goes, be more likely to make decisions and cultivate relations that reflect this fleshy discovery. The commitment to justice as right-relationship that disciples of Jesus are invited towards can partner fruitfully with the practice of yoga, as well as with any other embodied practice that guides moral agents into their interconnected fleshiness. Yoga's capacity to instill a passion for pursuing right-relations is borne not out of the ideological assertion that we *should* care for the bodies of our neighbors because it is logically, ideologically or objectively the right way to be in the world, but rather from the felt experience of being connected to the rest of reality through the rhythms of body and breath.

Conclusion

If one of the foremost obstructions to the experience of an erotic pursuit of justice is the disconnection that we experience as body-selves and in relation to the body-selves of our neighbors, then we are in need of seeking practices that might situate us into our interconnected fleshiness. The disconnection and anti-eroticism that

we have been formed into is carried somatically, and so it is to our fleshiness that we must turn in order to disentangle. We will have to challenge and transform the explicit and embedded anti-erotic desires that the conditions of inequality have instilled into our bones. This is undoubtedly a tall order. However, there are certainly many erotically pleasurable inroads in this direction; you might hike in the woods and absorb the sounds of the birds, you might dance and find remarkably synchronous rhythms with your neighbors, or you might take great erotic pleasure in the feeling of the ingredients in your hands while preparing a meal. I am suggesting that yoga, and *prāṇāyāma* specifically, is one way to awaken the erotic sensations of our own bodies and to the felt knowing that we are radically and sensuously allied with all of our neighbors, because this has been my experience. With a deep, conscious breath, the pursuit of just relations as an act of discipleship might begin. In noticing how the air enters through our nostrils, travels down our windpipes, and finds its way into our lungs and belly, we have the potential to connect to the truly erotic experience of present moment interrelation. As we are mindful of the air that travels through our system each and every moment of our lives, we might begin to sensuously experience and become inspired by the profundity of what it means to be a being that breathes alongside of and with the rest of the cosmos. That potential is there so long as we are alive, taking in this deeply shared-air.

Expanding the Boundaries of Human Subjectivity: The Need for Ecological Conversion

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Abstract

There has been an increasing amount of nature writing that calls human beings to a new understanding of what it means to be human by developing a deeper attentiveness to, and intimacy with, the natural world around them. However, contemporary nature writers and cultural historian, Thomas Berry, note that human beings tend to regard the natural world as a mere backdrop to the human living that we think really matters. This disregard of the natural world affects our ability to fully know who we are, and contributes to the bias that fosters ecological decline. This paper will argue that expanding the boundaries or limits of our understanding of what it means to be human is critical for the kind of personal and social transformation or conversion that is needed to meet the ecological crisis. I will utilize Bernard Lonergan's identification of three aspects of conversion — religious, moral and intellectual, and Robert Doran's notion of psychic conversion. These four conversions can lead to the development of an explanatory account of ecological conversion that helps us to answer the questions: what does ecological require of us? What are the foundations that undergird it? What does it mean for human and other-than-human relationships?

The long-term flourishing and, indeed, survival of the Earth is, perhaps, the most significant social breakdown in our world. Despite substantial data on the reality and impact of things such as climate change, species loss, habitat degradation, and food sovereignty, we lack the political and social will to deal adequately with the global ecological crisis. At its core, this is a question about how we can improve the conditions and increase the probabilities that there can be a transformation of our understanding of our human subjectivity, as well as the nature of our universe, and the nature of the divine. As cultural historian Thomas Berry indicates, it is

precisely the role of the human in our time to engage in this difficult process of becoming truly "present to the planet as participating members of the comprehensive Earth community,"[1] a period that he calls "the Ecozoic Era."[2] Increasingly, the language being used for this "arduous transition" in the Catholic tradition is "conversion."

In this article, I will argue that Bernard Lonergan's discussion of conversion can provide a framework for thinking about the kind of transformation that is needed to meet the ecological crisis. For Lonergan, there is no solution to social decline or breakdown except the exercise of human authenticity in our societies and cultures. This is as true of dealing with the survival of the Earth as it is with other types of decline.

Roman Catholicism and Ecological Conversion

John Paul II's 1990 World Day of Peace message, *Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation*, is regarded as the time when the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church started to speak directly about ecological issues. This is also the first time that church leadership uses the language of conversion to talk about what is required of us. "Faced with widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past . . . [A] new ecological awareness is beginning to emerge. . . . A true education in [ecological] responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior."[3]

The Catholic conversation about ecology starts with the long tradition of social justice, that is, justice for the poorest, most oppressed, persons of the world. As John Paul II goes on to say in his 1990 message: "It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in the conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence."[4]

Our waste is dumped where the poor live. We build incinerators to eliminate *our* garbage in the backyards of the poorest people.[5] We consume at such a rate, and in such a way, that land is taken over by corporations for the exporting of

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1 Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 8.

2 Berry: "Our own special role, which we will hand on to our children, is that of managing the arduous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic Era, the period when humans will be present to the planet as participating members of the comprehensive Earth community. This is our Great Work and the work of our children" (Ibid., 7-8).

3 John Paul II, "Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation," 1990, 1, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace.index.html#messages

4 John Paul II, "Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation," 8.

5 See Center for Environmental Transformation in Camden, New Jersey, for its efforts to deal with the impact of ecological devastation in the Waterfront South neighborhood. For more information, see http://www.cfet.org/.

crops. This means that indigenous peoples all over the world cannot grow their own food and feed their families. They are forced to move to cities in the hope of finding work that does not usually exist. They have to look for food wherever they can.[6] The emerging ecological awareness saw clear connections between human injustice and ecological injustice.

On October 4, 2003, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document on what they called, the Christian ecological imperative. Then, in 2008, the United Nations *International Year of Planet Earth*, they issued another document called: "Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion." In both, the bishops say that serious responses to the ecological crisis demand "that human beings change our thinking, relationships and behaviours in order to recognize the interconnectedness of all creation."[7] In other words, the only way to meet this crisis is with conversion. In the 2008 document, the bishops speak of this crisis as moral and spiritual, which means that the conversion also needs to be moral and spiritual: "A moral crisis must be met with conversion, which is a change in perspective, attitudes and behavior."[8]

For Thomas Berry, this is a moral and spiritual crisis precisely because, "[w]e no longer [are able to really] hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. . . . The world about us has become an 'it' rather than a 'thou.'"[9] We are so profoundly alienated from the natural world that we do not realize the cost, not only to the planet, but to our sense of ourselves. As Berry says, "Everyone lives in a universe; but seldom do we have any real sense of living in a world of sunshine by day and under the stars at night. Seldom do we listen to the wind or feel the refreshing rain except as inconveniences to escape from as quickly as possible."[10]

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, provides a further perspective on our alienation from the natural world. He asks: "What happens when all the parts of childhood are soldered down, when the young no longer have the time or space to play in their family's garden, cycle home in the dark with the stars and moon illuminating their route, walk down through the woods to the river, lie on their backs on hot July

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6 See Oxfam Canada and its work on food sovereignty. For more information, see http://www.oxfam.ca/.

7 CCCB, "A Pastoral Letter on The Christian Ecological Imperative," 2003, 14, http://www.cccb.ca/site/Files/pastoralenvironment.pdf See also CCCB, "Building a New Culture: Central Themes in Recent Church Teaching on the Environment," January 28, 2013, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Church_Teaching_on_the_Environment.pdf

8 CCCB, "Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion," 2008, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/enviro_eng.pdf

9 Berry, *The Great Work,* 17.

10 Ibid., 54.

days in the long grass, or watch cockleburs, lit by morning sun, like bumblebees quivering on harp wires? What then?"[11] Will our human children experience what Bill McKibben calls 'the end of nature'?[12] Or is there, perhaps, "another possibility: not the end of nature, but the rebirth of wonder and even joy" for the natural world because of a new relationship with it?[13]

Thomas Berry also laments what has happened to our human children: "For children to live only in contact with concrete and steel and wires and wheels and machines and computers and plastics, to seldom experience any primordial reality or even to see the stars at night, is a soul deprivation that diminishes the deepest of their human experiences."[14]

He argues that, as a consequence of our alienation from the natural world, we end up teaching our children about an economic system that depends on the exploitation of life systems. If we want our children to have an attitude of exploitation, to think that the resources of the planet are there for our use, then what we need to do is make sure that they lose any feeling for the natural world, any relationship with it.

This is not difficult because we, ourselves, have little sensitivity for the planet. We are not even aware of the need for an intimate relationship with the natural world about us. We tend to regard the natural world as a backdrop to our human undertakings.

> While we have more scientific knowledge of the universe than any people ever had, it is not the type of knowledge that leads to an intimate presence within a meaningful universe. . . . Our world of human meaning is no longer coordinated with the meaning of our surroundings. We have disengaged from that profound interaction with our environment that is inherent in our nature. . . . Our children no longer learn how to read the great Book of Nature from their own direct experience.[15]

If we are going to respond adequately to the ecological crisis, one critical step we need to take is to recover a capacity for being in communion with the natural world. How do we do this? What will help the process of transformation and reversal of decline?

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11 Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008), 97.
12 Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989).
13 Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 4.
14 Berry, *The Great Work*, 82.
15 Ibid., 15.

Bernard Lonergan and Conversion

The ecological devastation of the planet is the most significant social breakdown that we are currently experiencing. For Lonergan, "decline" or social breakdowns, like the ecological crisis, occur because individuals and groups violate the transcendental precepts that call us to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and loving human persons. The cumulative effect of living according to these precepts is what Lonergan means by "progress." Living authentically makes it more likely that we will see the limitations and devastating consequences of what we have done to the Earth so that we can improve and correct problems and transform our world.

Our inattentiveness, failures to understand, wrong judgments and problematic choices can, over time, bring about a world that is confusing and disheartening because it is such a mixture of progress and decline. Because of the confusion, we find that we do not know where to start to turn things around. We even begin to think that it is not possible to overcome the situation.

If decline has to do with the cumulative effect of human persons choosing to be inattentive, unintelligent, unreasonable and irresponsible, then the only way to reverse decline is to operate as fully authentic subjects. And that is the essence of conversion. It is an ongoing process of discovering our inauthenticity and choosing to embrace the fullness of human authenticity. Robert Doran summarizes Lonergan this way: "Authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence, and consistent self-transcendence is reached only by conversion."[16]

For Lonergan, conversion has to do with a transformation both of human subjects and the world. In other words, the ongoing living out of conversion affects all of our conscious operations, from what we attend to, to the way in which our understanding is enriched, our judgments are guided, and our decisions are reinforced.[17] Conversion is a transformation of who I am/we are, of how I/we operate in the world. A change in me, in us, and how we operate in the world will result in a change in the world itself. For Lonergan, conversion is not about learning something new, or developing what I already know. Rather, conversion is about moving into a whole new horizon. It sets our lives on a radically different course. It is about a shift in our fundamental orientation. As Lonergan says, "It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emer-

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16 Robert Doran, "What does Bernard Lonergan mean by 'conversion'?" 2011, http://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20Bernard%20Lonergan%20Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf. See also Lonergan: "Conversion is a matter of moving from one set of roots to another. . . . It is a process . . . [that] occurs only inasmuch as a [person] discovers what is unauthentic in [her or] himself and turns away from it, inasmuch as [she]he discovers what the fullness of human authenticity can be and embraces it with [her]his whole being." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 271.

