Illumine

The Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Graduate Student Association

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Graduate Student Association

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The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) was established at the University in Victoria in 1991 to foster the scholarly study of religion in relation to any and all aspects of society, both contemporary and historical. The CSRS Graduate Student Association, led by graduate students who hold Fellowships at the CSRS, draws together UVic graduate students from a range of departments and academic programs who share an interest in areas related to the research mandate of the CSRS.

This issue of *Illumine* represents a continuation of the Association's tradition of producing an annual publication containing graduate students' written scholarship exploring the interrelation of religion and society. Copies of these prior publications are available from the CSRS. In addition to the production of *Illumine,* the Association undertakes events such as luncheons and discussion forums. Questions or comments may be directed to CSRS, or to illumine@uvic.ca

Introduction

Featuring essays by Canadian graduate students, *Illumine* is a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal produced by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) Graduate Student Association at the University of Victoria. *Illumine* provides a forum for graduate work that contemplates religious and other moral, spiritual and philosophical systems enmeshed in diverse cultural, societal, temporal and geographic settings. The fine essays in this fourth issue of *Illumine* explore the ways in which religious values, spirituality, and moral ideologies are reflected in assorted cultural products, such as film, art, literature, oral histories, and print media. Throughout this year's issue there runs a theme of the engagement of these ideologies with the needs of present-day life.

Aimee Patterson explores ways of bringing Christian values into consideration as the foundation of an environmentally responsible ethics. Inspired by James Gustafson's thinking, this novel approach opens up the possibility of reconciling ecological with theocentric priorities. In particular, Aimee's examination of Gustafson's views presents God-centredness as a middle road between the secular view (e.g. in "deep ecology") of life itself as intrinsically valuable and Christian environmentalists' reaction that human life is the goal of creation. An important contribution made by Gustafson, she shows, is his acknowledgment and accommodation of now-pervasive scientific thought within his Christian framework, an idea owing much to the natural-law tradition which incorporated observation of nature into its theology. In the well-chosen words of Patterson's essay, Gustafson's ideas can help us conscientiously negotiate a path from "pantheism to panentheism," opening our eyes to God's immanence in nature.

Other authors in this issue examine quite recent developments in negotiating a theologically-centred life, but one who takes a longer—though still rooted in the contemporary—historical view is **Carolyn Shaffer**. Shaffer examines what is for many of us a surprising aspect of the Zionist movement's history, the opposition of many Orthodox and especially Hasidic Jews to the temporal Jewish state. She shows that the development of the modern state of Israel has followed a historical trajectory more complex than might be inferred from the common present-day equation of Jewish religious fervor with support of Zionism. Her exposition of the range of opinion within Hasidism points the way to a better understanding of the roles of religion and nationalism in Israel.

Carol Tulpar's "thought experiment" on impromptu roadside shrines for young accident victims touches on a phenomenon that is part of our daily lives, yet often goes unexamined. Her meditation on people's motivations for creating these shrines compellingly conveys the widespread desire for a "return to meaning" and for bringing the sacred more vividly into an everyday life that has come to be deeply influenced by the secular and rational. Among the several important roles that roadside shrines play, according to Tulpar, they defy convention in constantly reminding us to ponder death, and they help us process the spirits of the prematurely dead from lingering ghosts into effective ancestors. Tulpar has identified an overlooked corner of contemporary spiritual experience and, upon careful examination, found much to ponder about the relationship of the ritual with the routine.

Samuel Wagar's article on Wicca considers another innovation—a young, rapidly growing pagan religious movement, in light of the substantial historical information available about its founding in 1954 by Gerald Gardner as well as its extensive development since. Wagar posits that Wicca offers a heterotopian alternative to mainstream faiths, one which encourages free expression of dissent, canonizes nonconformity, and thereby provides a needed space for psychological and spiritual healing. He concludes that this new religion's success is to a significant degree due to its resolutely questioning and challenging the status quo ante, making it a haven for those who, like so many in contemporary society, are troubled by aspects of existing religious and social norms.

Khadijeh Zolghadr's essay on women in the thought of the Iranian religious scholar Mutahhari will, like Shaffer's essay, probably serve as an introduction to new insights into one of the more familiar religions. Given Mutahhari's influence upon the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Zolghadr proposes, a study of his writings can help us make greater sense of the course of women's societal role there since 1979. She convincingly shows that this scholar firmly believed in the equality of the sexes, though crucially primarily in terms of the individual's creation by God, ability to achieve spiritual perfection, and worthiness of

respect, rather than in terms of one's rights in society. Indeed Mutahhari argued for the distinctness of women's and men's rights as an extension of the Islamic theological principle of telicity (and it is provocative to compare this with Gustafson's interpretation of our having been made in God's image—viz. Patterson's article): each gender was created physically different in order to fulfill distinct roles in the world. Fascinatingly, Zolghadr suggests that Mutahhari's publicly expressed views would have likely developed to include discussion of women's civic rights, had he not been assassinated within a year of the Islamic revolution.

The essays in this issue contain thoughtful discussions of religious and moral ideologies, practices, and expressions that permeate the lives of people in distant places at divergent times. Nonetheless, it is clear from the quality of the authors' engagements that these topics—of ecological ethics, of religions of the book coming to terms with modernity, of innovations in ritual practice—resonate in closer and more immediate quarters. The vitality of the contributions in this issue of *Illumine* is a testament to the scholarly inspiration that awaits those who venture into the entanglements of religion and society.

The CSRS graduate student fellows who formed the editorial board for this issue would like to express sincere thanks to all of the contributors for the effort they took to make their interesting pieces so expressive and engaging, as well as to those students who contributed submissions that were not published. We would like to extend appreciation to all of the editors of previous issues of *Illumine*, Angela Andersen, Rachel Holmes, Jennifer Lee, Eve Millar, Jenny Munro, Erin Ronsse, Andrew Wender, and Wendy Wheatley, for setting excellent standards and welcoming our many queries. Support from the CSRS and its administrative staff, Moira Hill, Susan Karim and Leslie Kenny, was central to the completion of this project.

David D. Robertson
For the Editorial Board, December 2005

Revising Christian Environmentalism:
Locating a New Ecological Foundation in James M. Gustafson's Theocentric Ethics

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Abstract

Typically, secular environmental movements locate intrinsic value in biological life. While some recent Christian ecotheologies have appropriated this stance, Christian ethics has generally tended to relate value to human life, considering creation as instrumental to human needs. Seeing neither of these alternatives as authentically Christian, James M. Gustafson finds a middle way between "deep" and "shallow" approaches. His theocentric ethics centres value on God, rather than on human or general biological life. In order to bring Christian theology and ethics back to this focus, Gustafson utilizes evidences from the sciences as a source for theology. At the same time, he modifies so-called deep ecologies for a Christian context by indicating that, for the religious person, all things are not of intrinsic value, but find their value in relation to God. This allows theocentrism to encourage Christians in a more responsible attitude toward the environment that takes into account nonhuman goods.

In 1967, Lynn White Jr. published a watershed article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in which he blamed the Judeo-Christian religious worldview for the ecological devastation wreaked on the earth at the hands of humans.[1] Since then, Christian ecotheologians have sought out ways to relate ecology to theology. Many have subverted the anthropocentric orientation critiqued by White by promoting an understanding of the intrinsic value of all parts of creation. This move is parallel to many secular ecologies that have adopted "deep" approaches to environmentalism; they aim at conservation not for the good of human life but with an understanding of the value of nature in and of itself. This shift toward deep ecology has occurred across the theological spectrum, from process theologians, to ecofeminists, and even to evangelical thinkers.[2] Despite their numerous and differing

rationales for such biocentric ecotheology, the notion of the intrinsic value of nature does not ring true to many Christians. This may be the consequence of the longstanding tradition of Christian ethics that has emphasized the instrumental value of creation for humans. A corresponding observation, though, is that proponents of intrinsic value consider value in isolation, while in Christian theology, value is always related to its ultimate centre, God.[3]

In this regard, the thought of James M. Gustafson stands out from other attempts at ecotheology. He endeavours to bring Christians to an understanding of responsibility concerning their interactions with the natural environment without compromising the unique perspective of a Christian worldview. Rather than conforming his articulation of Christian environmentalism to an existing secular standpoint of intrinsic value, Gustafson reconciles theology and ecology by respecting the authorities of these two very different disciplines, allowing them to shape each other. In doing so, he arrives at a theocentric articulation of Christian ecotheology. I aim to demonstrate how Gustafson shapes a new Christian environmental ethics by providing correctives to both the Christian and scientific communities. First, he tempers a theology that considers humanity to be God's primary concern, and then he modulates an ecology that views nature as having value in itself.

Contrasting Deep Ecology and Christian Anthropocentrism

Deep ecology has become a blanket term for ecologies that emphasize intrinsic value. The expression was coined by renowned ecophilosopher Arne Naess, who went on to inspire the deep ecology

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[1] Lynn White, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203-07.
[2] For examples of these see, respectively, Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 67;

Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 165; and Richard A. Young, *Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and Their Solutions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 82.
[3] Judith Scoville, "Fitting Ethics to the Land: H. Richard Niebuhr's Ethic of Responsibility and Ecotheology," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30:2 (2002), 216.

movement.[4] While Naess's philosophy is not the only articulation of biocentrism, many others have taken their cue from his thought. Thus, I will use it to indicate what is meant by deep ecology, and also to point to areas where deep ecology and Christian tradition clash.

Naess's underlying philosophy challenges individuals to think more deeply about their fundamental attitude toward life and experience of the world, a sentiment echoed in many ecotheologies. The environmental vision of deep ecology is driven by scientific method and knowledge.[5] Its proponents have ecologically informed reasons for wanting to lighten the touch of humanity on the earth, including evidences that continue to surface about the devastation of the atmosphere, oceans, landforms, and species. Despite the thrust of this data, Naess believes that ethics follows from life experience, and his system is largely an intuitive and spiritual one. He has founded deep ecology on the idea of biocentrism, or the central value of life in all its diversity. He opposes more "shallow" approaches to ecology that seek to preserve nonhuman life only insofar as it is necessary to maintain current standards of living. Thus, when he speaks of life, he does so referring to all forms of life, not merely human or other purportedly "higher forms." This is supported by a worldview that recognizes the biological fact that all life is interrelated and interdependent.[6] Within this philosophy, Naess posits that all forms of life also have their own good ends that should be respected—an idea not alien to Christian theology.[7]

However, the breach between Christianity and deep ecology widens with the incorporation of eastern religion and philosophy in the latter. For example, the deep ecology view includes an event of self-realization, or positing the whole world as an extension of the self. The self becomes comprehensive, as there is no distinction between it and other selves or nonhuman life forms. This means that humans are not given any special place within nature; rather, all of nature is sacred. Presuming a comprehensive self means extending rights to those aspects of life that are not moral agents. In deep ecology, anything that is considered a "moral

patient," that is, acted upon or affected by the moral agent, is given rights.[8] Out of this come axiomatic statements that make up a platform of deep ecology commitments, including decreasing the human population, encouraging local and decentralized autonomy, favouring the idea of "quality of life" over "standard of living," and refraining from killing or harming life "except to satisfy vital needs."[9]

The assertion of the sacredness of nature creates several problems for Christian theology and ethics. From this perspective, what is at stake is the status of and relationship between God and humanity. A deep ecology view that would promote the intrinsic value of all things seems to extend divinity to nature. This suggestion of pantheism is anathema to Christian theology. As well, theological anthropology would have it that humans are created in the *imago Dei*. Deep ecology is not readily palatable to a group that has long regarded human salvation as central to God's plan, and which confesses salvation through a human saviour. Not only are humans deemed distinct from nature, but they also bear some special consideration apart from other forms of life. Such assertions are usually justified by making recourse to the unique nature of human reason. The distinct place of humanity has been a foundation for Christian ethics, also, which has accordingly concerned itself with matters of human rights. Deep ecology, however, alters the very basis for rights; rights become predicated not on value stemming from rationality but on intrinsic value. In this vein, mainstream Christian thought largely continues to defend traditional conceptions of the role of human dominion over the earth, an idea derived from the early Genesis stories that has led to the understanding of the earth as a resource to use.

In speaking to the Christian church, Gustafson takes seriously concerns such as these. However, he also points out that for too long, Christians have avoided the environmental implications attached to belief in a good creation.[10] The need for a middle way between deep and shallow ecology becomes readily apparent. It is a focus on the doctrine of creation that will direct his theology away from anthropocentrism and toward theocentrism. Anthropocentrism has appeared throughout human history as a way to assert humanity over and against

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[4] Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 (1973), 95.

[5] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (New York: Cambridge, 1989), 32 and 138f.

[6] Ibid., 47-63.

[7] All things begin and end in God according to the *exitus et reditus* principle of Thomistic natural law theory.

[8] This is a development attributed to Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1989), 4.

[9] Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 29.

[10] James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 109.

nature, "denying man's ultimate dependence on a power we cannot control, a source of goodness we did not and cannot create."[11] Whether the use of creation is reckless or responsible, any view of humanity that separates it from the rest of nature is incomplete and has tended to lead in the wrong direction. To consider humans in isolation neglects the truth of humanity's radical dependence on and interdependence with nature, both of which shape daily life and make existence possible. Moreover, any change humans make to the present ordering of life has a ripple effect, and these effects are multiple and often unpredictable.[12] Christian ethicists must seek not to do what is good for humanity in isolation, but what is good for the larger creation.

On the other hand, Gustafson also critiques the deep side of the debate, rejecting purely biocentric views in light of Christian faith. According to Christian theism, what is of ultimate concern cannot be biological life itself, since religion depends upon recognizing those things that are beyond empirical observations and measurements. In order to be faithful to human perceptions of the divine, Gustafson must offer a third way appropriate for the ecologically-concerned Christian. He avoids "tacking on" environmental concern to theology by calling Christians to begin with a theology that considers God as the centre of value.[13] From a theocentric standpoint, all things are valued in relation to God, rather than having intrinsic value or instrumental value to humans. In confronting the problem in this way, Gustafson alleviates certain theological apprehensions, such as deep ecology's tendency toward pantheism, while also allowing the scientific implications behind ecology to provide appropriate limits to Christian theology. I will address these subjects in reverse order and then go on to explain the lasting significance of theocentrism for Christian environmental ethics.

Accommodating Science and Theology

In one sense, Gustafson's theocentric viewpoint has much to recommend it to deep ecology. Like Naess, he challenges individuals about their fundamental attitude toward nonhuman life. He invests heavily in the idea of the interrelated nature of creation and agrees that the foundation of ethics is a kind of informed intuition or experience of the world.[14] His theology is, in large part, inspired by the Reformed tradition, and expands on Jonathan Edwards's affective "senses" of the world, including senses of dependence, gratitude, and direction. However, theocentrism is shaped not only by cultural and societal experience, but also by evidences from the sciences.

As Gustafson observes, science and theology are in competition for the Christian imagination. Theology affects Christians not only emotionally and spiritually; it also informs their values. Christians are supposed to live lives oriented toward God. On the other hand, Western Christians, like most other Western humans, have frequent recourse both to scientific discovery and the scientific method. Scientific proof is a commonly sought method of verification. The word 'progress' is understood in terms of the technological advancements that make life easier or better. While these customs may not be harmful in themselves, what Gustafson does perceive as harmful is the dysfunctional dynamic of the relationship between science and theology in the Christian mind.[15] Frequently, there is a cognitive dissonance between a theological view of the world and a scientific perspective. They tend to be regarded as mutually exclusive ways of knowing. Science is humanity's primary means of discovery and verification of the natural world. Theology concerns those things that are not verifiable through science. This dichotomy, however, ignores those events in which humans search for both physical and spiritual meaning.[16]

Gustafson's aim is to show that scientific and theological interpretations do not have to be irreconcilable. In fact they can even inform each other and contribute to a more holistic outlook on the world that betrays neither carefully reasoned theological convictions nor contemporary scientific commitments. He clearly opposes those theologies, including postliberalism, that would claim the Bible and tradition as the isolated sources of the Christian's worldview.[17] Theology also requires reflection on

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[11] James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 320f.

[12] Ibid., 239f.

[13] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 112f. For a description of theologians who are guilty of tacking on environmentalism to theology see Scoville.

[14] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 210f and 338.

[15] James M. Gustafson, *An Examined Faith: The Grace of Self-Doubt* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), *viii* and passim.

[16] For instance, Gustafson draws on Edwards's description of the collapse of a meeting house, in which he provides a physical interpretation regarding the decaying wood, and also a spiritual interpretation of God's purposes behind the event. Ibid., 1ff.

[17] For a dialogue between Gustafson and postliberal thought see the following series of articles: James

experience, and the elements of this include not only religion, but also culture, history, society and nature. In Gustafson's estimation, "no Christian in parts of the earth that are saturated with scientific and other secular knowledge can avoid the impact of alternative ways to describe, explain, value, and give meaning to natural and historical events and human actions."[18] This persuades him that, in order to develop a fitting view of the world, Christian theology must be done in a way not incommensurate with scientific evidences.[19] What he proposes is striking a balance between scientific informing and theological construction by placing science alongside the other sources of theology.

Gustafson appreciates the legacy of Roman Catholic natural law, which includes the sciences among its sources.[20] Though natural law theory retains many of the long outdated scientific evidences used by Aquinas, the point remains that scientific observation of the natural world is not a novelty in theology. Reconciling science and theology means rejecting the independent autonomy of the Bible or tradition in speaking of empirical matters. If theologians openly criticize the ways of the secular world from an elevated position, they must themselves be open to the critiques of science. Fact and value must not be divorced in theology and ethics, but integrated in a manner Gustafson terms "accommodation." Accommodation allows that science "*authorizes but does not determine* the theological or religious account."[21] In other words, viewing science as the authority on those things that fall within empirical verification limits what can be said theologically, while also pointing out basic directions for theological exploration. Science can do so without completely governing the content of theology.[22]

Gustafson constructs his own theology based around this accommodationist strategy, and the consequences are abundant. While they cannot all be explored here, the most important result for my purposes is theocentric orientation. Gustafson's

scientifically informed theology brings Christians back to the truth that God is not humanity's debtor, and expands this claim to the idea that humanity is neither central nor essential to God's plans:

The conditions necessary for human life will disappear long before the gravitational collapse, if that is how the end will be. It is not easy to claim that all things were created for our sakes as humans when there is considerable evidence that the destiny of our species is extinction.[23]

He also critiques those theologians who put God in the service of humanity by affirming that God's purposes align with humanity's good end. One example is Walter Rauschenbusch, who has indicated that, "The will of God is identical with the good of mankind."[24] While such an assertion does not say in so many words that God is indebted to humanity, the effect is the same, and it is one Gustafson finds both inaccurate and repulsive. It makes for too happy a coincidence.[25]

What Gustafson advocates is that Christians instead align their wills with God's purposes. His theological assertion, tempered by empirical observation, is that while God is not perceived to be against humanity, any sense in which God is for humanity must be carefully qualified. Human happiness may indeed be among God's purposes; but though God is the source of every good thing humans experience and receive, God is not the guarantor of human happiness and good ends.[26] This approach brings Christians back to their roots of being humble before their creator.

