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The Journal of Interreligious Studies
A Collaboration Between Hebrew College and Boston University School of Theology

Issue 21
October 2017

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From the Managing Editor

I am once again delighted to see published this issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies* (*JIRS*). The *JIRS* has continued to flourish in large part because of the partnership between Hebrew College and the Boston University School of Theology; their support enables open access to issues, the articles of which are of interest not only to the academic community but also to the larger public: ministers, community organizers, educators, non-profit leaders, and more. This issue and subsequent ones would not be possible without the support from the Henry Luce Foundation, which awarded the Boston University School of Theology and Hebrew College a two-year grant to support the *JIRS* and related projects jointly published and coordinated by the two schools.

This issue comprises five articles drawn from presentations made at the 2016 conference of the American Academy of Religion held in San Antonio, Texas, last November. In coordination with Jennifer Peace, I am excited to see these pieces transformed from presentations and into articles, thereby conveying their research, ideas, and conclusions from a small group at the AAR to the wide readership of the *JIRS*.

The topics of these articles vary in several ways. Cláudio Carvalhaes writes as a Christian, liberation theologian who challenges interreligious educators to speak from their own suffering in practicing ritual and discussing theories. Teresa Crist challenges theories of multiple religious belonging that are founded on Western conceptions of individualism and free choice. Rachel Heath turns to constructive, Christian theologies of multiplicity to offer a more coherent conception of multiple religious belonging that guards against the ineluctable logic of oneness and sameness that is at the root of dominant Christian theologies. Anne Hege Grung turns to the Saudi Arabian initiated KAICIID center in Vienna, Austria, to demonstrate how new language may be needed for interreligious dialogue that is more political and diplomatic than personal and theological. Matthew Taylor asks us to learn from the history of the field of comparative fundamentalism lest the field of interreligious studies make similar mistakes in excluding from the discourse those deemed uncooperative or unsympathetic to the shared assumptions of pluralism and humanism.

While these topics may at first appear disparate, they are connected in one crucial—and challenging—way: they remind scholars, practitioners, leaders, and students of interreligious studies that the field, like any field, is discourse, and as discourse it is not immune to the inevitable marginalization of non-dominant communities by the power, authority, and privilege of the dominant group. Determining who participates in and contributes to the field of interreligious studies is just as susceptible to hegemony as determining who is invited to the table of interfaith dialogue. These pieces challenge all of us, whether scholars of interreligious studies or academic theologians who speak and write interreligiously, to be ever cognizant of the times when we, as individuals or collectively as a discursive discipline, may begin to exclude or marginalize underrepresented or oppressed voices from the interreligious conversation. Once made aware of these incipient forces, there must be a subsequent movement to disrupt the process of hegemony and prevent it from ensconcing itself within the discipline.

Axel M. Oaks Takács
Managing Editor

From the Coordinating Editor

As the coordinating editor for this issue, it is a pleasure to introduce the October 2017 issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*. The articles are drawn from papers presented at the 2016 meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) held in San Antonio, Texas. Each was presented under the auspices of the Interreligious and Interfaith Studies program unit (IRIFS) as part of one of the three panels sponsored or co-sponsored by our unit: "The Politics of Interreligious Engagement: Structural Inequities and Power Dynamics" (Anne Hege Grung's and Matthew Taylor's papers); "Ritual in Interfaith Pedagogies" (Cláudio Carvalhaes' paper); and "Exploring Multiple Religious Belonging" (Rachel Heath's and Teresa Crist's papers). We are grateful to these scholars for developing their papers into the published articles you see here as a way to extend the conversation beyond the halls of the Academy to a wider readership.

Each of these papers reflects one dimension of an emerging and dynamic conversation about the nature and contours of interreligious/interfaith studies as it is currently being constructed. As the founding co-chair of the IRIFS program unit (with Dr. Homayra Ziad), I have watched the interest in this conversation develop and grow since 2013 when the unit began. This year, which will mark the fifth year of the unit, in response to calls from the scholarly community for more time and space for this conversation than our allotted panels allow, I've proposed the founding of a new organization, the Association for Interreligious/Interfaith Studies (AIIS), to foster study and scholarly exchange in this field.

The AIIS will launch in conjunction with the upcoming meeting of the AAR in Boston. Events will be held on Friday, November 17th beginning with a working lunch at 11:30 am, followed by a half-day workshop for faculty and emerging scholars who want to share resources and ideas for teaching (in college, university, and seminary classrooms) using frameworks from interreligious/interfaith studies or intercultural theology. The lunch and workshop were developed through a collaboration between the AIIS and the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS). The events are supported and co-sponsored by the Interfaith Youth Core, the Henry Luce Initiative on the Current State of Interfaith Learning in the US, and the Pluralism Project at Harvard; with additional support from the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies (ICJS), Hebrew College's Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership, Boston University School of Theology, the *Journal of Interreligious Studies* (*JIRS*), and the journal *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* (*ISIT*). Registration and additional details may be found here: http://www.cvent.com/events/association-of-interreligious-and-interfaith-studies-launch/event-summary-9e053e7b405045a48c1399653f12fadb.aspx

In addition to sustained interest in the IRIFS program unit and the launch of the new Association for Interreligious/Interfaith Studies, another heartening trend for the prospects of this emerging field is the growing number of publications. I am part of an editorial team publishing a series for Palgrave, Macmillan called *Interreligious Studies in Theory and Practice* that now has five titles. This year alone I've been involved with several new publications including: *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, edited by Eleazar Fernandez (Pickwick Publications, 2017); *The Future of Interreligious Dialogue: A Multireligious Conversation on Nostra Aetate*, edited by Charles Cohen, Paul Knitter, and Ulrich Rosenhagen (Orbis, 2017); and a volume that will be available by next year's AAR meeting, *Towards a Field of Interreligious/Interfaith Studies*, which I am co-editing with Eboo Patel and Noah Silverman (Beacon, forthcoming, 2018).

This issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies* both participates in, and helps fuel, a wider conversation that continues to gain momentum. Interreligious studies at its best draws on the collective insights of scholars, teachers, preachers, practitioners, and activists of all stripes and faiths, as we respond to the ever-pressing need for greater understanding and more abiding collaborations across lines of difference. I appreciate the role the *Journal* has played and continues to play in supporting the emergence of this new and much needed field.

Jennifer Peace
Coordinating Editor

Birds, People, Then Religion—An Eco-Liberation Theological and Pedagogical Approach to Interreligious Rituals

Cláudio Carvalhaes

In this article, the author wrestles with a possible common ground for interreligious theological dialogue and engagement as they relate to educational processes and ritual practices. Rituals and theories must be brought together to help us put thought and practice together. In order to do this, we need to start where it hurts, in our own suffering, which is the ground zero for many religions. This article narrates a group of students who create a ritual that engages the "colonial wound." The article suggests that we must listen to the birds so we can listen to the wounds of the earth, our common ground.

Keywords: colonial wound, suffering, common ground, interreligious rituals, solidarity

Introduction

What does it mean for us to do interreligious theological dialogue and engagement after the election of Donald Trump, whose rhetoric has at best validated and at worst increased xenophobia and the colonial economic powers and the global movement towards hatred of the poor? Our challenges get bigger and more complex and difficult by the day. The world is burning through religious and cultural-identities' fights. Our situation is so confusing that even the IMF and the World Bank are concerned with the unequal distribution of the wealth in the world! Fear and anger are the world's most present feelings right now, thereby adding to the humiliation of the majority of the people in our planet who simply cannot make it. All brought by the Spirit of development in the neoliberal system that is *crushing* entire populations, taking not only our money but poisoning our souls and breaking our spirits. The earth is excruciatingly exploited, making poor people of all colors, religions, and places inhabit the same impoverished, squalid, sordid, neglected spaces.

Moreover, working in institutions that are heirs of colonial powers, we must deal with the shattering of the white liberal myth of the USA as a land of democracy and rights and care for all. Education has become a business and schools mirror for-profit agencies; unless we can gain results with clear outcomes, education cannot support and be part of the system. In the classroom, as well as in society, there is hardly any possibility to engage in any sort of political cultural conversation across the divides, much less attend to religious conversations about diversity. Moreover, the same system is telling us that all we have is our own property: identities in body politics. I fight for mine; you fight for yours; and we fight with each other. Meanwhile the financial powers laugh at our very educated, proficient, and very highly complex understanding of political identities and religious exclusivisms.

If we are to think about these dynamics in our educational systems and our classrooms, I wonder—how can we engage in interreligious conversations? Since our classrooms are also mirrors of our communities, how do we think and do with communities who live in the margins? Is there any correlation between classrooms and our world at large?

I write as a Christian liberation theologian. My sense of God comes from my upbringing in poverty and from being a shoe-shining boy at eight years old in Brazil. In that sense, I am writing in ways in which I try to reach the same children and their families growing up in poverty. My (very dangerous) common denominator is the economic exclusion of people across the globe, in whatever religion they might or might not belong. The hope is to find a sense of a "body" where we work with, from, and to, trying to find ways to transform these situations. In these attempts, there are many dangers, among which is the possible flattening of the concept of poverty and its given normative claims. Nonetheless, this is an attempt to find a location, that is, economic poverty, within diverse social, contextual, cultural, and religious locations, one in which we can perform interreligious engagements.

Setting the ground

When the radical Brazilian Catholic Archbishop Dom Helder Câmara, known in Brazil as "the communist priest" for being on the side of the poor, received the Niwano Peace Price in Kyoto, in 1970, he also participated in the World Conference of Religion and Peace. In that meeting, he said that religions were able to share the following:

> A conviction of the unity of the human family and equality of all human beings;
> A sense of sacred in every individual and its conscience;
> A sense of value in the human community;
> The comprehension that strength is not reason, that human power is not self-sufficient and absolute;
> The belief that love, compassion, detachment and interior strength of truth have a spirit that is stronger than hatred, enmity and egotism;
> A sense of obligation to be on the side of the poor and the oppressed, against the rich and the oppressor;
> A profound hope that goodwill will triumph.[1]

For Archbishop Helder Câmara, the commitment with the poor, to enter into a pilgrimage with the poor, was the very notion that would create utopias on the horizon of our thinking and our practice. For him, to be with the poor was the fundamental ground, path, motion, and notion that sustained our forms of actions, beliefs, and utopias. It is from this place that I want to speak, from the margins. Coming from my theological education in liberation theologies in Latin America, I firmly believe that the Christian God is a God of liberation! Jesus, as God Emmanuel, God with us, chose to live with us in the form of a boy who right at birth was a refugee, with his parents having to run away from his own "country." This Jesus lived his life amidst the poor and the outcast and at the end was killed by the Roman empire. For Jesus, the final judgment of our own lives will not be what we believed but what we did for those cast aside of our societies: "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."[2]

[1] Dom Helder Câmara, *Utopias Peregrinas*, (Pernambuco: Editora UFPE, 2014), 107. Translation mine.
[2] Matthew 25: 35–36, *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version.

In Jesus, God makes clear options for being on the side of the poor. A God who doesn't make choices is a God of the powerful. A God of all is a God of nobody. A God who loves all is like saying all lives matter. A God who makes choices, who chooses the poor, is like saying Black Lives Matter. Clearly this preferential option does not mean to avoid others but does mean to be on the side of those who are in the underside of history, in whatever religion or no religion those might belong. It is from this place that I want to pursue interreligious theological dialogue and study interreligious engagement through rituals. This is necessarily not an exclusive Christian place and definitely not an attempt to find Karl Rahner's notion of "anonymous Christians"[3] in other religions. As we will see later, the concern and deep care for the poor are present in many religions. This broad religious care for the poor can entail interreligious engagements and commitments that can create many forms of religious liberation,[4] decolonial thinking, pedagogies of insurrection, healing ceremonies, theologies of liberation, and rituals of deliverance that deal with the wounded knees and souls of our people and that pay attention fundamentally to the suffering of the people. In order to do that we must not pledge our allegiance to any flag, a single form of knowledge, some unmovable syllabi format, *a priori* learning outcomes, repeated pedagogies, and so on. Our allegiances must be with the poor and our collective liberation in whatever material-spiritual, local-global, contextual-universal, immanent-transcendent form.

What would this mean ritually? How can we think about interreligious rituals and engagement from the perspective of the poor? The reference to our work from the perspective of the poor means engaging the life of the poor by being with the poor, with other sources of the academic thinking, like an organic liturgist-theologian, something akin to the Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual. How can our encounter with rituals of justice in one another's religion help us seek clarity within our own primary traditions? Is this an impossible theological/ritual task? Our very task as ritual doers and theorists is to combat a form of anti-intellectualism that is a contemporary plague in our academy that divides praxis and theory, keeping both as separate entities or even antagonistic to each other. The fact that very few scholars engage in ritual or any other practice that is deeply related to their thinking shows how a certain form of thinking has detached itself from forms of praxis that are considered counter-productive to theoretical work and even "fluffy stuff" when related to proper forms of knowledge. That dichotomy has found its place in cultural forms through secular rituals that are often totally foreign to the very religious theories that ground, through absentia, these rituals. Forms of life, experiences of resistance, and communitarian practices not carefully reflected not only make us lose the universal sense of our life but also make us run the risk of losing points of connection and contextual grounding situations that speak to specificities, localized potentialities, and lived antagonisms. In any doing, we need some theory. In any theory, we need some doing. In this way, present, past, and future; the sensual and the ideal; the sense of awe and beauty; the classroom and the streets; our life and the lives of our communities can only be organized and lived if theory and practice go hand in hand. There, at that juncture, we find our theoretical-theological contradictions, our ritual paradoxes, and our lives cross in between these impossibilities.

Thus, the starting point must be the lives of the poor, the economically poor—their honor and dignity above all else. Religion must come after, as a way to help us expand and challenge our

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[3] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 14, translated by David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 283.
[4] Miguel A. De La Torre, ed., *The Hope of Liberation in World Religions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

thinking and theory; to make us more aware of why we do this; to empower our practice; to remind us to relate to sources of life; to ground us on earth; to help organize ourselves; to help us deal with and keep our diversities, specificities, distinctions, and pluralities, all while embracing the oneness of a body that struggles and fights for common causes. In that way, our interreligious dialogue and engagement should pay attention to suffering as its ground zero of belief and action. James Cone writes:

> It is this common experience among black people in America that Black Theology elevates as the supreme test of truth. To put it simply, Black Theology knows no authority more binding than the experience of oppression itself. This alone must be the ultimate authority in religious matters.[5]

Linda E. Thomas works from this grounding and expands it in regard to rituals:

> For African American male and womanist theologians, neither scholastic tradition nor scripture could be claimed as the primary/dominant sources for dis/cerning the nature of God or God's will for creation. Rather, the experience of oppression forced upon black persons and communities became the primary arbiter of theological authority.[6]

But this is not only a Christian form of thinking. The Four Noble Truths of Buddha are grounded in the elimination of *duḥkha*, suffering. Buddha sees people suffering from being sick, old age, and death, and the way they related to these issues makes him realize that their minds are attempting to grasp permanence and stability in a world where life is impermanent and unstable. The mind grasping itself and making everything permanent is the source of suffering. At the heart of Buddhism is *duḥkha*, the self-clinging aggregation of the mind to form sensation, perception, and karmic formation and consciousness.

As academic thinkers working theoretically with sources of suffering and liberation, as teachers, we also must work with our students in order to provide forms of thinking and of practicing liberation. We must create pedagogies that demand ethical imperatives before any form of religion is possible. Peter McLaren states that in the "field of critical pedagogy today, there is a disproportionate focus on the critique of identity formation at the expense of examining and finding alternatives to existing spheres of social determination that include institutions, social relations of production, ideologies, subjective formation and the cultural imaginary—all of which are harnessed to value production."[7]

Caring for the poor interreligiously

Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis proposes that "[t]here shouldn't be any religious ritual until there is justice." His claim points to the easiness in which religious people do their rituals without fully considering the suffering of the oppressed people, or rather despite the suffering of

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[5] James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 120.
[6] Linda E. Thomas, "The Social Sciences and Rituals of Resilience in African and African American Communities," in Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 46.
[7] Peter McLaren, *Pedagogy of Insurrection*: *From Resurrection to Revolution* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 13.

the people. In his words: "On Passover, once my favorite holiday. My passion for Passover left years ago. How to celebrate my/our liberation when we are permanently oppressing another people? Can't be done. No way. My attempt last year? Passover for Palestine."[8]

What if we take Ellis's challenge seriously for a moment? What if we were not allowed to do our rituals until oppressed people have the possibility to live their lives fully? How can we make interreligious rituals and engagements infused with justice in a way that we become concerned with oppressed people as they challenge us to see and organize ourselves in the world? More than a rhetorical plea, Ellis's question challenges us to see our thinking and teaching in light of our praxis, ways of living, ritual production, pedagogical praxis, and so on. Following this challenge, I think we can indeed create interreligious ritual practices that come out of our commitment with the poor and the work of justice.

There is enough justice seeking and caring for the poor in so many religious traditions and this is the common ground we are searching. Jewish prophets criticize worship when detached from works of justice. The Prophet Hosea says: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."[9]

When Muslims are fasting, they hear these words from the Qur'ān:

> Be maintainers,
> as witnesses for the sake of Allah,
> of justice,
> and ill feeling for a people should never lead you
> to be unfair.
> Be fair; that is nearer to Godwariness,
> and be wary of Allah.
> Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.[10]

From Christianity, Jesus gives two main commandments that deeply relate worship and daily life: "'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"[11]

One of the most chanted *Mettā Sutta* of the Buddhist tradition says:

> May all beings be happy,
> May they be joyous and live in safety,
> All living beings, whether weak or strong,
> In high or middle or low realms of existence

[8] Marc Ellis, *Facebook posts*, April 2016, https://www.facebook.com/marc.ellis.1291.
[9] Hosea 6:6, *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version.
[10] Qur'an 5:8, 'Ali Quli Qara'i, *The Qu'ran, with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004), available at https://zawaar786.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/phrase-by-phrase-quran-with-english-translation-by-ali-quli-qarai.pdf.
[11] Matthew 22:36–40, *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version.

> Small or great, visible or invisible, near or far,
> Born or to be born, May all beings be happy.[12]

As we continue these ancient traditions in our days, we can see Christian, Jewish, and Muslim liberation theologies claiming God's liberation for the poor. Socially engaged Buddhism is also deeply entrenched in social liberation. The Indian Buddhist thinker Ambedkar said: "Religion is for men and not men for religion." It is the experience of oppression that should guide us in our theological thinking, our interreligious thinking, and our forms of ritual engagement. In that way, I can see how possible it is that this interreligious task can be done! We could also mention the Muslim Reform Movement; its members define themselves in their declaration in this way: "Ideas do not have rights. Human beings have rights."[13] There is also the Jews of Conscience, a group of Jews that works on behalf of the Palestinians for justice and liberation. Christian liberation theologians have emphasized that God has a preference for the poor. In all these traditions, there is a clear option for the human being, living in justice. These forms of tradition engage the praise, the "doxa," the glory of God in more concrete, material ways.