17 See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 131.

ges something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments on all levels and in all departments of human living."[18]

Lonergan distinguishes conversion as intellectual, moral or religious, while recognizing that the three are interconnected in the human person.

Intellectual conversion has to do with our explicit philosophical position on what knowing is, what the true is, what being is.[19] It is about the ongoing process of overcoming the myth that knowing involves taking a good look at what is already out there. Lonergan helps us to recognize that knowing is not about taking a good look; it is, rather, a composite of experience, understanding and judgment. In this understanding, objectivity resides in raising and answering the relevant questions.

Ecologically speaking, this discussion of intellectual conversion encourages us to attend to questions that we tend to disregard, to ask the questions that would lead us to fuller understanding, to affirm a more comprehensive sense of what it means to be human, and to value the whole of life. Consequently, when something like a severe typhoon in the Philippines happens, we would notice the persistent unwillingness to ask about the reasons for the increased severity of weather events around the planet. It is ongoing intellectual conversion that would open up the horizons of our questions, increase our willingness to pursue questions about the meaning and value of the ecological devastation that is affecting the whole community of life that is the Earth.

Moral conversion is the ongoing process of withdrawing from being self-enclosed to being self-transcendent in our decision-making. It is the ongoing movement away from self-referential criteria to asking the question, "Is this really good or only apparently good?" The issue at stake is the orientation, the criterion, the horizon within which I make my decisions.[20]

Here Lonergan is identifying the fact that there is a self-constituting part of human living, that we have an option to decide what kind of persons we want to be in the world. We are all responsible together for the world we are making. Whatever world we make is grounded in the types of persons we choose to be.

In this dimension of ecological conversion, we enter into the ongoing process of shifting from regarding the natural world as of value only instrumentally, that is, only as it contributes to human growth and development. It is a process where we open up to the natural world as having its own integral meaning and value, of

18 Ibid., 130.

19 Lonergan: "Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge" (Ibid., 238).

20 Lonergan: "Moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values" (Ibid., 240).

the natural world as the context within which we live our lives as individuals and as a species.

The human species continues to refuse to consider adequately the good of other non-human beings, to the sustaining and flourishing of all living beings. This refusal extends to the sustaining and flourishing of ecological systems, bio-regions, air, water, soil, etc., that support all life.[21]

This one species, the human species, has a serious blind spot that refuses the insights that would help us understand that concern for human well-being is so excessive that it is destroying the good of all that is other-than-human. We refuse to consider that such destruction will affect us as well. We refuse to consider how integrated we are, as a species, with the whole of the natural world, with the whole of the cosmos.

Our species also resists doing the work that would determine adequate long-term solutions that would decrease the likelihood that human-induced ecological problems occur in the first place.

This aspect of ecological conversion is an ongoing shift from living our lives as if they have nothing to do with the natural world to living our lives as if we will flourish only if the whole community of life on earth flourishes. It is a shift from making decisions about development, energy, agriculture, oil, etc., only in terms of the economic benefits to shareholders *to* making decisions that take into account all stake-holders, including habitats, bioregions, ecosystems, all species, etc.

A further dimension of ecological conversion can be understood by looking at the notion of psychic conversion which has been developed by Robert Doran. This dimension of conversion has to do with the ongoing process of opening up the connections between our conscious orientation and the underlying movement of life with all its feelings and images. We can lose touch with the flow of sensations, memories, affects, etc., that accompany our intellectual and moral activities. Psychic conversion has to do with reconnecting to that flow.[22] Why do we need these re-connections? Doran says: "Affective self-transcendence is frequently re-

21 CCCB, "This is also why, in Catholic social thought, the common good should be conceived as the sustenance and flourishing of life for all beings and for future generations. The call for a 'new solidarity' should take into consideration not only the economic needs of all people but also environmental protection in order to provide for all." ("The Christian Ecological Imperative," 7) See also Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* on care for our common home. (Rome: Vatican Press, 2015), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

22 Doran: Psychic conversion "is a matter of establishing the connections in consciousness between one's waking orientation as a cognitive, moral, and religious being and the underlying movement of life with its affective and imaginal components" ("What does Bernard Lonergan mean by 'conversion'?"). See also Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2006).

quired if we are going to be self-transcendent in the intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions of our living."[23]

On the psychic level of the ecological crisis, we are alienated from the rhythms and flows of the natural world. We have lost the connections between these rhythms and flows AND how we operate in the intellectual, moral and religious realms. And, both we, and the Earth itself, pay a price for being so alienated. At this level then, the ongoing process of ecological psychic conversion is from alienation to a deepening relationship with the rhythms and flows of the natural world. Ongoing and regular encounter with the natural world, experiencing its beauty, will help with this.

Contemporary nature writers are helpful guides for teaching us how to reconnect with the natural world, how to develop our capacity for intimate communion. A consistent theme in their writing is the need for human beings to develop the capacity to pay attention. In his book, *Crow Country*, Mark Cocker writes about the fact that we share our lives with so many different species of birds and animals yet we tend to ignore them; they function as a mere backdrop to the human living that we think really matters. But this disregard of the natural world affects our ability to fully know who we are. Such a limited self-knowledge is part of the bias that contributes to ecological decline.

Madeleine Bunting of *The Guardian* states that the point of this writing "is that nature is no longer something to be studied from a position of scientific detachment, but [it is] an experience, a relationship in which human beings are as much part of nature as any so called wildlife."[24] She points out that "[w]e need that attentiveness to nature to understand our humanity, and of how we fit, as just one species, into a vast reach of time and space."[25] Thomas Lowe Fleischner, editor of *The Way of Natural History*, says that "'natural history' is a practice of intentional, focused attentiveness and receptivity to the more-than-human world . . . [A]ttention is prerequisite to intimacy. Natural history, then, is a means of becoming intimate with the. . . . world."[26]

Fleischner goes on to argue that attentiveness to nature matters because, "[i]n a very fundamental sense, we *are* what we pay attention to. . . . Our attention is precious, and what we choose to focus it on has enormous consequences. What we choose to look at, and to listen to—these choices change the world."[27] Fleischner's comments remind us of this poem by Walt Whitman:

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23 Doran, "What does Bernard Lonergan mean by 'conversion'?".
24 Madeline Bunting, *The Guardian*, Monday, 30 July, 2007.
25 Ibid.
26 Thomas Lowe Fleischner, *The Way of Natural History* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2011), 5-6.
27 Ibid., 9.

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.
The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning glories, and white and
red clover,
And the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter,
And the mare's foal and the cow's calf[28]

Thomas Berry thinks that this process of transformation or conversion will be arduous. There may be large and difficult sacrifices that will be required of us both as individuals and as a species as we deal with the consequences of ecological devastation. We will continue to have to deal with ecological devastation, pollution, the impact of more severe storms, the degradation of our air, the soil in which we grow our food, the water that helps to sustain us, habitats and eco-systems.

What will sustain us through this arduous process?

The Role of Religion in Ecological Transformation

At the end of his discussion of the human good in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan notes that a religion that helps human beings to develop their authenticity and self-transcendence, "to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love," can help to bring about healing in society."[29] This would be a religion that promotes religious conversion, inviting us to live out of the horizon of ultimate, divine loving of the whole cosmos. This is particularly poignant when we think of the need for ecological conversion to the earth.

Thomas Berry argues that religions have the capacity to contribute to the arduous journey into a larger, more comprehensive, and deeply spiritual realm of being. "Only religious forces can move human consciousness at the depth needed. Only religious forces can sustain the effort that will be required over the long period of time during which adjustments must be made. Only religion can measure the magnitude of what we are about."[30]

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28 Quoted in Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, front matter.

29 Lonergan, *Method*, 55. See also Lonergan: "Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations" (Ibid., 240).

30 Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 11.

Religions also have a role to play in helping us appreciate that the story of the cosmos has a dimension to it that transcends the physical, that the universe, from its beginning, is a psychic and spiritual as well as a physical reality. If we would understand that our human story is integral with the story of the universe, "[t]hen we [could] see that this story of the universe is in a special manner our sacred story, a story that reveals the divine particularly to ourselves, in our times; it is the singular story that illumines every aspect of our lives—our religious and spiritual lives as well as our economic and imaginative lives."[31] Berry goes further to say that we should understand the Earth community as a sacred community of life: "we form a single sacred society with every other member of the Earth community, with the mountains and rivers, valleys and grasslands, and with all the creatures that move over the land or fly through the heavens or swim through the sea."[32]

Recognition of our integral place within this Earth community makes it possible for us to overcome our alienation and begin to experience the subjectivity of all beings. We could understand that every member of the Earth community has its own identity and dignity, what Berry refers to as its sacred dimension. To the degree that human beings can come to understand how intimate we are with the universe, the difficult, often impenetrable, psychic barrier between humans and the natural world can be removed. We can find ourselves relating as subjects to subjects, no longer alienated from each other, but living in a relationship of communion with all. We would intimately know that, "[o]n the planet earth. . . . [w]e are literally born as a community; the trees, the birds, and all living creatures are bonded together in a single community of life."[33]

Conclusion

Ecological conversion requires us to enter deeply into the dynamics of creation, into the fullness of the story of the universe or the cosmos. Lyanda Lynn Haupt, author of *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom for Urban Wilderness*, reminds us that we are connected to the natural world in and through our everyday lives. "[I]t is in our everyday lives, in our everyday homes, that we eat, consume energy, run the faucet, compost, flush, learn, and live. It is here, *in our lives*, that we must come to know our essential connection to the wilder earth, because it is here, in the activity of our daily lives, that we most surely affect this earth, for good or for ill."[34] We must begin to pay attention to the places where we live, to walk the paths of

31 Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 94.

32 Ibid., 85.

33 Thomas Berry, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 14-15.

34 Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom for Urban Wilderness* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2009), 9.

our neighborhoods and start knowing all our neighbors, human and non-human, "on and off the concrete, above and below the soil."[35] We need to understand our intricate net of connections with the rest of the earth community. Such attention is the only way to cultivate the types of insights into the natural world that we need, insights that are based in attention, knowledge, and intimacy. For Haupt, as for Berry, "an intimate awareness of the continuity between our lives and the rest of life is the only thing that will truly conserve the earth—this wonderful earth that we rightly love."[36]

Like today's nature writers, Thomas Berry argues that we need to provide our children with experiences and opportunities that will help them to develop a deep intimacy with the natural world. This poem by Berry reminds us of this.

The child awakens to a universe.
The mind of the child to a world of meaning.
Imagination to a world of beauty.
Emotions to a world of intimacy.
It takes a universe to make a child both in outer form and
inner spirit.
It takes a universe to educate a child.
A universe to fulfill a child.
Each generation presides over the meeting of these two in
the succeeding generation.
So that the universe is fulfilled in the child, and the child is
fulfilled in the universe.
While the stars ring out in the heavens![37]

We are most true to ourselves when we are attentive to the community of life within which we live, when we strive to understand the nature and role of all members of this community, when we affirm the whole of the cosmos as the most comprehensive context of our being, and when we value the whole of the cosmos and take all of it into consideration as we make our choices. In this is authenticity and self-transcendence. Through such transformation, we can become, with God, knowers, co-healers and lovers of all that exists.[38]

35 Ibid., 13.
36 Ibid., 12.
37 Thomas Berry commenting on a book of verse for children, November 1990, http://www.thomas-berry.org/Biography/It_Takes_a_Universe.html
38 Note: The 2003 CCCB pastoral letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative was entitled, "You love all that exists . . . all things are Yours, God, lover of life." This title derives from the biblical book of Wisdom 11:25-26.

