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Borders, Boundaries, Backdrops

An Introduction to the Special Issue on Christianity and Nationalism

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This issue of the *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* constitutes one of several capstone projects for Lund University's research platform on Christianity and Nationalism, housed at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies. Alongside an international conference in Lund at the end of October 2022 – titled *Christianity and Crisis in European Contexts* – this research platform has interrogated the relationship between its two central concepts in a series of academic and public-facing blogs, lectures, seminars, and podcasts.

Any serious research trajectory is dangerous, for worthy prey – with cunning or strength or even simply sheer mass – can fight back. So it is with Christianity, so it is with nationalism, and so it certainly is with the intersection therebetween. What is nationalism, and what are the markers of its manifestation? Is nationalism a modern phenomenon, or is it as old as nations (if, indeed, any such things exist)? What are the limits of Christianity? What distinguishes Christianity from something that is not Christianity? Are Christianities conducive to nationalism? Are they opposed, neutral, or are the concepts themselves linked only by the gossamer of questions such as these? To step into these lines of inquiry means exposure to dangers

from the history of nationalisms, and the history of Christianities. And to wield such concepts, even in honest and courageous pursuit of clarity, can risk perpetuating the harmful dynamics of each. So what can be said about Christianity or nationalism that is new, true, and of use? And what avenues might take us there?

This issue has recruited contributions that approach the intersection of nationalism and Christianity with diverse points of departure and different methods than those which nationalism studies often deploys. We, the editors, have done so on the hypothesis that research on nationalism (much of which is rooted in social science methodologies) has room to grow further, based on insights from theology, philosophy, religious studies, and the history of science. We have envisioned this special issue as an opportunity to reach across disciplines, and in several cases, back through intellectual and political history, to see what possibilities there are for enhancing conversations about nationalism and Christianity for nationalism studies proper. In this way, this issue is an experiment: By pulling on threads at the borders of nationalism studies, we hope to determine whether something unravels that might occasion higher-order questions (sometimes indirectly) *about the very questions* we often put to the study of Christianity and nationalism.

Before addressing each of the special issue's articles, a survey of the field of nationalism studies is in order, so that each piece's contribution to the ongoing academic conversation about nationalism – and Christianity's involvement with it – can be properly framed.

Scholarly conversations about the origin of nations and nationalism – which constitute the field of nationalism studies – have drawn together cross-disciplinary accounts of the formation of nation-states and research on the social, political, and economic implications of modernizing structural transformations. The so-called *modernist* camp of nationalism studies links the emergence of the nation to events of the late eighteenth century: the French and American Revolutions, the creation of the modern state, and continued economic developments that resulted in the rapid progress of capitalism, improved technologies for communication, upward social mobility, and the reduction of religious influence.[1]

The argument of the rival *primordialist* camp proceeds quite differently: If a nation is understood to be "a historical community, more or less

1. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1991; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, NY 1983; Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1993.

institutionally complete, occupying a given territory, or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture",[2] then several key patterns determine and characterize nationhood: history, culture (be it institutional or in the form of a system of shared values), territory, and politics. However, so the argument goes, nations are distinct from preceding collective entities. Anthony D. Smith has dubbed these pre-national collectives *ethnies*. Ethnies share various features of nationhood (for example, certain types of solidarity, shared myths of ancestry, common historical memories, and links to a territory) but have neither territorial borders nor a resolute institutional culture, as nations do. Smith's ethnosymbolist approach dissociates the categories of culture and politics: Ethnies passed down shared memories, certain customs, and symbols to inheritor nations,[3] but ethnies, which predated nations, already involved an emotional attachment between their inhabitants and territory, biology, memories, myths, symbols, and/or specific shared values.[4]

According to modernists, modern nations needed neither primordial ethnic origins nor "ancestor"-like ethnic communities to become nations; nationalists could indeed invent the elements of nationhood (myths, symbols, and links to sacred territories) *ex nihilo* and legitimize them through various means.[5]

Echoing the modernist camp, sociologist Jonathan Hearn identifies nationalism as "the making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to *identity*, to *jurisdiction* and to *territory*", where these (nationalist) claims are usually articulated via mass communication (be it printed, electronic, or other modes of information exchange) and via educational systems.[6] In order to avoid presenting nationalism as a purely political ideology, Hearn rightly mentions that a collective claim to identity may include "religious beliefs or language, or notions of shared biological substance, or of

2. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford 1995, 11, https://doi.org/10.1093/0198290918.001.0001. See also John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, NC 1982; Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Reno, NV 1991; John Hutchinson, "Cultural Nationalism", in John Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, Oxford 2013, 75–94, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199209194.013.0005.

3. See Smith, *National Identity*.

4. See Slobodan Drakulic, "Whence Nationalism?", *Nations and Nationalism* 14 (2008), 221–239, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2008.00315.x; Philip S. Gorski, "The Mosaic Moment: An Early Modernist Critique of Modernist Theories of Nationalism", *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (2000), 1428–1468, https://doi.org/10.1086/210435.

5. See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Ernest Gellner, "Reply to Critics", *Poznán Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities* 48 (1996), 623–686.

6. Jonathan S. Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, New York 2006, 11. Italics in original.

inherited historical experiences, but it can also invoke more abstract qualities such as core values (for example, egalitarianism, liberty, and democracy)".[7] Thus, when referring to the concept of nationalism, we do not only mean it to be a "political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent", as Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) suggests.[8] We also recognize that the cultural elements that define the character of nationalism exert a political *force*. A natural question to ask – indeed, a question raised by some of the articles that follow – is: In light of these political forces, are some nationalisms more inclusive, indeed more ethically or morally justifiable, than others? Why? How?

Literature divides nationalism into two ideal types – civic and cultural. Civic nationalism is relatively inclusive by nature and liberal in its manifestations, unlike ethnocultural nationalism, which is more exclusive and illiberal in articulating its demands. Civic (political) nationalism was a product of the French Revolution and the Reformation. It emerged in socio-economically and politically developed societies that historically had well-established "legal" and "political-cultural" traditions.[9] Civic nationalism was a political phenomenon that was either simultaneous with, or subsequent to, the establishment of the modern sovereign state. Besides its political character, civic nationalism is characterized as culturally thin and more receptive to allowing "others" (whoever might be categorized as such) to belong to the nation. The sense of nationality (or nation-ness, as it were) in the civic model has been characterized largely as voluntaristic rather than ascriptive; in other words, nationality is not something simply given, but is open to acquisition. Rogers Brubaker identifies the principle of *jus soli* (the right of soil, or, birthright citizenship) as one of the key determinants for one's belonging to a civic nation.[10] Others argue that loyalty to state institutions and adherence to social values might determine membership, rather than their ethnic, racial, or religious background.[11] Such framings treat nationality as determined by merit, rather than factors outside the individual's control.

Matters are slightly different with ethnocultural nationalism. It emerged and progressed in nations which, at different periods in their histories, struggled to acquire their own statehood, but their nationalist

7. Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism*, 11.

8. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

9. See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background*, New York 1944; Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, New York 1993; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA 1992; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA 1992.

10. See Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*.

11. See Greenfeld, *Nationalism*; Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*.

sentiments preceded the realization of this goal; elements of culture and ethnicity rather than institutional development were primarily what mattered. The ethnocultural model of nationhood was also closely linked to belief in the collective cultural distinctiveness of the nation. It was turned to the historical past, concerned with ancient myths of nations' historical struggles for self-survival, protection, and preservation of culture. This gave nationalism a robust emotional power and sometimes (if not always) led it to quite illiberal articulations of nationalist claims. According to this model, nation-ness (that is, belonging to the nation) is more determined by ethnic, linguistic, or racial grounds – not to mention the perception of threats to ethnic features of identity – which together functioned as pillars of social mobilization. Hence, ethnocultural nationalism tends towards exclusivity, and is less apt to accommodate "others". Even when threats (or the perception of threats) to national culture vanish, such nationalists still define the nation in exclusively cultural terms, thus alienating non-members of the culture from becoming members of the nation.[12]

Though these above typologies prove heuristically useful, they are ideal types (in the Weberian sense).[13] Even in histories of institutionally, politically, and economically advanced states – such as the UK, Spain, or Canada – the cultural elements of nationalism have been and often remain at play. The situational character of nationalism has led some scholars to conclude that – regardless of whether nationality is understood ethnically or civically – people are usually born into their nationality. Both their political and cultural traditions represent part of this inherited "package". Civic identity may thus be "no less an inherited cultural artifact than [...] ethnic identity".[14] Both cultural and civic nationalism might imply or contain aspects of one another, depending on situation and context.[15] The question, then, is when and why one component of nationalism achieves sufficient hegemonic status in discourse or practice to create the emotional power necessary for a social movement. It is in the particularity of expressions of nationalism – be they liberal or illiberal, and neither necessarily civic nor ethnic – that helps us better understand the character of nationalism in general. Those who define the criteria (whether cultural, political/institutional, or some

12. See Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*.

13. See Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy", in Edward A. Shils & Henry A. Finch (eds.), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, New York 1949, 49–112.

14. Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation", *Critical Review* 10 (1996), 193–211, https://doi.org/10.1080/08913819608443417.

15. See Tornike Metreveli, "An Undisclosed Story of Roses: Church, State, and Nation in Contemporary Georgia", *Nationalities Papers* 44 (2016), 694–712, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2016.1200021; Tornike Metreveli, *Orthodox Christianity and the Politics of Transition: Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia*, Abingdon 2021.

admixture of the two) turn out to be the nationalist groups themselves, who direct nationalism on the liberal–illiberal axis through ongoing interpretations of the outsider or "other" as belonging (or not) to the nation.

The pioneering works recounted in this section are largely top-down accounts, which focused on the structural features of transformations, underestimating and sometimes even ignoring bottom-up trajectories, including the role of individual agency, in the making of nations and nationalism. This gap has been addressed by recent accounts, which attend to bottom-up elements and attempt to theorize the "here" and "now" of nationalism. In light of Michael Billig's concept of *banal nationalism*, we learn how nationalism operates as a hidden discursive practice.[16] Nationalism manifests when people produce and reproduce it; willingly or not, the idea of the nation-state is legitimized through routine (seemingly "banal") activities. Hearn and Marco Antonsich distinguish between banal and everyday nationalism. If banal nationalism is more concerned with "subliminal discursive forms", then "everyday nationalism focuses more on the 'practical accomplishment of ordinary people doing ordinary things'".[17] If these scholars are correct about the (re)production of nationalism, further questions emerge: What are the implications of banal and everyday nationalism on macro-sociological processes? In what ways do *I* (an individual among others, a member of communities) reinscribe, indeed co-create nationalism, and ought I do so, or do otherwise?

The role of Christianity (conceived as narrowly or broadly as the reader chooses) in these dynamics is as incontestable as it is complex, at least throughout a significant portion of the world. It is clear that religious and national identities interweave, but how they usually do – as well as how best conceptually to frame the interactions between them – is not so obvious. Here we will introduce our contributions, each of which approaches Christianity and nationalism with different tools and against different backdrops.

Our first article, "When We Fail to Understand Ourselves: Reflections on Theology in the Crisis of Representation", is authored by Ragnar M. Bergem, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society. Bergem's question is occasioned both by the ever-increasing seismic waves reverberating from the fault-lines

16. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London 1995.

17. Jonathan Hearn & Marco Antonsich, "Theoretical and Methodological Considerations for the Study of Banal and Everyday Nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism* 24 (2018), 594, https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12419.

running through today's liberal democracies, and by the observation that a "crisis of representation" – and, deeper still, a problem of social unintelligibility – lie underneath them. What is theology's role, asks Bergem, in analyzing and responding to this problem? What repositories are available within Christian traditions and communities for critiquing liberal democracy (including its false starts and failings), and for critiquing itself when it needs to? One of Bergem's crucial claims – shared, of course, by liberation and other theologies – is that the semantics of God's relationship to humanity (the "vertical") is never removed from the shape of relationships between creatures (the "horizontal"). Bergem concludes by offering several reflections on what it would mean for theology to approach a crisis of representation, attentive to the fact that theology itself is always entangled with its object of critique.

Second, we have Julia Reed, an instructor in History of Science at Harvard University, whose piece is titled "Sovereignty, Sedition, and Sacrament in the Affair of the Placards (1534–1535)". Here, our author uncovers – occasioned in an acute but textured theological controversy in sixteenth-century France – one possible window into the unique dynamics of the origin of the early modern French state's religious identity. The thread running through her analysis of the affair concerns theology, state theatricality, and the public: the monarchical response to challenges to sixteenth-century French Roman Catholicism may not indicate, without doubt, the real presence of nationalism *per se*, but implicitly we see both church and state reaching for, grasping at, and in the end, efficiently wielding theological tools to craft and reinscribe narratives of French religious exceptionalism in opposition both to the theology of the radical placards and to moderate reforms. When the monarch has consolidated power – well, what just happened? It is tempting to see portents of late modern, even twentieth-century forms of nation in the brew, but Reed cautions against this, remarking on a "specifically Gallic" and a "particularly French anxiety" about the connection between sacrality, sovereignty, and a public sense of national belonging. The crucial meta-question we ask of and with Reed concerns the limits of generalizability, indeed the limits of history: When do these particular things (indeed, the fragments of this historical document I hold in my hands) teach me about myself, when do they teach me about themselves, and on what grounds can we tell the difference?

Jason Hoult, an instructor at St. Jerome's University in Ontario, offers no apologies for the thrust of his article, made clear in its title: "The Freedom of Religion Is a Divine Idea". With agility, Hoult springs between biblical texts and several titans in the history of religious thought – Baruch

Spinoza (1632–1677), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) – to leverage an argument about the origin and characteristics of the idea of religious liberty: namely that the features of that very idea preclude a merely natural origin, yet while simultaneously refusing the ascription of the supernatural. Here, we find Hoult's move analogous in structure to so-called "trademark" arguments for God, such as that of René Descartes' (1596–1650) third meditation.[18] Readers may have difficulty classifying Hoult as an author; his piece resists the label of confessional theology yet adopts some interests, positions, and methods associated therewith. If there is such a thing as a religion of philosophy or morality – and if, indeed, it is fair to dub this piece a representative thereof – then we might recognize Hoult's argument as issuing us a challenge about the ways we adapt, adopt, and divide our own explicit or implicit commitments: Which canons (philosophical, theological, political) can, indeed *must*, we embrace, then critique, yet ultimately transgress in order to critique, then transgress, yet ultimately embrace the once-hidden ideas espoused therein? If we do not recognize that democratic ideas are fundamentally distinct from nature in some crucial way, Hoult argues, then we risk losing them, or abusing them. A further challenge emerges, then, for those studying nationalism: If we grant Hoult's conclusion, then what would it mean to study human beings – and their attempts at realizing democracy – empirically (as political *animals*, whose habits can be observed, theorized, explained, and perhaps predicted to some degree)?

The final contribution to the special issue is by Lucilla Pan, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Manhattanville College. Pan offers a reframing of a widely taught work by Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Her interpretation exemplifies one of myriad possibilities for invoking the history of philosophy and religious thought to shed light on contemporary problems – and in turn, to have light shed on the history of religious thought *by* contemporary problems. As *Fear and Trembling* (1843) – a work whose political ramifications are understudied – may have something critical to say about the constitution and identity of a nation, so might the study of nationalism have something to say about *Fear and Trembling*, a text which, with its whirlpool of concepts, archetypes, and characters, exposes itself – so Pan argues – as both interlocutor about, and potential participant in, a project of national

18. See René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy", in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff & Dugald Murdoch (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1984, 35: "The whole force of the argument lies in this: I recognize that it would be impossible for me to exist with the kind of nature I have – that is, having within me the idea of God – were it not the case that God really existed. By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me."

identity. Here, Pan asks whether Kierkegaard's Abraham might be a surprising (but subtle) figuration of resistance against certain political formations we observe today and have observed before, while serving as the father of a "nation" in a very different way. While Pan ascribes to *Fear and Trembling* a formulation of nationalism's relationship to Christianity that our research platform has attempted, in the past, to complicate – namely that nationalist movements unilaterally coopt well-meaning or apolitical Christianity for political ends – it is perhaps expected for research on Kierkegaard to argue that he privileges, in just this way, the supposed purity of Christianity in opposition to corrupting political forces.

As we have previewed above, this issue's articles will offer views into the conditions of *nation* and *nationalism* from outside contemporary nationalism studies, or perhaps from a position that straddles the boundaries of the inside and outside of nationalism studies. We hope that they contribute in unexpected ways to focused research – sociological and beyond – on nationalism, and on nationalism's and Christianity's interlocking braids throughout history. ▲

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When We Fail to Understand Ourselves

Reflections on Theology in the Crisis of Representation

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Introduction

The democratic experiment continues, but we have once again noticed it falter.[1] Among the attempts to understand these political upheavals, one approach has been to draw the contours of a certain "crisis of representation". The symptoms of such a crisis are manifold: low voter turnout,[2] a deterioration of party systems and affiliations,[3] a growing distrust of politicians and established media, new political cleavages,[4] as well as social and cultural turmoil. The result is a growth of populist parties and movements and nativist or nationalist ideologies.

We need a wide range of explanations to understand these varied phenomena in contemporary political life, and no single theory is likely to cover all

1. This is not, in general terms, a new phenomenon. See David Runciman, *How Democracy Ends*, New York 2018.

2. See Roberto Stefan Foa & Yascha Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect", *Journal of Democracy* 27:3 (2016), 5–17, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0049.

3. See Russell J. Dalton & Martin P. Wattenberg (ed.), *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford 2002, https://doi.org/10.1093/0199253099.001.0001.

4. See Amory Gethin, Clara Martínez-Toledano & Thomas Piketty (eds.), *Political Cleavages and Social Inequalities: A Study of Fifty Democracies, 1948–2020*, Cambridge, MA 2021.

of them satisfyingly. What I would like to do is to approach the problems of contemporary Western democracies as symptoms of an underlying crisis of representation, acknowledging that such an approach will only be partial. To view them as symptoms of a crisis of representation is to think of them as indications that the gap between the people and representatives has become too large and that this condition is persistent.

My interest in the much-discussed relationship between this crisis of representation and the growth of populist parties or the resurgence of nationalist ideologies is primarily theological. The mobilization of Christian discourse by versions of nationalism, nativist populism, or champions of "Western civilization" puts new pressure on the question of how theologians should relate Christian resources for imagining communal identity to the general processes of representation in society at large. Thus, my intention in this article is neither to explain nor to propose a political solution, but to gain a theological perspective that might tell us something about how churches can respond to these crises and what resources theology may offer to the larger project of understanding our contemporary political crises. In this article, I will explore some possible answers to this question. In particular, I will suggest that we develop a theological analysis of the limits of representation, which will, among other things, involve attention to the times and places of *social unintelligibility*.

Representation and Its Crisis

While some of our contemporary political questions concern the democratic nature of modern society, what is often at stake is, in fact, a question of political *representation*. As Mónica Brito Vieira and David Runciman have argued, "representation is the key concept for understanding the workings of modern, democratic states".[5] While modern societies are democratic, democratic power is always mediated through processes and institutions that put a wedge between the government and the represented people. Democracy was a political form associated with the ancient Greek city-state, and only arrived as a form of government in modern societies when other key developments had already occurred. Modern societies were organized around a distinction between state and society and between the sovereign power and the government. Representation depends on a division between state and society because the government, the holder of power, is never identical to the sovereign power as such. Modern societies became democratic *within* this structure of representation, which existed to *create*, *authorize*, and *restrict* political power. Hence, they combined a theory of popular sovereignty

5. Mónica Brito Vieira & David Runciman, *Representation*, Cambridge 2008, vii–viii.

with democratic rule (which is not a theory of sovereignty, but a theory of government). Given the division between the rulers and citizens, which is also reflective of the vast size and pluralism of modern societies, democracy cannot be realized in its classical, unmediated ideal, in which citizens directly and collectively rule themselves.[6] Instead, power must be represented by elected representatives who are granted regulated and limited powers.

In contemporary representative democracies, the leaders are supposed to represent the interest, wills, or identities of their people.[7] Democratic representation is an endless, though fluctuating affair. If the experienced distance between the representatives and the represented becomes too large, an electorate may react and reprimand or reject its leaders. Moreover, if this distance becomes more pervasive and becomes a general distrust of the system, a society approaches a crisis of representation. In the words of Paula Diehl:

> When, however, this exchange becomes interrupted or inconsistent, when the control mechanisms over the representatives no longer function, and these claim for themselves the power, and when the democratic configuration of political representation is no longer brought to expression, then there is a crisis of representation. Citizens turn away from politics, political institutions are no longer afforded trust, parties and politicians lose their trustworthiness, and the feeling reigns that political representatives have disconnected themselves from the people that they are obliged to represent.[8]

Some contemporary research into the resurgence of populist parties and movements and nationalist ideologies suggests that this has occured. Well-known surveys of the rise of European right-wing populist parties, such as research conducted by Cas Mudde, note a range of causes or demand-side dynamics, none of which are sufficient to explain their rise or to connect macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of explanation.[9] It is difficult to speak of

6. Brito Vieira & Runciman, *Representation*, 34. This is perhaps more an ideal than a reality, since Athenian democracy was never entirely "direct". Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, Cambridge 1997, 8–41, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511659935.

7. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley, CA 1967, 60–143.

8. Paula Diehl, "Demokratische Repräsentation und ihre Krise", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 60:40–42 (2016), 12–17. My translation.

9. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge 2009, 201–231, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492037. See also Kirk Hawkins, Madeleine Read & Teun Pauwels, "Populism and Its Causes", in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford 2017, 267–286, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.13.

a "crisis", Mudde notes, because the concept of crisis is unclear and highly contested. Like Mudde, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser is hesitant about explanations of right-wing populism in terms of social, economic, or political crises, partly because such explanations assume a liberal devaluation of populism as an ailment within democracy.[10]

Ernesto Laclau's (1935–2014) theory of populism as a discursive logic takes it for granted that a "crisis of representation" is "at the root of any populist, anti-institutional outburst".[11] His theory of populism is directly related to his concept of the political, and thus a philosophy of the conditions of political intelligibility. According to this theory, populist movements arise because people experience that their social demands have not been met. If this sense of frustration becomes sufficiently strong, it may threaten the hegemonic order of representation.

Benjamin Moffitt has sought to triangulate these positions, proposing that they fail to note that the contested nature of the crisis is precisely the point: the ascription of a crisis to society depends on a normative judgement about the original or proper functioning of that society, and such judgement is inherently political.[12] Therefore, the sense of a crisis is not merely something that breeds populism but something that many populist parties seek to sustain.

I will neither settle this debate nor make any strong claims about the empirical validity of a crisis of representation. But I will say that Moffitt implicitly points towards the fact that, insofar as the notion of crisis is relevant to the question of populism, it is because it operates on the level of the *symbolic*; it is weaponized and wielded in a contest about the fundamental symbols through which we interpret the society in which we live. And it is on this level that the notion of a crisis of *representation* becomes pertinent. A crisis of representation is a phenomenon that is fundamentally symbolic and thus susceptible to drastic change merely by a change of appearances of convictions.

For this reason, I would like to reflect on the crisis of representation as an occurrence on the level of the symbolic, granting that there is a range of other analyses (structural and economic) that are equally important. As Margaret Canovan (1939–2018) notes, populism arises from a symbolic ambiguity within modern representative democracies between its relatively

10. See Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy", *Democratization* 19 (2012), 184–208, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.572619.

11. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, London 2005, 137.

12. See Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Stanford, CA 2016.

thin processes of representation and its thick claim about the centrality of democratic rule.[13] This ambiguity may make some sense of the populist invocation of "the people" as well as nationalist ideologies. When the processes of symbolic negotiation that occur through regular politics fail to achieve consensus, there might arise such calls to reinstate "the people" – though often through a representative leader and sometimes through the appeal to an exclusionary identity. In order to understand as a symbolic issue what Diehl describes as a disconnect between the people and its representatives, we need to consider the problem of representation from a broader, philosophical point of view. While there is a much more detailed story to tell about the specifics of political representation, my concern is with how the concrete processes of representation are part of a more fundamental social symbolic structure.

A strand of French political thinkers, including Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997), Claude Lefort (1924–2010), Marcel Gauchet, and Pierre Rosanvallon, have argued that concrete political processes are part of a broader attempt in societies to determine and change the fundamental symbols, discourses, practices, and norms by which society makes sense of itself. For Castoriadis, "the institution of society" denotes the creation of the norms, categories, and symbolic arrangements that organize human life in general, as well as the more concrete and tangible sense of creating specific institutions.[14]

Claude Lefort was a colleague and collaborator with both Castoriadis and Gauchet at various times in his career. Like them, he was part of the French post-Marxist turn towards "the symbolic".[15] Every society, claims Lefort, depends on a specific *form*, a shaping (*mise en forme*) that provides the conditions for being, acting, and speaking in society as a whole. On the one hand, it sets the conditions for making sense (*mise en sense*), and on the other, it provides a stage (*mise en scene*), a field of representations, onto which sensible actions and statements are placed.[16] This constellation of conditions is what Lefort calls a *regime* and is what gives society a sense of unity, coherence, and endurance. A regime operates on the symbolic level of society, what he calls "the political" (*le politique*), since it concerns the institution of society as such – an institution that is always contestable to some extent.[17]

13. See Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy", *Political Studies* 47 (1999), 2–16, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184.

14. See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Institution of Society and Religion", *Thesis Eleven* 35 (1993), 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1177/072551369303500102.

15. See Warren Breckman, *Adventures of the Symbolic: Post-Marxism and Radical Democracy*, New York 2013.

16. See Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique, XIXe–XXe siècles*, Paris 2001, 282.

17. On the arrival of the distinction between politics and the political in continental

On a fundamental level, political life designates the field of activity in which human beings cooperate, negotiate, and struggle for competing visions and structures that define and sustain a communal essence. This activity is inherently a striving for *representation* (though not exclusively so), that is, a way of determining an intelligible context for identification, interaction, and change. In this sense, politics is a process that shapes and changes the fundamental conditions for making sense of whom we are and for determining the limits and possibilities of what can be done.

