Fear and Virtuous Action: Applying Accounts of Fear by al-Ghazālī and Thomas Aquinas to a Study of an Historical Case of Injustice

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Abstract

This comparative theological study prompts insights into the emotion of fear and its relationship to virtuous action by bringing two accounts of fear into conversation: *The Book of Fear and Hope*, a practical, pastoral work by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and categorizations by Thomas Aquinas of the passion and gift of fear in his *Summa Theologiae*. An immersive interfaith fellowship study at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, a site where Japanese American citizens were unconstitutionally concentrated following the attack on Pearl Harbor, provides the historical framework and motivation for this comparative theological study. The use of the historical case—a particular, real-world context—as a springboard to comparative study reveals unique insights into the relationship between fear and theological hope. Thus, it challenges the hermeneutical imagination by questioning how fear is cultivated and activated within systems of oppression, both in the past and today.

Keywords

comparative theology, hope and fear, virtue development, applied ethics, Japanese internment camps, World War II

In 2021, I had the opportunity to participate in the Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE), an interfaith fellowship studying at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, a site where Japanese American citizens were unconstitutionally concentrated following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Immersed in case studies of perpetrators of injustice, the cohort extended our hermeneutical imagination to examine human agency within systems of oppression. We then turned to question the orientation of our own ethics. As a veteran who served in a post-9/11 U.S. military, I could vividly imagine the rampant fear at play within the American population following the Pearl Harbor attacks. In 1942, few religious communities spoke out against the

issuing of Executive Order 9066. Furthermore, many local faith organizations in California actively facilitated the uprooting and relocation of over 110,000 of their neighbors.[1] The few religious groups and individuals who *did* organize and protest against the internment of fellow citizens sparked our interest: what made their fear and uncertainty for the future different from the reactions of the majority? But to understand the unique role of resistors, one must first examine the ordinary: what was the role of social fear that led to the total disregard of the constitutional rights of Japanese Americans on the West Coast, the majority of whom had been born on U.S. soil and were under the age of 18? How did fear contribute to their loss of land, businesses, generational wealth, and community, as well as to their subjugation to ethnic isolation in the middle of the country for over three years?

Observing the role of fear within this historical case study of injustice altered my understanding of fear's relationship to hope. Psychological behaviorists have increasingly questioned a traditional understanding of virtue ethics that renders emotion subject to reason.[2] They have cited empirical data illustrating emotion's role as a form of knowledge—affective knowledge—that strongly shapes our judgments and resulting actions. Ethical theorists and moral theologians have, in response, taken a renewed account of, and attempted to give proper weight to, the role of emotion.[3] Contemporary psychological descriptions of hope and fear, not as static traits or wavering emotions, but as malleable features of affective knowledge, provide parallels to Muslim and Christian theories of virtue as something beyond natural disposition, viz., that hope and fear are learned and acquired through practice within a particular way of life.[4]

The powerfully operative role of fear, as a future-based motivator of decision-making and action, also prompted me to question the normative "context of Christian theology, where the polarity of *hope and despair* is the point of departure."[5] Comparison between theological notions from Christianity and Islam (a tradition that has at least partially defined itself as moderating what it saw as extremes in the Christian tradition) aims to bring forward refreshing, and possibly rebalancing, insights from both these traditions on the role of fear.[6] In developing this line of

[1] Anne Blankenship, "Religion and Japanese American Incarceration," *Religion Compass* 8, no. 10 (2014): 317–25; Ellen Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice? Western Jews and Japanese Removal During WWII* (Lantham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); "A Statement: Berkeley Fellowship of Churches and the First Congregational Church of Berkeley to Japanese Friends and Fellow Americans," April 19, 1942.

[2] Nancy Snow, "Models of Virtue," in *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[3] Rosalind Hurthouse, "Virtue and the Emotions," in *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 108–20; Craig Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006); Thomas Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowing and Connaturality in Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2005): 49–68.

[4] David Cloutier and Anthony H. Ahrens, "Catholic Moral Theology and the Virtues: Integrating Psychology in Models of Moral Agency," in *Theological Studies* 81, no. 2 (July 2020): 326–47. Ethical theorists have found that they psychological model of social cognitive theory, with its distinctive emphasis "on cognition and on social context" can break dichotomies between reason and emotion, allowing for analysis of virtue as "a complex interconnection of circuits." Bringing a comparative theological framework of hope and fear into conversation with a social-cognitive psychological model of virtue development can provide the bridge to "an interactive model of virtue." Applied within this interactive model, there is an opportunity to take account of how fear and hope are cultivated, shaped and guided through active participation within contemporary Catholic and Muslim religious life.

[5] William McKane, "Translator's Introduction," in *al-Ghazālī's Book of Fear and Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), xvi.

[6] From a Christian perspective, reading al-Ghazālī next to Aquinas helped me to ask: Do contemporary Christian norms fully account for the reality of the historical text?

thinking, this paper will bring into conversation two formative theological accounts that provide unique insights into the cultivation of fear and its relationship to virtuous action: *The Book of Fear and Hope* (*kitāb al-khawf w'al-rajā'*) by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and categorizations of the passion and gift of fear within the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274).[7]

For this study, I lean on David Burrell's established model of comparative theology. As a Catholic engaging in comparative theology, I compare philosophical theologies across religious traditions in order to grow in understanding of God's intention for and relationship with humanity. Specifically, this paper adapts a form of Burrell's method of triangulation, which usually introduces a third individual theological voice as a means to illuminate a two-way dialogue.[8] But in this paper, instead of a third theological source, historical examples will play the functional role of illuminating the two theological accounts. This third "voice" is specifically intended to shed light on the role our religious networks play in cultivating individual and communal fear. Through such a process, this paper addresses some major theological and ethical questions. First, in what sense can al-Ghazālī and Aquinas provide a renewed treatment of fear? Second, how is fear related to the religious communities with which we identify and to which we commit ourselves? And, finally, how can this renewed understanding of fear prompt relevant work in the field, particularly regarding interreligious engagement of contemporary concerns of social injustice?