Beyond Luther's *Imago Dei*: Imagining a Modest Humanity[1]

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Abstract

In this article I use a comparative theology—engaging First Nation insights—to explore the *imago Dei*, and argue that this can only be affirmed by pairing it with the theme of *imago mundi*. I first review the *imago Dei* in dialogue with Genesis 1:26-27 before considering modern scholars' various identifications of it. My point of departure is Luther, who identifies it as being without fear of death and being content with God's favor, and as unique to *homo sapiens*. I propose that humans are also created in the image of the world. In concert with Indigenous thinkers, I note that we fall from this image in our loss of balance in life. This can be seen in Eliade's treatment of the *imago mundi*. He reflects a common prejudice of ignoring liminality, which I consider under the motif of the skin and nakedness. In opposition to Agamben, whose treatment of nudity precludes nakedness as lost and irretrievable, I turn to Luther who described nakedness as our dependence on God and retrievable with eschatological proviso. Yet I contest Luther's assertion that the human alone knows of this nakedness, and point to the earth and God in Christ both as "dressed" in this naked dependence. In summary I note the gift of a comparative theology in allowing theologians to embrace the twin gift of being same and different in the task of engaging our world with a measured humility.

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1 An earlier version of this was delivered May 27, 2014 as the Presidential Address at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Theological Society at Brock University, St. Catharines, ON.

Introduction

In October, 2011, while on sabbatical, I found myself on the Hobbema reserve in Central Alberta. This reserve is now named Maskwacis and is composed of four nations which are among the 16 that are signatories to Treaty Number Six. My sabbatical research question was "What might Christian theologians learn from Indigenous Spiritualities and Worldviews?" In order to facilitate some of this learning, I engaged my High School friend Trevor Swampy. We had recently reconnected via Facebook and he arranged a number of meetings with some local elders, who very generously offered me glimpses into a way of being about which I knew next to nothing. I was continually awed, humbled, and confused by what I heard. I felt as if I was walking on holy ground, or rather, I felt as if I was being taught that ground is holy and all of Mother Earth is best traversed with bared feet. On one of these occasions I found myself in the company of John Crier.

This was an especially auspicious meeting. As was the case with many of these encounters, I would get a call from Trevor, who would invite me to join him in 20 minutes or so at this place or that. I would jump in my rental car and travel to what was then Hobbema from Ponoka, my hometown where I was visiting. On this particular occasion, Trevor had proposed a meeting with John, who had mentioned that he was about to have a circle at the Pe Sakestew Centre, a low security prison on the reserve. Indigenous inmates from across western Canada ended up in this alternate sentencing program.

We arrived, made our way through the requisite security and met a handful of inmates interested in learning how Native Spirituality relates to Christianity. The format of the evening involved me asking a series of questions, and John would offer some thoughts, and invite further question and conversations. It was memorable for a number of reasons, but the interchange that most impacted me was John's teaching on the human condition. He said that this is where native spirituality differed from Christianity in the most dramatic fashion. He iterated that there is no fall from Eden story in Indigenous spirituality. As he put it, and as I have since heard from different people in different first nations: the human is born whole, and stays whole by walking in a good way—keeping ceremonies that mend the ruptures of our life—so as to die whole. There is no original sin, and no consequent need for redemption in the Christian sense.

Of course, my inner and outer Lutheran chaffed, but I bit my tongue and listened hard. In fact, I am still listening as I think through what it means to be human as I continue to ask my sabbatical question. In what follows I engage the thought of one of my spiritual ancestors, Martin Luther, and ask hard questions of him as he asks hard questions of us. In sum, I will explore the theme of *imago Dei*, and argue that in a time and place such as ours, this can only be affirmed by pairing it with the theme of *imago mundi* to the end that only in this way are we

able to imagine a modest theological anthropology: one that respects the integrity of God's creative and life giving work with Mother Earth.

Imago Dei: Imaging God

The Imago Dei and Genesis 1:26-27

Christian and Jewish readers of Holy Scripture find support for the theme of *imago Dei* in the Priestly writer's account of creation in Genesis 1:1—2:4a. In what follows I will draw attention to some textual work by Biblical scholars before exploring a theological treatment of the same under the tutelage of Luther and in conversation with some theological insights from contemporary thinkers as I consider Genesis 1:26-27:

> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Westermann provides a brief overview of theological treatments of the *imago*, noting that biblical scholars, in the main, do not imagine that it has been lost as a result of the fall.[2] It functions within the text to identify the wholeness of the human, and so iterates that the human is unique among God's creations as having the capacity for partnership with God.[3] Westermann notes that biblical scholars generally avoid a Christological reading of this text, and invite us to consider its *Sitz im Leben*, which points to the possibility that the text is borrowed.[4] Von Rad suggests that the theme of the *imago Dei* per se was related to the ancient practice of Sovereigns setting up images of themselves throughout their reign as a ways to enact their rule.[5] The text, then, stands as a startling proposal: divine sovereignty is signaled in the stewardship of creation by humanity as a whole rather than by any one nation, or people group. J. Richard Middleton further qualifies this qualification when he notes:

> The democratization of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1 thus constitutes an implicit delegitimation of the entire ruling and priestly structure of Mesopotamian society (and especially the absolute power of the king). In the Genesis vision, it is ordinary humans (and not some

2 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion S.J. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 148.
3 Ibid., 150, 157.
4 Ibid., 155-56.
5 Ibid, 151.

> elite class) who are understood to be significant historical actors in the arena of earthly life.[6]

Middleton notes that this perspective radically counters the Mesopotamian world-view with which the text is in contention. It presumes all have direct access to God.[7] Moreover, humans "as *imago Dei* are thus not only priests of the Most High, they are (if we may dare to say it) God's living cult statues on earth."[8] We are God's reminder to ourselves that *God* is sovereign. Brueggemann notes that the human alone is the object of direct divine speech, which indicates a higher degree of intimacy accorded the humans than the rest of creation from Genesis 1.[9] He also underscores the manner in which this text supports the impossibility of imaging God—since humans are the irreducible image of God and are beyond representation in our totality. The text, thus, anticipates the prohibitions of idolatry.[10] The image of God is to be predicated of human-kind, with the astounding assessment that humans alone disclose something of God.[11] But we dare not leave it at that insofar as a theological accounting of who we are (a theological anthropology) that does not attend to where we are (a theology of creation) leaves the human with license to do as she will with planet earth, a theme I will take up in earnest after first attending to the reception of the theme of *imago Dei* in its various modes.[12]

Identifying the Imago Dei

Ian McFarland provides a very fine summary of the treatment of this text throughout the history of its reception in the tradition.[13] He notes that the *imago Dei* is understood in the history of the tradition in the following categories: 1) the *imago* references a human capacity, such as intellect, will, freedom etc.; 2) it references human relationality; 3) it points to Christ. In fact, all three might be engaged by a given thinker, but in many systematic theologians, the latter is the touchstone: Jesus is the image of God. Yet, as McFarland notes, in engaging the work of Mary McClintock Fulkerson, identifying the *imago Dei* with Jesus introduces more

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6 J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 204.
7 Ibid., 207.
8 Ibid.
9 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 31.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 32.
12 See Middleton, *Liberating Image*, 262. Middleton provides a helpful critique of the too common propensity to imagine creation as creation-by-combat, wherein evil is given an ontological foundation as the necessary over-against of God's wrestling creation into being wherein God is thus imaged as sovereign (250-52). Instead, Middleton identifies the Divine to be imaged under the motif of generosity (271-97).
13 Ian McFarland, *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 2-4.

questions than answers:[14] the identity of Jesus as God and human is perplexing and hardly perspicuous. Furthermore, Jesus does not solve God for us, and so the *imago* remains an enigma, which is, finally, a good thing. Yet, all three of these solutions—both on their own and in variation thereof—have the unhappy consequence of allowing a certain hubris to breed in humanity. In order to confront this, I now turn to one of my favored conversation partners, Martin Luther, in order to find a vantage point from which to expand our assessment of the human in a manner faithful to the tradition, yet respectful of the earth.

Luther and the Imago Dei

From the outset, it is good to recall that when reading Luther, systematic theologians are well advised to loosen their ties, to let down their hair, to do whatever it takes to make vexation endurable. Luther was no systematic thinker—at least in the sense that this signals a neat and tidy thinker—and so was more than content to put contentment to rest. This is not to say his writings and musings were without a trajectory. Clearly all he writes is in service of the gospel and to advance its liberating message: God's righting the wrong of the human condition in Christ and in so doing making new all of creation. For Luther, this message is articulated Scripturally, and so narratively. A story is told that does what stories do and good stories move people to the places they need to be; often by laying bear our condition, which is decidedly unsystematic. Stories are, in the words of Indigenous author Thomas King, all we are.[15] First Nations know well that it is the storied world that provides healing for our Mother, the earth, and its inhabitants, and so to walk in a good way always involves telling a story. This is not a bad way to read Luther: as a story teller, who sees truth emerge in the faithful articulation of what is seen and heard, which seems, to me, to be precisely what Scripture does. So, in what follows, I simply bring to the fore two unsettling sets of insights Luther advances in his exegesis of the creation story in Genesis. The first addresses the question of the nature of the *imago Dei* and its propriety to the human. The second addresses its loss.

The Propriety of the Imago Dei for Humans

What is the *imago Dei* for Luther? We read that Luther was rather nervous about identifying the *imago* with any human virtues, or faculties, as per Augustine or other ancient authors. He writes:

> If these powers are the image of God, it will also follow, that Satan was created according to the image of God since he surely has these natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect

14 Ibid., 10.

15 Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 2003), 2.

> and a most determined will to a far higher degree than we have them.[16]

Luther does not identify human powers with the imago, yet understands that the qualities of the intellect as well as the qualities of the body were enhanced by the *imago* to the end that human sight was perfect and human insight was profound; that human strength bested lions and bears and Adam and Eve's strength of character cannot even be imagine by us today. But these characteristics still do not speak specifically to the imago. Luther writes:

> Therefore my understanding of the image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that God was good, but that Adam lived a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death and any other danger and was content with God's favor.[17]

We see, then, that Luther marries two themes in this definition: being without fear of death or danger (a kind of confidence in body) and being content with God's favor (a well settled soul). This latter is significant in that the phrase "God's favor" recurs in Luther's writing and references not only God's beneficent acceptance of the human as she is, but more importantly it speaks to God's self-giving in creation proper.[18] To know the favor of God is know that God sees you as a child born from her own womb and so bearing something of God's own character. The favor of God is, for Luther, both God's gracious gaze upon her children and what that gaze renders. This latter is more important than first obvious because Luther notes that the human is lovely not because of our intrinsic loveliness, but because God's look renders the human lovely. God doesn't see passively, but creatively. And what is true of sight is also true of speech. We read in his reflections on the creation of the lights in the sky by saying "let there be":

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16 Cf. Martin Luther, *Luther's Work American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955, 1986), hereafter referenced as LW. LW 1, 61. The question of the relationship of the *imago Dei* to the term original righteousness is pertinent. In the Genesis lectures, Luther does not simply equate them, nor discuss them as different. When he speaks of original righteousness in his discussion of Genesis 3, however, he identifies it as "to love God, to believe God, to know God, etc." (Ibid., 165), and so we see that it is nearly the same. Moreover, the two images of corruption and loss that we see in his treatment of the *imago Dei* are also used with the theme of original righteousness. What is especially important is that this original righteousness is deemed to be a part of nature, and its corruption/loss results in the corruption of the natural part of all human faculties (165). Original righteousness, then, is a part of human nature rather than an adornment. Oswald Bayer, in discussing the *imago Dei*, identifies it relationally with the given-ness of the human and her capacity to hear the word. Insofar as the *imago Dei* is corrupt she hears the wrong message. See Oswald Bayer, "Being in the Image of God," in *Lutheran Quarterly* 27/1 (Spring 2013): 80-86.