There is also an implicit assumption in Lefort's account that such contests for representation concern the community we call the nation: an often territorially circumscribed community in secular time, often unified around ideas of culture, ethnicity, language, or religion.[18] Thus, Lefort's theory intersects with the tradition from Benedict Anderson (1936–2015) – and Ernest Renan (1823–1892) before him – that thinks of nations as "imagined communities".[19]

If we take these general interpretations into account, we can approach the crisis of representation as a condition in which the fundamental premises of social action have become disputed. During such a crisis, social identities and actions cannot be understood as before because they lack the proper conditions (*mise en sense*) and an agreed-upon stage (*mise en scene*). By interpreting the crisis of representation in this way, I mean to present neither an adequate theory of populism nor an explanation for it, but rather to relate contested political issues and movements of our time to the symbolic questions at stake. And if we ask about a crisis of representation, we are asking about those times and places where people fail to make sense of themselves within the context of a broader social world.

Theology and Social Intelligibility

The history of modern theology is intertwined with this broader social project of sense-making. This should not come as a surprise, since politics and theology in the West have had a close relationship in the past,[20] and not least since modern senses of "religion" and "society" as collective reifications developed together, so much so that it was possible for Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) to describe society as the real object of religion.[21] And

thought, see Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh 2008.

18. See Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge 1997, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612107.

19. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 2006.

20. See Ragnar M. Bergem, *Politisk teologi*, Oslo 2019.

21. See John Bossy, "Some Elementary Forms of Durkheim", *Past & Present* 95 (1982), 3–18,

Christianity was fundamental in the development of modern nationalism, understood as a fundamental way of representing social coexistence in space and time.[22]

Since Christianity and religion played an often-crucial role in how European societies have represented themselves, theologians also sought to understand theology in relation to this role. Consequently, modern European theologians came to think about their work in relation to the social order as a search for intelligibility and transparency. For much of European theology from the eighteenth century onwards, the theological task turned into clarifying some of the fundamental symbols through which a society could become intelligible to itself. This holds particularly true for the hegemonic tradition of German Protestant theology.[23] It is also true of the French Roman Catholic tradition, which responded to and was informed by post-revolutionary debates within socialist, republican, and royalist circles about religion as the missing "positive" element of social cohesion.[24] Similar interests could be traced in Anglican theology as well.[25]

This interest in social intelligibility was directed internally towards the Church and externally towards the broader society, though the relationship between theology and communal representation was envisioned in various ways. The example of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770–1831) philosophy is instructive, as would be Friederich Schleiermacher's (1768–1834) theology. For Hegel and the tradition after him, religion was an essential part of the intelligibility of society as a whole. Without the role of religion in determining the subjective dispositions of the people, there is no purpose, Hegel argued, for institutions such as public education, civil society, or the state. Objective freedom is worthless without *subjective* adherence to the ideal of freedom, and thus religion is the means by which the people

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https://doi.org/10.1093/past/95.1.3; Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York 1995.

22. See Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*.

23. See Gary J. Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology*, Malden, MA 2012, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444355918.

24. On this complex of problems in French culture, see Michael C. Behrent, "The Mystical Body of Society: Religion and Association in Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2008), 219–243. Strong echoes of these concerns is readily available in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French theological debates about the mystical body. See overviews of some debates in J. Eileen Scully, "The Theology of the Mystical Body of Christ in French Language Theology 1930–1950: A Review and Assessment", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992), 58–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/002114009205800105; Edward P. Hahnenberg, "The Mystical Body of Christ and Communion Ecclesiology: Historical Parallels", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70 (2005), 3–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140005070001O1.

25. See Stephen Spencer (ed.), *Theology Reforming Society: Revisiting Anglican Social Theology*, London 2017.

would come to believe in freedom.[26] Importantly, the essential "idea" of Christianity – subjectively adhered to in established churches – corresponded to the idea that underlaid modern social organizations. In other words: religion was, for Hegel, a conduit for social intelligibility. The Christian "universal" was practised, worshipped, and preached; thus it contributed to making sense of the social world in which people lived. It was these sorts of arguments that allowed some theologians to find a place for explicating the universal categories of the Christian communal vision.

At several points, some reacted against theology's trajectory, which risked collapsing into nothing but a supplier of inclusive symbols that supposedly aided us in representation and social integration. Karl Barth's (1886–1968) indictment of liberal theology was one such response.[27] Similar qualms were later expressed by "post-liberal" communitarians who reacted to Christianity becoming a naive puppet of secular society.[28] Theologians sought to shift the focal point of communal representation from society as such to the process of self-identification within a Christian community. The post-liberal ecclesiology of William T. Cavanaugh, for example, is strongly anti-nationalistic and evidently suspicious about the quasi-religious role of the modern state.[29] The triumphant vision of theology as a social science in Radical Orthodoxy, as espoused by John Milbank and others, depends on the argument that *any* "universal" or "neutral" theory of the social is impossible.[30] "Society" as an object of allegedly neutral description, is intrinsically aporetic, according to Milbank. In its place, he proposes a presentation of Christian *Sittlichkeit*, though at the cost of equivocating about the Church being a historical or ideal reality. In this manner, the Church appears to be a supplier of social unity and intelligibility that no other community can achieve, though Milbank has admitted that the Church has failed to live

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26. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: 1. Introduction and The Concept of Religion*, London 1984, 458–459.

27. See, for example, his characterization of the project of synthesizing "Christ" and "society" in his 1919 Tambach lecture: "Es gibt allerdings auch hier die Möglichkeit, das alte Kleid mit losgerissenen Lappen vom neuen Kleid zu flicken, ich meine den Versuch, der weltlichen Gesellschaft eine kirchlichen Überbau oder Anbau anzugliedern und so nach dem alten Mißverständnis des Wortes Jesu dem Kaiser zu geben, was des Kaisers und Gott, was Gottes ist. [...] Bereits zeigen sich die Ansätze dazu auch auf protestantischem Gebiet: Laßt uns eine neue Kirche errichten mit demokratischen Allüren und sozialistischem Einschlag!" Karl Barth, "Der Christ in Der Gesellchaft", in Jürgen Moltmann (ed.), *Anfänge der Dialektischen Theologie: 1. Karl Barth, Heinrich Barth, Emil Brunner*, München 1962, 8.

28. See Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*, Notre Dame, IN 2001; George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, London 2002.

29. See William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI 2011.

30. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed., Oxford 2006.

up to this ideal.[31] Accordingly, Milbank's ecclesiology seems to push in two opposite but equally questionable directions: entertaining either the idea of a new Christendom, where the Church integrates with and consummates the representation of society (as Christiane Alpers has argued),[32] or an idea of the Church as an anarchic community without determinable place and time, being only "present intermittently"; what Gillian Rose (1947–1995) has termed a "holy middle".[33]

In very general terms, many theologians have found themselves between these two poles: that of treating Christian symbols and practice as necessary conditions for an accurate representation of society, or as an alternative *societas* or *polis* that should not concern itself with how broader society represents itself. Neither of these extremes is necessarily connected to a certain political persuasion. However, the recent mobilization of Christian discourse by versions of nationalism, nativist populism, and champions of "Western civilization" raises a question of how theologians ought to relate Christian resources for imagining communal identity to the general processes of representation in society at large. It demands, among other things, a consideration of what legitimate role social *unintelligibility* may play from the perspective of Christian political theology. There is clearly something to be said for the idea that an essential theological task is the explication of social intelligibility, of how human beings may relate and coexist in a peaceful manner that respects everyone's integrity, dignity, and liberty. At the same time, there is something to the worry that such a task may lead theology into becoming uncritical and overly preservative of the present self-understandings of whatever society it inhabits. There is also a correlative concern about the view of the Church or Christianity as an idealized substitute for whatever social unity and intelligibility that worldly society cannot achieve.

Thinking Theologically during the Crisis of Representation

A critique that underscores the responsibility of Christian language and practices towards God is, I think, necessary if only to ensure the integrity of theological language.[34] However, we ought not to underscore the

31. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 11, 108, 382–383, 440–442.

32. See Christiane Alpers, *A Politics of Grace: Hope for Redemption in a Post-Christendom Context*, London 2018, 33–85.

33. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 440. See Rose's critique in Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society*, Oxford 1992, 277–295. For some theological implications of Rose's critiques of holy middles, see Rowan D. Williams, "Between Politics and Metaphysics: Reflections in the Wake of Gillian Rose", *Modern Theology* 11 (1995), 3–22, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.1995.tb00050.x.

34. See Rowan Williams, "Theological Integrity", *New Blackfriars* 72 (1991), 140–151, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1991.tb07155.x.

transcendent or “vertical” dimension of religious language without understanding its implications in the “horizontal” constitution of societies. That is why, I think, it is helpful to glance at the tradition most critical of the function of representation in modern society, namely the Marxist tradition. The Marxist critique of religion’s role in society turns the Hegelian analysis on its head.[35] It accepts the claim that religion is a supplier of a range of fundamental social coordinates, but then it charges that these coordinates amount to a bourgeois ideology that justifies and veils social inequality by promising a freedom only finally gained in heaven. Religion, then, provides a mode of social intelligibility for its adherents at the price of sustaining a deeper confusion about the determinants of society. The existence of religion is a marker of a society that has failed to make sense of itself and, therefore, displaces its point of coherence to an otherworldly realm. Insofar as religion helps us represent ourselves, it also misrepresents us because it forecloses possibilities for change. Karl Marx (1818–1883) reminds us that making sense of oneself is not an unequivocal good, as those who have been told to remain in their deprived status can undoubtedly appreciate. Hence, the first lesson from this tradition is that *representation is never an unequivocal good*.

Though the Marxist critique might seem to limit possibilities for theological thinking, variations of this critique reverberated within theology in the latter half of the twentieth century. Liberation theology, for example, drew on Marxist themes as a fruitful starting point for theological reflection and action. It argued that the governing structures of representation structurally excluded those most vulnerable and cemented capitalist identities so that even Christians were induced to overlook the poor.[36] Liberation theology, like a range of other critical traditions of theological reflection, has therefore been able to establish a critical counterweight to a Christianity overly concerned with allying itself with hegemonic ideologies.

While the reference to the “poor” in liberation theology may converge with Marxist criticism of oppression, it also replaces with a symbolic reference what was, for Marx, a materialist basis. Thus, it is just one instance of a broader complex shift in critical thought after Marx that has some of its sources in nineteenth-century socialist traditions, but that, at least on

35. See, for example, Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, in Joseph J. O’Malley (ed.), *Marx: Early Political Writings*, Cambridge 1994, 28–56, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139168007.006.

36. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, Maryknoll, NY 1988, 151. Enrique D. Dussel, *Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology*, Lanham, MD 2003, 97. See also Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, Maryknoll, NY 1990. For a more radical appropriation of Marxist thought, see Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff, *Salvation and Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY 1984.

the European continent, received more support during the latter half of the twentieth century. In some of these traditions, the "social" was reconceived as a field of possible political action that was not entirely predetermined by material structures. As Warren Breckman has demonstrated, the post-Marxist turn among political philosophers after 1968 – which includes Castoriadis and Lefort, as well as postmodern theorists – drew on a tradition traceable to German Romanticism and to French socialists such as Pierre Leroux (1797–1871).[37] Common to this tradition is the recognition that a critique of representation cannot be accomplished through a scientific theory of materialistic conditions since it is impossible to formulate a theory that can prove its validity independently of a contingent symbolic context. Hence, for postmodern theorists like Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), the failure of Marxism is not that it sought to critique representation, but that it thought it was possible to do so from a position shielded from the symbolic:

> It is no longer worthwhile to make a radical critique of the order of representation in the name of production and of its revolutionary formula. These two orders are inseparable and, paradoxical though it may seem, Marx did not subject the form production to a radical analysis any more than he did the form representation.[38]

Thus, the second lesson I would like to gather from these critical traditions: *it is impossible to analyze or critique the order of representation from a standpoint altogether outside that very order*. It follows that an analysis of the crisis of representation cannot escape the inherently contested symbolic realm either.

Given these lessons from critical traditions in the wake of Marx, how can we approach the crisis of representation on theological terms? I will offer only some reflections here by providing a few observations and drawing some possible consequences.

If the post-Marxist tradition is right about the symbolic constitution of society, theological symbols may equally help us understand the crisis of representation. This is not an argument for the *replacement* of "secular" with "religious" symbols for achieving more accurate representation, but quite the opposite: the claim that theological symbols may help us understand and negotiate the *limits* of representation. Much post-Marxist political thought is still indebted to certain Kantian presuppositions, though without trans-historical transcendental justification. For example,

37. See Breckman, *Adventures of the Symbolic*.

38. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, St. Louis, MO 1975, 21.

Castoriadis and Lefort, and more recently Slavoj Žižek and Ernesto Laclau, tend to substitute the materialistic base with some version of a psychoanalytic claim about the symbolic field as haunted by an unrepresentable lack.[39] Such theories seem to me to fall into the temptation of asserting that *all* representations are faulty by default (and in the same manner) and, concomitantly, so succumbs to the desire to determine unequivocally the limit between representation and its other. These theories seek to submit the order of representation to at least *one* universal logic, namely that of its failure.[40]

If, however, the symbolic is unavoidable, theological symbols may help us approach the limits and failures of representation, not by univocally determining the limits between the knowable and the unknowable in Kantian fashion, but by negotiating human life in light of affairs that appear at once in and beyond the limits of human powers and cognition.[41] In particular, Christian symbols of creation and the Fall continue to hold relevance for our understanding of the problem of representation. In terms of creation, I believe that a proper account of created finitude must acknowledge the opacity of human existence – both on individual and social levels. Thus, while a structure of representation geared towards ultimate transparency may very well "work" for some time, a theological critique of such a structure ought to point out the problematic consequences of a search for what is, in fact, a God's eye point of view.[42] To be sure, Christian practice and discourse do and ought to promote a horizon of intelligibility – both in terms of Christianity's theology of creation and its doctrines of ecclesiology and salvation. For what is the Gospel if not also a promise of a community, a mode of living in a context in which social actions *make sense*? However, what I take to be a significant insight from a long tradition of theological reflection is that this horizon of significance, this open welcome into the community of divine life, ought not to be understood as a call to enter a univocally defined "frame" on which social life becomes meaningful. Whatever we mean by living the life together in Christ, we are not speaking of entering a "stage", the backdrop of which is the Christian truth. One could

39. See Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London 2012; Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 110.

40. See an analysis of some of these tendencies, and how theology might respond, in Ragnar M. Bergem, "On the Persistence of the Genealogical in Contemporary Theology", *Modern Theology* 33 (2017), 434–452, https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12337.

41. See one exposition of this way of thinking theologically in Ragnar M. Bergem, "Transgressions: Erich Przywara, G.W.F. Hegel, and the Principle of Non-Contradiction", *Forum Philosophicum* 21 (2016), 11–27, https://doi.org/10.5840/forphil20162112.

42. See Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language*, London 2014.

argue that if theologians are overly concerned with representation, they will always risk erecting an idol, in Jean-Luc Marion's sense of the term.[43]

Similarly, an account of sin can contribute to our understanding of how a particular political regime is inevitably shot through with practices of deception. However, the theologico-political history of the West complicates this insight, especially when it pertains to the question of political representation. The Augustinian tradition of political thought has claimed that politics is, to some extent, a response to the sinfulness of human beings.[44] Similarly, a strand of nominalism employed the doctrine of sin to emphasize the limits of human cognition.[45] The consequence was not necessarily the erasure of political ambition but a way of approaching politics that was highly suspicious about representing and safely enacting human beings' "real" will or interest. Given the unknowability of individual consciousness and the viciousness of human nature, a number of rules had to be deduced to determine a safe basis on which people may be treated in a public context.[46] Such political developments occurred in the same period when religiosity was associated with the interior, which also meant that, in this context, sin was chiefly considered an individual affair. The positive upshot of this line of thinking is that it puts a check on attempts to actualize utopian visions that may eventually turn politics into a tool of repression. However, the negative consequence is that one may fail to reflect on the communal and structural dimensions of sin. The most potent version of this "liberal" tradition seeks to deal with sin by means of rules, yet it seems unwarranted that any human construction can shield itself from sin in this manner.

In Christian traditions, symbols such as creation and sin gain meaning through concrete spiritual practices that contribute to sense-making and destabilization. To practice Christianity is inevitably to engage with a set of very particular symbols and, explicitly or implicitly, to occupy oneself with a specific communal vision. Nevertheless, it is not a practice in which transparency necessarily precedes intelligibility or where the Christian symbols of community ought to function as a reference for the univocal determination of social actions. Thus – to touch on the question of nationalism – when Benedict Anderson repeats Hegel's claim that reading newspapers is a modern nationalistic substitute for the morning prayer, we should take

43. See Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, 2nd ed., Chicago 2012.

44. Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, Cambridge 1988, xiii–xx.

45. See Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*, Cambridge 2007, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511487750.

46. See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 2001, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490583.

a moment's pause.[47] On theological grounds, we may indeed say that the practice of prayer sustains a sense of belonging, of temporal and trans-spatial co-existence, and we may, in that sense, compare it to the nationalist imagination. Yet, prayer is also a mode of *destabilization*, a place in which the believer opens herself up to be changed – both by God and her fellow believers. As Sarah Coakley has argued, prayer may put into question precisely the "horizons" of representation to which we have committed.[48] Hence, ultimately, a Christian is, as Barth once noted, one who is "strange to himself and his fellows".[49]

Alongside such symbols and practices that destabilize our view of representation, the Christian tradition has often given voice to a particular view of the human community that has significance for our view of representation. The idea that human sociality in fallen time is always deficient is linked to the idea that true human sociality is at once granted and revealed in and through God's actions for the world. This is the idea that salvation is first and foremost to share in a communal relationship to which we previously did not have access. In the words of the Anglican historian and priest John Neville Figgis (1866–1919): "'The Fellowship of the Mystery'; that is St. Paul's account of Churchmanship. It is a fellowship, a common life; and what is shared is a mystery, something that was once obscure, but is now in the process of being made known."[50]

In this particular sense, a certain interpretation of Marxism's eschatology resonates with Christian eschatologies: that true sociality is something to come, both ontologically and epistemologically. In terms of representation, then, true sociality can only be formulated on account of conditions that are not directly accessible or verifiable at present. One can read Christian practices of destabilization in this light, namely as attuning human beings to opening themselves up to relationships before and without any determinate regime of representation, that is, without necessarily relying on a preordained scheme of identification. What one could call the overdeterminacy of community or the priority of the communal over the representable is expressed "inwardly" and "outwardly": inwardly, because the Christian "identity" is precisely not an identity, but rather a kind of relationship to every particular identity, as Kathryn Tanner has suggested, and which Giorgio Agamben has so suggestively explored in philosophical terms.[51]

47. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.

48. See Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"*, Cambridge 2013, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139048958.

49. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: 4.4. The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Edinburgh 1969, 3.

50. John Neville Figgis, *The Fellowship of the Mystery*, London 1914, 3.

51. See Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Minneapolis, MN

Similarly, the "outward" relationship is captured by Christian conceptions of love (*agape*) that underscore that the love of one's neighbour must transgress any particular representation that might restrict one's conceptions of who that neighbour might be. One consequence of the Gospel seems to be that Christians must wager that intelligible social interaction is possible even in those places where we have no stable point of reference. In this sense, the Christian faith implies that communal life is *more* fundamental than any regime of representation, which challenges the assumption that we can only safely engage with each other if first we recognize everybody as subjects, as formally identical bearers of rights within a determinable space.

Communal Life and Eschatological Reserve

Given these theological observations, I would like to end this article by proposing four tentative lessons we might draw from this attempt to situate the theological task in relation to the question of representation.

First, Christian symbols and practices of destabilization ought to orient theological reflection towards the unrepresented. Responding theologically to the crisis of representation may require a perilous search for and cooperation with modes of living among people that are not "adequately" represented, being open to the fact that there could be ways of acting and thinking that are valuable precisely because they *do not fit* into the hegemonic regime of representation. Social unintelligibility ought not, therefore, to be deemed a problem or danger as such. However, this will also involve a risk of becoming unwitting partners with reactionary forces that want to reshape society to become a place where only their sense of identity is acceptable.[52] Thus, facing this risk also means detecting where a sense of dislocation threatens to become a starting point for a project of domination and recapture.

Second, as implied by the previous point, a Christian political theology of the crisis of representation will do well to attend to the "informal" or "communal" dimensions of politics. This is an insight that Luke Bretherton has developed extensively in his recent works on political theology.[53] By following various Christian socialist and associationist traditions, he seeks to decentre the state as the focal point of politics without turning the Church

1997. See also Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, Stanford, CA 2005.

52. See Hannah M. Strømmen & Ulrich Schmiedel, *The Claim to Christianity: Responding to the Far Right*, London 2020.

53. See Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*, Chichester 2010; Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life*, Cambridge 2014, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139343442; Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy*, Grand Rapids, MI 2019.

into a *polis* obliged to carry the burden of true representation for all. For that reason, he is able, for example, to accommodate a positive role for populist movements, since the "real question is not whether it is possible to banish populism from democratic politics, but what kind of populism to foster alongside structures of representation".[54] The key political term for Bretherton is *common life*, something that may be sustained on various levels and ultimately arises out of bottom-up processes of association. Hence:

> The people as a whole is made up of associations coming into relationship with each other, and it is the negotiation of the different interests and visions of the good between associations that forms a common life – this common life being what constitutes the people qua people.[55]

The benefit of this view is that it refuses a reduction of representation to a single hegemonic process and shifts the emphasis from the state as the point of convergence of a static "people" to a multifaceted politics of the *social*. Hence, it decentres processes of representation and acknowledges the priority of the communal. At the same time, this revision faces the difficulty of reconciling the "informal" and "formal" bases of politics – that is, the relationship between the social and communal basis of politics and the formal structures of democratic representation and government through the state. Hence, there are dangers to idealizing the social.

On the one hand, there is the problem – not least in Scandinavian countries – that "society" is so thoroughly molded by the state and market that it is difficult to recognize "the social" other than through those lenses. In a crisis of representation, non-dominant modes of living, with their local practices and traditions, may make their mark, and such modes of living may become the starting point for a renewal of community and politics. But quite often, they do not; instead, we only see the shadow of state and market – minor protests made on behalf of those who are powerless to change their fundamental conditions. So there remains a real question whether positing "the social" as a basis for political action escapes the dialectics of state and market.

On the other hand, as Oliver O'Donovan has argued, there is a danger that the *polis*, in this vision, comes to stand for "the ideal pre-lapsarian community, experienced exclusively as free relationality and cooperation".[56] I am unsure whether O'Donovan's charge is entirely fair to Bretherton's

54. Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 424.

55. Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 427.

56. Oliver O'Donovan, "The Professional Politician and the Activist", *Studies in Christian Ethics* 33 (2020), 248, https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946819897591.

political theology. However, it certainly points to a question that should be explored further, namely that of the relationship between dominant modes of representation through the state and whatever communal life transcends the former. This issue is raised, in other terms, in debates about liberation theology after "the end of history".[57]

Third, more than the Church being a *solution* to the crisis of representation, it might be that the crisis is first and foremost an opportunity for the Church to relearn something about its language and processes of representation. One of the things it may learn is to operate in this space between hegemonic social worlds and their deterioration. To operate wisely in this space includes, among other things, an eschatological orientation that inflects the status of our symbols by which we make sense of ourselves. There is a peculiarity to "the Christian universal" (if one may use such words): At that point where all the lines converge, where these symbols of the divine community create a unifying context in which everyone gains their rightful place, precisely *there* is the place where the symbolic opens *beyond* itself. The completion of the universal is its opening.

Hence, the Church's fickle nature as a political entity: On the one hand, it is a public place for gathering and sharing life across every division. On the other, it constitutes itself as a society through an act that points beyond itself – not simply to God "up there", but to the Kingdom, the unity of all human beings with each other and with creation. What is enacted in the eucharist, for example, is undoubtedly a *representation* and a realization of community. Nevertheless, insofar as the eucharist stages social unity, it already points away from itself – ultimately towards all humankind. Thus, whatever "transparency" we may enact in a Christian community must constantly be challenged by the destabilizing eschatological status of Christian symbols and practice.

Different churches must enact such practices and symbolic processes in highly contextual settings, and there is no *single* practical implication to be drawn from these theological reflections. But for the majority churches of the Scandinavian countries, these questions of representation are particularly fraught because of their deep symbolic entanglement with statehood and nationhood. For such churches, I believe that the task in an increasingly multicultural society must be to critically question how ecclesial modes of operation are governed by an implicit concern to represent the national social whole. My worry with such a concern is that it may paradoxically

57. See Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*, London 2001; Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto*, Aldershot 2004.

curtail the proper openness that follows from the eschatological status of Christian practices.

Finally, I must note that this eschatological character enables us to think theologically *outside* the Church, as well. The Church exists to articulate a difference, a different way of being in the world, and imitates, in that sense, a different *city*. Yet, the difference it articulates is ultimately the difference of the world as changed through Christ, and thus, as Herbert McCabe (1926–2001) once wrote, the Church exists "to show the world to itself".[58] We must retain the analogy of Church and society, but also some of the dialectics between them. In that sense, theological reflection may contribute, too, as peoples and groups beyond the ecclesial context seek new sources of intelligibility. However, the offer that theology may present to such people should not be a promise of a new context involving complete transparency, lest we betray the eschatological mode of faith. ▲

SUMMARY

The mobilization of Christian discourse by versions of nationalism, nativist populism, and champions of "Western civilization" puts new pressure on the question of how theologians should relate Christian resources for imagining communal identity to the general processes of representation in society at large. In this article, I analyze the contemporary crisis of representation as a problem on the symbolic level of societies: as a crisis of social intelligibility. I do so in order to develop a theological perspective on how churches can respond to these crises and what resources theology may offer to the larger project of understanding our contemporary political crises. In particular, I suggest that we develop a theological analysis of the limits of representation, which will, among other things, involve attention to the times and places of social unintelligibility.

