

# *Illumine*

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

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**Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Graduate Student Association**

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 the sciences, ethics, social and economic development, and other aspects of culture. 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 *Illuminate* 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 *Illuminate*, the Association undertakes events such as luncheons and discussion forums. Questions or comments may be directed to CSRS, or to [illuminejournal@yahoo.ca](mailto:illuminejournal@yahoo.ca).

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## Introduction

The 2003 issue of *Illumine* marks the second annual publication of the interdisciplinary journal of the Graduate Student Association of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. It is with excitement that we, the editors, present this periodical in what we hope is now part of a continuing tradition. *Illumine* offers graduate students the opportunity to publish work that examines the diverse ways in which religion interfaces with society and, as several of the articles in this issue suggest, societal practices influence religious traditions.

It has become somewhat of a trend in our increasingly multicultural and globally-connected communities to speak of religion and its political, historic, artistic, philosophical and scientific manifestations in broad and non-specific terms. Yet, if we are truly to understand how religion functions in society, how religion and society attract, repel and intersect with each other, then it is of the utmost importance that we take seriously our obligation to examine specific examples of this interface and to reflect upon how many people live a life that does not merely adopt religious trappings on a periodic basis, but which gives each essential aspect of thought, action and consequence a spiritual or a religious interpretation. How do people incorporate religious practice into their lives? How do religion and spirituality become active rather than passive components in shaping a sense of responsibility to self, community, the environment, art, history, health, commemoration, and even academic pursuits?

This issue contains seven works by graduate students studying in British Columbia. They come from a variety of backgrounds, with a diverse set of lived experiences. Each of the authors has, in his or her own way, explored the broad theme of “studies in religion and society.” It is perhaps not a coincidence that all of them have addressed, in some form, the marking of belief with a ritual act or a mnemonic device in a material form. Religion, whether in a formal, organised setting or in intimate, personal practice, has always provided a framework for the recognition of the passage of time, of important events and life cycles, of remembering tragedy and of finding ways to heal.

The first article, a thought-provoking piece entitled ‘The Struggle for Protestant Identity in Seventeenth Century England: ‘Catholic’ Pictures and Protestant Buyers’ by Seanine Warrington, looks

at art auction house sales of late seventeenth-century London. In an environment of Puritanical, Protestant protest against religious imagery, paintings of Biblical subject matter, a seemingly ‘Catholic’ commodity, were being bought and sold with great frequency, to be placed in private homes. Warrington examines this phenomenon, the political, religious and aesthetic context for the production of religious iconography, and how the sale and purchase of these paintings by a dissenting population informed the religious and political beliefs of the people of England.

‘From Christianity in China to Chinese Christianity: Missing History Since 1583 and Recent Academic Debates in English’ by Hua Li is a critical look at the place of Christianity in China since the sixteenth century. By reviewing the perspectives of several authors and contrasting their commentary with historic events and outcomes, Li establishes three phases for the Christian faith in its Chinese form: accommodation, inculturation and indigenisation. His contemplation of the process of introducing a new religion to a land with ancient cultural and religious patterns is filled with personal insights while presenting a specific example of how religion can take on malleable qualities in a new setting.

Monika Dix provides fascinating and original research in ‘The *Mukaekō* Ritual at Taimadera: A Living Tradition of Medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.’ Informed by her personal experience of Buddhism in Japan, Dix explains the process of the *Mukaekō* Ritual, currently enacted at Taimadera, in vivid detail. She then traces the unique iconographic and processional details of the ritual to antecedents in Buddhist art, and medieval interpretations of Japanese Buddhism and the tradition of Amida’s Pure Land. The interaction between art, history and belief merge in ritual, which subsequently exerts influence of its own.

‘The Tree on White Mountain: On Ritual, Spirit and Place’ is a short work that delves into the personal experiences of author Alison Pryer. At the urging of the *Illumine* Editorial Board, Pryer has taken her academic interest in rituals and their role as a “holistic form of communication” and shaped them into a personal reflection on the grief, loss and eventual return to balance she experienced following the death of her mother. With sensitivity and honesty, she shares the emotional process of finding

solace and strength through connecting with spirit and place on a Japanese mountain.

In a similar vein, Annick de Witt looks at the role of the natural world in humanity's understanding of the spiritual in 'Our Spiritual Nature: An Exploration into Nature Experiences, Spirituality and Environmental Responsibility.' Seeking to re-define the often vague notion of "the spiritual," de Witt has undertaken a series of interviews with environmentally active residents in the Victoria region in British Columbia to determine how their experiences of nature inform their spirituality. Wrestling with challenging issues of extracting quantifiable data from what has formerly been regarded as ephemeral subject matter, she leads readers through a series of themes that emerge in her research findings. De Witt poses important questions about our sense of self, our values, and our sense of environmental responsibility as they relate to our experiences of nature.

The fifth article in the journal, 'After Ground Zero: Problems of Memory and Memorialisation' is a polemic on the issue of creating a memorial in New York City for the former site of the World Trade Center towers. Geoff Carr undertakes the emotionally charged task of examining proposals for the memorial to be built at this location and critiques the concept that a physical, constructed memorial can embody universal meaning. Noting that the religious, spiritual and symbolic layers of meaning at Ground Zero cannot possibly be captured by any design team, regardless of the demographic representatives included (or forgotten) therein, Carr suggests that a return to the anti-monument movement of Pierre Nora would have been the appropriate approach to this sacred space.

Craig Vance's work 'Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent Paths Towards a Christian Social Ethic' is the final piece in the 2003 edition of *Illumine*. Vance, noting the seeming absence of the practice of social justice rooted in the Christian theological tradition today, turns to the works of Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore for his discussion of "Sacramental Socialism." Through his examination, Vance seeks a form of social action that is reflective as well as active, with a personal responsiveness based on the Christian understanding of the Incarnation of God in Christ.

These writers have engaged their subject matter in personal ways, in many instances combining their own belief systems with the methodologies they apply to their academic work. This active approach to the study of religion and spirituality has resulted in work that expresses the dynamic aspects of religion

in daily life. As editors, we saw these qualities in each piece. Sometimes we agreed, sometimes we had doubts and sometimes we outright disagreed with the perspectives offered, but in all instances we were inspired to ponder and ask questions about our own research and our own understanding of religion and spirituality acting within society. We took this to be the defining characteristic of the pieces we wished to include in the journal.

We would like to thank all of the contributors for their dedication and perseverance through a lengthy series of revisions. We also extend our appreciation to those students whose work was submitted but not published. The continued interest and enthusiasm from the staff, friends and fellows of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, as well as the financial support of the Centre, have been invaluable, and the help of Moira Hill and Susan Karim is always given with gracious generosity. To the Managing Editor of the 2002 edition of *Illumine*, Andrew Wender, we are grateful for your guidance and suggestions in passing on the *Illumine* project. Erin Ronse and Nancy Yakimoski, the brilliant, passionate and insightful members of the Editorial Board are worthy of laurels for the countless hours they contributed to this publication. Last but not least, thank you to the fantastic Connie Carter, who put the production details into place, and to Leslie Kenny, who helped us finish the job.

Angela Andersen and Eve Millar,  
*Illumine* Managing Editors, 2003

## The Struggle for Protestant Identity in Seventeenth Century England: 'Catholic' Pictures and Protestant Buyers

Seanine Warrington, University of Victoria

### Abstract

*Religious art was proudly supported by Anglicans after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 for its ability to connect both the early and Medieval churches with the Church of England, and, more importantly, to demonstrate the Anglican's rejection of the increasingly powerful dissenting perspective. Because nonconformist challenges to the Church's authority were often framed around the issue of religious imagery, art became a focal point for a power struggle between two Protestant groups: the Anglicans and the Puritans. Taking a defensive stance on the use of religious imagery, the late seventeenth-century Anglican Church promoted religious art on a large scale, both for church and household worship. As a symbol of their loyalty to the Church of England, Anglican laity brought pictures featuring Biblical and hagiographic imagery into their homes for both instructional and devotional purposes. These images, purchased at London auction houses, reflect how the middle levels of lay society enthusiastically embraced religious iconography and indicate the self-conscious identity of Anglicanism in the midst of Protestant conflict and division. The question of the presence of 'Catholic' images in Protestant English homes goes beyond simple decoration—religious imagery became a symbol of one's religious sentiments.*

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 marks England's decisive rejection of Catholicism in favour of a national Protestant religion. This official commitment to Protestantism was to bring stability and contentment to the majority of English people, however, the period following the Revolution was marked by religious tensions. Factional strife within the Church of England bled into society and although there was a heightened mistrust of Catholicism, pictures featuring what can typically be called 'Catholic' subject matter were among the most popular items sold at London auction houses at that time. This paper examines the seeming anomaly of 'Catholic' pictures in English Protestant homes and through investigating the politico-religious context, I conclude that Biblical and hagiographic imagery

found in middle class homes articulated religious and political differences that were forged in the conflict between Protestant factions after the Glorious Revolution.

Picture auction sales in London were extremely popular in the years following the Revolution. Current scholars, such as Iain Pears, have traced the development of a permanent commercial art market in London from 1680 to 1760. He states that throughout the 1680s, more than four hundred art auctions took place in London and by 1691, the number increased; in that year alone, London hosted ninety-nine sales.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, art was of major interest to many Londoners by the end of that century. In my study of sixteen auction catalogues which represent some of the largest auction sales held during these two years, I examined eight catalogues from 1689 and eight from 1690, and classified the types of images according to their descriptive titles since the pictures are no longer in existence. I determined that twelve per cent of the paintings listed for sale were of a religious nature and featured saints as well as Old and New Testament stories and figures. This casts religious subject matter as a significant focus of attraction for London consumers. Given the fact that early modern and current accounts of this century indicate that any Catholic influence on English life was perceived as a threat to the spiritual and political health of the nation, the popularity of these images poses an interesting question; why are pictures featuring Catholic subject matter being purchased and how are they being used within buyers' homes?

Current scholarship offers a convincing picture of the consumer patterns around these London auction sales. In the essay 'Picture Consumption in London at the End of the Seventeenth Century,' Carol Gibson-Wood's study of both probate and orphan's court inventories between the early 1690s and the early eighteenth century indicates that many middle class Londoners owned the type of pictures that would be found at the auction sales. Of the one hundred middle class households that she looked at,

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<sup>1</sup> Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 51-59.

including those of merchants, shopkeepers, tradesmen, artisans, and professionals, sixty-two record ownership of pictures. Furthermore, their average value listed in inventories was approximately ten shillings—a price which corresponds with those at the auction sales. Possessing a similar value to such items as petticoats and pewter dishes, these pictures can be interpreted as affordable luxuries of the time that were likely used to decorate homes.<sup>2</sup> However, the consistent appearance of what is considered ‘Catholic’ imagery at London auction sales presents a challenge to current conceptions of England during the Glorious Revolution and the following years. Although there are no known surviving examples of these pictures, the descriptive titles used in auction catalogues such as *Virgin and Child* and *Our Savior on the Cross* suggest that religious art followed the subject matter and iconography of the Catholic artistic tradition despite the threat Catholicism posed.

England, in the seventeenth century, was marked by religious conflict and debate. During the Civil War of 1642 to 1649, royalists fought to preserve the Church of England against the Puritans whose dissatisfaction with the church was expressed through violent iconoclasm. Under Oliver Cromwell (1649-1658) the Protectorate government granted religious toleration to many Protestant dissenting groups who were known as the Puritans.<sup>3</sup> Puritanism was largely informed by the teachings of reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) who asserted that scripture represented the only authority in Christian faith. This prompted a call for the “purification” of the church: all ceremonies not advocated in the Bible were to be eradicated from worship. In particular, Puritans rejected ceremonial vestments and the preparation of communion on an altar, as well as the use of the cross and religious imagery in worship, which were considered to be both a form of idolatry and a challenge to the ultimate authority of the Bible.

While Puritans regarded the use of images as one of the most objectionable practices in both the Catholic and Anglican churches, they also condemned the Church of England for practicing what they considered to be popish ceremony. Traditionally, the term popery described the power

of the Pope and of Roman Catholic practices, but by the seventeenth century it was identified with the arbitrary or autocratic government, which early modern English people associated with the Catholic monarchies on the continent.<sup>4</sup> For instance, Charles I’s government embodied the threat of popery because of its despotic style and its alliance with Catholic France. Popery, therefore, signaled foreign invasion and the possibility of religious persecution of Protestants. During the 1660s-70s, Charles II’s alliance with France’s Catholic King Louis XIV drew England closer to the possibility of the arbitrary Catholic rule which many Protestants feared.<sup>5</sup> When the heir to the throne, James II, openly converted to Catholicism in 1669, some anti-royalist members of the government quickly took measures against the likelihood of a future Catholic rulership. This resulted in The Exclusion Crisis of 1679 to 1681, which was intended to exclude James from the throne on the basis of his Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> Despite this measure, he ascended to the throne in 1685 and began making adjustments to legally allow Catholic worship in England. In 1687, he issued a Declaration of Indulgence allowing for both freedom of worship and access to public office for Catholics and Protestant dissenters.<sup>7</sup> He further communicated his Catholic loyalties to the nation by imprisoning seven Anglican bishops who refused to adhere to the 1688 Declaration of Indulgence. Both the Church and government began to challenge James as he took measures to increase the number of Catholic Members of Parliament. In 1688, a group of aristocrats and one bishop wrote a letter to Protestant Stadholder of the Netherlands, William of Orange, requesting that he invade England and restore Protestantism. William’s arrival in England in 1688 was termed the Glorious Revolution. It is not surprising that William initially received much English support for his efforts to preserve

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Gibson-Wood, ‘Picture Consumption in London at the End of the Seventeenth Century,’ *Art Bulletin*, vol. 84, no. 3 (2002), p. 491.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England, 1539-1660* (London: Longman, 1984) p. 342.

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<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> In 1660, Charles II restored the English monarchy and, along with it, the Anglican state church. His Catholic sympathies however, were widely known. When he began to form a political alliance with Catholic King Louis XIV, many English Protestants feared inevitable Catholic rule. See Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722*, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power*, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 2.

Protestantism in England, as indicated by the majority of government, church, and lay people acknowledging his new authority over English ecclesiastical and political matters. Further, anti-Catholic riots in London upon William's arrival attest to the fact that Protestant sentiment dominated popular opinion.<sup>8</sup> Many believed he would put an end to the threat of popery, but shortly after he took the throne the unified Protestant approval of the Glorious Revolution began to crumble with much of the opposition to William's ascendancy located within the Church. Many of the clergy would not swear the oath of allegiance to William, and those who regarded their oath to King James II as life long were pitted against the jurors who favoured William. Ultimately, the nonjurors lost their dioceses. The appointment of dissenting clergymen as replacements for the nonjurors revealed William's support of nonconformist rather than Anglican Protestants. Thus, both a schism within the Church of England and a rift between William and Anglicanism was created.

William's Calvinist background was a guiding force in his dealings with Church politics. This resulted in tensions being felt within the Church of England as well as the expansion and creation of divisions outside of it. In 1689, William introduced the Comprehension and the Indulgence Bills which invited moderate dissenters to become part of the state-supported Church of England. Nonconformists who did not fall into the moderate group were called non-Trinitarians since they did not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity; they were protected by the Act of Indulgence. Even more radical was William's hope to repeal the Test Act, which allowed dissenting Protestants to hold office despite their refusal to take the Anglican sacrament of the Eucharist. Tories, or High Churchmen, who were pro-royalist and conservative regarding changes within the Church of England, rejected these proposals. Although they prevented the Comprehension Bill and the repeal of the Test Act from following through, they conceded to passing the Act of Indulgence.<sup>9</sup> William not only protected the dissenters from being punished for worshipping outside of the Church of England, but also allowed them to acquire licenses to build meeting houses. As early as 1690, there were 940 dissenting congregations (excluding Quaker meeting houses) in England. By 1711, the number of meeting houses

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<sup>8</sup> Rose, *England in the 1690s*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-165.

outnumbered Anglican churches by two to one. Between these years, approximately 4,000 new licenses had been issued.<sup>10</sup>

The matter of religious art in Christian worship became increasingly controversial after the Glorious Revolution. Looking back to the Civil War period, iconoclasm allowed dissenters to exert their power over the Church based on what they believed were commonalities between the Anglican and Catholic religions in relation to imagery and its uses. Protestant dissenters believed that religious images were heretical and hoped "to demolish such old monuments of superstition and idolatry."<sup>11</sup> With this as a backdrop, the Church of England's decision to rebuild and redecorate St. Paul's Cathedral reemerged as a hotly contested point between Anglicans and dissenters. It began earlier in the century, during Charles I's reign (1625-1649) when Puritans repeatedly protested the court's and clergy's desire to refurbish the building.<sup>12</sup> From their perspective, a church was a purely functional building necessary only for worship, and as such, one which did not require embellishment. As decisions about the re-adornment of St. Paul's Cathedral were being made, theological questions regarding the interior decoration of the cupola moved to the forefront of the controversy. Some members of the clergy, especially those with dissenting sympathies, feared that St. Paul's decoration would echo the Catholic counter-reformation churches on the continent, which featured brightly coloured dramatic depictions of saints. While Protestants did not attach a divine status to saints like the Catholics, many Puritans rejected the representation of saints because it was part of the Catholic tradition. However, in 1709, the decision was reached that the cupola should depict figures from scriptural history, specifically from the Acts of the Apostles. The clergy consented since the imagery would be didactic rather than awe inspiring. Representing the church's namesake, St. Paul was an obvious subject matter choice for the decorative scheme; as well, this apostle was particularly important to Protestantism for his emphasis on faith alone as the key to salvation. The Commissioners for the Rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral specified representing the *earthly* rather than the *otherworldly* life of St. Paul.

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<sup>10</sup> Holmes, *Politics, Religion and Society in England*, p. 193.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>12</sup> Judith Hook, *The Baroque Age in England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 146.

In this way his life as a man, rather than as a saint, would be stressed, which would inhibit utilising the images in a way that was idolatrous.<sup>13</sup>

The controversy surrounding the decoration of St. Paul's cupola demonstrates how religious art was both a politically and spiritually-loaded endeavour. As indicated by numerous seventeenth-century books against the use of religious imagery in churches, authors such as Thomas Comber responded to the ongoing criticism of redecorating the Cathedral. In *A Discourse Concerning the Second Council of Nice* (1688), Comber looks back to the Council of Nicaea in 787 when, according to the author, idolatry was sanctioned. Challenging the legitimacy of the Council altogether, Comber writes: "...as for this *Nicene* Council, they can neither confute their Adversaries by Scripture, nor yet by the Councils, Fathers and Tradition, and were better at an Anathema than an Argument."<sup>14</sup> The first commandment in the Old Testament, "Thou shalt not have false gods before me", was often cited as the ultimate statement against religious imagery thus condemning any early Church doctrine which argued the contrary. Comber adheres to this precedent when he states, "The Religious Veneration which is now by the *Roman* Church said to be due to Images, cannot be grounded upon Scripture, because it was expressly forbid in the Old Testament."<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, images of saints and Biblical figures would bring the sins of Roman Catholicism into Protestant churches.

Many Puritans, like Comber, also condemned the display of religious imagery in the domestic realm. From this perspective, it seems likely that Roman Catholics would be the sole audience for images purchased at London auction houses. However, seventeenth-century statistics record that less than two per cent of England's population was Catholic during the 1690s, making this an unsatisfactory explanation.<sup>16</sup> Since the statistics do not support a large Catholic purchasing market, it is necessary to turn our attention back to the Protestant population for a deeper analysis. Is it possible that dissenters now formed the menace that Catholics once posed to

the Church of England? If one uses the case of St. Paul's Cathedral, which seems to encapsulate the conflict between Anglicans and dissenters, a division between the Church of England and nonconformists was already under way. According to Restoration scholar Judith Hook, this conflict forced the Anglican Church to publicly express a strong support for religious imagery, as seen in the redecoration of the Cathedral.<sup>17</sup> This position further alienated dissenters. By continuing to promote religious imagery, despite opposition from dissenters, the Church of England cultivated a distinctly Anglican interest in Biblical and hagiographic pictures, such as those found at London auction sales. For this reason, we may assume that a large number of consumers who purchased religious imagery at these London sales held Anglican loyalties. Religious pictures bought at auctions and displayed in homes thus functioned to illustrate the household's politico-religious affiliation.

The Anglican acceptance of religious art can be seen in theological literature of the time. In *Concerning Images and Idolatry* (1689), the proctor and writer Abraham Woodhead presents a defensive position on the use of images in the Anglican Church. He lists the Anglican practices of bowing, kneeling, taking the Eucharist, burning frankincense and kissing the Gospels, among other ceremonies, as proper for "a true Son of the Church of *England*."<sup>18</sup> Woodhead condones Anglican ceremonies, and clearly supports the use of religious art by turning to the early church's application and justification of using religious images: "If then, I say, this Veneration of Holy Relicks and the Cross which is found in the fourth Age, or ancients, be conceded anyway lawful, or justifiable, then the same and no greater given in whatever following age to Images can never be Idolatrous."<sup>19</sup>

While *Concerning Images and Idolatry* reveals Woodhead's desire to establish support for the proper use of religious imagery, a contrasting point of view is set out by John Gother in *A Discourse of the Use of Images: In Relation to the Church of England and the Church of Rome* (1687). Gother's dissenting sympathies are evident as he draws many parallels between the two churches in relation to the issue of religious imagery. He states that "The Church of *England* likewise agrees with her [Church

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<sup>13</sup> Carol Gibson-Wood, 'The Political Background to Thornhill's Paintings in St. Paul's Cathedral,' *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 56 (1993), pp. 233-236.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Comber, *A Discourse Concerning the Second Council of Nice* (London, 1688), p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, preface.