Fear as Necessary to Guiding Judgment

For this comparative work, I start with Aquinas' treatment of fear as a passion, or emotion, belonging to the soul,[9] and connect his descriptions with al-Ghazālī's pastoral psychology of hope and fear as therapeutic motivators of the heart.[10] Al-Ghazālī's practical application of theologically-oriented fear as a means to grow in relationship to God is then brought into conversation with Aquinas' descriptions of fear as an emotion that is perfected through orientation to higher-order considerations. In reading these texts on fear side by side, al-Ghazālī's descriptions of particular hopes and fears as intending to order a person to God build a functional bridge from Aquinas' descriptions of fear, first as form of emotional judgements, to then playing an important role within acquired and infused virtue.

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[7] For this comparative theology, I have depended on William McKane's English translation of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Revival of the Religious Sciences: Book of Fear and Hope*, and the Dominican Fathers English translation of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. William McKane's translation and introduction provides a list of Sufi technical terms that he uses to translate al-Ghazālī's text. At times, it will be important to return to the original Arabic to examine potential translations of key terms, specifically for insight into the relationship between *khawf* and *taqwā*.

[8] David Burrell C.S.C., *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[9] For my initial descriptions of hope and fear as passions or emotions, I lean on Craig Steven Titus' chapter "Resilience and Aquinas' Virtue of Fortitude" in *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 143–87.

[10] In the introduction to the English translation of the *Book of Fear and Hope*, William McKane describes this work of "pastoral psychology" as "an essay in the tactics of propagating the Faith to the community at large." William McKane, "Translator's Introduction," in *al-Ghazālī's Book of Fear and Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), x.

In Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (referred to as *ST* for the remainder), hope, despair, fear, daring, and anger are passions belonging to the irascible appetite, the power of the soul defined by an element of *struggle or hardship*.[11] Aquinas names the emotions of fear (*timor*) and hope (*spes)* as the principal irascible passions.[12] Fear is related to a desire to avoid an arduous or difficult *future evil* that seeks to overcome a particular good.[13] Aquinas argues against the presumption that fear is to be equated with sin.[14] Instead, according to Aquinas, because the virtues are all dispositions not only to act, but also to feel emotions, the emotion of fear can positively or negatively affect the voluntariness of virtuous action. Inordinate fear "shuns what reason adjudicates that we need to endure," while positive or ordinate fear shuns what reason "requires to be shunned."[15] In other words, fear is a necessary and crucially guiding form of emotional judgment that can be in alignment with reason in avoiding evils in this world. This understanding of fear is echoed in al-Ghazālī, who also articulates fear as playing a necessary, guiding role in the human experience. Within *The Book of Fear and Hope*, al-Ghazālī argues that, for the average person, fear, more than hope, may play a more practically significant role in guiding actions toward God. Hence, both Aquinas and al-Ghazālī argue that one should suspend the negative preconceived notions of fear and instead adopt a mindset of fear as a value-neutral term, regardless of how difficult and counter-intuitive this attempt at viewing fear might be.[16]

Naming and Categorizing "Fear" Properly

Aquinas distinguishes fear's moral good by fear's object, cause, and effects. For Aquinas, the object of fear is something recognized as an evil to come, imminent, and difficult to avoid. Love is the cause of our hope and our fear since human agency is underwritten and directed by love. The cause of our fear, according to Aquinas, is love, since we do not fear that which either does not motivate or sustain us or that which we do not care if we lose. While hope's object aims toward a particular good, and fear's object seeks to avoid a particular evil, both hope and fear are caused by love. That hope and fear are both, in some way, caused by love is, I believe, a

[11] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 23, a. 2; "On the other hand, the object of the irascible faculty is sensible good or evil, considered not absolutely, but under the aspect of difficulty or arduousness. Fear and hope are principal passions, not because they complete the others simply, but because they complete them as regards the movement of the appetite towards something." Also see Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude*, 158; the irascible emotions "help us to manage sensible good and evil that are arduous to attain or avoid."

[12] I follow Craig Steven Titus' use of the terms *passions/emotions* interchangeably.

[13] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 23, a. 2: "Now the good which is difficult or arduous, considered as good, is of such a nature as to produce in us a tendency to it, which tendency pertains to the passion of 'hope'; whereas, considered as arduous or difficult, it makes us turn from it; and this pertains to the passion of 'despair.' In like manner the arduous evil, considered as an evil, has the aspect of something to be shunned; and this belongs to the passion of 'fear': but it also contains a reason for tending to it, as attempting something arduous, whereby to escape being subject to evil; and this tendency is called 'daring.' Consequently, in the irascible passions we find contrariety in respect of good and evil (as between hope and fear): and also contrariety according to approach and withdrawal in respect of the same term (as between daring and fear).

[14] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911–1925), I–II, q. 41, a. 1.

[15] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 125, a. 1.

[16] This initial insight from Aquinas and al-Ghazālī requiring the reader suspend preconceived notions of fear and adoption of a mindset of fear as a value neutral term, can itself prove to be a difficult task, a resistance, particularly to the concept of "fear of God" that my peers offered vivid insight into during the discussion section of the was 2022 Engaging Particularities conference.

significant theological insight, one that begins to help unpack the operative power of fear. It also can start to help us name and ask questions about the particular loves motivating our future-oriented thinking.