However, avoiding anthropocentrism does not mean that Gustafson neglects the distinctive nature of humanity, as deep ecologists tend to do. His point to Christians is that being distinct is not the same as being central or superlative.[27] Admittedly, humanity has uniquely developed capacities for rationality and affectivity. However, to say that this makes humanity the omega point of creation would simply be to judge humans based on their own subjective measure of worth. The fact of the matter is, each creature is adapted to its own niche, and humanity is no exception. In addition, the apparent interrelatedness of creation is not limited to functional interaction. It extends to the nature of each creature. Drawing on the philosopher Mary Midgley, Gustafson points out that human nature is largely made up of traits and

Gustafson, "Just What is 'Postliberal Theology'?" *Christian Century* 116:10 (1999), 353-55; William Placher, "Being Postliberal: A Response to James Gustafson," *Christian Century* 116:11 (1999), 390-92; James Gustafson, "Liberal Questions: A Response to William Placher," *Christian Century* 116:12 (1999), 422-24.
[18] Gustafson, *An Examined Faith*, vii.
[19] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 32f.
[20] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 44.
[21] Gustafson, *An Examined Faith*, 7.
[22] Ibid., 33.

[23] James M. Gustafson, "Nature: Its Status in Theological Ethics," *Logos* 3 (1982), 20.
[24] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 94.
[25] Ibid., 190.
[26] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 40.
[27] Ibid., 56.

characteristics consistent with those of other creatures.[28] To see the human species as higher up on the evolutionary ladder, rather than simply on a different branch of the evolutionary bush, is not only a biased perspective; it is a false one. Instead, he puts forth the following idea:

If we should develop the order of "value" in relation to the order of necessary conditions for life, rather than in relation to the order of development from "lower" to "higher," the image of man's dependence on, and interdependence with the ordering of nature becomes sharper.[29]

A more helpful attitude toward humanity is to understand that humans do have an increasingly great capacity to make a mark on the world. But with this capacity comes a sense of responsibility. An expanded concern for all life, based on its relation to God, is combined with a respect for the different qualities of these forms of life, a respect that influences human action. This is the first instance in which Christian theology and secular deep ecologies are brought together to provide mutual correctives.

Moving from Pantheism to Panentheism

Though Gustafson critiques theological assumptions, he is not unsympathetic to all theological tenets. His concern in correcting theology, especially Reformed Theology, is to bring it back to an authentic articulation that recognizes the implications of the doctrine of creation. This same concern is revealed in addressing the question of pantheism. Christians often fear that environmentalism requires that one structure ethics in a way that makes all things of ultimate value, thus making God indistinguishable from God's creation. Gustafson addresses this concern in a sympathetic way, acknowledging classical monotheism as integral to the Christian experience; it is not apparently impinged on by scientific evidence.[30] Theocentric ethics makes it clear that a respect for nature, and for the way God is experienced through nature, does not entail that Christians must value nature as God. On the other hand, Gustafson recalls that the immanence of God is an important principle to reclaim.

The definition Gustafson gives to the divine is that God is the ultimate ordering power of the patterns and processes of interdependence; there are no other formal designations attached to God in his

theology.[31] He also frequently cites Calvin's puzzling statement that God can be identified with nature, so long as God is not confused "with the inferior course of God's works."[32] What Gustafson wants to accomplish through this is not to promote a pantheistic attitude toward life, but to show that God can be experienced indirectly through nature. He clarifies that perceiving God in nature is no less valid than experiencing God in history. Too often the perception of God in nature is ignored by theologians; limiting God to the stage of human history dwells inappropriately on the importance of human activity. Gustafson contends that his theology is incarnational, saying, "If I confront God in the world, I confront God in natural and historical events."[33]

To this Gustafson adds something more: "*God is not nature without remainder*, but the historic doctrine of creation certainly affirms that God orders life through nature. Thus knowledge of nature contributes to, but does not finally determine, what can be said about God."[34] God can be distinguished from natural processes, because God provides purpose and direction to those processes.[35] So in relating God and nature, Gustafson does not want to confuse God with all of creation: "While I use the language of parts and wholes, I deliberately do not use that language in relation to God and the world, as if all the 'parts' of the world made up the 'whole' of God."[36] What he labels God can be construed as equivalent to that which unites all parts into a whole, while at the same time standing over that whole. What is arrived at, then, is what I consider to be a kind of *panentheism*. The typical articulation of panentheism is that everything existing is within God, but God is not identical with all existing things. God is a whole that is more than simply the sum of these parts. Gustafson's variation on this theme states that God is both immanent in the patterns and

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[31] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 1.

[32] Cited in *Ethics* 1, 251 and *A Sense of the Divine: The Natural Environment from a Theocentric Perspective* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994), 44f.

[33] James M. Gustafson, "Response to Critics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13:1 (1985), 199. Similar comments can be found in his *A Sense of the Divine*, 14.

[34] James M. Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University," in *Catholic Theological Society of America, Proceedings of the Annual Meeting* 40 (1985), 92, italics added.

[35] Edward Farley, "Theocentric Ethics as a Genetic Argument," in *James M. Gustafson's Theocentric Ethics: Interpretations and Assessments*, eds. Harlan R. Beckley and Charles M. Swezey (Macon: Mercer University, 1988), 51.

[36] James M. Gustafson, "Afterword," in ibid., 247.

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[28] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 282ff.

[29] Gustafson, "Nature," 20.

[30] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 135f.

processes of the interdependence of life, and a transcendent ordering of these forces that shape life.

Gustafson's portrayal of God, which recovers the aspect of the divine immanence in nature, leads to a more accurate portrayal of nature and humanity in relation to God. Humans are considered to have the task of representing God as the *imago Dei*, though this does not make humanity divine. In the same way, nature represents the goodness and purposes of God without leading to pantheism. Nature effects life in ways that both sustain and threaten it.[37] But no aspect of nature, whether seen apart from or continuous with humanity, is intrinsically valuable, as value is not substantive but relational to God. Still, all creation does receive value because of this very relationship to God. Gustafson shows it is possible to appreciate the affective feelings nature arouses without submitting to pantheism. Just as God is transcendent in relation to humanity, God is also transcendent in relation to the rest of nature, standing above nature and ordering it. Yet God's bond with creation means that humans can discern ways in which God is working by observing the patterns and processes that make up the web of interdependence in life. This will be the foundation for Gustafson's ethical direction.

An Ethic of Participation

Thus far it has been shown how a conviction of the scientific reality of the interdependence of all life has led Gustafson to modify traditional theology. As well, his accommodationist theology brings insights to bear on ecology.[38] It is clear that the discoveries of science have led to the perception of larger and larger wholes that continue to be ordered so that all the parts within are interrelated and interdependent. Theology has the potential to teach scientists to understand that there is a certain value to be placed on things not only because of their direct ecological interrelationships, but also because of their radical dependence on the ordering of a larger whole. The contribution of Christian thought shifts the secular ecological viewpoint from biocentrism to ecocentrism. Gustafson's reorientation also brings with it several important implications for Christian environmental ethics. He affirms the goodness of all creation, citing the Genesis 1:31 statement that God sees the whole of creation as very good. This is the basis for Gustafson's ontology. Diversity, he agrees with Naess, is very good.[39] But since value is not

intrinsic in the way deep ecology would have it, romantic ecological ideas are not a part of Gustafson's ethics, and he shies away from the attitude that would see nothing killed or destroyed. Rather than reverence for or worship of life, he affirms a respect for life as it relates to the creator.[40]

Creation is necessarily caught up in a web of interrelationship: "All created things somehow function not individually, but in their relations to each other to the glory of God."[41] This means that value is not only relational, but also multidimensional.[42] There is a reciprocal, though not necessarily harmonious, set of relationships at work here that requires the agent to attend to the well being of individuals, direct relationships, and larger interconnected relationships.[43] Theocentric ethics is concerned with the good of the whole, but incorporates a more complex understanding of the makeup of the whole than do most ethical theories. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, just as a family unit is more than the aggregate of individuals within it. The aim here is not to show that the purpose of God for the world is perfect interrelation. Scientific observation cannot support such a conclusion, since what is good for one creature is often bad for another. Suffering is a natural part of interrelated life, one built into the predator-prey relationship. So, Christian environmental ethics should not aspire to eradicate all instances of suffering or lost good. The aim is, rather, to glorify God by acting within, rather than against, the patterns and processes in which human life is set.

Theocentric ethics has much to say regarding the concept of extending rights to nonhuman nature. On the one hand, Gustafson approves of Midgley's assessment of this device; "rights" is a very desperate word, one more useful in drawing attention to problems than in solving them.[44] Understanding value in nature is not so much a rational activity, invoking legal terms such as rights. Here, too, Gustafson is in agreement with Naess: respect for nature, and for the human impact upon nonhuman nature, comes from an affective response to nature as another aspect of creation. On the other hand, rights have played a significant part in maintaining justice in human relationships. Viewing a general justice within nature, Gustafson sees no need to reject rights language altogether, and understands the concept of rights as preventative of the tyranny of

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[37] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 293.

[38] Gustafson, *An Examined Faith*, 82.

[39] Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*, 11.

[40] Ibid., 55.

[41] Gustafson, "Nature," 11.

[42] Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*, 63f.

[43] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 162.

[44] Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*, 32f.

anthropocentrism.[45] However, the call to justice or the extension of rights and duties must now be based not on a particular outline of rational merit.[46] In a theocentric perspective, it does not make sense to grant rights to those who fit a particular description of humanity, since all possibilities for being and achievement are given, and not intrinsic to humanity. Instead, rights are to be based on need.[47] All those with goods to fulfill have a right to do so, according to their value to the ordering, and the orderer, of the larger whole. Those who have been given a capacity for moral responsibility have a duty to respect these rights. Rights are never absolute, just as values are not, but they indicate points to consider in making ethical decisions.

A second practical matter related to theocentric environmentalism is that of noninterference with nature, or of the avoidance of all killing. Theocentric ethics cannot favour this approach for the reason stated above: rights are not absolute. Gustafson recognizes that there are times when a human good does outweigh the potential damage that might be caused to another species.[48] Biodiversity should be respected as a mechanism of the patterns and processes of life, and so human action that would threaten a population or species should be avoided. Gustafson does indeed concur that present patterns of human interference with the nonhuman world are excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. Nonetheless, this does not mean that humans are not justified in affecting this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. There are needs and values that do not come to the point of being vital or life-threatening that must also be addressed, and these extend to the human community and the rest of life.

Humans can even use animals, though responsibly, in scientific research. What theocentrism teaches is an ethic of participation in nature that comes out of the realization that humans not only depend on patterns and processes of nature; humans also contribute to them.[49] Within Gustafson's interpretation of nature and culture is the observation that animals, particularly humans, have a history of developing ways to control the forces bearing down upon them.[50] Part of having respect for human capacities is to encourage the natural urge to create and explore. However, it cannot be overemphasized that humans must participate responsibly in this interaction. Every killing is now viewed as a sacrifice, and the loss of good must be recognized. Those instances where harm must be caused are not redeemed as good through the aspect of necessity. Rather, theocentric ethics acknowledges the reality of tragedy in nature, while still seeking to eliminate unnecessary and excess tragedy caused by human interference with nonhuman life.[51] For this reason it might be concluded, in medical research for example, that animal experimentation may continue, though it must be limited to those instances when the data will have accurate implications for the human species and take place only for the most extreme medical needs. Conversely, we might conclude that creating comfortable and even natural conditions in which to house these animals, even at great financial cost, is an essential response to the needs and values of these creatures.

Conclusion

In distinguishing certain elements of Gustafson's theology and ethics, I have indicated how his thought has the potential to lead Christians to a respect for nature apart from its instrumental use to humanity, without changing the nature of Christian theology. Gustafson finds a middle way between what he considers the seed of anthropocentrism that has infested Christianity and the biocentrism that dominates deep ecology. He brings Christians closer to a respect for the relationship of the whole of nature to God by reclaiming the source of science for theology. Not only does Gustafson avoid the further alienation of Christians from environmental concern, but he also restores significance to the experience of God in nature, bringing Christian theology and ethics back to an authentic expression of value.

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[45] In this way, Gustafson returns to the original concept of rights: "Rights were designed primarily as immunities, as a way to protect us from overweening governmental power, *not as entitlements*." Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (Concord: House of Anansi, 1993), 15, italics added.

[46] James M. Gustafson, "Ethical Issues in the Human Future," in *How Humans Adapt: A Biocultural Odyssey*, ed. Donald J. Ortner (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 493 and *A Sense of the Divine*, 32f.

[47] Gustafson, "Ethical Issues in the Human Future," 493.

[48] Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine*, 57.

[49] Ibid., 99.

[50] Gustafson, *Ethics* 1, 4.

[51] Gustafson, *Ethics* 2, 21.

Guarding the Gates of Zion: Hasidic Arguments against Zionism

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Abstract

Today, it is common in the popular media to draw attention to the connection between Jewish religious fervour and Israeli nationalism, and justifiably so. Groups such as Gush Emunim exhibit the powerful convergence of Torah and nationalism. Because of this, it is easy to envision a directly proportionate relationship between the level of a Jew's religious observance and his or her support for Zionism and the State of Israel. However, this is not and has never been an accurate view of the picture. Zionism's roots were in the secular Jewish world, and from the start, it met strong opposition from the religious community. All Orthodox Jews, and notably the Hasidim, strongly opposed the Zionist movement from its inception, and while some Orthodox groups later embraced the Zionist cause, many groups remain resistant. In fact, some oppose the state even as they reside within it. This paper charts the history of Hasidic opposition to Zionism, examining the theological, political and social arguments. The opinions and policies of prominent Hasidic anti-Zionist rabbis and groups is discussed and briefly contrasted to those of Hasidic Zionists. Finally, the question of whether there is something inherently Hasidic in the opposition to Zionism is addressed.

The Talmud relates the following story:

> Two scholars, sent by Rabbi Judah the Prince to supervise a community, asked to see the city guards. Upon meeting them, they told the armed guards, 'You are not the city's guardians but its destroyers. The scholars who study the Torah are the true guardians of the city [neturei karta]'.[1]

Today, it is common in the popular media to draw attention to the connection between Jewish

religious fervour and Israeli nationalism[2], and justifiably so. Groups such as Gush Emunim exhibit the powerful convergence of Torah and nationalism. Because of this, it is easy to envision a directly proportionate relationship between the level of a Jew's religious observance and his or her support for Zionism and the State of Israel. However, this is not and has never been an accurate view of the picture. Although now much less prominent than their religious Zionist counterparts, the Orthodox anti-Zionists were once the ideological majority of religious Jews.

From the time of Zionism's beginnings in the late nineteenth century, its reception by Jews of all levels of religious adherence has been mixed.[3] However, Zionism's roots were in the secular Jewish world, and from the start, it met strong opposition from the religious community. Contrary to the perception that Jewish religious extremism and nationalist sentiment go hand in hand, history presents a picture of vehement Orthodox opposition to Zionism. All Orthodox Jews, and notably the Hasidim, strongly opposed the Zionist movement from its inception, and while some Orthodox groups later embrace the Zionist cause, many groups remain resistant. In fact, some oppose the state even as they reside within it.

This essay will chart the history of Hasidic opposition to Zionism. It will examine the Hasidic position based on their theological, political and social arguments. The opinions and policies of prominent Hasidic anti-Zionist rabbis and groups will be discussed. These views will be briefly contrasted to those of some Hasidic Zionist supporters. Finally, the question of whether there is something inherently Hasidic in the opposition to Zionism will be addressed.

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[1] *Chag* 1:7, quoted in Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem Friedman, "Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 226.

[2] On Gush Emunim and Jewish fundamentalism, see for example David Hirst, "Pursuing the Millenium," *The Nation* (online version), February 2, 2004.

[3] For a broader and more in-depth discussion of the Jewish reception and criticism of early Zionism see Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), ch. 8, or Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement (1882-1904)*, tr. from the Hebrew by Lenn J. Schramm (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1988).

Zionism's Beginnings: From Europe to Palestine

The Zionist movement originated in the south of Russia, where a Jewish nationalist movement called *Hibbat Tsion* had been founded in response to the pogroms there in 1881-2.[4] From the outset, Zionism was a movement led by relatively secular Jews, and found strong opposition from the Hasidim throughout the Pale of Settlement. *Hibbat Tsion* was interpreted by the Hasidic rebbes who led their communities as having a secular orientation that would undermine the religious integrity of their communities as well as challenge their own political authority[5]. Besides the concern that Zionism would lead Jews away from religion, a large factor in Hasidic opposition to the Zionist movement was the Hasidim's general conservatism. Goldstein in fact links their opposition to Zionism (in the late nineteenth century) to their prior opposition to the Enlightenment[6]. At the same time, as Goldstein notes, many secular Jews from the middle-class, urban intelligentsia also opposed Zionism for the opposite reason: they thought it would foster more of a religious and ethnic divide between (relatively assimilated) Jews and the rest of society[7].

As Zionism gained ground, the Hasidim fought to keep it back. In 1897, Hasidic leaders began a counter-Zionist campaign, through sermons, posters and other methods. Goldstein notes that the rebbes of Kock, Radzyn, and Gur were the spearheads of this campaign, which then spread to the heads of Hasidic courts in other towns[8]. "The Hasidic rebbes and their followers, who comprised the majority of Polish Jewry, were totally opposed to the Zionist movement and employed every possible device in order to harm it and sabotage its activities."[9] This included excommunicating the Zionists as well as informing on them to the state authorities.[10]

According to J. Jasinowski, a prominent Zionist leader of the time, the Hasidim were not above using violence to achieve their aims. In his words, the rebbe in Siedlce "preached from the pulpit that pursuing Zionism to its destruction is a religious obligation … things have reached the state that our activists are being beaten up …"[11]

Despite the efforts of the Hasidim, however, the Zionist movement established itself and grew across central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, Zionist leaders were faced with the fact that the strength of their movement would be severely limited without the support of the Hasidim, who made up the majority of Polish Jewry[12] and a large part of eastern European Jewry on the whole. They continued their efforts to win over the Hasidim.