<sup>16</sup> Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War*, p. 2.

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<sup>17</sup> Hook, *The Baroque Age in England*, p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> Abraham Woodhead, *Concerning Images and Idolatry* (London, 1689), p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

of Rome] in the same *Doctrin and Practice*; allowing of *Images*, as helps to Piety, and for affecting the minds of the Beholders with Pious Cognitions, and encouraging them to a Vertuous and Exemplary Life.”<sup>20</sup> By casting the Church of England in the same light as the Church of Rome, the author hopes to not only implicate Anglicans as promoters of popery but to also accuse the Anglican church of practicing Catholic ‘heresy,’ including idolatry. Gother associates Anglicanism with religious imagery, not only in the realm of the Church, but also in private households. Quoting an unnamed author, he asserts: “The Pictures of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints may be made, and had in Houses, set up in Churches—The Protestants do it, and use them for Helps of Piety.”<sup>21</sup>

While religious images such as those found in auction houses may have served both decorative and devotional needs within the realm of the Anglican home, current scholars like Jeremy Gregory support the idea of an increasing Anglican interest in religious art for educational and commemorative purposes. He believes that art was championed by the clergy within both the church and the domestic sphere; it could instruct the laity in their piety as well as in the value of Christian charity.<sup>22</sup> Gregory highlights the Anglican favour toward Biblical imagery specifically for its ability to educate. As visual narratives, images could illustrate and commemorate events from scriptural history, rather than inspire adoration or idolatry. According to Gregory, the Church of England believed that Biblical imagery used in a didactic fashion would prevent idolatry and gain the support of those possessing nonconformist sympathies.

Like Gregory, Jonathan Barry’s ‘Cultural Patronage and the Anglican Crisis, 1689-1775’ (1993) sees the rising interest in religious prints and pictures around the turn of the century as part of this new interest in household worship among Anglican Protestants.<sup>23</sup> This was the result of the increasing

popularity of illustrated devotional books at the end of the seventeenth century which went hand in hand with the flourishing of church building and decoration in the early eighteenth century. He cites as an example the Commission For Building Fifty New Churches in London, which was set up by Parliament in 1711. In response to London’s population increase, many of these churches were built in the quickly developing suburbs.<sup>24</sup> The extensive painting and sculptural decoration of these new churches, however, suggest that factors other than demographic considerations fueled the building project. Imagery often associated with Catholic practices played a significant role in their decoration and in Anglican worship. Both Gregory and Barry advocate that the Church of England, wanting to assert power, played a key role in the design and decoration of the new churches. Strategically, the Church harkened back to the practices of the early and Medieval churches to legitimate the depiction of saints and other religious figures based on the authority of its connection to the early church. In this way, the Church of England articulated a clear position on the use of religious imagery for Anglican worship in response to the ongoing conflict.<sup>25</sup> Although they tended to avoid mirroring the elaborate ornamentation of the Catholics, the Anglican clergy, unlike Puritan groups, remained favourable to religious art that could instruct the laity in Christian piety.

In conclusion, we return to the question of ‘Catholic’ pictures and Protestant buyers. Barry and Gregory provide a framework within which to position middle class consumption of Biblical and hagiographic imagery purchased at London auction houses. From their findings, it can be assumed that Anglicans were purchasing religious images at London auction sales for both devotional and instructional purposes. While such purchases may indicate both the affluence and a particular taste of the middle class, these acquisitions also identified the consumer’s Anglican loyalties. Indeed, the subject matter of religious pictures, which included saints, Crucifixions, Old and New Testament stories, and figures, echoes the decorative programs of Anglican churches at the time. In this way, the types

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<sup>20</sup>John Gother, *A Discourse of the Use of Images: In Relation to the Church of England and the Church of Rome* (London, 1687), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Jeremy Gregory, ‘Anglicanism and the Arts: religion, culture and politics in the eighteenth century,’ pp. 82-109 in Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory, eds., *Culture, Politics, and Society in Britain, 1660-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 87.

<sup>23</sup>Jonathan Barry, ‘Cultural Patronage and the Anglican Crisis: Bristol, 1689-1775,’ pp. 191-208 in Colin Haydon, Stephen Taylor, and John Walsh, eds., *The Church of*

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*England c. 1689-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 195.

<sup>24</sup>W. M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 200-201.

<sup>25</sup>Hook, *The Baroque Age in England*, p. 146.

of images that decorated households articulated religious difference: Anglicanism was aligned with religious art while Protestant nonconformity was associated with the rejection of such imagery as idolatrous. This raises an interesting point; did the threat of dissent during William's reign encourage the Church of England to support their position on religious imagery more strongly than in previous times? Perhaps Anglicans, both clergy and laity, accepted religious imagery as a means of announcing their Anglican loyalties and their rejection of dissent. The popularity of Biblical and hagiographic pictures at London auction sales may be interpreted as belonging to—and illustrating—the religious tensions at the time between the Anglicans and the dissenters.

# From Christianity in China to Chinese Christianity: Missing History Since 1583 and Recent Academic Debates in English

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## Abstract

*The history of Christianity in China can be roughly divided into four periods of growth, decline, revival, and indigenisation. After briefly reviewing each period of the history of Christianity in China, I will examine a variety of influential books written by western scholars of different perspectives, reveal their disparate or even contradictory points of view, and evaluate their effectiveness in examining the three phases of the Christian presence in China: accommodation, inculturation, and indigenisation. As the historical evidence presented by these authors develops from a discussion of the introduced presence of Christianity in China to a look at indigenised Chinese Christianity, I will try to find the voids, biases and omissions, and conclude by indicating the possible directions which, I believe, scholarship should take to provide a more complete picture of the history of Christianity in China.*

Christianity was first introduced to China as early as the seventh century, but it failed to firmly implant and was all but extinguished during the Tang dynasty (618-907). At the same time, however, imperial patronage helped to develop Buddhism, another imported religion, brought to China from India in the first century. It was not until the late sixteenth century that Christianity once again entered into China and managed to embed itself in the Chinese social structure. Christianity was not able to reach the status of the three dominant faiths, practiced in China for over one thousand years: Buddhism and the indigenous traditions of Daoism and Confucianism. Christianity has remained a marginal religion in China, with variable influence, for the past four hundred years.

In the present article, I will solely focus on the debates of western scholarship regarding the history of Christianity in China from 1583 to present. This history can be divided into four eras of growth, decline and revival, roughly demarcated by significant events in the path from the early role of Christianity in China towards an indigenised Chinese Christianity. These events include Jesuit Matteo Ricci's first visit to China in 1583, Emperor Yong Zheng's Imperial Edict banning Christianity in 1724 and the Nanjing Treaty of 1842 guaranteeing foreign

missionaries the right to proselytise in China, and the ascent to power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 followed by the Three-Self Movement. My article is, thus, organised into four sections. After reviewing some major events in each period, I will examine a variety of influential books by western scholars to reveal disparate and sometimes contradictory points of view on Christianity in China, evaluating their recognition and effectiveness in addressing the uneven growth from accommodation to inculturation to indigenisation. I will locate the voids and biases of scholarship in this field in order to indicate possible directions which I believe future research should take to provide a more complete picture of the history of Chinese Christianity.

## The Early Growth of Christianity in China, 1583-1724

Early Catholic Jesuit missionaries to Asia adopted strategies of accommodation to communicate cross-culturally. St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), the pioneer of Christian missionaries to eastern Asia during the sixteenth century, asserted that effective Christian evangelisation and proselytisation required that "a missionary was to become an integral part of a particular civilization."<sup>1</sup> Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) followed Xavier's ideas and lived the typical life of Chinese literati after coming to China in 1583. Achieving Confucian-Christian syncretism, Ricci won respect among celebrated scholar-officials. Some were converted, including Xu Guangqi, Li Zhizao and Yang Tingyun, who became known in China as the "Three Pillars of the Early Christian Church."<sup>2</sup> While Ricci and his fellow missionaries worked with literati primarily in south China, other Jesuits such as Joachim Bouvet cultivated close relationships with the throne at Beijing, obtaining imperial patronage and protection. Pro-court missionaries naively believed that if they

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Mungello, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp.15-17.

could convert Emperor Kangxi then China would become a Christian country. However, the arrival of the Papal Legation around 1705, which spread the Chinese Rites Controversy from Europe to China, annoyed Kangxi, and he abandoned Christianity. Though he would continue to allow the Jesuit missionaries to reside in China, the situation would change after his death with Emperor Yong Zheng's edict. When dealing with the early Jesuit experience in China, western scholars inevitably approach it as a set of intellectual issues, arising from the cultural encounter of two ancient civilisations. They either stress Christianity's accommodation of Chinese culture and the similarities between Christianity and Confucianism or they focus on the conflicts and unbridgeable differences.

In his book *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, David E. Mungello traces and confirms the evolution of accommodation from Ricci's association with Confucian literati to Bouvet's "displacement of Confucius with Kangxi Emperor as the model of exaltation."<sup>3</sup> As the salient feature of this book, he points out that "the framework of the Jesuits' Confucian-Christian blending became the intellectual funnel through which most information from the Jesuits about China flowed."<sup>4</sup> In my opinion, the significance of this book lies in the fact that it shows the interactions of European and Chinese civilisations. From a European perspective, it presents the way in which the European missionaries, as media, not only disseminated Christianity in China and exerted influence on Chinese intellectuals, but also, in return, brought back "information about China – its geography, language, government, philosophy, history and society – and provided intellectual foundation for those European savants who became proto-sinologists."<sup>5</sup> By examining the books written by the missionaries, such as Ricci-Trigault's *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas* (1615), Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (1655), and a group translation of the Confucian Four Books *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687), Mungello demonstrates that these published writings shaped the seventeenth-century European assimilation of information about China, among which two most important areas are China's "historical chronology" and "the Chinese

language."<sup>6</sup> This laid the initial foundation for sinology.<sup>7</sup> In spite of Timothy Brook's criticism of Mungello's cursory treatment of the chronologies, I still confirm the success of the synthetic study conducted by Mungello<sup>8</sup> because he emphasises that the dynamic mediation of the missionaries was influenced by their practices of accommodation.

Similarly, Lionel M. Jensen devotes an entire chapter to the Jesuit missionary's accommodation in his controversial book *Manufacturing Confucianism*, published in 1997.<sup>9</sup> In the first chapter, he makes a profound and persuasive analysis about why and how those early Jesuit missionaries decided to turn themselves into Chinese literati in order to draw parallels between concepts in Christianity and Confucianism. The most striking point is his scrutiny of the missionaries' psychological state when they first landed at China. He describes them as "victims of cultural shock" that "could only be overcome through invention based on analogy."<sup>10</sup> Like any man who comes to a strange land, he will instinctively grasp at something familiar in order to feel safe. So the Jesuit missionaries tried to find similarities between Christianity and Chinese traditions, especially Confucianism, and in this way to accommodate themselves into Chinese culture. In Jensen's view, their accommodation was a "more thorough form of cultural assimilation than was sinification and could not have been accomplished without significant Chinese indulgence,"<sup>11</sup> and had three distinct expressions in their adaptations of culture, theology and literature.<sup>12</sup> Jensen's chapter on accommodation can be regarded as a good supplement to Mungello's book.

Though Jensen provides readers with his deep insights into accommodationism, his thesis that "Confucius" and "Confucianism" are the inventions of the Jesuit missionaries, jointly manufactured by European and Chinese scholars through all these years, is arguable.<sup>13</sup> Kong Fuzi's philosophy had been the mainstream ideology for more than fifteen

<sup>3</sup>David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Mungello, *Curious Land*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Brook, 'Book Review on Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 45, no. 5 (1986), p. 1067.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 1067.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 1067.

<sup>9</sup> Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*, pp. 31-75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, this parallels Edward Said's argument that Orientalism did not exist before scholars invented it in their offices.

hundred years when Ricci arrived in China and *Sangang Wuchang* (Three Bonds and Five Relations) had long been the dominant set of rules in Chinese life. It is possible that Ricci imparted something of himself into the ideas that he transported to Europe. Though it may be true there were no Latin equivalents for “Kong Fuzi” and his philosophy before Ricci and his fellow missionaries introduced them to Europe, and that Ricci invented the terms “Confucius” and “Confucianism,” the practice of Confucianism itself could not have been invented. An outsider may use postmodern theory to explain Confucianism as an invention, but an insider such as myself, who grew up within Chinese culture, knows that Confucianism penetrates into ways of thinking, the practice of religion, and all aspects of life.

David Mungello’s focus on the efforts of the Jesuits to achieve accommodation between Western Christianity and Chinese civilisation is used in his work to try to justify Christianity by presenting the similarities between Christianity and Confucianism. This is in contrast to the “culture-conflict” view, represented in my article by two studies conducted in the 1980s: *China and The Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* by Jacques Gernet<sup>14</sup> and *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* by John Young.<sup>15</sup> Gernet and Young do not simply treat the Chinese critics of Christianity as “xenophobes or hidebound resisters of change,”<sup>16</sup> but make great attempts to introduce the Chinese perspective into the historical record, and to probe the question of how deeply the religious thinking of the two civilisations differed. In their limited historical studies, this leads to the conclusion that Christianity indeed failed to be assimilated into seventeenth and eighteenth-century China, merely playing an ephemeral and peripheral role in Chinese history during this period of time.

On the philosophical level, Gernet underlines the contrast between Chinese and Christian views of morality, Heaven and God, relationships between religion and politics, and makes a “cynical casuistry”

of the policy of accommodation.<sup>17</sup> His main concern is the intellectual engagement between the Jesuit missionaries and their Neo-Confucian literati critics, and he stresses the challenge posed for the Jesuits by the Chinese world. First hand research materials from a variety of Chinese social groups, including the literate elite, Buddhist monks and common people, are applied to disclose the generally negative reactions toward Christianity and Christian missionaries. Furthermore, he portrays Jesuit missionaries as fearful of too much compromise with Chinese philosophy and culture after Ricci’s death. Ultimately, Gernet believes that “different languages express, through different logics, different visions of the world and man.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, he makes a very striking point in this book: the reason why Chinese people were basically unable to absorb and understand the essential concepts of Christianity is due to their cultural, including linguistic, predispositions.

However, this book should be approached with some caution. Paul A Cohen, in his review of *China and The Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, makes a pertinent and persuasive evaluation of Gernet’s cultural-contrast approach based on three facets. Firstly, Gernet uncritically incorporates materials, in which “the Chinese enemies of Christianity might have overstated the differences between Chinese culture and the culture of the Christian West,” into his own portrayal of cultural differences.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, he overgeneralises about Chinese cultural orientations and ahistorically suggests that these orientations were fixed. Thirdly, Gernet’s linguistic/conceptual relativism and determinism potentially jeopardise “any sort of meaningful cross-cultural inquiry or understanding.”<sup>20</sup>

One year later, Gernet’s book was followed by John Young’s *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter*, which, although of narrow scope, strengthened many of Gernet’s points. However, in contrast to Gernet’s philosophical, cultural-conflict approach, Young examines the important individuals, such as Xavier, Ricci, and Xu Guanqi,

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<sup>14</sup>Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup>John Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983).

<sup>16</sup>Daniel H. Bays, ‘Book Review on China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1987), p. 115.

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<sup>17</sup> Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism – Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Paul A. Cohen, ‘Book Review on China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1987), p. 679.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 681.

and significant events, such as the Nanjing incident of 1616-1617, Schall and Bouvet's defenses of Christianity, and the Rites controversy. Young's case study echoes Gernet's view that Catholic Christianity and Chinese culture were fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed. However, he gives more weight to the moral absoluteness of Confucianism to account for Christianity's difficulties in China.

Though both Gernet's culture-conflict approach and Young's case study endeavour to demonstrate the incompatibility and irreconcilability between Christianity and Chinese culture, they overemphasise the objective difficulties the missionaries encountered in their proselytising activities, such as the opposition of the local literate elite, Buddhist monks and common people, as well as some incidents of anti-Christianity. The two authors also tend to ignore the other side of reality – the friendly relationship between some missionaries and Chinese literary men, and the prominent Chinese converts, such as Li Zhizao and the Confucian official scholar Xu Guangxi. Most importantly, they overlook the extent of missionaries' efforts to bridge the gap between Christianity and Confucianism, seeking to identify with the Chinese literati, thereby accommodating Christian belief with Chinese cultural tradition. Their analyses are also limited by their grasp of historical perspective, as will become clear in the following sections.

### **The Imperial Ban on Christianity and its Effects, 1724-1842**

One year after Emperor Kangxi's death, the new emperor, Yong Zheng, banned Christianity in China by issuing an imperial edict. Emperor Yong Zheng's anti-Western stand was a turning point for the encounter between China and the West. Following the imperial proscription in 1724, Christianity witnessed a low ebb in China, and proselytising activities were forced underground.

Nine years after the publication of *Curious Land*, Mungello presented another book, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, in which he emphasises the Christian "inculturation" in China, which "refers to the absorption of Christianity into a culture to the degree that it not only finds expression in the elements of that culture but also becomes an animating force that transforms the culture."<sup>21</sup> Inculturation affects a society to a greater extent than accommodation. Mungello discusses the life story of

Zhang Xingyao, who was part of the third generation of Chinese Christians in Hangzhou, to demonstrate the reconciliation of Confucianism and Christianity in China. This example of Christian inculturation directly contradicts Gernet and Young's belief that Christianity was not and could not be assimilated into Chinese culture.

Mungello's point of Christian "inculturation" into Chinese society is strengthened by two papers from *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* by Robert E. Entenmann. Entenmann describes Christian evangelisation under the Imperial Ban of 1724. While persecution and apostasy dramatically reduced the number of Catholics from about 300,000 to 200,000,<sup>22</sup> in the frontier environment of Sichuan, the immigrant population provided Catholicism with a relatively hospitable atmosphere.<sup>23</sup> Discussing the leading evangelistic roles of Chinese priests and their families, the author also describes their experiences of persecution in Jiangjin, in 1746 and 1755. Entenmann points out that Catholics did not all belong to one social stratum but came from both indigent and middle classes. He also provides impressions of local Catholic life and worship. In his discussion of the phenomenon of the "Christian Virgins" he says that the Catholic Church offered Chinese women a channel for their religious passions that was the only respectable alternative to marriage. The Christian Virgins remained central to the growth and maintenance of the Catholic community through their education of girls in Sichuan.<sup>24</sup> The author concludes that by "the mid-eighteenth century Catholicism had become a popular religion with roots in Chinese society."<sup>25</sup>

Though Entenmann only touches a tiny part of Catholic Christianity during the period of Qing imperial proscription of Christianity from 1724 to 1842, his writings suggest that missionaries persevered and made gradual progress, and the whole

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<sup>22</sup> Robert E. Entenmann, 'Catholics and Society in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan', Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> This Catholic institution, a parallel of the White Lotus sect, comprised of teaching-women, flourished into the twentieth century. Robert E. Entenmann, 'Christian Virgins in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan', Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 193.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.193.

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<sup>21</sup> Mungello, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, p. 2.

issue of the Christian presence outside the court appears to be much more complex than previously thought. Catholic communities increased in parts of the empire, despite imperial banning.<sup>26</sup> The survival of Christianity in this period may be attributed to the inculturation of Christianity within Chinese society. Unfortunately, most western scholars refrain from probing this religious history and fail to detect the hidden development of Christianity in eighteenth-century China. Neglect impedes the recognition of Christianity's adaptations within Chinese society. Further research into this period is necessary and will help elucidate the ongoing process, from accommodation to inculturation to indigenisation.

### **The Official Revival of Christian Proselytisation in China, 1842-1949**

Through the Nanjing Treaty of 1842, western missionaries again obtained the right to proselytise in China and a guarantee of toleration for Chinese converts. In this favourable political setting, European Catholic missionaries intensified their evangelical activities in China, and the crusade to convert China also captured the imagination of the Protestants. The number of Protestant missionaries in China grew rapidly through the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Christianity was experiencing a revival in China. However, backed by the unequal treaties and gunboats, the evangelism of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries was tainted with imperialism. Inevitably, the missionary ventures increasingly encountered considerable hostilities. Especially after the 1860s, China saw a series of anti-Christianity movements, which reached a climax in the court sponsored Boxer Uprising of 1900. Consequently, when western scholars deal with the history of Christianity in China after 1842, they are inclined to examine either the local conflicts between Chinese Christians and non-Christians or the interactions between foreign missionaries and local officials and members of the gentry.

Some scholars believe that local suspicions of foreign imperialist power resulted in a pattern of Chinese anti-Christian movements and that such movements were often actively promoted during the last four decades of the nineteenth century by gentry, with the collusion of officials. This point of view is supported by Paul A. Cohen in his book *China and*

*Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism 1860-1870*. Cohen examines anti-Christian movements and lawsuits in Nanjing, Kuizhou, Tianjin and other cities, asserting that the presence and activities of Christian missionaries not only stirred up old xenophobic sentiment, but also directly challenged the status and roles of the local Confucian elite. Cohen sympathises with officials who were sandwiched between missionaries and this local gentry elite. If officials protected missionaries, they ran the risk of offending the gentry who could easily disrupt and cripple local government. Furthermore, he argues that the anti-Christian tradition in Chinese thought was long-standing and specifically "rooted in the antipathy of the Confucian system to heterodox ideas and practices as irrational and as threatening the moral order of society and state."<sup>27</sup> Such a view of Confucianism is oversimplified and monolithic. Cohen's focus on the missionary-gentry tensions results in the neglect of other possible elements that may have caused anti-Christian sentiments among the masses. In addition, he suggests that Christianity often attracted followers from groups that were in some way marginal to the dominant Chinese power structure. He feels that Chinese Catholics were "drawn almost entirely from the most disadvantaged classes – poor peasants, shop-keepers, merchants, vagabonds," and were "isolated and often estranged from their fellow Chinese."<sup>28</sup>

Alan Richard Sweeten's case study in *Christianity in Rural China – Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi Province, 1860 - 1900* reveals the local elite's peripheral role in local Christian conflicts.<sup>29</sup> Although missionaries during the seventeenth century tended to be sympathetic to Confucianism and sought to accommodate to Chinese culture, missionaries in the nineteenth century found "Confucian China grossly deficient and morally inferior to the Christian world. ... Their criticisms of Confucianism necessarily

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<sup>26</sup> Bays, 'Christianity and the Dynamics of Qing Society', Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 3.