Trying to follow what Marc Ellis says, we will keep Ellis's words hovering over our practices haunting us like a prophetic ghost. Our rituals are marked by notions of power, control, authority, and wealth. There must be a shift from these places, breaking the top-down structures of our religions and attending to what people are actually doing. Ellis is pointing to this place, to the people, marking our places of privilege and detachment from the people.

We must be aware of rituals that emerge within communities of marginalized people, for these can reflect what can happen in our classrooms.

Interreligious rituals—in classroom and in chapel

The field of interreligious ritual and dialogue is trying to find ways to think about and take seriously the theologies and/or religious thinking of religions along with the performative/ritualized forms of their beliefs. Marianne Moyaert states that, in this field, there are two forms of ritual: *outer-facing* and *inner-facing*. She writes: "Generally speaking, however, one may distinguish between two types: on the one hand, ritual sharing that is *responsive* and *outer-facing* and on the other hand ritual participation that is *inner-facing* and follows the pattern of *extending* or *receiving hospitality*."[14] In this process, we try to look at history and see how interreligious rituals have happened and have developed and also, how we today can try new things, ritualizing new forms of interreligious engagements, dialogues, and needs.

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[12] Venerable Dr. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Aggamaha Pandita, Dlitt, D Litt, Jayasili, "The Discourse on Loving Kindness (Mettâ Sutta, Sutta Pitaka)," in *Introducing Buddhism,* translated by H. J. Russell-Williams and The Buddhist Group of Kendai (Theravâda) (London: The Buddhist Society, 2003), 26.

[13] "Our Declaration," website of the Muslim Reform Movement: A Global Coalition of Muslim Reformers, https://muslimreformmovement.org/first-page-posts/personal-marketer/.

[14] Marianne Moyaert, "Introduction: Exploring The Phenomenon Of Interreligious Ritual Participation," in Marianne Moyaert and Joris Geldhof, eds., *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 1. Emphasis in original.

This new ritualizing or ritualization can happen in many places: worship places, streets, street gatherings, conferences, and so on. Here I want to show how it can happen in classrooms. My question is: How do we connect the theoretical forms of justice purported by our religions in pedagogical and ritual ways so students can create/recreate forms of resistance and justice for their own communities?

In what follows we see a somewhat blended outer and inner ritual done by my class on postcolonialism and liturgy at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It was a blended ritual because it was done interreligiously but also using the inner sacred sources of our religions, namely Latinx and black forms of Christianity, Islam, and native religions (Americas and Samoa). The ritual was about addressing an issue in society but also about offering and receiving hospitality. Being aware of the distinctions and similarities of religions and diverse classrooms, we decided to start from below, our common place, what Walter Mignolo calls our "colonial wound."[15] This was a barely possible task. The major task was to keep some understandings of the Christian eucharist while opening it up for a much more expansive relation—the host becoming that which offers and receives the blessings, the transformations. The eucharist became a venue within and around which our people could talk. What grounded us was actually the "colonial wound," the places of hurt in our communities. Yes, there was a strong presence of Christian theology in a Christian chapel, which was also challenged and somewhat undone by our movements and the singing of our communities' voices.

My students included a queer black man with AIDS, a woman with European and Philippine belongings, a Muslim woman from Syria, a Central American queer man, an indigenous man from Samoa, and a man from Latin America. All of them with stories of violence, loss, despair, and sadness, with coloniality traversing their own people. They were the organic liturgist-theologians of their own people. They not only re-presented their people but wanted to create a ritual that they could themselves do in their own communities. We put this worship service together at James Chapel at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It was communion day. This is how it went:

> We were welcomed into the space with an accordion. In the center was the Eucharistic table. Around it were other tables.
>
> Somebody speaks: Welcome! We are here to share the sufferings of our people. To give light to the shadows where they live. And to figure out how to love our God in connected and distinctive ways. One of the main themes of decolonial thought is the loss, the tragedy, the trauma of something that has happened in the land, to people, culture, languages, Spirit . . . the colonial wound, the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as less humane, unreasonable, underdeveloped physically, economically and mentally, all of that has plagued us and our people, keeping us from living a just and dignified life. Colonial wounds that have historically dismissed our people and taken away their

[15] "The de-colonial path has one thing in common: *the colonial wound*, the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally." In Walter D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26:7–8 (2009): 1–23, 3. Italics mine. Available at http://waltermignolo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/epistemicdisobedience-2.pdf.

strength and power to continue. Wounds that can be seen and heard in the feelings and songs of melancholia, of the African Banzo, the longing for that which was taken away from us. Due to that, many of our people live in distention, in emotional distress, stretched too thin and without rest . . . And yet, we all continue to go on singing: "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired." As we go, we think about our wounds, we tend our wounds, we feel our wounds, and re-discover forms of resistance, and stubborn ways to continue with our lives.

So now we are invited into a journey to different places and peoples. In each stop, we will hear about a wound and will receive food for the journey. We begin singing "God have mercy" from an indigenous community in Latin America and we will walk around singing the same song. We will finish here at this table, where the Eucharistic table will be deeply engaged, transformed, expanded and offered in many forms and ways to all of us. Let us walk. Let us go explore!

We walked around, we ate something different offered from each student/ people, we heard stories, we sang. At the gathering tables, we heard about the brutal disasters of colonization over indigenous people and their land and culture in Samoa. We heard about the economic exploitation and death of the people in Central America. We heard about disasters of social climate change in the Philippines. We heard about black ancestors and old and new stories of slavery and liberation. We heard a cry of a woman holding her dead son in her arms after a bomb exploded in her house while singing Allah, Allah, Allah without stopping. Then we went back to the final gathering table.

Somebody says: Welcome back to this table after being in other tables with other foods and stories. T. S. Eliot says: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." Back to this table, we will know this place again and yet for the first time. We heard from Jesus that we are to eat and drink in his memory, a memory of a wounded body, killed by those who tried all they could to get him down. But they thought that cutting the tree would be enough. That everything would end. They forgot however that Jesus was a seed, a seed that was to be reborn in many other people. Along the history we saw many other seeds being reborn in other people and today we saw some of those seeds in the places and people we just visited.

Now these seeds will continue to spread, will continue to be taken into different stories, meanings, and possibilities. From these seeds, we will now receive a drink that will serve to sustain you for the rest of our journey . . . until we meet again. From each cup, a blessing, a very different blessing, with different beginnings and ends, with different sources and beliefs, but blessings that will help us sing alleluias in the midst of the wounds of ourselves and our people. We are now invited to come to whatever cup you feel so moved to receive a blessing and then leave singing alleluia. Our hope is that you go out singing an alleluia to and from your own people. Whatever alleluia you might know, with other words or meanings. Let the seeds of this worship and of this week, the seeds of each people we visited today,

> the seed of each blessing flourish in you and in your people. Come to drink! And go strengthened by the power of the seeds!

We left empowered by the stories of pain and sorrow of our people and our lands. That made me think that we are desperately in need of another vocabulary for our pedagogies and our rituals. Perhaps if we start instead with the wound of the earth, we might be able to find ourselves there—deeply interconnected. But for that we need a new idiom so we can engage well with it.

Concluding

In that ritual, communities were remembered by individual stories that showed a larger social, economic, cultural, and political context. More importantly, every colonial wound mentioned in those stories was related to the earth: stealing, economic exploitation, social climate, slavery, wars, everything fundamentally connected with the earth. That makes us think that the social, economic, cultural aspects of our analysis are not enough. We need to ground ourselves elsewhere. We all need to go elsewhere to begin this work. We need to literally touch the ground, feel the wind, give space to the ways we can connect to the earth. In that way, religious scholars need to go elsewhere and learn from the indigenous people. In order to start where we suffer, we must be attuned to the movements and sounds of nature. What are the rain, the birds, the trees, the rivers, the earth, the animals telling us about life and ourselves? They all hold forms of humanity and unless we are deeply connected we cannot pay attention to our collective suffering.[16]

The Zapoteca poet Natalia Toledo recited her work "The Reality" at a conference once, saying: "What it is to be indigenous? Here is my list: To have an idiom to talk to the birds who sing in the air, an idiom to speak with the earth, to talk with life. . . . To be indigenous is to have a universe and not to renounce it."[17]

In order to have an idiom to talk to the birds and the earth, we need new sources, new practices, new thinking, new paradigms, new teachers, new classrooms, new pedagogies. The pedagogies we still have do not help us to sing, or to pay attention to the birds or the earth. Our pedagogies teach us to tackle productivity, to race after learning outcomes that demand clear forms of evaluation that show the budgetary demands, the control of the means of production and the goals of our consumerist desires, even before we get into the classroom. We are trapped in a pedagogical model that searches the earth for profit, that measures the birds by the number of bullets, that approves the variety and richness of our human life from dogmatic thinking, privileging minds over bodies and feelings, straight thoughts over zigzagging contradictory emotions of communities, European sources over native wisdom.

Now, at the beginning of every class, we have to be in silence to listen to the birds. If we can't listen to the birds, then our classes are very sad and unproductive. When we listen to the birds we feel alive! We can connect through that which is our common ground. We can hear each other's voices and suffering. We can hear the earth's wounds. Religion? Comes after, to mend the earth,

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[16] See Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds*, translated by Martin Holbraad, David Rodgers, and Julia Sauma (Chicago: HAU Books, 2015).
[17] Natalia Toledo, *La Realidad, Nación Zapoteca, México*, avaiable at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcKlFJQ-q6g.

to heal the wounds of the earth and each other. For the assurance of our being alive, the very possibility of our believing, and ritualizing our lives and beliefs, is the birds singing.

Thus, for interreligious ritual practices to happen, we first start with the wound of the earth. And for that, we need to learn how to listen, and to talk to the birds!

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Discussing Displacement: Decolonizing Multiple Religious Belonging[1]

Teresa Crist

Multiple religious belonging (MRB) has become a way to challenge hegemonic ideas about identity and religiosity. This paper questions the influence of the Western construction of "good religion" on MRB and how it limits the experience of multiplicity in the context of people displaced by war and violence. Ultimately, this paper is a plea for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of MRB that accounts for a lived multiplicity not framed by the choice and individualism that mark Western definitions of religion.

Keywords: multiple religious belonging, decolonizing, religion definition, problematizing Christian supremacy, cultural Christianity

The term "multiple religious belonging" carries the heavy burden of confused, conflicting, and multiple meanings, especially as it has gained currency within the academy. Interestingly, its history is one of being present in actuality but not engaged in theory. On the ground, MRB has been practiced as a positive norm in Asian contexts, and more negatively labeled as syncretism in many colonial contexts across the globe. MRB is, in other words, nothing new. What *is* new about MRB is its instantiation as an ontological status worthy of exploring, which comes largely out of Christian contact and appropriation. MRB is now framed not as something happening *out there* on the margins, but as a phenomenon which even those practitioners of "good (Christian) religion" can engage as a means to greater spiritual fulfillment or life-affirming human flourishing. With this positive claim toward multiplicity, however, comes a need to acknowledge the roots of the terminology and project of MRB. Multiple religious belonging, while often a useful term describing the lived religion of modern peoples, is mired in Western ideology and categories that require deeper examination and nuancing. Embedded assumptions behind the terminology of MRB both erase the experience of some multiple belongers and contribute to a quotidian trauma that often remains ignored.

At the forefront of much of the MRB discussion is Catherine Cornille, whose edited volume *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* led the way for academic discussions of the phenomenon. Cornille has acknowledged various forms of MRB, very usefully explaining that it is not only in one form that MRB exists. She engages New Age religiosity, interreligious dialogue, and a "strong sense" of multiple religious belonging, the last of which is for her the truest manifestation of multiplicity in belonging. New Age forms of MRB she cleverly describes as a "complete absence of belonging," as this so-called cafeteria style of religion rejects ultimate truth claims and refrains from the affiliative aspects of institutionalized religions, while engaging selective beliefs and practices from various traditions based on one's own taste.[2] Interreligious dialogue can develop into MRB when contact with different religions leads to an identification with certain

[1] This paper emerged out of a collaborative project with Shawn Fawson and Roshan Kalantar. I am grateful to my original collaborators for opening the door to this conversation.
[2] Catherine Cornille, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging," in *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, ed. Catherine Cornille, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 3.

beliefs or practices of the conversation partner's religion in addition to an existing religious commitment. Cornille's "strong sense" of MRB shares some qualities with both interreligious dialogue and the process of inculturation. As a more "radical form" of interreligious dialogue, this "full and dramatic" sense of MRB manifests when one is "between traditions, unwilling to renounce the tradition of origin and unable to deny the truth discovered in the other tradition."[3] It may also "manifest itself in the form of belonging to the symbolic and historical framework of one religion and the hermeneutical framework of another,"[4] much like the process of inculturation, in which a religion's theology is adapted to a particular cultural context.[5]

Cornille's definition of multiple religious belonging in the strong sense shares practical aspects with Gideon Goosen's working definition of what he labels dual belonging, a term that can be used interchangably with MRB: "[dual belonging] is when a person has a first major religion and draws on a second to a greater or lesser degree, according to the three criteria of doctrine, practices and actions."[6] Peter C. Phan echoes these definitions, by claiming that MRB goes "beyond inculturation and interreligious dialogue," and means " to accept in theory this or that doctrine or practice of other religions and to incorporate them, perhaps in a modified form, into Christianity but also to adopt and live the beliefs, moral rules, rituals, and monastic practices of religious traditions other than those of Christianity, perhaps even in the midst of the community of the devotees of other religions."[7]

All of these definitions bear in common not only a root in Christian theology and interested scholarship, but also a tendency toward a certain understanding of whatever term is favored for labeling multiple religious belonging. Essentially the definition is one of allegiance (belonging) to a primary religion and then either being supported by practices, rituals, or theories from secondary religions, or perhaps using the hermeneutical framework of a secondary religion to complement or interpret the primary one. This is based less on an equal sharing of different religious contexts and more on the use of conscious choice and personal seeking to find supplementarity in different religious expressions.[8]

These definitions are problematic for two reasons: (1) They rely strongly on a concept of "religion" that is the result of colonial encounters and is dependent upon a Protestant Christian paradigm. (2) Despite insistence from various scholars that MRB is manifest in many different

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[3] Ibid., 4.

[4] Catherine Cornille, "Double Religious Belonging: Aspects and Questions," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 23 (2003): 47.

[5] "Inculturation" is discussed and developed with particular nuance and brilliance by Edward Antonio, in his essay "The Hermeneutics of Inculturation." For Antonio, inculturation is particularly about Christianity's adaptation to various contexts, and it also presupposes the anthropological concept of enculturation, which is a broader term for the cultural adaptation process. In this case, I use inculturation as a helpful analogy for the process of developing MRB. Edward P. Antonio, "The Hermeneutics of Inculturation," in *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, ed. Edward P. Antonio (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 30.

[6] Gideon Goosen, *Hyphenated Christians: Towards a Better Understanding of Dual Religious Belonging* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 27.

[7] Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 497.

[8] One might note the similarity between this description of MRB and the discipline of comparative theology/comparative religions, the project of which is often using the framework of one religion to understand and interpret another. The field is particularly tied to a conception of comparison rooted in similarity, rather than difference. J. Z. Smith explores this issue in his 1982 essay, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19–35.

ways, the definitions rely upon choice to some extent; MRB seems to be indebted to a concept of religion that is largely interior, abstract from historical-cultural context, and individualized. Often, MRB seems to be the process of engaging other religions by personal conscious choice— however genuine—in order to benefit one's own spiritual journey.

The first problem in defining MRB is that of a singular conception of what constitutes "religion" and therefore "religious;" often used is the sort of "world religions" understanding of the term. In fact, "religion" as a category for study emerged out of the contact between imperial Christian Europe and the peoples of the lands they colonized. At that time, there arose a need to maintain European superiority, and one way of doing so was to label any indigenous practices or beliefs as atavistic or even morally corrupt.[9] Scholars led by the likes of Max Müller and E. B. Tylor began to develop what became the field of comparative religion by postulating "religion" as something that looked like post-Enlightenment Christianity. Anything not neatly circumscribed by that category was either primitive religion, or not religion at all. In fact, says comparative religion scholar David Chidester, "[u]nder colonial conditions religious categories were not simply discovered or purely invented by outside observers. They emerged through complex interrelations, negotiations, and mediations between alien and indigenous intellectuals."[10] The categories of religion that have existed until the present day grew out of imperial projects that looked to build theories that rested upon political and moral judgments. Atavistic religion could be used as justification for the colonizer's presence and actions. Categories of bad religion gave more credence to the "good religion" of those in power.

This idea of "good religion" has hardly been lost. Though the academy and the world at large enjoy more cross-cultural connections and an ostensible tolerance if not affirmation of diversity, the idea of "good religion" still permeates public discussion and academic engagement. Scholar Robert A. Orsi examines this idea in his work *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them.* He notes the establishment in the academy of "a liberal and enlightened civic Protestantism"[11] as the standard for study. This gentle, rational, and compartmentalized Christianity then gets cast in the role of "good" or "true" religion, in comparison to various expressions of religious "madness." Indeed, Orsi explains, "The discipline [of the academic study of religion] was literally constructed by means of the exclusion—in fact and in theory—of these other ways of living between heaven and earth, which were relegated to the world of sects, cults, fundamentalisms, popular piety, ritualism, magic, primitive religion, millenialism, *anything but religion*."[12]

In the same way that Chidester elucidates the establishment of a category of "religion" and comparative religious studies, Orsi exposes the maintenance of those boundaries in the academy,

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[9] For an excellent treatment of this, especially regarding Islam and "the Orient," see Edward W. Said's seminal text, *Orientalism.* Running throughout this work is a theme captured in the introduction, in the following quote: "[I]ndeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is […] the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), 7.

[10] David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 18.

[11] Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 185.

[12] Ibid., 188. Emphasis mine.

helped along by a moral judgement that masquerades as definition and fact. Good religion is something that looks like post-Enlightenment Protestant Christianity: private, rational, respectful, and wholly compatible with secular (and democratic) society.[13] And it is this continued reliance upon a "good religion" that has made studying, or indeed even engaging with, religious expressions that do not exist within the "good" side of the good/bad binary such a challenge.

The second problem, an overreliance on choice for defining MRB, is largely the result of modern Western identity. One of the main markers for this identity is a trend toward interiority and individualism, the result of locating moral sources inwardly. Augustinian thought is the starting point, argues Charles Taylor, for a modern identity imbued with the language of inwardness. It is Augustine who "represents a radically new doctrine of moral resources, one where the route to the higher passes within."[14] Such language of inward and outward had not been possible before this distinctive shift, and it remains in vogue to the present day. This movement has led to a propensity for individuation, as everyone's articulation of this internal source is unique. The shift to individuation is still deeply entrenched in modern conceptions of identity; every self has value in its uniqueness, and every self is called to express that uniqueness as part of their full identity.