17 LW 1, 63.

18 Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism" in *The Book of Concord*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 124.

> God does not speak grammatical words. He speaks true and existent realities. Accordingly that which among us has the sound of a word is a reality with God. Thus sun, moon, heaven, earth, Peter, Paul, I, you, etc.—we are all words of God, in fact only one single syllable or letter by comparison with the entire creation.[19]

The notion that each extant in creation is but a syllable in a divine discourse renders two results: first, each part matters and second, our part only makes sense in the sounding of the whole. It is significant that each star is a saying of God, as is each quark. There is something profoundly leveling about this, but yet Luther holds forth something peculiar about the place of the human in this, and so—at this point—writes in concert with the Christian tradition. As he comments on the establishment of the Sabbath he notes that the human

> was especially created for the knowledge and worship of God; for the Sabbath was not ordained for sheep and cows but for [humans], that in them the knowledge of God might be developed and might increase.[20]

So, on the one hand we see a radical flattening of creation: all of creation is born by the Word and reflects that. In fact, in these same Genesis lectures, he writes that "The word is present in the very body of the hen" and in his Preface to Psalms 1 and 2 we read concerning all creatures that they are "watching and listening and paying attention to the Word of God (for it is correct to believe that everything reveres the Word of God, through it was created, except for the [human] and the devil)"[21] So, something of a space is created between these two truths. The human is special, but not. This paradoxical truth *is* the *imago Dei*, but has it been lost?

The Imago Dei: Lost or Not, or . . . ?

Here again, as with his treatment of the specialness of humanity we experience Luther speaking out of both sides of his mouth. On the one hand he writes:

> Our adversaries today maintain the foolish position that the image and similitude of God remain even in a wicked person.

On the other hand he continues:

> After sin all these things were marred to the extent that all creatures and the things which were good at first later on became harmful on account of sin.[22]

19 LW 1, 21, 22.
20 LW 1, 80.
21 LW 14, 281.
22 LW 1, 90.

So, while Luther speaks of the *imago Dei* as lost—no longer present to the human—he also describes it as marred: present, but broken. Elsewhere he describes the *imago Dei* as "obscured and corrupted."[23]

But to be present and broken is radically different than being utterly lost and without presence. To be certain, Luther does hold forth the possibility of *imago* being restored for Christians: in both senses of the word: being returned to its place and being returned to its condition, yet in a fragmentary fashion.[24] An eschatological proviso obtains even in this more optimistic vein.[25]

In sum, something of an aporia arrives in my mind as I read Luther on the *imago Dei* in his commentary on Genesis. On the one hand the human's place in creation is radically qualified, and on the other there is a kind of specific, if not special, dignity accorded it. Likewise the perdurable character of this same *imago* is uncertain. In these perplexing assertions something of a gap, or a wound, or a fissure arrives. A boundary is rendered permeable and therein appears an invitation for exploration of the nature of this skin we live in: where does the human begin, and where does she end?

Imago Mundi: Imaging the World

A World in Miniature

Let me use Luther, once again, but now as a launching pad that will take us beyond Luther. In his treatment of the first chapter of Genesis wherein he writes of the differences between the animal that is human and the remaining animals. We read:

> In the remaining creatures God is recognized as by [God's] footprints; but in the human being, especially in Adam, [God] is truly recognized, because in [Adam] there is such wisdom, justice, and knowledge of all things that he may rightly be called a world in miniature.[26]

"A world in miniature." This is most interesting way to imagine the human, and one that serves as something of a counter-point to the theme of *imago Dei*; a counter-point that does not necessarily undo, or undermine the *imago Dei*, but simply reflects the astounding reality that the human is world. Composed of water, iron, nitrogen, etc., we share much with our fellow animals. But to stake out our relationality with the other animals is not yet enough. In Wayne Grady and David Suzuki's marvelous book "Tree: A Life Story" they describe the link between *homo sapiens* and the Douglas Fir. In the work they explore the manner in which

23 LW 1, 65.
24 LW 1, 64.
25 LW 34, 139.
26 LW 1, 68.

the said fir furnishes us with energy via its conversion of Brother Sun's rays. They write of a certain Donald Peattie, who in his student days extracted chlorophyll from a plant, and in peering at it discovered its make-up to be eerily familiar. He saw that chlorophyll was likened to hemoglobin. We read:

> The one significant difference in the two structural formulas is this: the hub of every hemoglobin atom is one atom of iron, while in chlorophyll it is one atom of magnesium'. . . . Chlorophyll is green blood. It is designed to capture light; blood is designed to capture oxygen.[27]

To be a world in miniature is, then, to be made in the *imago mundi*. We reflect the world as surely as we reflect God; but it is also important to note, from the outset, that we reflect the world as poorly as we reflect God. Perhaps you noticed that Luther commended *Adam*—that is the Edenic Adam—as the *microcosmos par excellence*. Fallen humanity fails in this fashion, and so as we explore this notion we do so recognizing that one of the things that makes us "special" is our failure to live up to our potential as animals: our failure to live in integrity with creation, our failure to live simply, our failure to live within our means. The Indigenous thinker Taiake Alfred says it well as he addresses the need for First Nations to take leave from certain Settler sensibilities:

> The challenge we face is made up of specific patterns of behaviour among Settlers and our own people: choices made to support mentalities that developed in serving the colonization of our lands as well as the unrestrained greed and selfishness of mainstream society. We must add to this the superficial monotheistic justifications for the unnatural and misunderstood place and purpose of human beings in the world, an emphatic refusal to look inward and an aggressive denial of nature.[28]

Without doubt Luther and his heirs have contributed to this "aggressive denial of nature" yet it must also be recalled that Luther did not imbibe modernity and so can be read against the current of too much interpretation of his thought. I propose that this theme of the human as the world in miniature, this *imago mundi*, might serve such a project. It is also important to recall that this theme of *imago mundi* has had some traction in the world of religious studies; and so as I imagine a theological deployment of this phrase I first explore its use in one of the preeminent theorists of religion, Mircea Eliade.

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27 Wayne Grady and David Suzuki, *Tree: A Life Story* (Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books, 2004), 68.

28 Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 102.

Mircea Eliade and the Imago Mundi

In his provocative book *The Sacred and the Profane* Mircea Eliade addresses these two categories in his title, recognizing how the strict separation of the sacred and profane in modernity was not germane to ancient cultures. This is nowhere more apparent than in pre-modern construals of space, of no small importance for discussing the *imago mundi*. In discussing space, Eliade notes that for pre-modern cultures all space is holy, but some spaces are more holy than others.[29] The great Ojibway storyteller Basil Johnston says the same as he describe women and men who are especially sensitive to Kitchi-Manitou:

> With their senses, nay their entire beings, awake and alive to the world, men and women discovered the presence of Kitchi-Manitou. Certain precipices, recesses in woods, ravines, waterfalls, caves, or valleys were infused with a greater presence of Kitchi-Manitou than were others.[30]

Sensitivity to the sacred and its weighty presence on the land marks First Nations and those who have not set up an impermeable wall between the sacred and the profane. Religious ceremonies celebrate this. John Crier, whom I mentioned above, told me that Cree ceremonies generally retell the creation story. Creation and space are fundamental categories in Indigenous thought. Eliade is also very interested in the connections between space and the narratives of the world's founding. He writes:

> It must be said at once that the religious experience of the non-homogeneity of space is a primordial experience homologizable to a founding of the world.[31]

What Eliade suggests is that the recognition of sacred space alerts us to the world as created. His use of "homologizable" is significant in that it carries quite a bit of weight in Eliade's work on the *axis mundi*. The *axis mundi* points to a central space in rituals, or nature, which functions to open the human to the beneficent powers above and the malevolent powers below.[32] He notes that the "*axis mundi*, seen in the sky in the form of the Milky Way, appears in the ceremonial house in the form of a sacred pole."[33] This high point in the temple references the founding of the world, and so temples function as cyphers of creation. But Eliade recognizes

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29 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001), 20.

30 Bail Johnston, *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Press, 2001), 6.

31 Eliade, *The Sacred*, 20-21.

32 Ibid., 39.

33 Ibid., 35.

that this identification of what some traditions call "thin spaces" is not restricted to temples alone. He writes concerning the human house:

> The house is not an object, a "machine to live in"; *it is the universe that the [human] constructs for [the self] by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony*.[34]

So the temple and the house share a construction that mimics the creation of the world, but still more is asserted. He goes on to note that the human's "dwelling is a microcosm; and so too is [the human's] body."[35] In sum, Eliade propose a homologation of cosmos/house/human body. These three entertain a semantic overlap. There is a certain convertability of these sacred realities in the minds, the eyes, and the touch of the ancient peoples. I have to admit that I am quite excited by this idea, the notion that my home can project the cosmogony; the idea that my *corpus* embodies the Big Bang; the idea that it is not enough to say that I am a person in the world, but that it is also true that the world is a person in me. Because the world is a person in me I am an *imago mundi*. Yet there is something I find somewhat disconcerting in Eliade's configuration of this axis mundi, this *imago mundi*. Consider his articulation of the life of the religious human:

> It is [her] familiar everyday life that is transfigured in the experience of the religious [woman]; she finds a cipher everywhere. Even the most habitual gesture can signify a spiritual act. The road and walking can be transfigured into religious values, for every road can symbolize the "road of life," and any walk a "pilgrimage," a peregrination to the Centre of the World.[36]

This motif of centre is recurring in Eliade's work and is married to the image of highest point.[37] This is architecturally encoded in temples and houses both. The high centre is where God is to be found. Of course, in light of the homologation, then, one might expect the high centre point of the human body too—hat is, the head—to be the *locus sanctus*. This is probably not a very helpful thing to dwell upon, and is especially troublesome in his identification of the cross on Mount Golgotha as Christianity's elevated centre, and so a point of contact with God by virtue of being high and centred. This theme can be contested from two directions. Many feminists theologians and their allies have rightly critiqued those exaltations of the cross whereby suffering is glorified and those who suffer are sainted when they ought to be aided. From my own faith perspective, Eliade's articulation of

34 Ibid., 56-57 (italics original).
35 Ibid., 172.
36 Ibid., 183.
37 Ibid., 38-39.

the cross in this key is highly problematic in that it undermines the fundamental message of the cross: God chooses to be recognized in suffering as love.[38]

The cross, in this theological tradition, is not so much a *locus sanctus* as the site of God's abandonment of God, and so the paradox of God's decentering of God. In a fashion, the cross, as a horrific spectacle draws our eyes to it so that we look away. The cross decenters us and if we want to imagine what decentering looks like on the human body, we will need to turn our gaze away from the head, that highest and central site of disembodied spirituality, and look instead at the skin, the locus of orifice, of wound, of interaction that wraps the body round and puts in place even the head. So I turn, now, to the skin as the meeting site par excellence of the *imago Dei* and *imago mundi*; as I do, I ponder the possibility of imagining a modest humanity, starting with the skin.