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<sup>27</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Paul A. Cohen, 'Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900', John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 557.

<sup>29</sup> Sweeten's study is exclusively confined to rural Jiangxi; the complete picture of Christianity in rural China remains obscure.

included the gentry because the gentry enjoyed the greatest benefits of the Confucian-based system.”<sup>30</sup> The gentry were not usually involved or implicated in Christian lawsuits. Moreover, these lawsuits between Christians and non-Christians were not very often centered on religion, but rather on secular and personal matters. Sweeten maintains, against the characterisation of Cohen, that Chinese Christians came from all walks of life, including the lower gentry, living side by side with the non-Christians and keeping “daily and regular contact with non-Christian kin and neighbors.”<sup>31</sup> He puts more emphasis on the mutual accommodation between Christians and non-Christians within rural society than on their conflicts and repeatedly stresses that rural people accepted, or at least tolerated, Christians as members of the local community.<sup>32</sup> Such an evaluation offers support for the theory of the inculturation of Christianity into Chinese society.

*Christianity in China – From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, edited by Daniel H. Bays, is another influential book that deals with Chinese Christianity in the Qing Era. Here, Christianity is seen as a religion that eventually implanted itself in the Chinese social structure and as a practice that the elite and common people alike viewed as part of a “Chinese pattern of sectarian conflict.”<sup>33</sup> In one chapter, Richard Madsen points out that Christianity helped ethnic groups confirm their unique identities and separate themselves from the dominant Han culture in China. He also views the role of Christianity in China from another perspective, asserting that “if one accepts Chinese culture as a frame of meanings uniting a variety of ethnic groups within a single social system, then Christianity can be seen as very much part of Chinese culture.”<sup>34</sup>

It appears that, in comparison with earlier historical periods, there was a greater show of hostility towards Christianity and western missionaries after 1842, but the general tendency towards inculturation proceeded and even moved a further step towards indigenisation. The argument for indigenisation is strengthened by Sweeten’s

case study in Jiangxi on the mutual accommodation between rural Christians and non-Christians, and by discussions in Bays’ edited volume of the reciprocally beneficial relationship between Christians and ethnic identities in China. The further indigenisation of Chinese Christianity, however, was complicated by a dizzying series of political and social upheavals and external assaults. To mention only a very few of these significant events, one must include the 1911 Revolution, the overthrow of the Qing Imperial Government for a Chinese republic, the Japanese occupation and the Anti-Japanese war, and the civil war that established Communist China. Nevertheless, these turbulent situations actually helped break Christian churches free from western control and urged Chinese Christianity to become independent and indigenous. Daniel Bays characterises this shift as part of a worldwide trend in Christianity, saying:

The nineteenth century was the great age of building foreign-missions-dominated programs and institutions, not only in China but around the world. The twentieth century has seen a reversal, with national Christian movements succeeding to power and control over their own churches as foreign missions have been expelled, have withered, or have entered into partnerships with the “native” Christians over whom they formerly presided.<sup>35</sup>

### **Chinese Christianity under the Communist Party, 1949-Present**

Since 1949, the practice of religion in China has dramatically changed under communist rule. The nascent Chinese Communist Party believed that socialism was the only way to save China from the evils of capitalism. Religion, especially Christianity, was strongly condemned because of its perceived foreign origin and European imperialist associations in the late Qing and Republican eras. The lack of Christian missionary accommodation to Chinese culture during these same times is partly to blame. But while many foreign missionaries withdrew from Mainland China under CCP rule, Chinese Christians often moved their religious activities “underground,” most often to believers’ homes, with ceremonies

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<sup>30</sup> Alan Richard Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China: Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi Province, 1860-1900* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001), p.3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Madsen, ‘Book Review on Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 2 (1998), p. 482.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

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<sup>35</sup> Bays, ‘The Rise of an Indigenous Chinese Christianity’, Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 265.

performed by local Chinese priests or pastors.<sup>36</sup> Some Chinese Christian churches survived by compromising with the CCP, acquiring Socialist standing by joining the official Three-Self Movement, the bridge between the Chinese government and Chinese Protestants. In spite of this radical indigenisation, hostility existed between “evangelical leaders on the one hand and the new regime and the Three-Self on the other.”<sup>37</sup> Both forms of Protestant Christianity in Mainland China, not to mention the unprotected Catholic Church, were beaten almost to death by the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution.

Yet, the radical political movements that culminated in the Cultural Revolution mostly destroyed Chinese confidence in Marxist socialism, and many people eventually returned to religion for spiritual sustenance. After 1976, the CCP itself became more tolerant of religion, and in 1979, after thirty years of repression by a hostile, atheistic government, both Protestant and Catholic churches in China experienced revival. David Mungello sees this revival of the indigenous Chinese church as a resumption of the inculturation of Christianity, stating that “the Communist government, by forcing Chinese Christians to terminate all ties with foreign Christians and foreign support, unwittingly aided the inculturation process.”<sup>38</sup> Even oppression and persecution, it seems, contributed to the inculturation, and ultimately the indigenisation, of Christianity in China as it became Chinese Christianity.

## Conclusion

Although western scholars offer a veritable feast of books with deep insights and provocative hypotheses on the experience of Christianity in China, their main focus is generally on the first period of growth and the third period of revival, while the second period of decline and the fourth Communist period remain obscure. Studies on Chinese Christianity from 1949 to present are still scant, and certain aspects of Chinese Christian history remain almost untouched. There is also room, and need, for further biographical,

institutional, and comparative studies between different historical periods, including a comparative examination of missionaries operating in China during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, while these two centuries were vigorous times for missionary activity, the earlier era is distinguished by the respect Jesuit Catholic missionaries held for Chinese culture as they worked with scholar-officials, while later post-Industrial Revolution European missionaries, often Protestants concentrating their efforts on the grass-roots population, saw only a “backwards” China. The period from 1898 to the present especially deserves consideration, and though there are scattered papers and articles, many voids still exist. This was one of the most turmoil-ridden times in Chinese history, and the way in which the evangelical activities interacted with contemporary social and political movements should be studied. In spite of the mandates and prohibitions that sought to limit and even eliminate Christianity as a faith within China, further examination of historic periods, such as the height of the communist leadership, will reveal how these challenges actually cemented Christianity as a local and indigenous religion. Additionally, because Christianity was further inculturated into Chinese society at this time, there is sufficient need for further studies of “Chinese church leaders and all-Chinese Christian movements, as well as for investigations of the dynamics of cooperation, competition, and sometimes confrontation between the Chinese and foreign members of the Christian communities.”<sup>39</sup>

Though cultural conflict theories try to convince readers of the incompatibility and irreconcilability of Christianity with Chinese culture,<sup>40</sup> the dynamism and persistent existence of Chinese Christianity invalidates such arguments. Historical evidence shows that, as Christianity becomes accommodated and inculturated in Chinese society, it survives and develops.

In the first historical period from 1583 to 1724, with the help of the accommodation policy, Ricci successfully introduced Christianity to China and won not only the Chinese converts but also the respect of the Chinese court and literati. During the period of imperial prohibition from 1724 to 1842,

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<sup>36</sup> This is called “family church.” It continues to have popularity today.

<sup>37</sup> Wangzhi Gao, ‘Y.T. Wu: A Christian Leader Under Communism’, Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 350.

<sup>38</sup> Mungello, *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, p. 176.

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<sup>39</sup> Bays, ‘The Rise of an Indigenous Chinese Christianity’, Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 266..

<sup>40</sup> The work of Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, has been used to represent the culture-conflict perspective for this article.

due to inculturation, Christian missions persevered and made gradual progress outside the court. From the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century, though the imperial ban on evangelical activities was lifted, Christianity did not flourish in China as expected because missionaries departed from the accommodation policy. It is also notable that in some rural and border areas, because of missionary efforts towards inculturation, a harmonious relationship was established between Christians and non-Christians, and between missionaries and ethnic groups. With the retreat of western missionaries from socialist China under harsh political conditions after 1949, imported Christianity was inevitably indigenised and transformed into Chinese Christianity. Though Christianity still remains a marginal religion in China, its revival in the most recent twenty-five years in Mainland China may indicate a future as one of the major beliefs in Chinese society. The history of Christianity in China from 1583 to the present is a continual ebb and flow of conversion movements that have at times slowed, but never completely ceased. A process of growth, decline, and revival of proselytising activities, and the development of evangelisation policies, has facilitated the evolution of an introduced Christianity, practiced in China, to a domestic Chinese Christianity. Much work remains to be done in specific historical studies. However, Christianity in China can be characterised as proceeding from accommodation to inculturation to indigenisation. Only by taking a wide view of history can such patterns be ascertained.

# The *Mukaekō* Ritual at Taimadera: A Living Tradition of Medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism

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## Abstract

*This article examines the religious significance of the mukaekō, an annual performance ritual held at Taimadera, which commemorates Chūjōhime's attainment of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. Focusing on the artistic, religious, historical, and social circumstances that contributed to the popularity of Pure Land Buddhism in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), the reasons behind early medieval Japanese society's aspiration of faith in Amida and the desire to be reborn in his Pure Land are explored. My discussion of the interrelationship of history and art examines how both faith in Amida and pictorial expressions of this faith inspired the creation of the mukaekō ritual. Through this analysis, I will show that the mukaekō is a living tradition of medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism and a unique embodiment of mutual influences of art, religion, and history.*

According to the vow of Amitābha Tathgata, he will come with many bodhisattvas and ten thousand monks, brilliant rays of light will shoot forth, and he will stand right before your eyes. At that time, the merciful Kannon, with hands of happiness, will offer a jewelled lotus dais and appear in front of the devotee. The great Seishi and infinite hosts will say blessings together, and they will lead the devotee into the Western Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

These are the words of Japanese Tendai monk Eshin 惠心 (942-1017), also known as Genshin 源信. They describe a vision of salvation, referred to in Japanese as *raigō* 来迎, meaning “coming to welcome.” The Buddha of this *raigō* vision is Amida 阿弥陀 (Skt. Amitābha), who reigns over the Pure Land Western Paradise (Jōdo 浄土).<sup>2</sup> According to the *Three Pure Land Sūtras*, anyone who has faith in Amida will experience a similar vision at the

moment of death.<sup>3</sup> Although the *raigō* vision indicates death, it is not a sad vision, but rather one of joy. Amida and his hosts appear as saviours and guides, and upon Kannon's lotus dais, the soul of the dead is taken to the Pure Land to be reborn for a final time. The cycle of rebirth (Skt. *samsara*) is finally broken and salvation is achieved.

Every year in Japan this *raigō* vision comes to life in the form of the *mukaekō* 迎講, a performance ritual held at Taimadera 当麻寺. Taimadera is a temple of the Pure Land sect of Buddhism located in Taimachō 当麻町, Kitakatsuragi-gun 北葛城郡, Nara prefecture. The *mukaekō* honours the legendary eighth-century female figure, Chūjōhime 中将姫, who attained rebirth in Amida's Pure Land.

This article examines the religious significance of the *mukaekō* at Taimadera. Focusing on the artistic, religious, and socio-historical circumstances that contributed to the rise and popularity of Pure Land Buddhism in the late Heian (794-1185) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods, I explore the reasons behind early medieval Japanese society's aspiration to faith in Amida and the desire to be reborn in his Pure Land. I also demonstrate that pictorial and performance art aid in the understanding of Buddhist doctrines and the re-reading of history. By interpreting the complex, historical interrelationships between religion and art, this study emphasises how this particular faith in Amida inspired Pure Land imagery and how, in turn, these pictorial expressions led to religious practice. In addition, I explore how these developments mutually inspire the *mukaekō* ritual in terms of its canonical and structural components. To what extent did Pure Land narrative and Pure Land *mandara* paintings contribute to the emergence of ritual performances such as the *mukaekō*? Through this analysis, I will show that the

<sup>1</sup> Allen Andrews, *The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Genshin's Ōjōyōshū* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I have adopted the common usage of *Amida* and *Pure Land*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Three Pure Land Sūtras* are: the *Sūtra on the Buddha of Infinite Life* (*Muryōju-kyō* 無量寿經), the *Sūtra on the Buddha Amida* (*Amida-kyō* 阿弥陀經), and the *Sūtra on Contemplation of Amida* (*Kanmuryōju-kyō* 觀無量寿經). Hōnen (1133-1212), the founder of the Pure Land sect (Jōdo-shū 浄土宗), chose these three scriptures as the primary scriptures for Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. Inagaki Hisao, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodō, 1995), p. 3.

*mukaekō* ritual derives from medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism and yet is a living tradition that uniquely blends art, religion, and history.

### The *Mukaekō* at Taimadera

The *mukaekō* at Taimadera takes place every year on May 14<sup>th</sup> to commemorate Chūjōhime's rebirth (*ōjō* 往生) into Amida's Pure Land.<sup>4</sup> This ritual is open to the public and takes place in front of Taimadera's main hall, the *mandaradō* 曼荼羅堂, which houses the *Taima Mandara* 当麻曼荼羅, the temple's central icon of worship.<sup>5</sup> Located in the west, the *mandaradō* symbolises the Pure Land where Amida and his hosts originate.<sup>6</sup> Opposite the *mandaradō*, is the *shabadō* 娑婆堂, which symbolises the defiled world of human existence, located in the east. During the *mukaekō* ritual, these two halls are connected by a wooden ramp (*raigōhashi* 来迎橋), the symbolic pathway on which Amida and his heavenly host descend to earth, greet the devotee, and ascend with the devotee from the terrestrial world to the Pure Land.

The *mukaekō* ritual begins at four o'clock in the afternoon with the first ringing of the temple bell.<sup>7</sup> In the *mandaradō*, the monks place a small wooden figure, which has been sculpted in a position of prayer and seated cross-legged on a lotus dais, within a larger wooden portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime. Together, these two sculptures are placed in a palanquin, which is then carried to the *shabadō*. Upon arrival at the *shabadō*, the portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime is taken out of the palanquin and deposited on a pedestal facing the *mandaradō*.

Previous scholarship has put forth many theories regarding the identity of the small figure that is placed within the larger portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime. As mentioned by Grotenhuis, this figure has been variously interpreted as a representation of Amida, Chūjōhime as a nun, and Chūjōhime in the

guise of the bodhisattva Seishi.<sup>8</sup> From an iconographical viewpoint, it seems plausible that this small figure represents Amida in his esoteric form, known as *Amida of the Five Kalpas* (*Gokōshiyui Amida* 五劫思惟阿弥陀), because the figure, who sits cross-legged and holds its hands in a gesture of prayer, wears a crown. However, other theories, more closely related to the meaning of the *mukaekō* and to Chūjōhime's legend, contradict this attribution. The *Three Pure Land Sūtras* and Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集, canonical sources that outline the practices essential for attaining salvation in Amida's Pure Land, emphasise that, at the moment of death, the devotee is greeted by Amida's heavenly host. The devotee's soul is placed on Kannon's lotus dais and carried to the Pure Land. This is exactly what happens during the *mukaekō* ritual. Based on this evidence and the fact that this figure is invisible to the audience until the peak of the ritual – the moment of Chūjōhime's death – I



Figure 1. Twenty-five musical bodhisattvas descending from the *andaradō* to the *shabadō* along the *raigōhashi*. The *mukaekō* at Taimadera, May 15, 1999.

propose that this small wooden figure is the embodiment of Chūjōhime's soul.

Upon the second ringing of the temple bell, the monks return from the *shabadō* to the *mandaradō*, where both Pure Land and Shingon monks recite prayers and invocations in praise of Amida in front of the *Taima mandara*. While the Pure Land monks chant the *nembutsu* 念佛, by repeating the phrase *Namu Amida Butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏 (*Hail to the Buddha Amida*), the Shingon sect monks chant the

<sup>4</sup> Gorai Shigeru, *Shūkyō sei ji ki* (Tokyo: Kodagawa shoten, 1982), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> In this paper, I will use the Japanese term *mandara* rather than the Sanskrit term *mandala*.

<sup>6</sup> The *mandaradō* is also referred to as the *Hall of Ultimate Bliss* (*gokurakudō* 極楽堂) because Amida's Pure Land is also called *Western Paradise of Ultimate Bliss* (*gokuraku* 極樂).

<sup>7</sup> The description of the *mukaekō* ritual is based on my own observation of this ceremony at Taimadera in May 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, 'Visions of a Transcendent Realm: Pure Land Images in the Cleveland Museum of Art', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol.78, no.7 (1991), p. 275.

*Amida Nyorai Daiju* 阿弥陀如来大寿, an esoteric *mantra* in honour of Amida.<sup>9</sup>

On the third sounding of the bell, the Shingon monks protect the *mandaradō* with a ritual fire, while the Pure Land monks walk down the *raigōhashi* towards the *shabadō*, where they assemble and prepare for the arrival of the heavenly host. With the fourth ringing of the bell, the sound of traditional Japanese *gagaku* 雅楽 music marks the beginning of the descent. Following the procession of forty-eight children, representing the forty-eight vows of Amida,<sup>10</sup> are twenty-five bodhisattvas playing musical instruments (Fig.1).<sup>11</sup> Kannon 観音, the bodhisattva of mercy, identified by carrying a lotus dais, and Seishi 勢至, the bodhisattva representing the power and wisdom of Amida, identified by holding his hands in prayer, follow.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Originally founded as a Pure Land sect temple, Taimadera has been controlled by both the Pure Land sect and the Shingon sect since the fifteenth century. Toshio Fukuyama, 'Taimadera no rekishi', *Bukkyō Geijutsu* 45 (1960), pp. 1-4.

<sup>10</sup> Amida, while he was still a bodhisattva, meditated for five *kalpas* (Indian eons) before making his forty-eight vows to save all sentient beings. The eighteenth vow, in which Amida declares that when he has attained the Buddha nature, any beings who call on him and wish to be reborn in his Pure Land will be heard, is the most important. Louis Frederic, *Buddhism: Flammarion Iconographic Guides* (Paris: Imprimeurs Tours, 1995), p. 315.

<sup>11</sup>The appearance of these twenty-five musical bodhisattvas is of great interest to art historians because this number, give or take one, has developed into a standard iconographical representation for late Heian and early Kamakura *raigō* paintings that seems to have been inspired by Genshin. However, doctrinal sources such as the *Three Pure Land Sūtras* do not specify a fixed number of bodhisattvas to accompany Amida. What then is the significance of these twenty-five bodhisattvas? Why did they become standard iconographical conventions in *raigō* paintings and in the *mukaekō* ritual? According to Okazaki, Genshin composed a hymn, called *Hymn to the Twenty-five Bodhisattvas*, in which he refers to each deity by name and by their instruments. Genshin based this Hymn to the Twenty-five Bodhisattvas on the *Ju ōjō amida bukkoku-kyō*, a Chinese Buddhist scripture that describes the vision of Amida in which he is accompanied by twenty-five bodhisattvas who enhance rebirth in the Pure Land when worshiped. However, this Chinese scripture turned out to be a forgery. Jōji Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Paintings* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977), pp. 114-116.

<sup>12</sup> Both Kannon and Seishi are the principal attendants of Amida. When depicted in paintings or sculptures as an

Lastly, Fugen 普賢, the Bodhisattva of Universal Virtue, descends holding a canopy.<sup>13</sup>

Upon the heavenly host's arrival at the *shabadō*, the monks sing a hymn in praise of Amida. Seishi transfers the small figure from the large, portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime to Kannon's lotus dais (Fig.2). Kannon then leads the entourage of monks, celestial children, musical bodhisattvas, Seishi, and Fugen to the ascent of the *mandaradō*. In the meantime, a statue of Amida has been positioned in front of the *mandaradō*, symbolising his welcome of the devotee to the Pure Land. The entire performance lasts about one hour. When the heavenly host ascends to the *mandaradō*, the sun is beginning to set. This further enhances the feeling of departing the terrestrial realm in order to enter the celestial world, emulating Chūjōhime at the moment of her death. The canonical texts and the precise process of re-enacting Chūjōhime's rebirth into Amida's Pure Land during the *mukaekō* ritual are evidence that not only is the small wooden figure in the Chūjōhime portrait sculpture an embodiment of her soul, it is her soul that will be reborn.

### Iconographical Context: *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki*, Pure Land Mandaras, and Pure Land Paintings

The *mukaekō* ritual, in which the community of Taimadera at Taimachō becomes transformed by masks, music, and dance to re-live the moment of Chūjōhime's rebirth into Amida's Pure Land, was first performed in the mid twelfth century. What are the origins of the *mukaekō* at Taimadera? How does this specific case of Chūjōhime's rebirth in Amida's Pure Land reflect medieval Japanese's society's perceptions of death and rebirth in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods? What artistic influences gave rise to the iconographical components of the *mukaekō*?

The earliest extant textual and pictorial illustration of the history of Taimadera and the legendary eighth-century female figure, Chūjōhime, is the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki*

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Amida triad, the central figure of Amida is always flanked on the right by Kannon and on the left by Seishi. In addition to holding a lotus dais, Kannon is also iconographically distinguished by having a small image of Amida (*kebutsu* 化仏) in his crown.