Such a cerebral and inward trend of understanding identity, morality, and belief bolsters the individualized Protestant Christianity that functions as the paradigm for religious definitions. Out of this trend toward inwardness and individual human flourishing expressed by the Romantics comes an emphasis on individual choice. And the Western choice paradigm leads eventually to religious seekers, some of whom supplement their own cultural and religious traditions with others in what has come to be called multiple religious belonging.

A result of (and contributor to) this process is the move to what Olivier Roy calls the deterritorialization and deculturation of religion, the de-linking of religion from its historical-cultural context. "Religion," says Roy, "circulates outside knowledge," lending it the appearance of universality. It is "disconnected from a specific culture that has to be understood in order for the message to be grasped. […] Salvation does not require people to know but to believe."[15] As "religion" becomes belief-oriented rather than practice-, ritual-, or space-oriented, it is more easily adoptable by those not born into a particular tradition or community. Such deterritorialization therefore supports multiple religious belonging since anyone can choose to appropriate and participate in these unbounded and universal religious practices, which are no longer tied to racial/ethnic or geographical restraints.

However, this shift to understanding religion as an interior, belief-oriented, and deterritorialized matter of choice is as limiting as it might also be freeing. The importance of choice in the paradigm of religion prevents those expressions of MRB that are coerced from being recognized as such. The focus remains on religion as private and voluntary, Protestant Christianity

[13] Ibid. Orsi gives a far more comprehensive list of the attributes of good religion.
[14] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 140.
[15] Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, trans. Ros Schwartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6–7.

serving as the paradigm for religion in general.[16] Christianity has become something like the ultimate deterritorialized religion, one that can easily coexist with various cultural markers because of its intense interiority. This can also be seen in the relatively recent "rise of the nones" phenomenon in the United States, where a shift in the understanding of religion and spirituality has manifested in the growth of non-affiliation with religious institutions. Linda Mercadante explains that people "commonly use the term 'spirituality' to refer to the interior life of faith and 'religion' to mean the necessary communal and/or organizational component."[17] While sociologists of religion like Mercadante see a decline in interest in "religion," these so- called "nones" or the "spiritual but not religious" maintain the importance of the interior and belief-oriented aspects of religious traditions, often engaging a variety of them in a new form of multiple religious belonging.

These definitions and paradigms of "religion" privilege a certain form of participation, one premised on affiliation, belief, interiority, and individualism, such that not all forms of MRB are given due consideration. MRB is, in effect, a colonized term, premised on the superiority of these values and definitions, which negate or erase the experiences of marginalized peoples.[18] For example, MRB that is the result of displacement or direct colonial encounters is often not considered MRB at all, instead being labeled as syncretistic, coerced conversion, or a new product of acculturation. All three of these forms of multiplicity are MRB, little as one might like to consider this the case. MRB therefore needs to be expanded and nuanced to engage these different forms of multiple religious participation, which are invalidated as a result of the emphasis on conscious choice and interiority. Particularly egregious is the example of displaced people(s), for whom religious participation can be both dangerous and coerced.

Displacement functions in multiple ways—it is not just in the spatial relocation from one land to another. Spatial displacement is, of course, traumatic in its own sense, especially when that displacement is accompanied by war, violence, and genocide. Spatial displacement is also traumatic in the very removal of people from their cultural basis of traditions and practices. But another aspect of displacement is explored by theologian Willie James Jennings, in that spatial displacement often leads to spiritual displacement. Jennings elucidates the very displacement of salvation in the context of American slavery, where the development of a racial scale prioritized white Christians as the most deserving of salvation. Such spiritual displacement marked a "theological reconfiguration" of Christianity, whereby whiteness became a visual marker of being Christian.[19] This process is mirrored in contemporary situations of displaced peoples, where a

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[16] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 312ff. Masuzawa elaborates on this process in Chapter 9, "The Question of Hegemony: Ernst Troeltsch and the Reconstituted European Universalism," in which she discusses the creation of the category of "religion in itself," wherein Christianity began to stand in for "religion."

[17] Linda A. Mercadante, *Belief Without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual But Not Religious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5. Also helpful on the subject is Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[18] The fact that MRB is a colonized term does not invalidate its usefulness. Nor is MRB solely a whimsical invention of liberal Christian scholars who have gained multiplicity in their contact and engagement with other religious traditions. Rather, MRB manifests in a variety of ways, and it is absolutely a legitimate label for the identity of some. My argument is that it is not *only* a happily ascribed label, and that the colonized nature of the term (including its underlying definitions of religion) prohibits all MRB from being recognized as such.

[19] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 31–33.

religion or tradition of origin is belittled in favor of that of the new land. Even in a world supposedly full of toleration and acknowledged pluralism, there still remain hierarchies of religious participation, epitomized in the very development of the category of religion molded in the shape of Protestant Christianity.

Two examples here are well worth exploring further. I begin with the Native American context in the United States. Though the explicit war and violence that began their displacement is considered officially ended,[20] Native Americans continue to exist in a colonized state. Displaced from ancestral lands and places of great importance, Native Americans have been forcibly removed to reservations at the hand of a trail of broken treaties and federal laws that continue to subject them to marginalization. Boarding schools were used as a tool to destroy Native traditions and replace them with Christian religion. Even these schools could never totally erase Native American practices[21] and as a result the U.S. instantiated laws barring Native religion, which were only removed in the twentieth century.[22] One of the results of these colonial practices is a multiple religious belonging made of both Native American traditions and a culturally euro-christian context.

Although it might be argued that this does not represent MRB in the popular conception, I contend that it does because it is essentially the participation in more than one religious tradition. Religion and culture are not always easily separated, despite deterritorialization and the world religions approach that skews "religion" into something that looks remarkably like Protestant Christianity. Similarly, indigenous traditions are often excluded from religion, or if included, they are *euro-formed*,[23] a delicious term from Barbara Mann, in order to fit them into extant European categories, despite their incompatibility. Thus, Native Americans, in adhering to their own cultural and spiritual traditions, have one type of (unacknowledged) religion, and whether participating explicitly in a Christian (or other) religion or merely in the euro-christian cultural context of the United States, participate in another. Interestingly, with the development of the MRB conversation, there has been a move for greater accommodation of Native traditions from mainline churches,[24] often as epitomizing the ideas of environmental stewardship.

This multiple religious belonging was for some a matter of survival—converting in order to gain the benefits of Christian participation while keeping indigenous practices secret. "In many of these contexts," says scholar George Tinker, "the traditional spiritual structures of the ancients actually continue to live as sort of a parallel universe to the missionary religion."[25] Here, the displacement of spiritual reward is explicit, where without total conversion to euro-christian religion and culture, Native Americans were left without any hope of participating fully in human flourishing on American soil. It is perhaps also important to note here that Christianity is often

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[20] It is not, however, completely absent. The violence against Native Americans continues, as exemplified in the Dakota Access Pipeline standoff at Standing Rock, North Dakota.

[21] Albert Memmi explains that as much as the colonizers lauded assimilation, they refused to grant it fully to the colonized, such that true assimilation was impossible. The colonizer needs the colonized to maintain their own position. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

[22] The Dawes Act of 1887 banned all forms of Indian religion, and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 allowed freedom of religion once more.

[23] Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 62–63.

[24] George E. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 38.

[25] Ibid., 50.

placed at the far end of a linear developmental trajectory, so that its appropriation or expression is understood as an uplift or improvement, and thus a goal to be reached.[26] Whether one is actively participating in traditional Native American practices at the same time as attending church on Sunday is less important than the fact that these two ways of being in the world are both expressed merely in the presence and person of Native Americans.

A second example of MRB in the context of displacement is that of refugees, persons who emigrate and immigrate due to dangers at home. Refugees often rely upon religion and religious communities for humanitarian support as well as for support in adapting to new circumstances.[27] For them, MRB can manifest not only in a conversion process or in an encouragement for interreligious dialogue on new soil, but also in the acculturation process. Syrian refugees to America, for example, face an extremely difficult challenge of being Muslim in an Islamophobic environment.[28] Even where Islamophobia does not hold sway, the challenge lies in becoming American, essentially becoming culturally Christian in a country with a Eurochristian social imaginary. Refugees and immigrants must often adopt the "reformed" or "progressive" Islam demanded in the American (and Western) context as more palatable, a moderate Islam that conforms to Western standards. In a sort of backwards inculturation, immigrants and refugees must reinterpret Islam on the cultural basis of America, which is largely Eurochristian, despite its secularity.[29] These moves toward conformity result in spiritual displacement; without conforming, refugees maintain the status of outsider, and their religion is labeled "bad religion," even as much as other means of assimilation are attempted.

These examples of MRB in displaced peoples exhibit two forms of trauma, which does not have to come as a singular event, but can be chronic and part of daily experience.[30] One trauma of MRB is in its societal reception. There exists no real safe space for conversation because of the continued villainizing of multiplicity, which emerges largely out of (mis)understandings of syncretism, which has been interpreted as negative, clandestine, and divergent, though it is not

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[26] Another particularly strong example of this can be seen in the "benevolent assimilation" practices of the United States in the Philippines in the early twentieth century.

[27] Damaris Seleina Parsitau argues that "individual faith played a critical role in integrating women [internally displaced persons] into their new circumstances, and also as a motivating factor to turn their lives around." Damaris Seleina Parsitau, "The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (Sept. 2011): 507. Katherine Marshall writes more generally about the connection between religious faith and global development. Katherine Marshall, *Faith-Inspired Organizations and Global Development Policy: A Background Review 'Mapping' Social and Economic Development Work in Europe and Africa* (Washington, DC: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University, 2009). Available at https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/faith-inspired-organizations-and-global-development-policy-a-background-review-mapping-social-and-economic-development-work-in-europe-and-africa.

[28] Geoffrey Samuel elaborates on this issue in the case of Bangladeshis in the UK. He works to point out not only the many manifestations of Islam in the UK that are different from those in Bangladesh, but also the different values and agendas underlying their expression. Thus, individualism—a strong value in the UK—helps determine how new migrants and later generations of Bangladeshis interact with, and sometimes alter, the practice of Islam. Geoffrey Samuel, "Islam and the Family in Bangladesh and the UK: The Background to Our Study," *Culture and Religion* 13, no. 2 (2012): 141–158.

[29] For an excellent treatment of this topic, see Mucahit Bilici's *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Bilici chronicles the transition from alien to citizen in the Muslim case, elaborating the various shifts and challenges that occur in that process.

[30] "Chronic versus Acute Trauma?" website of Trauma Abuse Treatment, *http://traumaabusetreatment.com/chronic-versus-acute-trauma.*

necessarily so. This is problematic in all forms of MRB, since it is only recently that multiple religious belonging has become widely recognized.

The other trauma of multiple religious belonging, and this one perhaps more challenging, comes out of the issue of living in tension, pulled in multiple directions, often unable to go fully in one place. Some of this tension is reflected in the previous definitions of MRB that privilege one religion/tradition over another—we might even call this religious "passing" in a sense similar to that of multiracial persons, where claiming one religion as primary is a way of negotiating cultural cues.[31] This tension is sometimes forced, lived in response to historical events that left some sort of syncretistic way of being in the world necessary in order to avoid full erasure. It is in a place of multiple belonging and tension that Native Americans live, and such a tension is indeed manageable for some.[32] But the daily challenge that comes of having to hold two wholly distinct world views in place in order to function cannot be ignored. These world views, "Christian doctrines and beliefs, and some of the beliefs of Indian tribal groups," as Native American scholar Vine Deloria Jr., puts it, "appear to stand in direct opposition,"[33] testing the limits of any one person to reconcile oneself internally. Similarly, the tension manifests itself in the fracturing of community, where colonial tools like boarding schools have caused generations of Native Americans to "[reject] old religious activities as a continuation of paganism,"[34] another one of those "bad religion" words that should be shunned. Though it is possible for some to live comfortably in tension, the challenge of maintaining irreconcilable world views—especially within a framework that considers one world view superior to the other—can also result in a chronic trauma, disrupting daily existence.

Multiple religious belonging definitions have grown out of colonial contexts and Protestant Christian paradigms, and subsequently do not allow for the diverse and complex realities of MRB on the ground, especially within the examples of displaced peoples. MRB must be nuanced to account for the multiple ways in which it manifests, both voluntary and involuntary. Such inclusive definitions will help to create safer places for all multiple belongers to function fully and with affirmation in the world. Because much interest in MRB has come from the Christian perspective, it is no surprise that some of the first steps in expanding definitions has come from that quarter. The World Council of Churches recently published *Many Yet One? Multiple Religious Belonging*, which is a collection of essays seeking to engage this very topic. Reverend Karen Georgia Thompson, Ecumenical Officer for the United Church of Christ, suggests moves from within churches to

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[31] This idea comes from Roshan Kalantar, whose work on the subject is forthcoming. "Passing" was defined by novelist Nella Larsen as "breaking away from all that was familiar and friendly to take one's chance in another environment, not entirely strange, perhaps, but certainly not entirely friendly." Nella Larsen, *Passing: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism* (1929; repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), 17. The idea has since been examined by other scholars, including Werner Sollors in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Religious passing functions similarly, where a person functions within one religion at the expense of another in order to avoid challenges or negative biases.

[32] A recent volume by Mark Clatterbuck explores this way of being. *Crow Jesus: Personal Stories of Native Religious Belonging* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017) is a qualitative study, consisting of narratives from self-identified Crow Christians on the ways they interpret, integrate, challenge, and change the Christianities that have been present on the Reservation since the time of the missionaries. Clatterbuck argues that "Crow Christianity is now set firmly on Native terms" (Ibid., 39), identities existing in fluid multiplicity. This is the positive side of MRB for Native Americans, for whom living in tension has become a manageable and even desirable reality. Clatterbuck, *Crow Jesus*.

[33] Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 287.

[34] Ibid., 241.

bolster education while nurturing the spirituality of multiple belongers.[35] I would go one step further and state that in order to nurture this multiple spirituality and to refrain from perpetuating the trauma of Christian supremacy, educational programs and ministries must seek to acknowledge and confront both the positive and negative variations of MRB, including the coercion and displacement that make MRB traumatic for some. Such an effort might help to create a safer place for people to understand, know, and be in the world outside of the modern Western paradigm to which they have been conscripted.[36]

[35] Karen Georgia Thompson, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Erasing Religious Boundaries, Embracing New Ways of Being," in *Many Yet One? Multiple Religious Belonging,* eds. Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar and Joseph Prabhakar Dayam (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2016).
[36] Conscription to modernity is an idea from David Scott, which I have adapted further to the religio-cultural aspects of the modern Western paradigm. See David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

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Multiple Religious Belonging and Theologies of Multiplicity: Confluences of Oneness and Porosity[1]

Rachel A. Heath

Though interreligious engagement is not necessarily a given for those who identify with or belong to more than one tradition, attending to the question of interfaith participation might help scholars and practitioners recognize the central issues that emerge in both the theory and practice of Multiple Religious Belonging (MRB), especially in participants' relation between and among traditions. Multiple religious belonging directly challenges this ethos of oneness and underscores the need for postures or logics that do not, in the end, revert to an absolute unity. Interpreting MRB through the lens of theologies of multiplicity, in particular those from Laurel C. Schneider and Catherine Keller, may provide a remedy that diverges from a politics of representation that too often focuses on unitary or fixed manifestations of both individual religious identities and communal religious traditions. Ultimately, this paper will show how concepts from constructive Christian theologies that are attuned to ontological and epistemic multiplicity—in their attention to how the rhetoric of oneness operates—may be helpful in supporting the project of thinking of multiple religious belonging as coherent, as it relates to both individuals and to traditions.

keywords: multiple religious belonging, multiplicity, interfaith dialogue, oneness, porosity, constructive theology, coherence, power relations, logic of the one, Christian hegemony, chaplaincy

We stumble or we dance under quantum conditions writ large.
− Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*

The more closely you look at any body, culture, language, or religion, boundaries blur, categories falter…
− Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*

Opening

"Separation is a sham," Catherine Keller intones throughout *Cloud of the Impossible*.[2] Keller makes this proclamation in view of the quantum entanglements that comprise our physical existence. Though many physicists are hesitant to make ontological claims based on the physical

[1] I want to express gratitude for the communities and persons whose questions and *thereness* influenced the writing of this essay: the Multifaith Working Group at the University of Chicago Divinity School, especially Cynthia Lindner; Alternative Epistemologies (workshop and salon) at the University of Chicago Divinity School; colleagues in the theological studies cohort in the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University; Elena Lloyd-Sidle, PhD candidate in theological studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School; Laurel C. Schneider, professor of Religious Studies and Culture at Vanderbilt University; and the many students and friends whom I have worked alongside in the field of multifaith university chaplaincy.

[2] Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 158. Keller takes this phrase from Jeanette Winterson's novel *Gut Symmetries* (New York: Knopf, 1997); the phrase appears in the epigraph at the beginning of Keller's chapter "Spooky Entanglements," and it is also employed for conclusive effect at the end of the chapter. *Cloud of the Impossible*, 127, 167.

data they gather, discoveries from the past century are ripe for interpretation. Theologians, like Keller, interpolate from these discoveries that our very being and practice (action) are constituted by relations. Just as there are multiple creation stories invoked in the book of Genesis, there are many scientific stories that we tell to help us narrate the nature of our existence.[3] We experience this existence as somewhat separable creatures, I in my being and you in yours. Yet as Catherine Keller indicates, these are different tellings of creation, different variations on the theme of how to interpret our existences—and indeed our embodiments—in view of the larger cosmos and everything in-between.

Setting up the Problem: Pluralism as a Context for Multiplicity?

Interfaith dialogue and similar kinds of pluralistic programs, as much as they attempt a positive response to religious diversity in the United States, can certainly have harmful and silencing aspects as well. And these aspects can undermine the diversity—in fact more complex than the framework allows—which they aim to highlight. Though some of these dialogues and programs are ostensibly organized to create peace among traditions or to mobilize toward a common goal, they can also reify or reproduce logics that reinforce stereotypes, privileges, and power differentials between and among religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions in moments when those with more political clout (or power) determine how a religious other represent themselves in pluralistic contexts.[4]

These power dynamics and relations, in turn, can become increasingly complex when the question is not just how multiple religious traditions can exist peacefully in society, but how or *whether* they can exist peacefully (or at all) within an individual's (embodied) existence. That is, built on the original "problematic" of societal pluralism, interfaith spaces can become difficult and fraught when the spaces are organized by representation models based on the construct of religious identity as only or primarily monolithic, which excludes those who belong to more than one tradition. What is the place of a person who identifies as "plural within" and locates more than one tradition within their (embodied) existence, an experience that may be unimaginable or disallowed by those who create and participate in these spaces?[5] Or, if multiple religious belonging is allowed, must it be confined by strict modes, categories, or identities such as "Christian" or "Muslim"?