Imaging a Modest Humanity

Luther on Nakedness

In light of pertinent and important critiques—from both theological and other quarters—of humanity's puffed up sense of self, what is the way forward in imaging a modest humanity? In the above section I spoke of the need to add to the definition of the human as *imago Dei* the theme of the *imago mundi*. How might these two be woven together in a way that does justice to justice, that is in a way that attends to the message of the cross wherein God is especially interested in the marginalized? Let me begin again with Luther. In his treatment of the Genesis 3 Luther makes the interesting observation regarding the primal pair's embarrassment regarding their nakedness. In verse 11 God asks Adam who told him he was naked, and God then asks him if he has eaten from the forbidden tree. Luther comments:

> Here Adam's conscience is roused by the real sting of the Law. It is as if God said: "You know that you are naked, and for this reason you hid. But your nakedness is my creation. You are not condemning it as something shameful, are you?". . . Here, Adam pressed hard in this manner was in the midst of death and in the midst of hell. He was compelled to confess that nakedness was not evil, for it had been created by God. On the other hand, he realized that evil was this: that now he had a bad conscience because of the nakedness in which he had previously glorified as in a unique

38 Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1983), 206.

> adornment, and that he was now terrified by God's voice, which he had previously heard with utmost pleasure.[39]

Nakedness is described by Luther as an adornment, a unique adornment; this is most interesting place to begin thinking about modesty. Modesty, in contemporary parlance, is generally associated with clothing, and plenty of it. We dress modestly, yet Luther here reminds us that once *undress* was our unique, God-given and modest adornment. What might we do with this, this theme of nakedness?

Agamben on Nudity

The philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his little book entitled *Nudities* discusses the theme of the nakedness of the primal pair. He makes some important philosophical and theological observations that may be of help as we rethink nakedness as an adornment. He notes that the theologian Eric Peterson makes a distinction between nakedness and nudity. Nudity only appears after the fall, when eyes have now been opened.[40] Agamben connects this appearance of nudity with the loss of grace. Grace, here, is seen as a kind of clothing.[41] Agamben then works through the reflections of Augustine and Cajetan in conversation with Peterson to explore how, after human sin, nakedness is really a kind of place-holder concept, or perhaps a transcendental. Nakedness cannot be observed, while nudity can. Nakedness is the condition for the possibility of nudity, but is beyond the realm of our experience. Nakedness is lost, and can only be thought of as what once was but can now no longer be. Nudity, on the other hand, speaks to the human condition as that moment of exposure, when a thing's knowability is revealed. He writes:

> The nudity of the human body is its image—that is, the trembling that makes this body knowable but that remains, in itself, ungraspable. Hence the unique fascination that images [of nudity] exercise over the human mind.[42]

The nudity of the human body—he identifies it with trembling—makes the body knowable but not graspable. Elsewhere he identifies nudity with the appearance of appearance.[43] He also calls it the arrival of disclosure.[44] But what is disclosed is not nakedness—the naked body—but rather the removal of clothes. We cannot see a body clothed in grace, which is what the body was before sin. Grace was an adornment to the natural body, and so its boast, but we can know nothing of

39 LW 1, 176.
40 Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 58-59.
41 Ibid., 59-60.
42 Ibid., 84.
43 Ibid., 86.
44 Ibid., 81.

this naked body, this place holder, this transcendental. I must admit that I am not altogether happy with this understanding of nakedness. It hardly seems satisfying to know that disclosure only reveals a more primordial closure; to know that there is a hidden, a hiding mode of being human that is lost forever, beyond reach and finally only construed, or constructed in the key of lament. Is that all there is? I want to move this forward a bit using Luther, but in a mode of contestation, at least eventually. First, though, I must explain why I use Luther to go beyond Luther.

Beyond Luther: In the Skin

Unlike some of his Catholic interlocutors, Luther did not see the *imago Dei* as an addition to the human, something super-added, but instead as constitutive of her. This way of being—without fear of death and content with God's favor—was what it meant to be human. Nakedness as adornment speaks to this because skin is the dress of nakedness. I like this bit from Luther, but what I don't like is that it is defined by Luther as an adornment unique to the human. I protest his claim that nakedness as an adornment is unique to the human. It seems to me that living without fear of God and in gratitude is predicated of the cosmos and her members that laud the God who made them. The earth, too, is naked. In fact, so is God. The human, the earth, and God all are naked. Christ on the cross is God naked, as was the lot of an executed criminal in 1st century Rome. But beyond that, God is naked in laying bear what God-forsakeness means to God. God is vulnerable on the cross, and so we know that nakedness as adornment is not unique to *homo sapiens*. In fact, I contend that we need to look away from ourselves to understand what nakedness is.

The nakedness of the human is an adornment precisely because it is the meeting place of the self and other—the divine and cosmic other—in the skin. Skin needs to be exposed for nakedness to be disclosed. The skin is that organ of the human body that facilitates touch, the means whereby the aches and pains, the pleasures and passions of the self both impress and express our interaction with the world and God. Skin is humanity in the mode of liminality, and while it does not eschew the possibility of a human core, a *coeur*, a heart, it negotiates with it. There is no center without circumference; no focus without margins; no entrée without an edge, and our skin is our edge. Our skin makes us edgy. The edge of the human body is shaped by its skin and so this pliable cover of the *corpus* continually reconfigures the center. The center of my body moves as my feet leap from the burning sand that scorches my skin. The skin of the church, in like fashion, is where Christ is and since it is the edge that locates the centre, the church's middle point is never static—but always under negotiation. A modest church is one which recognizes that it is its skin and it only knows where it is, only knows what it is by exposure. Insofar as the church lays bare its body as broken, it gives

the world a token of what it means to be human. Of course, it is not only the church that has this task of pointing to a more authentic humanity, but the church is most surely given this task: to be in its skin, to be at its edge, to negotiate a centre that is nomadic and so to be a sign of manifest modesty.

In sum, a modest humanity is a naked humanity, a people who know that they are made in the image of God and in the image of the world. The unique adornment of the human, according to Luther, is her, is his nakedness: a sign of relationality, of vulnerability, and of utter dependence on God. But where does that leave the beginning of this my essay, my attempt to think through that elder's understanding of the human as born, not in sin, but in community, where rituals shape and reshape its members so that they walk in a good way? I will restrict my comments to two. The first addresses the need to embrace difference, the second the need to address continuity.

Being the Same, Being Different

Part of the gift of a comparative theology—a theological method that is interested in and informed by other religious perspectives—is the affirmation that difference is scripted into this play that is life, and we have to leave its resolution to the play-writer, so to speak. But at the heart of this drama, is the understanding that I do not need to flatten difference, and can indeed celebrate it. So, the fact that some of my Indigenous friends do not sign on to the diagnosis of original sin in considering the human condition is no reason to wring my hands, but an occasion for me to think through the consequences of this belief in my life. And for that, I give those who think differently from me thanks. The world is richer for its diversity because a monoculture is susceptible to disease. This is an important learning for all disciplines, including theology. But is difference all there is? Can we imagine a unity in community?

Clearly, learning to live together is also critical to the flourishing of human and non-human life. Settlers need to learn to live with our Indigenous hosts, and from them we need to learn to live with land. Christians, in the main, haven't been so very interested in learning from other religions, although there are important and celebrated examples to the contrary. More often, alas, Christendom has been patronizing. But the disestablishment of Christianity gives us a new vantage point as our sense of entitlement slowly erodes, as this mighty ship, corroded and compromised not so slowly slips into oblivion, and we—survivors few—arrive barely alive on a shore that looks vaguely familiar: we have finally come to be where we are. Yet this land now looks foreign, frightening and we know not how to survive. And so we know that now is the time to ask the people of land how to walk on it in a good way. What can they teach us? I asked this very question of John Crier and he told me: Indigenous people can teach Christians to be free. What did he

mean by that? Well, in the course of our conversation we discussed how First Nations were flexible in keeping their ceremonies. So, for example, going clockwise, or counter-clockwise around a circle is not absolutely determined. Rituals are determined by a particular land, or territory and the rituals she commends. In sum, do what you do in dialogue with the territory and its residents. As I have thought about that, I have realized that our first task in this life long walk is to figure out where we are. So, we might begin with this question: where are you, where am I? Where are we? In a way, John told me: "Get to know the lay of the land where you are and you have begun in a good way." It is given to us to learn to listen to this land, and it is the people who know this land best who can best school us in this careful listening.

What kind of continuity can we discern between the religious worldview of our hosts and our own settler sensibilities in the above peregrination about the themes of *imago Dei* and *imago mundi*? Well, I suppose we can imagine that when we live authentically, we live with vulnerability, we live in our skin, where the *imago Dei* and the *imago Mundi* meet. Difference does not preclude this task of learning to live in our skin, where we are, in harmony with the land our feet caress. And together, with them, we will learn to humbly image the Creator who so lovingly makes us, and our Mother, the earth, who so generously hosts us. Together we will learn to live in our skin, modestly.

BOOK REVIEWS

The *Canadian Theological Review* gratefully accepts book review requests as well as book review submissions from potential contributors and publishers. All review submissions should be of academic quality and should conform to the standards laid out within the principal scholarly handbooks of style. We are also happy to provide publishers with prepublication reviews of their submitted material upon request. Review submissions, requests, and publisher volumes relating to the broader disciplines of Theology, Scripture, and Culture can be directed to the book review editor at the following address:

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Fallen: A Theology of Sin. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013. ISBN: 978143352212. Pp. xi + 314. $19.99 (USD).

Fallen: A Theology of Sin, the fifth book in the six-part *Theology in Community* series edited by Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson, seeks, like the previous books, to assemble world-class scholarship on a subject of biblical and theological importance. *Sin* finds a place in the series, says Fred Sanders, because it is the "inconvenient truth" of humanity, a truth that "we are tempted to hurry past in our rush to get to the good news of the gospel" (2). But only by "fac[ing] squarely our common spiritual disease," says contributor Paul R. House, is "God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ" adequately "magnif[ied]" (80-81). To amplify the salvific truth of the gospel, then, this book traverses the subject of sin with a deliberately thorough and patient analysis of biblical, historical, systematic and practical data.

D.A. Carson begins the discussion in chapter one by highlighting both the "intrinsic" and "contemporary significance" of a robust theology of sin, a topic that often "induce[s] cringe factors" and is understandably lacking in popularity (21). Notwithstanding, the subject is vital, says Carson, because (a) sin "establishes the [very] plotline of the Bible" and "the problem that God resolves," and (b)

talking about it will confront "the painfully perverse absence of awareness of sin" within contemporary culture (22, 34).

Following Carson's introduction, chapters two through six trace the presence of sin in Scripture. House leads off, in chapters two and three, by noting sin's persistence in the Old Testament, which he says "unearth[s] the depths of human failure" (75). Robert Yarbrough and Douglas Moo underscore the *ongoing* impact of sin throughout the New Testament in chapters four and five, notably highlighting "the victory over sin that God has won for us in Christ" (130), while Morgan rounds off the discussion with an overarching chapter that looks at "sin in the biblical story" (131). Together, these chapters grant readers a solidified and enriched understanding of Scripture's "eloquent testimony to the prevalence of sin," even as they renew the significance of Christ's "sinless life, sin-bearing death, sin-defeating resurrection, and sin-crushing second coming" (81, 162).