In 1912, European Orthodox leaders formed the group Agudath Israel, in order to unite Orthodox Jews in the battle against modernization and reform efforts in Judaism. The group was comprised of a variety of Orthodox Jews from both Hasidic and Mitnagdic camps.[13] According to Walter Laqueur, the Agudah "bitterly denounced Zionism. In east European communal politics it cooperated even with the assimilationists, for Zionism was the more dangerous enemy."[14] Agudath Israel became a political party, even serving in the Polish parliament[15]. Such activities marked them as assimilationists and compromisers in the minds of more zealous Orthodox groups, including the majority of Hasidim.

Indeed, Agudath Israel proceeded towards an increasingly moderate view. Facing increasing pressure to stand in solidarity with the Zionists in Palestine in the face of mounting anti-Jewish violence there, and in light of the tragedies that had taken place in Europe, the Agudah developed a more sympathetic stance toward statehood. In 1946, they pronounced support for the Jewish claim to the Land of Israel on religious grounds. In the coming of the State of Israel, "they saw the finger of God," not the redemption itself, but certainly its beginning.[16] By attributing the impending statehood to the actions of God, the Agudah avoided attributing this achievement to the efforts of the Zionists[17] or identifying with their largely secular approach. After the war, Agudath representatives signed the Israeli Declaration of Independence[18] and Agudath Israel became an Israeli political party.[19]

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[4] Joseph Goldstein, "The Beginnings of the Zionist Movement in Congress Poland: The Victory of the *Hasidim* Over the Zionists?" *Polin,* vol. 5 (1990), 114-5.
[5] Ibid., 115.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 115-16
[8] Ibid., 118.
[9] Ibid., 119.
[10] Ibid., 124.

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 24.
[13] Heilman and Friedman, 225
[14] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 409.
[15] Heilman and Friedman, 225.
[16] Laqueur, 413.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Heilman and Friedman, 227.
[19] Laqueur, 413.

Later Stages: Post-War, Post-Independence

From this point on, the majority of Orthodox Jewry accepted the idea of statehood. However, scholars are quick to attribute this change of heart to the fear provoked by global anti-Semitism rather than to any changes in the Orthodox Jews' apolitical doctrine.[20] At any rate, the Hasidim by and large remained anti-Zionist and anti-State. They were members of both the Eda Haredit and the Neturei Karta, who by 1945 had become "twin forces leading the most aggressive contra-acculturation forces and the battles for traditional Orthodoxy" in Palestine.[21]

Major Hasidic Anti-Zionist Figures

The Munkaczer Rebbe

Among Zionism's most vocal early critics was the Hasidic Rabbi of Munkacz, Hungary, Hayyim Elazar Shapira (1872-1937). According to Allan L. Nadler, Shapira was not only the most militant rabbinic opponent to Zionism in his day, but was obsessive in his devotion to the cause.[22] His conservatism and that of ultra-orthodox Judaism in general is exemplified by the motto of R. Moses Sofer of Pressburg, in which Shapira was a firm believer: "*hadash asur min ha-Torah*" (all that is new is biblically prohibited).[23] In line with Goldstein's appraisal of Hasidic anti-Zionism, Nadler situates the Munkaczer Rebbe's rejection of Zionism within the larger rejection by the Hasidic leadership of all things modern, beginning from the time of the *Haskala* (Jewish Enlightenment) onward.[24]

In Shapira's view, the religious-Zionist movement was an even greater threat to tradition than secular Jewish nationalism [25] because it was in fact a form of false Messianism, and "a repudiation of one of the thirteen principles of the Jewish faith."[26] This Maimonidean principle called for the Jews to passively await the redemption rather than seeking to bring it on through their own initiative.[27]

Furthermore, religious Zionists were even worse than secular Zionists to R. Shapira, because in his view they were heretics masquerading as pious individuals, whose influence could lead others astray.[28] R. Shapira's anti-Zionist passion erupted in such outpourings as the labeling of Zionism as a "demonic force."[29]

Shapira's opposition to Jewish political organizations of any kind brought him into conflict even with other anti-Zionist Hasidic leaders such as the Gerer Rebbe, Abraham Mordechai Alter, who was the most influential Hasidic rebbe of the day[30] and the founder of Agudath Israel. To Shapira, Agudath Israel was a group of "crypto-Zionist heretics parading as Torah-faithful Jews."[31]

However, R. Shapira was not against Jews living in Israel; his Munkaczer Hasidim had a yeshiva (religious school) in Jerusalem.[32]

The Satmarer Rebbe

R. Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979) and his Satmar Hasidim were early, vocal and consistent opponents to Zionism. Satmarers continue to be so in the present day, now under the leadership of R. Yoel's nephew, R. Moshe Teitelbaum. Yoel Teitelbaum and his original followers hailed from Hungary, a bastion of Hasidic ultra-conservatism and anti-Zionism. After the annihilation of Jewish life in Hungary in 1944 and the Holocaust, Teitelbaum and his surviving followers settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York. Today, Satmarers are also found in Israel and many other places around the Western world.[33]

Satmarers are key organizers of demonstrations against Israel. Sometimes they target specific religious affronts, such as Israeli violations of religious customs, and sometimes they demonstrate against the existence of the State in general.[34] They also maintain a bond with the Neturei Karta in Jerusalem and provide financial assistance to various cultural and educational establishments in Israel that refuse government funding.[35]

R. Yoel devoted an enormous amount of energy and resources to combating Zionism. American Satmarers "picketed embassies, organized boycotts,

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[20] See Laqueur, 412-13, also Israel Rubin, *Satmar: Two Generations of An Urban Island,* 2nd Edition (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), 35.
[21] Heilman and Friedman, 226.
[22] Allan L.Nadler, "The War on Modernity of R. Hayyim Elazar Shapira of Munkacz,"*Modern Judaism*, vol.14, Issue 3 (Oct 1994), 233.
[23] Ibid., 233-34.
[24] Ibid., 235,
[25] Ibid., 237.
[26] Ibid., 238.
[27] Ibid., 242.

[28] Ibid., 293.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 240.
[31] Ibid., 293.
[32] Ibid., 242.
[33] Rubin, 48.
[34] Ibid., 204.
[35] Ibid.

and argued their case in leaflets and in the press. … In Manhattan mystified onlookers saw thousands of Satmar Hasidim in mass demonstrations against the presence of Israeli officials."[36] In the 1970s and '80s, the Satmarers bought full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* to denounce the Jewish State.[37]

R. Yoel also distinguished himself from other Hasidim in his practice of blaming Zionism for all modern Jewish misfortune, including the tragedy of the Holocaust.[38] This belief is of course very controversial and, although it may be shared by other Hasidic groups, it is certainly not universally held in the Hasidic world. In the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, "the tragedy of the Holocaust is an unanswerable question. There is no human rationale whatsoever that can explain such indescribable suffering."[39]

This particular difference in opinion may be a key to understanding the fact that the Lubavitch Hasidim have come to accept Zionism and the State of Israel while the Satmarers have not. Whereas, prior to the Second World War, the Lubavitchers shared the Satmarers' demonization of all things nationalistic and Zionist, after the Holocaust the Lubavitch view changed dramatically to endorsement of the Zionist movement. This must certainly be reflective of their Rebbe's above-mentioned position. The Satmarers, in their belief that the Zionists had brought on the Holocaust through their heretical movement to establish a Jewish state, naturally became even more vociferously anti-Zionist post-war, and all the more determined to flush out any tinges of modernity and secularity from their midst. The Lubavitch, on the other hand, have become relatively open to the outside world, wearing more contemporary styles of clothing, for instance[40] and fostering interactions with non-Orthodox and secular Jews. In Israel, the Lubavitchers became "a vital link between the government of Israel and the Orthodox community" and have furthermore become champions of the Zionist right wing in taking a stand against proposals to surrender land for peace.[41]

Meanwhile, the Satmarers find themselves on the same side of political demonstrations as Palestinian nationalists. They continue to blame the Holocaust on the Zionists, voicing opinions that border on conspiracy theory. Take, for example, the following statements made by a spokesperson for the Monsey, New York branch of the Neturei Karta, in a recent interview:

…the Zionists wanted to get Jews to Palestine to build their state, so they needed people, they needed cannon fodder. And to do that they even made deals with the Nazis. There are 51 documents in a book by Rabbi Veismandel that show how they collaborated with the Germans. The Germans were not going to kill the Jews of Hungary, but for the Zionists… spiritually we believe that they caused God's punishment of the Jews by trying to fight the exile.[42]

An ironic side note is that the Satmarer Rebbe in fact owed his life to his despised enemies, the Zionists. In December 1944, Zionist leaders bribed some German officials into transporting a trainload of Jews out of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and into Switzerland at a price of $1000 per head. R. Yoel Teitelbaum was among the 1,368 Jews saved.[43]

Anti-Zionists in Israel: The Eda Haredit and the Neturei Karta

The Eda Haredit was formed in Israel around 1917. Its mandate was to combat the forces of Zionism and secularism. Its members were largely yeshiva students who "eschewed the passivity of the Old Yishuv and espoused an activist and aggressive struggle against Zionism and all it represented."[44] However, the Eda Haredit were only a marginal force in Israel, being few in number and lacking in political skill. Moreover, they were fighting a losing battle as mainstream Orthodox sentiment veered increasingly towards the settlement and building of *Eretz Yisrael*. Members of Agudath Israel continued in increasing numbers to move to Palestine. While they remained affiliated with the Eda Haredit until the 1940s, the latter held them in low esteem since many Agudists willingly made concessions to the British rulers, such as allowing English to be taught in their schools.[45]

In 1939, a group of Orthodox anti-Zionists in Jerusalem who believed that "only religious activity

[36] Jerome R. Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 39.
[37] Heilman and Friedman, 234.
[38] Mintz, 37.
[39] Ibid., 51.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 52.

[42] R. Yisroel Dovid Weiss, quoted in Brian Lipson, "Interview – Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss," *T/F* Issue No. 1 (Montreal: Bluebomber Recordings/ Press, Fall 2003), 7.
[43] Mintz, 27.
[44] Heilman and Friedman, 224.
[45] Ibid., 225.

could truly protect Judaism"[46] established themselves under a new name, the Neturei Karta, or "guardians of the city." They remain active to this day. The group was originally made up of the descendents of pre-Zionist residents of Israel. The Neturei Karta had the support of the followers of the rabbis of Brisk (Poland) and Satmar (Hungary), who were living in America and other Western countries, and the blessing of several talmudic sages such as Hazon Ish.[47] According to the Neturei Karta, anyone who accepted the state of Israel was an apostate, because the purpose of the state was "to lead the Jews away from religion."[48] They drew no distinction between the Agudah, which had originally been an anti-Zionist group, and the Mizrachi, a religious Zionist group, since the Agudah was now compromising with the Zionists.[49] The Neturei Karta took a radical and uncompromising stand against the state:

> [The Neturei Karta] refused to take part in the war of independence of 1948, and demanded the internationalization of Jerusalem under the supervision of the United Nations. They refused to accept Israeli identity cards, for they believed that any concession to secularism and modern life, however small, would sooner or later spell doom for traditional Judaism as they understood it.

The Eda Haredit went to such extremes as petitioning the ruling British government and the League of Nations to save them from perceived Zionist oppression, and enlisting the help of Arab leaders in the fight against Zionist domination.[50]

The Neturei Karta and Satmarers in Israel today continue to refuse all affiliation with the state, protesting against its existence through such measures as refusing army service and eschewing the right to vote, as well as organizing and staging protest rallies.[51]

While the Neturei Karta claim the Satmarer Rebbe as their spiritual leader[52], in certain respects they are too extreme even for the Satmarers. For instance, the Neturei Karta have "solidly allied" themselves with the P.L.O. and its leader, Yasser Arafat, who has commended them for their refusal to recognize the State of Israel and for "considering

themselves as Palestinians."[53] The Satmar Rebbe, by contrast, chose not to meet with Arafat during a visit to Israel in 1994, viewing the P.L.O. as "an organization that has killed, and anyone who associates with it is a killer."[54]

The Theological Arguments Against Zionism

The Hasidim justify their opposition to Zionism with the declaration that it is inimical to traditional Judaism, both doctrinally and in practice. Their arguments on this front have remained the same from Zionism's inception to the present day.

The fundamental Hasidic anti-Zionist argument is that the return to Israel and the establishment of a Jewish kingdom or state can only be accomplished by a Messiah who is sent by God, and not by human beings[55] of the Messiah. The Zionist movement constitutes a denial of God's supreme authority over the fate of humans.[56]

However strongly evinced, the anti-Zionist argument contains some elements of contradiction when held up to biblical law. The conviction that the Jews' return to Israel must only come about through the messianic redemption conflicts with a biblical commandment to settle the Land of Israel (*Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Israel*).[57] Early Orthodox anti-Zionist leaders discussed this problem, as Laqueur notes.[58] One explanation they gave was that this commandment was merely one of 248 *mitzvot*, and that it could potentially clash with any of the others.[59] However, this argument was not deemed to be convincing. Another argument was that Jews are exempt from fulfilling the commandment of settling the Land of Israel if it presents physical danger, economic obstacles, or the impossibility of studying the Torah, among other reasons.[60] Further still, others argued that this *mitzvah* did not apply at this time, since God had put the Jews in *golus* (exile) as punishment for their sins, and it was not up to them to determine when their sentence would end.[61] Agudah Israel countered this argument with the

[46] Ibid.
[47] Laqueur, 412.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 409.
[51] Mintz, 38.
[52] Rubin, 48.

[53] Clyde Haberman, "Hailed in Zion, Anti-Zionist 'King' From the U.S." *The New York Times (1857-Current file)*; June 8, 1994, A1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, A4.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Laqueur, 408.
[56] Nadler, 237.
[57] Laqueur, 407.
[58] Ibid., 408
[59] Laqueur, 407.
[60] Laqueur, 408.
[61] Ibid.

proclamation that Israeli statehood was being brought about by God.[62]

Political and Social Reasons

A major reason for opposing Zionism was the belief that it constituted a serious deviation from traditional Judaism in many respects, one of which was an ideal of apoliticism. According to proponents of this argument, the Jews had never and should not take part in politics of any kind, or form any kind of political associations, even if they were Orthodox in nature. R. Shapira was horrified by the Jews' participation in such organizations as the League of Nations. [63]

Shapira advocated maintaining the *shtadlanut* system, under which the European Jewish community had been operating for centuries, in which the Jews were treated as a religious minority and were at the mercy of local authorities, to whom they pleaded for favour.[64] The Zionist movement, however, operated on the principle that the Jews were a nation in the political sense and that they should be accorded the political rights and powers of sovereign nations.

To anti-Zionists such as Shapira, Zionists were simply a new version of *Maskilim* (the assimilationists of the Enlightenment era), and nationalism was a foreign concept the Zionists had borrowed from Western Europe.[65] Indeed, the Satmarers maintain that democracy is valid only for non-Jewish political communities. Therefore, the Zionist vision of the State is invalid, as the Messianic State will be a complete theocracy. In such a State, only the laws of the Torah apply, "as interpreted by its authorized expositors."[66] However, critics argue that this unrealistically inflates the tradition of Jewish quietism.[67]

Another argument against Zionism deals with its secular nature. The Satmarers hold that only pious people can bring on the redemption. In this way, they reject Rabbi Avraham Kook's often quoted view that "the irreligious, by virtue of their zeal and sacrifice for national goals, are unconscious agents of the divine redemption."[68]

Finally, Hasidic anti-Zionists argue that Zionism destroys the very heart of Jewish identity by replacing religion with secular nationalism. As Ehud Luz explains, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shalom Dov Baer, believed that "Zionism cannot remain neutral toward religion and tradition—as Herzl, for example, believed. Zionism is compelled to reject religion in order to cultivate the national spirit."[69] In a letter of 1903, the Rebbe argued that:

> …one who subscribes to the Zionist covenant no longer thinks himself at all obligated to observe the Torah and mitzvot, nor can we hope that he will someday return to them…because by his lights he is a proper Jew by virtue of being a loyal nationalist.[70]

The Other Side: Hasidic Supporters of Zionism

It must be pointed out that while the Hasidim universally opposed early Zionism, within Orthodox Judaism as a whole the response to Zionism varied. For example, the early religious-Zionist Mizrachi movement was formed by rabbinic leaders who supported Zionism and wanted to give it Orthodox representation to ensure that it pursued a religious agenda.[71] In more recent times, groups such as the prominent Israeli activist organization of religious Zionists, Gush Emunim, show that Hasidim today display a range of sentiments towards Zionism and nationalism.[72]

The Lubavitchers are also Zionist supporters, as mentioned earlier. As proposed earlier in this essay, there appears to be some compatibility between their theological view of the Holocaust and their sympathy for Zionism, which may in part explain the reversal in their stance on Zionism from the pre-war days of the Previous Rebbe to the post-war time of R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson. However, such a line of inquiry is beyond the scope of this essay.

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[62] Laqueur, 413.
[63] Nadler, 243.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Laqueur, 408.
[66] Norman Lamm, "The Ideology of the Neturei Karta, According to the Satmar Version," *Tradition*, vol. 12 (Fall 1971), 46.
[67] Ibid., 52.
[68] Ibid., 46.

[69] Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement(1882-1904)*, tr. from the Hebrew by Lenn J. Schramm (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 215.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Nadler, 233.
[72] On Gush Emunim and religious Zionism in general, see R. Scott Appleby's, *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, and Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky's *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*.

Conclusion: Is Anti-Zionism Hasidic in Character?

To what extent do the philosophies of these anti-Zionists represent the original spirit of Hasidism?[73] In Nadler's view, the vision of R. Shapira constitutes an outright reversal of traditional Hasidic values. For one thing, the Hasidism of the Besht was an optimistic movement that espoused belief in the transformative powers of redemption, and that all Jews, no matter how sinful or low, could redeem themselves through repentance and sincere heartfelt prayer to God. Shapira on the other hand believed that Jews who sinned were no longer Jews and were not to be associated with.[74] Zionists were infidels and heretics who should be persecuted and never brought back to the fold.[75]

Secondly, Shapira rejected the Besht's focus on joyful service of God and distancing from asceticism.[76] In Shapira's view, the Besht's council was no longer applicable to the current generation, whose sinfulness was too extreme, and had to be mediated through strict self-denial and penitence.[77]

Third, Shapira rejected the social pluralism implied by the Besht's tolerance and outreach to Jews who had strayed from Orthodoxy, celebrated by such modern writers as Martin Buber.[78] In Nadler's view, the philosophy of R. Shapira shows a transformation of the spirit of Hasidism from a "populist, optimistic spiritual revolution into the most pessimistic, elitist and reactionary religious movement in Jewish life."[79]

However, such an argument implies that R. Shapira is representative of all of Hasidism of his time. This is a questionable proposition at best, since other Hasidic leaders of that era, such as the Gerer Rebbe, endorsed settlement in Israel. As noted earlier in this essay, many Hasidic leaders at this time were members of Agudath Israel. While this group was anti-Zionist initially, it eventually adopted a more moderate political stance that was quite distant from the militancy and reactionism of R. Shapira and his followers. Furthermore, while groups such as the Satmarers have maintained their original vociferously anti-Zionist stance to the present day, other Hasidic groups such as the Lubavitch have changed their perspectives over time. Furthermore, contrary to Nadler's assessment of the Hasidim post-R. Shapira as pessimistic and elitist, Lubavitchers continue optimistically to reach out to Jews the world over, regardless of their background, religious affiliation or level of observance, encouraging them back into the fold.