That which could deprive a person of what they love is seen as an evil to be avoided or feared. Aquinas echoes the six-form typology, put forth by John of Damascus (d. 749), of the multiple *effects* of fear that can take shape in the appetites, with these fears rising either from judgments of outside evil, or judgments of evil within ourselves.[17] Aquinas describes three outcomes that can result from fear of an outside force: 1) dumbfounded amazement as an effect of fear where rational capacities are overcome; 2) stupor as a reaction to rare and unusual evil; and 3) anxiety*/agonia* as a response to unforeseen or unforeseeable evil, which surpasses the human capacity to resist. If one fears a personal, "internal" evil, (4) fear can have the effect of laziness as one fears "the work required to fully enact our capacities." Finally, fear can result in (5) shamefacedness or (6) shame if one fears "disgrace in the face of others for future or past deeds."[18] In all these described effects, fear results in a form of constriction, a natural avoidance of the future arduous evil that can take on various forms.[19]

Aquinas categorizes different kinds of fear based on his assessment of whether fear's effect as constriction plays a positive or negative role. Positive fear is realistic. Rather than gravely disturbing our reasoning, positive fear can actually work to heighten our attention and reflection as well as push us to carefully seek counsel and social support.[20] Positive fear, as a form of constriction, can cause us to be careful, aware, and discerning in our actions. In contrast, negative fear constricts our capacities inappropriately. Aquinas describes a number of potential negative physiological and psychological effects of fear such as a loss of spirit, speechlessness, trembling, and a stupor that overcomes the rational capacity.[21] Even when a fear responds to a real potential evil, it becomes a negative fear when it subverts and undermines the human person's attention from focusing on higher-order considerations.

Before examining the distinctions made by al-Ghazālī and Aquinas regarding fear's moral good based on higher-order considerations—specifically, the highest-order considerations which are theological—I want to return back to the historical case study. Aquinas' initial descriptions of the emotion of fear, viz., as a necessary form of judgment with categorizable positive or negative effects, come to life when applied to a real-world context. In this way, we can begin to examine fear's role in shaping decision-making and action within the historical case study of the unjust internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Applied Framework: Categorizing the Operative Forms of Fear

[17] John of Damascus, Chapter 15, "On Fear" in *The Orthodox Faith*: Book II. Included in John of Damascus, *Writings,* trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 240.
[18] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 41, a. 4.
[19] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 44, a. 4.
[20] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 44, a. 4; "In face of great, proximate, or difficult to overcome evil, moderate fear that does not disrupt reason can incite us not only to work well and to employ our own rational guidance, but also to seek counsel."
[21] Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude*, 157.

It is easy to envision how a form of fear of an outside evil had the effects of dumbfounded amazement, stupor, or what Aquinas classifies as anxiety/*agonia*, and that this anxiety/*agonia* shaped how people acted in the aftermath of the attacks on Pearl Harbor. As the American people were faced with an unanticipated reality of a large-scale physical attack, was the potential unforeseen and unimaginable evil so great that it surpassed any human rational capacity to resist the facts on the ground? The argument could be made that this immediate fear regarding a potential further loss of the "loves" of security and stability inevitably limited human capacities to take in facts, specifically the detailed Naval Intelligence reporting that Japanese Americans were not a threat to national security.[22] We could stop at the conclusion that this form of fear was a real fear that hindered the rational capacity to consider anything else, including protecting the rights of Japanese Americans. But there are reasons not to rest on *agonia* as the only fear at play in this situation. By leaning into Aquinas' process of categorization to distinguish the moral standings of different kinds of fear, one can identify another, more deeply rooted negative form of fear that powered the forced internment.

Historical insights provide an important context to assess the negative form of fear. First, in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, religious communities and institutions put out statements emphasizing the loyalty of Japanese Americans to the United States and warning against injustice.[23] It was only months later, with the announcement of Executive Order 9066, that these religious institutions went silent.[24] It seems that the *immediate reaction* to the Pearl Harbor attack was *not* a particular form of fear that silenced the majority of religious institutions and leaders.

The short film, *Japanese Relocation*, produced and disseminated by the US Office of War Information in 1943, depicts an organized removal of Japanese Americans from their homes. The systematic selling-off of land, businesses, and generational wealth, along with communal and ethnic isolations in the middle of the country, was framed under the banner of patriotic duty, set to upbeat chords of marching band music. In the film narrative, Japanese American citizens are described as having "cheerfully handled the enormous paperwork involved" and "cooperated wholeheartedly," while lightly noting how the forced removal "often involved financial sacrifice for the evacuees."[25] As images show Japanese American families walking in mass toward trains and then settling into newly constructed camps on barren land, the narrator describes that "the many loyal among them felt that this was a sacrifice that they could make on behalf of America's war effort." What did it mean for this group of people, the majority of whom had been born on U.S. soil and were under the age of 18, not only to be denied rights guaranteed under their citizenship but also to be praised in propaganda as somehow *proving* their loyalty to America through the denial of their rights? This film serves as a visual representation of how US leaders

[22] Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press and Washington, DC: Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 1997), 461.
[23] Statements included those from "Catholic bishops, the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), mainline Protestant pastors, the Quaker American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), foreign and domestic missionaries, and Pacific Coast ecumenical councils," in Blankenship, "Religion and Japanese American Incarceration," 318.
[24] Blankenship, "Religion and Japanese American Incarceration"; Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice? Western Jews and Japanese Removal During WWII*; "A Statement: Berkeley Fellowship of Churches and the First Congregational Church of Berkeley to Japanese Friends and Fellow Americans." 318.
[25] It is interesting to note that the narrator for the film, the Director of Wartime Relocation, Milton Roosevelt, had, by the time the short film became public, after fewer than 90 days in the position, stepped down from the position.

and average citizens constructed and implemented policy that systematically identified, separated, and secluded this minority group over the course of four years.