After demonstrating the enduring reality of sin throughout Scripture and, in the New Testament, God's solution to the problem through the redemptive work of Christ, chapters seven through ten shift to discuss theology, Satan, temptation, and evil within the world. Gerald Bray and John W. Mahoney highlight historical and contemporary theological views on sin in chapters seven and eight. Sydney H. T. Page underscores the relationship of sin to the "supernatural realm" and especially to Satan in chapter nine (242), and David B. Calhoun sheds light on temptation, its source(s), how to overcome it, and the role of confession in chapter ten. It is not until the next and final chapter, however, that the last contributor, Bryan Chappell, articulates the results of confession and repentance—a repentance, he says, that because of the freeing grace of Christ, sounds less like "stereotypical gritted teeth" and "more like singing" (288).

Like the other books in the series, *Fallen* is written to "provide pastors, leaders, and laypeople an up-to-date resource for exploring both theology and practice with accessible depth" (back cover). Such a task is not an easy one, yet with each consecutive chapter, readers of *Fallen* will find an intricate weaving of both theory and praxis. House's chapters, for example, do not just reference sin throughout the Old Testament, they look also at its "active," "relational," "pervasive," and "deadly" nature in order to "magnify God's redemptive work" and humanity's absolute dependence on it (80-81). Similarly, Page's chapter on "supernatural perpetrators of evil" does not merely point to the Bible's description of the supernatural realm, but also emphasizes Satan's defeat and "the ability [of Christ's followers] to rout the Evil One" (239). What one finds, then, is a careful balance of the "bad news" of sin's perpetual presence in the world, the "good news" of Christ's redemptive work, and the way in which followers of Christ may live within these tensions.

Without wishing to undermine the authors' skillful negotiation of a difficult

subject, one area that may prove troublesome is their seeming lack of consensus regarding sin's definition. For example, Morgan defines sin as "rebellion against God, breaking his covenant, and failing to live as image bearers," while House defines it flatly as a "lack of belief in Yahweh" (142, 68). Yarborough cites Thomas Schreiner, defining sin as "the refusal to believe in Jesus as the Christ"—a view that seems to reflect House's—but also defines it more simply as "wrongdoing" (83). Certainly the definition of sin is one that the authors (rightly) admit to be complex and multifaceted, but it would seem that a shared definition might support a more effective conversation. More than that, a single definition would have invited readers who might raise an eyebrow over a particular author's description (like House's) to read each consecutive chapter more hospitably.

In addition, though it is true that *Fallen* offers a robust interlacing of biblical, theological, historical, and practical content, the resource itself is arguably more accessible for scholars, seminary students, and pastors. Its structure, language, and thoroughness require of its readers a persistence that is perhaps too much to ask of the "layperson" whom, among others, is identified as its target audience; yet *Fallen* remains an exceptional addition to any library, whether one is able to support each definition of sin and persist in reading every page or simply uses the text as a repeated reference.

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Paul and the Faithfulness of God. N. T. Wright. Christian Origins and the Question of God 4. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. ISBN (2 vols.): 9780800626839. Pp. xxx (vol. 1) + xvi (vol. 2) + 1658. $89.00 (USD).

Let's begin with the elephant in the room, though that expression feels less figurative than usual here: this is a massive text. At the book's launch at the 2013 Society of Biblical Literature meetings in Baltimore, Wright noted that he had initially promised volumes in this series every few years. When the series is complete, it is to be hoped that this five-pound (!) book—arriving *ten* years after its predecessor (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*) and 900 pages longer—will prove to be something of an outlier. Even discounting front and back matter, there are over 1500 pages to work through, mercifully divided into four parts and two physical volumes; though I enjoyed the reading, my copy's table of contents now bears the faint scars of daily reading goals, penciled-in to keep myself on track. In the margins, I found myself reverting to old undergraduate reading habits, noting not just memorable points but key thesis statements, so as not to lose the very long thread of the overall argument.

Fortunately, Wright makes this thread relatively easy to follow, as he employs an elegant, chiastic structure, mapped out in Volume One's preface (xv). Part One, "Paul and His World," consists of an introduction, chapters on the Jewish, philosophical, religio-cultural, and Roman imperial "worlds" that Paul encountered; after Part Two, "The Mindset of the Apostle" (addressing Paul's "symbolic praxis" and "storied worldview"), and Part Three, "Paul's Theology" (thematically organized around monotheism, election, and eschatological hope), Part Four ("Paul in History") considers Part One's contextual emphases, but in reverse and in light of all of the above: empire, religion and culture, philosophy, Jewish context, and a conclusion. If this chiasm appears too simple, fear not: Wright also adds elements of Shakespeare, using *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to illustrate the interlocking plots and sub-plots in Paul (and, again as he noted in Baltimore, to inspire the interlocking components of his own book). Wright notes carefully—though probably not carefully enough to satisfy his critics—that he is not categorically equating Paul's epistolary writing with Shakespeare's tragicomic. Rather, Shakespeare makes for useful analogies: "Just as we are focusing on one theme in [Paul's] writings, something else is going on, as we might say, in another part of the wood, to which we need to pay attention as well. And these 'themes' turn out to be stories which actually belong closely together" (473).

Rather than trying to describe adequately all these "themes," I'll focus on two instances where Wright is likely to continue to provoke discussion. The first instance is in how he sees his themes interlocking. In introducing Part Three, Wright pictures Paul's theological worldview as a cube. On the front face, he inscribes his themes of monotheism, election, and eschatology, running through the cube from front to back, as it were; running from side to side, we have God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit; and on the base and the top face, respectively, we find Paul's Scriptures and the pagan world (615-16). I find the illustration helpful, particularly as it allows Wright to image Paul "at his most world-challenging" (617), engaging the pagan world (and the Scriptures) on the gospel's terms, not the world's or the empire's. But I wonder whether the image goes far enough. If "with the crucified and risen Messiah the one God . . . had placed a swift bisecting bar through the rectangular box" (617), might this not have *shattered* the box, forcing Paul to pick up and reassemble the pieces? Put differently, does the resurrection of Jesus speak more of *continuity* or *discontinuity* in the biblical (meta)narrative(s)? On every point, Wright is arguing (often implicitly) for the former. For example, his description of Torah leading sin into "the Israel-shaped trap (Romans 5:20), getting it to do its worst right there . . . so that in Israel, or rather in Israel *in the person of the representative Messiah*, it could be condemned" (909-10, italics his) reminds us of how skilled—and how *missional*—a biblical theologian Wright is. My question is only whether he'd really be losing any ground if he

admitted the possibility that Paul's task extended to *reconstructing* (or showing how God was reconstructing or recreating) a fractured or broken "world," not just (!) redefining an un-fractured world around Christ.

The second instance concerns a much finer point, within Wright's second, shorter, but theologically deeper treatment of Paul and empire—on the way back "down" his chiastic mountain. Arguing with J. M. G. Barclay (especially his *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* [Tübingen: Mohr, 2011], 386), Wright disputes Barclay's view that Rome constituted nothing unique in Paul's eyes; rather, Wright says, Paul saw death and other fallen powers "coming together and doing their worst precisely in and through Rome itself . . . [he] almost certainly saw Rome as the final great empire prophesied by Daniel" (1311). As in the preceding instance, I largely agree with Wright, and I appreciate how nicely this statement mirrors his missional treatment of sin and representative soteriology, noted above. My concern is with one of the building blocks Wright uses to get there: "Thus, while in terms of Daniel 7 Rome would be seen as the fourth monster, in terms of its own imperial narrative it would appear as the sole rival to the story of Israel" (1282). Hardly! I realize that as Wright is describing how *Paul* saw Rome's narrative, it would appear as the principal rival; but to use his words, *in terms of* [Rome's] *own imperial narrative*, Israel's story was no rival. It was barely even on the map. This perspective is one that Wright has expressed well in earlier work, but he misses the mark slightly here, on a point (and in a larger discussion) that remains too easily neglected in the teaching of Pauline theology in churches and in some academic settings, too.

Following Wright's lead slightly, I conclude by returning to the point where I began: the book's size. Wright is surely shrewd enough to see the irony of size when he holds up tiny Philemon as a suitable point of entry for his entire study, inasmuch as that letter's appeal is so theologically and rhetorically powerful that it "can hold up its head, like Reepicheep the Mouse beside the talking bears and elephants, alongside its senior but not theologically superior cousins, Romans, Galatians, and the rest" (16). The same irony might be present when he claims, while redefining "election" around the Messiah and the work of the gospel and the Spirit, *not* to be "pretending to offer the complete millimetre-by-millimetre exegesis that one might ideally want" (965) of Romans 3-4, Galatians 2-4, and Philippians 3. Dare we ask how long a book with such exegesis would be?

Certainly Wright doesn't *need* so many pages to argue effectively. He manages to squeeze several of this entire book's best points into a single chapter in *Galatians and Christian Theology* (Mark W. Elliott, Scott J. Hafemann, N. T. Wright, and John Frederick, eds. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014]), as I observed in a NetGalley review of that volume. Sometimes the phrasings are almost identical: in *Galatians*, messiahship, "like image-bearing humanness itself, was all

along a category designed, as it were, for God's own use" (39); in the present book, it "turns out to have been a category designed for the personal use of Israel's God himself" (695; Wright has made this point often enough that he doesn't bother to cite himself). But in the conference volume, the point is made in a forty-page essay; here, it's supported within a magisterial, *150-page chapter* on Paul's cruciform redefinition of monotheism, with implications that could shape Pauline theology for years to come. Yes, Wright's work is massive. But it also continues to be massively important, well worth the work of reading and the weight-lifting required to do so.

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Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages. Ian Christopher Levy. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. ISBN: 0268034143. Pp. xvi + 336. $38.00 (USD).

Depending on whether you make your home in Rome, Wittenberg, or Geneva, you will likely have very different reactions to the names of Wyclif and Hus.[1] Protestants have referred to Wyclif as the Morning Star of the Reformation, while Hus' reforming stance has exalted him as a Bohemian martyr: both are remembered as standing defiantly against clerical decadence and immorality. However, for most Roman Catholics, Wyclif and Hus remain outliers, proposing extreme, revolutionary ideas that ran counter to the patristic tradition, to conciliar and magisterial pronouncements, and to the Scriptures themselves. That is what makes Ian Christopher Levy's book such a compelling read: he is able to construct a compelling counter-narrative without getting bogged down in the minutia of chronological events at any point. In fact, those not well-versed in the background of these reformers' lives (and the events surrounding their condemnation) should first consult another source to properly place the context of Levy's work, as there is a conspicuous lack of references to the chain of events, dates, and key individuals within the debates and trials. The historical details, however, are not Levy's focus; rather, he closely analyzes how the lack of consensus regarding the authoritative structure of theology through the late Middle Ages caused, at best, ambivalence—and at worst, capriciousness and confusion—amidst the academic guild and the church.