What compels Hasidim such as the Satmarers to maintain their uncompromising anti-Zionist position while other Hasidic and Orthodox groups have changed over time? Since some Hasidim have become Zionists, we cannot propose that there is something inherently incompatible between Zionism and Hasidism. It is difficult to say whether there is a Hasidic character to religious anti-Zionism, since its proponents come from both Hasidic and non-Hasidic Orthodox communities. Furthermore, Hasidim are not a homogenous group, and hold a variety of attitudes towards Zionism. At the same time, it is possible to draw several conclusions about the nature of the relationship between Hasidism and Zionism, and to propose several ways in which Beshtian Hasidism may inform the anti-Zionist stance.

As noted earlier, those who oppose Zionism tend to be the most strongly conservative of Hasidim, whose objection to Zionism stems in a large part from their rejection of modernity in general, with Zionism as just one of its many evils. The Lubavitch, with their policy of relative openness to the outside world (compared to other Hasidic groups) are also more open to Zionism.

Does Zionism contravene Hasidic beliefs and values? Would the Besht (the original Hasidic leader) have endorsed Zionism or condemned it? We can only speculate. It is argued that the Besht advocated personal, spiritual transformation, and preferred theurgic activity to political activism, as Murray J. Rosman argues.[80]

Modern commentators on Beshtian Hasidism, such as Martin Buber, emphasize the humanistic elements of the Besht's teachings.[81] Buber has written extensively on reconciliation and coexistence between Jews and Palestinians.[82] A similar concern for human rights can be seen in recent writings of the Neturei Karta, one of whose American representatives, R. Yisroel Dovid Weiss, recently

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[73] That is, if we can agree that such a thing exists. For the purpose of this essay and its speculative conclusion, I will assume that the spirit of Hasidism reflects what we know of the teachings and life of the Besht.

[74] Nadler, 252.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 254.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 255.

[79] Ibid., 256.

[80] Murray J. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 110-112.

[81] See Buber's *Hasidism and Modern Man*.

[82] See *The Martin Buber Reader*, ed. Asher D. Biemann, Part VII.

attended the memorial service of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas who was assassinated by the Israeli army in March, 2004. R. Weiss offered condolence to his Palestinian "cousins" and professed hope for the day in which Arabs and Jews will "live side by side under Palestinian rule over the entire Holy Land."[83]

However, it cannot be argued that either Buber or the Neturei Karta (or the teachings of the Besht, for that matter) represent Hasidism as a whole. Satmarer anti-Zionism may be less of a departure from historical European Orthodox Jewish communal ways than is Lubavitcher Zionism, or Neturei Karta's outreach to the Palestinian community, for that matter. However, the Satmarers' anti-State activism could also be said to contravene the quietism of the Hasidic tradition in Europe.

Rather than leading to the formulation of any conclusive distinctions between Hasidic and non-Hasidic religious anti-Zionism, the study of the Orthodox Jewish response to Zionism reveals the diversity of modern Hasidic belief and practice. While these days, ultra-Orthodoxy and religious zealotry are not necessarily the first thing that come to mind when anti-Israel activism is mentioned, this is nonetheless a valid connection to make in the case of many Hasidim today. As unlikely partners as they may be, Hasidic Jews currently share ideological space with Palestinian rights groups and other affiliated "left wing" groups, while approaching the issue of Zionism from a decidedly unique religious perspective.

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[83] This speech is entirely reproduced on the Neturei Karta website under the title "Orthodox Jews Responding to the Assassination of Sheikh Yassin." See http://www.nkusa.org.

What Motivates the Roadside Shrines for Young Automobile Accident Victims?

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Abstract

As recently as thirty years ago, impromptu roadside shrines of the type we see so commonly now were virtually non-existent in Canada and the U.S. Now nearly each time a road accident claims a young life, an ad hoc shrine springs up at the place where that life was lost. This paper explores, from various points of view, some of the possible motivations for these memorial shrines. In coming to terms with the changing zeitgeist, we may try to understand phenomena by viewing them through various lenses. Accordingly, in this essay, reference is made to material from ritual theory, morphic field theory, and post-modern thought.

This essay records a thought experiment about the impromptu roadside shrines that mark the scenes of violent and unexpected deaths, usually of young people. Over the past twenty or thirty years, these have increasingly become part of the Canadian landscape. They are seen in the U.S. and some other countries as well.

As we pass through life, society constantly changes around us. Old institutions wither away, and new practices come into being, sometimes gaining prominence in a relatively short time. Such is the case with the roadside shrines. What it is about our era that might have caused such a custom to take root? Seen repeatedly, yet only through the corners of our fast-moving eyes, these shrines exist mysteriously, as fleeting visions on the edge of our busy perambulations. Ironically, even passers-by wanting to take a closer look can scarcely do so. To stop beside the very busy roadways where the shrines are located is to risk the same fate as those who are memorialized there.

This paper does not discuss particular shrines in detail. Rather, it is the "invention" and the proliferation of this type of shrine that I seek to account for. By looking through various lenses of thought—historical, sociological, psychological and scientific—I put forward for consideration some possible explanations for these shrines, the recurring sight of which has become firmly established as part of our daily experience.

Of course there are certain common explanations given by the people who erect the shrines, the most obvious being to help bereaved families and friends come to terms with the shock of sudden death. In a letter to the *Edmonton Journal,* one young victim's mother explains that the visits and placing of memorabilia at the crash site by the friends of her son helped his family immensely, by showing them how his life, so precious to them, had also touched the lives of many others.[1]

Other reasons often given are to keep memory alive and to serve as a warning to others. Where a twenty-two year old Wisconsin mother was struck and killed by a car at a city intersection while strapping her baby into her vehicle, her family established a permanent shrine. Each week, they gather there and pray, hoping that the shrine will serve as a warning, and thus help them feel their loved one's death was not in vain.[2]

These shrines evoke strong emotion. Newspapers regularly report controversy around them. Marnie Ko describes the mixed reactions that followed when the City of Edmonton announced its intention to remove one of the larger shrines. While some agreed that "such public displays of grief are an eyesore and a potential hazard to motorists' concentration," others expressed anger at having this avenue for expressing their grief curtailed by bureaucracy. Ko reports that in the face of strong opposition, Edmonton softened its stance, allowing the memorials to stand for a certain period of time before they are removed.[3] In the same article, Ko quotes Gary Laderman, an associate professor of religion at Emory University in Atlanta, who considers them "*essential*" (italics mine) to grieving families, saying that they "repair a hole in the social fabric."[4] If this is so, how and when have they become so necessary?

In the United States, a Massachusetts newspaper article published in 1999 describes another controversy arising out of attempts at regulating the shrines following the huge proliferation of memorials on a particular section of road already considered dangerous. When the article was published, relatives of accident victims who died on Route 88 in Westport alone had "posted more than twenty

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[1] Marnie Ko, "*Human Touch or Roadside Clutter?*" *Report Newsmagazine*, February 18, 2002. http://www.marnieko.com/shrines.htm.
[2] Rick Barrett, "Roadside Memorials Bring Both Comfort and Concern," *Journal Sentinel,* May 21, 2001, via http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/may01/shrine22052101a.asp, 2.
[3] Ko, 2-3.
[4] Ibid., 2-3.

crosses, and a Star of David."[5] One mother whose late son's memorial had been taken down because of road work, angry that this public "warning" might turn out to be illegal, insisted that she would restore it.[6]

Survivor's guilt must also be particularly strong when the young die with unexpected suddenness. The living naturally question whether they could have done something to prevent the tragedy. Parents may berate themselves for decisions made, such as lending the car that night, or failing to control well-known risks such as drinking or drugs, or too many teens in cars. When accidents take only some lives, survivors wonder "Why not me?" Where drinking or other risky behaviours are factors, the shrines must create an eerie reminder of guilt and shame, perhaps at the same time providing some avenues of assuaging such feelings through ritual atonement. Certainly, friends return to the scene, often repeatedly.

The rationales given by family members for erecting them, and the controversies, too, are instructive in understanding the recent proliferation of roadside shrines. Yet I believe there are other, more complex factors at play that might account for these new practices. The latter part of the twentieth century brought about a huge wave of social and cultural change, including a huge increase in both urbanization and cultural diversity. Today's towns and cities are the homes of many overlapping cultural and faith communities, making it virtually impossible to carry on traditional ways that seemed merely "normal" fifty, or even thirty years ago.

Interestingly, the shrines exhibit marked commonalities that reveal their roots in traditional Christian burial customs. Crosses, flowers, and epitaphs are almost universal features, with personal memorabilia usually displayed as well. Although our communities are now very diverse in terms of religious backgrounds, for the most part, the shrines at first glance do not appear to reflect this diversity.

The Surrey Leader recently published on its front page a photo of an impromptu shrine that was placed at the death site of a young man named Gurjinder Singh Sidhu, who was, according to the newspaper, gunned down as a result of "Indo-Canadian" gang violence. Although he was rooted in the Sikh tradition, his memorial shrine follows the common form. Along with a bouquet of white roses,

chrysanthemums and ferns, and a white teddy bear, a simple home-made cross of unpainted lumber had been driven into the grass, with a smaller white cross propped against the foot of the larger one.[7] What are we to make of this? The cross is an ancient symbol, and as used in the roadside shrines may not convey only the usual Christian allusion. Tom Harpur reveals in a recent book that the cross was "by far the most universal of all religious icons…[and had] a range of wholly different meanings for untold millennia" before Christianity came into being, symbolizing "spirit plunged into matter," the intersection between earthly and spiritual life.[8]

Seen through intuitive eyes, rather than the lenses of logic, the shrines may convey subtler meanings. At the gate of the shopping mall, the veritable church of secular consumerism, the shrines remind us of the ultimate mysteries of life and death. Perhaps our soulful yearnings, so neglected by modernity, are re-asserting themselves through such spontaneous expressions of unconscious wisdom.

A salient feature of the roadside shrines is their existence in a border zone, in several senses. Physically, they exist on the ambiguous border between the public road and either the adjacent private land, or the wild land that borders the highways between towns. Temporally, they also occupy a transitional era; modernity is almost exhausted; a new *zeitgeist* is coming into being. Yet our vision of what form this may take is limited precisely because we are living within this liminal time when old assumptions and habits of thought are dying away but new ones have yet to be firmly established. Indeed, as well as occupying liminal zones in terms of time and space, metaphysically also, these shrines occupy a border between thought eras. In our time, the extremes of secular scientism that for too long made our long-suffering planet seem a mere thing to be exploited are now giving way to movements toward re-sacralizing the earth.

In the same way that secular scientism roughly exploited the desacralized earth, secular humanism virtually defined the human soul out of existence. Now contemporary writers in a wide variety of fields are focusing on the need to alter the flawed attitudes bequeathed to us by modernity, as we finally begin to understand their tragic limitations and take action to protect our planet from the depredations that have resulted from these attitudes. Looking back into

[5] "Law would limit roadside memorials," *South Coast Today*, December 6, 2002, via
http://www.southcoasttoday.com/daily/02-99/01-16-99/a01sr007.htm.
[6] "Law would limit roadside memorials."

[7] Dan Ferguson, "What is taking place almost defies logic: Forum examines increasing violence among young Indo-Canadian men," *The Surrey Leader,* June 19, 2002.
[8] Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2004), 43-44.

history, we see that the distorting lens of modernity has not always been worn, and in our time, we are obliged to change lenses once again. As Dudley Young reminds us, "The evidence is increasingly accumulating to suggest that the occidental experiment in secular scientism over the past four centuries has suppressed certain vital processes of a more or less religious nature, and this is becoming intolerable."[9]

Young is only one of many writers on the cusp between eras. What was so clearly "known" during modernity is steadily being eroded, made irrelevant. Perhaps creating shrines for the young who die suddenly and unexpectedly is a spontaneous response to the changing ritual needs of the occupants of this border zone between eras.

To explain what I mean by the end of modernity, let me turn to the writing of Peyman Vahabzadeh. Writing from a sociological-anthropological standpoint, he vividly explains how many of the assumptions that we have lived with are losing their long unquestioned validity. Vahabzadeh says that society is "withering…as a unified totality" and thus we witness how "the dominant norms of progress, the cultural orientations of the programmed society become not only increasingly pluralistic but in most cases also divergent or even irreconcilable."[10] Indeed, we witness the pluralism, the divergence, the tendency towards irreconcilability of views, all around us. Vahabzadeh speaks of "the shift to a post-modern era, which passes through a moment of exhaustion of universal norms."[11]

Without a unified, normative society around us to define our ritual customs, ritualizing thus happens on an *ad hoc* basis, as we move through the transitional era. The individual "actors" posited by Vahabzadeh, as they articulate their own experience without reference to unitary principles, are becoming ever less inclined to permit overarching controls over their lives. Logically, this would include refusing to be told what forms and places of ritual are permissible or socially acceptable.

From a socio-political perspective, Vahabzadeh also speaks of the "eroding distinction between public and private spheres" within the modern liberal

democracies. [12] It strikes me that these shrines provide an excellent illustration of the blurring between public and private, a distinction which Vahabzadeh rightly argues has been central to liberal democratic ideas. In an age when cultural diversity is as much a norm as the vast net of instant communications systems, we can no longer escape from the awareness of how knowledge itself is affected by our post-modern conditions. In spite of what Vahabzadeh calls the "passionate craving" we have inherited from the Enlightenment thinkers to do so, it becomes increasingly impossible to apply one universal standard of truth to all. [13]

Writers who attempt to define the early post-modern era agree that it is vastly different from the world that those of us in middle age so clearly remember. The absence of overarching truths is a hallmark of the new era. Post-modernism has meant moving away from universalist principles that have long been dominant. As cracks open in our habitual ways of thinking, we cannot fail to see the tragic limitations of secular scientism; it is increasingly clear that our earth can no longer sustain the treatment that has been meted out under its mesmerizing sway. Happily, the emerging era is not nihilistic. Indeed its coming into being is at least in part a positive response to the negative results of the destructive path that humanity followed in accepting the logic of the modern age. Post-modernity, says Vahabzadeh, is not one but many new movements.[14] Thus the creation of the shrines may be viewed as a new social movement, a project carried out by actors who refuse to be governed by hegemonic definitions of how things are supposed to be done.

The notion of a need to revive the soul and re-sacralize the earth has been voiced with increasing frequency and urgency in recent years, by scientists as well as humanists. By comparing us to "primitives" of the past, Dudley Young accentuates the serious blind spot in the thought of our era, a flaw which once seen, necessitates that we give up our exhausted and exhausting ways and be willing to initiate new ways of living. "Unlike us," he says, "primitive man was not disposed to separate his own soul from the world soul. Soul is soul, invisible power that moves in the wind," which cannot "be chopped up and compartmentalized." Young thinks "there is much to be said for such primitive stupidity."[15]

[9] Dudley Young, *The Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), xvi-xvii.

[10] Peyman Vahabzadeh, *Articulated Experiences: Toward a Radical Phenomenology of Contemporary Social Movements* (Burnaby, B.C.: Simon Fraser University, 2000), 38.

[11] Vahabzadeh, 24.

[12] Ibid., 38.

[13] Ibid., 38.

[14] Vahabzadeh, 311.

[15] Dudley Young, *The Origins of the Sacred*, xxi.

Young is by no means the only writer to discuss the urgent need to take action to counter some of the excesses and imbalances of modernity. Undeniably, the twentieth century, in spite of its brilliant contributions to civilization, was also a time of unprecedented violence. Is it any wonder, when the overarching "truths" of modernity permitted such horrors, that people would lose trust in and rebel against the institutions that controlled them? Perhaps the shrines signal that individuals are choosing now to listen to their own soul movements, as they take back some control of the ritualization of grief from the hands of the long-powerful institution of the church. And perhaps, rebelling against the consumer creed of our times, people are creating the *ad hoc* shrines to express themselves individually, soulfully, even artistically, refusing the standardized "tasteful" consumption advocated as *de rigueur* by the funeral home.

Books on caring for the soul have been proliferating in recent years. Among the different writers on this subject, there is a common message: we have been neglecting our souls and must now devote conscious effort to cultivate them. Thomas Moore has entitled one of his books precisely, *Care of the Soul*; James Hillman uses the ancient term "daimon" to describe the individual soul that accompanies us from birth. The character you are born with, he says, "is given, a gift, as the old stories say, from the guardians upon your birth."[16] David Whyte expresses a similar idea, saying: "The soul of a person lies outside of time and belongs to the unknown, it is the sacred otherness of existence…the soul is owned by no one, not even by the personality formed around it."[17]

Throughout human history, living and dead have been recognized as souls. There have always been rituals for the souls of the dead. The twentieth century also had these rituals, and so will such rituals undoubtedly continue in new forms, as a new *zeitgeist* establishes itself and becomes visible. The shrines may well reflect the human need and desire to dig deeper into soul stuff, as well as to participate consciously and believingly in the re-sacralizing of our home planet.

Meanwhile, as pilgrims in a threshold era, seeing the future of our civilization only dimly, we mark the passing of our dead beside the road, revealing ourselves as wayfarers who wish to leave our mark. I

suggest that the *ad hoc* shrines give public and visible expression to human feelings about the nature of the world, and our place in it. As we leave behind the known country of the twentieth century and travel the mysterious road between two eras, we ritually mark the roadside, commemorating those who have briefly inhabited this liminal era, between modernity, and…what, exactly? The new era cannot yet be quite seen.

It seems likely that the non-rational, insight-providing part of the psyche is a powerful motivator in the creation of the shrines. Although reason dictates that the dead cannot literally remain among us, we still attempt to preserve them effectively in memory. We are loath to let go our dead, especially those who die young, unexpectedly, when they "haven't yet lived," or left any descendents. It is much harder to accept such a death than it is to come to terms with the death of someone who "has had a good life," is old, or has for long been ill or suffering.