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[3] Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physic*s, trans. Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (New York: Riverhead Books, 2016), 33. Rovelli writes: "This is the world described by quantum mechanics and particle theory. We have arrived very far from the mechanical world of Newton, where minute, cold stones eternally wandered on long, precise trajectories in geometrically immutable space. Quantum mechanics and experiments with particles have taught us that the world is a continuous, restless swarming of things, a continuous coming to light and disappearance of ephemeral entities . . . a world of happenings, not of things." Ibid., 40.
[4] I explore this theme, in the context of multifaith college chaplaincy in the United States, in "Lessons in Multifaith Chaplaincy and Feminist Thought: Making Room for Multiple Religious Belonging in Interfaith Praxis," *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, Issue 20 (March 2017): 71-79, http://irstudies.org/journal/lessons-in-multifaith-chaplaincy-and-feminist-thought-making-room-for-multiple-religious-belonging-in-interfaith-praxis-by-rachel-a-heath/.
[5] I have used the phrase "plural within" in the past to describe the experience of MRB, and I am indebted to Jem Jebbia, colleague and at-large representative on the executive board of the National Association of College and University Chaplains (NACUC), for this term.

The practice of interfaith and multifaith[6] engagement, as well as my positionality as a chaplain and scholar, form the foundation in this essay for emerging questions related to the phenomenon of belonging to or identifying with more than one tradition. Approaching these questions from the perspective of multifaith engagement allows us to think multiply (or multiplicity) from the ground up. A chaplain takes what a student brings at face value: if multiple religious belonging is something experienced and articulated, then the goal is to render the experience coherent rather than explain it away. As for multifaith contexts, it is one thing to meditate on multiple belonging in a general society or community in which religious pluralism can be characterized as something that happens incidentally through day-to-day interactions, and another thing entirely to ask these questions from within a context that is already—and *intentionally*—interactive in its religious and philosophical pluralism. As I will explore, it is my sense that any resistance to belonging multiply within these intentionally pluralistic settings reveals that this resistance is less about multiplicity itself and more about the allure of a subterranean logic of oneness that presumes notions of stable, monolithic categories for traditions as a whole. Any breakdown of that stability on a micro-level (as with an individual participant) begins to poke holes in the assumption that unity can be had on a macro-level (tradition), a notion that can be deeply unsettling and threatening as it breaks down how many of us in the West have been taught to think of the category of religion and religious identity.

Taking as a given that practices of multiple religious belonging exist, that people positively claim such belonging or identities, and that this experienced reality can be a life-giving one[7] clears a pathway for us to attend to the unmistakable ***thereness*** of those who belong multiply.[8] *Thereness*, a term used by constructive theologian Laurel C. Schneider, attends to what is happening "in the middle"; it does not return to stories of origin nor does it skip toward notions of the eschaton to explain away the how or why of multiple belonging. *Thereness* confronts the reality at hand, the experience being experienced. It encounters, right here, right now. As comparative theologian Michelle Voss Roberts articulates in her own interpretation of *thereness*:

> The plural and hybrid practices of multiple religious belonging are *there*, embodied in persons and communities. Imperialistic urges to divide and conquer or to impose a unifying ideology run roughshod over these lived realities. If we follow

[6] On terminology: I will intersperse multifaith and interfaith throughout this essay. There is ongoing conversation within the fields of practice (chaplaincy) and theory (interfaith and interreligious studies) on definitions and preferred terminology, but generally speaking, *multifaith* refers to the practices that focus on offering resources to distinct traditions while not expecting them to interact, while *interfaith* connotes interaction between and among traditions. In addition, some scholars, like Monica A. Coleman, prefer the term "multi-religious" to multifaith or interfaith.

[7] From a small group discussion with Paul Knitter, Paul Tillich Professor Emeritus of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary (New York), in which he emphasized that theologians and religious studies scholars attend not only to the reality of MRB, but that it has been a "good thing" in some people's spiritual experience. Conversation occurred on October 26, 2016, immediately following Knitter's lecture at the University of Chicago Divinity School entitled "Good Neighbors or Fellow Seekers? Dealing with the Plurality of Religions in the Twenty-First Century," hosted by the Multifaith Working Group, a group of students and scholars focusing on questions of diversity, pluralism, multiple belonging, and divinity education.

[8] The term *thereness* is used by Laurel C. Schneider in *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 5; 90. Michelle Voss Roberts picks up on the use and application of this term (see below, n. 9), as do I.

> [Laurel] Schneider [in *Beyond Monotheism*], we can cognize multiple religious involvements according to other logics.[9]

So, amidst this *thereness,* how can we begin to theorize or theologize about multiple religious belonging?

It is here that theologies in the field of constructive Christian theology that are attuned to ontological and epistemic multiplicity may be helpful in supporting the project of thinking of multiple religious belonging as coherent, as it relates to both individuals and communities.[10] This multiplicity and coherence must be markedly different than a typology of multiple belonging in which coherence means abiding by the limits of constructed categories and boundaries that are articulated as natural, normative, and/or final. In other words, I am not arguing for a final answer about multiple religious belonging, in which we can easily delineate how a person conscribes and bounds their religious identity and through which we can assume, with a kind of knowing finality, those who identify with more than one tradition do so with the same patterns, same logics, and the same definitions and practices of those traditions. An argument of this kind would end with a logic that might say, "If multiple religious belonging exists, then it has to exist in this particular way; identities can be parsed and categorized in the same way across different contexts, so a Buddhist-Jew will have a similar mixture of religious identity and practice as a Hindu-Muslim-Christian." Instead, *coherence* in this essay refers to something that speaks to the wholeness of a particular person (or being) while taking into account their inherent, irreducible multiplicity—a multiplicity that is open and porous, in which unities are provisional and not final.[11] Taking a cue from Catherine Keller, wholeness in this sense "does not signify a one, a fixed, perfect, or homogenous totality" but, instead, "its elements are ensembles, not ones."[12]

With the aim of lending coherence defined in these terms, I will first touch on critiques and concerns related to multiple religious belonging, particularly through the lens of interfaith engagement. I will next transition to theologies of multiplicity, by initially positing that the logic of the One, as delineated by Laurel C. Schneider in *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity*, is at work in pluralistic settings that resist multiple religious belonging. We will then explore how multiplicity presents theoretical inroads for dismantling or decentering hierarchies of power and privilege in interreligious contexts—contexts that can assume, require, and even desire the monolithic over the multiple.

Multiple Religious Belonging

Multiple religious belonging, as a phenomenon and reality, has indeed been characterized *multiply* by scholars. Multiple Religious Belonging, Multi-Religious Belonging, Dual-Belonging, and Religious Hybridity are all ways of referring to the experience of those who identify with

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[9] Michelle Voss Roberts, "Religious Belonging and the Multiple," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 58 (italics in the original).

[10] Current trends in constructive theology suggest that this is an emerging conversation, marked significantly by the work of Laurel Schneider, Catherine Keller, and Mayra Rivera—though many others are contributing to the conversation as well.

[11] See Schneider, 202ff, for the concept of provisional, proximal, and/or functional unities.

[12] Keller, 158. Keller, in this passage, is drawing together conceptions from theologian Nicolas of Cusa and quantum physicist David Bohm.

more than one tradition.[13] Though no universally agreed-upon, umbrella terms exists (which is probably a good thing), as scholars treat this phenomenon, their characterizations have generally fallen into three general categories: multiple religious belonging as inherent (positive), as functional (neutral), and as optional (negative).

Approached with a positive outlook, multiple religious belonging has been described as a culmination of a pluralistic framework of relationality, reciprocity, and transformation. Syncretizing or synthesizing religious beliefs, in this sense, is the logical end of attending to the pluralistic relationality that comprises daily life. In this view, all religious orientations are inherently syncretic and relational. Approached more neutrally, multiple religious belonging is the logical outcome of a globalized society where there are interfaith marriages and increased access to the theologies, frameworks, and practices of religious others. The emphasis here is less on relationality as constitutive and more about functional plurality or multiplicity; our families, partners, and children come from different traditions, which naturally leads to blending and mixing those traditions. Finally, approached more negatively, multiple religious belonging is described as being a manifestation of relativistic and individualistic "cafeteria-style" identities in which individuals have the prerogative to choose with whom and what they identify at any given moment. Multiplicity, here, is less about inherent relationality and more about individuality, autonomy, and the free market of neoliberal capitalism.[14] It should be emphasized that this more pejorative description of multiple religious belonging is used to characterize Westerners in particular who, unintentionally or not, appropriate practices and concepts from other traditions without being acquainted with or mindful of the theological or philosophical grounding for those practices and concepts, the accompanying diverse interpretative traditions, and/or the ethical and ritual traditions that support the chosen practices and concepts.[15] For scholars of comparative theology like Catherine Cornille, multiple religious belonging thus poses a problem of "modern subjectivity" in which agential capacities are prioritized far more than "total commitment and unitary belonging."[16]

With each of these portrayals possibly containing an element of descriptive relevance, the basic concept remains—that of a person engaging in some substantive way with more than one spiritual or religious tradition. Scholars interested in theorizing about this phenomenon are approaching it from different angles, including defining, delineating, or categorizing what kinds

[13] For a fuller treatment of the ways that Multiple Religious Belonging (MRB) has been characterized, particularly from the lens of those who primarily center themselves in Christian traditions, see Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002). The initial sections of Michelle Voss Roberts's article "Religious Belonging and the Multiple" are also quite helpful for an overview of how belonging is characterized and who can be seen as legitimately belonging to more than one tradition.
[14] The notion of cafeteria-style identities for Multiple Religious Belonging comes from Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 495. However, we should also acknowledge that "cafeteria style" has been a common way of negatively describing the "marketplace" of religious pluralism. See, for example, chapters 6 and 7 of Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).
[15] An all-too-common example of this is the white, American "soccer mom" who goes to a Christian church on Sundays, a yoga class on Tuesdays, and a mindfulness meditation class on Thursdays. A more in-depth discussion of how this lived reality may, or may not, fit a category of multiple belonging would be the subject of a different essay. A helpful discussion of models for belonging can be found in Roberts, "Religious Belonging and the Multiple," 46–52.
[16] Cornille, *Many Mansions*, 2.

of engagement count as substantive or multiple. The contribution of this essay is to explore how theologies of multiplicity might contribute to our theorizing about multiple religious belonging: how the former can help us think multiply through the latter. Since I have begun with the assumption that the practice (or reality) instantiates possibility, my attention will focus on lending a kind of coherence to multiple religious belonging by articulating what its inherent multiplicities might reveal for interfaith contexts in particular.

Theologies that turn our attention to multiplicity, following in the lineages of philosophers and poets of multiplicity in the last half century, offer ways to think beyond dualisms or binaries that collapse into oneness or unity and beyond descriptions of human *being* and *practice* that are produced and reproduced by religious and theological hegemonies.[17] In these accounts, I see openings and fissures, pathways toward an orientation of coherent multiplicities rather than unities that are too easily perceived or interpreted as stable, homogenous categories that are situated, powerfully, in relation to one another. This powerful situated-ness of traditions in juxtaposition (and comparison) to one another can be seen in practice most clearly in contexts of interfaith dialogue. At least in the West, these dialogues and programs are often dominated by Abrahamic traditions that, in their declarations of monotheism, tend toward more monolithic ways of conceiving both human beings and their divinities.[18] In the sections that follow, I will focus on Laurel C. Schneider's narration of the logic of the One from *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity*, because it speaks of power and the way that Oneness asserts itself in religious imaginaries. I will then explore whether porosity and its relation to embodiment, which Schneider imagines to be an aspect of a logic or mode of multiplicity, may help us conceive of multiple religious belonging as coherent.[19]

The Logic of the One

As Schneider articulates, the Logic of the One has deep roots in Western philosophy and epistemology, from Plato and Aristotle to Aquinas and Newton. Modern science tells us that human brains need to categorize to survive, in order to determine our priorities for interpretation in a diffuse world. Lacking certain kinds of natural instincts, humans need to separate what we absorb and/or perceive in order to live, move, and have our being alongside other beings. Those from the West, however, have inherited a troubled legacy of distilling this (perhaps) benign instinct for categorization and separation into a desire for pure Oneness (an inclusive or exclusive unity) upon which empires and religions have been built and through which some cultures and peoples have been eliminated or dispossessed. In relation to religion, the logic of the One is expressed in the desire for monotheism, manifest most prominently by divine conceptions from Abrahamic traditions. Though monotheism as a term was coined much later than we might expect, it has (and continues) to "[labor] in the classifying and cataloguing enterprises of western

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[17] My context is Western epistemologies, theologies, and frameworks for practice, so I want to be clear that it is Western contexts in particular to which this essay is related.

[18] For a compelling account of how concepts of monotheism colluded with imperial power, consult Part 1 of Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*.

[19] Schneider, 157–163; 202ff. Porosity, fluidity, transience, interconnection, heterogeneity, and a-centered relationality are aspects of ontological multiplicity for divinity, as explicated by Schneider. I am choosing to focus on porosity as a way of thinking "multiply" about multiple religious belonging because of the way it relates to the body, or embodiment. It may pave a possible pathway because the multiple belonging is, in a sense, contained in the proximal/functional unity ("agreement of atoms") held together in an individual body.

social science" and act "as a transport vehicle for ideologies of European cultural and religious superiority."[20] Oneness in itself is not the most harmful thing here; it is the claim of *absolute* oneness, of a whole that consumes everything else in the end and admits no gaps, that is of concern.

Practically speaking, this logic of the One can be seen through the push by interfaith organizations to gather representatives who have discrete religious identities and traditions; the supposition is, simply, the gathering of these discrete ones into a group for dialogue—the grouping of "ones" into a "many."[21] The logic of the One rears its totalizing head when there is an assumed one-to-one ratio between an individual and a tradition, since this ratio presumes that a relation between entities (person and tradition) can be whole or complete. I would argue that those within pluralistic or interfaith contexts who deny the coherence of multiple religious belonging ultimately trip over their own push for pluralistic harmony along the way, as the logic of Oneness at work in their denial is the same logic that would also deny the coherency of maintaining a pluralistic worldview/orientation in the first place. Consider, for example, the well-known concept within the Christian tradition that a person must be Christian (and exclusively so) to be saved. Christian traditions that reinterpret this soteriological claim in order to support the flourishing of other traditions often do so through denying Christianity's claim of exclusive truth and asserting that there are many "ones" (traditions) that can claim truth. Pluralism conceived in this way, then, still depends on oneness—just on a scale of manyness. What I am drawing attention to here is that, in this case, assumptions of truth's oneness or manyness are integrally related; *to assert a manyness of truth for traditions and then to retreat from the possibility that an individual can belong to or inhabit many traditions is to deny the application of the logic that makes an engaged pluralism possible*.

Religious traditions constitute each other through their comparison of similarity and difference, just as the number one is rendered understandable through its being one in relation to others, not one in itself.[22] We can only conceive of the number one through its relation to all that is not-one. Similarly, we could assume that plural means multiple, or that many ones leads to a logic or posture of multiplicity, but this is not necessarily the case. In fact, the plural has historically been used to reinforce the logic of the One by way of inclusion or exclusion, whichever applies in a given context. It is my contention, with the example above in mind, that multiple religious belonging may be the best way, in religiously plural contexts, to push through the One and the Many—because it defies both and embraces a multiplicity that is not dependent upon the absolute separability of discrete ones.

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[20] Schneider, 20.

[21] Michelle Voss Roberts briefly discusses Schneider's logic of the One and connects it to the "irreducible thereness," or multiplicity, that it denies. Roberts, "Religious Belonging," 57–58, referencing Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 89–90. Roberts acknowledges that Schneider's discussion may help lead us to better imagine multiplicity metaphorically. I take a slightly different path, staying more focused on what the logic of the One and "constitutive multiplicity" could do theoretically and practically (and perhaps even theologically) for those who belong multiply.

[22] Schneider, 142–149. This is a mathematical concept that philosophers of multiplicity, as summarized by Schneider, have expressed in different ways.

The logic of the One also manifests through the desire for proper *representation* in contexts of interfaith dialogue, on both parliamentary and local levels.[23] The bounded-ness of representation denotes who is qualified to exemplify a given tradition in a public setting; it also underscores the drive to gather *valid* adherents who can adequately represent what are "agreed" upon to be the major world religions. More explicitly, for an interfaith program to be *good* (in a pluralistic sense), then that program must gather as many representatives from the world's traditions as possible in order to adequately render diversity visible.[24] There is much that could be said here about the problems of categorization and visibility as they relate to representation, especially in light of the recent colonial era in which religious difference was defined and categorized by the West in contradistinction to Christianity.[25] Though this cannot be fully explored here, suffice to say that scholars of comparative religion have convincingly shown that the very definitions of religion and religions, as well as the differences between and among them that are commonly understood as being essential or basic, were formulated during the period of Western colonial expansion. This reality should trouble, or complicate, our notions of discrete religions and requisite total commitments to these discrete religions, since "others" were defined, catalogued, and referenced in comparison to Christian traditions. Both the boundaries of Christianity and other religious traditions were created during this era.[26]

What bears mentioning is that assumptions of monolithic representations of religious belonging unearth a real fear of syncretism in belief and practice *and* multiplicity in orientation. Monica A. Coleman, womanist and process theologian, identifies the "value judgement[s]" associated with syncretism in both plural and non-plural environments. She writes:

> Syncretism or syncretic faiths have been understood as bastardized or lower forms of an authentic faith, one that was presumably the "real Christianity." Syncretic

[23] Parliamentary dialogue is a way of referring to gatherings of (usually important) religious leaders, rather than a gathering of lay participants of various traditions. One example is the dialogues hosted by the Parliament of the World's Religions; another example would be inviting the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu to have a dialogue with one another. Diana L. Eck, founder of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, clarifies these designations in her chapter "Dialogue and Method: Reconstructing the Study of Religion" in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, ed. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 131–152.

[24] I want to emphasize that the expansion of diverse religious representation in pluralistic and interfaith programs is a good intention; however, there is still a long way to go in ensuring balanced representation. Too often in United States history, *interfaith* has been an umbrella term for ecumenical Christian gatherings or Abrahamic programs. (The history of military chaplaincy in the United States attests to this, as does the history of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Interfaith Council in Chicago, Illinois, which is one of the longest-running interfaith community organizations in the United States. Only in recent decades did the group expand its membership beyond Abrahamic traditions and paradigms). This is a reality that should continue to be appropriately explored and addressed in current interfaith gatherings. For more on this, see Heath, "Lessons in Multifaith Chaplaincy and Feminist Thought."

[25] Another issue that cannot be fully explored in this essay is the resistance/inability to encounter intersectionality in a holistic way. A Muslim's experience of practicing Islam and being part of a Muslim community, for example, will be marked by other aspects of her identity, including her gender, sexuality, where she lives, first language, regional origin, ethnicity, class, and ability. These aspects of identity, which are fully present when one participates in religious community, are often not afforded an obvious space (at best) in many interfaith (dialogical) models because of the intention to provide a space for "positive" engagement between and among religious traditions, unintentionally compartmentalizing the religious experience of the participants in an a-contexual way.