Levy devotes a portion of the book to each of the major players within the debates: aside from Wyclif and Hus, he focuses on their major opponents, like the Franciscan William Woodford, Carmelite Thomas Netter, and Bohemian theolo-

1 I will use here the spellings that Levy prefers in his work, rather than the commonly used alternatives "Wycliffe" and "Huss."

gian Stephan Páleč. On conciliarist alternatives, he examines the Parisians Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson and gives some attention to Guido Terreni, an early proponent of papal infallibility. He concludes by looking at a more radical proposal by Reginald Pecock and the response it elicited from John Bury. Overall Levy, himself a Roman Catholic, provides a persuasive apology for both Wyclif and Hus, painting them not as outliers, but as moderate traditionalists who thought and wrote in remarkably similar veins to their contemporaries. He dismisses the claims of radical *sola scriptura* that are often attributed to both, carefully and methodically showing where their opponents misunderstood them—often pointing out how the "reformers" were adhering *at least* as closely to the traditions of the church than those who were branding them as radicals. Perhaps the most nuanced and helpful sections are those which Levy intricately explores how many of the thinkers who operated with a proximate theological method to Wyclif and Hus were the most outspoken against them—likely, he suggests, out of a self-defensive impulse aiming to separate themselves in order to appear more "orthodox" than their targets.

The revisionist narrative that Levy charts is both compelling and comprehensive, but it should be noted that there is little to no attempt at bridging the work into contemporary discussions of Scripture within any ecclesial context. In other words, not only does Levy's book demand at least a broad overview of the cast and crew of the medieval church, but it also requires the reader to undertake a substantial amount of work in order to connect it with the voluminous scholarly output on Scripture in our (post)modern settings. What, for example, do Platonist and Nominalist philosophical distinctions have to do with contemporary evangelical interests in patristic or medieval understandings of Scripture? I would submit that they actually have a lot to do with it, but Levy makes no attempt to draw a connection here and it falls to the reader to play theological connect-the-dots in order to bring this erudite work further into the lively and important contemporary discussion about Holy Scripture.

Putting this objection aside, although the book could be read only as a learned apology for Wyclif and Hus, the author's intention is deeper and more important. The picture that appears as he peels away the accretions and manufactured (and entrenched!) narratives is an image of a medieval church that was desperately searching for a solid foundation for authority. Cast aside is the modern assumption that the mediaeval Roman Catholic Church was a monolithic institution that required strict operating guidelines by balancing papal authority, canon law, conciliar decisions, and traditional interpretations of the Scriptures. Concerning the two hundred years leading up to the formal fissure of the Roman Church, Levy has provided a window into the variegated search for authority that led, in fits and starts, in disparate directions. The resulting work will be especially useful for

those who are seeking to understand how Scripture was used (or *not* used) within the debates prior to the Reformation. This is a rare thing, a book of scholarly depth that carries a coherent thesis throughout its biographical chapters on theologians from numerous countries covering almost a century.

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Complications: Abortion's Impact on Women. Angela Lanfranchi, Ian Gentles, and Elizabeth Ring-Cassidy. Toronto: The deVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research, 2013. ISBN: 9780920453360. Pp. ii + 434. $39.95 (USD).

Lest anyone assume this book to be the offspring of Christians whose convictions cannot be gainsaid but whose qualifications can be challenged, it must be noted that Angela Lanfranchi is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a practising surgeon, and a professor of surgery; Ian Gentles is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a professor at York University and Tyndale University College, an expert in the history of human population, and Research Director of the deVeber Institute; and Elizabeth Ring-Cassidy is a registered psychologist specializing in Development Psychology and Research, with expertise in child abuse and in the psychological implications of abortion and assisted reproductive technologies.

A decade's research underlies this discussion of the complications—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual—surrounding induced abortion. In addition to the reams of quantitative data analyzed in its first 300 pages, the book fittingly concludes on a more qualitative note, with the self-articulated narratives of women who underwent induced abortions years, even decades, earlier, and who remain haunted by the traumatic event.

The rigour of the research is indisputable: thorough examination, argumentation and conclusion, informed by refereed medical and psychological journals, along with academic volumes and the published proceedings of government enquiries. The primary motivation behind the book is concern about the ill effects—largely unknown, generally unpublicized, and frequently denied—of the euphemistic "termination of pregnancy."

Many of the authors' conclusions are startling; more than a few seem counter-intuitive for a book such as this (e.g., the conclusion that women's reproductive health is improving faster in those countries where abortion is no longer available on request, than in nearby countries where it is available). In at least one case, the duplicity of the National Cancer Institute, in suppressing overwhelming evidence irrefutably linking abortion to subsequent breast cancer, can only be

likened to the NCI's treacherous capitulation to political and economic pressure wherein it suppressed evidence, from 1928-1964, linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer.

Another irony: concerned as everyone is to minimize development difficulties in newborns, it is incontrovertible that women who have had one or more induced abortions have a significantly higher rate of prematurity or preterm birth, with attendant low birth weight, in subsequent pregnancies; and that children born prematurely with low birth weight have similarly higher rates of infant mortality, intellectual impairment, epilepsy, blindness, and cerebral palsy. Making "every child a wanted child" is supposed, among other matters, to lower social and health costs; the practice of induced abortions raises such costs. (The irony-within-an-irony is that the great majority of women who choose an abortion subsequently choose to become pregnant again—and thereby increase the risk of bringing to term the very children the "Right-to-Choose" advocates deny the right to live.)

The last chapter of the book, "Women's Voices," gathers and comments on the stories of the traumatized. The conclusions are sobering: "Most of the 101 women who told their stories found having an abortion an emotionally devastating experience. . . . All the women, even those who have had an experience of spiritual transformation after the abortion, continue to be troubled by the memory of it" (319). In light of the human contradictions and human anguish highlighted in the book, the need for further theological discussion is palpable. Several issues leap out in this regard. For instance, what understanding of the image of God is operative—or should be—in any discussion of abortion? Since the Kingdom of God can be seen as the creation of God healed, what is the eschatological appointment and transformation of the pre-born, the women, and the facilitators? And not least, insofar as critics of abortion may believe themselves to be kingdom-sighted amidst the kingdom-blind, what should the lasting response of the kingdom-sighted look like in terms of praxis? Put differently, if socio-economic inequities amounting to iniquities contribute to abortion, what structural changes should those who are "pro-life" struggle for as relentlessly as they have spoken against a kingdom-contradiction that they deem unacceptable?

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Ethics in the Presence of Christ. Christopher R. J. Holmes. New York: T & T Clark, 2012. ISBN: 0567491730. Pp. viii + 164. $39.95 (USD).

It seems that in this day and age, "ethics" is a word that is constantly thrown around without any clear definition of what it actually means. Granted, the word

has had a long history, and in popular usage, it seems to be able to mean whatever its user wants it to mean, all of which can obfuscate any reader. A strict and clear definition is often lacking. It is precisely against this background that Christopher Holmes' book, *Ethics in the Presence of Christ*, provides an important and necessary corrective.

Of course, "Christian ethics" presents the same problem: Christian ethics can be similarly flexible and can too easily be diffused into nothing more than "do good" or "be good." As Holmes attempts to provide a sophisticated answer to the seemingly simple question of "What is Christian ethics?" he argues that it must first be grounded in, and find its meaning in, the person of Christ. Too often, Christian ethics is only concerned with the actions of Christ, leading to a belief that Christian ethics is nothing more than attempts to re-create Jesus's actions, often with no regard to the specific culture and setting wherein Jesus acted in the way he did.

Holmes' book is divided into five major chapters. The first chapter introduces the need to ground our ethics in the presence of Christ; the second chapter deals specifically with the presence of Christ's *power*; the third chapter, the presence of Christ's *truth*; and the fourth, the presence of Christ's *love*. The final chapter's conclusion allows the discussion concerning ethics in the presence of Christ to resolve within Scripture. It argues that Scripture is a reliable source for knowing and understanding the person of Christ.

Holmes uses the Gospel of John as the primary lens through which to attempt to understand and ground his study of ethics. By using John, he joins a long list of writers who have used this highly christological book as a basis to formulate further reflection—in this case, of course, on ethics, which Holmes rightly believes to be a deeply christological issue. But my own concern, before I even read the first paragraph, had to do with a recurring issue I have found in most evangelical works in christology: the promotion of a high christology, but at the expense of the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the main actor, while the Holy Spirit barely gets a "cameo," so to speak. Most authors seem to gloss over the important relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Balancing a high christology without resorting to a pneumatically deficient viewpoint can be difficult; yet this book was able to maintain the fine balance between showing the importance of Christ without diminishing the importance of the Holy Spirit. Not only did the author show unique deftness in handling this christological-pneumatological balance, he was also able to encompass it within a Trinitarian outlook. Although the book is nuanced in its approach, it was also able to present difficult concepts in such a way that a lay reader would not find completely incomprehensible. In other words, its readability does not come at the cost of shoddy scholarship.

This book is an important addition to the conversation surrounding Christian

ethics. Too often, the discussion concerning this issue can seem too banal or superficial. It can often be reduced to simply asking "What Would Jesus Do?" or attempting to re-enact Jesus's actions alone. In the process of advocating such a mentality, it often fails to take into account the very reason why Jesus acted in the way that he did. In a culture where there are no prominent Samaritan women around, what does it mean to talk to a Samaritan woman as Jesus did in his time? Jesus' ability to show compassion and respect to an apparent outsider and social outcast—and his call to do likewise—can be forgotten in the attempt to follow a "literal" meaning of doing what Jesus Christ did.

In one of Holmes' most important statements in this book, borne out through the rest of the volume, "ethics involves taking up the Christological foundation of ethics, the sense in which Christ is ethics' pioneer, but also the fact that ethics is a function of Christ's 'continually operative' reconciling and revealing intervention, his perfecting work" (1). He rightfully insists that it is impossible to speak of Christian ethics without referring to the person of Christ; in the descriptive as well as in the normative sense, Christ is not only *a* reference point, but *the* point of Christian ethics. True Christian ethics can only be understood with Christ as its central focus.

To his credit, Holmes' book also emphasizes the impacts that his christological ethic has on Christian anthropology and discipleship: "[e]thics is not, then, a matter of conformity to so-called moral principles, but is rather about being a form of life 'oriented toward revelation'" (4). He goes on to say that "[e]thics is a matter of being transformed, then, such that men and women, the community of faith, learn to will what God wills and so become truly human" (5). This is what true Christian ethics looks like: a life transformed in and by the likeness of Christ. True Christian ethics reminds us that to be truly human is to be truly like the One who made us and in whom all things were made. This is a book that elucidates and exemplifies this point so convincingly well.

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Revealing Heaven: The Christian Case for Near-Death Experiences. John W. Price. New York: HarperOne, 2013. ISBN: 9780062197719. Pp. 165. $14.99 (USD).

John Price, who "never fully believed in life after death," is a pastor, spiritual director, and former chaplain at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston. His seminary training (Virginia Theological Seminary), he states, was all but bereft of "spirituality." He recounts a time when he decided to write a term paper on God's

love for the church: "The professor gave me a 'C' with the comment, 'I do not get this "love" business'" (5). Price's focus in school, and even in his early years of ministry, was restricted to the here-and-now, with emphases on social justice and biblical interpretation. Despite the fact that two parishioners had tried, on separate occasions, to tell him about their near-death experiences (NDEs), Price flatly dismissed anecdotes that did not fit neatly into his understanding of Christianity—or worse, those that threatened to make the great Christian religion sound like a fanciful "ghost story" (6).