In the past, Canadian society provided a unitary and standard outlet for the very human need people have to remember and honour their dead. Until World War II and beyond, people tended to remain in a single community for life. As recently as about half a century ago, it was the norm for Canadians to die at home and be buried in the grounds of the churches they belonged to. Only during late modernity, as secular professionals replaced religious leaders in so many ritual roles, did deaths begin routinely to take place in hospitals. When people died at home, their souls were cared for by their churches, mainly various Christian denominations. Church funerals carried out the death rites, and the bereaved were supported by a faith community of people well-known to them. Parishioners were buried beside their churches, providing a locus for the souls of the dead. Even people who were not regular church attendants retained some loose affiliation with a church; thus their dead would be buried by "their" church. Close to home, these graves remained accessible to the bereaved through the changing seasons of mourning: for visiting, for tending, and as an abiding presence. When one went to church, the souls of the ancestors were there too.

Now many of these funerary rituals appear to have been transposed to the roadside shrines. Yet, writing in *The Vancouver Sun*, Shelly Fralic reports that the people she interviewed said their loved ones had *also* had traditional funerals and cemetery burials. Meanwhile, the ad hoc shrines are often

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[16] James Hillman, *The Soul's Code, in Search of Character and Calling* (New York: Warner Books, 1996), 7.

[17] David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused* (New York: Anchor Doubleday), 22.

visited on the anniversaries of the deaths they commemorate.[18]

Why the "duplication" of similar rituals? And why the attenuation or displacement of traditional burial rituals and the proliferation of the roadside shrines? It is likely that on the one hand, many people feel less closely tied to a nearby community church than they did in the past, and on the other hand, individuals want a freer hand than the church provides to articulate their unique experiences of grieving in their own way, at the site "where he drew his last breath." Importance has been given to graves from time immemorial, and marking the place of death is also an ancient practice. In like fashion, Fralic reports, the shrine builders show a marked tendency to sacralize the site of the death, as the title of her article suggests.[19] Evidently, marking the place where the spirit has left the body has gained in prominence at the same time that churchyard visits and grave tending have become less the norm than in earlier times.

Perhaps the shrines also permit mourners to participate in an eternal time that folds back on itself, in a way that can be experienced neither through standardized rituals nor in rational-linear time. This may be particularly true when the bereaved lack a strong emotional tie to the church that buries the loved one. Psychologists know that it is possible through non-rational thought processes to re-participate in experiences that are already "over and done with" in a rational sense.[20] From a psychological perspective, as well as from a ritual studies one, through the shrines apparently it is possible to re-establish or maintain a strong sense of the connection with the dead.

During secular modernity, and even now as we struggle blindly on the cusp of post-modernity, we have to a large degree lost touch with what has been called "timeless time." In the simple act of attending a church where family ancestors were buried, and participating once a week in church rituals and services, people had a regular outlet in their lives for participating in the part of life that is outside of the arrow of time. In sacred time, the dead were present

again, and God could be felt. Before the middle of the twentieth century, church rituals assuaged a human need that soulless secular modernity unconsciously squelched in the years that followed. When the dead were associated with a specific place in the earth, they could be evoked and remembered there, whenever their loved ones felt the need. The practice of cremation, which has become common relatively recently in Canada, also means there is no particular place to associate with the dead.

From a psychological perspective, the shrines also appear to have a darker side. Though they clearly provide comfort and closure for the people who erect them, they are often an emotionally jarring presence for passers-by. We are a culture that pursues materialism, and avoids thinking about death. Yet right at the very gates of the shopping malls, the veritable churches of consumerism, these shrines remind us of what has been repressed, providing a strong counterpoint to the carefully engineered illusions created by marketers. Ironically, this is a gift, a salutary reminder of the undone psychic work of our spiritually blind and death-denying culture.

Ronald Grimes says it is critical in our time to re-establish powerful, convincing rituals that penetrate "deeply into the bone." Grimes suggests that Mexican culture has a healthier attitude toward death, and more effective death rites. Mexicans, he says, greet death, "belieffully" and playfully as well as ironically, and suggests that we might well do the same. He advocates turning death rites into celebrations which provide conditions for dwelling and communicating with the dead, "*as if* they had presence and counsel to offer."[21] Gina Hyams agrees, saying Mexicans "not only accept the inevitability of death, they embrace its power as being essential to the fabric of life."[22] She recommends that we consciously adopt the Mexican custom of devoting a day to celebrating the dead. She describes how to construct and use the altar, as well as the benefits: "Day of the Dead altars give tangible form to our feelings of loyalty, affection and longing for those who have passed away."[23] I would suggest that the roadside shrines may be a movement in the direction of such participatory celebrations with the dead.

Grimes also reminds us that people who do not ritually mark their important life passages often regret their failure to do so. It is important that we

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[18] Shelly Fralic, "Where he took his last breath, the modern-day phenomenon of the roadside memorial," *The Vancouver Sun,* February 4, 2002, A9.

[19] Ibid., 9.

[20] The notion that time as experienced by people is not the same as rational calendar time is discussed at length by R.D. Laing in *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967). Ronald Grimes also mentions this in his book *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-inventing rites of passage* (Berekeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[21] Grimes, 281.

[22] Gina Hyams, *Day of the Dead* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 7.

[23] Hyams, 86.

fully attend to such events, spiritually, as well as in the psychological and social realms, he warns, since "unattended, a major life passage can become a yawning abyss, draining off psychic energy, engendering social confusion, and twisting the course of the life that follows it," and becoming a spiritual sinkhole "around which hungry ghosts, those greedy personifications of unfinished business, hover."[24]

Provocatively, Grimes asks "What does it mean to say a funeral 'works'? What are funerals supposed to do?" His answer is that they "liberate us to the gift of tears…help us find our grief, even if that grief is left over from some other death and our mourning for someone other than the deceased."[25] He cites Princess Diana's funeral as an example, saying it was "good to grieve with the world" and that her funeral actually conjured pain.[26]

If this is so, perhaps this kind of public outpouring helps individuals to break the cycle of alienation from certain aspects of their own experiences that are culturally unsanctioned. It may be that the roadside shrines, by interrupting people in the midst of life, conjure up the kind of grief that Grimes refers to. This notion also provides insight into what leads strangers who pass the shrines to write to the bereaved families, to pray for them, to leave flowers or stuffed animals for the victims, as they frequently do.

Grimes offers this novel idea: "For ritual purposes it is enough that the dead persist in memory, imagination, or in the form of visual icons and that we approach them with empathy or respect. *Belief, it seems, is not an absolute requirement* [italics mine]."[27] He does not tell us, however, on what ritual efficacy depends, except that by our participation, the ritual must carry us through necessary transformation, taking up residence in our very marrow. "Ceremonial effectiveness is not undermined by sustained critique," he adds, emphasizing that "People may participate in death rites not only feeling grief or expressing belief but also critically, ironically, playfully, imaginatively, pragmatically, or in a state of suspended disbelief."[28] Society, he suggests, must consciously work to reinvent death rites, using experimental approaches and wrestling control from the institutions that have reduced their effectiveness. Churches and death professionals have monopolized death rituals,

curtailing the freedom to experiment and make death rites more meaningful, inspiring and effective. In order to renew our myths and images and support communing with the dead, he advocates interacting directly with the dead as if they were alive. Interestingly, this is done at the shrines, where people leave notes to the dead *as if they were alive*.

Hyams suggests that a *rapprochement* with death might be a way of satisfying another important function of ritual, namely, alleviating our alienation from each other. Through ritual, we can renew our human ties, and by extension, our ties to our planet. Perhaps the roadside shrines, with their ragtag collections of memorabilia, attempt to do just that. As people are freed from the constraints of universal norms, they open themselves more to the mysteries of life and death. Once a year, as Mexicans eat, talk, write letters to and dance with the dead, they participate in time that has already passed. Do our roadside shrines provide a similar opportunity, a similar consolation?

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake is another writer who has written extensively about the need to resacralize our world, explaining his fascinating concept of morphic resonance, which provides a possible physical and scientific explanation of why certain places on the earth have long been and continue to be considered sacred, and how this sacralization occurs. Pointing out that the word "field" has long been used to describe regions of influence, Sheldrake states that his morphic field theory arises out of longstanding scientific concepts. The idea of the spirits of places as morphic fields implies that particular places "have a kind of collective character and memory" including that caused "by self-resonance with their own past."[29]

Morphic resonance takes place, explains Sheldrake, on the basis of similarity, and hence the patterns of resonance are also specific to each season of the year.[30] This might explain why people often revisit the shrines on anniversaries of the death. Common experience tells us that seasonal conditions help to evoke past times. As Sheldrake says, memory plays a part in how people respond to particular places. He adds that "through morphic resonance there will also be a component of collective memory, through which a person can tune in to the past experiences of other people in the same place."[31] The quality of a place depends on what has happened there, as well as how these events have been

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[24] Grimes, 281.
[25] Ibid., 281.
[26] Ibid., 281.
[27] Ibid., 280.
[28] Grimes, 281.

[29] Sheldrake, 146.
[30] Ibid., 147.
[31] Ibid., 147.

experienced by the participants. In sacred places "the past can in some sense become present", and thus these sacred sites "become doorways to realms of experience which transcend the ordinary limitations of space and time."[32] Significantly, Sheldrake reminds us that "the processes by which particular places become holy are still going on."[33]

Journalist Shelly Fralic describes one mother's experience when she goes to her son's roadside memorial. The mother says "an odd comfort" settles over her, despite the harsh memories it holds.[34] She returns to the place "because that's where it (Chris's life) stopped."[35] For her, the shrine is a place of pilgrimage, a relatively common experience among those who visit the roadside shrines. The mother of fifteen-year-old Jared Dion still frequents his memorial shrine beside the road. This shrine began several months after his death, when his mother asked to be taken to the place where her youngest son had died. Not only the family, but "strangers were drawn" to the roadside shrine, just a little garden until one day when she found that someone had added a cross.[36] Today, more than five years later, it is a neatly kept tiny garden, surrounding a wooden cross with Jared's name and dates. At the family's insistence, it was left intact in the boulevard when the road was widened.

According to Sheldrake's definition of morphic resonance, meaning should be added with each visit of the relatives and friends, as they participate in the suspension of the ordinary arrow of time. This appears to be a conscious use of sacred doorways to transcend ordinary space-time limitations. While our culture worships reason, fact, and science, explaining away our more mystical experiences, still, consciously or unconsciously, the members of such a culture find ways of meeting their soulful needs. Indeed, these mourners may be seen as assisting in the vital process of re-sacralizing the earth. Escaping the hegemony of overarching twentieth-century myths, people on the cusp of the new era are creatively reworking ancient strategies, (for roadside shrines go back centuries…), following their soul promptings.

In discussing the history of ritual studies, Catherine Bell credits Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950) and Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883-1959) with identifying the phenomenological dimension of religion, including the common elements that underlie all religious experience, and, along with others, postulating the notion of the human being as *homo religious,* acknowledging the sacred as an inborn element of human consciousness.[37] Although *Homo religiosus*, like Adam Smith's *homo economicus,* is a cartoon character, the use of such metaphors sheds some light on our experience. "Much of the study of ritual," says Bell, "was caught up in the quest to find both the historical origins and the ahistorical or eternal essence of religion," but "the study of ritual also…helped construct a portrait of the so-called primitive psyche in terms of how it differed from modern ways of thinking and still survived in the very depths of modern consciousness."[38] Although "ritual is…itself a construction," with "many untested assumptions" it has successfully "been pressed into service to explain the roots of religion in human behaviour in ways that are meaningful to Europeans and Americans of this century."[39] Ritual theorists, says Bell, "attempt to delineate the broad outlines of what is meaningful human experience in general."[40] Though in modern life, we may be estranged from ancient "patterns and rhythms," this very fact implies "the power of a potential return to meaning." It is this idea that "is the heart of the perennial philosophy of universal myth and ritual patterns that continues to speak to new generations."[41]

How might the roadside shrines represent such a return to meaning? Certainly, passing strangers, along with the bereaved, find meaning there. The leaving of offerings on the shrines by strangers suggests a kind of pilgrimage, itself a process of sacralization. According to Sheldrake, pilgrims "participate in the sacred qualities of the place and in the religious observances practiced there."[42] People pray and contemplate at the shrines, lighting candles or incense and leaving offerings there as well. As Grimes suggests, traditional ritual forms have not been meeting current needs and the shrines may well be a response to that. Sheldrake theorizes about why, for spiritual guidance, people in the West have often looked to other traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, and various kinds of shamanism, as well as attempting to revive paganism and goddess worship, and theorizes that this springs from "a sense that Christianity and Judaism have lost contact with

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[32] Ibid.,147-8.
[33] Ibid., 148.
[34] Fralic, A8.
[35] Ibid., A8.
[36] Ibid., A8.

[37] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9.
[38] Ibid., 20.
[39] Bell, 21.
[40] Ibid., 23.
[41] Ibid.,23.
[42] Sheldrake, 151.

mystical insight, with visionary experience, with a sense of the life of nature, and with the power of ritual."[43]

Rupert Sheldrake's morphic field theory applies, he explains, from the level of the cosmos down to the everyday. The visitations to roadside shrines, the prayers that are offered there, and the simple rituals that are carried out there thus become activities that affect the universe itself. This idea echoes common expressions that people have long used to express religious experience: being part of something greater than themselves, participating in a cosmic process, with the aim of feeling an overwhelming sense of peace and belonging. [44]

This is a hopeful idea: if the universe is endlessly creative, endlessly evolving new forms of organization, then over time, our limited views naturally give way to increasing understanding. Thus, the small acts of resacralization that are going on at the roadside shrines may represent a valuable contribution to our evolution, our collective future.

It seems that the roadside shrines, created and sustained out of an impulse to expand consciousness, show an opening to mystery that is becoming a hallmark of the coming *zeitgeist,* as we finally turn our backs on the twentieth century and look forward with a resolute willingness to change. Sheldrake says that "According to the hypothesis of formative causation, the conscious and unconscious memory of places and times is strongly influenced by morphic resonance."[45] This idea is easy to accept, because it is possible to sense the sacred in certain places. Here is a scientific theory that is consistent with the experiences people have at the roadside shrines.

Discussing the connection between rituals and morphic resonance, Sheldrake raises a provocative question: "Why do people all over the world believe that through ritual activities they are participating in a process that takes them out of ordinary secular time, and somehow brings the past into the present?" He proposes that morphic resonance "really can bring the past into the present," noting that ritual performers do connect with those in the past, and that, "The greater the similarity between the way the ritual is performed now and the way it was performed before, the stronger resonant connection between the past and present participants."[46]

Writing about the purposes of ritual in his book *Deeply into the Bone,* Ronald Grimes describes the general goal of rituals for the dead as transforming them into ancestors. But clearly, those who die very young, without having children of their own, cannot be re-formulated into ancestors in a literal sense. These are the ones who receive the tribute of wayside shrines. Perhaps we keep them with us by constructing their memorials in places where we cannot fail to remember their transitory lives, acknowledge their brief earthly time and dearth of descendents.

We are haunted by the past in many ways. Metaphorically, at least, the ghosts of the departed may still be stuck at the shrines, because they have not yet been processed into ancestors through the use of socially accepted rituals that carry "deeply into the bone." If that is so, no wonder the shrines send a chill down our spines as we drive by**.** [47]

To the degree that the social constructionists are right in claiming that the societies we live in create us, then the individuals created by diverse, secular, alienated non-unitary societies are themselves alienated, denied access to the now exhausted unitary "meta-narratives" posited (and mostly vilified) by post-modern theorists. We are still in the cusp of this change, and thus, darkly pessimistic post-modern theories notwithstanding, we may still hope for a new era when people will once more find unifying principles and purposes that can transcend personal and cultural differences, allowing us to participate peacefully in re-sacralizing the planet that nurtures us all.

The evidence of the shrines may be taken as a signpost pointing the way beyond our narrow, desacralized and pessimistic era, as they defy old custom to reveal realities that have been kept hidden. The creation of the shrines breaks our taboo about death, providing a salutary reminder of the perennial fact of death in the midst of life, a commonplace in the old "primitive" cultures.

Secular individualism, so reified in the culture of the West, does not represent the whole human. In the new era, if our planet is to survive with us as a species living with and on it, we must find what David Whyte calls "a vision of life that helps us remember we are human souls, living at the center of a troubled and ultimately unfathomable world."[48] The shrines may be a salutary signal that we have already begun to do just that.

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[43] Ibid., 152.
[44] Sheldrake, 162.
[45] Grimes, 137.
[46] Ibid., 142.

[47] Grimes, title phrase.
[48] Whyte, 261.

An Explanation and Understanding of Wiccan Ritual:
Approaching a Deviant Religious Discourse in the Modern West

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Abstract

This article applies Foucault's idea of heterotopia and Verter's extension of Bourdieu's cultural capital / religious capital to the foundation rituals of the Wiccan religion. Wicca as a feminist, body-positive, and sexuality positive religion supports challenging alternatives to the cultural status quo and accumulates religious and cultural capital for its members. It can legitimately be seen as a contra-hegemonic religious movement in gender and sexuality.

In this discussion the deviant religion is viewed as a healthy creative project inspired by the spirit. All religions begin at some time and place as new religions, or deviant religious movements, and thus act as vehicles for social critique and, if they are successful, social change. It follows that the study of deviant religious movements, particularly new ones, involves issues central to all religions.[1]

Deviant religions can act as heterotopian sanctuaries for the exploration of new discourses.[2] They can accumulate spiritual capital for their members through fruitfully expressing an aspect of the tensions of the larger society, capital that is dependent on both internal forces of the religions and the larger society's response to the discourses developed and spread from these deviant groups. This spiritual capital can then be mobilized for other purposes as for instance where a number of feminist women involved in Wicca have mobilized capital accumulated through the religion into political activism.[3]

Wicca is a deviant religion in the modern West. In contrast to the dominant religious tradition, Christianity, it is polytheistic or duotheistic, feminist with matriarchal tendencies (with priestesses taking slight precedence over priests, the Goddess over Her Consort), panentheistic[4], ecstatic, hedonistic and nature-centred. It is a small religious movement that is growing very rapidly; between 1981 and 1991 the number of Pagans counted in the Canadian census grew from 2295 to 5530 and by 2001 to 21,085.[5] Because of its intersection with the feminist political movement and the reinterpretation of female spirituality, Wicca can legitimately be described as a contra-hegemonic movement based on gender issues. The original rituals of the religion will be shown to express this contra-hegemonic sensibility.

A religion is not just a set of beliefs or symbols, not simply a category of facts, but a way of being in the world, a way of knowing, and a way of making knowledge. It engages in various types of exploration, experiment and explication around this knowledge-making (perhaps more accurately, *meaning-making*) process. In addition, religion rests upon a tension between that which is (Be-ing) and that which is potential (Becoming) and much religious practice assumes the primacy of the future.