58. Herbert McCabe, *Law, Love and Language*, London 2013, 142, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472965943.

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Sovereignty, Sedition, and Sacrament in the Affair of the Placards (1534–1535)

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18 October 1534 was a Sunday morning, and many Catholics in France on their way to Mass were confronted with a startling sight. Placards had been posted overnight in public places in Paris, Blois, Rouen, Orléans, and Tours – one was even posted outside the bedchamber of King Francis I (1494–1547) at the royal castle in Amboise – attacking the Mass as blasphemy and transubstantiation as the devil's doctrine. The placards decried

> the pompous and vainglorious Papal Mass by which the world is and will be totally ruined, lost, and desolated – unless God comes to our rescue – since in it our Lord is so outrageously blasphemed and the public misled and blinded. [...] In this wretched Mass, almost the whole population has been provoked into public idolatry [...] Those miserable sacrificers have in their frenzy taught that it shall no longer be bread or wine, but since they speak those great and miraculous words, by transubstantiation Jesus Christ is hidden beneath the appearance of the bread and wine, which is a diabolical doctrine, against all truth and contrary to Scripture.[1]

1. *Articles veritables sur les horribles, grandz, et importables abuz de la messe papalle, inventee directement contre la saincte cene de Jesus Christ*, Neûchatel 1534. The pamphlet is reproduced in full in Gabrielle Berthoud et al. (eds.), *Aspects de la Propagande Religieuse*, Geneva 1957, 114–119. My translation.

This so-called "Affair of the Placards" figures prominently in histories of the Reformation in France. According to Donald Kelley, the affair was

> a turning-point in the fortunes of French Protestantism, which from this time became a largely underground movement; it displayed the irreversible polarization of French society in painfully obvious terms and intensified it by provoking more extreme statements on both sides, ranging from Calvin's *Institutes* [which Calvin began composing when he fled to Basel, after the placard affair] to Guillaume Budé's *Transition from Hellenism to Christianity*, which defended the royal policy of persecution.[2]

Most importantly, according to Kelley, the affair doomed any future reconciliation between France and German Lutheranism. The diplomat Guillaume du Bellay (1491–1543) had been attempting to arrange a debate between Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and Sorbonne theologians in the presence of King Francis, but after the posting of the placards in October and a second posting the following January, the debate would never take place.[3]

Whatever the specific impact of the placards on the course of reform in France, however, the response to the attack on the Mass and the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist expressed a particularly French anxiety about secular and sacred sovereignty. At the very least, official royal support for reformers ended after the posting of the placards and galvanized the administrative transfer of prosecutions of heresy from the ecclesiastical courts of the Roman Catholic Church to the *parlements*, the highest judicial appellate bodies in the French kingdom. The Edict of Fontainebleau in July 1540 declared that all royal officials could investigate charges of heresy, and prosecutions increased across France, peaking after the establishment of the special branch of the *parlement* of Paris dedicated to investigating and trying heresy, the "Burning Chamber" (*Chambre Ardente*), in October 1547.

Given the rich history of institutional, cultural, and theological expressions of the special role of France and French kings in Christian salvation history, the placards' attack on the Eucharist struck at both ecclesiastical and

2. Donald Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation*, Cambridge 1981, 15–16.

3. Pierre Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la réforme: 3. Évangélisme*, Paris 1914, 560–565, 577; Francis M. Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne: A Bibliographical Study of Books in French Censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520–1551*, Geneva 1979, 33–34.

secular hierarchies, and, ultimately, threatened the political significance of eucharistic theology and ritual. Through an interpretation of the immediate responses to the placards, I argue that the strident and widely disseminated attacks on the Mass mobilized political consolidation around the seditious character of sacramentarian heresy in early modern France. Responses to the placards invoked the special role of the French monarchy in Christian salvation history as embodied in the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist, fusing heresy and sedition as a crime against two sovereign bodies – the King's and Christ's.

The first section of this piece outlines the history of French legends and iconographies of the salvific role of Frankish kings since Clovis I (c. 466–511) and the unique status of the Roman Catholic Church in France – what is often referred to as the Gallic church or the Gallican independence of the French church and monarchy from Rome. I show how the history of the French understanding of salvific exceptionalism was expressed in the royal procession through Paris on 21 January 1535, after the second posting of the placards and the ban on new printing. I then turn to the significance and scope of the transfer of heresy prosecutions to the *parlements* by the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1540. Finally, I argue that the official published response to the placards by the Sorbonne theologian Jérôme de Hangest (c. 1480–1538) was addressed to a literate public at risk from the dangerously seditious and heretical propaganda disseminated by the placards. In this sense, the responses to the placards expressed a nationalist identification of the French nation – made up of a public under the protection of a divinely anointed monarch – with the state that protected the nation.

Gallican Corpus Christi

The response and aftermath of the placards must be situated at the intersection of two historical trends in early modern France: first, sixteenth-century expressions of the special role of France and French monarchs in Christian salvation history, and second, legal reforms in the Edict of Villers-Cotterets of 1539 that streamlined and standardized criminal procedures and promoted French as the legal language of the kingdom. I will return to the latter below in my discussion of the Edict of Fontainebleau and the transfer of heresy prosecutions to the *parlements*, in the context of the legacy of the Christian God's special covenant with the dynasty of Frankish kings since Clovis.[4] According to the ninth-century legend first popularized by Hincmar, the archbishop of Rheims (806–882), Clovis was crowned and

4. Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France*, Oxford 1999, 18–26.

baptized alongside several thousand Franks in the cathedral of Rheims with chrism from an ampulla delivered to Saint Remigius (c. 437–533) by the Holy Spirit in the beak of a dove in the late fifth or early sixth century, invoking contemporaneous legends of Christ's baptism by John the Baptist. Aiming to popularize Remigius's cult and establish Rheims as the spiritual capital of the Frankish empire, Hincmar claimed to possess the same chrism and ampulla at the ceremony to coronate Charles the Bald (823–877) the king of Lotharingia in 869.[5] Hincmar's retelling of the legend of the coronation of Clovis combined the sacral kingship of France – baptism, anointing, and coronation – and its special covenant with God through the anointing of the monarch as the successor to the Kings of Israel. Remigius's ampulla first appears in the record of the coronation of Louis VII (c. 1120–1180) in 1131, and, by the end of the thirteenth century, royal coronation and anointing were referred to as the "eighth" sacrament.[6]

The particular form of the French divine right of kings as embodied in the monarch, therefore, carried specific historical and sacerdotal meanings, namely that the nation was covenanted to the Christian God and that the sovereign's body was the meeting point between the spiritual and temporal realms. While they were not official members of the clergy capable of administering the sacraments, French sacral monarchs occupied a liminal position between laypeople and the clergy, with specific healing powers of the royal touch for the king's evil or scrofula (a type of tuberculosis infection thought to be cured by touching the king's body) – a power conferred by the holy unction at coronation and traced back to Clovis, Philip I (1052–1108), or Louis IX (1214–1270). As Marc Bloch (1886–1944) has shown, royal healing rituals inspired popular devotion to the miracle-working powers of the king's body between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries; as early as Guibert of Nogent's (c. 1055–1124) *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus* (*On the Saints and their Relics*), royalist chronicles celebrated the power of the king's touch. In Guibert's account, there was popular demand for the healing touch of Louis

5. The first papal anointing of the French Roman Catholic king dated from a later ceremony in which Pope Stephen II (c. 714–757) recognized Pepin the Short (c. 714–768) in 754. On Hincmar's promotion of the legend of Clovis's baptism and the Holy Ampulla, see Edward Roberts, "Flodarard, the Till of St. Remigius and the See of Rheims in the Tenth Century", *Early Medieval Europe* 22 (2014), 201–230, https://doi.org/10.1111/emed.12053; Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, Berkeley, CA 1991; Jacques Le Goff, "Reims, City of Coronation", in Pierre Nora & Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory – The Construction of the French Past: 3. Symbols*, New York 1998, 199–200.

6. On the history of royal unction, see Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges: Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale*, Strasbourg 1924; Richard Jackson, *Vive le Roi: A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X*, Chapel Hill, NC 1984. On royal coronation as the eighth sacrament, see Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges*, 224–230.

VI (1081–1137), whose personal piety was said to enhance his miraculous abilities.[7]

The honorific of the "most Christian king" was routinely given by the papacy in correspondence with medieval monarchs, but it took on special national meaning in medieval France in the late thirteenth century during the conflict over appointments and taxation between Philip the Fair (1268–1314) and Pope Boniface VIII (c. 1230–1303). Philip's councilor and keeper of the seals, Guillaume de Nogaret (c. 1260–1313), was the principal architect of a campaign to promote the French king as the defender of the faith and the divinely chosen protector of Christendom against a heretical pope. Juridical treatises, diplomatic correspondence, and popular sermons during the late thirteenth century frequently referred to France as the holiest Christian kingdom of God's chosen people, protected by the most Christian king.[8]

Arguments for the Christian exceptionalism of the French kingdom, king, and people continued to spread in the fourteenth century during the Avignon papacy (1309–1376) and the Great Schism (1378–1417), with the Avignon and Roman popes each claiming papal supremacy. When Jean Gerson (1363–1429), a popular preacher and later the chancellor of the University of Paris, began delivering public sermons on ending the schism in the 1390s, he appealed to the special historical role of the French king to unify Christendom, armed by the Holy Spirit and chosen by God among all the temporal princes.[9] Gerson was a member of the generation of patriotic royalists in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries during the reigns of Charles V (1338–1380) and Charles VI (1368–1422) who promoted the supernatural status of the monarch through legends as well as political arguments for royal supremacy. The *fleur-de-lis*, for example, had been incorporated into the official iconography of French kings, at least since Philip I. Later mid-fourteenth-century legends, however, connected its theological,

7. Guibertus de Novigento, *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus*, in Robert B.C. Huygens (ed.), *Quo ordine sermo fieri debeat. De bucella iudae data et de veritate dominici corporis. De sanctis et eorum pigneribus*, Turnhout 1993; Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges*, 224–230. On Guibert's text, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Bodily Miracles and the Resurrection of the Body in the High Middle Ages", in Thomas Kselman (ed.), *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion*, Notre Dame, IN 1991, 68–106.

8. On Guillaume de Nogaret, see Julien Théry-Astruc, "The Pioneer of Royal Theocracy: Guillaume de Nogaret and the Conflicts between Philip the Fair and the Papacy", in William Chester Jordan & Jenna Rebecca Phillips (eds.), *The Capetian Century, 1214–1314*, Turnhout 2017, 219–259, https://doi.org/10.1484/M.CELAMA-EB.5.112974. On medieval France as the Holy Land, see Joseph R. Strayer, "France: The Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King", in Theodore K. Rabb & Jerrold E. Seigel (eds.), *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of E.H. Harbison*, Princeton, NJ 1969, 3–16, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400876068-001.

9. Jean Gerson, *Opera omnia*, Antwerp 1706. On Gerson's role in the schism, see Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, University Park, PA 2010.

heraldic, and historical meanings – respectively, as a symbol of the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Mother, its singular use by French royalty, and the accounts of its miraculous origins on Clovis's shield before his baptism and coronation, on the banner of St. Denis (as in Gerson's account), or delivered by an angel to Charlemagne (747–814) – as a polysemous symbol of French sacral kingship.[10]

By the early fifteenth century, the title of "most Christian king" was claimed by French royalists as the special designation of a divine right given directly to French monarchs that circumvented papal primacy. In the aftermath of the Avignon papacy and the Great Schism, the conciliar movement in the fifteenth century supported various interpretations of Gallicanism, or the informal independence of the French church and the French monarchy from Rome. The conciliar promotion of the precedence of church councils as a check to papal power underscored both monarchical independence and clerical claims of "Gallican liberties" – namely, the sovereignty of the French monarch from papal temporal jurisdiction and the right of the French church to elect its bishops and be exempt from papal taxation. The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438), issued by Charles VII (1403–1461), declared the supremacy of a decennial council over the pope and limited the pope's temporal jurisdiction, including requiring royal permission for the circulation of papal bulls. During the reign of Francis I, however, and approximately eighteen years before the posting of the placards, the Concordat of Bologna (1516) renegotiated the balance of power between the pope, the French monarch, and the Gallic church. Francis and Pope Leo X (1475–1521) agreed to let the monarch nominate ecclesiastical appointments and tithe clergy, while the papacy retained the right to collect annates (the first year's revenue of a benefice), and to be the supreme governor of the church above any ecumenical council.[11]

The body of the French king thus carried a specific significance as the implied target of the sacramentarian arguments of the placards. In the influential terms of Ernst Kantorowicz's (1895–1963) study of medieval political theology, by the early sixteenth century, the French monarch had one body rather than the English monarch's two bodies – for the English monarch, a natural body (*corpus naturale*) that lived and died differed from the political body tied to the king's office and sovereign authority.[12] More precisely, the

10. See Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology*, 201–225; Jean-Bernard Cahours d'Aspry, *Des fleurs de lis et des armes de France: Légendes, histoire et symbolisme*, Biarritz 1998.

11. On the Concordat, see Jules Thomas, *Le concordat de 1516: Ses origines, son histoire au XVIe siècle*, Paris 1910; Jotham Parsons, *The Church in the Republic: Gallicanism and Political Ideology in Renaissance France*, Washington, DC 2004, 32–38.

12. Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*,

French monarch's body was a *corpus naturale* that defended the body politic of a shared territorial fatherland, which Kantorowicz argued was a secularization of the *corpus mysticum* – the body of Christ as the body politic of the Church (as opposed to the earlier meaning of the body of Christ in the Eucharistic sense, as the sacrament of the altar). After the eleventh-century debates about the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist, official Church doctrine stressed and codified the Eucharist as Christ's true body, the *corpus verum*, *corpus naturale*, or *corpus Christi*, canonizing the doctrine of the transubstantiation of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In the mid-thirteenth century, the feast of Corpus Christi to honour the real presence of Christ in the sacrament was established in Liège and officially instituted by the Church in 1264. According to Kantorowicz, the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century conflicts between Philip the Fair and Pope Boniface VIII further transformed the meaning of the *corpus mysticum* into the social corporation headed by Christ, as distinct from the individual *corpus Christi* revered in the sacrament, and as having a secular counterpart, the *corpus mysticum* of the fatherland (*patria*) or kingdom:

> Whereas the *corpus verum*, through the agency of the dogma of transubstantiation and the institution of the feast of *Corpus Christi*, developed a life and a mysticism of its own, the *corpus mysticum* proper came to be less and less mystical as time passed on, and came to mean simply the Church as a body politic or, by transference, any body politic of the secular world.[13]

In France in particular, Guillaume de Nogaret's campaign against the papacy and the Knights Templar appealed to the *patria* of France, to which all French people belonged with the monarch as its head. The secular *corpus mysticum* of the fatherland, in other words, defined members of the Gallic *patria* as a temporal polity protected by, and serving, the monarch as their sovereign head. For Kantorowicz, this was a sociopolitical development that supported the political theology of the emergent French nation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, composed of the three estates of the clergy, nobility, and peasantry under the sovereign protection of the king.[14]

Kantorowicz's arguments have been widely discussed and critiqued; assessing his historical account of the emergence of a secular Gallic

Princeton, NJ 1957, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400880782.

13. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 206.

14. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 218, 259.

corpus mysticum is beyond the scope of my argument here. For my purposes, Kantorowicz's distinctions between Eucharistic, individual, and corporate bodies (both spiritual and secular) help define the key elements of the political theology expressed in the response to the placards. Scholarly studies of medieval and early modern Gallicanism, such as those by Tyler Lange and Alain Tallon, have argued that the political, social, and cultural commitments to royal and ecclesiastical independence were significant barriers to Protestant reform in France.[15] According to Lange, earlier supporters of the conciliar movement allied with the royalist anti-papal camp in a "first" French reformation that developed "two modalities of royal power, the king's defense of [Christian] orthodoxy, and the embodiment of the polity in his human body" that effectively prevented a "second" Protestant reformation.[16] Tallon has also emphasized Gallican exceptionalism as the bulwark against Protestant reform, but specifically as a "counter" identity that distinguished royalist, ecclesiastical, or juridical autonomy at different times in the service of France's special role as the nation and people chosen to safeguard the purity of the Christian faith.[17] As Lange has argued concerning the distinction between the bodies of the French and English kings, by the early sixteenth century, "the king of England, body natural, could be opposed to the king of England, body politic, [while] in France the inescapably unitary, simple royal person could only either incarnate or be opposed to the nation".[18] The sacramentarian arguments against the Mass were, in this sense, at once threats to the secular *corpus mysticum*, the king as its head and incarnation of the state, and to the veneration of the sacrament as the foundational ritual of both the sacred and secular bodies politic. The king's individual natural body (*corpus naturale*), in other words, both embodied and defended the *corpus mysticum* of the state and the *corpus verum* of the Eucharist.

These relationships were embodied in the massive royal procession, Mass, and burning of heretics on 21 January 1535 in response to the placards, which had been posted in Paris for a second time on 15 January.[19] The

15. Tyler Lange, *The First French Reformation: Church Reform and the Origins of the Old Regime*, Cambridge 2014; Alain Tallon, *Conscience nationale et sentiment religieux en France au XVIe siècle: Essai sur la vision gallicane du monde*, Paris 2002.

16. Lange, *The First French Reformation*, 111.

17. Tallon, *Conscience nationale*, 19–20. See also Alain Tallon, "Gallicanism and Religious Pluralism in Sixteenth-Century France", in Keith Cameron, Mark Greengrass & Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Adventure of Religious Pluralism in Early Modern France: Papers from the Exeter Conference, April 1999*, Berne 2000, 15–30.

18. Tyler Lange, "Constitutional Thought and Practice in Early Sixteenth-Century France: Revisiting the Legacy of Ernst Kantorowicz", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 42 (2011), 1022.

19. For contemporary chronicles recounting the procession, see Théodore Godefroy & Denys Godefroy, *Le ceremonial françois*, vol. 2, Paris 1649, 934–935; Georges Guiffrey, *Chronique du Roy Françoys premier de ce nom*, Paris 1860, 113–130; *Procession generale faict à*

procession began in the Church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, named for Saint Germanus, whose tomb was the legendary site of the conversion of Clovis and his wife, Clotilde (c. 474–548). Contemporary chronicles and correspondence described overfull streets, closed shops, and people hanging out of windows and off balconies; around seven in the morning, the different parishes and religious orders of the city brought their relics to Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois for the procession. The relics of Saint-Chapelle, including the crown of thorns, fragments of the True Cross, the Holy Lance, and drops of Christ's blood, were carried in front of representatives of the Sorbonne and French cardinals. Swiss guards played a Eucharistic hymn by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), "Pange lingua gloriosi corporis mysterium", and behind the clerical representatives the bishop of Paris, Jean Du Bellay (1492–1560), carried the Eucharist in a gold monstrance, covered by a canopy adorned with *fleur-de-lis* carried by the king's sons. At the rear of the procession behind the canopy, King Francis walked in a black robe and bareheaded. Small altars were placed along the streets, where the king would kneel and adore the Eucharist, prompting public weeping and prayer. On the Pont Notre-Dame, banners and tapestries depicted the divine gift of the *fleur-de-lis* to France and the salvific exceptionalism of France above other Christian kingdoms, as well as Eucharistic miracles (such as bleeding hosts) and prayers for the protection of the Eucharist from God's enemies. The procession ended at Notre Dame, where Du Bellay conducted Mass and decried the heretics threatening the holiest Christian kingdom. In the evening, six heretics were executed in the Rue St. Honoré and at the Paris market to mark the end of the ceremony.

One of the most elaborate and chronicled events in sixteenth-century France, the procession incorporated elements of royal processions and Corpus Christi festivals, the latter of which would have been familiar to the population of Paris since the late thirteenth century as extravagant communal rituals of public Eucharistic devotion. Barbara B. Diefendorf has suggested that the procession was most likely the first in France to make use of the Eucharistic monstrance outside of Corpus Christi celebrations.[20] The centrality of the Eucharist – the elaborate organization of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities around it, as well as local and royal relics preceding it – marked the special role of the French state and Gallic church in safeguarding Eucharistic orthodoxy, with the most Christian French king as the most pious and fiercest defender of the faith. The Eucharist was positioned in the procession as Christ's true and natural body, protected and

Paris, le Roy estant en personne: Le XXii jourt de Janvier. Mille cinq centz trente et cinq, Paris 1535.

20. Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*, Oxford 1991, 46.

adored by the king, whose own body was both natural and the embodiment of the Gallic body politic as the holiest Christian kingdom. According to Christopher Elwood, the procession thus expressed the profound sacramental and political character of the French state and sovereign:

> An attack upon the holy sacrament, according to the logic of the symbolism employed in the procession, presents a direct threat to the sacral character of the community, to the nation's well-being, and hence amounts to an oblique attack on the person of the sovereign. Given the close association established between the sacrament and the monarch, it is no wonder that those implicated in the affair of the placards were regarded as being guilty not only of heresy but also of lèse-majesté.[21]

At the palace of the bishop of Paris following the Mass, King Francis proclaimed the threat to the secular *corpus mysticum* a Eucharistic heresy: just as he would sacrifice his arm or his children if they were afflicted with a fatal disease, so too was his kingdom at risk of the disease of heresy and needed secular and ecclesiastical coordination to expel it.

Lèse-majesté and Seditious Heresy

The crime of "treason" in late medieval France evolved both from the Germanic tradition of *treubruch*, which largely concerned the betrayal of feudal obligations of vassals to lords, and the Roman tradition of *maiestas*, which punished those who injured people invested with public authority.[22] In the literary tradition of *chansons de geste* – accounts of heroic deeds – cognates of "traitor" and "treason" described false knights who betrayed their temporal lords and heretics who betrayed their eternal Lord. The Roman tradition of *laesa maiestatis*, codified in the *lex Julia maiestatis* and in the *lex Quisquis* from the Justinian legal code, by contrast, referred to crimes against public security.

By the mid-thirteenth century, these two traditions of treason – one against a feudal lord and the other against the public – came together in laws against injuring the sovereign. Philip IV (1268–1314) and Guillaume de Nogaret made frequent use of *lèse-majesté* as treason against the king and kingdom to consolidate royal power. When Nogaret accused Bernard

21. Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 30.

22. On treason in medieval France, see Simon H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France*, Cambridge 1981, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511562396. On the Germanic and Roman traditions of defining and punishing treason, see Floyd Seyward Lear, *Treason in Roman and Germanic Law: Collected Papers*, Austin, TX 1965, https://doi.org/10.7560/734135.

Saisset (c. 1232–c. 1314), the bishop of Pamiers, of heresy, for example, Nogaret declared the right of the French king to replace the pope when necessary, citing the papal definition of heresy from Innocent III's (c. 1160–1216) decretal letter *Vergentis in senium* (1199) as high treason against God, which had provided the legal basis for punishments of death and the confiscation of property against accused heretics.[23] Attempting to justify the charge of heresy against the bishop to Pope Boniface VIII, Nogaret defined heresy as treason against both the sacred majesty of the church and the temporal majesty of the king; more importantly, given the special role of the French king as a defender of the faith, heresy was also an injury to the king himself, and thus both a spiritual and temporal crime.

From the early fourteenth century onward, heresy was often defined in French legal texts as the union of injury to the human and divine sovereigns, but it was not until the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1540 that secular courts were charged with prosecuting heresy. The year before, the Edict of Villers-Cotterets had enacted comprehensive reform to centralize and streamline judicial and administrative procedures. Critiquing Latin as obscure and elitist, two articles of the edict declared that all legal documents – registers, contracts, commissions, sentences, and wills, most importantly – be written in the "French mother tongue [*en langage maternel françois*]".[24] The ordinances also shortened judicial procedures to avoid delayed and lengthy trials: local prosecutors and judges were ordered to arrest suspected criminals swiftly, and those who were indicted were immediately imprisoned. During criminal trials, moreover, defendants were not allowed counsel or any assistance in answering the charges against them.[25] With the prosecutorial reforms the year before, the Edict of Fontainebleau was issued when the number of criminal cases in French royal courts was increasing – according to William Monter's careful study of court archives, within twenty years the *parlements* were hearing two or three times the number of

23. On the decretal letter, see Walter Ullman, "The Significance of Innocent III's Decretal Vergentis", in *Études d'histoire du droit canonique dédiées à Gabriel Le Bras*, vol. 1, Paris 1965, 729–742. On Philip IV, see Clément de Vasselot de Régné, "Un succès méconnu des derniers Capétiens: L'annexion des domaines des Lusignan et l'usage du concept de lèse-majesté (1308–1327)", *Revue historique* 2019/4, 833–858, https://doi.org/10.3917/rhis.194.0833; Julien Théry, "A Heresy of State: Philip the Fair, the Trial of the 'Perfidious Templars', and the Pontificalization of the French Monarchy", *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 39 (2013), 117–148, https://doi.org/10.5325/jmedirelicult.39.2.0117.

24. For the language of the Edict, see Isambert, Decrusy & Armet, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises, depuis l'an 420 jusqu'a l'an Révolution de 1789*, vol. 12, Paris 1828, 676–683.