Resistors in real time identified the negative fear they were actively working against. A small number of religious communities and individuals called out against relocation; they resisted and explicitly named the fear they saw as shaping the decision-making of the majority. One such community, the Fair Play Committee, which included prominent West Coast-based Jewish leaders as well as leaders from the Christian pacifist communities, articulated a clear stance against the policy of "removal and incarceration based on race or ancestry" and argued that racism was the motivating factor behind that policy.[26] The Quakers, unique in this historical context for being a religious community that moved to resist through legislative action, vehemently stated in a 1942 issue of *The American Friend* that "the fault rests squarely upon us as a people who have permitted prejudice, fear, and hatred to flower into intolerance and violence."[27] In her study of religious actors during this time period, Anna Blakenship places Executive Order 9066 within a global historical context, highlighting the hypocrisy evident in the internment: "While purportedly fighting a war against ideas of racial supremacy propagated by fascist regimes, the United States government incarcerated nearly 120,000 American citizens and legal residents of Japanese descent on the sole basis of their ancestry."[28]

Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor took place, the emotions of both the public and certain actors in positions of power had been educated and shaped into a form of fear, a form of racism—an entrenched categorization of a whole group of humans as capable of potential evil. This fear was then galvanized in the wartime scenario. It was not that resistors experienced an absence of fear. They too, were products of a racially bias America. They too felt the effects of Pearl Harbor and the same potential unknowns, viz., the wartime threat of the potential loss of security and safety by an outside, formidable force. But these religiously-based resistors nonetheless publicly opposed the government's effort to uproot and isolate a whole group of Americans. Resistors enacted a different, entrenched cultivation of the passions, an operative framework that contained a different prioritization of fears, which resulted in just actions. Insights from al-Ghazālī can facilitate a deeper investigation into how these particular fears are cultivated in relationship to Ultimate Ends, providing practical observations on how fears are developed, ordered, and activated.

Fear Developed in Relationship to God

Written 200 years prior to *ST*, *The Book of Fear and Hope* by al-Ghazālī recognizes fear as commendable through the nature of fear's object and through the degree to which fear motivates action. It frames fear as a study of the human experience in relation to God. For al-Ghazālī, there is a pastoral urgency to articulate the means for the common believer to grow on the Sufi path toward God. He recognizes the motivating capacity of fear, highlighting fear as fulfilling a necessary role for the majority to grow in relationship to God. In the text, fear and hope quickly

[26] Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice?*, 82.
[27] Anne Blankenship, *Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 18.
[28] Blankenship, "Religion and Japanese American Incarceration," 317.

take on a design that is intended to bring the creature into a relationship with the Creator; other fears are to be judged as secondary and commendable only in relation to theological fear.

Khawf* as Leading a Person to *Taqwā

Al-Ghazālī frames the realistic fear found in the everyday human experience as intending to bring the person closer to God. In Arabic, those human fears are labeled a *khawf*, and those particular human fears are ordered in relationship to *taqwā*. McKane's translation of the text contains a "List of Sufi technical terms translated," and within that terms list, he translates *taqwā* as piety, but the term can also be translated as godliness, devoutness, God-consciousness, and even, in some instances, as *God-fearing*.[29] McKane himself chooses at different moments, specifically in translating al-Ghazālī's citations of Qur'anic text, to translate *taqwā* as God-fearing.[30] It is important to note that *taqwā*, even if translated as "God-fearing," is ontologically distinct from other forms of fear, such as *khawf*. There is a unique element to *taqwā*, an eschatological element, that is distinct from *khawf*, but the experience of *khawf*, and the resulting effect, is described as the means to lead a person to *taqwā*. *Khawf* urges a person to grow in "caution and abstinence and piety and spiritual combat and worship and reflection and recollection, and all the means that bring about union with God." *Khawf* as a tool is "the whip of God by which He drives His creatures towards perseverance in knowledge and action so that by means of both of these they may obtain the rank of nearness to God."[31] It is through *khawf* that one is brought along toward *taqwā*.

Significantly, the effect of *khawf*—a form of constriction or carefulness—continues to shape *taqwā* in some way.[32] Fear is described as a special attribute of those who remember God, as awareness of one's limitations in knowing or controlling the future then prompts a growing consciousness of God's limitlessness in comparison to one's limitations.[33]

While theological fear positively corrects a person who "suffers from a false sense of security and deluded as to their true condition by a brash self-assurance,"[34] al-Ghazālī repeatedly recognizes potential abuses of misdirected fear (i.e., fearing the wrong thing) or misguided fear (i.e., fear unmitigated by hope). Even fear of God has the potential to go to the negative extreme and must always be balanced with the mercy of God, because God's infinite power can overwhelm the human person if that person is without an understanding of God as The Most Merciful. Like Aquinas, al-Ghazālī recognizes the recoiling effect fear can have, to the point of producing an impotence to act.[35] Al-Ghazālī pairs hope and fear together as "therapeutic