By positioning religious knowing as just one, non-privileged type of knowing and by redefining religion as plural, the secularization of the West both opened up religious knowing and denied its exclusive truth claims. By becoming able to comparatively study contradictory truth claims, the absolute truth of a given religion's claims is denied. Wicca, a magical religion, is centred on the creation

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[1] Aidan Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic Book 1: A History of Modern Witchcraft, 1939-1964* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1991), 3.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring, 1986), 22-27. A heterotopia is a "place outside of all places… different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about" and heterotopias are counter-cultural sites for the expression and exploration of denied facts of social reality, which invert some norms in order to explore them and then feed back into the dominant culture, either as a means of exposing and contesting ordinary reality or as a perfection of the confusion of ordinary relationships.

[3] Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory,*

21.2 (June 2003), 150-174. Verter defines spiritual capital as "religious knowledge, competencies, and preferences as positional goods within a competitive symbolic economy" whose valuation is the "object of continuous struggle and is subject to considerable temporal and subcultural variation" 150.

[4] John Bowker, *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) defines panentheism on page 730 as the view that "the world exists in God ... but God is not exhausted by the world; the divine is both transcendent and immanent."

[5] Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1981, 1991, 2001 Census of Canada. The overwhelming majority of Pagans are Wiccan, so these numbers are likely to reflect the proportionate growth in the Wiccan population.

of experiences and states of mind, on truth games[6] rather than on truth claims, aside from the claim about the general value of these experiences or states. In this it resembles a mystical path or *bhakti* yoga practice of worship through devotion rather than the legalistic Abrahamic religions' emphasis on structures and is less directly in conflict with the secular.

The social particulars of religious expression are necessary aspects of its existence, but these details do not exhaust religion. Social constructionist theories may be better at explaining why people will choose mainstream non-deviant religions and how they are conditioned and disciplined by these religions. The order of their society is shaped by them; the fundamental institutions from the family through the educational system to the governmental structures are all steeped in the religious and moral values of the dominant religious traditions. The conversion experience still exists for mainstream religions, and religious meaning is still extracted from their rituals and theological discourses. The person involved in the mainstream religion is able to be as devout as one involved in a deviant religion, yet the cost of involvement in a mainstream religion is less than in a deviant one, and the reinforcement of its values is constant and partly external to the individual and the religious institutions. For a deviant religion to continue and to grow, it must be more effective in producing rewards for its members and must mobilize spiritual capital more effectively.

Stark and Bainbridge argued in *The Future of Religion* that religions are a means to produce and distribute non-material goods, spiritual compensators in the form of blessings of character, happiness, community, and assurance of life after death, which are more valuable if the amount of work gone into producing them is greater, as in a deviant religious movement in some degree of tension with society. These compensators are valuable regardless of access to material rewards.[7] Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of cultural capital as a medium of social relations has been developed by Bradford Verter into an alternative economic model for the use and exchange of spiritual goods that is better able to account for the particular goods produced and exchanged in deviant religions than Stark's model, because Bourdieu's ideas include the relations of power and their negotiation within the religious movements.[8]

Dipesh Chakrabarty states that, "gods are as real as ideology is—that is to say, they are embedded in practices. More often than not, their presence is collectively invoked by rituals rather than by conscious belief."[9] This points to a key difficulty in historical recovery of religious experience—the need to go beyond the texts to recover the beliefs and experiences imbedded in practice. Practices and rituals, particularly of popular religion, are less well documented than the elite theological exegeses.

Those theories that reduce religion to one or the other social factor, which assert the universality of an economic class, race, gender, or ideological factor above the reality of the divine assumed by the practitioner, do violence to the autonomy of the subject and disregard the agency of the religious person. These factors do enter in, and must be included to fit the religious projects in with other social forces. But the religious person is not required to accept the primacy of the secular or to understand her actions through that lens. With a Wiccan panentheistic sensibility, which sees deity through its manifestation in society and in the world, the social utility of religion is an aspect of its divinity and the Goddess as an advocate for the equality of women and men is not reduced from the divine but is rather expressed as the divine active in the world through people. The influence of Wicca in the feminist movement is due in part to this religious understanding, just as was the occultist spiritual influence in first wave feminism.[10]

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[6] Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Luhrmann's chapter 22 on "Serious Play: The Fantasy of Truth," 324-326, is a very effective exploration of the element of play and "truth games" in Wiccan contemporary practice. Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), deals very effectively with the magical imagination in chapter five, "Occult Reality and the Fictionalizing Mind," 148-185.
[7] Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Compensators are defined on page 6 as "the belief that a reward will be obtained in the distant future or in some other context which cannot be immediately verified."
[8] Verter, "Spiritual Capital …"
[9] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 78.
[10] A complete bibliography of Wicca's intersection with feminism is beyond the scope of this paper, or the capacity of the author. Significant texts include: Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1978); Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); Starhawk *The Spiral*

Issues specific to deviant religions point to the boundaries of some theories of religion. The use of religion as a social control mechanism for enforcing discipline and control over the subaltern classes is challenged by the conversion of people away from the normal religion of their society. The boundaries of the society itself are challenged by these conversions to the extent that the society is defined as having a particular religious values centre.[11] Wicca, a small religion rapidly growing through conversion, is producing spiritual capital and challenging this social cohesion.

The different religious compensators exchanged in the deviant religious movements challenge the universality of exchange theories. These are exchanges of goods less valued in the dominant tradition and thus demonstrate different markets for non-material compensators. Establishing religious authority, the authority of particular texts and practices and of particular individuals and

theological positions, is more difficult in a deviant religion, particularly a new religious movement.

As well as the issues involved in the study of all religions, and of deviant religions in general, there are issues involved in the explanation and understanding of Wiccan ritual particular to the situation of the Wiccan religion and to its assumptions and approaches. These include the centrality of the ritual in Wicca, the expectation of religious creativity and fluidity, and the small group norm, coupled with ecstatic practices.

If mythology emerges to explain ritual and theology arises in order to explain mythology, then, where possible, a study of religion must go back to ritual.[12] The intellect makes sense from an experience or artwork, but it does not make meaning. As religion is primarily in the business of making meaning, not so much of making knowledge or sense, the structuring done on the level of ritual performance is the primary experience, and the codification of it is secondary.

The historian seeks to understand change over time. The Wiccan religious perspective is that the divine expression is always conditioned and contingent, a particular expression through specific individuals at a particular time and place. It is thus compatible with historicization. As "every man and every woman is a Star"[13] (an expression of the divine), rituals that reinforce and express this belief such as *Drawing Down the Moon and Sun* and *The Great Rite*, are central. The divine remains eternal and immortal through the fact of its dialectical engagement with the temporal, an insight expressed through the *Charge of the Goddess*, one of the nearly universal pieces of Wiccan liturgical poetry.

The standard form of Wiccan ritual began with the composition of the first rituals by Gerald Gardner

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Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, 1979); and Zsuzsanna Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Oakland: Susan B. Anthony Coven, 1979). Scholarly work of note includes Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); more extensively in Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), Helen A. Berger, Evan A. Leach, and Leigh S. Schaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), and Janet Dahr, *Wild Women Witches of Greater Vancouver: Gyn/Ecology,* an unpublished M.A. thesis in the Department of Woman Studies, Simon Fraser University, 1995. Insight into the role of the occult in first wave feminism can be found in Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 3. "A feminist spirituality was a crucial component of much feminist politics…" and Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

[11] Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Viswanathan deals with several conversion narratives in this way. Particularly telling are her chapters four, "Silencing Heresy," 118-152, which deals with the hybrid experience of Pandita Rambai and the ways that her experience revealed the polyphony inside the Western and Christian identities, and seven, "Conversion to Equality," 211-239, dealing with the mass conversion of Indian *dalits* (untouchables) to Buddhism led by Ambedkar.

[12] This formulation is developed from Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites,* First Series, *The Fundamental Institutions*. Burnett Lectures. 2nd Edition London, page 19 as cited in Hans G. Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age,* trans. Barbara Harshaw (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 75. "So far as myths consist of explanations of ritual their value is altogether secondary, and it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable, the ritual was obligatory and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshipper." This is consistent with Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, op cit, chapter 22, 324-326, in particular.

[13] Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (privately printed 1929, reprint New York: Dover, 1976), xiv.

and associates in 1947. These rituals circulated in manuscript form and were modified by successive associates of Gardner, notably Doreen Valiente, prior to being described and published in part in Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959). The history of the successive versions of these rituals has been established by Aidan Kelly in *Crafting the Art of Magic Book 1*: *A History of Modern Witchcraft, 1939-1964*. The streams of British occultist and counter-cultural thought that influenced Gardner and associates have been examined in detail by Ronald Hutton in *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. [14] This study will rely substantially on the chronology established by these two scholars.

The Wiccan origin myth, which is still literally adhered to by a minority of practitioners, but which remains symbolically important to many others, has Wicca as a direct lineal descendant of pre-Christian European fertility religions, both Celtic and British or from the aboriginal Stone Age cultures immediately after the last Ice Age. During the period that Gardner and his associates were starting the religion, Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* was published (1954) and he there put forward several variations of this origin myth, speaking of "the witch who is a descendant of a line of priests and priestesses of an old and probably Stone Age religion."[15] He also indirectly credits many of his sources in the book: Aleister Crowley, Rudyard Kipling, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn,[16] Hargrave Jennings, Francis Barrett, and Margaret Murray (who provided the preface to the book).[17] He also mentions by indirection the origin of the spiral dance ritual and meeting dance: "it may simply be an old children's game which the witches have taken over or vice versa."[18]

The following briefly situates Gerald Gardner through the years leading up to 1954, when the basic rituals of the Wiccan religion were being written: he was a heterosexual, married, middle-aged man who had lived overseas in the south Asian part of the British Empire (Sri Lanka, North Borneo and Malaysia) for much of his life as a plantation manager and then an inspector in the Malayan customs service. He retired to England in 1936, at the age of 52, a knowledgeable occultist and "joiner," who belonged to a range of associations involved with folklore and the occult. After becoming involved in several aspects of the British occult scene, he embarked upon the development of Wicca in 1947. He was in many ways well prepared to provide an expression of various cultural forces that had been accumulating in British culture over the previous two hundred years and thereby to create a new religion. [19]

Gardner was a high-ranking member of the Ordo Templi Orientis, the Ceremonial Magical Order headed by Aleister Crowley. He was involved in the Rosicrucian Theatre in Christchurch in southern England, which was an offshoot of the Theosophical Co-Masonry movement, and many of his associates in his first covens were drawn from this group. He was a nudist, member of a naturist club near St. Albans, Hertfordshire, and built a "witch's cottage" on land adjacent to it for his coven meetings. He was a member of the Folk-Lore Society and author of a well-received book on Malay ritual knives entitled *Keris and Other Malay Weapons* (1936).[20] The range of occult and folkloric influences that he was able to bring to bear on the creation of the Wiccan religion is dealt with fully in Hutton and need not be elaborated upon here.[21]

However, new religions are founded every day. The Wiccan religion has been modestly successful in its growth, despite a strong bias against proselytizing and a training period before new members are able to participate in rituals, and it has been highly influential in raising issues that are being addressed in other religious fora. Aside from the intrinsic interest of the new and creative religious expression, attention must be paid to details of the content of the rituals and the religion.

A Priestess, usually assisted by a Priest whom she chooses, leads the rituals. The Priestess, as the embodiment of the Goddess, is explicitly primary,

[14] Aidan Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic, Book 1: A History of Modern Witchcraft, 1939-1964* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1991); Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[15] Gerald B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (London; Robert Hale, 1954, reprint New York: Magickal Childe, 1982).

[16] The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a ceremonial magical order that grew out of the esoteric Masonry of the *Societas Roscicruciana in Anglia* in 1888. It was by far the most significant English occult order, and drew prominent intellectuals and talented ritualists to it. It collapsed in internal wrangling in 1900. Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), is an excellent history of the Order.

[17] Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 47-8.

[18] Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 141.

[19] Hutton, 239.

[20] Gerald Gardner, *Keris and Other Malay Weapons,* B. Lumsden Milne ed. (Singapore: Progressive Publishing Company, 1936).

[21] Hutton, 205-240.

although the male principle is included in ritual as well. Rituals are performed in the nude and include a small group of celebrants of both sexes, known as a coven. There are explicitly sexual aspects to the foundation ritual, and the "Great Rite," which is not performed at each coven meeting, is a *hieros gamos,* (sacred marriage rite). These aspects are transgressive of gender norms today and were more so in the immediate post-World War Two period from which the first authenticated Wiccan ritual manuscripts date.[22]

A careful reading of the earliest version of the Wiccan *Drawing Down the Moon* ritual from 1949[23], established by Aidan Kelly, reveals its textual influences and origins. It also establishes the ritual space as a heterotopia, conforming very well to Foucault's discussion of the term, in that it has a formal opening and closing of the boundaries of the ritual space, which is typically only open to initiated members of a small worship group (in Wicca, a coven), the suspension of ordinary time, and the aspect of critical reflection outside of time, space and culture.[24] The transgressive element is marked first by the requirement for ritual nudity of all participants, save for jewellery and marks of rank in the religion. Numerous details of the ritual are Masonic or derive from classic works of the Western Ceremonial Magic traditions.

The set-up of the ritual circle is adapted slightly from the medieval grimoire, *The Key of Solomon the King*[25]*,* a popular text among occultists in England. A circle is marked out, nine feet in diameter with two outer circles around it, separated from the first by six inches and one foot. Names of deities are written in the two rings surrounding the inner circle. The perimeters of the circles are traced by the ritual leader with her *athame* (knife used in ritual). There is then a blessing of water and of salt, which are mixed together and with which the circle is asperged. Eliphas Levi seems to have inspired the details of the salt and water purification and blessing in his *Transcendental Magic*[26], although aspurging with

salt water is also a Roman Catholic and Anglican tradition. Candles are lit at each of the cardinal directions with a blessing.

The *Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram*, a ritual derived from the Order of the Golden Dawn, is then performed. The ritual leader makes the gesture of the Cabbalistic Cross by touching, in turn, her forehead, chest, right shoulder and left shoulder and then clasping her hands in front of her while intoning "Ateh (thou art), Malkuth (the Kingdom), Ve-Geburah (and the power), ve-Gedulah (and the Glory), le-Olam (for ever), Amen." She then turns to each of the cardinal directions in turn, beginning with the east and going clockwise, draws a pentagram (a five pointed star with one point upward) in the air with her athame and calls out the deity name associated with that direction: Yod He Vau He, Adonai, Eheieh, and Agla. Then, standing with arms outstretching in the form of a cross in the centre of the circle she says; "Before me Raphael, behind me Gabriel, at my right hand Michael, at my left hand Auriel. Before me flames the Pentagram, behind me shines the six-rayed star." She again makes the Cabbalistic Cross as before.[27] This part of the ritual is explicitly Christian ceremonial magic, with Cabbalistic trappings – calling upon Christian names of God and angels, the ritual leader crossing herself, and the Cabbalistic translation of part of *The Lord's Prayer*.[28]

Finally the ritual leader will walk three times around the circle clockwise, turn and address each direction in turn, and call for the spirits of those directions to come and participate in the ritual. This originally Christian Ceremonial Magical ritual has been simplified, and partly de-Christianized, in order for non-Christian folk magic to be worked. The substantial use of the Cabbala, derived originally from Jewish mysticism, has been a mark of the British occult community since its introduction in the 1740s, although the magical Cabbala is very different from the mystical one.[29]

Following the casting of the ritual circle, *Drawing Down the Moon* follows. *Drawing Down the Moon* is a ritual of ecstatic possession trance. Its

[22] Hutton, 238.

[23] *Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical,* manuscript in the Wiccan Church of Canada collection, Toronto. Kelly gives a detailed breakdown and analysis of this material from pages 47-75.

[24] Michel Foucault, op cit.

[25] *The Key of Solomon the King,* S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, trans. and editor (London: George Redway, 1888; reprint New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), 17-8.

[26] Eliphas Levi, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual,* trans. and introduction by Arthur Edward Waite

(London: Rider and Co, 1896; reprint York Beach Maine: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1970), 228-236.

[27] Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn,* 6th Edition (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1989), 53.

[28] Matthew 6.13 (KJV).

[29] Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). Godwin's excellent history of the Anglo-American occult traces the development of Christian occult Cabbalism in far more detail than possible here, beginning on page 94.

purpose is to assist the Priestess to embody the spirit of the Goddess of the Wiccan religion, one of Whose most prominent symbols is the Moon. The symbol of the pentagram is drawn on her body by the Priest, through touching her with a phallic-headed wand while reciting an invocation. Although the specific points touched are not specified in the document, current practice is at neck, left hip, right breast, left breast, right hip and neck again.[30] His invocation incorporates a quotation from Crowley's *Gnostic Mass*; "By seed and root and stem and bud and leaf and flower and fruit we do invoke Thee."[31] He then kisses her feet, knees, lower belly, breasts, and lips while reciting a blessing; "Blessed are your feet, which have brought you in these ways, …your knees, that shall kneel at Her sacred altars, … your womb, without which we would not be, … your breasts, formed in beauty and in strength, … lips, which shall speak the sacred Names."[32]

These invocatory gestures and statements explicitly establish the sacredness of the female body, and specifically the body of the individual Priestess receiving the blessings and being asked to embody the Goddess. The blessing of the genitals and breasts, the ritual nudity, as well as the use of the phallic wand in the blessing, emphasize the overt sexuality and carnality of this embodiment, as do the ritual kisses. The body is sacred here, *because* it is a body, not *despite* its carnality. The identification of the woman's body with nature does not involve the association of nature with lesser spirituality as conventionally assigned, but is an identification of the type of divine power being called—the immanent divinity of the forces of nature, the force of fertility, sexuality and the body.

The Priestess, then seen as embodying the Goddess, recites the *Charge of the Goddess*, a central theological statement of Wicca. It begins with a syncretic list of Goddesses from various times and places, all identified as aspects of the Great Mother: Artemis, Astarte, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Bride, and others. Then she recites a lengthy section adapted from *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* by Geoffrey Leland in which the Goddess asks Wiccans to assemble once a month, preferably on Full Moon,[33] to "be free from slavery, and as a sign that ye be really free, ye shall be naked in your rites, both men and women,"[34] to dance, sing, feast, make music and love[35] in Her praise. Then follows a quotation from *Book of the Law* which includes the phrase "nor do I demand aught in sacrifice"[36] and other material adapted from *Magick in Theory and Practice* by Aliester Crowley, and particularly from the *Gnostic Mass* (Liber XV).[37] There is some original material in the Charge, including the significant phrase "all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals,"[38] but slightly more than half of it is reworked from Aliester Crowley.