[26] For more extensive arguments on these points, see David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996) and *Empire of Religion: Imperialism & Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

> faiths are the things that poor people and colored people practice, while a more "pure" or "axial" faith is something to which dominant white communities adhere. My language is intentional because syncretic faiths are referred to as things people *practice*; "real Christianity" is referred to as something that one *believes*.[27]

There is a concern, which can be inferred from Coleman, that stable or "pure" traditions, "something to which dominant white communities adhere," will be destabilized and melt into an indistinguishable mass. Fear of multiple religious belonging (and syncretism) is akin to feminist theorist and physicist-trained Karen Barad's description of humans' fear of the blob (of early cinematic fame), and more recently in our fear of amoebas. Fearing an indistinguishable collective mass, like a blob or an amoeba, captures our "fear of being consumed by the Other in a xenophobic panic over the spread of foreign elements."[28] What is at stake is not only stable identities of a person within a religious tradition, but the stability and bounds of the religion—and in Coleman's example, whiteness—itself.

Significantly, and from another perspective, there is also a legitimate concern that power concentrates itself in an all-consuming, blob-like oneness. That is, this idea of melting into an indistinguishable mass is just another way that the religions with more cultural import and power—so, Christianity in a United States context—imperialize and appropriate that which is considered exotic or Other. In a context of religious hybridity or multiple religious belonging, then, theologian Kwok Pui-Lan rightly critiques Jeannine Hill Fletcher's assertion that we are all "hybrids" by arguing that *not all identities or hybridities are equal in a postcolonial contextual history*. There are indeed power differentials at work in interreligious and interfaith contexts, and hybridity for all does not erase this reality.[29] In this way, saying "we are all hybrids" yields the same result as claiming "we are all queer"—in highlighting difference as universal, that which comprises the margins is absorbed into whatever is considered normative.[30]

Multiple religious belonging, I would argue, resists this normative impulse arguably more than any other phenomenological reality in interfaith contexts, by beautifully disrupting this problem of representation. Those who belong multiply reveal that identities do not necessarily have strict, neat bounds and, in so doing, draw attention to the possibility that perhaps traditions

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[27] Monica A. Coleman, "The Womb Circle: A Womanist Practice of Multi-Religious Belonging," *Practical Matters*, Issue 4 (Spring 2011): 9, http://www.academia.edu/10265881/The_Womb_Circle_A_Womanist_Practice_of_Multi-Religious_Belonging (emphasis in original).

[28] Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning (Women, Gender & Research)* No. 1–2 (2012): 27.

[29] Kwok Pui-Lan, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 46–64. Kwok is critiquing an argument that Jeannine Hill Fletcher makes in chapter four of her book *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

[30] An earlier version of this article argued that Multiple Religious Belonging can queer any sense of normative religious identity delimited by oneness, i.e., only belonging to one religious tradition. This argument started from the "Critical Edges" identified at the conclusion of my earlier article ("Lessons in Multifaith Chaplaincy and Feminist Thought: Making Room for Multiple Religious Belonging in Interfaith Praxis"). We not only need queering of religious identity in general, but also positive constructions of religious identity that relate to the fluidity of gender and/or sexual orientation, and perhaps even taking these experiences and realities as a starting point for reflection on religious identities. This is still a theoretical pathway that I think may have some traction and will be explored in a later project.

in themselves are more porous and flexible than we desire or assume. Yet at the same time, we cannot assume or require multiple religious belonging to be unendingly flexible. It can be quite discrete in its embodied experience; fluidity, here, does not imply ultimate unintelligibility or the absence of a unitary, seemingly fixed identity as experienced by a person or community. What I am drawing attention to is this: having a strict label or category for what "multiple religious belonging" entails troubles monolithic representation while, at the same time, brings to light the reality that a person who belongs multiply may have a unique experience of a bounded religious representation that works particularly for them but cannot (and should not) be universally—or categorically—applied.

These potential disruptions are important because of the questions that Catherine Cornille has raised about evaluating multiple religious belonging in terms of its theoretical and theological coherence. "One of the characteristics of the experience of multiple religious belonging is its focus on this-worldly efficacy, rather than theological coherence," Cornille writes. "The truth and efficacy of particular teachings and practices tends to be measured in terms of personal or subjective needs and fulfilment, *rather than in terms of their theological or philosophical coherence*."[31] Cornille's underlying assumption is that to identify or embody more than one tradition is difficult or impossible because the propositional truth claims and even practices of various traditions are mutually exclusive, both from the standpoint of the individual who wants to reconcile those traditions within themselves and from the perspective of the institutions that acknowledge who belongs to a tradition and who does not. The logic at work in both of these examples is the logic of the One: belonging to one tradition is more internally, philosophically, theoretically, and theologically coherent than belonging to more than one.

Yet, as we have already discussed, this emphasis on oneness may be related to more than just tradition, but also to the assumption that the multiple can or should be contained in discrete categories. What I offer instead is the argument that multiple religious belonging, as a practice and as a concept instantiating the multiple, can question and/or undo our drive for categorized, representational coherence in interfaith contexts *if we allow this multiplicity to shift both our epistemological frameworks and related practices*. Exclusive identities—in their emphasis on sameness over difference, in their insistence on this not that, in their reification that this is Christian and that is Muslim, this is Buddhist and that is Hindu, or, for example, this is theology and that is ritual practice (categories that are delineated and related differently in different traditions)—become sites of normativity and reproduced performativity, wherein we must perform the perceived identity of a particular tradition in order to participate in interfaith contexts. And what can normativity related to religious traditions and identities do? It can reproduce a false ontology of oneness, unity, and sameness that ultimately excludes difference; normativity, in this way, tells us what categories and identities are *valid* and *coherent* and which are not. And, finally, these sites of normativity can reproduce the very power differentials (one religion over another) that interfaith dialogue and engaged pluralism seek to decenter or dismantle.

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[31] Catherine Cornille, "Multiple Religious Belonging," in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, ed. David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 338 (emphasis mine).

Porosity and Multiplicity

What does an awareness of the logic of the One do for theories and practices of multiple religious belonging? Perhaps it hints at the need for an alternative logic, or mode, by which we can perceive that multiplicity is everywhere: within our traditions, within ourselves. The problem is not oneness itself—but a oneness that asserts itself as the final answer, the final story for "belonging." And any assertion of finality denies our multiplicity of relations and tends toward a hegemonizing, totalizing sameness that erases difference, which can be a silencing and violent travesty for many. In the context of the United States, any assertion of Christian ultimacy runs this risk the most, especially in the face of traditions that are beyond the Abrahamic paradigm. A logic of multiplicity here does not collapse the idea of Oneness entirely, but the reality of multiple religious belonging could help those engaging in interfaith contexts not only to be more aware of the possible experiences of the people in the room, but also, as Catherine Keller reminds us, to be "mindful" of the "entangled" multiple relations in which our traditions already subsist, internally or otherwise.[32]

Multiple religious belonging, in light of this narrative of our physical existence, is resistant to the dream of totality, the dream of separability in interfaith contexts—where each participant occupies and represents one tradition, one religious identity.[33] And in this way it is more responsive to the "quantum ontology" of entanglement that, in actuality, may be a better way of characterizing the world and our experiences of the world.[34] To assert that any tradition is one, and thereby any participant is one, is to assert a faith in the separability of things, to assert that there are discrete separations on both macrocosmic and microcosmic levels. However, as quantum physics has revealed, this is just not the case.

We have already acknowledged that Christianity is not one and in fact has relied on the categorizing of other traditions to further differentiate, define, and particularize itself.[35] It is porous and multiple in history, manifestation, and practice, far from an exclusive unity. Christianity has always been syncretic, still "bearing the imprint" of the "encounter among Judaism, North African worldviews, and Greek philosophy," as Monica A. Coleman argues. No "real Christianity" exists, just as "there are no pure cultures."[36] The next step in giving epistemological priority to multiplicity, then, is to circle back into our interfaith practices, to not multiply our identities and categories into an indiscernible mass in any final sense, but to disrupt any logic of the One that continues to support or produce power differentials between and among diverse traditions, postulated as absolutely discrete and impermeable to change and flux. As Schneider says, "Theologians have tended to forget that categorical distinctions and absolutes are conveniences; they are not the world, not incarnation."[37]

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[32] Keller, 24. Keller uses "mindful" and "entanglement" throughout *Cloud of the Impossible*.

[33] Schneider, 9; 58; 127. Language of "dream" is used throughout the text to speak of the desire for purity, solidity, unity, and so on.

[34] Karen Barad argues for a quantum ontology, as distinct from classical ontology. Quantum ontology begins with the "existence of phenomena"—of relating and colliding entities—rather than an "independently existing thing" that exists *a priori*. Classic ontology relies on separable and discrete entities that exist prior to the relation. Barad, 45.

[35] I am again referencing David Chidester, who argues in *Savage Systems* that the field of comparative religion grew and expanded by comparing "indigenous" and "savage" religions to the theology and practices of Christianity.

[36] Coleman, 9.

[37] Schneider, 162.

A logic (or dialect or mode) of multiplicity, to which *Beyond Monotheism* aspires, uses our bodies as scripts for comprehending the local porosities that speak more of a continuous (infinite) multiplicity than of a final, closed unity. The body is perhaps the best place for locating the multiplicity of multiple religious belonging as well, or at least helping us to think analogously about the porosity of relations that make up our existence. For what body is ever static, unchanging and eternally the same? Even on an atomic level, we know our bodies are more porous than we think, picking up molecules from objects around us and containing multitudes that intermingle within. As physicist Carlo Rovelli writes, "We are made up of the same atoms and the same light signals as are exchanged between pine trees in the mountains and stars in the galaxies."[38] In our inhalations and exhalations, we never quite maintain the solidity, unity, closure, and finality that we assume exists; the oxygen we breathe into our bodies was recently inside a leaf, a reality that speaks to the incredible interconnection that constitutes life, that produces (bio)diversity.[39]

Taking the body's porosity as a site for multiple religious belonging helps us identify a possible response for one concern levied against the phenomenon, especially as it appears in relation to other traditions. The concern is that multiple religious belonging is not a natural (or good) way of embodying commitment to a tradition; the tradition is seen as a unified whole, as is the desired or required commitment from a practitioner. However, if we take into account that bodies naturally exchange with one another, that our natural porosity precludes any sense of ultimate impermeability in relation with others, then we could flip what is perceived as "natural" in relation to other traditions. Perpetual syncretic relations would be considered natural—as "simply the process of change that occurs when multiple cultures, languages, or religions encounter one another."[40] Multiple religious belonging is interpreted on this point as part of the naturally occurring interactions and change that comprise the body and that speak to our "natural" way of existing in relation.

We would be remiss, though, to only speak of porosity as a good and not acknowledge that the idea of impermeability, while not ultimately possible, can in the meantime create boundaries that are considered—and experienced—as positive. Boundaries prevent complete absorption into the other; they help maintain the "I" in the midst of the "we." In the face of violence, manipulation, or other unequal power dynamics, boundaries—such as a clear "I"—can actually be a matter of life or death. In fact, the ability to say with conviction, "yes, I do belong to multiple traditions" *in a context that might preclude that possibility* is dependent on a healthy boundary between one's experience of self and the framework and normative cues of a space that would seek to deny, discount, or suppress that kind of religious experience.[41]

With both accounts in mind, I am suggesting that the incarnations—the embodiments—of those who belong to more than one tradition can teach us something about the nature of the

[38] Rovelli, 66.

[39] This image is taken from Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).

[40] Coleman, 9.

[41] Schneider uses Jean Baudrillard's concept of "impossible exchange" to speak of the oneness of a person that is unable to be repeated. Schneider, 165–179. I am indebted to Elena Lloyd-Sidle, PhD candidate in theological studies at the University of Chicago, for helping me think through the consequences, especially for those most vulnerable, of identities without (self-asserted) boundaries.

world, our traditions, and perhaps, in some cases, about divinity or divinities. In the most basic sense, my overarching point is that evaluating the *coherence* of multiple religious belonging, at least in interfaith contexts in the United States, seems to be more often about filtering traditions, identities, and practices through the logic of the One than about rejecting multiple belonging altogether. As a response, then perhaps what is needed is a logic of multiplicity—which is a "challenge to think 'after' the dominance of European thought, which is a challenge to think 'after' oneness as a principle norm."[42] I might also add that multiplicity is a challenge to think after the exclusive, religious "total commitment" of which Cornille writes. Revelation of multiplicity here is not final or ultimately unifying or even ontologically secure: it is hearing another parable, writing a piece of a narrative, tracing another tuber, starting in the middle.[43]

(Provisional) Conclusion

Theologies of multiplicity offer important insights for beginning to think of multiple religious belonging as coherent, especially in contexts that are intentionally plural. The implication, or undercurrent, of these theologies from Christian traditions is that if God is multiple, then perhaps human experience and being are characterized by multiplicity as well. Searching for a mode, or logic, of multiplicity helps us uncover the ways in which the logic of the One may be at work in pluralistic settings that emphasize discrete traditions and discrete identities. Multiple religious belonging directly challenges this ethos, however, and underscores the need for postures or logics that do not, in the end, revert to an absolute unity. The theo-ethical implications of these arguments trouble the waters of an inclusivity based on discrete religious identities, the politics of representation and religious performance that rely on oneness, and various privileges that surface in interfaith engagement because of this conception of inclusivity. Perhaps multiple religious belonging reveals something important about the nature of religious traditions and religious identities in general: that there are no final answers, no ultimate stories, but rather the fluid intermingling of provisional unities that have depth of meaning but never the final say.

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[42] Schneider, 148.
[43] Ibid., 151.

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Interreligious Dialogue in the Squeeze between Diplomacy and Contextual Practices

Anne Hege Grung

Can interreligious dialogue evaluated as significant and successful at one level provide obstacles for interreligious dialogues at other levels? The Saudi initiated KAICIID center in Vienna, Austria is successful in gathering high-profile religious leaders from around the globe, including the Middle East, in order to establish regional platforms of dialogue. There are signs, however, that the Saudi representation of KAICIID in Austria creates challenges in the local context, particularly for Austrian Muslims who want to represent themselves without being affiliated with Saudi politics. Interreligious dialogues between religious leaders are also reproducing male ownership of the dialogues and patriarchal structures of religion because men are the overwhelming majority among them. Is there a need to develop a language for different kinds of interreligious dialogue beyond what is present in the discourse in the field? Can we talk about shared markers for all interreligious dialogues, or do we need to distinguish further between dialogue as a political and diplomatic tool and dialogue as community-building and emancipatory processes?

keywords: interreligious dialogue, KAICIID, diplomacy, Austria, Saudi-Arabia, institutionalizing dialogue

Interreligious Dialogues as Contested Spaces

What do we really mean when we talk about interreligious dialogue? Being a Norwegian theologian educated under heavy influence of the art of exegesis and German theology, I was always drawn to working linguistically and semantically with the notions in play. What do the words really mean? When confronted with contextual theology including feminist theology, this question changed into what do the words really mean and for whom, and who has the power to decide what they mean? Later, when working on cross-disciplinary scholarly settings, the question changed again, into: what do the words really mean, for whom, who has the power to decide what they mean, and what are the dynamics of the discourses the words are engaged in?

Some years ago, I was eager to communicate that the notion of interreligious dialogue should be qualified when used. All dialogue including interreligious dialogue should be defined as a human encounter, in real life, between equal partners, without hidden agendas, and the aim of the dialogue should be a possible mutual transformation of the people engaged in the dialogue, not that one party should try to convince or influence the other according to its own perspectives or convictions.[1] This working definition of interreligious dialogue aims at a transforming process where a space of shared ownership among the participants and an experience of shared humanity are established. It communicates well with many philosophy-of-religion-people and with religious idealists who are ready to perform self-criticism and work for community and power-sharing through interreligious dialogue.

[1] Anne Hege Grung, *Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings: Christian and Muslim Women in Norway Making Meaning of Texts from the Bible, the Koran, and the Hadith* (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 68.

The spaces of interreligious dialogue are, however, contested spaces, and the activities that are labeled interreligious dialogue are various, not only in form and method, but also in content. Some voices are talking about an ongoing institutionalization of the interfaith movement.[2] Institutionalization would imply a greater agreement among the participating parties in dialogues or multi-religious representations concerning focus and goals, for instance in academia and with establishing institutions such as KAICIID (the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, named after the late Saudi King who initiated and financed the center, usually referred to as the KAICIID dialogue center). This will have an impact on the discourses as well as on the various actual inter- and trans-religious dialogues. In this article, I want to make a contribution towards the discourses of interfaith and interreligious dialogue by discussing two interrelated questions.

The first question starts with a critical evaluation of how studying the image and the structural profile of the KAICIID center in Vienna may challenge our concepts of interreligious dialogue and generate new questions we need to explore further. Some question if everyday encounters between people belonging to different faith traditions should not automatically qualify for the label of "interreligious dialogue." The question now is how we should name organized activities in the intersection between top religious leaders, top politicians, and top diplomats. This is not only happening connected to the KAICIID center, but several other places as well. Examples are Kosovo through the Kosovo interfaith initiative and earlier Iranian initiatives, to mention a few. Is this interreligious dialogue? Is this interreligious dialogue used as a political and diplomatic tool at a top international level or is it political and diplomatic interests using the label of interreligious dialogue as a protective or legitimizing shield? This leads to my second question: Can we talk about shared markers for all interreligious dialogues or do we need to distinguish further between interfaith and interreligious dialogue as a political tool and dialogue as community-building and emancipatory processes?

The KAICIID Center: Dialogue or Diplomacy?

Let me present the KAICIID center very briefly, with an emphasis on how it presents itself in the press, through various reports, and in social media, and look at how some evaluate the center from an outside perspective. I will not go deeper into analyzing the center's educational or peacebuilding local activities that are established in many different contexts, which are extensive and look impressive. These activities would deserve their own evaluation and research. But I believe it is important also to discuss the structure and the image of KAICIID, including a look at its impact on political discourses, the discourse on interreligious dialogue and among faith-based organizations. I believe this is legitimate and also crucial due to the political, religious, diplomatic, financial, social, and intellectual resources that are accumulated around KAICIID. KAICIID as an intergovernmental organization has access to, and collaboration with, the UN (UNDP and UNESCO) and the Vatican (one of the center's founding Observers); it has established contact with the organization Religions for Peace and the University of Montreal; and it is communicating with the World Council of Churches, the Church of England, and several other influential actors on the political and religious scene.[3]

[2] See, for example, Nathan R. Kollar, "The Interfaith Movement in a Liminal Age: The Institutionalization of a Movement," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2016): 7–30.
[3] Website of KAICIID, http://www.kaiciid.org/who-we-are/our-partners, accessed 15 March 2017.