Then the author came across Raymond Moody's book, *Life after Life* (Bantam, 1975). Moody's book—along with no fewer than *six* more parishioners asking Price about their NDEs—convinced Price that NDEs are something that needed to be discussed openly among ministers and even studied at seminary. After this change of mind, Price visited the Episcopal seminary in Austin in order to meet with a friend who taught on faculty, who met with Price but remained unconvinced. Having faced such skepticism, it's not surprising that Price devotes his opening chapters to explaining his reason for writing, followed by an overview of the "Christian case" for NDEs, citing (contested) pericopes from 1 Samuel, Daniel, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Luke. Next, Price gives a brief history of NDEs. He mentions the example of Er in Plato's *Republic*, insisting that "[s]imilar accounts of near-death experiences are found in traditional folklore" around the world (51). Mid-chapter, he gives an example from his own ministry, where a hospitalized parishioner named Ella recounts the following: "I was lying here in bed when Jesus came through the ceiling, held his hands down to me, and I lifted my hands to him. He lifted me up through the ceiling. I saw my [deceased] grandparents, brother and other friends who had died, it was so beautiful" (60). According to Price, the incident was especially powerful because it providentially supported Price's ministerial emphasis on how important God's love is for his Church and the world, rekindling the spirituality of his long-struggling congregation.

In the second part of the book, Price moves on from his personal journey to discuss a variety of "explanations," including how death works, how heaven works, hellish experiences, and "the return" (to life, by the near-dead experiencer, or "NDEr"). By "how death works," Price appears to mean "what humans may experience the moment a person dies." He outlines five main events, the most common of which is being able to see predeceased individuals present in the room, otherwise unseen. The day before Price's mother died, for example, she claimed to see someone at the door who wanted desperately to enter, a person no one else could see, but whom she insisted had to be let in. (I must admit that the acknowledgment of this phenomenon helped me to make sense of some of my own father's experiences, just before he passed away, including his insistence that my deceased brother had visited him; and an outdoor picnic that he evidently

enjoyed, a great distance away from his hospital room, before returning to coherent conversation.)

Another event that apparently occurs at death is that a person's soul may "move away" from the body; it may also begin to feel like it's floating through a tunnel, or perhaps one may see a bright light. Price describes a sensation of standing up and walking around, experienced by patients who could do neither. Price admits that he does not know why there are such variations in what people experience at death, but in every instance, the experiences are transcendent, even life-changing. He also mentions one last possible event, although much less common: Jesus may personally come and "get" someone who is dying, but this "is not frequent in my experience . . . There must be something special about those whom Jesus comes specifically to get and escort to heaven," he reasons (81).

The rest of the book gives accounts of NDEs where NDErs describe heaven and hell along with various difficulties encountered as they adjust to having to return to earthly life. The main point of the book is essentially to remind readers that God is love, and that fear should have no place in Christian spirituality (or in the spirituality of *any* world religion, for that matter). Price observes, "From the annals of the near-death experiences, we know God loves, forgives, and redeems all people when they ask" (158). I agree with Price: such profound truth needs to be "shouted from the rooftops"—even if some readers remain skeptical of the evidence that brings Price to this conclusion.

Written for a popular audience, readers interested in a sensible, anecdotal presentation of NDEs, and in suggestions for how one might reconcile them with Christian faith, will benefit from reading Price's book. But I would be remiss not to remark here upon the ongoing controversy over NDE literature such as this. In her recent Slate.com article, "Even Christian Bookstores Have Had It with Fake Testimonials about Heaven" (<http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2015/03/30/christian_bookstore_lifeway_christian_resources_will_no_longer_sell_heaven.html>), Ruth Graham notes a blog post by Tim Challies as representative of what "mainstream evangelical leaders" think about the subject. Challies invokes an evangelical doctrine of Scripture as a major theological barrier to taking NDEs seriously: "When a Christian, or a person who claims to be a Christian, tells me that he has been to heaven, am I obliged to believe him or at least to give him the benefit of the doubt? No, I am under no such obligation. I do not believe that Don Piper or Colton Burpo or Mary Neal or Bill Wiese [bestselling authors who are NDErs] visited the afterlife. They can tell me all the stories they want, and they can tell those stories in a sincere tone, but I do not believe them." He continues: "How do I respond to a Christian who has read these books and who finds great joy or comfort in them? You point that person to what is true. . . . You can serve any Christian by directing him to the Bible and helping him to see that we are called

to believe God on the basis of what he says in his Word, not on the basis of another person's experience. . . . The Bible insists that it is enough, that it is sufficient, that we have no need for further special revelation from God; these books insist that it is not" (<http://www.challies.com/articles/heaven-tourism>).

The alarmist thrust of Challies' argument, claiming that NDE accounts "attack the doctrine of scripture," strikes me as overreaching. Even if we grant what is perhaps the basis of his argument, "we have no need for further special revelation from God," surely a lack of *need* does not *prohibit* God from *giving* humans further special revelation as he pleads with humanity to be saved. The reception of special revelation, of course, will always require discernment. Even so, there appears to me to be an equal and opposite danger here: every believer must also take care that an initially genuine defense of an important theological premise does not become a pretense for a spiritually hardened heart. This is where Price's message of loving God, one's neighbors, and perhaps especially one's enemies—including theological and cultural enemies, not just political ones!—proves invaluably timeless. With or without NDEs, the practice of this message is the will of God; and if NDEs are persuading people of this, I, for one, will not get in the way of them. Let no one, not even a being of light, convince anyone otherwise.

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Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step. Roland Boer (ed.). Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013. ISBN: 9781589837706. Pp. viii + 288. $36.95 (USD).

Most recent scholarly works applying the lens of political or empire criticism to the Bible have been from the field of New Testament studies. However, much of the content of the Hebrew Bible is equally applicable to various modes of postcolonial analysis, making Roland Boer's edited volume *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible* a welcome addition to the Society of Biblical Literature's Semeia Studies series. As the subtitle indicates, the purpose of this collection of essays is to advance the scholarly discussion and break fresh ground in the diverse field that is ideological criticism, encompassing exegetical treatments of texts, history of interpretation, contextual hermeneutics, and abstract theoretical discussion.

Boer's succinct introduction lays the groundwork for the book and provides a helpful synopsis of each contributor's chapter. He rightly asserts that the genesis of postcolonial biblical criticism lies in Hebrew Bible studies, and traces the origins of this movement to older liberation-critical scholarship as well as anti-imperial writings. He also offers the significant reminder that the term "postcolonial"

has two meanings: the period of time following the various uprisings against imperialism in the 1950's and 1960's, as well as the theoretical apparatus addressing the colonial situation in all its forms and phases.

Judith McKinlay's opening essay, "Playing an Aotearoa Counterpoint: The Daughters of Zelophehad and Edward Gibbon Wakefield," demonstrates the multi-layered ethical issues addressed by this kind of criticism, as well as the possibilities that can arise from the comparison of colonial situations in the Bible and recent history. McKinlay admits that while she wants to praise the actions of the five daughters as a bold affront to male domination, their purpose in securing land was to make sure the name of their father continued. Additionally, they were asking for Canaanite land being portioned off prior to the conquest. Thus, their actions are stained with the double contamination of patriarchy and property seizure. This charge is set in bold relief when read alongside the British occupation of New Zealand, which involved not only the predictable land redistribution and cultural change, but the use of women as pawns to promote bland civil religion and cement political connections.

A wide-ranging methodological exercise is performed by Althea Spencer-Miller's "Rethinking Orality for Biblical Studies," which, in a self-consciously "ovulatory" (38) manner, seeks, in her words, "to articulate the difference an auto-ethnographic oral perspective makes to both textual hermeneutics and translation as art" (38). Interacting heavily with Walter Ong, she moves from discussion of scholarship encompassing epic performance and oral subjectivity to the politics of translation theory. Perhaps her most suggestive observation is the fact that Westerners tend to assume it is proper to translate the Bible into dominant languages (English, French, Spanish, and so on), but that translating the Bible into "indigenous" languages (many of which are linguistically closer to Hebrew than the dominant languages) still seems to require justification (60).

Steed Vernyl Davidson's "Gazing (at) Native Women" provides a straightforward confrontation with the stories of Rahab and Jael, particularly their shared, traitorous roles. The figure of the "Native Woman" is one that can be found frequently recurring in literature, as a role that is the site of sexual desire of invading men (partly due to the fact that the woman symbolizes property and territory), and that acknowledges the superiority of the colonizing power and by association, the effeminacy of the native men. At the conclusion of a thorough reading accompanied by Bhabha and Fanon, Davidson concludes that attempts to empower these women are duplicitous, and that one is better off approaching the texts with the posture that they are fundamentally, ideologically ruptured.

Christina Petterson offers up an essay on the political function of the descriptions of Solomon's opulent throne, and the correspondingly lavish colonizing efforts that have been inspired by it throughout history. She convincingly argues

that it was partially due to readings of this narrative that, today, the global economy is in a situation in which certain nations, which were able to accumulate wealth through the exploitation of the resources of other countries they colonized, are now (on moral grounds) enacting restrictions to ban the trade of the very substances these colonized societies rely on for income (an example would be the ivory trade).

Uriah Kim's "Is There an 'Anticonquest' Ideology in Judges?" uses Jephthah's speech as a springboard to examine ways in which the conquest of Canaan is justified in the book of Judges as a whole: the representation of Israel as an innocent underdog; the Canaanites as malicious, clueless, and effeminate; and the invasion as divinely ordained, all of which surely makes for an ambivalent rhetorical strategy. Meanwhile, Johnny Miles' "The 'Enemy Within'" places most of its attention on the twentieth century, specifically the relocation of the Japanese population of California in prison camps in World War Two. His in-depth examination of the strategies used by American public offices to justify this maneuver is then used as a conversation partner for the Israelite enslavement of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9.

Leo Perdue's "Hosea and the Empire" is a refreshingly clear reading of Hosea in its context of polemicizing against Assyrian propaganda. Specifically, Hosea's affirmations that Yahweh is in control of history, that the Israelites should remain ethnically pure, and that they had a period of pure worship in the wilderness would have functioned to combat Assyrian claims of legitimacy to rule. The focus shifts entirely with Gerald West's "African Culture as *Praeparatio Evangelica*," which wrestles with the convoluted issues of the problem of missionary groups deriding the value of indigenous African culture, and the response that indigenous African culture is, in a sense, the African people's "Old Testament."

The last word is appropriately delivered by Boer himself. In "Thus I Cleansed Them from Everything Foreign," he examines the nature of subjectivity in Ezra-Nehemiah. Not only does he see the text's strategies for delineating the boundaries of the community as ultimately ringing hollow, he suspects that the large amount of space the books devote to genealogies is part of this desperate—but unsuccessful—attempt at crafting a pure cultural identity. Finally, two responsive essays by Richard Horsley and Joerg Rieger offer largely laudatory reflections on the contributions to this volume.

Despite the large amount of intellectual space covered by *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible*, the essays complement each other well and are generally representative of the best that postcolonial biblical scholarship has to offer, possibly due to the noticeable lack of endless theoretical summaries so endemic to this kind of work. However, the question that must inevitably be raised when reading such work is this: despite the explicitly ethical orientation adopted by these con-

tributions (particularly those openly critical of the agenda of the biblical text), is scholarship like this likely to have the positive, real-world impact it desires? Are such offerings likely to be ignored by a secular academia (to say nothing of the public at large) that has long since consigned the Hebrew Bible to cultural irrelevance? Or, conversely, is such interdisciplinary work precisely the way to demonstrate the continued vitality and cruciality of biblical studies to the larger world of the humanities and social sciences? Given the diverse fields this volume touches upon—religion, history, global politics, cultural theory—one hopes the larger world will take notice.

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CANADIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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