We may briefly contrast the sentiments in this central theological statement with those expressed in Christian tradition. This is particularly telling when we consider that the period immediately after the Second World War, the period of the birth of Wicca, saw a dramatic revitalization of British Christianity, of domestic ideology and the rebirth of the "Angel in the House".[39] The Wiccan "acts of love and pleasure" sharply contrasted with the ideal of the sexually unassertive woman whose "desire shall be for your husband, and he will rule over you."[40] Wiccan ritual nudity may be contrasted with the general Christian attitude, but echoes the theme of Genesis 3, that unashamed nudity symbolized innocence. The leadership by women in Wicca contrasted with the Christian norm, after the deutero-Pauline epistles, that "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."[41]

The other Wiccan material that was written at this time includes the originals for the three initiation rituals. Although the current practice is that the three rituals are separated by periods of time, typically a minimum of a year of practice and training, the original rituals were set up to be performed one after another on the same occasion.

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[30] Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar, *The Witches' Way: Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft* (London: Robert Hale, 1984), 69.

[31] Crowley, *Magick,* 350.

[32] Kelly, 52.

[33] Charles G. Leland, *Aradia or The Gospel of the Witches* (1890; reprint Custer WA: Phoenix Books, 1990), 6, cited in Kelly, 53.

[34] Leland 6-7, cited in Kelly, 53.

[35] Leland, 14, cited in Kelly, 53.

[36] Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Law,* (London: BCM Ankh, 1904, reprint York Beach ME: Samuel Weiser, 1976), 26 cited in Kelly, 53.

[37] Crowley, *Magick*, 345-61.

[38] Kelly, 53.

[39] A popular Victorian trope drawn from Coventry Patmore's poem of the same name celebrating love and marriage, 1854-6. An excellent gender religious history of Britain from 1800-2000, which inspired this analysis is Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain,* (London: Routledge, 2001). Brown deals with the return to piety from 1945-1958 in chapter eight, 170-192.

[40] Genesis 3.16 (NASV).

[41] 1 Timothy 2.12 (NASV).

For the *First Degree* the Postulant is brought into the ritual circle blindfolded, hands bound together and the ends of the rope brought around the neck in the Masonic manner with the cable-tow being used to lead him around the circle to be presented to the spirits of the four directions. He is blessed, put through a short ordeal (bound and ritually scourged) and then administered an oath before being untied, having his blindfold removed and being presented with the ritual tools of Wicca. For the *Second Degree* he is blindfolded, blessed, put through a short ordeal as before, administered an oath, and then told to use the ritual tools, prompted where necessary. He then is required to scourge the Priestess as instructed, as a demonstration of his new power and responsibility. For the *Third Degree* the Priestess is scourged, then scourges the Postulant, as a ritual of purification. Then the ritual of *The Great Rite*, which is a ritual of sexual intercourse as worship, *hieros gamos*, is performed.

There are numerous borrowings from Masonic ritual in the *First Degree*, including the use of the cable-tow and hoodwink (blindfold) and many phrases in the obligation oath are directly copied from its *Entered Apprentice* ritual. The presentation of the ritual tools is also a detail taken from Masonic sources.[42] A number of details are also patterned on the Order of the Golden Dawn's *Neophyte Ritual*, although enormously shortened and with the language and ritual equipment substantially simplified.[43]

Kelly argues that Gardner emphasized scourging and a highly scripted form of sexual ritual in order to satisfy his personal sexual needs and that otherwise there is "no reason to include scourging in the ritual."[44] Hutton was able to examine Gardner's papers, including his modest collection of pornography, and found that "none of the pictorial or literary items in the books is concerned with binding or flagellation,"[45] which leads him to conclude that Gardner was not introducing this element for that reason. The extensive ritual use of scourging as a form of purification in ritual is not found in any of the Masonic sources, but the use of *hieros gamos* in initiation and in ritual is found in the Ordo Templi Orientis, the ceremonial magical order to which both Gardner and one of his literary sources, Aliester Crowley, belonged. The O.T.O. had ceased to function in Britain by the late 1940s, although Crowley's books were popular among occultists.

This sacralization of sexuality and of sexual intercourse is highly transgressive in the context of late 1940s England. Although there is a great deal of variation among modern Wiccans, the basic form of ritual established in 1949 continues. The use of the scourge and of *hieros gamos* has been greatly reduced, with the majority of Wiccans accepting these things as legitimate aspects of Wiccan practice but not personally engaging in them. However, ritual nudity, the use of kisses on the body during *Drawing Down*, the ritual of *Drawing Down the Moon*, the general form of the Initiation rituals and many other ritual ideas from Gardner's first covens are prominent features in contemporary coven practices, de-emphasized or absent in public rituals. The Wiccan religion has changed from a religion of small groups, all of whom were Initiated Priesthood, to a variety of traditions all drawing elements from the same roots but not practicing in the same way. This polyvocality was established as a norm by Gardner and continues as a prominent feature of Wicca.

The discursive construction of femininity in the immediate post-war period with its return to domesticity, the "traditional values of family, home and piety"[46] and the revitalisation of the evangelical Christian discourse runs directly counter to the Wiccan religion in these key aspects. However, it would not be correct to see Wicca as an overtly bohemian or counter cultural reaction like the Beats. The adherents to the first covens were conventional and conservative people in many regards, although there are transgressive and challenging ideas in these first rituals. An examination of how the religion was first practiced poses several questions and offers inter-textuality for the religion that has evolved; what did Wiccan rituals tell the participants about themselves and their religion, what do they bring to them, and how did their interaction with the material reshape the ritual?

Ritual nudity told them that they are bodies. The erotic is made clearly a sacred force through many details of the ritual. *Drawing Down* is explicitly about immanence and trance and the possibility of prophecy. Bringing to the ritual the assumptions about the body and sexuality from the broader society led to a challenging and redefinition of those things. The awkwardness of the initial involvement with this ritual style, the discomfort with nudity, the weak and ineffective experience of trance the first few times it's practiced, gave way through

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[42] Kelly, 63-4.
[43] Regardie, *Golden Dawn*, 117-133.
[44] Kelly, 65.
[45] Hutton, *Triumph*, 235.

[46] Callum G. Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 172.

habituation and the construction of a stronger and more defined magical personality[47] to a more effective and graceful performance. The small group norm makes this learning less difficult because of immediate feedback and lesser performance anxiety. As Luhrmann points out, "people often argue for a belief as a means to legitimize, and even to understand … the practice in which they have become involved."[48] The practice of the ritual produced resultant experiences that were then made sense of and made into beliefs.

Some provocative research undertaken in Canada by Shelley Rabinovitch found that virtually all of the active participants in the Wiccan religion had been emotionally, physically, or sexually abused as children or adults, in most cases in more than one way.[49] This study indicates that the transgressive aspects of Wiccan practice acted as means to bring forward the feelings of participants in a psychodrama and heal them from their abuse. It is possible that these data can be projected backward, carefully, to the origins of Wicca as well. The high rates of abusive families hidden behind the ideological façade of perfect domesticity have only recently been brought forward. The patriarchal monotheisms have been inadequate in religiously dealing with or even in acknowledging the extent of familial disfunctionality. In the discursive climate of the origin of Wicca, with the reified family and Freud both influential, this factor may well have been important.

The non-material compensators produced through Wiccan ritual, to return to Stark and Bainbridge, include the re-valuing of the body, the re-emphasis of personal sexual power and efficacy, and the identification of the individual with the divine. The specific form of social capital that has been produced through the Wiccan religion has been the capital which feminist women, in particular, are able to draw upon—the emphasis on the special sacredness of women's experience, of the female body and of the Goddess, and rituals and art celebrating these things. Although only a minority of feminists are Wiccan, there is less reinterpretation of the beliefs and symbolism necessary for Wiccan social capital to be mobilized by them than for those feminists in some other religious traditions. With the second wave of feminism beginning in the late 1960s, this capital became valuable in the larger society. In addition, the original heterosexual exclusivity of Wicca has shifted with the rise of gay and lesbian movements to an emphasis on generally sex-positive spirituality, mobilizing another type of compensator and spiritual capital.

The initiation by Gardner of Doreen Valiente at Midsummer 1953 was a significant turning point in the development of Wicca. Valiente was an intelligent and gifted writer who became Gardner's High Priestess and substantially revised the rituals, elaborating on fragments and reworking the awkward wording of the earliest versions, as well as removing some of the more obvious Crowleyana.[50] Even at the earliest date, another aspect of Wicca, which distinguishes it to the present, emerged—Gardner's "insist[ence] that all Wiccan initiates should not merely copy the existing rituals and statements of belief but alter and add to them according to their own tastes and abilities."[51] This insistence on polyphony, coupled with Gardner's disavowal of his personal authorship of the foundation rituals and his theoretically subordinate position working under his High Priestesses, produced a religion with spokespeople but no prophets. The norm of small group work, coupled with the splits and splinters beginning in 1957 when Valiente and her faction split to form a coven of their own and which continued to operate until her death in 1999[52], further increased the amount of variations on a theme in the liturgy of the Wiccan religion.

This liturgical variety means that unearthing the earliest drafts of the Wiccan rituals is not like the recovery of sacred scriptures, but instead is the examination of early expressions of the ideas about the divine that animate the Wiccan religion. The rituals and stories are all works in progress and express a view of the Goddess and Her Consort centred on continuous revelation and adaptation, rather than finality. And, by including "leaping laughter" in the *Charge of the Goddess*, as a

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[47] Luhrmann, *Persuasions*. Her chapter 21 on "Interpretive drift", 307-323, is an excellent description of the process of application of magical ideas which leads to a comfort with them, an ease in the use of the symbolism and ideas of the Wiccan and magical worldview.

[48] Luhrmann, 310.

[49] Shelley Tsivia Rabinovitch, *An Ye Harm None, Do What Ye Will: Neo-Pagans and Witches in Canada* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of Religion, Carleton University, Ottawa 1992), 98-114. Rabinovitch found that 39 of the 40 women and 20 of the 27 men whom she interviewed in taped interviews reported experiences of abuse.

[50] Hutton, 247.

[51] Hutton, 248.

[52] This coven was studied by Luhrmann as part of her Ph.D. research, published as *Persuasions* op cit.

desirable aspect of devotion, a playful and experimental quality was included from the start.[53]

Wicca developed, in the modern context, as a religion of well-educated urban Britons and North Americans. Recent survey results indicate that Wiccans are substantially more educated than the general American population, with 64.5% possessing a BA or better while 51% of the American population has a high school education or less.[54] Its practitioners have an ironic and modern or post-modern approach to ritual and belief, drawing on the modern magical traditions of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis. The depth of challenge to the version of scientist rationality that was developing with the advent of modernity represented by the magical thinking of these orders continues in the rational mystical experimentation of Wiccan ritual. Alex Owen explores the issue of magical subjectivity in her *The Place of Enchantment* and Joy Dixon in *Divine Feminine*, issues of the intersection of the occult with feminism.[55] The influence of both on this paper has been profound.

Wiccans are acting "as if" they believe, to see what the results are, in search of experiences which are valuable to them, rather than in search of confirmation of absolute belief statements. They are not performing an intellectual dodge to make their religion non-falsifiable, but understanding the playful possibility of ritual and magical exploration and the positive results in aesthetic and psychological happiness that result from a rational subjectivity in the exploration of the spiritual. By developing on the bases of the original practices of the religion, Wicca's challenge to the hegemony of Christian values has continued. The new aspects of its religious discourse about sexuality, which the gay and lesbian, polyamorous and "lifestyle" community members now involved have added, indicates that it continues as a heterotopia and continues to generate new religious compensators and spiritual capital for its members.

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[53] Kelly, 53.

[54] Helen A. Berger, Evan A. Leach and Leigh S. Shaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 31-2, particularly table 6.

[55] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Women's Position in the Islamic World View in Mutahhari's Thought

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Abstract

This paper examines the thought of Murtada Mutahhari (1920-1980) on the issue of women in Islam or more specifically in the Quran. Mutahhari is a shi'i thinker and philosopher who is known as one of the influential figures in forming the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, examining his thought is important in defining and evaluating women's position in post-revolutionary Iran.

Emphasizing that the standpoint of the Quran on women's creation makes it clear that woman is neither inferior to man in her creation nor created from man or for man, Mutahhari relates the different Islamic laws and rights for men and women to different physical and psychological qualifications that have been assigned to them by nature. Nature has done this, in Mutahhari's view, in order to provide humanity with a solid family foundation. However, in regard to women's position in the society he believes that in Islamic perspective man and woman are regarded as both equal and similar whereas in the family they are equal but not similar.

Introduction

Women and women-related issues are among the most important and yet at the same time the most neglected issues in the Muslim world today. Women have suffered from negative treatment throughout history. They were, and still are in some parts of the Islamic world, viewed as objects of sin and disorder in society, so that the more secluded and invisible women are, the more prosperous the society would be. Al-Jawzi (d.1200), who is best known as a preacher and scholar whose moral and religious teachings were (and still are) widely read by Sunni Muslims, is an instance of those figures who have strongly upheld this view. He defines women in his book *Kitab Ahkam al-Nisa'* as: "immoral seduction, shameful nakedness and indiscriminate lust… imprison them in the homes…for like female snakes, women are expected to burrow themselves in their homes."[1]

Some scholars, however, do not believe that this idea was either promoted by the Prophet or that it is in accordance with Islamic ideology. In this respect it should be noted that, during the Prophet's lifetime, Muslim women were able to attain positions of high rank in the community. They were characterized as honorable and dignified companions of the Prophet (*al-sahabiyyah al-jalilah*) alongside the Prophet's most distinguished male companions. Interestingly enough, the same al-Jawzi, who was mentioned earlier for his harsh characterization of women, gives a different account of the situation of women at the time of the Prophet. He reports that, "The prophet used to attend the '*Eid* celebration surrounded by dignified women together with Abu-Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman."[2]

It should be noted that the apparent inconsistency between al-Jawzi's two statements seems to be related to the context in which the statements are made. The former is his personal outlook about women while the latter is his report of an event.

Although most Muslim scholars hold the view that Islam, as a tradition, does not look at women as objects of sin and disorder, this general outlook does not, however, place all those who promote this view into one camp. There is today a strong trend towards altering the position of women in Islam by insisting less on their Islamic obligations and duties—such as the Islamic modest dress—and stressing instead women's equal rights with men. This is the approach of most Islamic feminists today. This is not, however, the focus of this paper. The approach that will be examined here is one that claims to respect both women's dignity and rights as human beings and their position as outlined in the Quran and explained in the writings of Murtada Mutahhari (1920-1980), an Iranian *shi'i* scholar who promotes the latter option.[3]

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[1] See Homa Hoodfar, "More than clothing" in *The Muslim Veil in North America*, ed. Sajida Sultana Alvi, Homa Hoodfar and Sheila McDonough (Toronto: Women's Press, 2003), 6. Although al-Jawzi is a well known scholar among Sunni Muslims, this particular statement cannot be

considered as the general perspective of Sunni Islam about women.

[2] Soraya Hajjaji-Jarrah, "Women's Modesty in Qur'anic Commentaries," in Alvi, Hoodfar and McDonough, op. cit., 204.

[3] In regard to the relation between Mutahhari's view and Muslim feminists' it is worth noting that considering the social, political and cultural context of Iran in Mutahhari's time when the prevalent view among feminists was that Islam is the cause of women's backwardness in Muslim world and that Muslim women must discard their Islamic

Mutahhari can be considered an influential figure in the last few decades in Iran. His significance is partly due to his effort in reconciling the two opposed classes of scholars in pre-revolutionary Iran, namely *hawzeh* and university scholars.[4] This move by Mutahhari introduced a *hawzah* scholar to the university who was open to new ideas and questions and had a more than sufficient knowledge of other schools of thought, such as Western philosophy and materialism. On the other hand, Mutahhari's fellow *hawzawiyun* (those who study and teach in the *hawzah*) became interested in this constructive relationship with the university.

Gradually, Mutahhari became a pole that attracted the religious students and professors of the university—a phenomenon that led to the formation of different Islamic associations among university students and teachers, such as the Islamic Association of Doctors or Engineers. For these groups Mutahhari taught classes on different subjects such as the Quran and philosophy. A number of his subsequently published books are in fact revised transcripts of his lectures at this time. They were the beginning of a long career of writing on religious issues (especially those of political and social relevance) at an ideological and intellectual level rarely equaled by other clerics. He composed in this way hundreds of books and articles on different Islamic subjects.[5]

Although his works attracted many minds and souls, they also inflamed a fierce animosity against him. The reason for this can be traced back to his criticism of and attacks on three approaches: Marxism, traditional Islam, and *'iltiqat* (the addition of non-religious thought to religious thought). In the social, political and intellectual climate of his time, Mutahhari saw these groups as a danger to people's faith and Islamic thought. Therefore, in his writings and speeches he was constantly addressing the problems and doubts that were raised by these three approaches.

Of the three approaches outlined above Mutahhari found the latter the most dangerous because it had the advantage of applying an Islamic label on its own views, so that religious people would not immediately reject it (an advantage that Marxism lacked) and on the other hand was actively involved in social and political change, and therefore attractive to young people (an advantage that traditional Islam lacked).

His continuous battle against what he called non-Islamic ideas masquerading as Islam resulted in his assassination, organized by the group *Furqan,* in 1980.[6]

Mutahhari's thought is particularly important for its influence on the theoretical foundations of women's position and laws pertaining to them in post-revolutionary Iran. Of particular importance, and the focus of this account, are his readings of the Quran, rather than his thoughts regarding pertinent *hadiths*, his anthropological observations or his criticisms of other—especially Western—views.

Woman in the Quran

Women's position in relation to the universe in general and to men in particular as outlined in the Quran is the starting point from which Mutahhari launches his discussion of women. He emphasizes that the standpoint of the Quran on women's creation makes it clear that woman is neither inferior to man in her creation nor created from man or for man. One of the verses of the Quran that addresses human creation reads as follows: "It is He [God] who created you from a single person [self/source] and made that self a mate of the same nature, in order that the self might dwell with that mate [in love]" (7:189). There is another similar verse in the Quran, which reads as follows: "Among His signs is [the fact] that He has created spouses for you from among yourselves so that you may console yourselves with them. He has planted affection and mercy between you; in that are signs for people who think things over" (30:21).