25. Arlette Lebigre, *La justice du roi: La vie judiciaire dans l'ancienne France*, Paris 1995, 180–200.

cases they had heard before 1540 – and the criminal justice system was being reorganized to expedite prosecutions.[26]

The language of the Edict itself defined heresy as a treason against God and the king, sedition against the people of the kingdom, and a disturbance of public order. The ten articles of the Edict ordered that all "Lutherans" and "sacramentarians" be prosecuted before all other crimes, that prosecutions should be conducted against both laity and clerics, and that the *parlements* should determine whether the trial should be transferred to an ecclesiastical court. Most importantly, the edict defined heresy as a crime of "both divine and human *lèse-majesté*, sedition against the people, and disturbance of the state and public peace [*en soy crime de lèze majesté divine et humaine, sédition du peuple, et perturbation de nostre estat et repos publique*]". This was not, crucially, the reduction of heresy to sedition, administratively speaking, but the expansion of the secular judiciary apparatus to prosecute heresy as the crime which posed the greatest threat to the sovereign, state, and public. All subjects of the kingdom, both secular and ecclesiastical, the edict declared, were enjoined to report suspected Lutherans and sacramentarians to criminal authorities, just as "everyone must run to put out a public fire [*comme un chacun doit courir à esteindre un feu publique*]".[27]

The Edict does not explicitly mention the attacks against the Mass, however, nor Eucharistic heresies specifically. In fact, Eucharistic heresy does not seem to have been overrepresented in the prosecutions after 1534, when the placards were posted, or after the secular courts began prosecuting heretics in 1540. Yet as Monter has documented, "sacramentarian" was the most persecuted kind of heresy in the seven months after the posting of the placards and through 1541, and the term "sacramentarian" (*sacramentaire*) and sacramentarian arguments were associated with the publications by Pierre de Vingle's (1495–1536) newly established press in the Swiss city of Neûchatel.[28]

The Placards and the Reading Public

Thanks to a well-coordinated effort across a secret network of French reformers, the placards had been printed in Neûchatel by Vingle's press – the publisher of the first French Bible translated from Hebrew and Greek, the Olivétan Bible, less than one year later – and smuggled into France

26. William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements*, Cambridge, MA 1999, 23.

27. Isambert, Decrusy & Armet, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, 680.

28. Monter, *Judging the French Reformation*, 69; Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 181, n. 25; David J. Nicholls, "The Nature of Popular Heresy in France, 1520–1542", *The Historical Journal* 26 (1983), 271, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00024067.

by allies of their anonymous author Antoine Marcourt (c. 1490–1561), the Reform pastor in Neûchatel and a follower of Huldrych Zwingli's (1484–1531) Eucharistic theology. Neûchatel had legally adopted Reform Christianity four years earlier under the influence of the evangelist and reformer Guillaume Farel (1489–1565); Marcourt, Farel's successor as pastor, authored works attacking the clergy and the Eucharist, including the first edition of his influential *Livre des marchans* (1533), a sharp satire of Roman Catholic clergy as deceitful middlemen peddling spiritual goods they had no right to sell, and ending with attacks on the Mass similar to what would appear the next year in the placards, and only four years after the Marburg Colloquy where Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Zwingli failed to come to an agreement about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[29]

Marcourt's placards were among a number of publications from Vingle's press, including *Livre des marchans* and the 1534 publication expanding on the sacramentarian arguments in the placards, *Petit traicte tres utile et salutaire de la saincte eucharistie de nostre Seigner Jesuschrist* (A small useful and beneficial treatise on the holy eucharist of our Lord Jesus Christ), that were addressed to a vernacular and popular audience, and which mobilized official anxiety about public Eucharistic discourse. Although vernacular religious literature was by no means novel in the 1530s – French readers would have had access to a variety of broadsheets, portable Lutheran catechisms, devotional manuals, and vernacular Bibles from printers in Paris, Basel, and Antwerp, for example – the publications from Vingle's press were uniformly critical of the papacy, clergy, and Mass.[30] The well-organized dissemination of the placards, and their strident and polemical arguments attacking the Eucharist in broad terms, indicated their intended audience of a literate French public. As Torrance Kirby has observed, the placards were thus a decisive event in the history of Christian reformation in France and in the development of a public audience for theological arguments:

> By calling for radical religious reform through an open appeal to popular judgment, Marcourt played a key role in precipitating a controversy that was to alter decisively (and perhaps irrevocably) the Reformation in France, and serves to highlight the emergence in the early modern period of a new and popular sense of "public" over against a much

29. Genviève Gross (ed.), *Le* Livre des Marchans *d'Antoine Marcourt: Une satire anticléricale au service de la Réforme*, Paris 2016. On Marcourt, see Gabrielle Berthoud, *Antoine Marcourt, réformateur et pamphlétaire du "Livre des Marchans" aux placards de 1534*, Geneva 1973.

30. Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 31.

older and hieratic sense embodied in the institutions of monarch and church.[31]

The placards not only inveighed against the Eucharist but characterized the Mass as a communal ritual of public idolatry. Indeed, the language of the placards was addressed to the deceived and deluded public. Imperiled by the human (and thus carnal) invention of the Mass, readers of the placards were exhorted to public professions of faith in Jesus Christ and the word of Scripture "in confidence of their salvation".[32]

The official written responses to the placards indicated an awareness of the public audience of the sacramentarian arguments and the threat those arguments posed to the French sovereign, state, and church. The Sorbonne chose the theologian Jérôme de Hangest to respond to the placards in print. Hangest published two responses directly after the placards were posted in October, one in Latin for a university audience, and one in French for a popular audience.[33] His Latin treatise, *De Christifera Eucharistia adversus nugiferos symbolistas* (The Christian Eucharist against the cowardly symbolizers; 1534), is an academic response to the theological arguments of the placards and engages with the more technical debates concerning sacramental signs and real presence. His French treatise, *Contre les tenebrions lumiere évangelicque* (Evangelical light against the spirits of darkness; 1534), by contrast, is a point-by-point refutation of each claim in the placards – that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was a unique event that cannot be re-enacted in the Mass ritual, that transubstantiation is not found in Scripture, and that the body of Christ can only be in one place in heaven.

Most importantly, in his French treatise, Hangest describes the threat of heretical and false doctrines that deny transubstantiation and real presence as well as the sacrificial nature of the Mass as spreading through the public like an army of darkness or latent poison. This army was led by their

31. Torrance Kirby, "Emerging Publics of Religious Reform in the 1530s: The Affair of the Placards and the Publication of Antoine de Marcourt's *Livre des Marchans*", in Bronwen Wilson & Paul Yachnin (eds.), *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, New York 2009, 38, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203861356. See also Antónia Szabari, *Less Rightly Said: Scandals and Readers in Sixteenth-Century France*, Redwood City, CA 2009; Georges Farid, "La violence verbale entre catholiques et protestants au XVIe siècle", *Voix plurielles* 3:2 (2006), 2–13, https://doi.org/10.26522/vp.v3i2.507.

32. Berthoud et al. (eds.), *Aspects de la Propagande Religieuse*, 116.

33. Jérôme de Hangest, *De Christifera Eucharistia adversus nugiferos symbolistas*, Paris 1534; Jérôme de Hangest, *Contre les tenebrions lumiere évangelicque*, 2nd ed., Paris 1535. The first edition of the latter text was published in late 1534, and a second and expanded edition in 1535, presumably right after the second posting of the placards in January. All citations are from the second edition published in 1535. See Francis Higman, *Lire et découvrir: La circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme*, Geneva 1998, 515–530.

captain, the devil himself, the cause of sedition and destruction of the Christian kingdom of France.[34] The text is composed almost as a mirrored response for an audience presumed to have read the placards: Marcourt's attacks on the "horrible, great, and intolerable abuses of the Papal Mass" are met with Hangest's attacks on the "detestable, harmful, and blasphemous posters" spreading the poison of heresy to a vulnerable readership. Hangest's awkward, Latinized French suggests he wrote the treatise in Latin first and then translated it, leaving in a number of Latin quotations from the Vulgate to defend the Scriptural basis of transubstantiation and real presence.

The text is meant for a French speaker who may know some Latin, or is at least familiar with certain key phrases from the Gospels and the Pauline epistles (though Hangest often, but not always, translates the Vulgate Latin into French). The somewhat cumbersome and prolix style hints at the author's familiarity with longer and more technical genres of academic disputation that he is adapting and attempting to condense for readers more likely to be persuaded by hyperbole, humor, and invective. Yet Hangest spends considerable time emphasizing how any elementary reader of the Gospels and Paul would easily understand the plain meaning of the Eucharistic words of institution to mean the transubstantiation of the consecrated bread and wine into Christ's body and blood; the placards aimed to seduce faithful readers away from the obvious and accepted descriptions of the Last Supper in Scripture.[35] The task of drawing out the poison or putting out the fire of heresy thus becomes a communal task for each reader of Hangest's response to the placards: resisting the sacramentarian arguments of the placards becomes at least in part a responsibility of the French reader invested in the national health of France. The "public fire" of heresy, in other words, threatens the holy French nation and is extinguished by the cooperation of the public with the state apparatus to prosecute seditious heresy.

Conclusion

Despite the specific steps taken in the immediate aftermath of the placards, the five years after their first posting did not see as significant and sudden a shift towards repression and the impossibility of reform as has often been claimed. While the next four months saw an increase in prosecutions for heresy, the Edict of Coucy the following July suspended all proceedings against suspected heretics if they made a public renunciation, and, despite the ban on new printing in January 1535 after the second posting, no

34. Hangest, *Contre les tenebrions*.
35. Hangest, *Contre les tenebrions*, Fo.xiiii.

significant action seems to have been taken against specific printers or booksellers. Moreover, sympathizers with humanist reform such as Gérard Roussel (1500–1555) and Jean Du Bellay gained power and prominence in the French church in the aftermath of the placards.[36] According to Francis Higman (1935–2015), Christian reform in sixteenth-century France before the outbreak of the Wars of Religion in 1562 saw the development of two Protestantisms – the anti-clerical sacramentarianism expressed in the placards and a moderate Lutheran humanism associated with the circle of Meaux, led by Guillaume Briçonnet (c. 1472–1534) and the theologian Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1450–1536), the latter of which enjoyed royal support from the king's sister, Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549). The affair of the placards forced sharper distinctions between the radical and moderate positions, and Higman suggests that one of the placards' aims was to undermine moderate efforts by yoking the Lutheran humanists to a sacramentarian critique of the mass. The specific attack on the mass as the central ritual of the Gallic church, state, and society, however – a national ritual of one faith, one law, and one king – was the precise form of seditious heresy to threaten the early modern French nation-state. ▲

SUMMARY

In October 1534 and January 1535, placards were posted in French cities attacking the Mass, prompting official backlash and altering the course of the Christian Reformations in France. This paper argues that the response to the posting of the placards expressed a specifically Gallic anxiety about the popularization of sacramentarian critiques of the Mass and the Eucharist. France's history of sacral kingship and Gallican independence from the papacy were the key contexts and causes of the official response to the posting of the placards, which affirmed the importance of Eucharistic devotion in the political theology of early modern France and transferred heresy prosecutions to secular courts. Focusing on three key responses – the royal processional in January 1535, the empowering of secular courts to prosecute "seditious" heresy, and the defense of the Mass by the Sorbonne theologian Jérôme de Hangest, I argue that the responses to the posting of the placards reflected an understanding and fear of popular receptions of sacramentarian arguments and the threat they posed to the political, social, and institutional cohesion of the early modern French nation-state. The placards both reflected and mobilized a nationalist identification of a sacred and secular nation with the state headed by the monarch charged with protecting the nation.

36. Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne*, 33–34. See also Higman, *Lire et décourvrir*.

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The Freedom of Religion Is a Divine Idea

Spinoza and Derrida on Democratic Autonomy

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How is the freedom of religion possible? How is it that we can freely gather to discuss, to share, and indeed to critique the various beliefs and practices of different religions? In other words, how is this journal issue possible? How is it possible to engage in a public discussion – to publish an essay, for example – that critically assesses both Christianity and the nation? Is the publicity of this discussion an "event", in Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) terms?[1] Does it involve the "coming of the other"?[2] How do we address the

1. Derrida is constantly playing with the root of the words event, advent, and invent (*venir*) in his works. *Venir* means to "come"; an "event" for Derrida is constantly arriving and so always at once here (now) and yet still to come. In his essay "Privilege: Justificatory Title and Introductory Remarks", he describes the promise that constitutes the democratic as an event: "An event or a promise", he writes, "[constitutes] the democratic: not presently but in a here and now whose singularity does not signify presence or self-presence." Jacques Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Philosophy*, vol. 1, Stanford, CA 2002, 42.

2. In "Psyche: Invention of the Other", Derrida observes, as he reflects on the mind's inventiveness and invention, that it is "another 'we' that is given over to this inventiveness [...], a 'we' that does not find *itself* anywhere, does not invent *itself*: it can be invented only by the other and from the coming of the other that says 'come' and to which a response with another 'come' appears to be the only invention that is desirable and worthy of interest. The other is indeed what is not inventable" as one's own product, "and it is therefore the only invention in the world, the only invention *of* the world, *our* invention, the invention that invents *us*. For the other is always another origin of the world, and *we are to be invented*. And the being of we, and being itself". Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 1, Stanford, CA 2007, 45. Unless otherwise noted, emphasis is given in the text.

subjects of religion and democracy (or Christianity and nationality, to invoke the themes of this special issue) so that our essays are rendered eventful and inventive, as Derrida would say, avoiding the conventions that give rise to calculated and expected responses?

In this essay, I undertake to address these questions through an analysis of the concepts of democracy and religion as advanced by Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) and Derrida. As we shall see, there is a profound relationship between the moral principles central to their analyses of the democratic state and religious concepts. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, for example, Spinoza founds the civil rights of democratic freedom on the command, the duty, to uphold another's right as one's own. He argues that in founding the civil state, people "had to bind themselves by the most stringent pledges to be guided in all matters only by the dictates of reason [...], to do to no one what they would not want done to themselves, and to uphold another's right as they would their own".[3] Thus, he marries the dictates of reason that guide the actions of human beings in a democratic state to the Golden Rule; in turn, he ties the observance of the Golden Rule (as articulated by Jesus in Matt. 7:12 and in Luke 6:31) to civil freedom. But, from his presentation of the founding of democracy, there arises a series of questions. For is democracy (not) then religious? Is the Bible or are the religions of the Bible, in turn, understood to be democratic? Is the democratic right to autonomy (the right to decide upon one's own religious commitments for oneself, including the right not to believe in anything that one identifies as religious) a biblical or a modern invention? Is it a divine or is it a human idea?

Spinoza begins the *Theological-Political Treatise* by indicating that the freedom to think (that is, reason) preserves and is preserved by both piety and political peace. It is freedom that constitutes, for Spinoza, philosophy, religion (the knowledge of God as articulated by the authors and figures central to the Bible),[4] and politics. Derrida also holds, over a suite of

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3. Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, Indianapolis, IN 2001, 175. When I include, within the same paragraph, successive quotations from the same page of a source, I append the footnote citation to the last quotation.

4. Although I recognize the significant differences between Judaism and Christianity, along with the differences between what constitutes Jewish and Christian Scripture, I shall generally refer, in concert with Spinoza, to "the Bible" and use the term "biblical" in order to allow me to focus not on Judaism or Christianity in particular but on the particular set of ideas and values that are found at the very core of both traditions. Let me also note here that, although I do not discuss Islam explicitly in my study, Derrida properly includes Islam among the religions of the book, as the third, historically, of the Abrahamic religions, all of which contain, he argues, the concepts of justice and grace (the gift) that he also associates with deconstruction. Finally, I want to be sure to note that, although I refer, at times, to Christianity specifically (in keeping with the particular terms of this special issue), I do not mean to suggest that Christianity or Christian doctrine in any way supersedes or supplants Judaism or Jewish doctrine (or that Spinoza or Derrida suggests, in any critical way, that

essays and works, that it is the free promise to respond responsibly to others that constitutes reason, faith, and politics. But what these thinkers thereby show us is that neither religion nor democracy have their origin in the natural evolution of human beings but in the law (at once divine and human) to uphold another's rights as one's own. Consequently, what we discover when we examine the concepts of religion and democracy advanced by Spinoza and Derrida is that, paradoxically, the freedom of religion (the freedom involved in the democratic right to practice any or no religion at all as an autonomous human subject) is a divine idea. In other words, through an analysis of the concepts of Spinoza and Derrida, I shall undertake to show in this paper that biblical religion is democratic (in principle) in the beginning and that the principles of modern democracy (the rights and freedoms articulated in democratic states, including the freedom of religion) are religious unto the end.

Prior to turning to Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, I want to indicate what I understand by the idiom "democratic autonomy". It is patent that Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in setting out what it means to impose a law upon yourself, to impose the law yourself, to impose your own law – *auto-nomoi* – demonstrates that the call for autonomy is but another version of the democratic imperative: all persons are created equal. For what Kant shows us in both the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* is that, as the legislator of the law, you are equally its subject, that is to say you are subject to the law that you prescribe for others.[5] Thus, the autonomous human subject is the person who wills for others what she wills for herself, the person who wills to treat both herself and others as ends and never merely as means. Kant thereby argues in Part III of the *Grounding* (and in concert with Spinoza, as we shall soon see) that, because we possess an understanding of ourselves as natural, we are not only natural but free: born in the state of nature yet conceived by the civil state in which human beings know the dictate of reason as the practice of willing what he calls the kingdom of ends.[6] Democracy disseminates autonomy in bearing witness to the idea that every human subject is to be treated as a free human person and never merely as a determined natural object. Autonomy, in turn, is a democratic practice. For it involves the practice of building the

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Christianity exceeds Judaism). As we shall see, there is no exceeding or superseding the command to love your neighbour as yourself. There is nothing more perfect than this imperative (and the existence that is created in its image). For it is this command (along with its infinite variety of expressions) that enables us to distinguish our perfections from our imperfections, good from evil, right from wrong, holy from unholy.

5. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed., Indianapolis, IN 1993, 431–434, 440–441; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, New York 1997, 5:33–5:35.

6. Kant, *Grounding*, 446–463.

kingdom, the social structure, in which all persons are treated as ends, as persons with dignity, and not as mere means, as objects with a price.

But how do the ideas of autonomy, democracy, and equal human rights arise? They do not appear to be found in or founded upon the feudal, aristocratic past that precedes them. What is the history of these ideas? What is the story of the ideas of human equality and autonomy? Are we not also critical (and rightly so) of the founders of democracy? Are the people who voice these principles historically not also the ones responsible for contributing to the massacres that follow the French Revolution and for the violent and vile oppression of American slavery? The answer is: Yes. But how, then, do we relate to the history of democracy in a way that is justified? How do we tell the story of the founding of democracy in a way that does justice to its own principles? In mustering a critical response to these questions with the aim of demonstrating the historical paradox involved in the development of democratic rights (including the right to free religious expression), let us see how Spinoza's argument unfolds in the *Theological-Political Treatise*.

The Religion of Democracy

In the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza undertakes, as his main objective, to separate philosophy and theology, for the aims and bases of these two faculties, he writes, "are as far apart as can be".[7] Philosophy, for Spinoza, rests on universal axioms, whereas faith is derived from scripture and revelation. Yet Spinoza indicates at the outset that natural knowledge (philosophy) "has as much right as any other kind of knowledge to be called divine [...] for the knowledge we acquire by the natural light of reason depends solely on the knowledge of God".[8] Thus, he concludes that one who abounds in justice and charity, "whether he be taught by reason alone or by scripture alone is in truth taught by God and is altogether blessed".[9] In separating philosophy and religion, Spinoza demonstrates that the two faculties are inseparable. As Spinoza never wavers in holding, neither is theology the handmaiden of philosophy nor philosophy subordinate to theology. Instead, both reason and faith (the natural light of the mind and the revelation of scripture) are invested in the knowledge of God. It follows that whatever it is that serves as the basis of philosophical or religious thought is a divine idea (expressing the knowledge of God). As Spinoza observes, "the whole of our knowledge, that is, our supreme good, not merely depends on the knowledge of God but consists entirely therein".[10] There is nothing outside divine

7. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 164.
8. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 9.
9. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 70.
10. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 50.

knowledge. The human mind, whatever it thinks or knows, knows God. But what, then, is the content of this knowledge? What does God think or know? What do we think about when we think about God?

In the "Appendix" to Part I of the *Ethics*,[11] and throughout the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza develops a critical distinction between religion and superstition. After distinguishing between those laws that depend on nature's necessity (the laws of nature that "explain [particular] things through their proximate [efficient] causes") and those that are generated by human will, Spinoza draws a further distinction between the laws that render to each one's own through fear, threat of punishment, or bondage and the laws that render to each one's own "through awareness of the true principle of law", which ascribes freedom to all individuals and which, therefore, engenders a community where, as Spinoza writes, "sovereignty is vested in all citizens, and laws are sanctioned by common consent".[12] It is this community, sanctioned by the right of all persons to sovereignty or autonomy – the community that insists, by law, that each person has infinite worth – that Spinoza describes as just. He draws a sharp distinction, in other words, between two types of human law: between the human law that renders to each one's own, *suum cuique*, through the violence of bondage, threat, and fear (a law that William Shakespeare [1564–1616] aligns with ancient Roman justice in *Titus Andronicus*)[13] and the human law that renders to each one's own through the right to sovereignty for all individuals. It is in light of the distinction between these two formulations of law that Spinoza proceeds to establish the relationship between human and divine law. "By divine law", he writes, "I mean that which is concerned only with the supreme good, the true knowledge and love of God [...] So the rules for living a life that has regard to this end can fitly be called the Divine Law."[14] The divine law that establishes these rules for living (*ratio vivendi*: the rule of life) does not consist in ceremonial rites, doctrinal commitments, or dogmatic belief. Rather, the divinity of Scripture, written on the hearts and minds of all human beings, consists in true moral doctrine, "for it is on this basis alone

11. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Toronto 1996, I, Appendix.

12. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 48–49, 64.

13. Marcus Andronicus, tribune of the Roman people and brother of the Roman general Titus, states, in defense of Bassianus' claim to Titus' daughter Lavinia, "*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice: / This prince in justice seizeth but his own". William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, in Stephen Grenblatt et al. (eds.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, vol. 1, New York 2008, 1.1, 280. It is arresting to see the tribune of the people within the Roman republic apprise the motto *suum cuique*, to each his own, in defense of the seizure of Lavinia by prince Bassianus. Shakespeare is so conscious that in Rome, as in the natural state, might is (coextensive with) right. In the Roman state depicted in his play, there is no idea of the people's rights but only that of the might of the public majority.

14. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 49–50.

that its divinity can be proved".[15] "From Scripture itself", Spinoza writes, "we learn that its message unclouded by any doubt or any ambiguity, is in essence this, to love God above all, and one's neighbour as oneself."[16] The worship of or obedience to God consists in loving one's neighbour and (as) oneself. That is, the knowledge of God expresses the justice and charity entailed in the human command to uphold another's right as one's own.[17]

In light, then, of his notion of divine law as expressed in human justice and charity, Spinoza launches his attack on superstition, which he associates with the belief in supernatural miracles and with the concept of free will.[18]

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15. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 88.

16. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 151.

17. For a comprehensive examination of the relationship between the love of God and the love of human beings in Spinoza's *Ethics*, see Clare Carlisle, "The Intellectual Love of God", in Yitzhak Y. Melamed (ed.), *A Companion to Spinoza*, Hoboken, NJ 2021, 440–448. As Carlisle explains, Spinoza stresses the dialectical tension of this relationship, "first by attributing the affect of self-love to God, and then by assimilating this divine self-love to human self-love" (p. 444). As Spinoza argues, Carlisle observes, citing the Part V, Proposition 36 of the *Ethics*, "The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself [...] from this it follows that insofar as God loves himself, he loves men, and consequently that God's love of men and the mind's intellectual love of God are one and the same". Searching for a way to express this equivalence, she notes, "Spinoza describes *Amor Dei intellectualis* as 'an action by which the mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause, that is, an action by which God, insofar as he can be explained through the human mind, contemplates himself'", citing the *Ethics* VP36, in which Spinoza concludes that the human mind, through this contemplation, becomes satisfied with itself. In other words, as Carlisle tells her readers, the love of God describes the process by which we learn to love being ourselves (and *vice versa*). Nonetheless, Carlisle also remarks that, for Spinoza, there is an "asymmetry between God and finite individuals", for God is different ontologically from "finite things" (p. 445). Yet she immediately points out that Spinoza also ceaselessly argues that the mind thinks infinite existence (God), that all thinking involves and expresses infinite existence, that the existence of thinking things (the mind) is infinite (not a thing that is measured in terms of quantity). It follows, I would add, that human beings (in strict, philosophical terms) are not finite things; for, as both Spinoza and Carlisle indicate, nothing finite about us can explain what it is that makes us human. I would also add that, viewing God as infinite and human beings as finite (in the tradition of René Descartes [1596–1650], notwithstanding his own resistance to the idea that the mind is an extended or material thing) finitely opposes God and human beings and renders what is infinite about God finite (subject to a finite border: a finite demarcation of space or time). It is a finite conception of the infinite that results in opposing the infinite to the finite. The infinite describes the act of thinking founded upon the moral principles that are brought into existence in our social, political, personal, economic, and historical relationships. For an analysis of the concept of the "infinite" in the biblical tradition and in Derrida's philosophy, see Mark Cauchi, "Traversing the Infinite through Augustine and Derrida", in Philip Goodchild (ed.), *Difference in Philosophy of Religion*, Burlington, VT 2003, 45–57.

18. As Carlisle notes, "in the *Ethics* Spinoza defines religion as 'whatever we desire and do of which we are the cause insofar as [...] we know God'", citing the Scholium of the *Ethics* IVP3. "He could have added", she continues, "affectivity to this definition – 'whatever we desire and do *and feel* insofar as we know God' – since the affects are central to his discussion of religion." She additionally notes that Spinoza viewed "both the Dutch Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church" as promoting "a superstitious popular religion characterized by

Indeed, Spinoza is a staunch advocate for the freedom of all persons, in concert with his avowal of reason, which dictates "that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being [...] – want[ing] nothing for themselves which they do not desire for other men". But he is an assiduous critic of free will in both its divine and human versions.[19] Spinoza thereby undertakes to deconstruct the teleological belief in first and final causes, along with the theology – consistent with the superstitious belief in miracles – that assigns these causes to God. The belief that God is a first or final cause of natural events, the belief that God contravenes nature or natural law, the belief, that is, that God is supernatural, "would lead to atheism",[20] Spinoza suggests, for "we can understand nothing" of an event that surpasses human understanding.[21] That is, the belief in a supernatural God is an admission of ignorance of God and God's works. But the admission of ignorance indicates that one believes that there is no evidence for belief in God. Thus Spinoza finds himself in concert with Hosea, who castigates the people of Israel for a lack of knowledge, for rejecting, as Hosea states, knowledge of God and so for joining those who believe in idols.[22]

It becomes evident, moreover, why it is that Spinoza criticizes the act of conflating the theology of the Bible with the teleology of Aristotle (384–322 BCE) and ancient Greek philosophy. For to imagine God as a first or final cause is to conceive of God as an end, a *telos*, out of thy stars (outside of the world of human beings): an end that all desire and so lack. As Aristotle notes in Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "what a man actually lacks he aims at".[23] Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE) also indicates, through Socrates (c. 470–399 BCE) in the *Symposium*, that to love the good, beauty, or wisdom is to lack it, to demonstrate one's human ignorance of it. The wise man does not seek after wisdom, for "he is wise already". Nor, however, Socrates continues, do the ignorant seek after wisdom. For, as ignorant of the good, Socrates notes that human beings do not even know to seek what they do not know.[24]

The teleology to which Aristotle subscribes and that Plato sets out in his dialogues is contradictory. There is no way to know or to seek the end, the

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passive affects, many of them species of sadness (the feeling of diminishing power), bound up with confused ideas about God and human beings". Carlisle, "The Intellectual Love of God", 445.