<sup>13</sup> Fugen is called the Bodhisattva of Universal Virtue because he offers salvation for everyone, especially for women. Chapter twenty-eight of the *Lotus Sūtra* is dedicated to the bodhisattva Fugen.

当麻曼荼羅縁起絵巻 (*Miraculous Origin of the Taima Mandara*). The *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* narrative begins with the founding of Taimadera by Prince Maroko, the third son of Emperor Yōmei (r. 585 -587). The textual passages then discuss the



Figure 2. The sculpture of Chūjōhime is placed on Kannon's lotus dais. The *mukaekō* at Taimadera, May 15, 1999.

religious aspirations of Chūjōhime, daughter of the eighth-century nobleman, Yokohagi Toyonari, who copied a thousand scrolls of the *Lotus Sūtra* and dedicated them to Taimadera.

The narrative relates that on the fifteenth day of the sixth month of the seventh year of Tempyō Hōji (763), Chūjōhime took the tonsure of a nun at Taimadera and set herself a limit of seven days to realise her vow of seeing Amida in living form. Seven days later, a mysterious nun appeared and asked Chūjōhime to collect lotus stems to be spun into threads. Together they dyed these threads into five colours. Shortly after, a female weaver appeared and, in a single night, wove the threads into the *Taima Mandara*. After explaining the meaning of the *Taima Mandara* to Chūjōhime, the weaver ascended to the Pure Land on a five-coloured cloud.<sup>14</sup> Immediately following this miracle, the nun also ascended to the Pure Land. Witnessing these

<sup>14</sup> The five colours (*goshiki* 五色) are blue, red, white, black and yellow. In the pictorial illustrations of the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* these five colours appear in the *Taima Mandara* and also on the cloud that transports the nun to the Pure Land. The five-coloured cloud is one of the esoteric attributes of the bodhisattva Kannon. This aspect is significant because the female weaver in the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* descending on this cloud is a human manifestation of Kannon.

miraculous transformations, Chūjōhime realised that the weaver was Kannon and the nun Amida, having appeared to her in their apparitional bodies (*keshin* 化身). Inspired by the fulfillment of her vow, she devoted the rest of her life to the worship of Amida and the invocation of his name in front of the *Taima Mandara*. At the moment of Chūjōhime's death in 775, Amida and his heavenly host welcomed her to the Pure Land (Fig.3).

As is evident from this story, there are striking similarities between the textual and visual illustrations in the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and the *mukaekō* ritual at Taimadera. These include: the descent of Amida's host to Chūjōhime, her welcome by Amida into the Pure Land, the portrayal of Kannon, Seishi, and Fugen descending to Chūjōhime, and Kannon offering her a golden lotus dais. Therefore, the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* is an illustrated handscroll that represents a "pictorial prototype" of the *mukaekō*. The key elements of this narrative are also the essentials for attaining rebirth in Amida's Pure Land that constitute the structural elements and highlights of the *mukaekō* ritual.

But what was the incentive for Chūjōhime's legend? While the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* tells us a great deal about the attainment of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land, it fails however to tell us why faith in Amida and rebirth in his Pure Land had such a great appeal to medieval Japanese society. In order to shed light on this issue, we need to look at the *Taima Mandara*, one of the Pure Land *mandaras*, which is an iconographic diagram of Amida's Pure Land.

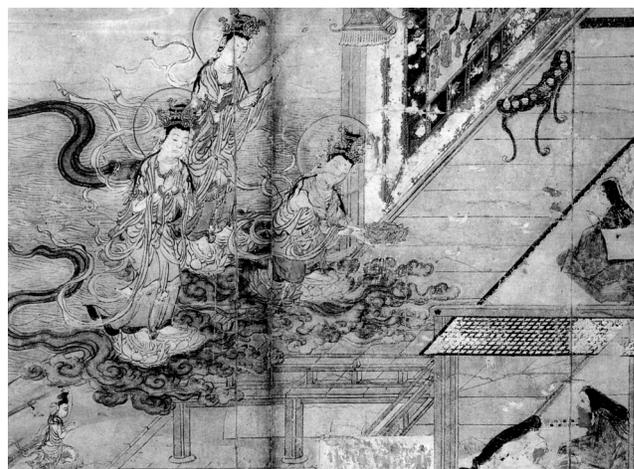


Figure 3. Detail of the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* showing the heavenly host descending. Kamakura Kokuhōkan, Kamakura, February 4, 2003.

Visual representations of Amida's Pure Land accompanied the development of Pure Land thought. Paintings depicting the descent of Amida and his host, called *raigō-zū* 来迎図, and cosmic diagrams showing Amida's Pure Land, called *Jōdo Mandara* 浄土曼荼羅, became increasingly popular from the late Heian period onwards. The *Taima Mandara*, (Fig.4) of great importance for the history of Taimadera and the story of Chūjōhime's rebirth, is the oldest surviving pictorial representation of Amida's Pure Land in Japan. A close analysis of this thirteenth-century Pure Land imagery (*jōdo hensō* 浄土変相) offers a glimpse into Amida's paradise, so much desired as an escape from worldly suffering by medieval Japanese society.

The visual illustration of the *Taima Mandara* is based on the *Sūtra on Contemplation of Amida* (*Kanmuryōju-kyō* 観無量寿經), which is one of the *Three Pure Land Sūtras*. Key passages from this canonical text are found in the inscriptions framing each scene in the three outer rows of illustrations that surround the central section of the *mandara*. The central section of the *Taima Mandara* is referred to as the *Court of the Central Doctrine* (*gengibun* 玄義分), and it is based on the first four chapters in Shan-tao's commentary (*C. Kuang-ching-su*) on the *Kanmuryōju-kyō*.<sup>15</sup> The *gengibun* depicts Amida in the center forming the *raigō mūdra*, the hand gesture which welcomes the devotee into the Pure Land, and sitting in front of glorious palatial architecture. He is surrounded by Kannon and Seishi, as well as by a multitude of bodhisattvas; all of them are depicted seated on lotus dais. While bodhisattvas on clouds descend above Amida, below him is a pond around which heavenly beings dance and play musical instruments.

This central section of the *Taima Mandara* is framed by three rows of pictures. The outer row on the left, known as the *Court of the Prefatory Legend* (*jobungi* 序分義), conveys the legendary story of the Indian prince Ajatasatru, who was incited to arrest his father and to starve him to death. However, Ajatasatru's mother, Queen Vaidehi, secretly brought food to her husband, an act for which she was imprisoned. Due to the queen's deep veneration for Sakyamuni Buddha, she prayed for him to lead her into a safe place away from the world of suffering, upon which Sakyamuni appeared before her to show

her visions of various Buddhist paradises. Sakyamuni taught Vaidehi a series of sixteen contemplations through which she could achieve rebirth in her chosen paradise: Amida's Pure Land.<sup>16</sup>

Thirteen of these sixteen contemplations are depicted on the right of the *Taima Mandara*, in the *Court of Specific Contemplations* (*jōzengi* 序善義). In front of each object of contemplation appears a kneeling figure of Queen Vaidehi. These contemplations focus on the jeweled ponds, the palatial architecture, and the celestial music in Amida's Pure Land. The final three of these sixteen contemplations are divided into nine grades (*kuhon* 九品)<sup>17</sup> of rebirth, determined by the qualities of the devotee. These are shown in the horizontal row, located beneath the *Taima Mandara*, called the *Court of General Contemplations* (*sanzengi* 三善義), and provide incentive for moral behaviour on earth, while expressing hope for salvation to sinners. These nine grades of rebirth (*kuhon ōjō* 九品往生) are depicted through the various *raigō* visions specific to devotees of the different grades. Those who are reborn into the highest grade (*jōbon* 上品) see a vision of Amida and his entire host of bodhisattvas descending on clouds at the moment of death. Those reborn into the middle grade (*chūbon* 中品) see a lesser number of bodhisattvas and Amida does not descend with them. Those reborn into the lowest grade (*gebon* 下品) see neither a vision of Amida, nor of descending bodhisattvas.

The story of Queen Vaidehi shows certain similarities to the story of Chūjōhime. It reflects the desire to be reborn in Amida's Pure Land in order to escape worldly suffering, something Heian and Kamakura-period society also strove for. Like Queen Vaidehi, Chūjōhime aspired to rebirth in the Pure Land and practiced contemplation on Amida and the Pure Land *sūtras*. At the moment of death, she experienced a *raigō* vision of Amida's descent, which is emphasised in both the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and in the *mukaekō*.

Certain pictorial elements in the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and in the *mukaekō* do not seem to fit the iconographical conventions of the *Taima Mandara*.

<sup>15</sup>Shan-tao 善導 (613-681) was the third Chinese Pure Land patriarch. He exerted the greatest influence on Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, p.106.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, 'Rebirth of an Icon: The *Taima Mandala* in Medieval Japan', *Archives of Asian Art*, no. 36 (1983), p.61.

<sup>17</sup>According to the *Kanmuryōju-kyō*, three levels of welcoming exist, and each level is further subdivided into three grades of people, corresponding to the qualities of the believer. For each of these nine grades a specific variation of Amida's *raigō mudrā* exists.

In the illustrated handscroll and the performance ritual, Amida stands amidst mountains but does not descend with his host, and there is also the unique appearance of musical bodhisattvas. According to the *Kanmuryōju-kyō* and the illustration of the nine grades of rebirth in the *Taima Mandara's* lower border, the descent of a reduced group of bodhisattvas without Amida indicates that the person belongs to the *chūbon* grade of rebirth. People of this grade were generally householders and common folk, possessing the Buddha nature and practicing Buddhist precepts to the best of their abilities. According to this iconographic interpretation, Chūjōhime belonged to the *chūbon* grade. However, since the legend presents her as a pious woman who, out of deep devotion to Amida left her home and took the tonsure as a nun, it would be more likely to assume that she belonged to the *jōbon* grade. People in the *jōbon* grade have departed from ordinary, worldly life to become nuns and monks, and have aroused the Buddha nature. Accepting this viewpoint, it raises the question as to why we do not see Amida descending together with the bodhisattvas in the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and in the *mukaekō*?

The various leaders of Pure Land Buddhism in medieval Japan, such as Genshin 源信 (942-1017), Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), and Ippen 一遍 (1239-1289), and their respective interpretations of the Pure Land *sūtras*, combined with the growing simplification of practice, and the increasing emphasis on faith as the only necessary means for salvation, created a situation where *raigō* paintings were no longer confined to *mandara* depictions. These works developed into an independent genre of Buddhist painting in the early Kamakura period. Amida is depicted amidst the mountains in both the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and in the *mukaekō*. The *Yamagoshi raigō-zū* 山越来迎図 painting genre, which depicts Amida and his host coming across the mountains to greet the devotee, may be used to explain the seemingly incongruous influence of the manuscript illustration on the *mukaekō* performance. Illustrations of the *yamagoshi raigō-zu* lack certain narrative elements, such as the depiction of the dying devotee and his or her dwelling. Instead, *yamagoshi raigō-zu* serve as objects of worship, which enable them to make their appeal directly to the viewer. Based on the tenets of the *Kanmuryōju-kyō*, one of the sixteen contemplations describes the reflection on the setting sun. The Heian period literary genre, called *Tales of Rebirth* (*ōjōden* 往生伝), like the one of *Oe no Sadamoto*, state that “music is heard above

the clouds; Amida's heavenly multitude comes to greet the believer as the sun sets”.<sup>18</sup> In addition, another genre of independent *raigō* paintings, the *shōju raigō-zu* 聖衆来迎図 (Fig.5), sheds light on the presence of the twenty-five bodhisattvas in both the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki* and in the *mukaekō*.<sup>19</sup> This particular genre of *shōju raigō-zu*, became extremely popular with Genshin and his interpretation of the *Pure Land Sūtras*. In important ways, therefore, the study of the interactions and influences of visual sources assists in the interpretation of subsequent works of art.



Figure 4. The *Taima Mandara*. Copy of the original tapestry at Taimadera Tokushoji Temple, Arita, Wakayama Prefecture, March 17, 2003.

### Socio-Historical Context: Pure Land Doctrine of Salvation and Teachings of Genshin

In addition to the iconographical influences of Pure Land paintings on the *mukaekō* performance ritual, socio-historical context suggests additional influences of historical and doctrinal promotions of faith in Amida and the desire to be born in his Pure Land. Along with its significance for the history of Taimadera and the origin of the *mukaekō*, Chūjōhime's narrative also serves as an account of the ideas regarding death and rebirth in early medieval Japan. What inspired medieval Japanese society to have faith in Amida? How did pictorial illustrations of Amida's descent, such as those

<sup>18</sup> Frederic Kotas, 'Ōjōden: Accounts of Rebirth in The Pure Land' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Painting*, p. 62.

depicted in the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki*, arise in conjunction with the Pure Land doctrine of salvation? And how did these visual images influence and shape *raigō* performances such as the *mukaekō*?

Pure Land Buddhism was first transmitted from China to Japan in the seventh century.<sup>20</sup> However, it was not until the emergence of the Tendai sect in the Heian period, particularly under Saichō 最澄 (767-822), that Pure Land Buddhism underwent a change and became a popular faith among all classes of society. Although it is not quite clear what caused this transition from an ancestor cult to a religion of personal salvation, certain socio-political, historical and religious events are considered to have been the reasons for this change. The corruption of the clergy, political instabilities, power struggles, wars, famines, and natural disasters at the end of the Heian and the beginning of the Kamakura periods caused medieval Japanese society to believe that the *Age of the Final Law* (*mappō* 末法) had come.

According to Buddhist thought, the time period after the death of the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, is divided into three ages. In the first, known as *The Age of the Perfect Law* (*shōbō* 正法), people followed the teachings of the Buddha correctly. The second period, called *The Age of the Degenerative Law* (*zōbō* 像法), was characterised by a degeneration of the Buddha's teachings, failure to understand the true inner meaning of the Buddhist

Law, and an increased difficulty for people to attain enlightenment. In *The Age of the Final Law* (*mappō* 末法), which is believed to have begun in 1052 and to last until Miroku 弥勒, the Buddha of the future arrives bringing salvation, the practice of the teachings cannot be carried out and salvation becomes impossible.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, medieval Japanese society needed and aspired to a faith that could offer them a promising, glorious life after death as well as an escape from their worldly sufferings.

The “fragility of life” began to be deeply felt by Heian society, and even more by Kamakura society. Apart from the socio-political instabilities in the country, famines and natural disasters, medieval Japanese literary sources indicate that life was also often cut short by illness and death during childbirth. The aristocrats, though powerful and wealthy, realised their mortality and sought for ways to come to terms with death. Pure Land Buddhism provided them with comforting guidance, allaying their fears and anxieties, for, according to Buddhist Law, being mortal should not be considered an inferior condition; all sentient beings have the potential to attain enlightenment through right practice and faith in the *dharma*.

The early schools of Buddhism, which were transmitted to Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries, were quite complex and demanding. For example, practitioners strictly adhered to monastic devotees were required to be monks or nuns. The



Figure 5. *Amida Shōju Raigō-zu*

<sup>20</sup> Andrews (1977), p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Michele Marra, ‘The Development of *Mappō* Thought in Japan (I)’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1988), p. 25.

rules and only way that one could achieve merit and salvation was through the commissioning of religious artifacts and the copying of the sutras. All of the above required a certain level of education and monetary means, the reserve of the upper classes or the clergy. In contrast to these early schools of Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism appealed to medieval Japanese society because it was comprised of the simple practice of chanting Amida's name, accessible to everybody - clergy and laymen, rich and poor, the educated as well as the illiterate.<sup>22</sup> This form of devotion could be performed at any time, in any place, did not demand much effort on behalf of the worshipper, and promised devotees a glorious life after death in the Pure Land. Particularly with the emergence of various Pure Land advocates such as Kūya (904-972), Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1262) and Ippen (1239-1289), faith in Amida spread throughout the nation and people from all classes of society turned to it because the simple practice of chanting the *nembutsu* offered an easy path of salvation, accessible and rewarding to even the ordinary person (*bombu* 凡夫).

Genshin was instrumental in the promotion of Pure Land faith for the sake of personal salvation.<sup>23</sup> Through the *Ōjōyōshū*, Genshin's treatise on the essential practices required for rebirth in Amida's Pure Land, dated 984, visions of Amida's Pure Land were promoted and shaped, both textually and visually. This manual of practices was reinforced by faith and was intended for everybody who considered themselves "common people" before Amida. The result of the believer's faith in Amida and the practice of the *nembutsu* was the *raigō* vision

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<sup>22</sup> Aristocrats in particular were entranced by the promise of a life after death in a paradisiacal world. Based on the textual and visual imagery, such as the *Taima Mandara*, they created sumptuous palaces and gardens on earth, blurring the border between the terrestrial and the celestial worlds. The Phoenix Hall (*Byōdō-in* 平等院) at Uji illustrates this point. In 1052, Fujiwara Yorimichi built this temple, which houses a large wooden sculpture of Amida as its central icon of worship. The interior doors of this hall are painted. They depict scenes of Amida and his heavenly hosts descending on clouds and playing musical instruments. The architectural ground plan of the *Byōdō-in* consists of a pond and a temple hall located behind it. This architectural structure resembles Amida's Pure Land Paradise as depicted in the *Taima Mandara*.

<sup>23</sup> This "new" faith was also developed by Ennin 円仁 (794-864), who transmitted a form of musical *nembutsu*, called *goe nembutsu* 声念仏 from China to Japan. The *goe nembutsu* is a musical chanting ritual of Amida's name derived from the five tones of Amida's name.

of Amida and his host descending down to earth to greet the devotee at the moment of death. Rather than striving for the extinction of a person's ego (*nirvana*) in this world, Genshin emphasised rebirth in Amida's Pure Land as the easiest accessible way to attain enlightenment.

According to Genshin, faith, which he defined as a sincere mind, strong belief, and a longing to be reborn with unselfish dedication of merit towards others, was the primary prerequisite for achieving salvation in Amida's Pure Land. Even though Genshin retained certain esoteric elements in his Pure Land teachings and stressed the practice of meditation, as a Tendai monk, his faith and practice formed the basis for Hōnen and Shinran's Pure Land doctrines. They, however, considered faith in Amida as the sole necessity in the attainment of salvation.

## Conclusion

The significance of the *mukaekō* ritual at Taimadera results from specific influences in early medieval Japanese society. Complex interrelationships existed among art, history, and religious belief, some of which can be known today. Buddhist belief in *mappō* encouraged faith in Amida, and Genshin and his followers' Pure Land doctrines inspired different iconographical conventions to communicate the practices of personal salvation. Pure Land imagery offered devotees a vision of Amida's glorious paradise, the ideal refuge from worldly suffering, and Pure Land paintings exerted influence on performance art such as the *mukaekō* ritual. Furthermore, these artistic conventions inspired beliefs and practices. Demonstrating faith in Amida came to consist of chanting Amida's name, an attainable practice that guaranteed salvation.

The most important aspect of Pure Land Buddhism was the all-inclusive concept of salvation, regardless of class and gender. This aspect is emphasised pictorially in both the *Taima Mandara* and the *Taima Mandara Engi Emaki*, and continues to be celebrated annually in form of the *mukaekō* ritual. The consideration of the complex context for the canonical and structural components of the *mukaekō* ritual reveals a trace of the past that can be followed today.

\*The images used to illustrate this article (Figures 1-5.) were provided by the author, Monika Dix. They are from her private collection.

# The Tree on White Mountain: On Ritual, Spirit and Place

Alison Pryer, University of British Columbia

## Abstract

*In this autobiographical essay, I reflect on the healing and transformational power of ritual. Here, ritual is perceived as a holistic form of communication that incorporates and unites the material human body, the physical earth, and the non-tangible realms of emotion, intuition, spirit, and thought. The processes of ritual rebalance the flow of energy between and within these diverse elements, and act as a catalyst for change in the participant's consciousness. Thus, a ritualised act can change the very order of the world itself.*

*The performance of the personal ritual described in this essay was sparked by my grief over the death of someone I loved very much – my mother. The symptoms of my grief were a physical expression of my lack of knowledge about how to live after her death, and did not diminish until I had turned myself over fully to the practice of the ritual. The ritual itself was a simple one: a daily walk up a mountain path to sit in a particular tree. Indeed, at the time, I did not think of this daily act as ritual. Nonetheless, the performance of the ritual honoured and reconnected me to early childhood memories of my mother, and to the earth's body, and also permitted me to recognise and engage with the anima locus, or place soul, of the mountain tree.*

I was so far away from my mother when she was dying that we had no chance to say goodbye. After the funeral in London, overcome by grief and guilt, I could think only of times past and how much I wanted to be with her. Though I returned to my job in Japan with my new husband, I seemed to forget about life as a newlywed and began to suffer from headaches and dizziness. My doctor in Japan diagnosed low blood pressure, and gave me a prescription for some little white pills, which I didn't take.

While in London for the funeral, I happened to see a book on my mother's shelf by my physician, Christine Page. I read how traditional healers believe that breaking primal relationships with the earth leads to sickness, which manifests itself as mental or physical illness. In Tibet, healers often prescribe walks in the forest as a cure for depression because reconnecting with the natural world is seen as a

healing act. For illnesses such as low blood pressure that are thought to be caused by 'soul loss,' they advise sufferers to find a tree and physically connect with the energy that flows from the earth, up through the roots and into the trunk.