In his writings (though perhaps most importantly in his lectures), Mutahhari attempts to clarify that the Quran not only rejects humiliating and negative approaches to woman's characteristics but also dignifies her. In this regard he refers to the story of Eve and Adam in the Quran where, by use of the dual form of the verb, the verse refutes the idea that Eve was the source of the temptation that made Adam commit the first sin of humankind and thereby cause their descent from Heaven to Earth. This

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practices such as covering in order to catch up with modern world, Mutahhari was strongly critical of this view. He saw this form of feminism, which was in fact the only form of that phenomenon in his time, as symbolizing westernization rather than as an effort to help women regain their rights. For more on feminism and Mutahhari see Murtada Mutahhari, *Nezam-i huquq-i zan dar Islam* (Tehran: Ofset, 1980), 5-17.

[4] *Hawzah* is the traditional centre of Islamic teachings.

[5] Hizb-i Jumhūrī-i Islāmī, *Vīzhah nāmah-i shashumīn sālgard-i shahādat-i Āyat Allāh Murtadā Muṭahharī* (Tehrān: Daftar-i Markazī-i hizb-i Jumhūrī-i Islāmī, 1364 [1985]), 270; see also Martin, ibid., 77.

[6] Dārābī, ibid., 308.

verses reads as follows: "So Satan whispered to them to show them both their private parts which had gone unnoticed by either of them. He said: Your Lord only forbids you this tree so that you will not become two angels, or lest you both become immortal" (7:20). This verse is particularly careful to declare women's innocence by emphasizing that both Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan and were equally guilty of disobeying God's order.[7]

The idea that women are not capable of attaining the same spiritual achievements as men is another disturbing attitude about women that is also refuted by the Qur'ān, Mutahhari argues. He states that the Quran, by emphasizing *taqwa* (virtue) as the sole criterion in determining the superiority of one individual over another (regardless of gender, race or any other factor), has in fact rejected this negative view of women. The idea is refuted even further by the stories of the Quran about women who were important in many ways to humanity and who served as role models for all humans, not just for women. Pointing to Pharaoh's wife, Moses' mother, or Jesus' mother as examples of women who attained very remarkable spiritual positions, Mutahhari declares that the spiritual heroes of the Quran are not only men. Mary, Jesus' mother, is especially significant in this respect because of her high spiritual achievements, which amazed even Zakariyya, the prophet of her time.[8]

The other assumption about women that is rejected by the Quran in Mutahhari's view is that woman is created for man. In response to this assumption, Mutahhari argues that, according to the Qur'ān, the whole universe is created for the human being (*insan*). This is the notion of the principle of *al-'illah al-gha'iyah* (the ultimate cause) in Islamic theology. And the fact that the Quran has never excluded women from being human makes women as much the goal of creation as men. In other words, women, as part of the human population *(al-nas)* to whom the Prophet was sent and for whom the Quran was revealed, were never excluded from God's audience in the Quran.[9] In fact, men are created for women just as women are created for men, while the whole world is created for them both. This idea of creation for mutual benefit and support is outlined in the following verse: "They [wives] are your garments and ye are their garments." (2:187).

Based on his understanding of the Quran, Mutahhari envisions the universe as created for men and women who are separate entities with equal humanity who assist each other in their respective journeys towards perfection and fulfillment of their responsibility as "God's viceroys."[10]

Mutahhari also believes that the Quran not only does not support a negative understanding of women's creation, it insists on the opposite. In fact, because women lacked an appropriate position in Arabia before Islam, there exists a persistent attempt in the Quran to alter their position among Muslims.[11] Therefore, by emphasizing virtue—and not gender or race—as the only criterion for the superiority of one person over another, by condemning the inhumane practice of burying girls alive (which was widely practiced before Islam), by telling stories of women who were important in many ways to the life of humanity and who served as role models for all of humanity and not just women, and even by symbolic attempts such as repeating the terms "women" and "men" with exactly the same frequency, the Quran represents a supreme effort not only to alter the deteriorating situation of women during this time, but also to provide a guideline for the future of humanity.

Different Laws for Man and Woman

Despite Mutahhari's assumption of the Quran's positive attitude towards women, a question still remains: How did he justify the different rights for man and woman accorded in Islamic law (*shari'ah*)? If man and woman are created with the same respect and dignity and are both representatives of God on Earth; if woman can achieve the same level of intellectual and spiritual perfection as man; if she is not evil in her nature which God has provided her, then why would she be denied rights similar to those accorded to men in certain laws of the *shari'ah*? If the Prophet has been sent to all humans (*al-nas*), why would he bring different laws for women and men?

Responding to these questions, Mutahhari refers to the different physical and psychological qualities of men and women. These differences, which are not acquired but rather initiated by nature itself, are not geographical, historical, or social. Nor are they the

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[7] Ibid., 116.

[8] Ibid., 117.

[9] Ibid., 118-119.

[10] From verse 2:30 of the Quran: "And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not. "(2:30).

[11] Javadi Amuli, *Zan dar aine-e jalal va jamal* (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Farhangi-e Raja, 1993), 123.

result of miscalculation or accident on the part of nature. They are, rather, carefully planned by nature. Elaborating further, Mutahhari states that creation compels all creatures towards achieving perfection with the abilities and faculties provided for them; each natural faculty brings a natural right for the creature. A human being has, for instance, the right to education because he has the faculty and ability to be educated, but an animal does not have that right because it simply doesn't have the necessary faculty.[12]

Through this natural placement, creation has placed every creature in its proper orbit, and thus the prosperity of all depends on each following their faculties and remaining in their proper orbits. The human being, however, has a special position in this placement. He has been given the faculties that enable him to fulfill his responsibilities as God's vicar on earth. The faculties that are exclusively human are listed by Mutahhari as follows: intellectual faculty, since a human being, according to his nature (*fitrah*), always searches for the reality of things; the faculty of moral goodness, since a human being has a natural tendency towards being good and doing "good"; adoration, since by virtue of his *fitrah*, a human being looks for a sacred source of transcendental power and perfection to worship and glorify; the faculty of beauty, since beauty is an undeniable reality that cannot be defined and which each individual perceives differently; and the faculty of innovation (*khallaqiyah*), since a human being desires to acquire new ideas and to introduce new objects and innovations into his life that will make his world a more desirable place to live in.[13]

Although individuals have different ways of developing and actualizing them, Mutahhari emphasizes that these faculties exist in the nature of every human being regardless of gender. Both men and women, by virtue of these faculties, are eligible to have certain rights.

He also points out that the same source that has created the human being and privileged him with these special faculties and rights has made him a two-gendered being, and with perfect reason to do so. In addition to their faculties, human beings each have also been given particular qualities that help to distinguish the genders from one another. Mutahhari categorizes these gender-related qualities as being physical, psychological, and emotional. Interestingly,

these gender-related qualities have nothing to do with the humanity of the human, that is, they do not reduce, increase or have any other effect on human essence whatsoever. In other words, nature has given similar human faculties to both genders along with their respective rights, as well as specific physical, psychological, and emotional qualities that are attached to each gender's nature, and furthermore, specific rights for each gender based on the qualities that are already present.

Nature has done all these things, in Mutahhari's view, in order to provide humanity with a solid family foundation and by doing so has given men and women each a responsibility within their mutual relationships in the family. The different gender qualities are all in line with the principle of *al-'illah al-gha'iyah* to ensure the survival, protection and well-being of humans. In doing so, nature has created a remarkable system of reproduction in all creatures, including humans. To get the best results, nature has provided humans with a sense of unity and cooperation between man and woman that is caused, not weakened, by their differences. These differences strengthen their bonds, attract one to another and make them desirable to each other.[14] Referring to biological and psychological research, Mutahhari concludes that these differences are essential to man and woman's sexual relations, which are ultimately key to ensuring the survival of the human race. He states that if a woman were to have the same physical and emotional features as a man, she would be very unlikely to attract a man, just as a man who has the same feature as a woman can hardly expect to be the subject of a woman's attention.

The laws of creation thus made men and women desirable to each other by giving them different capabilities, qualifications and features. This desire however is not the same as the desire that a human being has for objects, for this desire for objects comes from his self-centred feelings. Objects seem desirable to a human being because he wants to use them as a means to achieve his goals, while the desire between men and women is categorically different. They long for one another because they love each other and find tranquility in each other by their nature. They are even as close to each other as a person is to his clothing, as the Quran states.[15] They even feel incomplete without each other; indeed,

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[12] Murtada Muthhari, *Insan dar Quran* (Tehran: Sadra, 1979), 254.

[13] Ibid., 254-264; see also Murtada Mutahhari, *Fitrat* (Tehran: Sadra), 1993, 74-86.

[14] Murtada Mutahhari, *Nezam-i hoquq-i zan* (Tehran: Ofset, 1980), 147-153.

[15] They [wives] are your garments and you are their garments. (Q. 2:187).

Mutahhari believes that celibacy is a deviation from the laws of creation.[16]

In fact these differences are established by nature specifically to provide men and women with the bonds they need in their relationship. They are not meant to cause either superiority or inferiority for either, but rather to direct the family life of humans and provide a basis for the sharing of responsibilities. The best analogy for the position of men and women toward each other is the example of the different organs of the human body. Each organ has been given a special position in the human body and plays a different role, while all are important to the life and well-being of a person. By giving each organ a different qualification and responsibility, nature has no intention of discriminating or giving advantages to some and not others, or of depriving one of one's advantages. The same situation can be imagined in the relations of men and women.

Although the natural differences between men and women are so obvious that they cannot be disputed in principle, the point that Mutahhari tries to make is that these differences are the source of the genders' different responsibilities and rights. If the existing physical and psychological differences are not intended to lead to different responsibilities and rights for men and women, we should doubt the teleological essence of the creation and as a result the whole notion of *al-'illah al-gha'iyah* would be at stake.

Woman In a Civic Society and In a Family

Differentiating between women's rights and responsibilities in the family and in civic society, Mutahhari argues that in a family the natural differences between men and women entail different responsibilities and rights, and consequently different laws. As such, in the family, men and women enjoy equal rights but not similar ones, whereas in civic society, they enjoy both equal and similar rights. In society, individuals can achieve different positions based on their personal abilities and efforts. There is no natural division for their social roles. No one is created to be a worker, an officer, a teacher, or a president. These positions should be acquired by individuals, men and women alike. It is the individual's right to acquire such positions in the society and it is the responsibility of society to provide its members with positions based on their personal efforts. [17]

Thus, the social life of the human being is categorically different from that of animals, for whom nature decides who will take which position in society. To take the example of bees, some are created to be masters and some to be workers, some to be soldiers and some to be commanders. But in a human social setting there is no such natural law dividing responsibilities. This is what has led some social scientists to assume that the human being is not by nature a social being, as some have perceived it to be. Based on their human faculties, all men and women are equally entitled to take part in a fair and just competition for social roles. Nevertheless, it is obvious that not all humans have developed their capabilities and skills alike, which has gradually led to their being placed in different and unequal social positions. In other words, humans are equal in their basic social rights but unequal in acquired rights and it would be unfair and unjust to give them all equal acquired rights as well. [18]

With regard to family life the story is different, as Mutahhari explains. He first of all emphasizes humanity's strong compulsion to form families and notes that history shows no trace of a period in which human beings existed without profound bonds of commitment between the sexes.[19] Under conditions of such seeming inevitability, nature has decided for men and women, who are individual members of the society regardless of their gender, who will take which position in the family. Men and women become separate entities with full human faculties but with special qualities by virtue of which they are placed in different positions and given different responsibilities and rights. These differences eventually enable them to fulfill their full human responsibilities and move towards perfection. Based on this understanding, it becomes possible to determine whether an individual's family life is a conventional type of living, like his life in the society, where being a wife, a husband, a father, or a mother does not necessarily entail particular responsibilities and rights and where only one's acquired advantages make one different, or whether these roles naturally impose on individual members of the family specific responsibilities and rights.

Mutahhari favours the latter interpretation, namely the natural approach towards the family life of humans, and maintains that family-oriented feelings in humans are not based on human civilization or custom; rather, they are trends in which the laws of the nature rule.

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[16] Mutahhari, *Nezam-i hoquq-i zan.*, 148.
[17] Ibid.,143.

[18] Ibid., 142-143.
[19] Ibid, 147-151.

As is understood so far, Mutahhari emphasizes that men and women, who may be seen as the main elements of the family, each have a different set of positions and responsibilities given to them by nature, and should enjoy their rights accordingly. This is how he justifies issuing different rights for man and woman in the *shari'ah*. Since the differences between men and women and the different laws of Islam are interrelated, the differences are the source of those Islamic laws and the laws are there to maintain the differences.

He believes that these laws are part of what he calls "the Islamic white revolution for women," which serves humanity in general and women in particular by allowing women and men to move freely in their own orbits. He refers to the following verse and uses the moon and the sun's relation to each other as a metaphor for man and woman. "The sun dare not overtake the moon nor does night outpace the day. Each floats along in its own orbit" (36:40). He calls this a revolution based on the assumption that Islam has served women in many ways and changed their deteriorating situation not only by negating the absolute authority exercised over them by male relatives, but also by establishing an ideology that respects and dignifies women. Islam took a radical and revolutionary step towards recognizing women's rights as free human beings enjoying full human dignity and respect—a notion that was clearly absent not only from Arabia at the time but from most other regions of the world. He calls it "white" because compared to the movements that claim to have fought for women's rights throughout contemporary history, the Islamic notion of women's rights does not necessarily require women to rebel against men. This white revolution does not encourage women to be suspicious and disrespectful of their male counterparts. [1]

The other major criterion of this movement is that it takes women's physical and psychological characteristics into consideration and by doing so conforms with the laws of creation by which its success is guaranteed.

Woman in Islamic Laws

In discussing Islamic laws, Mutahhari maintains that in all of Islamic law there is an attempt to conform with the natural laws that govern men and women's marital relations. It should be noted however that, at least to my understanding, he has overlooked certain of the laws, including some of the most controversial ones such as those governing blood-money and women's right to testify. Given Mutahhari's dedication to clarifying and defending Islamic principles against Marxism and eclecticism, this neglect cannot be simply considered as unintentional.[2] It is not Mutahhari's intellectual style simply to ignore such important maters. His silence about these issues can be attributed either to the fact that his views on those issues are not yet published, or that he has ideas and approaches for which he believed his fellow *'ulama* were not yet ready. The second possibility seems more likely, for while we should not totally rule out the first, it is nonetheless true that even his relatively conservative approach on *hijab* was not welcomed by some of the jurists of his time.[3]

Mutahhari did, however, discuss many of the laws that relate to women's position in the family, such as the laws of divorce, inheritance, polygamy, dowry and sustenance. These issues, though worthy of a full discussion, are outside the scope of this paper, which focuses on the theory Mutahhari deduced from these laws. He believes that in issuing these laws the *shari'ah* is in full conformity with the laws of nature. In other words, *shari'ah,* by issuing these laws, is determined to take women's and men's natural differences into consideration and to harmonize the Islamic laws with the laws of the creation. In this way, the relationship between man and woman in the family environment is such that they both have responsibilities and rights, but in accordance with their specific physical and psychological qualities. This conformity ensures that the system will work properly. Moreover, the laws have an indirect impact on the prosperity of society as a whole by establishing a just system for the family as the core unit of society.

In conclusion, Mutahhari seems to have succeeded in establishing a theoretical ground for issues related to women in Islam. He expressed himself very clearly on the topic of woman in her marital relations and on women's responsibilities and rights. In this attempt in particular he does not hesitate to employ a variety of different forms of knowledge to clarify, explain, and justify the Islamic principle, which is that women and men are equally human, sharing all human characteristics; therefore,

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[1] Ibid., 69.

[2] Hizb-i Jumhūrī-i Islāmī, 75-76.

[3] Mutahhari's response to their criticism came out as *Mutahhari's responses about the Islamic modest dress,* a book that, interestingly, is still not as widely published as his other works are. For more information on the issue see also Linda Clarke, "Hijab According to the Hhadith: Text and Interpretation," in: Alvi, Hoodfar and McDonough, op.cit., 255-258.

they have equal and similar religious obligations and responsibilities. On the other hand, they are created with the specifications of manhood and womanhood that do not affect their humanity but do impact on their marital positions, responsibilities and rights.

Nevertheless, he seems to have failed to address issues related to women's position in society by placing too much weight on "woman as spouse" compared to woman as an individual member of the society.

Considering the historical, political, and social context of Mutahhari's time, this negligence seems to be justifiable. Mutahhari's intellectual emergence at a time when traditional Islam prevailed in pre-revolutionary Iran seems to have forced him to address issues of a more fundamental and, at the same time, less provocative nature. In a situation where the traditionally religious people who opposed the Shah's policies were reluctant to send their daughters to public school, let alone into society to work, Mutahhari saw it as important to place more weight on the role of woman as spouse as compared to her role as an individual in society, since this was the only option for the majority of women, while cautiously inserting some more radical views in his works. This reality might well have been his next target had he lived to experience the changes in social values and norms in post-revolutionary Iran.

Notes on Contributors

Aimee **Patterson** is a Ph.D. student of religious ethics at McGill University's Faculty of Religious Studies in Montreal. Her MA thesis, of which this article is a product, focused on Christian environmental ethics and the work of controversial theologian, James M. Gustafson. Currently, she has turned her interest toward bioethics and is beginning research on the dialogue between Christian churches and public policy sources on euthanasia and other end-of-life issues.

Carolyn Shaffer is completing her M.A. in the history and philosophy of religion at Concordia University. Her thesis focuses on contemporary Muslim/Arab-Jewish dialogue in Montreal. Her interest in religious responses to Zionism was sparked by a three-month stay with Jewish religious settlers in the Palestinian Territories in 2001-2002. She is currently helping organize a symposium on Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives, to be held at Concordia in March, 2006 under the rubric of the Peace and Conflict Resolution Series. Carolyn has presented papers at Dalhousie and McGill universities, and has previously been published in the *Journal of Religion and Culture*. She is a two-time recipient of the M.A. fellowship from Concordia's Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies.

Carol Tulpar recently completed her Master's degree in Liberal Studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C. "What Lies Behind the Ritual Shrines?" was written in the fall of 2002 as a guided independent study under the aegis of Professor Donald Grayston, then Director of the Institute for the Humanities at SFU. In August, 2005, Carol had the privilege of presenting an overview of this paper to the 4th Annual Conference on New Directions in the Humanities, in Cambridge, U.K.

Samuel Wagar recently completed an M.A. at Simon Fraser University. His research dealt with links between the occultist new religion of Theosophy and the social democratic movement in 1920s British Columbia. He has a strong interest in Canada's occultist history, a number of publications in the area (and he hopes for more), and is currently working on research into the Wiccan use of *hieros gamos*. He has been a Wiccan High Priest for twenty years and is ordained through the Congregationalist Wiccan Association of B.C.

Khadijeh Zolghadr is a graduate student in the Department of Religion at Concordia University. Her main area of interest and research is in the legal issues concerning women in Islam and Judaism.

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