19. Spinoza, *Ethics*, IVP18, Schol., 126.

20. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 76.

21. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 75.

22. See Hos. 4:6–14, 6:4–6, 9:10. All biblical citations reference the Revised Standard Version.

23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, New York 2001, 1095b.

24. Plato, *Symposium*, Toronto 1976, 162.

good, of which all human beings are ignorant. Therefore, as both Plato and Aristotle recognize, in the *polis*, good and evil are averred *ad hominem*, relative to the man. As ignorant of the good, human beings judge an event good or evil by how it affects them. Spinoza therefore scolds all those who give in to these "prejudices" concerning good and evil by abjuring the knowledge of God in favour of a belief in supernatural causes. Of those Jews and Christians who "subject God to fate" by believing in God as a first or final cause capable of abrogating the laws of nature and who judge good and evil by whether it rains or shines, Spinoza writes:

> I do not see that they have taught anything more than the speculations of Aristotelians or Platonists, and they have made Scripture conform to these [...]. It was not enough for them to share in the delusions of the Greeks; they have sought to represent the prophets as sharing in these same delusions.[25]

Although Spinoza introduces a sharp distinction between superstition (as the conflation of the concepts of freedom and God with ancient Greek ideas) and religion (represented, for him, by the teachings of the Bible), he nevertheless maintains that the knowledge of God, and so of the dictate of reason, is universal. Spinoza finds himself confronted by the same paradox of history that confronts Jesus and Paul (in addition to the Hebrew prophets and the authors of the stories of Genesis). In Chapter 3 of the *Theological-Political Treatise* he tells us in no uncertain terms that the gift of prophecy, which consists not in foreseeing future events, but in teaching true moral doctrine and virtue, was not peculiar to the Jews.[26] Still, although Spinoza claims that natural knowledge (what he calls philosophy or reason) is invested with the knowledge of God, that the true knowledge of God is universal, and that, therefore, all peoples historically possessed prophets, he cites no examples of prophets of other nations who, like Hosea, testify to the moral precepts that he aligns with the dictates of reason. Spinoza's concept of the human mind (as principled by a concept of freedom that wills the good common to all) is uniquely wed, rather, to the principles and values of Hebrew and Christian Scripture. Indeed, as we have seen, he excepts Plato and Aristotle (and ancient Greek thought, more generally) from the history of natural knowledge (that is, philosophy). It is astonishing to note, then, that, for Spinoza, Plato and Aristotle do not belong to the category of philosophy as he conceives it (as the consciousness of God that

25. Spinoza, *Ethics*, IP33, Schol.2, 25; Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 5.
26. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 40.

consists in the practice of justice and charity). In becoming self-consciously critical of the idolatry in which God is confused with the concept of fate, condemning human beings to ignorance of divine laws, Spinoza calls his readers to uphold the total difference between ancient Greek philosophy and biblical texts.

But it is also important to note for my purposes in this essay that what Spinoza finds to be unique to the Bible is a notion of universality that encompasses all people, all races, all nations – and so all religions: whether Abrahamic or Gentile. On this point, he is in agreement with Jesus, who repeatedly reminds his listeners that it does not help, when your aim is to love one another, to have Abraham as your father.[27] Or, as Jesus tells his own followers: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."[28] Just because you identify as a "Christian", we can say (to invoke one of the themes of this special issue) does not mean that you are truly following the teaching of Jesus. To be a Christian is not reducible to the appearances of "Christianity" in one's life – to its rites, the observance of its ceremonies, or churchgoing. To be a Christian, as Martin Luther (1483–1546) puts it, is to be free – to be free to make your own rituals and traditions meaningful by placing them in the service of the freedom of oneself, others, and still others.[29] To be a Christian, then, as Luther says (in one of his striking claims), is to become a Christ – a messenger who bears witness to the message of love – to your neighbour.[30]

What I want to point out here, in introducing the idea that it is not the appearances that justify one's religious commitments but (as chief figures within the Bible and the history of Christianity indicate) one's commitment to the moral imperative to love one another that justifies – and so re-fashions – our appearances, is that the uniqueness of the Bible is not reducible to its

27. See Matt. 3:9.

28. Matt. 7:21–23.

29. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian", in John Dillenberger (ed.), *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, New York 1962, 53.

30. In "The Freedom of a Christian", Luther observes that "it is not enough or in any sense Christian to preach the works, life, and words of Christ as historical facts, as if the knowledge of these would suffice for the conduct of life" (p. 65). Rather, he continues, claiming that through our faith manifest in our works, we must also "serve and benefit others in all" that we do, considering nothing but the need and advantage of human beings so that "we may be sons of God, each caring for and working for the other, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ [Gal. 6:2]" (p. 73–74). For this is "a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done". Hence, "as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians" (p. 76).

own appearances. In other words, the distinction between the Bible and ancient Greek thought historically (between Jew and Gentile, in Paul's terms) cuts across the terms of that distinction. All religious expressions belong to the history of the concept of religion in modernity insofar as they embody the call to love one another, a call voiced by both Jesus and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), as we shall see. That is, the uniqueness of biblical thought identified by Spinoza (in contrast to ancient Greek philosophy) does not permit us to oppose biblical religion to any other world religion. My purpose in pointing out the distinction that Spinoza makes between ancient Greek philosophy and the biblical message is to show how the very maintenance of a respect for the difference between religious practices (and so the freedom of religion) enacts the spirit of the moral principles that are advanced by both biblical and modern authors. In the spirit of Spinoza, I want to preserve the moral concept of universality that is advanced by biblical authors so that it does not devolve (when confused with the ancient Greek notion of sovereignty or the One, as we shall see) into an abstract notion of oneness that obscures the unique history of the different expressions of religion in modernity. The concept of "religious studies" today – the reason that it is possible to hold critical and loving discussions with one another about the variety of religious expressions – is made possible through, and so demonstrates our commitment to common human rights. The message of the Bible does not allow one to reify the Bible, to reduce the concept of what is truly "biblical" to the pen and ink that we find on the pages between its covers. Rather, what is truly "biblical" – what belongs to the truth that many passages in the Bible convey (although many transgress these dictates) – is discerned by what Spinoza calls the dictates of reason written on the hearts and minds of all human beings: the principles of justice and charity.

In other words, while there are many different religions, there is one (unique and universal) concept of religion.[31] As Cynthia Ozick notes in her essay "The Moral Necessity of Metaphor", in which she distinguishes between the "natural religion" of the ancient Greeks and "our idea of religion today", the concept of religion for us invokes a notion of "conscience" (which she also ties to the biblical command to love your neighbour –

31. To be sure, there are many rich, unique, different ideas of what religion involves and entails today. But the respect that we show for the difference between our individual religious expressions also sets a limit upon these expressions. The celebration of religious diversity does not permit us to call "religious" any act that undertakes to disrespect – to demean or to oppress – other, different religious expressions. The concept of religious diversity demands respect for the differences of ourselves and others and so does not permit us to welcome oppressive ideas, actions, or policies that infringe upon the right to the freedom of conscience or religious expression.

including the stranger and your enemy – as yourself).[32] It is also fascinating to note that when the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the United States has to define what it is that qualifies as religious for the purposes of offering tax exemptions, they do so by defining a religious institution as an organization with a charitable objective.[33] The IRS agrees with Ozick (not to mention Spinoza): what is fundamental to religion in modernity is the conscientious work to provide for the needs of ourselves and others, that is, *caritas*: love or charity. So Gandhi writes, in concert with the IRS and Ozick, that his experiments in truth (in which he includes, above all, the practice of non-violent resistance he deploys in opposition to the oppression and occupation of India by Britain) are fundamentally "spiritual, or rather moral; for the essence of religion is morality".[34] Gandhi then proceeds to develop his concept of the love of all human beings as one that both demands (justifies) the right to forceful resistance and condemns (holds as unjust) the violent tactics of resistance that seek to oppress one's oppressor. Not only does Gandhi explicitly connect this concept of love (*ahimsa*) to the counsel to love your neighbour as yourself,[35] but he also links it to (as another expression of) his concept of *harijan*, the idea, for him, that all people are children of God, which he uses to denounce the hierarchies that plague the social structures of his time. For Gandhi, religion describes the practice of establishing human equality by recognizing our infinite difference: the uniqueness of one another.

As we are beginning to see, the very concept of religion in modernity, in reflecting a common (democratic) commitment to respecting the difference between expressions of faith, is moral. The method by which the above authors identify and catalogue practices and expressions under the concept of religion reflects the very content that they view as central to those practices and expressions. As conceived by Ozick and Gandhi (not to mention Spinoza and Derrida), the concept of religion is, we can say, democratic. It is also important to note that Spinoza makes the concepts of justice and charity the hallmark of religious expression in order to assess the second part

32. Cynthia Ozick, *Metaphor and Memory*, New York 1989, 274.

33. As Section 501(c)(3) states: "The organization's activities may not serve the private interests of any individual or organization. Rather, beneficiaries of an organization's activities must be recognized objects of charity (such as the poor or the distressed) or the community at large (for example, through the conduct of religious services or the promotion of religion)." U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, "Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations", IRS Pub. 1828, Washington, DC 2015.

34. Mahatma Gandhi, *The Essential Writings*, Toronto 2008, 1.

35. Gandhi, *The Essential Writings*, 98.

of the argument that I am presenting here: that democracy (as conceived by Spinoza and Derrida)[36] is religious (in principle) unto the end.

Before turning to the concept of democracy, however, I want to examine the critique of the reified (ontic, idolatrous) concept of sovereignty that Derrida sets out. For, as we shall see, Derrida makes the contrast between Aristotelian thought and modern democracy central to his critique of the theology of first and final causes (what he calls *ontotheology*). He thus joins Spinoza in alerting us to the difference between ancient Greek metaphysics and modern thought as he develops his concepts of religion and democracy (such that we can, in modernity, understand the relationship between them).

In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, for example, Derrida undertakes a mordant critique of sovereignty and autonomy when these concepts are conceived by modern authors according to the principle of identity (the principle that Parmenides uses, as Aristotle shows, in generating his concept of being as "One"). For to be recognized as self-identical or "one" requires, Derrida repeatedly points out, another. To be one (to be oneself) requires the other, who reflects a difference between one and others. It is the desire for self-mastery, for license, the desire not to be limited by one's relationship to any other, that leads to the unjust abuses of power and the rule of one, some, or many over others. Derrida therefore indicates that our modern or "democratic" God, when conceived under *ipseity*, the *autos*, the sovereignty of the one – that is, when conceived under the principle of identity – resembles the unmoved mover of Aristotle. "Aristotle also defines", he writes, "this first principle [...] as a life, a kind of life, a way of leading life, comparable to the best of what we might enjoy [...] It is thus a life that exceeds the life of human beings." The life for man, the "best of what we might enjoy", when that "best" reflects and is reflected in the unmoved mover, is not for man in the *polis*, not to be found in or through man's relationships: social, political, economic, familial, and so on. Derrida continues, the life of this principle is also represented by a "finity of time. God, the Prime Mover or pure actuality", as conceived by Aristotle, "is not infinite".[37]

36. In *The Gift of Death* Derrida asks, "What is religion? Religion", he responds, "presumes access to the responsibility of a free self [...] Religion is responsibility or it is nothing at all." It involves, therefore, "the subject's relation to itself as an instance of liberty, singularity, and responsibility, relation to self as being before the other: the other in its infinite alterity". Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 2nd ed., Chicago 2008, 5. Religion, for Derrida, involves the relation to oneself that is engendered by responding to the other responsibly; it involves a way of engaging one's existence that affirms that no human being is a substitute for any other human being.

37. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Stanford, CA 2005, 15.

Derrida recognizes that the God of Aristotle is finite.[38] Derrida also sees that, given that Aristotle's notion of God is finite, unmoved, unchanging, and so unchallenged and that God represents the "best" way of leading life for human beings, the politics of Aristotle is constituted by master–slave or ruler–ruled relations: whether in the form of the rule of one (monarchy), some (aristocracy), or many (democracy) over others. But modern democracy bears no relation to the concept of "democracy", the rule of the many, that is set out by Aristotle. Rather, as Derrida notes, it is in reflecting the notion of sovereignty that is represented in Aristotle's finite God that democratic nations, and the people in those democratic nations, reduce democracy, to Derrida's horror, to the rule of the majority over others and so fail to enact the principles that constitute democracy in modern nation-states. For democracy is not, in principle, the rule of many over the few but the rule of all, by all, and for all, to recall Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).[39] "It has always been very difficult", Derrida observes, "and for essential reasons, to distinguish rigorously between the goods and the evils of democracy [...] It has always been hard to distinguish, with regard to free will, between the good of democratic freedom and the evil of democratic license."[40] Freedom, for Derrida, is not license, not the will to do whatever one chooses whenever one chooses to whomever one chooses. Rather, freedom is shared. Freedom is the act of sharing (in) our human rights, the act of advancing the rights of others as one's own.

38. By contrast, in examining Abraham's relation to God (concept of God) in *The Gift of Death*, Derrida observes that the God of Abraham is "defined as the infinitely other, the wholly other" (p. 87). "We should stop thinking about God", he continues, "as someone, over there, way up there, transcendent, and, what is more [...] capable, more than any satellite orbiting space, of seeing into the most secret of interior places. It is perhaps necessary, if we are to follow the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic injunction, but also at the risk of turning against that tradition, to think of God and of the name of God without such representation or such idolatrous stereotyping. Then we might say: God is the name of the possibility I have of keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior. As soon as such a structure of conscience exists, of being-with-oneself [...] as soon as I have with me [...] a witness that others cannot see, and who is therefore *at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself*, as soon as I can have a secret relationship with myself and not tell everything, as soon as there is secrecy and secret witnessing within me, and for me, then there is what I call God" (p. 108). Here, God names the "structure of conscience", the possibility of a relationship with myself and others that is governed by principles that aim to affirm our infinite subjectivity.

39. Lincoln concludes his "Gettysburg Address" by stating that "it is for us the living [...] to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have so nobly advanced. It is [...] for us here to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion [...] that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth". Abraham Lincoln, *The Gettysburg Address*, Toronto 2009, 116.

40. Derrida, *Rogues*, 21.

It is also the distinction between freedom and license that Spinoza invokes when he criticizes free will. Spinoza insists, "the mind cannot be a free cause of its own actions, *or* cannot have an absolute faculty of willing and not willing".[41] The mind is not disembodied. Rather, for Spinoza, the mind is the practice of willing human action. Or, as he also indicates, the mind is always affective and so involves the transition, the process, the communication (with oneself and others) that works through the ideas that adequately and inadequately describe the cause of our joy and sadness (the increase and the diminishing of our power). To be free, then, is to acquiesce in the knowledge that it is love, at once divine and human, that serves as the eternal cause, the divine source, of our joy and sadness, of our feelings and actions. To have an effect on an object is not necessarily, therefore, to act freely. Rather, in indicating that the mind is not a "free cause", Spinoza puts us on notice that freedom describes the way in which we measure, and so account for, our effects (actions) and affects (feelings).

Although we make choices between two options, things, possibilities, and so on, all the time, we never choose (to paraphrase Spinoza) between choosing and not choosing. There are also times when we decide not to make a choice between two alternatives to give ourselves time to think or to allow time to rearrange our choices. But, paradoxically, the choice to suspend our choices remains a choice. The mind is not free, we can say, not to be free. Nonetheless, to choose is to recognize the choices of others, the choices for which others are responsible in your life and for which you are not responsible. To choose is also to recognize what we have not chosen, from the social facts into which we are born to the natural traits with which we are born. As Spinoza puts it in his discussion of the story of the "fall" of Adam and Eve, to be free is not to be born free.[42] The facts of our birth – where we are born, to whom we are born, and so on – are not under our control. What counts is what we do with the facts, the givens, of our lives. To be free, then, is to use all that we are given in the loving service of ourselves and others. To be free, in other words, as Spinoza points out in the same proposition, is to know good from evil, right from wrong. We see, then, why Derrida insists that it is for "essential reasons" that it remains a task for each and every generation to distinguish the goods from the evils of democracy, that is, freedom from free will. For freedom, in conflating its own practice with the ability to cause effects, ever runs the risk of disintegrating into the license that seeks one's own (to the disadvantage of others) or else of collapsing into the self-negation that seeks to give up one's own for the

41. Spinoza, *Ethics*, IIP48, Dem., 62.
42. Spinoza, *Ethics*, IVP68, Schol., 152.

advantage of others (to one's own disadvantage). So Spinoza concludes Part IV of *Ethics* with the proposition that "a man who is guided by reason", as by faith in the Golden Rule, "*is more free in a state where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself*".[43] That human beings are "more" free, truly free, only in a community that recognizes and respects the dictate of reason, the law to uphold another's rights as one's own, is also what Spinoza demonstrates in his discussion of the democratic state, as we shall now see.

The Democracy of Religion

In Chapter 16 of the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza analyzes what he calls the "transition" from the state of nature to the civil state. He notes, reflecting upon the state of nature, that "it is by sovereign natural right that fish inhabit water, and the big ones eat the smaller ones. For it is certain that Nature, taken in the absolute sense, has the sovereign right to do all that she can do, that is, Nature's right is coextensive with her power".[44] In the natural state might is (coextensive with) right. The state of nature involves the enslavement to appetite and, therefore, to the right of the strongest (what Derrida calls the "reason of the strongest" in his reflections on Jean de La Fontaine's [1621–1695] poem "The Wolf and the Lamb" in the Preface to *Rogues*).[45] However, what is so contradictory about this state is that, in advocating for the co-extension of one's rights with one's power, in holding that whatever one does by one's own might is right, one's rights are equally open to reprisal by another's might. The result is that there are no (universal, binding) human rights governing the state of nature, wherein natural right is aligned with natural power. To align our right with our natural power is to abdicate our power to advocate for human rights. As Spinoza proceeds to show us, it is, rather, only when we surrender our natural right and so put our rights into common ownership, as in the civil state, that we can endeavor to serve and protect our inalienable human rights. It is the very endeavor to preserve (in promoting and advancing) human rights, at once individual and collective, that we make the leap, the transition, involved in constituting the civil state.

There are two startling paradoxes, then, that arise from Spinoza's simple, concise treatment of the "transition" from the state of nature to the civil state. First, although Spinoza depicts the state of nature as ruled by the appetites, he also holds that we are, in the beginning, conscious of our

43. Spinoza, *Ethics*, IVP73.

44. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 173.

45. Derrida, *Rogues*, xi.

appetites, conscious of ourselves as we naturally are. Yet, it is only from outside the state of nature that one is conscious that our appetites are naturally determined; for there is no consciousness of the rules governing the state of nature within the state of nature. A fish is not conscious of the natural ecosystems determining its survival. Instead, it is within the civil state that we become truly conscious of our natural state. Thus, we find that, although we begin *in* the state of nature, we begin, all of us, *of* the civil state, conscious of the divine law, the Golden Rule, the human(e) command to do unto others: to love others as ourselves. Second, it is in surrendering our *natural* right that we acquire natural and inalienable human *rights*. It is in divorcing might from right that we invest our human rights (constituted by the equality, the uniqueness, of all persons within the global community) with inimitable power and force. For it is the idea of human rights, including the right to the freedom of religion, that guides how we legislate and enact our laws (both nationally and internationally). As Spinoza states, "such a community's right is called a democracy".[46]

In distinguishing between natural and human law, Spinoza goes on to observe that "God has no special kingdom over men except through the medium of temporal rulers [...], from which it follows that the kingdom of God is where justice and charity have the force of law and command".[47] He continues:

> We must concede without qualification [moreover] that the divine law began from the time when men by express covenant promised to obey God in all things, thereby surrendering, as it were, their natural freedom and transferring their right to God in the manner we described in speaking of the civil state.[48]

Since, then, the natural right in a state of nature to "live by the laws of appetite" is in "clear contradiction" with the divine law, we are told that the state of nature is "prior to religion in nature and in time. For nobody knows by nature that he has any duty to God". Prior to the revelation of the dictates of reason, "nobody can be bound by a divine law of which he is unaware". Yet, to repeat, to be aware of a time in nature prior to the revelation of the divine law (of religion) presupposes that one already knows what the divine law entails. There is no way to tell the story of human history – the story of modern democracy (the transition, in Spinoza's terms, to the

46. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 177.
47. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 212.
48. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 182.

civil state) – except from a position that acknowledges these civil principles (which Spinoza argues are at once rational and faithful). Thus Spinoza concludes by reiterating the universal dictum wrought by this divine command: since all human beings "without exception [...] are equally required by God's command to love their neighbour as themselves, we cannot, without doing wrong, inflict injury on another and live solely by the laws of appetite".[49] Any attempt to return to the state of nature does wrong. But the attempt to return to a natural state therefore demonstrates that we do not begin in a state of natural innocence but begin, always already, knowing good from evil, right from wrong. In other words, the paradox that I am flagging here is that the story of the transition from the state of nature to the civil state can only be told within the civil state of human freedom, having already made the leap, the transition, into knowledge of justice and charity, the very knowledge that Spinoza views as the foundation of democracy (along with philosophy and religion).

But we are not yet done with Spinoza (or he is not yet done with us). For Spinoza goes on to argue explicitly that the covenant established by the ancient Hebrew people was democratic. As he writes in Chapter 17 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, upon analyzing the story of the exodus from Egypt: "Without much hesitation", following their liberation from the "intolerable oppression" of the Egyptians, the Hebrew people "all promised, equally and with one voice, to obey God absolutely in his commands and to acknowledge no other law than that he should proclaim [...] Now this promise, or transference of right to God", Spinoza continues, "was made in the same way as we have previously conceived it to be made in the case of an ordinary community when men decide to surrender their natural right." Since "the Hebrews did not transfer their right to any other man, but, as in a democracy, they all surrendered their right on equal terms, crying with one voice" to obey the divine command, "it follows that this covenant left them all completely equal, and they all had an equal right to consult God, to receive and interpret his laws; in short, they all shared equally in the government of the state".[50] He then repeats: "This is an exact parallel to what we have shown to be the development of a democracy, where all by common consent resolve to live only by the dictates of reason."[51]

I want to make three points, then, prior to concluding my reflections on Spinoza's (together with Derrida's) conceptions of religion and democracy. First, it is patent that, in separating philosophy (natural knowledge) from

49. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 181.
50. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 189–190.
51. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 213.

theology, Spinoza determines that they are equally based upon moral principles and not on the knowledge of natural processes, as we have seen. An analysis of his description of the "transition" from nature to the civil state also shows us that it is the human mind (as grounded in moral principles and so conscious of its difference from natural objects: things) that gives rise to the understanding of nature as determined by appetite. Second, in founding his concept of religion on justice and charity, Spinoza is able to distinguish critically between religion and superstition, with superstition characterized by the conflation, historically, of ancient Greek philosophy with biblical theology and by the confusion, ontologically, between natural causes, on the one hand, and human and divine laws or principles, on the other. Third, precisely because he sees that our concepts of justice and charity are not based on our natural appetites (our understanding of the processes that determine the operations of the state of nature), he is able to develop a concept of the civil state (and so of democracy) that is based upon the very imperative that governs what he understands by faithful (true) religious practices. This observation returns us to the task at hand: examining how the concepts of religion and democracy developed by Spinoza and Derrida can aid us in thinking about the relationship between religion (together with the freedom of religious expression) and democratic states.[52]

Conclusion

Spinoza's demonstration of the relationship between the biblical covenant and modern democracy (together with Derrida's critique of the evils that follow when democracy is conceived according to a finite concept of sovereignty) puts pressure on how we understand our democratic nation-states today. For what we learn is that the union of democratic nations is not founded upon anything that human beings share naturally but upon the recognition of the uniqueness (and so the absolute value) of each and every individual, which Spinoza describes in theological terms as one's individual right to consult God. As Brayton Polka points out, whenever we attempt to derive right from the unity of natural facts, we ineluctably "erect a hierarchy of rulers and ruled".[53] For any attempt to choose – to discriminate or to demarcate – who belongs to the group or to the union on the basis of immediate facts inevitably results in the inclusion of one, some, or many and the exclusion of others. "Whenever barriers of discrimination",

52. Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads: "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association."

53. Brayton Polka, *Truth and Interpretation: An Essay in Thinking*, New York 1990, 247.

Polka observes, are erected upon the idolization of natural facts, "others are unjustly excluded (or included) on the basis of race, gender, or class".[54] What we learn by holding together the constitution of modern democracy and the law of the covenant is that the foundation of our modern unions (including our nation-states) is not natural but divine or, in philosophical terms, infinite. The origin of our ongoing critique of the ways in which we continue to engage in discriminatory forms of socialization (from the most overt to the most subtle) is not based on our phylogenetic biology but on our commitment to the principles of justice and charity. The reward, then, for our modern democracies, upon seeing that there is no natural basis for what makes us human (which is not to suggest that what makes us human is not profoundly concerned with celebrating what is natural about us), is that they are equipped with a principle for interpreting each and every situation (including the legitimacy of our laws and their application) in a way that critically distinguishes between justice and injustice. In light of Spinoza, we discover that any form of nationalism that seeks to establish the character of a nation upon the immediate facts of race, class, creed, gender, physical ability, or citizenship status unjustly violates the principles upon which democratic nations are founded.