I decided to try this traditional cure for low blood pressure. After all what did I have to lose? I made sure not to tell anyone about my plans and secretly slipped away to walk in the forest on Shiroyama, the White Mountain, which lay just five minutes from where I lived. As a child growing up in Scotland I seemed to know almost every tree, rock, hollow, and stream within a mile's radius of my family's house, but like most grown-ups in a fast-paced world I had lost this intimate connection with my own habitat. Now all of the trees on the mountain seemed unfamiliar to me even though I had hiked this route many times before. I climbed slowly looking for the perfect tree, a tree that seemed to be inviting.

The forest backed an ancient Shinto temple, and it was also the famed setting of a local warrior's adventurous evasion of an enemy army. The local people had cherished this forest for generations. None of its trees had ever been cut down for commercial use. Indeed, most of the trees on the mountain were many hundreds of years old. I climbed on and on searching for a tree. Just when I thought that I would have to look elsewhere, there it was, some distance away from the stony path: a huge, ancient cedar. It looked as if it were the oldest tree on the mountain. The root system was colossal. The main trunk was dark and dead, and the bare branches reached high into the sky. Perhaps the tree had been hit by lightning? The old trunk was completely hollow. I'm sure I could have crawled in and then stood to my full height, but I was too scared of the bats, snakes and spiders that might call the hollow home to venture inside. From the base of this lifeless central body, however, sprang another giant living trunk – a whole new tree. One of its strong branches swung down in a low arc, broad and smooth. It was the perfect place to sit. Reclining was even more comfortable, and as I laid back against the branch, looking up at the light dappling through the swaying green canopy, the tree seemed to cradle me. I felt welcome here.

I came up to my secret forest cradle every day. One day, a snow-white cat stepped out in front of me

at a hairpin turn in the crooked path and stretched its tail upwards, as if in greeting. "Hello, cat," I said, a little afraid of the feral feline. In response, the sleek, muscular cat meowed quietly and then rubbed its body against my shins. I gingerly stepped over it and set off for my special tree. The cat followed. When I stopped, she stopped. It was clear the cat wanted to walk with me. Again, I set off, and the cat accompanied me up the mountain until the tree was in sight. Then she disappeared into the undergrowth. Every day after that, the cat, whom I began to call Shiro (which means "White" in Japanese) would appear at the same spot on the twisting mountain path, as if she had been expecting my arrival. From there, I would be escorted by my white feline spirit guide up the twisting mountain path to within sight of my healing tree.

One of my earliest memories is of my mother taking me to a London park near our home. Lying in my stroller, I looked up at the sunlight playing on the leaves of an old elm. Now, many years later, in the forest of Shiroyama, I lay back on a huge cedar branch like a baby in a cradle. Bathed in dappled light I dreamt of nothing in particular and let my thoughts simply come and go, relishing my solitude, soothed by the sounds of the mountain forest. As I relaxed into the cedar's bark skin, the energy of the welcoming tree branch flowed along my spine, and revitalised my whole body.

A week after I began my daily walks up to the mountain tree, my blood pressure returned to normal. I was still grieving for my mother, but with the assistance of the spirit of the wild white cat, my mountain guide, I was able to tap into the life energy flowing through that ancient, knowing, half-dead, half-living tree. By performing this personal ritual on White Mountain, I once again felt reenergised and in friendship with the earth, and willing to accept the inevitable, cyclical nature of life and death.

Even though I felt well, I continued to climb the mountain regularly to visit my tree, accompanied by the gentle Shiro. When I said goodbye to Japan eighteen months later I missed the tree and Shiro more than many of my human friends. But I was able to leave the country feeling more complete, and more fully connected to the earth's body. It was through this healing ritual that I was able to accept my mother's death, the inevitability of change, and my season of loss. I could now understand these concepts in a wholly embodied way. Through ritualised performance, I had infused the routine walk up the mountain to the tree with sacred meaning, and had come to know the mystery of the sacral, opening my heart to its daily lessons.

# Our Spiritual Nature: An Exploration into Nature Experiences, Spirituality and Environmental Responsibility

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## Abstract

*My research project explores the reciprocal relationships between nature perception, spirituality and environmental responsibility. Based on twenty-eight in-depth interviews with 'nature-lovers,' environmentalists and 'spiritual seekers,' an insider's-perspective is sketched of how an immanent spiritual sense is experienced and activated in nature, and what its potential is concerning the pressing issues in the world. Seen from a philosophical perspective, the research explores if and how an integral worldview, incorporating an inner or spiritual dimension, interacts with and is supported by concrete experiences in the (natural) world, as well as how it finds expression in the world. This research project gives insight into the possible potential of spirituality in terms of the environmental crisis, and attempts to demystify the concept of spirituality and presents it from a 'this-worldly' perspective.*

When struck by the amazing wonders and the captivating beauty of nature, our treatment of the planet seems incomprehensible; we are damaging the earth, and ultimately ourselves. In the age of rationality, we are committing the ultimate irrational act: we are destroying the prerequisites of our own existence. As Ken Wilber, a contemporary American philosopher, expresses, "If the earth is indeed our body and blood, then in destroying it, we are committing a slow and gruesome suicide."<sup>1</sup>

When reflecting on the environmental crisis, it appears that science, technology and management alone cannot be the solution to our problems. Even 'technological optimists' must face the fact that technology needs to be developed, implemented and integrated into society, which can only be done with human will and commitment, creativity and intelligence. Although regional, specific and practical solutions are absolutely essential, the following essay will reveal how human nature and spirituality are integral aspects of nature by its

broadest definition, and how this realisation may be a vital component in awakening a sense of environmental responsibility.

The word *nature* holds multiple meanings. Nature is the basic principle of life. Not only is the whole universe nature, but even we, regardless of how civilised we have become, are part of nature, are nature ourselves. Moreover, the word nature refers to the *essence* or disposition of things and people. In Buddhism and other spiritual doctrines they speak of *Buddha nature* or *true nature*, the inherent free and enlightened dimension in all beings, suggesting that the natural order penetrates both the physical and the metaphysical realms.

In this paper, I reflect on 'our spiritual nature,' viewed in the context of my research. Through interviews conducted among environmentalists, 'nature-lovers' and 'spiritual seekers,' insight is given into how *nature*, *spirituality*, and *environmental responsibility* are interconnected in the experience and understanding of the individual. The first section gives a simplified overview of the modern paradigm and how it structures and limits our understanding and experience. This is followed by an exploration of the elusive and often undefined concept of spirituality, a discussion of my research project, a look at the project's findings, and my conclusions.

## The Modern Paradigm

The modern paradigm is often considered to be a root cause of the environmental crisis. This materialistic worldview denies the existence of anything other than that which is empirically observable and sensory tangible, yet it is profound in its knowledge and understanding of the physical-material world. Wilber therefore characterises this modern world as *flatland* –a purely material world, lacking intrinsic value, depth, essence, spirituality, subjectivity, and consciousness.<sup>2</sup> He explains this using a four-quadrant-model of reality, pointing out that everything in reality manifests itself in four inseparable dimensions. Everything has an *exterior*

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Wilber. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality The Spirit of Evolution* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000), p.12.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

or 'outside' (its material form or structure) and an *interior* or 'inside' (its consciousness or 'depth'). Simultaneously, everything is both a whole in itself (its individuality), and part of greater wholes (its communalness).

These four dimensions are all intimately correlated with, and dependent upon, but not reducible to each other. Precisely because these different dimensions are so intimately connected, it seems plausible to deny the existence of any one of them. That is exactly what the modern worldview does, according to Wilber: *it reduces the whole interior domain to its counterparts in the exterior domain.*<sup>3</sup> All the interior phenomena are explained pointing at their exterior counterparts. To explain consciousness we point at the brain; love, in this view, is the result of chemical reactions. Pitrim Sorokin, an original thinker within the field of sociology, comes to a similar conclusion, and refers to the '*sensate*' worldview in this context. This worldview is characterised by the assumption that

true reality and value is sensory. Only what we see, hear, smell, touch, and otherwise perceive through our sense organs is real and has value. Beyond such a sensory reality, either there is nothing, or, if there is something, we cannot sense it; therefore it is equivalent to the non-real and the non-existent.<sup>4</sup>

Sorokin sees this major principle, the *sensory principle*, as the foundation of modern culture, which, in all its main compartments, is an articulation of, is based upon, and is integrated around this principle. He critically points out the consequences of this way of viewing 'reality':

This path led inevitably to the growth of materialism, because nothing can be more sensory than matter; to a more radical mechanisation, because nothing can be simpler than mechanical motion; to growing hedonism, utilitarianism and sensuality in the world of the values, because only sensory pleasure and pain, sensory utility and disutility are real from this standpoint.<sup>5</sup>

This objectivistic worldview devalues the whole of the reality that exists beyond sensory perception.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 426-428.

<sup>4</sup> Pitrim Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1992), p. 252.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 254.

Reducing nature to its material aspects, without (intrinsic) value or meaning results not only in a *devaluation* of nature, but also in an *alienation from* nature. When material boundaries are taken to be ultimate boundaries, alienation, fragmentation and isolation results. In this objectified context, the subjective human being, who is perceived to be of a fundamentally different order or disposition, inevitably becomes isolated and alienated from nature. This results in the subject-object, human-nature, or mind-body dualism, usually referred to in philosophy as *Cartesian dualism*. A necessary step in dealing with the environmental crisis is to shift this paradigm towards a worldview which acknowledges the interconnectedness of humans and nature, as well as a pervasive inner or 'spiritual' dimension.

### **The Inner or Spiritual Dimension**

A. H. Almaas, a contemporary spiritual teacher and author, speaks about *true nature*, or the 'essential dimension,' when referring to this inner or spiritual dimension:

True nature is the inner nature of ourselves and everything. It is formless and it is the basis of all forms. As an analogy, consider water: The basic elementary compound of H<sub>2</sub>O can manifest as ice, snow, rain, steam or fog. To recognize that the essence of all of these is water is to see beyond the different manifestations of form in order to recognize their common nature.

Similarly, true nature is our innate essence, but we can see it only when we see through the particular forms, which is possible only when we experience without any veils or distortions. In our conventional everyday reality, our unconscious prejudices and conditioning distort and limit our perceptions such that we cannot see what is most fundamental. Usually we see the appearance of things and take it to be the whole of reality, meanwhile missing the essence of all we see. This is why conventional reality lacks a spiritual ground. We are seeing the appearance as if it were separate from or without its true nature. It is like believing the true nature of ice to be the little cubical shape it takes on in the freezer tray. We believe that the many forms that life takes are inherently different and separate and their nature is defined by their physical properties.

However, when we see without veils, we experience that the whole of existence possesses a single true nature – its common essential ground – and we find no distinction between appearance and true nature, for nothing can be separate from its true nature. This is objective reality – all of existence perceived in its true unobscured condition, in which everything is inseparable from its true nature.<sup>6</sup>

Form, *exterior* or *sensate* reality, is distinguished here from *interior* or *spiritual* reality. Both are considered to be true, present and real, which is why Almaas refers to both of them as ‘objective reality.’ The interior and the exterior are distinguishable, but fundamentally inseparable. They are Matter and Spirit; Form and Formless; Appearance and Essence; Object and Subject; Content and Ground. Therefore, when speaking about ‘spirituality,’ I refer to this understanding of an *all-pervasive, immanent spiritual dimension*, manifesting itself in, through and as ourselves and the world we live in.<sup>7</sup> Recognising this spiritual dimension solves the reductionism and dualism of the modern worldview and we see that everything has (intrinsic) value and is interconnected. Moreover, since this all-permeating Spirit manifests itself in the world, this immanent spirituality asks from and invites the individual to be fully present in, *and connected to the world*, thereby creating the potential for a sense of environmental responsibility.

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<sup>6</sup> A. H. Almaas, *Spacecruiser Inquiry: True Guidance for the Inner Journey* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002), p.32.

<sup>7</sup> This understanding is found in different philosophical, spiritual and religious traditions; for instance in different branches of Buddhism (emptiness as the intrinsic nature of reality), in different traditions of Hinduism like Advaita Vedanta and the Upanishads (*Brahman* as the holy power which informs and animates the whole of reality), in Daoism (in which the underlying but ineffable principle pervading the universe is the Dao, the Way) and in indigenous religions (which often distinguish between the closely interwoven spiritual and visible worlds). It is also found in the mystical strands of the Abrahamic traditions, like Kabbalah, Sufism (union with God and the world) and by mystics within Christianity (e.g. Teilhard de Chardin, Johannes Eckhart) as well as in the thinking of philosophers like Plato (the Platonic Forms), Plotinus (the world as a reflection of the One) and Hegel (the processes of existence as manifestations of one absolute spirit – *Geist*). For more information, see: Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Vagueness surrounding the concept of spirituality obstructs the full use of this potential. One of the main problems is *the ineffableness* of this spiritual or divine dimension, the experience of which can never be captured through language.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the spiritual is immeasurable, unquantifiable and impossible to detect through scientific-empirical means and standards. In order to use its full potential, more conceptual as well as experiential clarity is necessary.

## The Research

Research within the field of environmental psychology, for example wilderness-experience research, suggests that experiences with nature can prompt broad and significant psychological changes in the participating individuals, ranging from overall perspectives on life and nature, to personal priorities and involvements.<sup>9</sup> A variety of theories and philosophies claim that a more spiritual experience or perception of nature has a potential ‘healing’ effect on our worldviews and basic attitudes towards nature, which can lead to more environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours. Such findings imply that a spiritual perception of nature can drastically change the way we view the world, nature and ourselves.<sup>10</sup>

My own research project offers insight into this *transformative potential* of experiences in nature, and how this relates to a personal sense of ‘spirituality.’ The intention is to ‘sketch a picture’ of how an immanent spiritual sense is experienced and activated in nature, and what its potential is concerning the pressing issues in the world. Seen from a philosophical perspective, the research

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<sup>8</sup>This has been a key issue in the exploration and communication of my research. Finding the appropriate language in which to frame this project has required much contemplation on the meanings and connotations we associate with spirituality and even with events of personal experience.

<sup>9</sup>Janet Frey and Steve Kaplan, ‘Perspectives on wilderness: re-examining the value of extended wilderness experiences’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 6 (1986), pp. 177-188.

<sup>10</sup> See for example: Steve Kaplan and Janet Frey Talbot, ‘Psychological Benefits of a Wilderness Experience’ pp. 163-203 in Altman and Wohlwill, eds., *Behaviour and the Environment* (1983). And: Laura M. Frederickson and Dorothy H. Anderson, ‘A qualitative exploration of the wilderness experience as a source of spiritual inspiration’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 19 (1999), pp. 21-39.

explores alternatives to the materialistic/ objectivistic paradigm, by inquiring into *integral* worldviews, which incorporate an inner or spiritual dimension. Therefore, this research project not only investigates the possible *potential* of spirituality, in terms of the environmental crisis, it also *demystifies* the concept of spirituality by presenting it from a this-worldly perspective.

The necessary data was acquired through twenty-eight anonymous, in-depth interviews with self-described environmental activists, 'nature-lovers,' and committed 'spiritual seekers.' This research took place in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada,<sup>11</sup> in the autumn months of 2002. The choice for Victoria as the setting for this research project was mainly guided by the possibilities for supervision and support as offered by *The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society* at the University of Victoria, as well as by the 'green' atmosphere of the city, both in terms of its many parks and green spaces, and the inclination of its citizens to be involved with nature and the environment.

The respondents were found through approaching local environmental clubs,<sup>12</sup> the Victoria Outdoors Club, and several 'spiritually oriented' organisations.<sup>13</sup> Through the analysis of this data,<sup>14</sup> I

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<sup>11</sup> Victoria, a city with approximately 300,000 citizens (<http://www.statcan.ca>), is located on the most southern point of Vancouver Island, a large, forested island surrounded by the Pacific Ocean on Canada's west coast. This capital city of the province of British Columbia is gifted with parks, gardens, green spaces, beaches and the ocean. The city has a moderate maritime climate, which permits dense deciduous growth and rainforests to flourish. Nature is fairly accessible to the citizens of Victoria, who eagerly enjoy their beautiful surroundings. Moreover, the area has an interesting and relatively successful history of environmental activism, which has prevented part of the old-growth forests on the island from being logged. The resource-based industry in the area is still an important economical incentive and so the struggle continues. Characteristic of the city is also the history and presence of the First Nations peoples and their cultures. The University of Victoria helps to shape the community, as do the many elderly who often enjoy their retirement away from the harsh climates in other parts of the country.

<sup>12</sup> The Sierra Club and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

<sup>13</sup> Zen Centre, The Victoria Yoga Centre, the Interfaith Centre of the University of Victoria and the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society of the University of Victoria.

<sup>14</sup> The interviewee's ages ranged between 22 and 76 years, and the education level was generally high. All but two of the respondents had participated in formal education

came to realise the high level of interrelationship between the topics of nature perception, spirituality and environmental responsibility. Three clusters of themes formed the 'leading thread' running through this relationship: being *present in the world*, being *part of the world*, and an *expanded sense of self*. So what is embodied by these three themes? How do respondents understand and experience spirituality?

### **Present in the World**

Virtually all of the respondents describe their experiences in nature as *sensory*. They are fascinated by what they see, they enjoy the warmth of the sun and the freshness of the wind on their skin, they listen to the sounds or embrace the silence and they love the smells. As one respondent expressed, "Your senses are more in tune. You're listening, you're looking, you're feeling, you're moving – possibly you're more in tune with things. Maybe that's why you feel good, or because you feel good."

Some describe their experiences in nature as *grounding*. They feel that going out into nature brings them into direct contact with their immediate surroundings and sensations. They say that they "feel grounded to the earth again," which is meant as "literally feeling the earth under [their] feet." By experiencing the *immediacy* of the natural, living environment, respondents feel that they "get in tune with their senses" and become more *present in*, aware of, and in touch with their immediate space-time-dimension. Instead of being immersed in distant aspects of life and the abstractness of (conceptual) thought, respondents recognise that they actually feel more *present in the world*.

Other themes emerging in this context include the *fascination* and *absorption* many respondents experience in nature. Driven by an inner sense of curiosity and wonder, respondents become "caught up" in the natural environment they are exploring. Furthermore, they speak about nature in *relational terms*. Beyond viewing nature as a one-sided arrangement or "a commodity for consumption," as in *flatland* thinking, people feel that they "participate" or "commune with nature." They feel love, respect, and interest in their natural surroundings. I believe that this implies recognition of an inner or spiritual dimension in nature.

With its beauty, complexity and invigorating sensual stimuli, nature seems to provide a setting in

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beyond high school. The interviews were fully transcribed and analysed with support of *Kwalitan*, a computer program for the qualitative analysis of data.

which the individual feels invited to be more present in, open to and aware of the world. I suggest that this theme is the main prerequisite for having a *relationship* with nature, which forms the basis for a sense of environmental responsibility. This insight is reflected in the word “response-ability,” as one respondent pointed out. It is precisely the ability to respond to nature, to be responsive, which is the basis for a sense of responsibility.

### Part of the World

This sense of being more present in one’s immediate space-time-dimension is related to an increased sense of being a *participant in the world*. A central theme for virtually all of the respondents is that of *interconnectedness*, ranging from a scientific recognition of how one is physically tied in with nature, to a direct experience of oneness with the divine. Respondents feel part of nature and they recognise that they are nature themselves, which

brings back attachment to the world; being part of the world. Because so much now we separate ourselves from the world –we drive in cars and ‘boxes’, we live and work in ‘boxes’ and we have these artificial climates, the radio, light, inside. . . . it brings you back to the realisation that you are a part of that world, when you are walking in it.

Even though some respondents describe or explain this scientifically, this interconnectedness is often experienced or understood as a spiritual principle in itself. One respondent illustrated how “the feeling of being next to an ocean and feeling the wind through you . . . makes you realise that you can’t separate yourself from the earth, from other people, and that’s where my spirituality comes in.” Some respondents provided insight into mystical experiences of oneness in nature, or encounters that made them feel that “there is something bigger than just me,” as this quote illustrates:

I was standing in this grove of trees, which were all so huge, and so old . . . massive. . . . It was like a cathedral with all the giant pillars going up. The sun was coming in . . . it was just amazing, and I felt so humbled. Referenced maybe. It was a religious experience, and I felt a lot of respect for that nature. . . . I think it is comparable to experiences people have had encountering God . . . that there is something

bigger than just me, and my own being. That there is something about our world that is special . . . you just have this energy that goes through you, that you can’t quite describe –it feels so alive. I think that’s similar to what mystics for thousands of years have felt when they thought they had a connection with God –that power running through you.

Seeing or experiencing this interconnectedness helps the individual realise that they *do* influence the world, that their actions have measurable consequences, because “everything is so interdependent in nature. So often when we interfere with something, it all backfires, because one thing effects another. We are part of that system.” This is therefore likely to result in more environmental awareness and environmentally conscious behaviour. When people “feel part of nature,” or feel that “nature is not separate from me,” they are more inclined to *identify* with the interests and the ‘pains’ of nature, for “what we are doing to nature, we are doing to ourselves.” Consequently, this identification creates awareness of how humanity is tied in with nature, compelling the individual to defend its rights. Moreover, realising that one is participating in an interconnected whole also creates awareness that one *can* influence the world, that individual actions *do* have the *potential* to change something. The resulting feeling of power and responsibility is probably an essential component in becoming environmentally active. Nearly all the environmentalists who participated in this project expressed that the belief in their own ability to make change *is* a driving force in their motivation and commitment.