The center was established in October 2011 as a joint venture between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Austria, and the Kingdom of Spain as founding states and the Holy See (the Vatican) as a founding Observer.[4] *The Economist* reported on KAICIID in March 2013 and placed it among other initiatives that gather prominent religious leaders in order to establish mutual trust and conversations, with damage control in crises as the most important aim for these initiatives.[5] *The Economist* adds that the center has "the glitz of a monarch to monarch affair, with Spain's King Juan Carlos prominently involved."[6] . On its website, it is presented as an intergovernmental organization that aims to "foster dialogue among people of different faiths and cultures that bridges animosities, reduces fear and instills mutual respect" and to bring together religious leaders and governmental representatives "in a sustained dialogue for peace;"[7] and the keywords selected to present the work of KAICIID are "intergovernmental, multireligious, multilateral, and inclusive.[8]" KAICIID refers to its work as "Track 1.5 diplomacy"—between ordinary diplomatic work and Track 2 diplomacy, which refers to, for instance, religious leaders and NGOs undertaking diplomatic efforts as a supporting side-track of official negotiations.[9] KAICIID is located in a beautiful building in Central Vienna, known as the Palais Sturany. The center and its work are efficiently communicated on social media such as Twitter and Facebook—its Facebook page has almost 89,000 likes.[10]

The governing structure of the center can be seen as threefold; there is the political leadership, which includes representatives of the Saudi king. The former Austrian minister of justice (2009–2011) Claudia Bandion-Ortner was part of the leadership as a deputy secretary general from 2012–2014. There is a board of directors on which nine religious leaders from Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sunni Islam, and Shi'a Islam are represented. Christian churches in the board represents the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. There is also an advisory forum with 100 members from religious communities and cultural institutions, among them a representative belonging to the staff of the Lutheran World Federation. There are women representatives both on the board of directors (one out of nine) and on the advisory forum (nine out of thirty).[11]

The center was fully financed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the first three years. I have not been able to find indications of changes in the founding structure after this, so the chances are that this is still the case. The economy of the center is not referred to on the website. From the written agreement between the center and the Republic of Austria, it is clear that KACIID and parts of its staff have privileges usually given to missions, property, and staff connected to foreign diplomats and their work and working places, such as the agreement that the building housing the center cannot be approached by the Austrian police without the consent of the center. The agreement states: "The Seat of the Centre shall be inviolable. No officer or official of the Republic of Austria, or other person exercising any public authority within the Republic of Austria, may enter the Seat to perform any duties except with the consent of, and under conditions approved by the Secretary General of the

[4] Website of KAICIID, http://www.kaiciid.org/about-us, accessed 15 March 2017.
[5] "The Politics of Inter-faith Dialogue: It's (Usually) Good to Talk, 27 March 2013, http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2013/03/politics-inter-faith-dialogue accessed 14 August 2017.
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[10] Facebook page of KAICIID, https://www.facebook.com/kaiciid/, accessed 15 March 2017.
[11] Website of KAICIID, http://www.kaiciid.org/advisoryforum, accessed 15 March 2017.

Centre" (Article 4),[12] and the Secretary General shall be "accorded the privileges and immunities, exemptions and facilities accorded to heads of diplomatic missions" (Article 15).[13] The guests of the center, including the members of the board of directors and of the advisory board, and participants to conferences and other activities, also seem to be excepted from ordinary legislation concerning immigration, as "[v]isas . . . shall be granted free of charge and as promptly as possible" (Article 13).[14]

As shown, the KAICIID center is quite impressive regarding its image and resources, and has a very broad platform—an extensive power base and a wide base of action—religiously and culturally speaking when including the board of directors and the advisory forum, and even broader when including its collaborative partners and organizational network. Its activities, which I will not explore further in this paper, include large and smaller conferences, educational programs, and regional projects in various places in the world, all of which may be put under the broad headline "Dialogue" and which often are identified by the center as peace-building work.

At the same time, the center can be categorized as a diplomatic mission regarding the agreement with the Austrian government, as cited above. This aspect of KAICIID surfaced in 2014, when a diplomatic crisis between Austria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emerged because of the center's reaction—or rather lack of reaction—to the Saudi court sentencing the Saudi blogger on civil rights and atheism, Raif Badawi, to 1,000 lashes for charges including the accusation that he insulted Islam. The Austrian chancellor at the time, Werner Faymann, called on Austria to withdraw from KAICIID, because the center did not want to publically criticize this human rights violation.[15] The argument for not doing this was that the center did not want to "interfere in internal affairs." Faymann was cited in the press criticizing this decision, saying that "the center did not fulfill the mandate of dialogue because it was silent on basic issues of human rights." The crisis resulted in former Austrian Justice Minister Claudia Bandion-Ortner stepping down from her position as deputy head of the center. Other prominent politicians including the minister of foreign affairs, and a Roman Catholic bishop, did, however, warn against "rash action."[16] Rumors reported by right-wing-biased media said that the Saudi ambassador to Vienna threatened to move the headquarters of Vienna-based OPEC if KAICIID was closed due to an Austrian withdrawal. KAICIID was not closed. A report was made, concluding that a closure of the center would not make sense because the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia was the same as when the center was opened.[17]

In preparing this paper, I have in my explorations maneuvered in cyberspace between extreme right-wing and anti-Muslim bloggers in Austria and beyond who were fiercely critical of KAICIID on the one hand, and dialogue-oriented websites praising the work of KAICIID and reporting about its significance concerning top-level dialogue and peacebuilding on the

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[12] "Agreement Between the Republic of Austria and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Regarding the Seat of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Austria, available on the website of KAICIID, http://www.kaiciid.org/sites/default/files/02_kaiciid_hq-en_1.pdf, accessed 15 March 2017.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "Austria Mulls Quitting Saudi-Backed Religious Center in Vienna," 17 January 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-saudi-centre-idUSKBN0KQ0KA20150117.

[16] "Austria Mulls Quitting Saudi-Backed Religious Centre in Vienna," 17 January 2015, http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-austria-saudi-centre-idUKKBN0KQ0JS20150117.

[17] "Saudi Effort to Promote Open Society Abroad in Tatters," 22 February 2015, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2963783/Saudi-effort-promote-open-society-abroad-tatters.html.

other. Constructively critical voices and research on the center have not been easily found. But I will include some viewpoints and perspectives of the more sober kind below.

In an article on King Abdullah's reform-oriented legacy by Kumaraswamy and Quamar from 2016 (King Abdullah died in 2015), KAICIID is seen as part of a larger project by the late King to reform the Saudi society through dialogue.[18] It was initiated by a meeting between the King and the Vatican in 2007, and prepared for by a national dialogue within the Saudi society in order to contain and restrict extremists and implement reforms concerning the status of women and Shi'a Muslims in the Saudi public. The authors do, however, conclude that these initiatives made only marginal improvements and claim that they "ran out of steam."[19] The interesting point for us is the article's firm placement of KAICIID as an agent primarily within Saudi Arabia, as part of the reform effort aimed at the country's domestic politics.

One of the participants in one of KAICIID's conferences (held in 2014), the prominent Islamic feminist Riffat Hassan, writes in an article on her many engagements in interreligious dialogue where she also refers to her experience with, and view on, KAICIID. She openly criticizes the lack of gender awareness and the gender imbalance at the conference, which was overwhelmingly dominated by men. But she adds that this criticism is relevant not only for KAICIID but for most interreligious dialogue initiatives and conferences—she calls it "the chronic issue."[20] Her primary response to KAICIID is positive. She states that most interreligious dialogues she has attended have been financed and dominated by Jews and Christians, with the result that the Muslim attendees felt like "poor relatives." With KAICIID and the other initiatives in interreligious dialogues in Muslim-majority countries (the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Jordan, and the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue), Hassan states, "With the emerge of KAICIID and a huge influx of Muslim money a new era has dawned in the world of interreligious dialogue."[21] She hopes this will change the dialogues so that Muslims will no longer be defined by the others in the dialogues, but can be empowered to define themselves. She adds that "it is too early to predict the outcome of this grand project.[22]

KAICIID and the Austrian Context

How has the center influenced Austrian domestic politics? Clearly, the center is seen as a confirmation of Vienna's status as a hosting city for significant international organizations. Going to Austrian domestic politics and the Austrian discourse of interreligious dialogue as well as the discourse of Islam and Muslims, I have been looking for traces of how the establishing and the massive attention of KAICIID have been influencing these. There are some obvious traces, such as liberal Muslims protesting against the center based on the fear of Saudi influence in the country, worried that the already quite anti-Islamic public discourse in Austrian media now would interpret Saudi Arabia as the representative of Muslims, and of

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[18] P. R. Kumaraswamy and Md. Muddassir Quamar, "More Effective as Regent than as Monarch: Abdullah's Reform Legacy," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 9, no. 3 (2016): 445–460.
[19] Ibid., 454.
[20] Riffat Hassan, "Engaging in Interreligious Dialogue: Recollections and Reflections of a Muslim Woman," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 49, no. 1 (2014): 134–139 (special issue on "Celebrating 50 Years of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue").
[21] Ibid., 139.
[22] Ibid.

Islam.[23] From the more established Muslim organization IGGÖ, there seems to have been little public criticism, but also not any articulated support.[24] Most Muslims in Austria (6% of the population) are not Saudis or Arabs; they are of Turkish, Bosnian, and Chechen origin, and some have origins in Kosovo.[25] The Muslims in Austria with Turkish roots have been heavily funded by the Diyanet in regard to money and imams. But the oldest mosque in the country is a Saudi-sponsored mosque in Vienna built in 1979—right when OPEC peaked and the Iranian revolution occurred.

Since the establishment of KAICIID, Austrian legislation on Muslim faith communities and Islam has taken a radical turn. In 2013, both an Alevi faith community and a Shia community were recognized according to Austrian law. Islam had been recognized by law already in 1912, but from 2010 on there was a larger diversity among the recognized Muslim communities with now one Sunni Muslim community, two Alevi communities, and one Shi'a Muslim community. One of the articulated aims for this was to combat extremism.[26] In 2015, however, a disputed law passed in the Austrian parliament. According to this law, Islamic organizations and faith communities were not permitted anymore to accept financial support from abroad, and all Muslims were entitled to use a standardized German version of the Koran. The latter was backed by the Austrian Roman Catholic bishops and the IGGÖ—reluctantly. Austria's foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, claimed: "We want an Islam of the Austrian kind, and not one that is dominated by other countries."[27] The law, on the other hand, strengthened the rights of Austrian Muslims to be protected against discrimination, gave official status to Muslim holidays, and recognized the status of Muslim graveyards and the right to have Islamic pastoral care in public institutions such as hospitals. An education of imams was established at the University of Vienna. Despite these aspects of the law, the spokeswoman for IGGÖ asserted that the law was "hurtful." She stated, "This law mirrors an atmosphere of fear that all Muslims feel in Europe, where there is general suspicion toward Muslims."[28] Sebastian Kurtz, on the other side, stated that this law should become "a model for the rest of Europe."[29]

There are no records that KAICIID or the Saudis protested against the implementation of the law. KAICIID itself would not be affected by it, as an intergovernmental organization, not being an Islamic faith community, but inhabiting a de facto diplomatic immunity. It is mainly the Turkish and Bosnian Muslims that would be rejected having financial support—and not being allowed to read the Koran in Arabic when they gathered. It seems that this is not evaluated as a basic human rights issue in most of the dominant political discourse in Austria. During the years of the existence of KAICIID, the discourse on Islam in Austria seems to have become more polarized, and the Austrian

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[23] "New Vienna Interfaith Centre Opens With Saudi Help," November 26, 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-26/business/sns-rt-religion-interfaithcentre-pixl5e8mqc06-20121126_1_kaiciid-interfaith-dialogue-saudi-arabia.

[24] On the website of Austria's largest organisation for Muslims, IGGÖ, KAICIID is not explicitly mentioned (http://www.derislam.at/, accessed 15 March 2017).

[25] Thomas Schmidinger and Alev Cakir, "Austria," in Jørgen S. Nielsen, ed., *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, volume 6 (Amsterdam: Brill, 2014), 45–66.

[26] Ibid., 49.

[27] "Austria Passes 'Law on Islam' Banning Foreign Money for Muslim Groups," 25 February 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-muslims-idUSKBN0LT28420150225.

[28] "Austria Bans Foreign Funding for Islamic Groups," 26 February 2015, http://europe.newsweek.com/controversial-austrian-islam-law-bans-foreign-funding-islamic-groups-309753?rm=eu.

[29] "Austria Defends New Law on Foreign Funding of Mosques," 8 March 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/08/austria-foreign-minister-islam-funding-law-restricting.

politicians seem to be more eager to governmentalize Austrian Muslims, although letting more diversity among the recognized Islamic groups be acknowledged. This is, however, not a development we only find in Austria; it is rather a shared tendency in many European countries.

So—where does this place KAICIID? Is it a place for top-end interreligious dialogue among religious leaders and education for dialogue among international youth? Is it a diplomatic asset to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, providing access and legitimization for the Saudis to international organizations, including the UN, under the cover of interreligious dialogue? The answer is probably that KAICIID is a combination of both. The center does not seem to have prioritized the needs of Austrian Muslims, or interreligious dialogue in Austria. Neither does it seem to make any particular effort to negotiate between the discourse of interreligious dialogue and the discourse on certain human rights connected to or conflicting with religious freedom in Europe. If it initially was established to be an asset for reform initiatives within Saudi Arabia, this makes a certain sense.

The Discourses of Interreligious Dialogue and "1.5 Diplomacy"

Jeannine Hill Fletcher has sketched up three models of interreligious dialogue: the Parliament Model, the Activist Model, and the Storytelling Model.[30] She has pointed out that the Parliament Model of representation often excludes women and privileges religious leaders. Certainly, parts of KAICIID's structure can be categorized in this way, such as the board of directors and the advisory board. The Activist Model and Storytelling Model that open up for a more dynamic and inclusive dialogue may be present in some of KAICIID's projects and education in particular contexts. But the structure of KAICIID, with its intergovernmental, royal, papal, and diplomatic presence and status—how should we speak about this? Is this an extra-parliamentary model of dialogue? Dialogue established by autocrats among diplomats and religious leaders? In times when the boundaries between the religious and the secular are collapsing in international politics in so many ways and interreligious dialogues take different forms and shapes, sometimes even having contradictory or ambiguous aims, we need to find a language for this mixture of interreligious dialogue and international diplomacy in order to address it properly. Diplomatic negotiations between representatives of nation-states and possible transformation processes within interreligious encounters and dialogue are not necessarily mutually exclusive. But if processes of interreligious dialogue are instrumentalized to serve diplomatic interests of particular nation- states, this should not be called dialogue, but rather "1.5 diplomacy," as KAICIID names its own work in one of its self-presentations on the center's website.[31] This may be more transparent and the interests involved could be more open and articulated.

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[30] Jeannine Hill Fletcher: "Women in Inter-Religious Dialogue," in Catherine Cornille, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 168–183.

[31] In an MA thesis exploring interreligious dialogue connected to peace processes in the Middle East, Tyle Dale Haugerin requests a further discussion of 1.5 diplomacy. "Stalemate in the Holy Land: A Critical Examination of Palestinian-Israeli Interreligious Initiatives as Track-II Diplomacy," Faculty of Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Oslo, 2011, p. 88, available at https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/13123/Hauger_Thesis_Complete_May_2011.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

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A Cautionary Tale for Interreligious Studies from Comparative Fundamentalism: Who is at the Table?

Matthew D. Taylor

Interreligious studies is a promising new arena for collaboration in religious studies. This paper proposes that we read the recent demise of the comparative fundamentalism endeavor as a cautionary tale for what can result when religion scholars shape an interdisciplinary and intertraditional discourse. The key structural inequity of that framework was its assumed ideological identification with a non-fundamentalist, "normal" religious outlook. Fundamentalists were treated as a global crisis to be comprehended, leading scholars to caricature the communities, particularly the "Islamic fundamentalists," they studied. Through careful attention to whom we include in our interreligious conversations, interreligious studies might avoid these same pitfalls.

Keywords: comparative, Fundamentalism, inclusion, other, lessons, interdisciplinary

Interreligious studies is a relatively new and undeniably promising subfield within the broad, disciplinary-boundary-defying world that is religious studies. This subfield consciously brings interdisciplinary resources to examine intertraditional religious encounters. It positively engages the de facto religious diversity of our societies and the inevitable collisions and discussions that occur between religious identities. I deeply value the way interreligious studies can bridge the divides between religious studies and theology, between emic and etic approaches. That brings the possibility of opening up conversations that are not simply among arms-length observers about their data but that allow insiders in one religious tradition to speak to insiders in another. Scholars who may or may not belong to those traditions can bring their expertise as full participants. There is probably no more exciting arena of religious studies today.

It is precisely because of my admiration for, and eager participation in, interreligious studies that I would like to offer what I am calling a cautionary tale. It is a case study from another burgeoning field of religious studies that flourished in the late twentieth century. This field was also interdisciplinary, gathering scholars from a variety of academic specialties. It too facilitated collaboration across the divide between religious studies scholars and theologians. Scholars in this field studied and theorized among a wide variety of religious traditions to develop new paradigms of interreligious understanding. The field I am referring to is sometimes called comparative fundamentalism (or just the study of fundamentalisms). It was the attempt to deploy the terminology and framework of "fundamentalism" as a way of understanding the apparent rise of reactive and militant religious movements in the twentieth century.[1] This was perhaps the last and

[1] The locale of my overview is primarily America, and I will be principally surveying the history and expansive uses of the English term "fundamentalism." I am aware that the English term has occasioned a neologism in Arabic (*uṣūliyya*) and has been associated in French with a term (*intégrisme*) that had prior connotations with Catholic anti-modernism.

greatest comparative religion project of the twentieth century, and the fact that today it is largely moribund is testament to its rapid decline.

I will offer a brief overview of the etymological origins and growth of the comparative fundamentalism field, its surge of scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s, and the sharp criticisms that contributed to its recent dissolution. I will then draw out some lessons that I believe are relevant for interreligious studies lest it run into some of the same pitfalls.