But Spinoza's demonstration of the link between modern democracy and the Hebrew covenant also puts pressure on how we conceive of religion. For it follows from his argument that biblical religion is democratic (in principle) in the beginning. That is, in seeing that the divine law commands a respect for human beings, not as determined by our biological inheritance but as self-determined (autonomous) human subjects, we discover that there is no race, class, creed, or nation – no person – who can be excluded from the historical process involved in overcoming the hierarchies that are formed when we reduce our unions to natural bases. We can and must continue to organize ourselves around the idiosyncrasies of our own social identities insofar as our organizations seek to defend, to preserve, and to celebrate the equality (the uniqueness) of all human beings. But one excludes oneself from the covenant of democracy insofar as one's social identity is used as a tool for the oppression of one, some, or many. Still, the task of identifying and denouncing our own wrongdoing (as, for example, embodied in oppressive forms of nationalism) is one that is included in the forming of democratic states.

The reward, we can say, for the study of Spinoza's (together with Derrida's) concept of religion is that we are equipped with a basis for interpreting religious traditions and concepts according to a notion of freedom

54. Polka, *Truth and Interpretation*, 168.

that involves a respect for the freedom of others. In other words, we can engage in a critical and loving discussion of religion (and religious practices) on the grounds of our common commitment to the rights of each and every person to decide upon one's own religious beliefs, including the right not to believe in anything publicly identifiable as religious. To return to the themes of this issue, we discover that rightly calling Christianity to account involves invoking principles that demand that we treat others as we would want to be treated by them, principles that evoke the Golden Rule, the *ratio vivendi*, for Christians.

But the implications of Spinoza's study of the foundations of modern democracy ramify yet further for our understanding of Christianity when we note that our individual (no less than our collective) identity is formed on the basis, not of our natural inheritance, but of our commitment to the Golden Rule. As Kant notes, with perspicacity in his work on religion, in the "appearance of the God-man, the true object of the saving faith is not what in the God-man falls to the senses, or can be cognized through experience, but the prototype lying in reason which we put in him", the moral law of justice and charity.[55] The incarnation expresses the act of incorporating the laws of justice and charity, the effort to embody the teaching of biblical scripture. So Spinoza writes, quoting Paul, that all people have the mind of Christ, the mind borne in the body of our feelings and actions that testify to our commitment to loving principles.[56] Bearing in mind that "Christ" (in Greek) means "messiah" (in Hebrew), it follows that the messiah, for Spinoza, remains no less a part of our future than of our past.[57] For it

55. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, New York 1998, 6:119, 125.

56. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 14, argues that, in teaching moral doctrine, Christ possessed the wisdom (and so the mind) of God. Thus, he writes, "the Wisdom of God [...] took on human nature in Christ" and "Christ was the way to salvation". He continues: "Now the mind of God and his eternal thoughts are inscribed in our minds too, and therefore we also, in Scriptural language, perceive the mind of God" (p. 19). Since the mind of Christ exposes and expresses the principles of morality, no one, he concludes, "becomes blessed unless he has in himself the mind of Christ", citing Paul in Rom. 8:9 (p. 55).

57. Michael J. Scanlon, "A Deconstruction of Religion: On Derrida and Rahner", in John D. Caputo & Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, Bloomington, IN 1999, 227, points out the association between Derrida's concept of the gift and the "radical interpretation" of the incarnation forwarded by Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and Augustine (354–430). According to Scanlon, Rahner and Augustine demonstrate the necessary circularity between the love of God (ontologically) and the love of ourselves and others (ethically). For, as Scanlon points out, love *is* God in the biblical tradition. Scanlon then ends his essay by relating the concept of the gift (which, as impossible to present [to become present], is also always yet to come) to the messianic tradition of the Bible. He reflects: "It seems that our post-secular mood might open us once again to messianisms more faithful to the messianic" (p. 228). Although the valence of Scanlon's use of the term "post-secular" is not made explicit, it is evident from his comment that to be post-secular means to move beyond the simple narrative

ever remains for us to bear witness to – and so to incorporate (to make corporeal, to make flesh) – the idea that people ought to be treated as subjects with dignity and not as objects with a price.

To conclude, then, both for Spinoza and for Derrida democracy is not given naturally or a natural given. Derrida notes:

> There *is no* pure instance [of democracy]. "Thinking" [...] must even, in the name of a democracy still *to come* [...], unremittingly interrogate the de facto democracy, critique its current determinations, analyze its philosophical genealogy, in short, deconstruct it: in the name of the democracy whose being to come is not simply tomorrow or the future, but rather the promise.

Derrida launches a critique against the "de facto" democracy, the social and historical facts of oppression for which democratic states are responsible. He is ever critical, as we have seen, with the idea that democracy is, in fact, founded on majority rule and governed by majority opinion to the chagrin of the ruled and silenced minority. Derrida remains, that is, an unrelenting critic of unjust democratic practices and ideas. Yet he criticizes these practices not in the name of a philosopher king whose might is coextensive with his right, whose right is right because of his might, but in the name of a democracy "still *to come*", a democracy that is never immediately or directly (purely) present in the facts but is constituted by a promise.[58]

For Derrida, democracy is at once always yet "to come" and always "here and now". The policies and practices of democratic states and institutions are forever subject to critique or deconstruction. There is no pure

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that opposes one's religious past to one's secular future. His comment implicitly acknowledges that the way in which we break with religious traditions (on moral grounds; by receiving the gift, as Derrida might say) involves re-evaluating what is most true to those traditions and so demonstrating anew what we share with those traditions (and what they share with us).

58. Lee Danes puts us on notice that, because authority (or democracy, as the revelation of justice) is never wholly present, it is also never wholly absent. Rather, justice is established, each time, in and as the historical relationship between the past (old) and the future (new), between now and then (at once the past and the future). After citing Derrida's analysis of the decision of a judge in "Force of Law", Danes writes that, "for a decision to be just, Derrida tells us, a judge must reduce the law to nothing yet reinvent it according to the law's own principle. The judge conserves the laws by destroying it, yet in such a way that the law (the old) is reinstituted in and through a 'new and free confirmation of its principle'". Lee Danes, "Between Genealogy and Virgin Birth: Origin and Originality in Matthew", in Yvonne Sherwood (ed.), *Derrida's Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida*, New York 2004, 29. He goes on to state, in returning his attention to the biblical tradition, that "on the one hand, the interpreter of the biblical tradition must break with the tradition, and yet, on the other hand, s/he must in the very process of breaking with the tradition, rediscover and be transformed by that tradition (and in being transformed by the tradition, transform it)" (p. 29).

(complete, perfect, final) state of democracy. Yet there is also no promise of a democracy *to come* that is not embodied *now* in the democratic practice of criticizing the acts of democracy that enforce the rule of one, some, or many over others. The democracy that Derrida espouses is not now presently nor to come in the present but is still "to come" because it has "always already" arrived (in principle, we can say) and is "always already" here and now because it remains yet "to come". As Derrida puts it: "The time of teaching", as the time of philosophy and so of democracy, "lodges itself in the fold between the already and the not yet."[59] In the folds of time – in the act of folding time by criticizing (deconstructing) the (un)democratic practice of dispossessing another of his or her rights – democracy unfolds. Because the legitimate critique of democracy involves articulating a concept of human rights that shares a core principle with the Golden Rule, it follows that democracy is religious (in principle) unto the end. Democracy, we learn, is the promised land: the land, the place, that designates all finite (natural) places as bound to a promise, a contract, a covenant, to uphold the rights of both the many and the few, both the citizen and the stranger (visitor, newcomer, or recent immigrant).[60]

Although Spinoza and Derrida explicitly connect the concepts and values that found modern democracy to the Abrahamic religions, they also hold that this knowledge is universal and so found among all nations historically. In his interview entitled "Epoché and Faith", Derrida states: "the fact that it [deconstruction] is literally linked to Christianity doesn't mean that Christianity is more deconstructive than other religions"[61] (although demonstrating the deconstructive maneuvers of other religions is a project that falls outside the focus of his interview). As I have shown, both Spinoza and

59. Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*, 35.

60. For an illuminating catalogue of the many passages in which both Derrida and Paul (among others) bring together the concepts of justice and the gift (or grace, as God's promissory note to God's people), see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Justice as Gift: Thinking Grace with the Help of Derrida", in Yvonne Sherwood (ed.), *Derrida's Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida*, New York 2004, 181–198. As Jennings points out, to be made just, to become just, is the gift that God bestows upon the people who faithfully obey God's commands. Although Jennings is not primarily concerned, he admits, with the content of justice or grace (the gift) in his essay, it is evident that to be just is to bear the gift of hospitality towards others, to welcome others and to be welcomed by others as the different, unique, irreplaceable other (selves) we are. Thus Jennings notes, prior to concluding his paper, that how Derrida's reflections on hospitality and Paul's own "reflections on welcome of the other, the other who has a different practice/opinion and thus in a certain way a different religion" bear on the concept of justice is a question "of particular urgency" today (p. 195). My own essay has aimed to address a related question: the question of how the ethics of the Bible (as presented by Spinoza) relates to the concept of religious freedom.

61. Jacques Derrida, "Epoché and Faith: An Interview with Jacques Derrida", in Yvonne Sherwood & Kevin Hart (eds.), *Derrida and Religion*, New York 2005, 33.

Derrida also point out at times (and in critical ways) that the concepts of Greek philosophers are not adequate for understanding the concepts that they make central to their presentation of religion and democracy. As we have seen, natural knowledge, in accounting for the difference between the rules governing the natural world and the dictates of reason (which bespeak the principles that found modern democracy), reveals that the moral ideas that underpin our social covenants are not drawn from a study of nature. They are not naturally universal, but historical. They belong to the historical process in which all peoples and all religions participate, a process that is unique to the particular story of each religious tradition and group (as well as to the rich variety of individual religious expressions). In other words, in the spirit of the freedom of religion insofar as it is actualized in democratic nations, Derrida is surely right to indicate that all religions today are deconstructive (and so auto-deconstructive). For in the democracy of, say, the United States, a person is free in principle to discuss, to communicate, and to practice any religion one desires, including no religion at all. Yet there is, therefore, one right that no one is free to violate: the right to the freedom of religion. No one, inside or outside a religious community, is free to violate another's democratic rights, the right, above all, to freedom, to free and equal treatment from those both inside and outside one's religious (or secular) community.

It is these democratic rights, the right to freedom (though not to license), that we saw reflected in the divine law of the covenant (not to mention the religious and political teachings of Gandhi). What we learn, consequently, is that the freedom of religion is a divine idea. But what we discover, furthermore, as I have also argued, is that religion, insofar as it is founded upon moral principles, is democratic in the beginning and that democracy, in recognizing the Golden Rule of human autonomy (and so the freedom of each and every person to decide upon one's own religious commitments), is religious (in principle) unto the end. For the critical assessment of both Christianity and nationality to involve the coming of the other, we learn that we are required to assess the work of others, as of ourselves, in and through the principle that all persons possess the right to democratic autonomy. As Derrida has argued, we cannot be one with ourselves if we want to have a relationship with others. To learn to welcome the other's critical ideas is, instead, to be open to becoming oneself, not delineated according to the immediacies of one's identity but liberated to celebrate one's unique identities (both political and religious) under the guidance of the right to exist as thoughtful, willing, free human subjects. ▲

SUMMARY

In this essay I examine the concepts of democracy and religion as developed by Baruch Spinoza and Jacques Derrida. In taking up the argument for the relationship between philosophy and theology that Spinoza makes central to his *Theological-Political Treatise*, I undertake to show that, in separating philosophy (what he calls natural knowledge) from theology, Spinoza demonstrates that they are equally based upon moral principles that advocate for the autonomy of all human beings. I also invoke Spinoza's distinction between religion and superstition before turning to Chapter 16 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, in which Spinoza demonstrates that political democracy does not have its origin in the state of nature but in the articulation of moral laws that are at once divine and human. Just as the origin of religion is not supernatural for Spinoza, so the civil state does not have its source in the natural evolution of human beings but in a respect for the rights and freedoms of all persons. In developing my argument, I make use of Derrida's concept of religion as well as his notion of the promise of democracy in order to continue to show that the source of both religious concepts and the democratic state in modernity is neither natural nor supernatural but moral. Throughout my paper, then, I point out the relationship between the values that underpin the concepts of religion and democracy for these two thinkers. Consequently, I undertake to show as the overall argument of my paper that biblical religion (as conceived by Spinoza) is democratic in principle in the beginning and that the principles of modern democracy (the rights and freedoms articulated in democratic states, including the freedom of religion) are religious unto the end.

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Abraham against the Political

Kierkegaard on Nationalism and Duty

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The question of nationalism's relationship to religion is by no means new, but has gained renewed attention within the past few years. In particular, the question of Christian nationalism – a conception and narrative of a nation-state that is connected to the Christian religious tradition[1] – is of general interest for the ways in which Christianity has historically ruled or connected itself to the state. The question of Christian nationalism is concerning in the twenty-first century, given the ways in which political partisanship in the United States has coopted religion as a way of influencing the population in areas such as one-issue voters, textbook debates/bans, and the use of religious language within political slogans.

While Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) precedes current tensions, he, too, was concerned with the ways in which the Christian religion was connected to nineteenth-century Denmark. Although Kierkegaard is sometimes regarded as only opaquely discussing the political, he focuses much of his work on the tension between the individual and the communal, specifically for him the Christian community, which is often referred to as Christendom (*Christenhed*) in Kierkegaard scholarship and used to distinguish his thoughts on Christianity from the failings that he saw in Christian Denmark. While there is less scholarship on the topic of Kierkegaard and Christian nationalism than on his conception of Christendom, Stephen

1. This is a preliminary definition that will be fleshed out later on in the article.

Backhouse's *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism* is a crucial work on the former topic.[2] While Backhouse examines Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole and traces the themes throughout his works, I would like to focus more deeply on the early pseudonymous text *Fear and Trembling* (1843), which contrasts tragic heroes from the knight of faith. The tragic heroes adhere to the ethical *qua* universal and sacrifice their individual moral duty for the good of the nation, whereas the knight of faith disavows the nation entirely for the sake of an individual's obedience to the divine. I argue that the ethical *qua* universal can be taken as the kind of ethical duty that Christian nationalism adheres to, and Kierkegaard's discussion of Abraham, the knight of faith, and the religious[3] sphere points precisely to the problems that emerge from Christian nationalism and provides a better way of understanding Christian duty. The failure of nationalism is its attempt to systematize what cannot be explained rationally. On the other hand, Abraham is successful because he focuses on what is most important: to maintain the right relationship first and foremost with God.

The Ethical as Christian Nationalism

Although Kierkegaard does not use the language of Christian nationalism, his concept of the ethical *qua* universal within *Fear and Trembling* fits descriptions and definitions that other scholars have proposed. While Robert Bellah (1927–2013), in his article "Civil Religion in America", does not use the language of Christian nationalism, he pulls at the strings of Christian nationalism, and scholars such as Rhys H. Williams invoke his thinking for their own frameworks. Bellah situates his concept of civil religion in the American context, but some of the theoretical framework can be seen in Christian nationalism writ large. Specifically, he argues, "the answer is that the separation of church and state has not denied the political realm a religious dimension [...] there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share".[4] Regardless of the actual faith or personal beliefs of individuals within a state, there comes to be a shared sort of religion *vis-à-vis* being a citizen or political being of a country. The framework of a political narrative and political

2. Stephen Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, New York 2011, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199604722.001.0001.

3. I will use the terms "Christian" and "the religious" interchangeably in this article, as Kierkegaard uses "the religious" several times in *Fear and Trembling* but is clearly referring to Christianity, given his statement in the preface that he is concerned with faith in his contemporary, Danish Lutheran age as well as his larger preoccupation with what it means to be a Christian in his authorship overall.

4. Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", *Daedalus* 134 (2005), 42, https://doi.org/10.1162/0011526057744431464.

goals coopts specific religious narratives and language. As Bellah describes, "Europe is Egypt; America, the promised land. God has led his people to establish a new sort of social order that shall be a light unto all the nations".[5] Even if the actual religion is not taken seriously, the coopting of such narratives is accepted politically.

In "Civil Religion and the Cultural Politics of National Identity in Obama's America", Williams uses Bellah's argument on civil religion and connects it to an understanding of Christian nationalism:

> Although there exists some definitional variation (as with the concept of "religion" itself) the central thrust is clear – civil religion is composed of understandings and practices that treat the sociopolitical collectivity as having sacred dimensions and finds both its collective identity and its history religiously meaningful.[6]

Specifically for Williams, this understanding is connected to "blood" and "land" – blood in bloodlines, but also actual shed blood of the citizenry and land, as in the physical way of binding communal identity to an actual locale.[7] It provides a narrative of who the people are, where they came from, and why they should continue to exist. Philip S. Gorski, who writes extensively on twenty-first-century American Christian nationalism, has a similar approach to Williams on blood and land. Gorski writes:

> I argued that the American version of religious nationalism draws on Biblical discourses of apocalypse and blood conquest. [...] it draws on a Protestant reading of the Jewish scriptures governed by the metaphor of blood: blood conquest, blood sacrifice, blood atonement and blood purity.[8]

Backhouse too provides a definition in his book: "The family or set of ideas and assumptions by which one's belief in the development and uniqueness of one's national group (usually accompanied by claims of superiority) is combined with, or underwritten, by Christian theology and practice."[9] Where nationalism differs from a simple political body or an actual state or

5. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", 46.

6. Rhys H. Williams, "Civil Religion and the Cultural Politics of National Identity in Obama's America", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52 (2013), 240, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12032.

7. Williams, "Civil Religion", 239–240.

8. Philip S. Gorski, "Christianity and Democracy after Trump", *Political Theology* 19 (2018), 361, https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2018.1476053.

9. Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, xii.

government is that it sets up a shared narrative for the people encompassed by that nation. For Christian nationalism, the religious text is coopted into this narrative and is employed to justify and to sustain nationalism and political rule or regime. Backhouse writes:

> I find "nationalism" to be the best way to describe the ideological tie that binds the disparate elements that contribute to the self-deification of society – claiming for their nation the arbitration of destiny and identity that for the Christian should properly be the domain of God.[10]

All four scholars frame Christian nationalism as the way in which Christian discourse has been drawn into a political framework that seeks to refine its communal and citizen identity using elements of Christian theology.

I choose to use Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* specifically because of the way in which this book illuminates the dangers of the state that coopts Christianity. His focus on the single individual, who stands apart from the Christian community yet remains a Christian, highlights the importance of individual choice and the relationship to the divine as well as the problems that arise when such a relationship with God becomes subordinate to a relationship with the community at large. Secondly, although Kierkegaard does not use the language of Christian nationalism, his analysis of the narrative of Abraham and Isaac centres his thinking squarely on a concern about the national whole. The ideas of the four scholars above are reflected in the key figures Kierkegaard discusses in *Fear and Trembling*: the tragic heroes (Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus) and the knight of faith (Abraham). Each man contributes to nation-building and a national story, one that is built on blood and land. Agamemnon is the legendary hero-ruler for the Greeks, Jephthah saves the Israelites from the Ammonites, Brutus validates the rule of law in the Roman Republic with the execution of his sons, and Abraham is known as the founder of all three major monotheistic religions.[11] Each man is called to sacrifice their child for the sake of their nation. In particular, Abraham is distinguished in the Christian tradition because he is promised by God to become the father of a great nation, the kind of language that the scholars above argue is essential to an understanding of a Christian nation-state. Bellah goes further by saying that "behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes; Exodus, Chosen People,

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10. Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 29.

11. While Abraham is also considered the father of Judaism and Islam, the scope of this paper is concerned with Christian nationalism, and Kierkegaard's concern with Abraham is his role within the Christian tradition specifically.

Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth".[12] Generally, Abraham is presented under these archetypes: he is called by God to go into the land that will become Israel, he is promised by God that his descendants will be a great nation, the story of Abraham and Isaac is one of sacrificial death and salvation, and so on.

However, what is most interesting, and why I argue that Kierkegaard is a good resource, is that he flips the understanding of Abraham as a Christian nationalist figure on its head. Instead, Abraham is glorified because he rejects the expectations of Christian nationalism, whereas the other three fall into this trap. He is portrayed as an individual whose faith cannot be understood by anyone else. Such a reading of the biblical text calls into question Christian nationalism and whether Christianity can be associated with the building of a nation-state.

Although Bellah, Williams, and Gorski are concerned with an American Christian nationalism, the descriptions they use reflect the observations Kierkegaard made about his own Danish Lutheran society. Historically, Kierkegaard was very concerned with the connection between the Danish state and the Danish Lutheran church, and his writings reflect his criticism that such a close tie between church and state would be dangerous for the development of Christianity in nineteenth-century Denmark. He directly addresses his contemporary Danish Lutheran society in the preface of *Fear and Trembling*:

> In our age, everyone is unwilling to stop with faith but goes further. It perhaps would be rash to ask where they are going, whereas it is a sign of urbanity and culture for me to assume that everyone has faith, since otherwise it certainly would be odd to speak of going further.[13]

Kierkegaard juxtaposes several other narratives, which represent Christian society, with the story of Abraham, whose faith Kierkegaard believes his fellow Danes have lost. Instead, Danish Christianity has become the state religion, and the foundation of Christianity is coopted as an aspect of the national Danish narrative. It becomes not about individual, human faith. Rather, it is about one's identity as a citizen of the Danish state.

Textually, this distinction becomes more apparent. Within *Fear and Trembling*, the ethical is the universal, and the universal is tied directly to the nation. Each tragic hero must choose between his duty towards his child as a father and his duty to his nation as a leader. In each case, they tragically

12. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", 54.

13. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Princeton, NJ 1983, 7. Danish original in Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1997, 102.

decide to kill their child for the good of the nation. The tragic hero is one that adheres to the ethical *qua* universal and therefore must put aside other, lesser ethical duties for the sake of the universal, that is, for the sake of the nation. As Kierkegaard writes:

> When an enterprise of concern to a whole nation is impeded, when such a project is halted by divine displeasure, when the angry deity sends a dead calm that mocks every effort, when the soothsayer carries out his sad task and announces that the deity demands a young girl as sacrifice – then the father must heroically bring this sacrifice.[14]

Each tragic hero has a duty to their child, but also a duty to their nation, and they all choose their duty to their nation over their duty to their child, moreover actively killing their child. However, each hero is justified because they are following the requirements of the ethical, and each hero is remembered as the hero of their nation for doing so. The tragic heroes represent the ethical *qua* universal, and the ethical sphere of *Fear and Trembling* is a kind of Christian nationalism. The social whole establishes a set of ethical duties that is deemed universal moral law (hence the ethical *qua* universal), and it is specifically set up to establish a political *and* religious narrative. The tragic heroes are heroes because of the way in which they adhere to these moral laws while still sacrificing for the good of the nation. They represent what a good citizen should be: one that sacrifices for the good and well-being of the nation at large.

Although Abraham may seem at first glance to be another tragic hero, Kierkegaard sets him apart as the knight of faith who lives not in the ethical sphere but in the religious. Abraham, the knight of faith, must move out of the ethical *qua* universal and stands alone as the individual. Kierkegaard argues that Abraham does not set aside his personal duty to his son for a greater, ethical demand. Instead, Abraham actually acts against the ethical *qua* universal, and he is praised for doing so. As seen in the Problemata, Abraham is not called to kill Isaac out of some greater duty to the nation, for Kierkegaard makes it very clear that Abraham's only ethical duty is to his son: "In ethical terms, Abraham's relation to Isaac is quite simply this: the father shall love the son more than himself."[15] Several pages later, he reaffirms this:

14. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 57; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 151.
15. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 57; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 151.

> It is not to save a nation, not to uphold the idea of the state that Abraham does it [...] there is no higher expression for the ethical in Abraham's life than that the father shall love the son. The ethical in the sense of the moral is entirely beside the point.[16]

Unlike the tragic heroes, Abraham has no justification for his action. Indeed, in attempting to kill Isaac, Abraham is simultaneously failing to perform his duty towards his son *and* to his nation, because God promised Abraham that he would become the father of a nation specifically through Isaac.

Kierkegaard disabuses us of the claim that Abraham acts according to ethical duty entirely in a footnote:

> The tragic hero gives up his wish in order to fulfill this duty. For the knight of faith, wish and duty are also identical, but he is required to give up both. If he wants to relinquish by giving up his wish, he finds no rest, for it is indeed his duty. If he wants to adhere to the duty and to his wish, he does not become the knight of faith, for the absolute duty specifically demanded that he should give it up.[17]

There is no ethical, rational reason for Abraham to kill Isaac. The duty for Abraham is clear: the duty towards his son as son and the duty towards his son as founder of a great nation is the exact same – Abraham should not kill his son. However, God has called him to do so. This movement to kill Isaac cannot be absolved ethically or politically – filicide necessitates violating the ethical and destroying the potential for a nation. What Abraham should have done if he had remained in the ethical sphere is to save Isaac. However, Kierkegaard states that the ethical duty becomes secondary to the personal duty to God: "The ethical expression for his relation to Isaac is that the father must love the son. This ethical relation is reduced to the relative in contradistinction to the absolute relation to God."[18]

Although Abraham violates the ethical *qua* universal, he does not fall into sin but is considered to have acted from a higher order. Instead, Kierkegaard puts Abraham higher than the tragic heroes, and there is a higher mode of being than the ethical *qua* universal (that is, nationalism). As Kierkegaard explains, the individual becomes higher than the universal because of faith: "Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified before it, not as inferior to

16. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 59; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 153.

17. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 78; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 169.

18. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 70–71; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 162.

it but as superior."[19] Abraham, the knight of faith, triumphs over the tragic heroes and is no longer within the ethical *qua* universal because of his faith, even though the person who breaks from the ethical should actually be in sin.

Within the ethical sphere, this type of justification does not hold up, because there is no way in which an individual can act that breaks from universal moral law, and yet they remain justified in doing so. The ethical is supreme, as it is universal and must be obeyed by all. However, what Kierkegaard is showing through the story of Abraham is that this justification is possible if and only if the individual comes into personal relation with God. As he says, "God is the one who demands absolute love".[20] The demand of Isaac's death is about God's relationship with Abraham as deity to individual, and it is a personal demand asking for Abraham's love of God to trump his love for his son. Yet Abraham is justified within the narrative of *Fear and Trembling* precisely because he is obeying his duty to his personal relationship with God. For Kierkegaard, the story of Abraham shows that the ethical *qua* universal is not the ultimate way of existence and that the human individual still has an important role as a single individual.

The Problem of the Ethical *qua* Universal and Christian Nationalism

Although he knowingly and willingly violates the ethical by attempting to sacrifice his son, Abraham is elevated by Kierkegaard because he finds problems with such an iteration of the ethical. In fact, I argue that Kierkegaard has a greater criticism of the ethical because of the ways in which it ignores the fullness of human existence.

Christopher B. Barnett connects the ethical to the universal that seeks to systematize existence within it. He explains: "Self-deification emerges as the gravest danger facing not only Hegelian philosophy but in fact all who crave systematic clarity and total knowledge."[21] The danger of what Barnett calls Hegelianism is the danger of systematic thinking, that is, of prioritizing the universal over the individual. This connection of Hegelianism[22] to systematic thinking is affirmed by Brian Stiltner, as he argues that

19. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 55–56; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 149.

20. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 73; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 165.

21. Christopher B. Barnett, "From Hegel to Google: Kierkegaard and the Perils of 'the System'", in Stephen Minister, J. Aaron Simmons & Michael Strawser (eds.), *Kierkegaard's God and the Good Life*, Bloomington, IN 2017, 136, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxxxq2.12.

22. Or at least the version of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) that Kierkegaard argues against in his works. Whether or not this is an accurate representation of Hegel's thinking is up for scholastic debate. It is not the purpose of my paper to make this argument. I will use the term "Hegelianism" here because these scholars use the term.

Kierkegaard's ethical sphere is Hegelian because the morality of the individual gives way to a socially understood and agreed-upon morality.[23] This is exactly the scope of the ethical realm as the tragic hero must put aside his own individual duty to his family for the good of the nation, that is of the whole. The crux of this invocation comes as relational: Hegel thinks that the divine can only be reached through the universal, whereas Kierkegaard's narrative on Abraham is a direct critique of this. As John Lippitt writes:

> What this claim amounts to, at its most basic, is that an individual can have a relation to "the absolute" – understood by Johannes as (Abraham's) God – in a more direct way than by being "mediated" through the universal. Whereas for Hegel, a person cannot approach the divine without some kind of intermediary.[24]

I take systematization to be an implicit part of Christian nationalism because of how Christian nationalism incorporates aspects of the human experience under its umbrella. Bellah, Williams, Gorski, and Backhouse discussed how the state uses the Christian narrative to create a national story under which the individual is subsumed. It becomes less important what an individual actually believes or values. What is most important is that the individual adheres as a citizen to the political narrative that has been presented. The individual's religious experience is funneled through their adherence to the political social structure. Religious experience is important only in so much as it performs a role for the community.

As stated in *Fear and Trembling*, all individuality is subsumed under the ethical, universal system:

> Thus in the ethical view of life, it is the task of the single individual to strip himself of the qualification of interiority and to express this in something external. Every time the individual shrinks from it, every time he withholds himself in or slips down again into the qualifications of feeling, mood, etc. that belong to interiority, he trespasses, he is immersed in spiritual trial.[25]

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23. Brian Stiltner, "Who Can Understand Abraham? The Relation of God and Morality in Kierkegaard and Aquinas", *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 2 (1993), 224, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40015169.

24. John Lippitt, *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard's* Fear and Trembling, New York 2016, 100.

25. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 69; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 161.

To assert oneself outside of the universal is to fall into sin. The ethical *qua* universal sets up the system of morality, and this morality is supposed to be valid for every person in every instance. What is problematic, according to Barnett, is that the system becomes supreme without acknowledging that the system is inherently flawed because human reason is inherently incomplete: "The system is framed by human knowledge, and, precisely for that reason, it is discontinuous with transcendence."[26]

The problem of the ethical *qua* universal and of this type of systematic thinking is that the individual loses sight of their relationship with God as an individual. Instead, that relationship is replaced with a relationship to the system at large. As Kierkegaard explains:

> The duty becomes duty by being traced back to God, but in the duty itself I do not enter into relation to God. For example, it is a duty to love one's neighbor. It is a duty by its being traced back to God, but in the duty I enter into relation not to God but to the neighbor I love.[27]

The human being does not enter into relationship with the divine except in God's role as giver of the moral law. Instead, the individual's attention is turned to the other people who exist in the moral system. While this may be the right orientation in a secular society, Kierkegaard is writing to his Danish Lutheran contemporaries in which the theology and dogma of Christianity are still prevalent. The question of salvation and what it means to seek and gain salvation becomes unanswerable in such an ethical framework.

The downfall of Christian nationalism is that it believes that it can make right relationships with other people without first coming into right relation with God. Christian nationalism tries to codify and systematize the very human and imperfect way of relating to other people into a solid system. What the ethical seeks to do is to bring the divine into human comprehension. According to Kierkegaard, what becomes dangerous is that the ethical then demands that we sacrifice ourselves to the system and uses the sake of the other as justification for losing the individual:

> Thus if the Church were to insist on this sacrifice from one of its members, we would have only a tragic hero. The idea of the Church is not qualitatively different from the idea of the state. As soon as the single individual can enter into it by a simple mediation, and as soon as the

26. Barnett, "From Hegel to Google", 136.
27. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 68; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 160.

single individual has entered into the paradox, he does not arrive at the idea of the Church; he does not get out of the paradox, but he must find therein either his salvation or his damnation.[28]

What the tragic hero gets wrong is also what nationalism cannot fully grasp – that humans cannot distill themselves into one single desire or motivation. The tragic hero is asked to put aside their other desires, interests, and ethical commitments for the sake of the nation, and the nation becomes the end of everything. What nationalism ignores is the complexity of human life – that humans do not simply have one commitment or meaning but consist of multiplicity. Subsuming the human being under a system fails because it seeks to conceptualize what cannot be put into human language. It is easy to fall from Christianity into Christian nationalism because Christianity is beyond human communication whereas the nation, a human, social creation, is easily comprehensible.

Furthermore, nationalism is incredibly alluring because it seems to make transparent the often murky and complicated questions of life. It is this temptation that makes it dangerous, because we delegate our thinking to the nation as a whole. We turn to the ethical *qua* universal and Christian nationalism because they make easier the difficulties of what it means to be human and what their relationship is to the divine. As Stiltner argues, the fact that God's command is right because God commands it goes against human rationality. The concern (and move away from the religious into the ethical) is that God might ask something of his people that goes against human sensibility or a human understanding of the good.[29] Under such concerns, a human system of morality would understandably seek to excise the concerning ways that God undercuts a universal system. Nationalism and the ethical *qua* universal are "tempting" (to use Kierkegaard's language in *Fear and Trembling*) because they simplify humans into apprehensible and controllable objects. As Backhouse writes, "one of the key problems of nationalistic ideology is that is attempts to simplify the messy reality of modern identity by singling out only one layer of this construct from many, granting it exclusive priority and imbuing it with an inviolable nature".[30] However, human beings are complicated, eluding classification.

Furthermore, just as human beings resist simple understanding, so, too, does divinity. As Backhouse writes: "The natural response of Christendom to such a proposal is to remove the sting of the offense by suppressing the

28. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 74; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 166.
29. Stiltner, "Who Can Understand Abraham?", 222–223.
30. Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 201.

humble ordinances of Christ and expounding instead on his 'obvious' glory."[31] In *Fear and Trembling*, the knight of faith is an offense for its paradoxical nature – how can an individual become higher than the universal? How can the individual be justified for committing what is morally considered a sin? How could God, giver of the moral law, command Abraham to break the moral law? In the ethical, there cannot be such an offense, and it cannot fathom paradox. As Lippitt explains:

> The Abraham story offends such a consciousness in that Abraham's relation to God seems far more "direct". Rather than God's will being revealed through such intermediaries as a priest, a holy book or the incarnate son of God, in the Genesis narrative Abraham has *direct* access to God.[32]

Instead, the ethical *qua* universal is fixated on the external tangibles: follow these laws, perform these traditions, count how many people participate every week, and so on. It makes it easy to define what it means to be Christian. While these are valid political and social interests, they have no place within Christianity because such an endeavor goes against the expectations of Christianity (which calls for a relationship with the divine), so either the religious needs to be excised completely or the political cannot encompass a religious dimension. In either case, the conflation of the religious and the political can only be a failure.

Right Ordering of Christian Values

The ethical of *Fear and Trembling* sets up a wrong way of understanding the world – that the nation-state or the human community is the one that dictates what good and evil are. Any move to conflate the ethics of the individual with that of the nation is already a problem that Kierkegaard is fighting against. There can be nationhood and nationalism, but we cannot import the language of loving one's neighbour or any sort of individual Christian moral duty to the nation because these are two separate entities, two different ways of thinking and being. Trying to conflate the duties of individual Christians with the duties of the nation at large falls dangerously close to Christian nationalism once more. Within the ethical, there is no other way to rightfully exist except as a part of the whole: "Thus in the ethical view of life, it is the task of the single individual to strip himself of

31. Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 120.
32. Lippitt, *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard's* Fear and Trembling, 100.

the qualification of interiority and to express this in something external."[33] It is not that the political is unimportant or that nationalism as a political concept has no viability. Rather, Kierkegaard is concerned by the way in which the political and the religious become conflated and the political becomes prioritized over the religious. It is about the right orientation for the individual in the world.

This is not to say that the neighbour does not matter – Stiltner is quick to also tell his audience that God does not give arbitrary commands, and the fact that Abraham could not stop loving Isaac proves that. As he says, "for Johannes, Abraham must love Isaac *and* God; he may only act on God's command in the faith that this action is required by his love of God and of Isaac".[34] Backhouse, too, discusses a better sort of interpersonal relation. According to Backhouse, we can only come into right relation with other people if we are in right relationship with God to begin with:

> In the human's relation to the eternal, every person faces the same task – the task of authenticity of becoming a self [...] Authenticity is not grounded on one's right relation to the others in the group, but instead on one's right relation to the ground and source of all being.[35]

What comes out of this push against nationalism is exactly the right relation to God and the right relation to other people – to regard and interact with other people not as entities of the system but as individuals with their own interiority. Human community is not tossed out the window in such an account, but it is put in its proper place: a good Christian prioritizes their relationship with God first and foremost before they can attend to their human relationships, and their human relationships will only flourish if they are already in right relation with the divine. It is not that Kierkegaard is claiming that the ethical has no place in the world, only that an ethical that is separated from the religious or has coopted the religious within itself is ultimately a failure. This is worth noting, as Evans explains that Kierkegaard is separating out the ethical here to make a specific point about what he sees in his Danish, Lutheran society, which is more concerned with the ethical without its corresponding religious commitments.[36]

This is evident in how Kierkegaard sets up the religious in opposition to the ethical when he explains that true duty is the duty to God:

33. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 69; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 161.

34. Stiltner, "Who Can Understand Abraham?", 230.

35. Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 149.

36. C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self: Collected Essays*, Waco, TX 2006, 214.

> The paradox may also be expressed in this way: that there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute. [...] From this it does not follow that the ethical should be invalidated; rather, the ethical receives a completely different expression, a paradoxical expression, such as, for example, that love to God may bring the knight of faith to give his love to the neighbor – an expression opposite to that which, ethically speaking, is duty.[37]

It is only through the individual's duty to God that they have a duty to the people around them. The individual is called into relation with other discrete individuals, not to relate to others only as part of a community or political body. What is most important is the human–human relationship that is cultivated – the love of one human to another, not the love of nation: "No one who was great in the world will be forgotten, but everyone was great in his own way, and everyone in proportion to the greatness of that which *he loved*." On the same page, Kierkegaard notes that the one who is greatest is the one who struggles with God, "for he who struggled with the world became great by conquering the world, and he who struggled with himself became great by conquering himself, but he who struggled with God became the greatest of all".[38] He states clearly that the struggle for the world or for the self is lesser than the struggle to come into relationship with the divine, and this is a relationship of love. As Louis Pojman (1935–2005) argues, ethical knowledge of right and wrong makes sense as a set of universal truths: "Our apprehension of the universals involves not faith but knowledge. The moral order is intuitively and rationally ascertainable: its edicts are self-evident truths." On the other hand, a religious understanding of what is right and wrong is not known rationally because the God–human relationship defies external standards.[39] This is not to say that it is completely arbitrary; rather that such a religious understanding can never be comprehended by the social group, but can only be undertaken by an individual. Stiltner argues similarly that the ethical becomes relative in light of the human individual's relationship with God. The commandment to love one's neighbour is not done for the sake of the other person but for the sake of God first and foremost.[40] The priority in *Fear and Trembling* is very clear: right relationship with God comes as the priority over our obligations to

37. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 70; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 162.
38. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 16; Cappelørn (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 113.
39. Louis Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, Auburn, AL 1984, 82.
40. Stiltner, "Who Can Understand Abraham?", 225–226.

the world or to our nation. Christianity is one's relationship with God, not about cultivating a Christian nation.

Kierkegaard argues that it would be impossible to fully love the neighbour or be in relationship with other humans if the Christian individual is not already in right relationship with God. Indeed, Christian nationalism would also not resolve this problem, because an individual's relationship with another individual is also subsumed under their duty towards the nation as a whole. This is seen in the decision that each of the tragic heroes makes, as each man sacrifices his relationship with his child for the greater good. On the other hand, Abraham is able to retrieve his relationship with his son because of his decision to follow the personal command of God.

This is the content of the faith of Abraham and why he is exalted above the tragic heroes. It is because Abraham comes into right relationship with God that he is able to become the father of a nation – that he has faith in God to preserve Isaac despite any human logic or communal duty. Christian nationalism, on the other hand, demands that the individual must be in right relation with the group by becoming subservient to the group. However, Christianity dictates that the individual must first come into right relationship with God as an individual. The difficulty is that Christian nationalism comes out of a genuine desire to seek the good and to love the neighbour. However, it becomes caught up in its own project and loses sight of its original goal. In setting up the story of Abraham and Isaac, Kierkegaard reminds the reader of that goal: Abraham becomes justified precisely because he has the right prioritization: absolute love of God over the demands of the system.

Although Kierkegaard was addressing his contemporary Danish Lutheran society – as stated in his preface – his concerns about the political have a larger impact. Whatever place the political and the nation-state should have in our lives, the political should not be consumptive of individual experience. The concern of Christian nationalism is that it tries to make systematic what cannot be systematic – that is, the human individual and the individual's relationship with other people and the divine. First, interhuman relationships are not easily codified – human beings are messy and driven by mixed motivations, not pure rationality. Second (and this is what I believe makes Kierkegaard so fearful of the political), coopting the divine within a human system is a doomed enterprise – we cannot use human rationality to make sense of what lies beyond human reason. Any attempt to do so either fails immediately or attempts to subsume the divine (therefore the religious) *within* the political and makes the political the ultimate focus, to the detriment for both the religious and the political. Considering again the current

political climate and the relevance of Christian nationalism especially in the United States, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* warns the contemporary reader of the problems that arise when we conflate the political and the religious, as it becomes easy to subsume religious commitments under political narratives. The contemporary Christian must recognize Kierkegaard's critique of the political: that their faith and duty to the divine must be their supreme commitments over any duty to society or the state. It is only after they are in right relation with the divine that they can seek right relation with other people or with any political body. ▲

SUMMARY

This article is concerned with Søren Kierkegaard's implicit critique of Christian nationalism in *Fear and Trembling* (1843). By comparing the story of Abraham and Isaac to the stories of three tragic heroes, Kierkegaard unveils the problems of Christian nationalism: that it seeks to systematize what should not be systematized and that in such a political system, the individual is subsumed under the communal. The example of Abraham – someone who forgoes both his ethical duty to his child and to his promised nation for the sake of his relationship with the divine – reflects Kierkegaard's concerns about nationalism: that humans would be forced to sacrifice their individuality out of a so-called good of the whole. Instead, Kierkegaard praises Abraham because he obeys God instead of the ethical. For Kierkegaard, interpersonal relationships are what are most important for communal and political living. Abraham's faith enables him to preserve his relationships with God and with Isaac because he does not fall into the temptation of the ethical *qua* universal.

Stephen C. Carlson (red.). Papias of Hierapolis*: Exposition of Dominical Oracles. The Fragments, Testimonia, and Reception of a Second-Century Commentator*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2021. 381 s.

Som senaste tillskottet i serien *Oxford Early Christian Texts* publicerades Stephen C. Carlsons edition av alla kända fragment, vittnesbörd och texter med receptionshistoria om kyrkofadern Papias av Hierapolis (ca 60–ca 130). Papias är antagligen för en bred läsekrets mest känd för att ha skrivit femboksverket *Utläggningar av Herrens Ord* (Λογίων Κυριακῶν Ἐξήγησις) någon gång sent under första eller tidigt under andra århundradet. Verket och Papias har en avgörande roll för tidig kristendom när det gäller förståelse av nytestamentliga texters ursprung och teologi. Till exempel ska nämnas att framträdande kyrkofäder under samma period, såsom Irenaeus av Lyon (ca 130–ca 202) och Eusebios av Caesarea (ca 260–339), påverkats av Papias. Men Papias är även viktig som en tidigkristen teolog i sin egen rätt, och denna nya edition är således intresseväckande för fler än endast exegeter, patristiker och kyrkohistoriker.

”This edition aims to be the most complete edition of his remains to date” skriver Carlson (s.2), och det är minst sagt svårt att inte instämma i det påståendet. Samlingen innehåller 98 texter av eller om Papias, vilka härleds från andra till femtonde århundradet, varav 62 är nya för en Papias-edition. Utifrån en metodisk organisation framställs mer eller mindre all tillgänglig data om Papias på ett överskådligt vis. Genomarbetade grundtexter ställs, på dess respektive grundspråk, jämte en översättning till engelska. Och för att redan nu föranleda ett slutomdöme är Carlsons utgåva numera att räkna som standardverket för forskare som tar sig an den enigmatiska figuren Papias. Carlson kan därmed sägas ersätta tidigare utgåvor, såsom de av Bart D. Ehrman och Michael W. Holmes. Omdömet betyder inte att framställningen alltid är helt framkomlig för en allmänintresserad läsare eller lekman, eller för den delen att alla översättningar passar alla sammanhang eller syften. Men Carlson har åstadkommit något av en milstolpe och skapat ett standardverk inom Papias-forskningen. Förutom översättningen av 98 så kallade ”Papiana” från grekiska, latin, syriska, arabiska och armeniska, utgör editionens metodologiska bearbetning och diskussionerna i bokens första del det kanske mest avgörande bidraget till framtida Papias-forskning.

Några få frågor utgör fokus för resten av denna anmälan. För det första: vilka metodologiska *principer* använder Carlson i differentieringen av de 98 texterna, med sina termer ”fragment” och ”testimonia”? Fragment syftar på texter som säger något om Papias verk som sådana, medan testimonia pekar ut texter som säger något om mottagandet eller receptionen av Papias och hans verk. De två separata serierna med texter är huvudfokus i utgåvan, och vi gör klokt i att hålla F-serien separat från T-serien av analytiska skäl. Serierna avgör till exempel huruvida vi kan säga att Papias *själv* menade någonting (F-serien), i kontrast till vad som sagts om Papias och hans teologi eller verk (T-serien). De två serierna kan självklart överlappa vid olika tillfällen, men det är välfunnet att hålla dem åtskilda som material.

Utöver dessa serier lägger Carlson till ytterligare två P-serier, ”potential citations” och ”potential uses”, vilka syftar på texter som av sannolika skäl mycket väl kan härledas till Papias på ett eller annat vis. P-serierna är alltså anonymt material som inte nämner Papias vid namn, men som av olika skäl kan härledas till densamme. Men Carlson nöjer sig inte här, utan inkluderar till sist en Z-serie som består av elva ”spuria”-texter. Helt kort är spuriösa texter fall av felaktig tillskrivelse till Papias. Av de 62 ”Papiana” som hittills undgått bearbetning, lägger Carlson märke till att testimonia 70, 72, 79 och 98 är av särskilt intresse för omvärlden.

Bör en intresserad lekman eller student införskaffa utgåvan? I skrivande stund

kostar den ungefär 1 700 kronor och frågan är om utgåvan är tillräckligt omvälvande även för icke-specialister. Den tidigare utgåva av "Papiana" i Michael Holmes tredje upplaga av *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* kostar blott cirka 300 kronor. Och även om Holmes främst diskuterar ett trettiotal texter (som återfinns i F- och T-serierna) är Carlsons bok omistlig kanske främst i forskarsammanhang, eftersom just F-serien inte utökas nämnvärt med hjälp av nya fynd. Det är emellertid önskvärt att alla som är intresserade av Papias använder differentieringen i F-, T- och P-serier. Stephen C. Carlson har alltså gett ut en edition som bör påverka det samtida förhållandet till Papias, både hos forskare och lekmän.

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Mitsutoshi Horii. *"Religion" and "Secular" Categories in Sociology: Decolonizing the Modern Myth*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 2021. 263 s.

Den här boken behandlar ett viktigt ämne för religionsvetenskapen och teologin, nämligen de epistemiska gränser som omfattar kategorin "religion". Bokens ärende är att belysa några grundläggande problem som berör appliceringen av kategorin inom sociologi och att dekonstruera begreppet i ljuset av vad författaren menar är en förutfattad binär utgångspunkt som ligger till grund för den västerländska moderniteten; en utgångspunkt som gett upphov till inte bara ämnet sociologi, utan all form av vetenskaplighet (först och främst inom humaniora och samhällsvetenskap). I förlängningen menar författaren att samma problem som orsakar religionsbegreppets begränsningar finns i andra kategorier som står i centrum för den gemensamma kultur som sköljt över världen i modernitetens universalistiska och samtidigt essentialistiska kölvatten, exempelvis "ekonomi", "politik" och "vetenskap".

Mitsutoshi Horii är sociolog och har sin bakgrund i Japan. Det gör honom kanske särskilt lämpad att studera de många sätt som kategorin religion skaver i kontexter där den inte vuxit fram. Det här har uppmärksammats tidigare, nyligen av religionshistorikern Ernils Larsson i hans avhandling *Rituals of a Secular Nation: Shinto Normativity and the Separation of Religion and State in Postwar Japan* (2020). Horiis studie är dock teoretiskt driven och problematiserar inte bara begreppet religion utan även de förutfattade meningar han hävdar dominerar den globala epistemologin som grundlagts av den västerländska moderniteten. Det är detta undertiteln "Decolonizing the Modern Myth" syftar på.

Efter det första introducerande kapitlet, som förklarar bokens riktning och innehåll, följer ett kapitel som sammanfattar tidigare forskning som problematiserat modernitetens begränsningar. Det rör sig om forskning som påvisat modernitetens normativa drivkraft att enhetliggöra den epistemiska diskurs som egentligen är ett resultat av den västerländska kontext i vilken den växt fram, snarare än något som representerar "tingen i sig". Horii menar att uppdelningen mellan religion och sekulär ligger till grund för den västerländska moderniteten och om man söker dekonstruera den måste man först göra upp med den förstnämnda konstruerade dikotomin. Det tredje kapitlet placerar diskussionen som påbörjades i det föregående kapitlet i en historisk och etymologisk kontext och kapitel fyra för in Karl Marx (1818–1883), Max Weber (1864–1920) och Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) i diskussionen, teoretiker som Horii menar kan sägas ha grundlagt ämnet sociologi en gång i tiden. Argumentet här är att dessa inflytelserika tänkares syn på religion måste förstås i de specifika historiska kontexter som de verkade i, epoker som såg stora samhällsomvälvningar och klasskamper (både i Europa och i den koloniserade världen). Horiis fyra inledande kapitel är menade att synliggöra den normativa ansats som driver västerländsk modernitet.

Resterande del av boken syftar till att föra in kritiken i det sociologiska fältet specifikt. Bland annat skärskådar han hur aktuell sociologisk forskning och läroböcker i ämnet använder begreppen religion och sekulär.

Horiis bok behandlar ett viktigt och negligerat ämne som bör uppmärksammas av religionsvetare och teologer. Begreppen religion och sekulär behandlas alltför ofta som självklara motsatser, vilket är en utgångspunkt som behöver problematiseras. Det finns dock en rad problem med det sätt på vilket Horii väljer att framställa sin studie och argumentera för sina poänger. Påståendet att motsatsbegreppen religion och sekulär är fiktiva kategorier som växt fram i en västerländsk kontext upprepas så ofta att det stör läsningen. Flera argumenten som Horii använder för att underbygga bokens huvudtes är dessutom platta och förenklande. Ett exempel hittar vi i det andra kapitlet, där Horii vill påvisa att kategorierna religion och sekulär träffar fel och därför exemplifierar faktumet att det finns forskare som liknat fotboll med religion. Det stämmer att det finns likheter mellan beteendet hos fotbollssupportrar och det beteende som förknippas med religion. Det stämmer också att vissa forskare ansett det vara användbart att lyfta fram dessa likheter. Men detta är inget argument mot kategoriernas bärkraft eller användbarhet. Horii diskuterar inte varför forskarna han refererar till gör liknelsen eller till vilken nytta. Det är bara ett konstaterande från vilket han drar slutsatsen att eftersom jämförelsen görs mellan religion och andra ting som oftast placeras i kategorin sekulär är distinktionen mellan religion och sekulär inte användbar. För att Horii ska kunna dra dessa slutsatser hade en analys och en djupare diskussion behövts. Samma exempel återupprepas gällande så kallade ”sekulära” beteenden som shopping och matlagning.