[29] See Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Arabic, *waqā: waw, qāf, yā'* (*alif maqṣūra*)
[30] For example, in one instance McKane translates *taqwā* as "God-fearing" in his translation of Surah 49:19, but earlier in the same paragraph he translates *taqwā* as piety, citing Surah 23:38.
[31] al-Ghazālī, 30.
[32] al-Ghazālī, 40; "And abstinence (*wara'*) and piety (*taqwā*) are names derived from meanings which are conditional on fear (*khawf*). *If they are divorced from fear (*khawf*), they do not bear those names*." The experience of fear in life is, in some way, an opportunity given by God to draw near to the Divine, because "He that fears will remember (Q 87:10)."
[33] al-Ghazālī, 59; "And, if a man 'knows' the essence of 'knowledge', and that his 'knowledge' comes short of getting to the bottom of affairs, his fear will indubitably be great."
[34] McKane, "Translator's Introduction," xi.
[35] al-Ghazālī, *Book of Fear and Hope*, 30.

motivators to the soul,"[36] to be used to "repair deficiencies and to correct excesses, and so restore a proper balance."[37] The extreme opposite of hope is not fear, but despair, inaction, and hopelessness; likewise, the extreme opposite of fear is not hope but deluded self-confidence and misplaced assurance of security. One aims to walk the Middle Way, a balanced path of equilibrium between fear and hope, toward God.

Al-Ghazali's descriptions of fear, alongside hope, as a therapy aiming toward equilibrium, as well as his argument for the necessity of fearing toward right ends rooted in the love of God, enlighten and intensify a reading of Aquinas' depictions of the development of fear.

Growing in Virtue: The Mastery of Fear in the Virtue of Fortitude and the Gift of Fear in the Virtue of Hope

It is within Aquinas' descriptions of the acquired cardinal (or moral) virtue of fortitude, and its higher-order considerations, that fear and hope first take on aspects aiding in moral action. Fear, specifically fear of death, or fear of the loss of a particular love, that is the love of life, is the special emotion mastered, as the other irascible emotions of anger, daring, and hope do not motivate a person to act in the same way as does fear of death.[38] Aquinas' stress on the significant human anthropological role fear plays in shaping fortitude—that fear motivates action more significantly than other emotions—parallels al-Ghazālī's explicit emphasis on fear as a key driver of action.

Within Aquinas' acquired virtue of fortitude, cultivating fear and hope occurs through the person's intrinsic action. Through a deliberate *habit of practices* that develop a person's fortitude, one increases one's ability to balance fear with hope and daring. According to Aquinas' theory of moral habituation, we acquire the virtue of fortitude through courageous acts and we diminish the virtue through its opposite.

There is a significant difference between the habits of acquired virtue and cultivating the habits of the *infused virtues* of fortitude and the theological virtue of hope. In the infused virtues, a person grows in openness to receiving God's grace. When a person grows into a more steady, permanent focus on God, they form a resiliency that can withstand uncertain circumstances and experiences and order human hopes and fears to the love of God. This growth is articulated most fully through Aquinas' descriptions of the beatific vision.

In the beatific vision, fear acts as a primary entry point to reaching the summit of a hopeful life that rests in God. Aquinas describes the first of the beatitudes, the poor in spirit who show "reverence and submission to God,"[39] as corresponding to a gift of fear, "which implies withdrawal from external things which hinder submission to God."[40] Here we see the gift of fear as part of the continuum of hope, as this beatitude and the next (blessed are those who mourn) describe those people who are moving from living in a state of aggressive self-confidence

[36] McKane, "Translator's Introduction," x.
[37] McKane, "Translator's Introduction," xi.
[38] Aquinas, II–II, q.123, a. 4.
[39] Aquinas, II–II, q. 19, a. 12.
[40] Aquinas, II–II, q. 19, a. 12.

(misdirected hope) to self-awareness of one's smallness in comparison to God.[41] That step to embrace this fear, and to unpack misplaced hope, is essential to growing in understanding of the fragile imperfection of the human condition. This first step is defined as initial fear, containing elements of both filial and servile fear.

Aquinas, like al-Ghazālī, describes different forms of theological fear. *Punitive fear,* or fear of God's punishment, is described as less meritorious because it is a fear of what God can do—God's power—as "the relation of servant to master is based on the power which the master exercises over the servant."[42] This type of fear reflects a lack of choice or free will by the human, while filial fear—fear of disappointing the Father, or fear of separation from the Father—is described as "the relation of a son to his father or of a wife to her husband," since the former "is based on the son's affection towards his father to whom he submits himself," and the latter "on the wife's affection towards her husband to whom she binds herself in the union of love."[43] Filial fear includes charity or love within its definition. Reading this description of filial fear as defined by love made me pause because it stands in contrast with the normative descriptions of fear of God that I hear from Christians, who most often define fear of God as only servile fear. This initial fear, in containing elements of both filial and servile fear, is not where the faithful find the fullness of relationship with God, but is a step in the maturation of relationship defined by love of God. That step toward this initial fear—and the resulting humility of spirit and mourning—is an awakening, and only through the arduousness of it may a person grow to the other side. Thus, through fear, and those initial steps of humility and mourning, the ability to feel fear is intrinsically connected to the hope that one can move toward something else. It is God's call to something greater.