The Original Fundamentalists' Notoriety

The original Fundamentalists coined the term in a distinctly tumultuous moment. The nineteenth-century American Evangelical movement included a wide range of political and theological views, but, late in that century, a faction of self-described Evangelicals grew increasingly bellicose about what they perceived as a tripartite threat to Christian orthodoxy: changes in the practice of the physical sciences (most notable in Darwin's theory of evolution), Biblical criticism (also known as higher criticism), and the responsive rise of liberal Protestantism. They grouped these developments under the heading of "modernism" and set out to oppose any accommodation with these trends within their churches and denominations. One particularly positive expression of this oppositional perspective came in the form of a twelve-volume, paperback series published from 1910 to 1915, entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*.[2] For those familiar with the later anti-intellectual stereotypes of the American Fundamentalist movement, the essays in *The Fundamentals* are markedly urbane and learned. Though intended for an audience of educated laymen and pastors, the volumes were written and edited by some of the most respected and prominent theologically conservative Evangelical scholars and pastors in the U.S. and Britain. Evangelical heroes like Professor B. B. Warfield of Princeton Seminary and Rev. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, were recruited to write about each of the freshly delineated core teachings (i.e., fundamentals) of the Christian faith, which included "The Deity of Christ," "The Virgin Birth of Christ," and "Foreign Missions, Or World-Wide Evangelism." But the hinge upon which all the other fundamentals turned was the total reliability of the Bible as a source of knowledge and divine truth. For all their ambition to present a rousing public defense of a conventional Evangelical faith, *The Fundamentals* made a small splash in the cultural and religious discourse, as "neither theological journals nor popular religious periodicals seemed to take more than passing notice."[3]

The volumes' impact would be more terminological than cultural or theological. As this vocabulary of "fundamentals" exerted influence in various intra-denominational debates, a Baptist pastor and journalist coined the term "fundamentalists" in 1920 to describe those Baptists who

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Naturally, these words have acquired undertones and nuances in local linguistic contexts and scholarly discourse that are not in the scope of this article. For more, see J. J. G. Jansen, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Uṣūliyya," (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and Peter Antes, "Fundamentalism: A Western Term with Consequences," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12, no. 1 (2000): 260–266. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to maintain the capitalized "Fundamentalism" in reference to the original Protestant movement and used the lower case for other uses of the term.

[2] Reuben A. Torrey and A. C. Dixon, eds., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, Vol. I–XII (Chicago: Testimony Publishing, 1910–1915).

[3] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 119.

were ready to "do battle royal" against their more theologically liberal counterparts.[4] The term caught on quickly across denominational lines as it seemed to capture, for the self-ascribing Fundamentalists, their single-minded commitment to the core of the Christian faith. It also set them apart from the then diffuse usage of the title "Evangelical" in the 1920s to cover a wide spectrum of politically and theologically liberal and conservative views. For their opponents, Evangelical and otherwise, the epithet "Fundamentalist" summed up the ideological and oppositional attitude that they found so distasteful in the group.

The adversaries of Fundamentalism were quite vocal in their disdain, and perhaps the most prominent early refutation came in liberal Evangelical Protestant Harry Emerson Fosdick's 1922 sermon at New York's First Presbyterian Church provocatively titled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" He contended, "Their apparent intention is to drive out of the evangelical churches men and women of liberal opinions. . . . For in the Middle West the Fundamentalists have had their way in some communities and a Christian minister tells us the consequences. He says the educated people are looking for their religion outside the churches." In Fosdick's telling, Fundamentalist intolerance was rupturing Evangelical churches as they took doctrinaire stances on matters non-essential to the Christian faith.[5]

A different "battle royal" between the early Fundamentalists and scientific American culture materialized a few years later in the proceedings of *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* in 1925, popularized and mythologized as the Scopes Monkey Trial. Scopes was a biology teacher attempting to controvert a recent Fundamentalist legislative victory in Tennessee outlawing the teaching of human evolution in public schools. Popular media portrayals and perception at the time presented the Scopes trial as a showdown between the culturally-powerful-but-boorish biblicism of the Fundamentalists and the arrayed and embattled defenders of science, modernity, and American pluralism. The trial involved the first utilization of the new technology of a national radio hook-up and was broadcast nationwide as an unprecedented "spectacular media event."[6] For two weeks, hundreds of reporters converged on the little town of Dayton, Tennessee to cover the phenomenon. Setting aside the question of whether the trial truly was representative of core Fundamentalist concerns (the early movement was more focused on denominational purity than societal education reform, and several essays in *The Fundamentals* take a more conciliatory approach

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[4] Curtis Lee Laws, "Convention Side Lights," *Watchman-Examiner* 8, July 1, 1920, 834. Quoted in David Harrington Watt, "Fundamentalists of the 1920s and 1930s," in Simon A. Wood and David Harrington Watt, eds., *Fundamentalism: Perspectives on a Contested History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 20. As Watt notes, the new term was little more than an aside, and Laws' own feelings about the Fundamentalists were unclear.

[5] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," sermon at First Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, May 21, 1922, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/, accessed December 28, 2016. Fascinatingly, in 1922, Fosdick was still calling himself and his church "evangelical." He calls attention to the diversity of Evangelical opinion on "the historicity of certain special miracles," the "theory of the Atonement," "the inspiration of the Bible," and "the second coming of our Lord." The fact that liberal Protestants were still identifying with the term Evangelical in the 1920s demonstrates the flexibility of that title and why the Fundamentalists embraced a new terminological identity. By the mid-century, many of these theologically liberal and moderate Evangelicals would abandon that title in favor of calling themselves "historic" or "Mainline Protestants."

[6] Susan Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other," *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 382.

toward the specific question of evolution), the episode was important for widely introducing the term "Fundamentalism" to popular American culture.[7]

While the Fundamentalist-led prosecution actually did win the trial—the jury deliberated for a mere nine minutes, and Scopes was fined a meager $100 and then given a scholarship by a group of scientists to study at the University of Chicago—Susan Harding has compellingly argued that the lasting image of the trial was mediated by the elite, big-city media who relayed accounts of the event that were not even remotely neutral or sympathetic to the Fundamentalist side. H. L. Mencken, an acerbic columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*, attended the trial and fired off trenchant dispatches to the metropolitan elite. He caricatured rural, Fundamentalist Tennesseans as *"Homo boobiens,"* adding that a person "is a fundamentalist for the precise reason that he is uneducable. . . What impressed me most, watching that trial through long sweaty days, was the honest bewilderment of the assembled yokels. They simply could not understand the thing that Scopes was accused of teaching."[8] This became the dominant remembered narrative of the trial; indeed, many Fundamentalist Christian newspapers or periodicals hardly mentioned the trial at the time and did not send reporters to cover it. The largely secular or progressive, pro-science press who did cover the trial portrayed the famed prosecutor William Jennings Bryan and his Fundamentalist supporters as artless, unsophisticated Bible thumpers, unable to adjust to the demands of modernity.

Likewise, the mid-century Broadway play and hit Hollywood movie *Inherit the Wind* further propelled these images of Fundamentalists into the collective American consciousness by transforming the Scopes trial (lightly fictionalized) into an allegory for McCarthyism's prosecution of enlightened free speechers and pluralists.[9] The resulting popular image of Fundamentalists is, in Harding's condensation, one of people who are "militant, strident, dogmatic, ignorant, duped, backward, rural, southern, uneducated, antiscientific, anti-intellectual, irrational, absolutist, authoritarian, racist, sexist, anticommunist, reactionary, bigoted, war mongers. You cannot reason with them."[10] In Harding's sharp analysis, the Scopes trial becomes a mythic victory created by an anti-Fundamentalist, urban media, so that Bryan and the Fundamentalists were "'othered,' internally 'orientalized'" both in real time and in remembrance.[11] Fundamentalists were not persuadable fellow citizens in a pluralistic democracy; they were the benighted enemies of enlightenment.

As these negative connotations accrued, many Fundamentalists, beginning in the 1940s, opted to return to the more irenic and ecumenical "Evangelical" (or "neo-evangelical," as they originally preferred) moniker. Hence, "Fundamentalist" and "Evangelical" acted for the remaining decades of the twentieth century as attitudinal poles in a shared theological and ideological

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[7] See James Orr, "Science and Christian Faith," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, Vol. IV (Chicago: Testimony Publishing, c. 1912), 91–104, and George Frederick Wright, "The Passing of Evolution," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, Vol. VII (Chicago: Testimony Publishing, c. 1913). For analysis, see Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 122–123.

[8] H. L. Mencken, "Fundamentalism: Divine and Secular," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, September 20, 1925. Excerpted in S. T. Joshi, ed., *H. L. Mencken on Religion* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 120–121.

[9] Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *Inherit the Wind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960). See Marvin Olasky and John Perry, *Monkey Business: The True Story of the Scopes Trial* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 133ff.

[10] Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism," 373.

[11] Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism," 390.

movement, separated only by "degree[s] of militance," rather than discrete or separable qualities.[12] Famed Fundamentalist preacher and political mobilizer of the late twentieth century Jerry Falwell used to joke: "A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something."[13]

The Orientalists' Analogy

In a lexicological irony, in the same decades that the American media were, in Harding's expression, "orientalizing" Protestant Fundamentalists, actual Orientalists—the preferred term for Western scholars who studied Islam until Edward Said's scathing book *Orientalism* led to the term's abdication[14]—were beginning to expand the use of the term to Islam. In the 1940s and 1950s, several Orientalist scholars of Islam at the University of Chicago began applying "fundamentalist" to various figures and movements within Islam, principally as an analogy to help Western audiences understand the complexities of Islamic history. Rosemary R. Corbett has recently and witheringly surveyed this mid-century lexical expansion of the concept of fundamentalism in its earliest connection with Islam.[15] Her analysis is useful in its etymological tracing of the original idea of Islamic fundamentalism, which she credits to the famed Islamicist H. A. R. Gibb and then follows through the work of two of Gibb's students: the comparativist Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Fazlur Rahman, a liberal Muslim reformist. For introducing the concept of Islamic fundamentalism into the academic discourse, Corbett accuses Gibb of "ahistorical conjecture" that is "analytically imprecise," and, through his students, he contributes to a "false universal classification" of generic fundamentalism.[16] In her telling, the Orientalists' casual analogy "helped to foster the idea that fundamentalism is something common to all traditions."[17] My own assessment of these figures aligns with Corbett's on several fronts, but I would like to draw a few distinctions and clarify a few of her points.

Several features of the Orientalists' analogy are worth highlighting. First, fundamentalism appears in their writings alongside a number of imported Christian terms—"puritanical," "catholic," "the Muslim Church," etc.—that these Western scholars of Islam metaphorically employed to explain Islamic debates to a mostly Christian audience.[18] They appear keenly aware

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[12] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 149. Use of the term Evangelical (or "neo-evangelical") was re-pioneered in the 1940s by disaffected Fundamentalists clustered around Fuller Seminary, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the revivalist Billy Graham. They sought to differentiate themselves from the more factional and culturally antagonistic Fundamentalist modes of the 1920s and 1930s.

[13] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16. See also George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 1.

[14] Edward Said's sweeping critique of Orientalism was directed not only at the Western religious studies conversation about Islam, but also at the artistic and literary depictions of "The East" that infantilized, patronized, sexualized, and generally Othered non-white peoples as an imagined foil to Western identity and became embedded in academic discourse. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[15] Rosemary R. Corbett, "Islamic 'Fundamentalism': The Mission Creep of an American Religious Metaphor," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83, n. 4 (December 2015): 977–1004, accessed December 29, 2016, doi: 10.1093/jaarel/lfv056.

[16] Corbett, "Islamic 'Fundamentalism,'" 988, 989, and 980.

[17] Ibid., 981.

[18] For instance, Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), x, 14, and 32. See also Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," in P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2B (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 637.

that they were drawing an analogy to this particular Christian vocabulary and movement. Moreover, the Orientalists, surprisingly in retrospect, had many positive things to say about the imputed Islamic fundamentalists. Gibb and Rahman wrote about it as a scripture-based reformist/revivalist tendency that arose periodically throughout the Islamic centuries.[19] Gibb commented that the much-maligned, and oft-fundamentalist-labeled, eighteenth-century Wahhabi reform movement "in its ideal aspect . . . had a salutary and revitalizing effect, which spread little by little over the whole Muslim world."[20]

Rahman, operating as both a Pakistani Muslim reformer and a scholar of religion, does not categorically dismiss or dislike what he labels as fundamentalist. He thought that the Wahhabis had "done good work by bringing into relief the principles of Islamic egalitarianism and co-operation."[21] He sought to articulate a "mature and vigorously Qur'anically based vision of authentic Islam for this age."[22] In this process, he seemed to find some empathy for and identification with so-called Muslim fundamentalist movements and thinkers. At the time of his death, he was writing a monograph on the topic of Islamic fundamentalism. Ebrahim Moosa, the posthumous editor of that volume, wrote:

> In [Rahman's] vocabulary, a genuine "fundamentalist" was a person who was committed to a project of reconstruction or re-thinking. Such a person must recognize that one lived in a "new age" and with honesty, as well as with both intellect and faith, encounter the message of the Qur'an through the mirror of that historical moment.[23]

This does not sound so different from Rahman's own project, albeit with his added insistence on historical consciousness.

Smith—who, though younger than Gibb, was actually the first of the Orientalists to apply the term fundamentalism to Islam in print[24]—would argue later in his life that the various

[19] Gibb casts Islamic fundamentalism as the revivalist/textualist half of a Hegelian dialectic countered by mystical Sufism ("the tension between transcendentalism and immanentism") that reaches an occasionally sublime synthesis in figures like al-Ghazali and Muhammad 'Abduh. Gibb, *Modern Trends,* 31–32. Rahman traces the trajectory of 'Abduh's reformist thought as "it developed a fundamentalist character" in his disciple Rashid Rida. But even then, "it was essentially a throw-back to eighteenth century [i.e., Wahhabi] pre-Modernist fundamentalism." Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," 648.
[20] Gibb, *Modern Trends*, 26–27.
[21] Rahman, "Revival and Reform," 638.
[22] Frederick Mathewson Denny, "The Legacy of Fazlur Rahman," in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 98.
[23] Ebrahim Moosa, "Introduction," in *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* by Fazlur Rahman (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 8. This borderline affinity undermines Corbett's parenthetical statement that Rahman was "often using [fundamentalist] to describe his opponents" ("Islamic 'Fundamentalism,'" 990–991).
[24] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 2nd ed. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), 150. The first edition was published in 1943. Corbett attributes the conception of the analogy to his teacher, Gibb, in his 1945 Haskell Lectures in Comparative Religion at the University of Chicago (published in 1947). She papers over Smith's earlier use of the word and concept before Gibb's with a footnote: "While Smith technically used the term in print before Gibb, he did so while writing as Gibb's student and it is Gibb's dialectical schema that has exerted the lasting influence on the discourse" (Corbett, "Islamic 'Fundamentalism,'" 991 n.14). Is it not equally possible that Gibb got

fundamentalisms of the world were not products of unenlightened or pugnacious religiosity. Rather, Smith wrote:

> [They] should be understood only in terms of the failure of modern liberalism. . . . An increasing number of people around the world, responding to the shallowness of negative secularism [i.e., a secularism that is anti-religious] and its complete inability to make room for spirituality, are taking recourse to the only clear alternative that they seem to be offered: the various forms of fundamentalisms.[25]

Smith saw Islamic and other "fundamentalisms" not as a generic militancy against modernity but as the natural reaction that occurs when the human instinct toward meaning and transcendence is pushed to the cultural margins.

Against Corbett's genealogical thesis of the Orientalist's analogy—that Gibb started the sloppy comparison and his inheritors carried on using it uncritically[26]—I would offer a more generous assessment. Gibb, Rahman, Smith, and the other scholars who developed the concept of Islamic fundamentalism in various fashions from the 1940s to 1970s appear keenly aware that they were drawing an analogy to a particular Christian movement. Theirs was an exercise in translation, in comparative religion and interreligious intelligibility, making sense of the unfamiliar by way of the familiar. Islamic fundamentalism, in their composite view, was not irrational, irretrievable, or simplistically anti-modern. The term was not intrinsically negative or even reactionary. It was a metaphor—a non-native term imported to facilitate a comparison. Over the middle decades of the twentieth century, other Orientalists tentatively picked up the term as a generic shorthand for scripturalist or political Islamic reform movements.[27]

By the late-1970s, then, fundamentalism had come to occupy a fairly stable place in the American vocabulary: some American Protestants were still self-applying the word. And, in the Western scholarly discourse about Islam, the term had begun to slip the bonds that tied it to the

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the idea of using the term from Smith's prior publication or that they collaboratively noticed a parallel between certain trends in Islam and twentieth-century Christianity?

[25] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Fundamentalism in the Modern World," *India International Centre Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 41. Corbett puzzlingly casts Smith as a prescient, conscientious scholar, who in the 1960s, "had ceased to use the term fundamentalism and would later argue that to apply this term to Muslims was to confuse the histories and cultural essences of East and West" (Corbett, "Islamic 'Fundamentalism,'" 993). I can find no place where Smith made this argument against fundamentalism's use with regard to Islam in any of his publications, and Corbett offers no citation for it. I can find several instances of Smith using not only the term but the categorical idea of generic religious fundamentalism well into the 1990s. If anything, Smith helped expand the application of the concept of fundamentalism to other traditions beyond Islam and Christianity. He continued to use the term and even the plural (fundamentalisms), albeit with some qualifications, in this essay and elsewhere. In fact, in one of Corbett's few citations of Smith's broad corpus from a book of essays published in 2000, the year of his death, he explicitly says that Muslims' "disillusionment has led them to the sort of right-wing fundamentalism and religious reactionary stance that I myself certainly decry." Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Islamic Resurgence," in Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, et al., eds., *Consciousness and Reality: Studies in Memory of Toshihiko Izutsu* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 13.

[26] She argues, "At the very least, continual usage of the label outside of Protestant contexts is intellectually lazy" (Corbett, "Islamic 'Fundamentalism,'" 995).

[27] John O. Voll, whom Corbett critiques for participating in the 1990s Fundamentalism Project, tells the story of a gathering of American Islamicists in the 1970s where Barbara Stowasser "tried to convince us all to stop using this term (fundamentalism), and we all agreed that it was a bad term, and then went on using it in our publications the next year anyway." John O. Voll, "Al-Qaʿida" (lecture, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., October 23, 2013).

Protestant tradition. If you search American academic databases for uses of the word fundamentalism prior to 1978, you discover hundreds of articles analyzing the Protestant movement with a smattering of other religious and non-religious analogies derived from that movement. Interestingly, "farm/agricultural fundamentalism" occurs far more frequently than any sort of non-Christian religious—including Islamic—fundamentalism.

Comparative Fundamentalism

The academic conversation about fundamentalism, particularly in Islamic studies, that was at a low hum by the 1970s, grew to a roar in 1979–1980 when the mostly unrelated occurrences of the Iranian Revolution and the dramatic Republican political mobilization of American Evangelicals and Fundamentalists to elect Ronald Reagan catapulted the term fundamentalism again into American and Western consciousness and vocabulary.[28] Pundits and scholars, analysts and liberal elites cast about for conceptual handles to explain the ostensibly sudden resurgence of mettlesome religion, and fundamentalism became the catch-all word to describe newly assertive faith.