### An Expanded Sense of Self

When individuals begin to realise and experience themselves as part of this larger world, they also come to experience themselves differently; their sense of self changes. Some respondents speak in terms of feeling “more myself,” “more real,” “stronger” and “more aware.” Many gain access to parts of themselves that were neglected in the business of daily life, like a sense of inner peace, empowerment, beauty and joy. Respondents speak about the *expansion*, the *openness* and the *freedom* they often experience in nature, how they “get out of their selves,” and become totally immersed in the beauty and overwhelming presence of their location. Some explain how they feel their “boundaries dropping away,” or that “the need to cover up things

disappears.” One person experienced this larger sense of self on a diving expedition:

My physical experience was one of flow. . . . the body sensation [one of] porousness, the barrier has somehow opened up. Emotionally I felt very calm, peaceful, content. But also at the same time a sense of wonder and awe. And curiosity too . . . . So it was one of those magical moments in life, that I wish I had more. . . . To me it is a sense of transcending this ordinary existence that many of us in the Western world experience most of the time. Transcendence of that, to a place of deep connection, and perhaps moreover awareness.

This expanded experience of oneself often seems to put life back in *proportion*. Worries from the city disappear and everyday trivialities are revealed for what they are. The confrontation and interaction with the immensity of nature also seems to put people’s feeling of self in proportion. A sense of smallness in the midst of the great and amazing universe is contrasted by feeling part of and participating in this which is so big and overwhelming. Yet instead of feeling tiny and threatened, people describe feeling empowered and uplifted through seeing this ‘bigger picture.’ As one respondent explains:

You feel small. But it's not like a bad small; it is a very powerful small. It doesn't make you feel like you're less worthy. It's like you know you have a great responsibility –you can't just think about yourself. You're called to do something more.

The incomprehensible vastness of nature, when directly experienced, easily makes one think in greater, universal terms. Instead of only looking through anthropocentric glasses, a star-filled sky on a bright night or a huge mountain peak can give the individual a glimpse of the infinite, of the divine. The result is often a different perspective on life –on oneself, one’s capabilities and on what is truly important. More than just rethinking their lives, respondents are sometimes confronted with a deep felt sense of what their life is about and what place they want to fulfill as a vital participant in the intricate whole. An innate sense of *purpose* and *meaning* is discovered.

## The Understanding and Experience of Spirituality

There is an unmistakably spiritual dimension to respondents’ experiences of nature. They characterise their sense or understanding of spirituality in terms of a “higher power,” a “spirit” or divine dimension, which is understood to be closely connected to our world, either as creator, creative force, or an intrinsic aspect of creation. This results in a more *immanent* type of spirituality, as this respondent expresses:

I guess to me God is something very big, very nurturing. I think of God, not as a little old man, but as a sort of mothering spirit, who created the world, but probably also is in the world, in us, the trees and the animals, in some way. And that's probably why, when we are alone in this kind of [natural] setting, we're able to sense some of this spirit of God, in this beauty, in the creation.

Although this “unnamable force” is often *contrasted* with material or scientific reality, it is not generally considered to be in opposition to it. Respondents refer to the spiritual in terms of being beyond what we understand, what we know from science, and what we can express in language. Though often explicitly acknowledging science and its contributions, interview subjects say that “science doesn’t give the whole picture.” “The universe is a spiritual thing as well as a physical thing . . . . scientists analyse the universe and learn the physical laws by which it operates, but that isn’t the whole thing.”

However, the *culture of materialism* is understood to be the opposite of spirituality. Materialism is, then, roughly defined as the dominance of a materialistic, consumer-based way of understanding, evaluating and living in the world. Many respondents emphasise that they do not see any use or cause in “going for the money,” nor do they feel tempted to go along with the cultural values of materialism. Their spirituality provides them with an alternative source for finding purpose, meaning and contentment in life, of “being content with who you are –enjoying who and where you are.”

Respondents describe, not surprisingly, that their personal spirituality gives them a sense of meaning, one stating that “spirituality answers the question of who are we to be, and what life is all about.” Others stress that their spiritual foundations inform them with a “higher call” or a “higher cause.” This is often directly related to the view of the world as a

meaningful whole, in which everything is significant and has its own place and purpose, while simultaneously existing in intimate connection with everything else.

## Conclusion

By challenging the popular concept of spirituality as an other-worldly and inaccessible phenomenon, a new perspective on human-nature dynamics is gained. Connecting with our true or spiritual nature seems to go hand in hand with becoming more attuned with the natural world, as nature exists not only around us, but also in us and through us, and is a manifestation of the spiritual.

As a number of research-projects suggest, direct and profound encounters with the natural environment appear to have a significant influence on a personal sense of environmental responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Understanding the *inherent dynamics* and the *logic behind* these processes is crucial if we are to enhance, support and guide these experiences. Stimulating individuals to *directly* explore their relationship with nature in *the laboratory of their personal experience* may be the key to fostering and inspiring a sense of environmental responsibility. Such a spontaneous, open-ended exploration leads to the development of natural conclusions about humanity's relationships with environmental phenomena, and reveals the fluidity, porosity and the constructedness of the boundaries established between them. This interactive, explorative and expansive approach offers, therefore, an exciting perspective on environmental education, which may support the development of new methodologies in this field.

The main contribution of this research-project is in the provision of an *insider's-view* of different ways of thinking, feeling and acting in the world, as explained and described by the interview respondents. This worldview is, in many cases, quite an integral view, acknowledging material as well as spiritual reality. Spirituality, experienced in and through the (natural) world, not only allows individuals to have a meaningful and satisfying relationship with that world, but potentially also results in a paradigm shift – a move away from materialistic, individualistic *flatland* consumer society to more inclusive, expansive and

participatory ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Those who encounter their 'true nature' through truly experiencing nature can no longer continue to naively participate in environmental destruction: they must respond to the earth, their lifeline.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example: Louise Chawla, 'Significant Life Experiences Revisited: a review of research on sources of environmental sensitivity,' *Environmental Education Research*, vol.4. (1998), pp. 369-382.

## After Ground Zero: Problems of Memory and Memorialisation

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### Abstract

*According to French historian Pierre Nora, the twin economic and political revolutions of the eighteenth century ruptured lived traditions of memory as new social orders sought to create “new” pasts through establishing official “sites of memory.” It is against this formal tide that the anti-monument movement struggles, to return the act of social retrospection back to everyday life, to place the responsibility of retaining the past not on a site specific object, such as an obelisk, but upon each individual. In light of this current epistemological shift, it is curious that the Memory Foundations plan produced by architect Daniel Libeskind for the site of New York’s razed World Trade Center (WTC) ignores this avant-garde turn, and favours instead the creation of a conservative site of memory. Especially troubling is the vaguely defined process, used by Libeskind and other officials, to invest this place with an aura of sacredness. In this paper, I will discuss why constructing public memory at such sites is generally flawed, and suggest how the proposed “sacred memorial space” at Ground Zero attempts to manage and harness the range of possible recollections to be drawn from the horror of the collapse of the WTC, selectively forgetting the contradictory and complex, in favour of a spiritualised homogeneity.*

In the days immediately following the tragic events of September 11, 2001,<sup>1</sup> a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy for the victims and their families found material expression in makeshift memorials of flowers, candles, letters, photographs, and other ephemera. These temporary memorials allowed people to grieve, pay their respects to the dead and the victims’ families, and to reach out to others traumatised by the events. In Manhattan, Union Square became the city’s unofficial public space for commemoration. George

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<sup>1</sup> On September 11, 2001, two hijacked jets targeted the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers in New York, a third the Pentagon outside of Washington, D.C., and a fourth jet crashed off-target in Pennsylvania due to the intervention of passengers on board. Thousands of lives were lost in the attack; the highest toll was taken in New York due to the collapse of the Twin Towers.

Washington’s equestrian statue wore garlands and peace signs, Santeria candles burned beside Catholic votives, and art students unwound a paper scroll measuring hundreds of feet that would soon fill with conflicting messages from passers-by. Such unrehearsed public gatherings to express private reactions and thoughts, and to behave in ways that are personally meaningful—that is, to commemorate without being directed—suggests an intuitive inclination towards a lived practice of remembrance. At these gatherings, it seems tacitly understood that shared experience contains and conveys subjective memories far more effectively than symbolic objects, such as flowers or candles left behind as offerings. Conversely and problematically, however, permanent public monuments typically overlook the individual subject and their personal responses, emphasising instead the object’s role in imparting how the past is to be remembered.

The “Memory Foundations” plan proposed by architect Daniel Libeskind for Ground Zero, at the now-destroyed World Trade Center (WTC) in New York, strives to create such a materially inscribed locus of memory. However, in an attempt to invest locality with fixed meaning, this site ignores the contemporary trend away from traditional efforts to reify the past. Rejecting monolithic, object-centered representations of history typical to traditional monuments, anti- or counter monument designers attempt to return the act of commemoration back into everyday life, to revive a practice of living memory. Contrary to the planners’ publicly expressed desire to create a sacred memorial space, I argue that the traditional approach proposed for Ground Zero is neither capable of realising that sacred space, nor is it suited to conveying the contradictory and fragmented reality of human memory. Rather, the plan effects selective amnesia, not memories, of the varied meanings generated by the devastation at the WTC—a forgetting necessary to create a unified, narrow, and highly sanitised version of events.

## Pierre Nora: “Sites of Memory” and “Environments of Memory”

The writings of contemporary French historian Pierre Nora shed light on the problematic emergence of typical permanent memorials like that proposed for Ground Zero. Before the steady incursions of Enlightenment rationalism, Western memory was widely rooted in cultural practices of language, gesture, and religious rituals, which maintained spaces of living memory.<sup>2</sup> Nora describes these as *milleux des memoires*, environments of memory, which exist where the accretion of localised experience is absorbed into a form of traditional wisdom, and passed from generation to generation. This is not to be confused with nostalgia. Rather, it is a collective, geographically specific body of memories, which guides present action, yields a sense of belonging, and requires ongoing participation to keep it alive in the present.

As industrialisation and capitalism intensified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, disruptions to political, social and religious traditions in the West created a general shift from *milleux des memoires* to *lieux des memoires*, sites of memory.<sup>3</sup> Nora points to the toppling of France’s *ancien régime* at the end of the eighteenth century, and the revolutionary government’s subsequent employment of *fêtes* and allegorical monuments as prototypical sites of memory, established to bolster a new national consciousness. Beyond the onset of national identities, radical changes wrought by modernisation such as the flood of rural populations to urban centres, the growth of wage labour, and the ever-increasing pace of mechanisation, profoundly uprooted customs of memory. Modernity brought a sense of rootlessness, of flux, of alienation from tradition, creating a general anxiety that history itself could be swept away. Ironically, the waning of traditional memory practices shifted the burden of preserving the past to those official powers that hastened their decline. Consequently, traces of the past were transformed into official memories and made permanent in various ways: through public monuments, official annual celebrations, and museums, all of which materially marked history and historical events and anchored them in a network of sites of memory.

Not only do the ideologies informing state-sponsored sites of memory determine their design, location, and intended uses, they also influence how history is to be remembered. This traditional approach

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

to preserving memory is problematic for three key reasons. First, historical events are presented in a simplified way, whitewashing contradictions and complexities in order to preserve the political and social *status quo*. Second, state monuments often invoke and depend upon sacred symbolism to justify political outcomes and cloak partisan motivations without reflecting on the issues raised by utilising sacred themes. Third, while projecting an aura of historical accuracy and authenticity, official memorials rely on a planned amnesia of all previous histories of that site that could tarnish or interrupt what is to be commemorated at this particular point in time. Rather than openly acknowledging the limited capacity and the inherent biases of human memory and commemoration, conventional monuments direct individuals to uncritically absorb one particular version of a story without offering an opportunity for individual interaction. History, packaged as public memory, is rendered static and lifeless, unable to shift with time or to be reshaped by private recollections, interpretations, or rituals into a living practice.

## The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC)

From the outset, these problems have promised to vex the planners from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) who are designing the memorial site at Ground Zero. Formed on November 6, 2001 from the ranks of New York’s financial elite, the LMDC was created to direct the expenditure of several billion dollars of federal aid designated for rebuilding Lower Manhattan after 9/11. As Peter Marcuse, a professor of urban studies at Columbia University ironically notes, this development-oriented committee is comprised of:

one African American, no architects, no cultural leaders, one downtown resident, no educators, no families of 9/11 victims, three former Giuliani administration officials, one friend of George W. Bush, no planners, one union leader, no urbanists, and four Wall Street executives.<sup>4</sup>

Equally troubling as this committee’s homogeneity is the lack of diversity among the various committees formed by the LMDC who are to draft policy for

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Marcuse, ‘What Kind of Planning After September 11? The Market, the Stakeholders, Consensus – or...?’, in Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin, eds., *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 135.

creating the memorial site. Monica Iken, the founder of “September’s Mission,” a non-profit advocacy group lobbying for involvement in the planning of the memorial at Ground Zero, is concerned by who is *not* on the committees. Iken, who was widowed on 9/11, worries that without the influence of spiritual leaders, philosophers, ethicists, psychologists, anthropologists and other scholars, committees charged with drafting the project’s Mission Statement and Memorial Program could lack the necessary rigour to wrestle with the more difficult ethical questions.<sup>5</sup> In particular, she is concerned with debates over what constitutes sacred space, how best to facilitate societal healing, and how to balance commercial and commemorative aims.

In light of the exhaustive consultation between the LMDC and councils representing victims’ families, firefighters, police, survivors, residents, architects, and others too numerous to list, oversights hardly seem possible. However, as Marcuse suggests, this fashionable “stakeholder” model adopted by the LMDC lends the appearance of democratic inclusiveness, while restricting access to a limited number of interests.<sup>6</sup> This could help explain why the ‘Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program,’ drafted by stakeholders from nine advisory councils clearly marks Ground Zero as a future “site of memory.” Paradoxically, it seems that even a truly democratic consultation process would result in a conservative, reductive memorial in order to find a compromise that satisfies the interests of diverse groups. Also, this outcome may not be so surprising in light of the patriotic fervor and stifling of dissent in the days and weeks following September 11th. Journalists and members of the media, for example, lost their jobs over impolitic comments.<sup>7</sup> White House Spokesperson Ari Fleischer warned Americans to watch what they say and do, and Attorney General John Ashcroft stated that to disagree with President Bush’s policies of increased civil surveillance is to aid terrorism. This reactionary atmosphere likely did not encourage the committees to imagine a pensive, self-reflective and visceral memorial such as Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial (1982) in Washington.

One of the more problematic “Guiding Principles” listed in the Memorial Mission Statement requires the

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<sup>5</sup> Monica Iken; quoted from September Mission website. ([www.septembersmission.org/index.php](http://www.septembersmission.org/index.php)).

<sup>6</sup> Marcuse, ‘What Kind of Planning After September 11?,’ p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Bill Maher’s syndicated television show ‘Politically Incorrect’ was cancelled for making controversial remarks about 9/11.

monument to express a “powerful statement of enduring and universal symbolism.”<sup>8</sup> The error in this goal lies in the attempt to contain and convey an enormous number of differing, even conflicting, subjective memories with a single, unified object. How else, but through a gross oversimplification, could the multiplicity of memory from the deaths of 2,833 people from sixty-two nations be expressed for all time by a “one size fits all” monument? As Michel de Certeau writes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, “memory is a sort of anti-museum. It is not localizable.”<sup>9</sup> Rather, it “comes from somewhere else, it is outside itself.”<sup>10</sup> The moment memory is attached to an object or place it atrophies. Contrary to the aims expressed in the Mission Statement, memory can neither be refined, nor can it be materially anchored and eternally fixed. Despite these inherent complexities of human memory, a second Guiding Principle states that the site should “encourage reflection and contemplation [to] . . . evoke the historical significance and worldwide impact of September 11, 2001.”<sup>11</sup> This further suggests that a simplified version of 9/11’s memory will likely be forwarded at Ground Zero. Are the innocent victims of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Bush Administration’s new pre-emptive strike capability, the curtailing of U. S. civil rights by the Patriot Act, or the reprisals against Arab Americans meant to be contemplated? Though clearly these events are part of the worldwide impact of 9/11, the short and obvious answer is no.

Official sites of memory routinely ignore contradictory events in order to channel reflection away from subjects that are too politically divisive to openly address. Adopting this traditional model at Ground Zero would benefit the political and economic *status quo* since both depend upon a speedy and uncritical reestablishment of Lower Manhattan as a center of world trade. After 9/11, the Pentagon, President Bush, and the American media avoided discussing the symbolic import, both economically and militarily, of the terrorist’s targets. Instead, they opted to describe the aggressions as an attack on “freedom” and “American values” perpetrated by an “evil” foe.

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<sup>8</sup>Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, ‘Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program,’ 2002: p. 3 ([www.renewnyc.com/Memorial/memmission.shtml](http://www.renewnyc.com/Memorial/memmission.shtml)).

<sup>9</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p.108.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,p. 87.

<sup>11</sup>LMDC, ‘Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program,’ p. 3.

Questions regarding the United State's abuse of military or economic power were few, and when raised, were silenced with suggestions that critics should "tell that to the bereaved families of the firefighters."<sup>12</sup> According to geographer David Harvey, this quashing of dissent in the name of personal loss and "freedom" carries "more than a whiff of McCarthyism,"<sup>13</sup> an odour that could well linger indefinitely at Ground Zero. By sidestepping voices critical of American foreign policies through misdirection, the political events leading up to the tragedies of 9/11 were downplayed while the material devastation and loss of life became the focus. In other words, America is presented only as a victim. I am not arguing that the victims of 9/11 were somehow responsible for what happened to them or that the terrorists were justified in their actions. However, the use of simplified binary oppositions to describe the attacks, such as good/evil, crusader/infidel, and freedom/war, promotes the idea that U. S. government policies are as innocent as the victims. These sentiments appear to be informing an equally superficial memorial project which would further bolster this facile version of 9/11 and likewise shape the memories and sense of history of millions of visitors annually.

### Directing Public Memory

According to John Bodnar, a professor of American history at Indiana University, public memory is created at the junction of "official and vernacular cultural expressions."<sup>14</sup> Whereas vernacular expressions of memory describe social realities, official expressions rely on a dogmatic formalism meant to repackage the past as ideal and free from contradictions. These official versions of history are often built on the abstract ideals of "timelessness and sacredness."<sup>15</sup> Rooted in the politics of power, official expressions of public memory seek to promote social unity and continuity, and to control and calm anxieties by a selective process that champions "appropriate" events or meanings from the past. They generally

endorse a "nationalistic, patriotic culture . . . that mediates an assortment of vernacular interests, but seldom . . . at the expense of ascendancy."<sup>16</sup> As official and vernacular aims often clash philosophically, most public memorial spaces are infused with tension: between felt, spontaneous, heterogeneous (personal) memory and desired, constructed, homogenous (public) memory. This fundamental discord between complex emotional vernacular expression and simple dogmatic public expression promises to plague those designing the memorial at Ground Zero.

One of the key passages of the LMDC's Memorial Mission Statement evokes the desire that "lives be remembered . . . deeds recognised, and the spirit reawakened be eternal beacons, which reaffirm respect for life, [and] strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom."<sup>17</sup> Clearly this excerpt fits Bodnar's definition of an official expression of public memory. Its dogmatic formalism converts the senseless deaths into eternal beacons of spirit, employing timelessness and sacredness in the same breath. The tragedy also seems to justify the U.S.'s tougher political stance as an offshoot of a strengthened determination to safeguard freedom. This echoes Bodnar's earlier point that official expressions mediate an assortment of vernacular interests—in this case, the need of solace for the victims is conjoined with the state's need to garner acceptance for increased police and military action, both at home and abroad.

Perhaps the most perplexing problem associated with this site of public memory is the assumed ubiquity of Ground Zero's sacredness. Is it possible to create one sacred space that could satisfy and include the wide range of religious activities expressed in infinite forms? As concepts of sacredness rest on particular sets of belief, is it possible to build homogenised memorials that speak lucidly and personally to each participant? Or should we, as David Dunlop of the *N.Y. Times* drolly suggests, erect "a Quad-Faith Plaza, if not a Faithplex, with room set aside for those alienated or troubled by the presence of religious sanctuaries?"<sup>18</sup> However tongue-in-cheek, Dunlop's point is well taken. If this sacred space is to serve people of different faiths, its structure and iconography cannot seek to be universal or enduring, but must be as layered and malleable as possible to allow for individual interpretation and experience of the site. Rather than confidently assuming that such a

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<sup>12</sup> David Harvey, 'Cracks in the Edifice of the Empire State,' in Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin, eds., *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> John Bodnar, 'Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland,' in John R. Gilles, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> LMDC, 'Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program,' p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> David Dunlop, 'Looking for God in the Details at Ground Zero,' *N.Y. Times*, January 9, 2003, p. 85.

monolithic sacred space can be made, openly acknowledging the uncertainties of its nature may generate the insightful dialogue needed to realise a memorial that fulfills the needs of believers and non-believers. Otherwise, Ground Zero's memorial will take the shape of many other traditional "sites of memory" described earlier by Pierre Nora: a *mélange* of fossilised traces of living culture (memory) displaced from its original context, often for a new politicised purpose.<sup>19</sup>

### The Proposed Memorial Space: "Site of Memory"

Undoubtedly, the task of creating a memorial for Ground Zero is a daunting one given the range of political agendas and commercial proposals focusing on the 4.7 acre site. To complicate matters further, the remaining 11.3 acres of the WTC site slated for commercial redevelopment are also widely regarded as sacred and replete with memory. This suggests that much of the simplistic litany of social unity, patriotism, and sacredness heard from business interests is likely meant to ease the perceived tension between the commemoration of 9/11 and concurrent plans for commercial enterprise. The presence of a strong sense of unease explains the call from some to avoid commercial development entirely. New York's former mayor Rudy Giuliani, for instance, declared in his farewell speech that the site of the former WTC site should *not* be restored as a mercantile centre. Though usually in favour of speculative urban development Giuliani insisted that, by raising a "soaring, monumental, beautiful memorial that . . . [would] draw . . . millions of people here who just want to see it,"<sup>20</sup> the devastated area could be revitalised without paving over Ground Zero's memory. To accomplish this Giuliani claimed, "we have to . . . create something here. . . that allows people to build on it [9/11] and grow from it. And it's not going to happen if we think about it in a narrow way."<sup>21</sup> In other words, the standard, short-term profit-driven ethos should not be pursued.