Aquinas' process of spiritual growth described in the beatific vision resonates with al-Ghazālī's concept of the Sufi path, the wavering "states" *(aḥwāl)* and permanent "stations" (*maqāmat*). Al-Ghazālī shows that one may have shining moments of proper orientation, but these states rise and fall with the whims of the heart in the face of the difficult realities of life. For al-Ghazālī, fear motivates an action-based process of growing in "caution and abstinence and piety and spiritual combat and worship and reflection and recollection, and all the means that bring about union with God."[44] Al-Ghazālī describes and orders the merit of the forms of theologically related fear, and who embodies them: with the body of the people often motivated by a theological fear of God's punishment, and the Ascetics, the Sound in Faith, the Practitioners, and finally the "Gnostics" growing to embody higher states of fear.[45] The highest theological fear is one that "does not fear the Fire but fears only the veil."[46] The fear of Gehenna becomes a fear of

[41] William Mattison, "The Beatitudes and Moral Theology: A Virtue Ethics Approach," *Nova et Vetera* 11, no. 3 (2013): 826. This growing self-awareness of one's smallness and humbleness in relationship to God may describe those who are awakening to the defect in their lives, mourning that defect, and also experiencing 1) real internal fear of the difficult work to change as well as the 2) real fear and vulnerability of the loss of previous, false security.
[42] Aquinas, II–II, q. 19, a. 2.
[43] Aquinas, II–II, q. 19, a. 2.
[44] al-Ghazālī, 40.
[45] al-Ghazālī, 37. The term "Gnostics" is taken directly from McKane's translation as a translation of *'urafā'*, that is, those with "recognition" of God and God's relationship to the world.
[46] al-Ghazālī, 37.

separation from God. Again, fear ultimately becomes a separation from what one loves.[47] Fear shapes degrees of pious behaviors, with the highest degree of fear lived out by those described as the Sincere, those whose actions are in alignment with one's emotions, which are all oriented to God. Within the Sufi path, reaching the highest degree of "the Sincere" is to be sought after, but difficult to achieve.

In summary, for both al-Ghazālī and Aquinas, fear is a necessary assistant to hope, whose fulfillment is an intimate connecting love between created and Creator. For both al-Ghazālī and Aquinas, growing toward God within the human experience requires arduous deconstruction of human hopes and fears and a subsequent reordering to ultimate fears and hopes.

Fear Cultivated in Community

Al-Ghazālī emphasizes the necessity of critical awareness and thoughtful care in implementing theological hope and fear as therapeutic motivators to the soul.[48] He takes seriously the uncertainty of the human experience and vividly describes the real fears that an average person faces in navigating their life. Al-Ghazālī names fear as playing an active role in individual and communal decision-making processes, not as something that needs to be repressed or overcome, but as requiring proper ordering within the priorities of God's intention for humanity. The potential role of theological fear is contingent on understanding individual and communal needs toward attaining equilibrium and proper ends.[49] Hence, within al-Ghazālī's account, the role of the pastoral/spiritual leader is emphasized as someone who carefully discerns various needs and guides the community of believers. The spiritual leader's effective application of theological fear and hope as a remedy for the soul is compared to diagnosing and using various medicines to treat ailments of the physical body.[50] Aquinas similarly recognizes that, while a person may be born with an inclination toward virtue, all persons need to be guided and taught.[51] The education of fear and an understanding of the proximate ends in relation to the ultimate *telos* are made possible through observation and experience in relationship to other human beings.[52]

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[47] Al-Ghazālī describes the significant difference between fear of God's punishment (the Fire) and fear of alienation and separation from God (the veil). The fear of alienation and separation from God can only be truly felt by those who have reached a point in their closeness with God where they would mourn and feel the pain of that separation.

[48] McKane, "Translator's Introduction," x.

[49] "[Men] vary greatly in their intellectual capacities" and temperament, and those differences must be "seriously reckoned with in any attempt to fashion effective machinery" (Al-Ghazālī, xi). This prioritization of practical applications through the eyes of the common believer stands out, especially in contrast with Aquinas' tendency to present the theological virtues at their peak performance.

[50] "[It] is necessary that there should be one to preach to the people; one benevolently disposed who observes the incidence of diseases and treats every disease with its antidote and not with what it has excess of." The emphasis on discerning, compassionate and critical analysis of each individual person's spiritual condition highlights the spectrum of human experience and the unique path each soul takes toward God" (al-Ghazālī, 10).

[51] Aquinas, I–II, q. 14, a. 1–5 discusses council as a form of inquiry and learning to discern choice; in particular, Aquinas II–II, q. 17, a. 3 discusses how a person may hope *in relationship to* one's neighbor, and hope *for* one's neighbor.

[52] In Aquinas I–II, q. 40, a. 5, he writes "Experience in matters pertaining to action not only produces knowledge; it also causes a certain habit, by reason of custom, which renders the action easier. Moreover, the intellectual virtue itself adds to the power of acting with ease: because it shows something to be possible; and thus is a cause of hope."

For both al-Ghazālī and Aquinas, the objects of our fears—what we love and, therefore, would suffer to lose—are shaped and guided through our active participation in the Creator's providence, being guided and taught in connection with others. Fears are shaped in community, in relationships between individuals, actively orienting our proximate ends of human flourishing and ultimate ends of closeness with God. Virtue is ultimately social and learned through the experience of a particular way of life.

A return to a study of an historical case provides data to illuminate and deepen this final point of comparison between al-Ghazālī and Aquinas: our fears are cultivated in community, within and through our human experiences and interactions. The study specifically highlights the opportunity and responsibility of faith communities to intentionally cultivate fear.