This surprised, visceral awareness of fundamentalism was quintessentially captured just a few months before Reagan's landslide election in an essay by Martin E. Marty, a liberal Protestant and one of the most widely read religious commentators in America, in *The Saturday Review*. Entitled "Fundamentalism Reborn: Faith and Fanaticism," the short article avers, "there is no denying that in the 1980s religion is back with a vengeance—and not just in Iran."[29] Marty profiles Jerry Falwell and Ayatollah Khomeini, while also pointing to various religious uprisings in Japan, India, and Israel to illustrate the menacing return of regressive religion confronting the new decade. Channeling Harry Emerson Fosdick, the essay is one part categorical analysis and two parts rousing call to action to join the battle. In the coming skirmishes between liberal modernity and the arrayed forces of militant fundamentalism, there is no doubt whose side Marty is on. In his prescient and martial conclusion, he notes, "If 'the fundamentalists are coming,' it is important, this time, to understand both their grievances and their impulses. Some reconnaissance, to determine who is in their camp and who is not, is strategically wise."[30] Marty was one of many voices championing a new comparative religion effort to categorize and combat the global fundamentalism phenomenon.

What ensued was an explosion of academic and popular, American and international discourse about fundamentalism in the 1980s and 1990s.[31] With the rise of the Religious Right

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[28] There is no shortage of scholarly and media attempts to make sense of the "Rise of the Religious Right" of the 1970s and 1980s. Good analysis can be found in Nancy T. Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed*, The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1–65. A primary-source collection edited by Matthew Avery Sutton is also illuminating: *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2013).

[29] Martin E. Marty, "Fundamentalism Reborn: Faith and Fanaticism," *The Saturday Review* (May 1980), 37.

[30] Ibid., 42.

[31] See especially Simon A. Wood and David Harrington Watt, "Introduction," in Wood and Watt, eds., *Fundamentalism: Perspectives on a Contested History*, 1–17. Douglas Long, *Fundamentalists and Extremists* (New York: Facts on File, 2002) has a decent chronology of the events that were labeled as deriving from fundamentalism (pp. 97–107) and an annotated

fueling Republicans' three consecutive terms in the White House, the sudden existential awareness of militant groups in the Middle East and elsewhere, and several high-profile attacks by Christian and Muslim terrorists, the American and European media and the liberal scholars of the academy generated a vast discursive endeavor to analyze and reconnoiter this seemingly ubiquitous, revivified fundamentalism. In the 1990s, the Library of Congress created a new subject heading (BL 238) for Religious Fundamentalism, leaving intact the historic BT 82.2 for the topic of Protestant Fundamentalism. There are today nearly 200 books under the BL 238 heading with numerous languages and countries represented. The earliest entry is from 1986. Some of these books and articles have been written from emic perspectives, with theologians and religious thinkers defending against the fundamentalist barbarians at the gates.[32] Others are written by religious studies scholars, and, despite the efforts expended at dispassionately understanding fundamentalism, the combative tone exemplified by Marty shines through. The deeper one plumbs this massive corpus of scholastic output, the more one gets the sense that there is never a considered option of defending or integrating fundamentalism. It must be fought. The Orientalists' ambiguity toward the "Islamic fundamentalism" skews toward tacit hostility among the comparative fundamentalism scholars.

This veritable eruption of scholarship and conversation about fundamentalism reached its peak in the publication of The Fundamentalism Project, a five-volume series, from 1991 to 1995. Under the editorship of Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, the series gathers scholars from a variety of fields (anthropologists, sociologists, historians) to contextualize, analyze, and even "comprehend" the global development of fundamentalism.[33] Virtually no major religious tradition is exempted from the fundamentalisms thesis. Marty and Appleby are cognizant of the heavy connotations that come with applying the fundamentalism concept beyond its Protestant origins. But, even if the word fundamentalist were abandoned, they argue, "the public would have to find some other word if it is to make sense of a set of global phenomena which urgently bid to be understood."[34] The editors are mindful of the word's Protestant roots, but they argue that fundamentalism can be elevated above its origins to become a universal category: "all words come from somewhere and will be more appropriate in some contexts than in others."[35] They cite

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bibliography (pp. 143–160) of the ensuing discourse. See also Gabriele Marranci, *Understanding Muslim Identity: Rethinking Fundamentalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–14.

[32] A few examples will suffice: Fisher Humphreys and Philip Wise offer an analysis of generic fundamentalism but with special attention to the concerns of progressive Baptists—*Fundamentalism* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2004). G. Elijah Dann, ed., *Leaving Fundamentalism*: *Personal Stories* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008) sticks to the Christian tradition but extends the meaning of the term to include stories of those who have survived conservative Catholic or Pentecostal/Charismatic upbringings. Within the Muslim tradition, Bassam Tibi has been one of the leading voices countering and refuting "Islamic fundamentalism," see especially, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

[33] The final volume is triumphantly titled *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, though Marty and Appleby are quick to note in their introductory essay that they intend the term to mean "the more modest goal of taking in or embracing a variety of movements in one inclusive analytical statement," rather than the more ambitious sense of completely understanding or knowing. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, "Introduction," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 5` (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.

[34] Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, "The Fundamentalism Project: A User's Guide," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, viii.

[35] Ibid. They apparently felt the need to reiterate nearly word-for-word this argument against their detractors in the introduction to the fourth volume of the series. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, "Introduction," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 8 n.1.

examples ("modern," "religious," "liberal," and "secular") where a word's etymology does not control all future usage.

Echoing the contentious forces that arose against the original Fundamentalist moment in the 1920s and the chorus of anti-fundamentalist voices in the early 1980s, the editors acknowledge that "The Fundamentalism Project issues from the world called Western, the sphere in which the 'modern,' 'liberal,' and 'secular' achievements are most readily experienced, and where fundamentalisms had appeared to be recessive, if not waning."[36] In other words, ingrained in the very structure of the project's analysis are a certain oppositional identity and a certain taken-aback posture. Fundamentalism is a problem to be solved. And yet, none of the contributing authors to the volumes self-identifies as a fundamentalist. Fundamentalism is the object of study, the phenomenon to be explained, the global crisis to be comprehended. For the remainder of the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century, comparative fundamentalism flourished as a field. Hundreds of scholars wrote hundreds of books in numerous languages, thousands of scholarly articles were published, and the word fundamentalism became entrenched in the analytical religious and popular vocabulary as the preferred byword for bad religion.

One conspicuous characteristic of the massive interreligious comparative fundamentalisms enterprise, exemplified but by no means isolated to Marty and Appleby's series, is its intensive focus on Islam. In his slightly sardonic review of the entirety of The Fundamentalism Project's five volumes, Earle Waugh notes that of the 106 articles included, "thirty-one are explicitly concerned with Islamic fundamentalist expressions, and many of the others use interpretive data drawn from Muslim phenomena."[37] This is particularly striking given that the term fundamentalism was coined in a Christian context, the editors of the five volumes are both professed Christians, and the project itself emerges from a Western, Christianity-imbued, American society. Well before 9/11, "fundamentalism," a word that was of Christian parentage and had been occasionally used analogically for Islamic movements, had not only been transformed into a universal religious category but had found a new native locale in the analysis of Islam.

Criticisms and the Decline of Comparative Fundamentalism

Comparative fundamentalism was *the* great comparative religion project of the late twentieth century, and its analyses have not held up well over time. The surge of fundamentalism scholarship in the 1990s has dwindled in the subsequent decades. The word and concept are still a part of the American lexicon, still used by journalists and, occasionally, scholars (especially in reference to Islam), but new comparative projects juxtaposing different forms of fundamentalism are vanishingly rare. Critics have justly and unjustly piled on the concept of a generic fundamentalism taxonomy, on the specific arguments and conclusions of The Fundamentalism Project, and on the ideological assumptions that undergirded the whole effort.

A few samples of these critiques will suffice: Jay M. Harris and many others challenge the circularity of the category of fundamentalism, namely that in labeling a group fundamentalist, we

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[36] Marty and Appleby, "The Fundamentalism Project: A User's Guide," xiii.

[37] Earle Waugh, "Fundamentalism: Harbinger of Academic Revisionism?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 162, accessed December 30, 2016, doi: 10.1093/jaarel/LXV.1.161.

"necessarily presuppose that we know what fundamentalism is," and then by delineating the common characteristics of fundamentalist groups, we reify the prior definition.[38] It is a self-reinforcing comparison. David Harrington Watt highlights the Protestant assumptions that lingered with the term and argues that "labeling Jews or Muslims fundamentalists is somewhat akin to labeling Christians Sunnis or Shiites or labeling Muslims Methodists."[39] In other words, lurking in the background of the American study of comparative fundamentalism are the Scopes Monkey Trial, the Rise of the Religious Right, and intra-Protestant debates that may or may not have analogues outside Christianity. Khalid Blankinship critiques the normative Western and liberal ideology behind the word fundamentalism, such that, like the term Wahhabi, it is deployed "primarily as a term of abuse."[40] In a surprisingly personal essay where he contrasts his "Fundamentalist Baptist upbringing" with his later scholarly perspective, anthropologist Daniel Martin Varisco admits, "Fundamentalist rhetoric, because it thrives on intolerance and hate, is the religion many of us love to hate. So how can we really understand it?"[41] And, echoing Foucault, Juan Campo holds that the Western academic and media conversation about fundamentalism is "a mode of hegemonic discourse" that has become "embedded in the ideologies of Middle Eastern states, among ruling elites as well as among their subjects."[42] "Fundamentalist" is what autocrats label a community they intend to per- / prosecute.

Many of these criticisms of the broad-brush comparative fundamentalism enterprise are fair and well-deserved. The participating scholars attempted to encompass so many movements that the bigger the fundamentalism umbrella became the lower the common denominator among the movements analyzed became. As Waugh comments about The Fundamentalism Project, "Throughout the articles there appears to be a constant awareness that the realities do not fit the frames applied."[43] This unwieldy breadth ultimately caused the entire endeavor to collapse under its own weight. Nearly any religious movement could, from the right angle, be labeled fundamentalist. Moreover, the participating scholars' presumed opposition to the object of their study did, indeed, color their analysis.

Marty and Appleby are correct that all words and categories come from somewhere. It is true that the word fundamentalism might have transcended its etymology. It might have become a trans-religious ideological orientation—like secularism, liberalism, modernism, or feminism—that grew beyond its original context. The original Orientalists' use of the term analogically with Islam did not betoken some intrinsic disapproval toward those so labeled. Had Marty and others followed Gibb and Rahman's lead, fundamentalism might have come to be seen as a complement to modernity, a synonym of revival or reform, with its own negative and positive aspects.

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[38] Jay M. Harris, "'Fundamentalism': Objections from a Modern Jewish Historian," in John Stratton Hawley, ed., *Fundamentalism and Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 167.
[39] Wood and Watt, "Introduction," 5.
[40] Khalid Yahya Blankinship, "Muslim 'Fundamentalism,' Salafism, Sufism, and Other Trends," in *Fundamentalism: Perspectives on a Contested History*, 158.
[41] Daniel Martin Varisco, "The Tragedy of a Comic: Fundamentalists Crusading Against Fundamentalists," *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 3 (2007), 227, accessed December 27, 2016, doi:10.1007/s11562-007-0019-6.
[42] Juan Eduardo Campo, "The Ends of Islamic Fundamentalism: Hegemonic Discourse and the Islamic Question in Egypt," *Journal of Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1995), 177. This analysis is by and large echoed in Corbett's "Islamic 'Fundamentalism'" article, though she does not directly reference Campo.
[43] Waugh, "Fundamentalism: Harbinger of Academic Revisionism?" 167.

Millions of people in contemporary society hold the identity of being secular or a secularist, liberal or an advocate of liberalism. These terms are contested and polemical, aggressively affirmed and constantly reinterpreted. But who speaks as a fundamentalist? Who contends for a positive reading of fundamentalism? To call someone a fundamentalist today almost says more about oneself and one's own implied adversarial identity than about the person being labeled. As Laurence Iannaccone puts it, "A group may thus earn the 'fundamentalist' epithet less because of what it *is* than because of who it *scares*."[44] For theologians and religious studies scholars who analyzed them, the fundamentalists were objects of study, ideological foes, and almost never fellow travelers, conversation partners, or friends. The negative connotations that have attached to "fundamentalism" make it similar to the word "weed." No plant is objectively a weed; to call it a weed is to name it an irritating intruder, a threatening interloper in the garden.

It is predictable that the more scholars and commentators employed the word fundamentalist as a negative category to describe Christian and other religious movements, the more it declined in usage as a self-description. The Protestant Fundamentalists themselves were sensitive to the shifts in the term's cultural undertones, and, over time, the coalition found a range of alternate identifying terms ("Evangelical," "born again," "Bible-believing," "conservative Christian," etc.) to avoid the word Fundamentalist. The attacks on September 11th, 2001 proved the death knell of self-ascribed Christian Fundamentalism. The al-Qaʿida attackers were constantly called "Islamic fundamentalists" in popular media, and demographers show a sharp decline in use of the self-appellation among American Christians as these further loaded connotations accrued.[45] Less than a century after its coinage as a positive identity marking one's vigorous Protestant orthodoxy, the self-ascription of Fundamentalism has virtually disappeared in America.[46]

There has also been a noticeable decline in academic use of the term fundamentalist as an analytical category over the past decade and a half since 9/11. It is still used by media and bloggers, at cocktail parties, and by progressive religious believers to denounce unsavory co-religionists; and it still pops up in the occasional academic article, but there has seemingly been a collective recognition by religious studies scholars that, as a categorical term, it has outlived its usefulness.

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[44] Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of 'Fundamentalism,'" *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 153, no. 1 (March 1997): 101. Emphasis his.

[45] No demographer seems to have been observing this shift in real time, but there are numerous data points. In the mid-1990s, Christian Smith found that, among American Protestants, 19.4 percent self-identified as "fundamentalist" when given four options (the others were evangelical—20.9 percent, mainline Protestant—27.3 percent, and liberal—20.4 percent). *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 236. Anna Greenberg and Jennifer Berktold discovered in 2004 that 24 percent of white Evangelicals (a much smaller demographic sample than Smith's American Protestants) identified as fundamentalists. "Evangelicals in America," Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner, Research Inc., *Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly*, April 5, 2004, accessed July 5, 2017, https://www-tc.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/files/2008/10/results.pdf. By the time Pew began its landmark U.S. Religious Landscape Survey in 2007 (to be repeated in 2014), "fundamentalist" had almost vanished with only 0.5 percent of the U.S. population, and 1 percent of Evangelicals identifying with "Other Evangelical/Fundamentalist" churches. Pew Research Center, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic," February 2008, accessed July 5, 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/05/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf.

[46] An exception that proves the rule: the *Fundamentalist* Church of Latter Day Saints is a widely reviled polygamist sect, notorious for caring little about the opinions of outsiders.

The sour taste left in my mouth having surveyed the comparative fundamentalism endeavor is this: the people who were labeled generic fundamentalists, be they Muslim or Hindu or Christian, were rarely given a voice in the comparison. The category was invented and deployed by Marty and others as a means of separating good religion from bad religion, "normal" modern religion from dysfunctional (anti-)modern religion. Eventually, with no one positively self-ascribing it, the word has become a libel not an identity, a put-down not a perspective.

Conclusion

As we come full circle back to applying our cautionary tale, I would like to suggest that the comparative fundamentalism effort offers a set of pointedly negative lessons for the field of interreligious studies. Obviously, comparative fundamentalism and interreligious studies are very different academic endeavors. The comparative fundamentalism scholars sought to extend an encompassing category, a theory, and a framework to explain a huge variety of contemporary religious movements. Interreligious studies, to the degree that a cogent definition exists for the field, begins from below and focuses the lens of analysis on the multitudinous encounters between religious traditions and identities. It studies, theorizes, and, in some arenas, facilitates such boundary encounters, borrowing from the interfaith movement a hope that mutual understanding and cooperation can defuse the cross-religious tensions that characterize many modern contexts.

But the two fields are also similar in significant ways: like comparative fundamentalism, interreligious studies is an academic discourse uniting outsider (etic) religious studies scholars and insider (emic) theologians and (interfaith) religious practitioners in collaborative projects. Interreligious studies is, like the comparative efforts of the last century, an interdisciplinary endeavor, drawing together psychologists, sociologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, and more. And, like the collaborative comparativists of yesteryear, interreligious studies scholars inevitably hold a shared set of assumptions. These assumptions may well be defensible—and arguably far more defensible than those of the comparative fundamentalism discourse—but they must be acknowledged. We would all agree that interfaith peace is better than outright hostility, that conversation and collaboration across religious borders can be productive. And most of us would hope, in Eboo Patel's phrasing, that we "can work with diversity to build pluralism."[47]

The lessons I take from the cautionary tale of comparative fundamentalism are threefold. First, it demonstrates how collaboration across religious traditions and fields of study can rather easily be facilitated by a shared academic culture and outlook, but that shared outlook can also create perilous blind spots. In many important respects, Christian and Muslim and Buddhist and Hindu (and agnostic) academics may have more in common with each other than with their co-religionists. The institutions we inhabit—colleges and universities, interfaith centers and institutes, academic journals and publishing houses—by their very nature provide our common ground and reinforce our inclusive worldviews and hopes for harmony.

Second, while our shared assumptions might be entirely plausible and humanistic and defendable, they can have collateral effects—tempting us to castigate and, potentially unfairly,

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[47] Eboo Patel, "Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies," *Liberal Education* 99, no. 4 (Fall 2013), accessed July 27, 2017, https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/toward-field-interfaith-studies.

label our seemingly uncooperative neighbors. The scholars of the various comparative fundamentalism projects were apparently united in disdaining or being alarmed by the phenomena they studied, seeing them as a threat to a modern, normal, liberal, and, yes, often Western and Christian order. Similarly, it would be easy for interreligious practitioners to amputate and interreligious scholars to ignore significant movements and groups within any given religious tradition that do not immediately warm to our pluralistic, interfaith ethos. When elite theologians and elite religious studies scholars collaborate, our conversation can quickly shift from analytical to normative, to assume that that which does not align with our program is bad or abnormal or disordered. Like comparative fundamentalism, interreligious studies risks becoming a conversation among "liberal modernists" (or "academic elites" or "religious pluralists") across traditions that marginalizes traditionalists, exclusivists, scripturalists, and conservatives.

Third, relatedly, constant attention must be paid to those voices we might not remember or desire to include in our conversations and our studies. It is crucial to consider who is welcome at and invited to the table of interreligious discourse, recognizing that every religion has elements that do not "play well with others," and those elements are perhaps the most important to be included in interreligious outreach and invitation. I am not naïve about this: I realize that conservative Evangelical Christians and Salafi Muslims and Hindutva activists will not be sitting around the interfaith table chitchatting congenially anytime soon. But as scholars who care about interreligious conversations, we must resist the impulse to excise those parts of religious traditions with sharp elbows. Many interreligious encounters are not harmonious or collaborative or warm, but those encounters can be studied and theorized and, perhaps, improved as well. These groups often make up a not-insignificant fraction of the religious landscape, and our admirable pluralistic and inclusive projects for our societies cannot succeed without them. The moral of our cautionary tale is that the voices who aren't in the room aren't voices. And the people who aren't at the table are vulnerable to caricature.

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