Contrary to Giuliani's wishes, New York's new Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, aims to remake the site as a centre of global commerce while ensuring to "pointedly recall for all time what happened on

September 11, 2001."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, LMDC members who have from the outset insisted on conjoining the memorial and commercial functions, want to redevelop Ground Zero as quickly as possible to restore at least ten of the fifteen million square feet of rental space lost with the destruction of the WTC complex.

Between these two seemingly irreconcilable poles of opinion, those opposed to and those for commercial redevelopment of Ground Zero, the lead architect Daniel Libeskind has toiled for a compromise. The name of his project, "Memory Foundations," so called for "the depth of memory linked to 9/11, and . . . for the foundations of the future New York,"<sup>23</sup> indicates his intention to fuse the antithetical positions of commemoration and development. His inclusion of a sizable central green space, five separate memorial parks, a cultural center, a museum, and a 150-foot waterfall in the plan has won over some critics of commercial redevelopment. But, it is in his reuse of a massive concrete retaining wall, the only surviving material from the WTC, that he claims to have brought together "these seemingly contradictory viewpoints into an unexpected unity."<sup>24</sup> The retaining ("slurry") wall holding back the waters of the Hudson River forms the western boundary of the "bathtub," a large sunken area that will contain the memorial parks, the competition winner's monument, the preserved "footprints" of the Twin Towers, and non-commercial structures. Framing this commemorative core, the remaining seven buildings allotted for office space, along with the enormous underground retail mall they will sit upon, will comprise the mercantile portion of the Memory Foundations scheme. While it is true that Libeskind's clever plan spatially integrates business and commemorative interests, it is not clear how he can claim this is a reconciliation of both competing desires. Between these opposing desires Libeskind has crafted an artful compromise, perhaps even a *détente* of sorts. But to claim his design "unifies" disparate points of view betrays how prepared Libeskind is to employ essentialist language to sell his proposal.

Libeskind's hyperbolic language mimics what is typically used at public sites of memory to assuage and mediate differing opinions. In particular, he leans heavily, as do the authors of the Mission Statement, on sacred imagery. Not only has he referred to the slurry wall as a spiritual and sacred area, he has gone so far as to suggest that the "rebuilding of the World Trade

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<sup>19</sup> Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Rudy Giuliani, quoted in Michael Sorkin's 'The Center Cannot Hold,' in Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin, eds., *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p. 197.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Bloomberg; quoted from Radio Free Europe website. ([www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)).

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Libeskind; quoted from press release, p. 1. ([www.daniel-Libeskind.com/press](http://www.daniel-Libeskind.com/press)).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Center has to be a spiritual process, not only an architectural one . . . [that requires] not only finding the visible angles, but the angles in the soul.”<sup>25</sup> As seen in the press, the enormous popularity of Libeskind’s spiritualised vision suggests the public’s need to frequent sacred sites in order to help heal trauma. Despite this popularity, when *N.Y. Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp accused Libeskind of indulging in emotionally manipulative language and planning, and condemned the project for its “quasi-religious, pre-Enlightenment emotionalism [that is] intolerant of criticism,”<sup>26</sup> Muschamp quickly found out just how intolerant people could be. He received an unprecedented amount of demands for his resignation—a censorious furor set in motion largely through an email campaign by Libeskind’s office manager.<sup>27</sup> Before being shouted down, Muschamp’s polemic raised an interesting point, namely: is it not highly problematic for lay people such as architects, politicians, and concerned “stakeholders” to promise sanctified sites of memory to the anguished? Worse still, is it not smug, even unethical, to suggest that converting sorrowful memories into future prosperity is merely a matter of finding the “right angles?” There is still a general need to heal, to be able to remember the events of 9/11 in a personally meaningful way. But can a design for a largely commercial complex do this, regardless of how “right” its angles are? Is it not shared dialogue and shared memories that will help clear the path to acceptance, to peace? To fully appreciate the poignancy of this tension, it must be remembered that thousands of unidentified partial remains are to be interred in a central memorial crypt—a graveyard—in the midst of commercial buildings.<sup>28</sup>

Especially troubling is the certainty with which Libeskind and the LMDC attempt to unite the public’s traumatic memories and desires for a spiritual space with the sanguine hope of financial recovery. In a *Cross Currents* editorial entitled ‘That You Forget Not What Your Eyes Have Seen,’ Catherine Marsden discusses this tenor of religious confidence in the U.S. after 9/11 as a “liturgy of glory,” or as a form of “public boasting.” Public boasting, Marsden relates,

“treats religious and national icons as secure and unshakeable.”<sup>29</sup> In times of crisis, this boast is mechanically repeated, “which does not reestablish the icon . . . but merely denies the truth of the present conditions.”<sup>30</sup> However, the key liturgies, upon which most if not all sacred beliefs rest, admit the frailty of their icons. Traditionally, it is:

the intemperate God, the crucified God, the unrepresentable God that govern the imagination not by their unassailable power but by their instability. Our relationship with God is always about to fall apart; much of the work in the monotheist traditions is the effort to salvage it through prayer and ethical life. In religions outside the monotheist traditions, the very dependency of the gods or the ancestors on human offerings and human remembrance emphasizes the frailty of the bonds that make the world cohere. Compelling ritual gives us not a prop for our complacency but a task that can fail.<sup>31</sup>

Instead, Libeskind brims with the confidence that fuels Lower Manhattan’s speculative markets. In broad strokes, he links the perceived sacredness of the site to the stability of the economic and political orders that built the WTC—again, via the slurry wall. Already described as a key memorial object and a sacred area, he further claims that the surviving wall stands “as eloquent as the Constitution itself asserting the durability of Democracy and the value of individual life.”<sup>32</sup> The LMDC similarly splices these disparate values in their ‘Blueprint for the Future of Lower Manhattan,’ with wording strangely familiar. The future memorial space should be an eternal tribute to the victims that “reaffirm[s] the democratic ideals that came under attack” yet also “reflect[s] the free exchange of ideas, goods, and services among diverse peoples that the WTC embodied.”<sup>33</sup> In the name of sanctified memory, both parties boldly promote a secular “liturgy of glory,” lauding America’s political and economic life without considering the negative consequences world trade has inflicted globally. As such, there remains a poignant gap at Ground Zero

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Muschamp; quoted from *Spiked* website, p. 1, ([www.spiked\\_online.com/Articles00000006DCB7.htm](http://www.spiked_online.com/Articles00000006DCB7.htm))

<sup>27</sup> Vicky Richardson, ‘That Libeskind Touch,’ March 7, 2003, quoted from *Spiked* website ([www.spiked\\_online.com/Articles00000006DCB7.htm](http://www.spiked_online.com/Articles00000006DCB7.htm)) p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> LMDC, ‘Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program’, p. 3

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<sup>29</sup> Catherine Marsden, ‘That You not Forget What Your Eyes Have Seen’, *Cross Currents*, Summer 2002, Vol. 52, no. 2, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Libeskind; quote from press release, p. 1, ([www.daniel-Libeskind.com/press](http://www.daniel-Libeskind.com/press)).

<sup>33</sup> LMDC, ‘Principles and Preliminary Blueprint for the Future of Lower Manhattan,’ April 9, 2002, p. 3.

between the public's need to engage in a living practice of memory that yields solace and healing, and the divided loyalties of official interests charged with rebuilding the site.

### Erasing the Layers of History

The most ironic and reductive aspect of the proposed memorial lies in the LMDC's claim to offer an interpretation of sacred space at Ground Zero, while "convey[ing] historic authenticity."<sup>34</sup> To achieve both on that spot, however, requires invoking a powerful oblivion. The difficulty arises in overlooking the palimpsests, the historical layers of sacred memory connected to the WTC site. To silence the voices of competing histories, official sites of memory require an erasure that clears and neutralises the ground so that new stories and histories can be invented and circulated. How else could Lower Manhattan's newest sacred space be considered historically "authentic" when the myth of Manhattan's sale by unnamed Indians for twenty-four dollars is common knowledge, and accounts such as the following of a 1643 Dutch raid on a Munsee Lenape camp which actually gave shape to Lower Manhattan, are largely erased from vernacular memory?

Infants were torn from the mother's breasts, and hacked to pieces in the presence of their parents, and the pieces thrown into the fire and in the water, and other sucklings, being bound to small cradle boards were cut, struck, and pierced, and miserably massacred in a manner to move a heart of stone. Some came to our people . . . with their hands, some of their legs cut off, and some holding their entrails in their arms.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, not all traumas can be accounted for on a particular site, but that is the point. There is no "real" or "authentic" memory. Memory *is* biased and deficient. As Toronto anthropologist Michael Lambeck points out, "to remember is never to solely report on the past so much as to establish one's relation to it . . . [as] memory . . . is never morally or pragmatically

neutral."<sup>36</sup> Yet it is the LMDC's posture of neutrality and objectivity and its refusal to recognise other histories such as those of the Munsee Lenape that allows for the construction of this "historically authentic" memorial site. Without the deficiencies and biases of official memory, without forgetting, how could a traditional memorial on this site work in the ways that the LMDC desire?

In a similar vein, the efforts to preserve the "footprints" of the Twin Towers further erase aspects of the city's memory and its history. In *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center*, Eric Darton discusses how the development of the site required the displacement of the vibrant commercial neighborhood known as Radio Row. Though home to hundreds of small-scale, family-run businesses that employed some 30,000 people, Radio Row fell to the bulldozers despite a lengthy battle in the streets (the largest demonstration staged swelled to over 120,000 protesters) and in the courts.<sup>37</sup> Since 1920, Oscar's Radio, perhaps the most noteworthy business on Radio Row, sat in the middle of Tower One's current footprint. Though never substantiated, allegations of strong-arm tactics used to force out the last holdouts, including assaults and arson, were leveled against the Port Authority and private interests.<sup>38</sup> In this light, how paradoxical this "authentic" official memory appears, to save and make sacred in the name of "freedom" and "American values" the footprint of buildings that uprooted the lives of so many entrepreneurial citizens.

Firmly reestablishing American values like freedom at Ground Zero's sacred memorial space necessitates a planned lapse of recall, without which this recent site of memory would simply lose its rhetorical force. When Libeskind waxes patriotic, stating that "freedom really [is] etched into this [slurry] wall,"<sup>39</sup> it is difficult to believe he is speaking about the freedoms historically enshrined in the Constitution. As David Harvey notes, "If freedom is exclusively defined in terms of market freedoms . . . [then] the space of the WTC could be depicted as a 'space of

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<sup>34</sup>LMDC, 'Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program,' p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> John Kuo Wei Chen, 'Whose Downtown?!?', in Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin, eds., *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 42.

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Lambeck, 'The Past Imperfect: Remembering as Moral Practice', in Paul Antze & Michael Lambeck, eds., *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Eric Darton, *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>39</sup>Daniel Libeskind; quoted from Polonia Global Fund Website ([www.pgfc.cc/Polonia/articles.3htm](http://www.pgfc.cc/Polonia/articles.3htm)).

freedom.”<sup>40</sup> Freedom, however, is an ironic and problematic term. Market freedoms can disguise numerous negative freedoms, such as “the freedom to exploit labour, to deplete and degrade environments . . . to exact high rents, to lay people off overnight . . . to exercise private property rights ruthlessly in the pursuit of individual advantage.”<sup>41</sup> As with other memories of past events that have been distorted or erased, the history of the WTC’s influence on the city’s planning and its neighbourhoods is stripped of its contradictions and repackaged as beneficial, and as embodying sacred freedoms—in this case free enterprise—held so dear by many Americans.

### **The Anti-Monument Model: Towards “Environments of Memory”**

While this paper’s discussion has focused on the inherent problems of traditional and conservative sites of memory, there is an alternative. There is an *avant-garde* approach that promises to shift commemoration away from object-centered sites of memory towards a lived practice—towards the environments of memory discussed earlier by Pierre Nora. Referred to as the anti-monument movement, it is promoted by a loose group consisting of scholars, conceptual artists, and architects from around the world.<sup>42</sup> They seek to move memory production from the grasp of state power and in doing so, reveal how it is always subjective and constructed. To avoid creating still more sites of memory, anti-monuments either openly acknowledge the break with the past’s meaning – the presence of absence – or through public interaction at the memorial, seek to build the past’s meaning not through material at the site, but through the memories of those who visit and participate.

John R. Gilles, a professor of history at Rutgers University, insists that the appearance of the anti-monument represents more than an intellectual trend; it reveals a deep rejection of the talismanic quality of traditional memorial sites. It constitutes a “radical turn not only aesthetically, but epistemologically.”<sup>43</sup> Aesthetically, instead of creating an object-focused site

of memory, anti-monuments seek to dematerialise remembering. In the case of certain Holocaust memorials, for example, the form and iconography of counter monuments often highlights the fragmentation and destruction of memories, rather than trying to relate the memories of those who cannot speak for themselves through material artifacts or representations. For instance, at first glance Rachel Whiteread’s ‘Nameless Library’ (2000) at the *Judenplatz* in Vienna, Austria, appears to be a cube-like structure with doors, but upon closer examination the doors are merely modeled in a solid concrete wall, denying any entrance to its interior. Similarly, mock cement bookshelves hung on the building’s exterior are filled with false books turned with their spines to the wall to avoid reading their titles. Whiteread strives to give the viewer a sense of the utter loss of memory wrought by the Holocaust in Vienna—to “describe the indescribable.”<sup>44</sup> By recognising our inability to grasp the void of memory rent by the Holocaust, by acknowledging the presence of absence, Whiteread’s Nameless Library formally avoids closure, challenging the viewer to wrestle not with the material of the site, but with what is not there.

Epistemologically, anti-monuments seek to close the gap between past and present by returning memory to the practice of everyday life; in this way they are closer in form to an “environment of memory.” This requires moving away from the image of a certain, “authentic” past advanced by most official sites of memory, to the uncertainty of each person undertaking a share in preserving and shaping memory. When memory is stripped of “all appearances of objectivity, . . . [it] forc[es] everyone to confront hers or his subjectivity, while at the same time acknowledging a civic responsibility not to let the past repeat itself.”<sup>45</sup> Generally, anti-monuments feature vernacular expressions over dogmatic rhetorical expressions, for the aim is to reflect upon the function of memory as experienced, rather than as desired and directed.

The German conceptual artist Jochen Gerz’s ‘Anti-Fascist Monument’ (1986) in Hamburg exemplifies this aim. The monument, a single twelve-meter column sheathed in lead, was lowered yearly into the ground after each reachable section was inscribed with visitor’s comments about the crimes of the Nazis, until being totally submerged beneath the ground in 1994. Gerz believes that because people interacted with the

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<sup>40</sup> Harvey, ‘Cracks in the Edifice of the Empire State,’ p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>42</sup> It is important to distinguish that there are different types of anti-monuments. Some do not try to construct anything at all. Rather they are concerned only with confronting our inability to remember, or the reality of forgetting. Others do seek to make new memory forms through interaction

<sup>43</sup> John R. Gilles, ‘Introduction,’ in John R. Gilles, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 18.

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<sup>44</sup> Rachel Whiteread, in Adrian Forty, ‘Introduction,’ in Adrian Forty and Suzanne Kuchler, eds., *The Art of Forgetting* (New York: Berg, 1999), p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Gilles, ‘Introduction,’ p. 17.

memorial, through marking it or attending the yearly lowering ceremonies, more profound and lasting memories were created than is possible with a static object. More than any inert obelisk, Gerz feels his monument transmits subjective, lived memory to the minds of its visitors, the only place he deems memory actually exists. In this way, he tried to make the public's memories—over 60,000 people left inscriptions on the stele—one of the site's key building materials. Further, the absence of the now-submerged column is meant to obligate people to be watchful and vigilant, as the shared recollection of the memorial's disappearance is more powerful than the object itself. As Gerz reminds us, "no permanent object can stand for justice."<sup>46</sup>

Though Libeskind's 'Garden of Exiles' memorial at the Jewish Museum in Berlin (1999) is widely considered to be on the leading edge of counter monument design, the Memory Foundations project appears to be steering towards the typical, conservative "site of memory." What makes this especially surprising is the LMDC's decision, on the other hand, to rebuild using *avant-garde*, deconstructivist architectural forms such as those employed by architects Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, or Peter Eisenman. Though this preference for tradition likely has mitigated and sped up the rebuilding process, it will do little to allow the average person to participate in a shared conversation of grieving and healing needed at Ground Zero. For commemoration to shift towards a lived practice, it needs to be inclusive and removed from the control of official power and the confines of an object. Living memory has both a *personal* and a *communal* form, and each shapes and sustains the other. If people are unable to contribute freely to the collective pool of memory, or to validate and express the valuable impressions that dwell subjectively, this reciprocal relationship begins to break down, and the practice of commemoration becomes suspect.

## Conclusion

The open competition to design the memorial concludes in October 2003 with the announcement of the winning proposal. The overriding considerations directing the jury are the guidelines outlined in the LMDC's 'Draft Memorial Mission Statement and Memorial Program.' Though the jury members are among the top architects, artists, and scholars in the

nation, the assumptions found in the Mission Statement and Memorial Program regarding the monument's power to represent memory and the possibility of a homogenised sacred space will likely hinder their attempt to achieve these aims, however well intentioned. As outlined in this essay, it is problematic, perhaps even impossible, to invest objects and sites with memories. It is even more difficult when the memorial is state-sponsored since it is in that governing body's interest to determine a suitable closure to trauma and to direct how events are best remembered. To exist at all, official sites of memory require simplifying complex events, making untenable claims to historical authenticity, and invoking an unexamined spirituality. While it is unlikely that the work of the anti-monument movement will close the gap between the past and present, or fully revive bygone environments of memory, struggling to subvert existing controls on public memory will shift its usage towards more egalitarian ends.

At Ground Zero, the financial stakes are too high and the process too politicised for architects and planners to construct a memorial that will acknowledge how U.S. foreign policies have decreased world peace. Instead, the commemorative project's sanguine and boastful tone lends stability to the hurried effort to rebuild a key instrument of global capitalism. There is no room in that proposed sacred space for deep reflection on the troubled, contradictory *tableaux* of American life, or the public's subjective deficiency to process and grasp the meaning of traumatic memory. If the model of the anti-monument had been adopted by the LMDC and these shortcomings openly confessed, perhaps the opportunity to develop a sacred and inclusive space of recall, or at least a step toward a more honest, vivid and animated experience of the past, could have been realised.

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<sup>46</sup> Jochen Gerz, 'Introduction', in Adrian Forty and Suzanne Kuchler, eds., *The Art of Forgetting* (New York: Berg, 1999), p. 7.

# Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent Paths Towards a Christian Social Ethic

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## Abstract

*Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore were contemporaries who had profound impacts in North America and England respectively in the area of Christian social thought. While they both provided theological justification for a moderate gradualist socialism their theologies are in many ways antithetical. Rauschenbusch's "social gospel," which has been predominant in North American liberal protestantism, is contrasted with Gore's "sacramental socialism," which is predominant in liberal Anglo-catholicism. This essay argues for the revival of the sacramental socialist tradition on the basis of comparison with theorists as varied as Max Horkheimer, George Lindbeck, George Grant and the Radical Orthodoxy project of John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock.<sup>1</sup>*

In June 2001, I attended a theology conference in Toronto sponsored by *Kairos*, the Canadian Interchurch social justice coalition. It was the third and final year of their Jubilee initiative, which had previously been successful in drawing attention to the plight of indebted nations. At one particular workshop, a presenter identified herself as an Anglican feminist theologian who draws her strength from the Incarnation and the Trinity. Hearing these theological ideas expressed by an activist, I felt like I had just stepped out of a dry and dusty place to stand under a waterfall: cool and bracing. However, she offered no further theological reflection and reverted to social analysis and discussions of praxis. This retreat seemed to me too characteristic of my conference experience. There was discussion of social praxis, sometimes supported by the Christian scriptures, but very little attempt to root activism and concerns for social justice back into the nature of God.

From my experiences at this conference, I believe there has been a misstep as well as a missed

opportunity: Social Gospel ideas that Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) exemplified still dominate contemporary North American Christian activism. The resulting tendency is to ignore Christian theology *per se* while stressing activism. The missed opportunity is a neglect of Sacramental Socialist traditions that are represented by Charles Gore (1853-1932). There is a weakness in the Social Gospel movement, and Gore's Sacramental Socialist tradition grounds a deeper praxis, one that is as reflective as it is active, one that is distinctively Christian. To address a lack of theological reflection in many Canadian mainline churches' social justice efforts, in this article I compare the Social Gospel ideas of Walter Rauschenbusch and the Sacramental Socialist traditions of Charles Gore on three key topics: first, their view of Christ; second, their perception of the ongoing presence of holiness in the world; and third, appropriately responsive Christian social action.