Applied Framework: Fear Assessed and Cultivated in Community

While our study at Heart Mountain focused on a particular place at a particular point in time, the interdisciplinary team who guided our study intentionally brought a global context to what was happening at Heart Mountain, specifically the genocide occurring across the Atlantic Ocean. This context was neither used to compare competing forms of suffering nor intended as a means to draw easy parallels. Rather, it brought out questions about patterns of human behavior and ethical decision-making. Mapping archives of the Netherlands' response to the Holocaust, an empirical study by Robert Braun analyzed Protestant and Catholic communities that acted to support their Jewish citizens by housing them, protecting them, and activating networks to move them away from danger. Quantitatively, the likelihood of evasion increased significantly for Jewish citizens who lived close to a minority Church.[53] The communities that effectively acted to protect Jewish citizens were themselves minority communities. Catholic communities in the North of the Netherlands, a predominantly Protestant region, moved effectively to support their Jewish neighbors. Similarly, Protestant communities in the Catholic-dominated South activated networks to help their Jewish neighbors evade deportation. This is not to say that individual Protestant actors in a predominately Protestant North, or Catholic actors in a predominately Catholic South, did not act to resist, but that *the effectiveness* of their efforts of evasion was dependent on networks of support, or as Braun states, "whether religious altruists can turn into heroes depends on the networks in which they are embedded."[54]

In this empirical breakout, we do not see an example of one particular tradition rising over another to act with moral rectitude, but a form of embeddedness that activated certain aspects contained within two different traditions. While numerous religious communities were under similar national-level threats and also possessed equal access to the full spectrum of their respective traditions, it was only those communities that had cultivated and practiced a certain form of faith—a lived faith experience that emotionally and rationally empathized with the marginalized and a communal faith experience that prioritized a certain form of love—who were able to mobilize their networks in a meaningful form of resistance to an arduous evil that threatened that love.

[53] Robert Braun, "Religious Minorities and Resistance to Genocide: The Collective Rescue of Jews in the Netherlands during the Holocaust." *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 1 (2016): 127–47.
[54] Braun, "Religious Minorities and Resistance to Genocide," 129.

Braun's study concluded: "The actual willingness and capacity of constituents to actively resist mass killing depends on subnational networks and norms."[55] It is not that fear of the Nazi's power was absent from these groups of people that resisted, but that, in community, other fears, specifically fear of the genocide of their fellow citizens, were prioritized to shape and motivate their protective capacities.

This effective ordering of fears in a communal context is echoed in the accounts of those like the Fair Play Committee and Quaker community, who actively protested the Japanese American internment. One such account captures the work of these religious-based groups to name and orient fear: A week after Executive Order 9066 was signed, Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin, who would later join the Fair Play Committee, gave a regional radio broadcast to his community in Los Angeles, which was then published in print through the Los Angeles-based newspaper "The B'nai B'rith Messenger." His address was made in coordination with the call of the National Conference of Jews and Christians for a nationwide observance of a "Good Will Sabbath," and he opens his statement by critically assessing "the very necessity for such a Sabbath is a commentary on the state of the world in this year of grace."[56] Like al-Ghazālī, he carefully describes the "illness" plaguing his community. He speaks to how people have been shaped and formed in a racialized fear: We "have been told since early childhood that certain groups are to be condemned. Impressed upon the channels of their brain are indelible patterns of hate and fear."[57] While identifying racism as fear, Magnin also describes how racial fear has been taught and shaped through the systems in which they are immersed and reflects on how he himself "learned from prejudiced lips in (his) childhood."[58] He describes the disconnect of minority communities, such as his own Jewish American community, that fail to recognize what we would now call the intersectional nature of prejudicial fear perpetrated against other minority communities. He broadens this disconnect to compare his current situation to his understanding of the foundations of the U.S.: "And still those who like to call themselves Americans, whose ancestors came to these shores to escape from fanatics and persecution, or who themselves came for that self-same reason, still harbor within their hearts suspicion and fears toward those who were born of a different racial stock or who worship the same God as they do in a slightly different manner." He describes prejudicial fear as something that isn't new. It is not a fear that arose solely in reaction to the Pearl Harbor attack but is a patterned form of fear: "This feeling of suspicion and fear that is always smoldering even in more normal times flares up and comes to the surface in an ugly and hostile manner."[59]

He calls for analysis, reflection, and contemplation of the deep-seated "love to nurse our prejudices," echoing one effect of fear described by Aquinas—a fear of the work it will do to internally evolve, which results in a form of laziness. Rabbi Magnin describes the majority's state as infantile, unexamined thinking and calls for growth toward "a real grown-up human being." His words echo that of al-Ghazālī and Aquinas, viz., the necessary process of cultivating and orienting one's fears.

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[55] Braun, "Religious Minorities and Resistance to Genocide," 146.
[56] Edgar Magnin, "Labels That Are Libels," *The B'nai B'rith Messenger* (February 27, 1942): 1.
[57] Magnin, 9.
[58] Magnin, 9.
[59] Magnin, 9.

This communal call to reflect is itself a product of a particular form of positive fear—a judgment of future evils and a desire to avoid certain ends. The fear of perpetuating injustice, as defined by his understanding of the responsibilities of his faith and the ideals of his national identity, heightens Magnin's carefulness and call for reflection. He calls on his audience to reorientate their fears through the lens of specific "ideals": 1) American foundations that cannot "tolerate intolerance," since democracy is based in "mutual appreciation and coordinated effort," and 2) the Jewish and Christian "religious implications of the dignity of mankind."[60] Magnin echoes al-Ghazālī's call for a form of treatment and communal discernment, while also echoing al-Ghazālī's realistic nature; at the same time that Magnin calls for his community to "stop and think," he realizes "It would be too much to hope for that this observance [of a single Good Will Sabbath] will alter human nature. Human emotions cannot be changed so fast, at least for the good."[61]