## "The Word Became Flesh . . .": Contrasting Christologies

Walter Rauschenbusch, born in Rochester, New York, to German immigrant parents, graduated from Rochester Seminary in 1886. Afterwards, he served as pastor at the Second German Baptist Church in New York's "Hell's Kitchen" area for eleven years. His encounters with urban poverty convinced him of the need for broad social reform. He returned to Rochester Seminary to become professor of New Testament and Church History, eventually writing two works that proved seminal for the developing "Social Gospel" movement: *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912) and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917).<sup>2</sup>

Rauschenbusch's Christology, that is, his perception of Jesus Christ, is strongly influenced by his emphasis on Hebraic rather than Hellenic roots for Christianity, an emphasis he derives from nineteenth-century German Protestant theologian, Adolf von

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<sup>1</sup> This article emerges from a Spring 2003 class on 'Anglican Social Thought' with Rev. Dr. William Crockett, Professor Emeritus at Vancouver School of Theology. The author acknowledges his appreciation for Dr. Crockett's exhaustive knowledge of Anglican social thought and his enthusiastic teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Donald M. Lake, 'Rauschenbusch, Walter', *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 827. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1912). Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997).

Harnack.<sup>3</sup> The privileging of the Hebraic over the Hellenic means that there is no room in his theology for the metaphysical speculation beloved of Hellenism. There is no discussion of *Logos* Christology, no explicit trinitarianism; Jesus does not work miracles, and there is no discussion of the resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Rauschenbusch offers a “low” view of the nature of Jesus, focusing on his humanity, in contrast to “high” views that stress the divinity of Christ. In Rauschenbusch’s Hebraic influenced theology, it is the Hebrew prophets who are pre-eminently invoked as a source for the Social Gospel.<sup>5</sup> Rauschenbusch’s perception of Jesus is primarily of a man who belongs to a lineage of Hebrew prophets and who preaches an ethical gospel of the Kingdom of God that emphasises social works. Rauschenbusch believed that in his lifetime he was witnessing an upheaval in how Jesus and the New Testament were understood. He especially believed that Jesus’ prophetic activity was exemplary, and his purpose was to show how to live a religious life. However, Jesus was no mere social reformer in the Marxist tradition. His Kingdom of God was an explicitly religious domain characterised by justice and equity in human relations.<sup>6</sup>

Notably, Rauschenbusch’s perception of the Kingdom of God is collective, not individual, and is reminiscent of the hope of Israel for a kingdom of justice, prosperity, and happiness as announced in the Torah and Prophets. Jesus, intimated Rauschenbusch, possessed a fine nineteenth century mind in seeing that the Kingdom of God would not come in imminent conflagration, but rather through evolutionary and organic change.<sup>7</sup> Growing from person to person “[t]he kingdom of God,” says Rauschenbusch, “is still a collective conception, involving the whole social life of man. It is not a matter of saving human atoms, but of saving the social organism. It is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven.”<sup>8</sup> Rauschenbusch’s collective, ethical humanism was his

chief insight, and in his Christological conception, Jesus’ mission was to establish a society built upon the “fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men,” a characteristic phrase in his tradition of liberalism.<sup>9</sup>

Theologian Charles Gore, a British contemporary of Walter Rauschenbusch, has comparable ideas on Christian social justice that surpass Rauschenbusch’s in many ways. Oxford educated, Gore was a fellow of Trinity College and principal of Cuddesdon Theological College and Pusey House before assuming the roles of bishop of Worcester in 1902, bishop of Birmingham in 1905, and eventually bishop of Oxford from 1911 to 1919 while an activist with the Christian Social Union. Editor of the influential work *Lux Mundi*, Gore also wrote numerous theological works including *The Body of Christ*, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, and *Christ and Society*.<sup>10</sup> Gore, like Rauschenbusch, was influenced by contemporary German liberalism, affirming the “Fatherhood of God” and the notion of a “historical Jesus.”<sup>11</sup> However, Gore also fully understood and embraced the social teachings of the Church in the patristic and medieval periods, and demonstrated a nuanced understanding of their views on wealth, property, and economics. He saw the Reformation as not entirely positive but unleashing economic forces divorced from questions of the social good.<sup>12</sup>

While Charles Gore appreciated the Hebrew prophetic tradition and recognised Jesus as part of the tradition that emphasised the centrality of the Kingdom of God, he argued that in Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion, there is clear intention to found a new order, that is, to begin the Church. While Jesus stands against hostile tyrannies of human beings he offers a cosmic victory that has eternal implications. In Gore’s explanation, the Kingdom of God is rooted both in the life and teachings of Jesus. Thus the Kingdom is transformed by Jesus’ death and resurrection and, furthermore, has an ongoing sacramental expression, that is, the celebration of the Kingdom continues to be

<sup>3</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Rauschenbusch complains that *Logos* theology was necessary due to Platonic influences that made God unduly transcendent. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Rauschenbusch is striking for refusing the accusation of *patripassianism*: his chiding of orthodoxy for rejecting the notion that God could suffer is widely accepted today. Cf. Jurgen Moltmann’s *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 387.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* (London: Murray, 1889); Charles Gore, *The Body of Christ: An Enquiry into the Institution and Doctrine of Holy Communion*. (London: John Murray, 1903); Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: John Murray, 1891); Charles Gore, *Christ and Society* (New York: Scribners, 1928).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Gore, *Christ and Society* (New York: Scribners, 1928), pp. 42-59.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (Gloucester Mass: Peter Smith, 1962, 1922).

expressed in the sacraments. Gore sought to affirm historical creedal formulas on the importance of the incarnation of the *Logos*, but his thoughts on “kenotic” Christology (the idea that there is a self-limitation of the *Logos* in the Incarnation), attracted considerable criticism from those who believed he was overemphasising the humanity of Christ.<sup>13</sup> Gore was attempting an orthodox Christology “from below,” a mediating theology, a vernacular theology, that would use ideas congenial to early twentieth-century people, thereby commending orthodoxy to the modern mind. Yet, he always retained the cosmic element of the Incarnation by emphasising the recapitulation of creation with the coming of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, for Gore, the Incarnation also encompassed a cosmic redemption, not simply an imminent development of a metaphysic. The goal of the Incarnation was the redemption of the cosmos and the individual person.<sup>15</sup> This personal redemption has implications for his social thought. Redemption, or the conversion of the person, is seen as a pre-requisite for social reform. He believed that activists will come to see that development of individual character is necessary for successful social reform.<sup>16</sup>

Rauschenbusch’s “low” Christology provides a basis for social change, but in a severely truncated form, in what theologian George Lindbeck refers to as “thin narrative.”<sup>17</sup> Gore, on the other hand, believes

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<sup>13</sup> In *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, Gore developed his kenotic Christology which is predicated upon self-limitation of the *Logos* in incarnation, as referred to in Philippians 2: 5-11 where Christ is described as “emptying” himself by the Greek word, *kenosis*.

<sup>14</sup> Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> By including redemption, Gore balances his theological presentation. The whole thrust of the *Lux Mundi* school was to affirm the incarnation as starting point for theology over the evangelicals’ stress upon atonement.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. This “ethic of character” has points of contact with Stanley Hauerwas’ notion of “communities of character.” Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ill: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> George Lindbeck suggests in *The Nature of Doctrine* that religions function within an intratextual semiotic universe. The function of theology is to understand existence within the framework of a narrative that is part of a canon and a tradition. Lindbeck argues that theologies that attempt to redescribe religion in extrascriptural frameworks have been dominant in liberalism. He does not recommend a return to pre-critical thinking but rather grounds theology in a semiotic epistemology that seeks to be faithful to intratextual narrative. In Lindbeck’s Post-liberalism, Gore’s rootedness in a “thick” narrative without being pre-critical is admirable.

that the “Christ of faith” is not divorced from the “Jesus of history.” He roots his understanding of justice in a “thick” narrative, tapping into more of the narrative structure of Christianity by accessing the prophetic tradition and the essence of the Christian “mythos,” that is, the full Christian story. For his theological expression, Gore can summon a divine Christ who takes on flesh, dies, and is resurrected. This brings about a universal and cosmic salvation, and initiates a community dedicated to overcoming evil. This is a much more potent narrative than Rauschenbusch’s “fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.” To view Jesus as an ethical prophet is vastly different from viewing him as an incarnate Deity.

The metaphoric power of Gore’s sacramental community is also an alternative discourse to the idea that justice is rooted in rights. Canadian Anglican philosopher George Grant has written of the poverty of the liberal rights-based understanding of justice. He speaks of the end of justice as the attempt to ground it in individual self-interest. He argues that for the Christian tradition, justice can only be rooted in love; however, it is a language that modernity cannot speak.<sup>18</sup> The incarnational tradition, represented by theologian Charles Gore, understands Jesus as the divine *Logos* who yet radically identifies with the poor, as in Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 25. This personal identification and interaction is far more powerful than rights-based discourse.<sup>19</sup> Christian theistic narratives can base justice on love and achieve a difficult victory; indeed in the demise of alternative narratives, it may be one of the greatest gifts Christians can offer their secular activist colleagues. Many contemporary Christian social activists, laypeople, and clergy are noting that, regrettably, fewer people within mainstream protestant churches are participating in social justice activities. Like my experience at the *Kairos* and conference, a pervasive “thin” narrative in the theology of Christian activists removes much of the potential for positive transformation in contemporary society.

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Alternatively, “thin” narrative typified by Rauschenbusch risks impotence because it has lost its semiotic rootedness in the Christian narrative. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> George Grant, *English Speaking Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1974).

<sup>19</sup> Theologian Emil Brunner explains the relationship between love and justice, saying: “Justice is the currency love takes in the realm of the institutions.” Love predominates in face-to-face relationships. Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), pp. 128-129.

## “. . . And Dwelt Among Us”: Differing Perceptions of the Ongoing Presence of the Holy

Rauschenbusch contrasts the prophets' ethical fervour for social justice with a prophetic denunciation of ritual practices of cult. Not only is the Hebrew sacrificial system condemned, but all aspects of cult and ceremony are deemed suspect. For him, sacramentalism is nothing more than ceremonialism; the “prophetic” is the antithesis of the “sacramental.”

This Christian ritual grew up, not as the appropriate and aesthetic expression of spiritual emotions, but as the indispensable means of pleasing and appeasing God, and of securing his favors, temporal and eternal, for those who put their heart into these processes. This Christian ceremonial system does not differ essentially from that against which the prophets protested.<sup>20</sup>

Rauschenbusch equates the prophets' zeal for justice with the negation of priestcraft and for him, the converse could also be assumed: sacramental religion is equated with the denial of prophetic fervour for justice. This is made explicit when he praises Calvinism as a tradition which “stripped off . . . [the] ceremonial and turned religious energy into political and intellectual channels.”<sup>21</sup> The prophetic critique and rejection of ceremony renders Catholic practices that prevailed in the patristic and medieval periods as rituals that obscure the truths of religion; symbols are seen to block, rather than mediate, the presence of God.

Rauschenbusch is critical of the Church Fathers and medieval theologians, dismissing them as myth-obsessive primitives who believed in the demonic. He comments that “a theology like ours, with no demons in it, would have seemed to Justin Martyr or Cyprian to knock the bottom out of the Christian faith.”<sup>22</sup> But he defends the Gnostics who were “thrust out by the Church, and of all its [Gnostic] rich literature we have only one book left . . . . [W]e are dependent for our information on the partisan statements and garbled quotations of its enemies.”<sup>23</sup> Among the “enemies” referred to is the early Church Father Irenaeus (fl. c.175-195 CE), whose thought is integral to those who affirm the centrality of the Incarnation.

In his book *A Theology for the Social Gospel*

Rauschenbusch sees no importance in the sacraments for social justice:

Can the spirit of the social gospel give any fresh spiritual meaning to the ancient ordinances (*i.e.*: baptism, eucharist), or add anything to the theological interpretation of them? I confess I doubt it.<sup>24</sup>

Rauschenbusch does not consider that baptism, as portrayed in the Book of Common Prayer, demands a social ethic: the baptismal candidate (or the sponsors) “. . . vow that he will renounce the devil and all his works . . . and obediently keep God's commandments.” But Rauschenbusch had some appreciation for English Christian Socialism and notes that “the High Church . . . leaders are weaving solidaristic ideas into their most sacramental and ecclesiastical doctrines.”<sup>25</sup> This reference must be, in fact, to the *Lux Mundi* group and Charles Gore. Rauschenbusch believed that these Anglicans were becoming more like himself, rather than seeing a high ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and credal/patristic Christianity as a source of social reform. His *Theology for the Social Gospel*, however, seeks to undermine traditional Christianity and offer an alternative theological agenda.

Rauschenbusch, though a professor of Church History, seemed to ascribe to a naive Protestant historicism which only values the New Testament and the Reformation. For him, the Social Gospel is the completion of the Reformation where the Church's emphasis on dogma and ritual gives way to free theological thought and an emphasis on ethical practices, culminating in a theology of social improvement.<sup>26</sup>

Charles Gore, by contrast, had a great appreciation for Church history and traditional Christian theology. He believed that the Eucharist is the extension of the incarnation. Gore affirmed that: “The incarnation gaped . . . incomplete and suspended, until in all its parts and elements it was fulfilled through the Eucharist.”<sup>27</sup> He cites Ignatius of Antioch (d. 135 CE) who complained of heretics who refuse the Eucharist because they do not believe Jesus was human. If one denies that a deity can become united with humanity, one would also not believe that deity can become present in bread and wine.<sup>28</sup> The “sacramental

<sup>20</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 6, 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 197.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>27</sup> Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Gore affirms the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as

principle” begins with the rejection of matter-spirit dualism,<sup>29</sup> and this negative type of dualism shows itself repeatedly within Protestantism:

There is a tendency in Protestantism . . . towards a conception of spirituality which is not completely Christian—a conception which puts the spiritual straight off in opposition to the material, so that that idea of a spiritual gift attached by divine ordinance to material conditions is rejected as unworthy of God.<sup>30</sup>

Here, Gore links sacraments with human embodiment; he sees human existence as “not material only but carnal.”<sup>31</sup> Anticipating themes so important in post-modernity, embodiment is a key theme in his theology. As humans, we create sacraments: “handshaking is the sacrament of friendship, and kissing the sacrament of love. And each in expressing also intensifies the emotion which it expresses.”<sup>32</sup> Gore links human embodiment with his theological emphasis on the incarnation:

[T]he religion of the incarnation—the religion of a Christ come in the flesh—associates the lower and material nature with the whole process of redemption, and teaches us that not without a material and visible embodiment is the spiritual life to be realized, either now or in eternity.<sup>33</sup>

The incarnational and sacramental tradition eschews dualism. It understands reality as symbolically mediated. Within this mediation of the *Logos*, the dualisms of matter/spirit, body/mind, and subject/object are resolved. Social activists often

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all Anglicans do but stops short of affirming transubstantiation. He makes an intriguing argument that transubstantiation does not reflect good sacramental and patristic theology. Using the traditional language from the 39 Articles, Gore argues that the continued presence in the host after consecration exalts the physical over the spiritual. This may be an arcane theological argument, but it again points to the importance of the sacraments in Gore’s theology, as well as the priority of classical Christology and the patristics. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-23.

<sup>29</sup> In contrast to Rauschenbusch above, Gore condemns the Gnostics as heretics who introduce this tendency to elevate spirit and demonise matter. Irenaeus is praised, but Rauschenbusch condemns him as an enemy of the Gnostics. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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dichotomise, and there is the eternal struggle between darkness and light, spirit and matter, capitalism and socialism, globalisation and anti-globalisation, pro-choice and pro-life. Polarisation on such exceedingly complex issues becomes requisite and mediating positions suspect. However, an incarnational position that eschews dualism, such as Gore presents, demands nuanced thought on policy and issues.

### “We Have Seen His Glory . . .”: Responsive Christian Social Justice

Because he views Christ as a prophet and the prophetic mission as an ongoing activity that initiates the kingdom of God, Rauschenbusch’s theology necessarily entails social justice as the active component of his thought. Rauschenbusch speaks of “social” and “structural” sins that require social change, rather than venial sins of personal vice, because he was conscious of the critique that the social gospel places inadequate emphasis upon sin.<sup>34</sup> The Fall of humanity into sin is, thus, affirmed without personal mythic content; it is a narrative of the universal human predisposition towards selfishness and the refusal to recognise human solidarity.<sup>35</sup> For Rauschenbusch, to be Christian means to serve one’s neighbour, and sanctification is not the cultivation of personal piety alone but results in social action. Rauschenbusch contrasts his views on human solidarity with solipsistic mysticism and religious subjectivity.<sup>36</sup> To be Christian is to exist in community. Rauschenbusch asserts that “the Church is the social factor in salvation.”<sup>37</sup>

In the Church, he recognises a community which can stand against individualism. Rauschenbusch sought to establish a theological movement that would free Christianity of its dogmatic crust to reveal its essence. This essence he sees as social justice and the incremental creation of a Christian commonwealth based upon democratic socialist principles, rising against the “demonic” conspiracies of capitalism and empires.

There is much in Rauschenbusch that is striking,

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<sup>34</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> “The social gospel is above all things practical. It needs religious ideas which will release energy for heroic opposition against organized evil and for the building of a righteous social life. It would find entire satisfaction in the attitude of Jesus and the prophets who dealt with sin as a present force and did not find it necessary to indoctrinate men on its first origin.” *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

incisive, and powerful: his social analysis is broad and the policy positions he advocates are intriguing. It is widely assumed that, because he was a Christian and a socialist, he was a kindred spirit to the English Christian Socialist tradition represented by Charles Gore. A careful review of Gore's thought, however, demonstrates a very different theology and approach to social thought.

For Anglo-Catholic theology, the interconnections between traditional theological ideas on the creation, incarnation, and redemption, and the institution of the Church and its sacraments are integral. Characteristically, Gore moves from these dogmatic concerns to the social implications. The purpose of God, says Gore, is to "bind individual beings together in a social relationship."<sup>38</sup> Through baptism, individuals are brought into fellowship with a community whose goal is to express their unity by participating in other sacramental celebrations, including the Eucharist. In his book *The Body of Christ*, Gore examines both the Eucharist and the Church as the "body of Christ," seeing these as integrally linked.<sup>39</sup> Gore, like Rauschenbusch, refutes a type of Christian piety that sees salvation as solely personal, but Gore finds his authority in traditional theology rather than outside it. For Gore, the social responsibility of Christianity is the essence of the "pre-eminently human and social religion of the Son of Man."<sup>40</sup>

Starting from different theological viewpoints, both Gore and Rauschenbusch argue that the visible community of Christianity is essential for the fulfillment of the covenant with God. Gore stresses "that there is no divine fellowship except in human brotherhood. It is to refuse to separate acceptableness with God from the actual service of man. . . . [Y]our salvation shall lie in the life of a community."<sup>41</sup> By means wholly unlike, Gore and Rauschenbusch both arrive at a point of profound agreement: that the redemption initiated by Jesus demands the transformation of society, and that those involved in the community of redemption are obligated to take up the task.

Despite the similarities of the actions Gore and Rauschenbusch advocate, Gore's theology offers a better basis for Christian social action today. The Sacramental Socialist tradition has the possibility for being both a more effective and a faithful starting point for those in the Christian tradition working for social

justice. It offers a "thick" narrative to a secular culture. With the demise of the Marxist meta-narrative, the Sacramental Socialist tradition upholds a transcendent order that effectively supports justice, especially under the totalising tyranny of modernity. In an interview at the end of his life, even Marxist theorist Max Horkheimer made the profound observation that a just political order is not possible without transcendence. Horkheimer concluded that modernity so completely subordinates dissent that a form of justice capable of resisting modernity is not possible without a "theological moment."<sup>42</sup> Gore's Sacramental Socialism, much more than Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel, demands theological reflection and appreciates traditional Christian ideas.

Additionally, Gore's Sacramental Socialist ideas advocate traditional ritual while encouraging personal responsiveness. Such personal responsiveness derives from an emphasis on the Incarnation of God in Christ. This approach to theology and justice is consonant with Radical Orthodoxy, a contemporary theological movement inspired by Jonathan Milbank and Catherine Pickstock.<sup>43</sup> Based in post-modern discourse and yet profoundly critical of it, contemporary Radical Orthodoxy proclaims the ultimate nihilism of any discourse not rooted in theism and, much like Gore's Sacramental Socialism, seeks to root thought and action in the traditional theological ideas on the creation, incarnation, and redemption, and in the institution of the Church and its sacraments. Effective social action today must be as reflective as it is active, and Christian social justice must find both strength and nurture in the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Christ.

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<sup>38</sup>Gore, *The Body of Christ*. p. 124.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. xii-xvi.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-47.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 321, 322.

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<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Siebert, 'Horkheimer's Sociology of Religion', *Telos*, 30, Winter 1976, pp. 103 ff.

<sup>43</sup>John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

## Notes on Contributors

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**Annick de Witt** is completing her Master's degree in Social Environmental Science, at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Her interdisciplinary research project, in environmental philosophy and environmental psychology, has partly been conducted in Victoria, B.C., under the supervision of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society. The project explores the environmental crisis and its potential solutions in a fundamental and general way, and is inspired by a personal fascination with spirituality, human nature and a big heart for the world.

**Monika Dix** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her area of specialisation is Japanese Art history, and her primary research interests are representations of women in Kamakura-period (1185-1333) Pure Land Buddhist narratives. In her dissertation, for which she is presently conducting research in Japan, she investigates the rise and popularity of Chūjōhime as a role model of female salvation, and examines how certain religious, social, and historical developments from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries resulted in transformed representations of Chūjōhime's legend.

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**Alison Pryer's** first career was as a curator at the British Museum in London, Great Britain. However, she soon decided that she wanted to work with children. Her life as a teacher has afforded her the opportunity to teach children and adults of all ages, and to work and study on four continents. Alison has taught in German and Japanese public schools, as well as in the Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia. A recent doctoral graduate of UBC, the focus of her research is non-dual pedagogy and the embodied self. In the last four years, she has also been conducting research on the Canada-wide 'Learning through the Arts' project.

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