This religious leader is critical of the role religious communities have played in cultivating the skill of unpacking fear. Magnin ponders how it can be that "thousands of synagogues and churches have been erected all over the world. Millions have poured in and out of those sacred portals time and time again. Yet a Good Will Sabbath is necessary today! Men still do not know how to be tolerant toward each other."[62] While articulating that this formation of fear is in some ways too little, too late, he still commits to a renewed formation, arguing: "There must always be a beginning. And if Good Will Sabbath will make only some think and feel, it will not be in vain."[63]

In analyzing Rabbi Magnin's address, and other accounts of religious communities' responses to Executive Order 9066, historian Ellen Eisenberg concludes that for those who protested and resisted, their religious and civil priorities "weighed more heavily than their compulsion to support all defense measures." These higher-order considerations, fear of perpetuating injustice in the eyes of God and fear of the loss of American ideals, led them to "break the silence" and protest what was happening to their fellow citizens.[64]

We can see from reading Rabbi Magnin's urgent address in 1942 that he was trying to treat the situation he saw unfolding before him, for the majority had not cultivated a resiliency to resist injustice. Ultimately, resistance was ineffective in preventing the removal of Japanese Americans from their West Coast homes. Injustice was allowed and was perpetuated. Nonetheless, the minority of religious-based organizations who protested against the treatment of Japanese Americans eventually became part of a form of accountability. The documented letters, articles, and protests, along with the testimony of members from those religious organizations, would become part of the evidence submitted to the 1980 formal governmental commission to review the facts and motivations around the internment of Japanese Americans. After twenty days of hearings and extensive reviews of archival sources, the report, entitled *Personal Justice Denied*, concluded that Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity and that the decisions following it—detention and exclusion of all West Coast-based Japanese Americans—were not driven by analysis of military conditions. The broad historical causes that shaped these

[60] Magnin, 9.
[61] Magnin, 9.
[62] Magnin, 1.
[63] Magnin, 9.
[64] Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice?*, 82.

decisions were described as racial prejudice, galvanized by war hysteria and a failure of political leadership.[65] The report's systematic categorization of the forms of fear at play, naming the particular negative fear of racism as the main historical motivator, paved the way for a formal apology from and restitutions by the government, culminating in the passing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

Historical and Theological Insights: Implications for Today

In the spirit of the FASPE fellowship, I want to conclude this paper with a call to connect this historical and theological study to the urgent problem sets we face today. At the 2022 Scholars in Dialogue conference, a convention of local Christian and Muslim leaders and scholars focused on grassroots, community-based peacebuilding initiatives, Amir Hussain, author of *Islam in America*, recounted a personal experience that occurred following 9/11. Two days after the tragic event, Hussain received a call from the leadership of a local Japanese American United Methodist community in Los Angeles, who told him that they could anticipate what was going to happen to the American Muslim community and that their community had the legal documents and systems prepared to support and protect them. In the following days, this Japanese American community was faced with the same unexpected, overwhelming threat that the rest of America faced, but the groundwork of previous experience cultivated an orientation to specific loves and prepared this local community to fear the harm done to others. This fear of a repeated past of injustice ordered their action to protect.

Responding to western Christian milieu of Islamophobia, misunderstanding, and oversimplification of Islam in the years following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Muslim religious leaders from across the spectrum of Islamic jurisprudence and schools of thought came together in 2007 to lend support to *A Common Word Between Us and You (ACW)*.[66] The document spurred dialogue, dissent, and discourse from Christians and Muslims alike.[67] Its themes of love of God and love of neighbor have become a staple reference in engagement across the traditions for almost two decades. Fr. Daniel Madigan's commentary on *ACW* called for collaborative Muslim-Christian work, side-by-side, to unpack our unique, particular theologies of love as having real-world implications.[68] This work, a comparative theological framework of hope and fear, aims to further progress the joint Christian-Muslim initiative to respond to the urgent problems of our time through an orientation of love of God and love of neighbor. Understanding that what we fear losing is rooted in what we love, this paper aims to respond to this call by arguing that unpacking fear draws attention to the intentional cultivation needed to live out particular loves contained within our traditions. There is an urgent need for a contextually based study that centers, raises up, and cultivates the loves within our traditions that prioritize the marginalized and the disempowered, both historically and in the present day.

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[65] "Personal Justice Denied," 1983, National Archives.
[66] Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg address prompted the first open letter from 38 Muslim Scholars to Pope Benedict XVI, with *ACW* released on the anniversary of that statement, a year later. Muslim response focused on emphasizing common theological foundations of love.
[67] See www.acommonword.com for an archive of Christian, Muslim and Jewish responses, signatories and endorsements, updated through 2013.
[68] Daniel Madigan, "A Common Word Between Us and You: Some Initial Reflections." *Online Journal of the British Jesuits*, January 18, 2008.

In Aquinas' theory of moral habituation and virtue, we acquire the virtue of fortitude through courageous acts and we diminish the virtue through contrary ones. In the post-9/11 environment in which we have seen, not abatement, but perpetuation of fears based on race and religion, are we operating with diminished fortitude, not prepared to resist difficult arduous situations for the pursuit of human flourishing and relationship to God? With the rise of a renewed pattern of the normative majority demanding sacrifices from minoritized groups for the sake of nation and/or religion, while defending their own freedoms and rights through the values of liberty and property, what roles do our institutions and communities play in cultivating particular forms of fear?[69] How can scholars within interreligious studies, like al-Ghazālī's spiritual leader, play a role in bringing to light and assessing where we are in our fear, so that we can guide a proper application of fear and hope toward the Middle Path? These important questions demand further candid studies and conversations about how the particular loves within our traditions shape and activate our fears.

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[69] For an analysis of this trend in our contemporary United States context, see Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).