Ett annat problem återfinns omedelbart efter ovannämnda diskussion. Horii argumenterar för att religion till stor del består av myter, berättelser som skapar ordning och ger mening. Kategorin religion är på så vis inte väsensskild från andra berättelser som ligger till grund för västerländsk modernitet, menar Horii, såsom existensen av nationalstater, ekonomi och lagar. Så långt en bra poäng, som andra visserligen gjort tidigare. Problemet infinner sig dock när Horii påtvingar en postkolonial analys på denna observation. Han anmärker att i den koloniala ordningen klassificeras religion som ”fiktion”, i motsats till ”verklighet”, och därtill placeras asiatiska fenomen såsom konfucianism, hinduism och buddhism i sagda kategori. Således framställs de asiatiska fenomenen som fiktion medan den koloniala ordningen skulle vara något slags sanning som speglar ”verkligheten”. Detta argument faller emellertid på att det inte beaktar att det också finns religioner i väst, vilka i den koloniala ordningen återfinns i samma fiktiva kategori. För att argumentet skulle ha övertygat hade Horii behövt visa hur de asiatiska fenomen han nämner var de epistemiska utgångspunkter som låg till grund för de asiatiska samhällena innan den västerländska moderniteten tog över (vilket de mycket väl kan tänkas ha gjort). Horii förenklar också diskussionen kring vad som egentligen skett när det västerländska konceptet religion applicerats på vissa fenomen utanför den västerländska kontexten. Frågan som Horii borde diskuterat mer detaljerat och noggrant är huruvida kategorin religion och dess underarter är användbara eller inte, och på vilket sätt de gör våld på de fenomen som är främmande för den västerländska kontexten. Det faktum att termen religion härstammar från väst gör den inte per definition oanvändbar. Richard King har i *Orientalism and Religion* (1999) bland annat visat hur kategorin ”hinduism” mottogs och spreds av indier själva (främst brahminkastet) och dessutom var behjälplig i vissa avseenden gällande bekämpandet av det koloniala förtrycket.

Det är synd att Horii slarvar med framställningen av ett problemkomplex som kräver och förtjänar en mer detaljerad och sammansatt analys. Att religion alltför ofta kopplas till något per definition falskt

medan det sekulära förknippas med det motsatta är viktigt att observera och problematisera. Horiis angreppssätt och argumentation lämnar en del i övrigt att önska, men budskapet och ambitionen är trots allt lovvärd.

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Martin Hägglund. *Vårt enda liv: Sekulär tro och andlig frihet*. Stockholm: Volante. 2020. 489 s.

Den engelska originalutgåvan av Martin Hägglunds fjärde bok, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom* (2019), har fått stor internationell uppmärksamhet genom recensioner, intervjuer, symposier och så vidare. Exakt samma bok som det amerikanska förlaget gett ut har även publicerats i Storbritannien och Australien med en mer provocerande undertitel: *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*.

Hägglund är professor i litteraturvetenskap vid Yale University och den förste svensk som blivit invald i Harvard Society of Fellows. Han har tidigare publicerat en bok på svenska, *Kronofobi: Essäer om tid och ändlighet* (2002), och två på engelska, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (2008) och *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (2012), som båda hyllats internationellt och översatts till ett dussin språk.

Den gemensamma nämnaren för dessa böcker är Hägglunds filosoferande om tiden och speciellt *fri* tid (inte fritid) som vi enligt honom ska förvalta väl, eftersom vi bara har ett liv, ett *ändligt* liv. Huvudpoängen i Hägglunds resonemang om tiden är att livets meningsfullhet bygger på livets ändlighet. ”Evigt liv” är för Hägglund ett begrepp som inte kan ges en meningsfull tolkning. Hur skulle ett evigt liv te sig i praktiken? Är det ens önskvärt? Han skriver: ”Den religiösa tron är inte ett trossystem som jag försöker *motbevisa*, i meningen att bevisa att evigheten inte existerar. Det jag ifrågasätter är uppfattningen att evigheten är *eftersträvansvärd*” (s. 41).

Hägglund kommer aldrig in på alla de svårigheter som föreställningar om de dödas eller kroppens uppståndelse och evigt liv genererar, till exempel var och i vilket tillstånd personer befinner sig mellan den kroppsliga döden och kroppens uppståndelse (det så kallade ”mellantillståndet”). Han tar inte upp frågan om föreställningar om kroppens uppståndelse går att förena med tron på själens odödlighet. Han oroar sig inte för vad Bibeln säger om evigheten och hur Bibelns författare beskriver livet i Guds rike, i himlen eller som hos Johannes – i himmelriket.

Mycket kortfattat kan man säga att Hägglunds bok består av två delar. I den första kritiserar han religionen och i den andra kapitalismen. Med utgångspunkt i det Karl Marx (1818–1883) kallar kommunism vill han ersätta denna med demokratisk socialism, ”som skulle förverkliga de materiella och andliga villkor som krävs för att vi alla ska kunna leva ett fritt liv, med ömsesidig förståelse för vårt beroende av varandra” (s. 37).

Vad finns det att invända mot en sådan filosofi?

Medan Hägglunds bok höjts till skyarna i utlandet har den inhemska kritiken inte varit lika positiv. Mattias Svensson på tankesmedjan Timbro kallar verket ”godmodigt och obekymrat totalitärt”. Ärkebiskop Antje Jackelén deltog i ett samtal med Hägglund om hans bok där hon kritiserade honom för att utan goda skäl inte vara öppen för det transcendenta och att han inte tagit upp några moderna teologer förutom Paul Tillich, som dog 1965.

Personligen har jag funnit Hägglunds bok mycket intressant och då speciellt hans funderingar om förhållandet mellan livets meningsfullhet och dess ändlighet. Den paradoxala slutsats Hägglunds resonemang leder till är att föreställningarna om ett liv efter detta och ett evigt liv inte bara är orimliga utan även oönskade. Det är bara genom att

acceptera vår dödlighet som vi kan finna livets verkliga mening.

Den svenska utgåvan är inte bara en översättning utan en något utvidgad version av den engelska förlagan. Vad exakt det nya består i är inte lätt att få fram, eftersom den svenska utgåvan saknar register, något som förlaget gott kunde ha kostat på sig.

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Caroline Klintborg. *Avstånd, delaktighet, längtan: Gudstjänst i en tid av religiös förändring*. Skellefteå: Artos. 2021. 177 s.

Titeln på religionspedagogen Caroline Klintborgs bok, *Avstånd, delaktighet, längtan*, sammanfattar också resultatet av hennes studie. Alla tre orden kan sägas prägla människors relation till Svenska kyrkans gudstjänster, ibland paradoxalt nog samtidigt. Klintborgs bok är en beskrivning av hur Asarums pastorat i Lunds stift under två års tid gjorde en aktiv satsning på att öka både deltagandet och delaktigheten i söndagens huvudgudstjänst. Syftet med studien är ”att undersöka hur församlingsbor och medarbetare i Asarums pastorat beskriver sin delaktighet i söndagens huvudgudstjänst och hur deras beskrivningar kan bidra till en förståelse för gudstjänstens plats och betydelse i en tid av religiös förändring” (s. 25). Klintborg har deltagit i såväl medarbetarsamlingar som gudstjänster och gjort intervjuer med församlingsanställda och församlingsbor om hur de upplever gudstjänsterna och gudstjänstsatsningen i pastoratet.

I bokens andra kapitel beskriver Klintborg sina teoretiska utgångspunkter: dels ritteori så som Martin Modéus tidigare använt begreppet i relation till Svenska kyrkans gudstjänster, dels begreppet delaktighet som någonting som förutsätter ett gemensamt intressefokus. Framställningen är präglad av Klintborgs intresse för hur ”människor själva tolkar och förstår sina liv” (s. 25) och en förståelse av gudstjänster som en ”social praktik där lärande och undervisning om den kristna tron tar gestalt” (s. 13). Att lägga tonvikten på enskilda människors erfarenheter och lokala kontext värdesätts ofta inom dagens empiriska praktiska teologi. Även här fungerar det som ett effektivt sätt att belysa också större mönster i Svenska kyrkan i dag, utan att för den sakens skull göra anspråk på generaliserbarhet i varje detalj. Frågor om kyrkosyn och om varför gudstjänster beskrivs som kyrkans centrum finns också hela tiden i bakgrunden, men teorivalen gör att de inte riktigt kommer upp till ytan.

Även om Klintborg har en bredd i intervjumaterialet möter läsaren främst de anställdas berättelse. Pastoratets satsning har inte lett till fler gudstjänstfirare på söndagarna, och det är otydligt om de församlingsbor som kommer upplever en större ”delaktighet” än tidigare. Det är återkommande hur de anställda som intervjuas lyfter fram *sin egen* utveckling i relation till gudstjänsterna och värdet av processen för dem som arbetslag. Detta är i sig intressant. På ytan är det här en studie av en gudstjänstsatsning i en församling i Svenska kyrkan. För den initierade läsaren är det minst lika mycket en studie av något i ett globalt och historiskt perspektiv så märkligt som en kyrka där människor som arbetar heltid i densamma inte känner sig hemma i söndagens gudstjänst.

Ett av de stora värdena med studien är hur Klintborg följt arbetet på en och samma plats under längre tid, med ett och samma fokus. Det leder dock till etiska dilemman, framför allt för Klintborg själv, men i någon mån även i relation till den här typen av recension. Hur undviker man alltför värderande omdömen om ett namngivet pastorat som innehåller material från samtal med en namngiven kyrkoherde? Klintborg navigerar detta på det enda möjliga sättet: genom att vara försiktig och genom att lägga stor vikt vid att det ska vara svårt att identifiera enskilda anställda och församlingsbor, med kyrkoherden som enda undantag. När

intervjucitat återges vet läsaren bara vilken ”kategori” av informant som står bakom yttrandet, om det är en anställd eller en församlingsbo, men får ingen information om yrke, ålder eller kön. Eftersom Klintborg använder samma pseudonym för alla informanter ur samma kategori (till exempel ”M” för ”medarbetare”) blir det som läsare något förvirrande på grund av att man inte vet om hon citerar samma person flera gånger eller växlar mellan flera olika. Detta gör det också svårt att bedöma huruvida bredden i materialet är representerad bland de intervjucitat som valts ut.

Avstånd, delaktighet, längtan är en studie av ett enskilt pastorat i Svenska kyrkan. Det vore lätt att kritisera studien för att vara ”inomkyrklig” eller ”svenskkyrklig”. Det är den naturligtvis. Hur skulle en studie av gudstjänstarbetet i ett pastorat i Svenska kyrkan kunna vara någonting annat? Däremot hade boken inte behövt vara fullt så *svensk*. Svenska kyrkans gudstjänstliv är inte, lika lite som någon annan kyrkas, format i ett vakuum, utan är tvärtom beroende av och står i relation till många andra kyrkors gudstjänster, på många platser och under lång tid. Klintborg gör en typ av samhällelig omvärldsanalys där hon sätter in pastoratet i sitt lokala sammanhang, men det hade tillfört analysen ytterligare en nivå om hon också på ett tydligare sätt hjälpt läsaren med den teologiska omvärldsanalysen. Ett konkret exempel är de återkommande referenserna till hur kyrkohandboken för flera medarbetare i församlingen är en källa till frustration och besvikelse. Detta är relevant intervjumaterial att redovisa, men framställningen hade vunnit på att också diskutera den plats kyrkohandboken har i Svenska kyrkan och varför, liksom kritiken mot den i relation till kristen gudstjänsttradition.

Studien sätter fingret på obekväma sanningar, som den bristande teologiska kompetensen bland anställda. Om inte ens prästerna, med drygt fem års teologisk utbildning, anser sig vara ”skolade teologer”, utan formar gudstjänster utifrån vad som ”känns bra” (s. 71), blir frågan vad teologisk kunskap alls är i Sverige i dag. En annan obekväm sanning handlar om i vilken utsträckning ”församlingen” likställs med de anställda. Detta problematiseras visserligen både av informanterna och av Klintborg själv, men förutsätts i texten. Mest uppseendeväckande är kanske när en av de intervjuade nämner att de anställdas ökade engagemang i gudstjänsterna till viss del har trängt undan ideellt engagemang, då till exempel kyrkvärdar halkat nedåt i ”hierarkin” när fler medarbetare än präst, musiker och vaktmästare har kommit in i bilden.

Avstånd, delaktighet, längtan bidrar till forskningen om gudstjänst i Sverige i dag. Klintborg visar hur en studie inspirerad av aktionsforskning kan vara relevant för att diskutera fenomen i en kyrklig kontext. Boken synliggör på ett tillgängligt sätt hur forskningsstudier kan vara av direkt relevans för utveckling av teologiska praktiker. Boken kan också ses som en uppmaning till teologer att bedriva praktiknära forskning, då många av de teologiska frågor som Klintborgs studie väcker inte kan besvaras inom ramen för en renodlat religionspedagogisk eller beteendevetenskaplig studie, men likväl är av stor betydelse både för kyrklig praktik och utvecklingen inom akademisk teologi. Resultateten sammanfattas med en fråga om huruvida gudstjänsten överhuvudtaget kan utgöra kyrkans centrum ”om den saknar betydelse för ett flertal av kyrkans medlemmar” (s. 158). Här finns en tydlig kritik. Frågan är vilka teologiska resurser den teologiska forskningen tillsammans med Svenska kyrkan har att besvara den.

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Frida Mannerfelt & Alexander Maurits. *Kallelse och erkännande: Berättelser från de första prästvigda kvinnorna i Svenska kyrkan*. Göteborg: Makadam. 2021. 456 s.

”Vad hände i går?” frågade vår lågstadielärare oss tredjeklassare dagen efter palmsöndagen 1960. En elev visste och räckte upp handen. Jag kan fortfarande känna den högtidlighet som infann sig när läraren läste upp namnen på de tre: Elisabeth Djurle (1930–2014), Ingrid Persson (1912–2000) och Margit Sahlin (1914–2003), de första prästvigda kvinnorna i Svenska kyrkan. Denna historiska händelse är utgångspunkten i *Kallelse och erkännande*.

Det är ett omfattande material som inbjuder läsaren att ta del av ett unikt och synnerligen betydelsefullt bidrag till kyrkohistorien. Innehållet spänner över tiden 1960–1970 och de trettiofyra kallelseberättelser nedtecknade av de första prästvigda kvinnorna, ett arbete som initierades av prästen och homiletikläraren Lena Malmgren för nästan femton år sedan.

Boken är indelad i fyra delar och en avslutande sammanfattning. ”Kallelsens historiografi” beskriver den inre kallelsens väg, upplevelsen av att vara kallad av Gud. Här framträder en kyrklig historieskrivning som näst intill osynliggjort de prästvigda kvinnornas erfarenheter och kamp.

I ”Kallelsens kronologi” ligger fokus på källmaterialet, de trettiofyra berättelserna och de prästvigda kvinnornas bakgrund gällande uppväxt, studier och utbildning. Inte minst inflytandet från olika frikyrkor blir tydligt i många av berättelserna. I denna del redogör författarna för det vanligt förekommande motstånd som kvinnor mötte vid universiteten och i prästutbildningen. Motstånd gör sig också gällande på biskopsnivå, med en ambivalent inställning trots kyrkomötets beslut 1958 att öppna prästämbetet för kvinnor.

”Kallelsens teologi” skildrar de teologiska argument gällande ämbete, kyrkosyn och församlingsliv som de trettiofyra kvinnorna lyfter fram. Utifrån källmaterialet blir det tydligt att det är på teologiska grunder, och inte av jämställdhetsskäl, som kvinnorna anhåller om prästvigning.

I den sista huvuddelen, ”Kallelsens erkännande”, står den yttre kallelsen i fokus, det mottagande eller brist på detsamma som kyrkan visar. Det nära sambandet mellan erkännande och identitet återkommer som en röd tråd genom samtliga narrativ, vilket manifesteras i prästvigningen. Dock ifrågasätts en del av kvinnorna när de kommer ut som församlingspräster, vilket i en del fall får förödande konsekvenser. Ett förvägrat erkännande som präst leder till en social utfrysning och en tilltufsad identitet. Många kvinnor ger upp redan under studietiden i brist på stöd och med ett ständigt ifrågasättande av lärare, studiekamrater och biskopar som var emot reformen från 1958.

I boken ryms en bild från en kyrkoherdeinstallation i Göteborgs stift som är direkt smärtsam att betrakta. På bilden syns en prästvigd kvinna som sitter ensam kvar i koret – utan några liturgiska plagg – medan de manliga kollegorna och lekfolket samlas vid altaret. Eftersom biskopen är motståndare till reformen nödgas den prästvigda kvinnan inta en låtsasroll som notarie, alltså inte delta i egenskap av präst. Året är 1978, hela tjugo år efter reformen!

Hur är det möjligt att så mycket av förtryck och direkta hot mot de första prästvigda kvinnorna har fått så ringa uppmärksamhet? Exemplen är många på de trakasserier som förekommer, låt mig nämna tre:

1. Professorn som fick veta att studenten ämnade bli präst svarade henne vid ett tentamenstillfälle: ”Då ska du veta, att det du tror är din kallelse från Gud är bara penisavund” (s. 127).

2. I anslutning till Ingrid Perssons prästvigning hålls en sorgegudstjänst i en kyrka i Medelpad, med svarta skynken och begravningspsalmer, som ett uttryck för motståndet mot reformen.

3. En student som gick på den praktiska delen av prästutbildningen, ”prakten”, fick höra ”att en kvinnlig prästvigning under alla omständigheter var verkningslös. Den kunde likställas med dop av en gris” (s. 153). Kvinnan berättar om hur hon får kämpa för att orka gå på föreläsningar och övningar.

Anförda exempel är inga undantag, tvärtom, de är legio.

En väsentlig anledning till de prästvigda kvinnornas tystnad beträffande trakasserier är det faktum att kyrkans ledning förväntar sig att kvinnorna träder tillbaka i ”besvärliga” situationer, som i exemplet ovan med kyrkoherdeinstallationen. En omhuldad föreställning är att de prästvigda kvinnorna ”splittrar” kyrkan. I denna kontext förblir många tysta angående de kränkningar de utsätts för. Tilläggas ska att de trettiofyra berättelserna också lyfter fram personer som oförväget står vid kvinnornas sida med både mod och inspiration. En av dem var domprosten och sedermera biskopen Per-Olov Ahrén (1926–2004) i Lund, som gick emot sin biskop genom att vägra delta i så kallade ”särvigningar”, där kvinnan fick prästvigas vid ett annat tillfälle än det officiella på grund av motståndet. En annan person som beskrivs i varma ordalag är prästen och läraren vid Stockholms teologiska institut, Gösta Hök (1903–1978). En av de trettiofyra kvinnorna berättar att hon kvällen före sin prästvigning får ett telegram av en professor i Uppsala som avråder henne från prästvigning, men tack vare Hök bröts hennes ”förlamande känsla av kaos” (s. 307).

Efter läsningen av denna bok framgår det med all tydlighet att Svenska kyrkan består av två helt olika ”kyrkor.” Den ena är grundad i luthersk teologi med dess syn på ämbetet som ett uppdrag i Ordets tjänst som ska visa på Kristus. Den andra utgår ifrån en syn på ämbetet där prästen representerar Kristus och som ställer sig avvisande till demokratiska principer i kyrkan. De trettiofyra kallelseberättelserna genomsyras av en luthersk teologi där ämbetet ses som en funktion. När det gäller motståndarna till reformen omfattas dessa i allmänhet av en syn på ämbetet som kristusrepresentation.

I egenskap av lärare i liturgik under många år på pastoralinstitutet i Lund har jag efterlyst en grundläggande kunskap om vad det innebär att Svenska kyrkan är en evangelisk-luthersk kyrka. För dem som inte har kommit i kontakt med luthersk teologi, eller läst något i ämnet, ställer det till stora bekymmer för den enskilde såväl som för klassen i övrigt. I dessa fall ses prästutbildningen som ett nödvändigt ont. I boken berättas om ”skuggprakter” där motståndare till reformen ger studerande ”den rätta utbildningen.”

Jag finner denna bok vara en kyrkovetenskaplig bedrift! Arbetet utmärks av ett grannlaga arbete med ödmjukheten som en ledstjärna. De skönlitterära anknytningarna förhöjer läsningen på ett unikt sätt. Min förhoppning är att detta arbete leder till vidare forskning samt att denna bok kommer att ingå i kurslitteraturen för kurser i kyrkovetenskap.

I ett för övrigt intressant förord finner jag dock några punkter förbryllande. Att ”kvinnorna vigdes för att […] deras biskopar […] menade att det var teologiskt och pastoralt motiverat” (s. 10) är en sanning med modifikation. En del kvinnor tilläts inte alls att vigas av ”sin” biskop utan fick vända sig till en annan biskop. Varför inte våga problematisera att flera biskopar nekade kvinnor som ville prästvigas trots reformen? Frågan om ”hur vi inom kyrkan behandlar […] våra meningsmotståndare” med hänvisning till ”kärlekens väg” finner jag förtryckande i just denna kontext (s. 10). Detta argument har tyvärr använts på ett synnerligen repressivt sätt gentemot prästvigda kvinnor, något som dokumenteras väl i boken.

En elev räckte upp handen den där gången lågstadieläraren frågade vad som hänt föregående söndag. Ja, det var jag. Inte kunde jag ana att jag en gång skulle få förmånen och kallelsen att följa i de tre första prästvigda kvinnornas spår. Jag är djupt tacksam

över alla prästvigda kvinnor som i kamp och glädje gått före och gett mig goda förebilder.

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Dieter Mitternacht & Anders Runesson (red). *Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins: Perspectives, Methods, Meanings.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 2021. 706 s.

En bärande betoning i föreliggande bok är att förutsättningen för en god analys av den tidiga Jesusrörelsen är att denna förstås utifrån sin historiska kontext. De nytestamentliga texterna är präglade av specifika historiska omständigheter och relaterar på olika sätt till andra texter och sammanhang. Denna betoning kan med fördel även tillämpas på den anmälda boken. Därför vill jag inleda med att placera *Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins* i sin historiska kontext genom att dels relatera den till sin föregångare, *Jesus och de första kristna: Inledning till Nya testamentet* (2006), dels beskriva dess karaktärsdrag i ljuset av andra introduktionsböcker till Nya testamentet.

År 2006 publicerades *Jesus och de första kristna* – en lärobok med bidrag från arton skandinaviska forskare, vilken säkerligen är välkänd för de flesta som är bekanta med det aktuella ämnesfältet. *Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins* är en reviderad, översatt och delvis utökad version av ovannämnda bok. Majoriteten av bokens innehåll är bearbetat av respektive författare och därefter översatt till engelska av Rebecca Runesson och Noah Runesson. Utöver detta har några nyskrivna delar lagts till – såsom ”The Peculiar Case of Pauline Scholarship and Judaism” av Magnus Zetterholm och ”Non-Rabbinic Jews and Varieties of Judaism” av Karin Hedner Zetterholm – och några delar skrivits om av en ny författare – exempelvis ”Reconstructing the New Testament Texts” av Tommy Wasserman och ”Gnosticism and ’the Gnostics’” av Ismo Dunderberg. Dessutom har David E. Aune författat ett nytt förord.

En vanlig ordning för introduktionsböcker till Nya testamentet är att de 27 kanoniska texterna ligger till grund för strukturen, antingen baserat på den kanoniska ordningen eller kronologiskt ordnat utifrån texternas tillkomst. I *Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins* har redaktörerna valt en annan väg, nämligen att ge den historiska kontexten stort utrymme och att presentera texterna i ljuset av denna. Boken är strukturerad i sex kapitel, där det första introducerar bokens angreppssätt och de nästkommande fyra belyser olika aspekter av den tidiga Jesusrörelsen och dess kontext utifrån ett historiskt perspektiv. Det avslutande kapitlet presenterar sedan exempel på tolkningar av specifika texter utifrån ett visst metodologiskt angreppssätt.

Det första kapitlet introducerar alltså primärt bokens innehåll och angreppssätt, men här finns även en översikt av Nya testamentets forskningshistoria, en fördjupning kring Paulus och judendomen samt metodologiska reflektioner kring det historiska studiet. Detta följs upp av kapitel 2, där det historiska sammanhanget för den tidiga Jesusrörelsen skissas. Det handlar dels om en diakron redogörelse för den judiska historien från början av den persiska till slutet av den romerska perioden (ca 587 f.v.t.–135 v.t.), dels om tre synkrona beskrivningar. Dessa fokuserar i tur och ordning på de grekisk-romerska religionerna och filosofierna, tro och praktik inom andra templets judendom samt synen på män, kvinnor och makt.

Kapitel 3 ägnas åt frågan om forskningen kring den historiske Jesus, bland annat med en presentation av de relevanta källorna, den tillgängliga bakgrunden kring Jesu liv och huvuddragen i hans förkunnelse. Därtill förs en diskussion om vilken Jesus som egentligen kan beskrivas inom ramen för den historiskt inriktade forskningen. Den ståndpunkt som skrivs fram är att ”den historiske Jesus” – alltså den Jesus som forskaren kan beskriva – är i fokus och att denna bör skiljas från till

exempel ”den verklige Jesus” som är oåtkomlig för forskaren.

I bokens fjärde kapitel flyttas fokus till de nytestamentliga texterna. Efter en inledande del kring texternas tillkomst, tradering och kanonisering behandlas de 27 texterna utifrån tre kategorier: evangelierna och Apostlagärningarna, de paulinska breven samt de katolska breven, Hebreerbrevet och Uppenbarelseboken. Genomgående för de tre delarna är att varje text behandlas med både historiskt och innehållsligt fokus. I jämförelse med andra introduktionsböcker är presentationen av respektive text relativt kortfattad.

Kapitel 5 tar sedan upp några strömningar som exemplifierar den mångfald som tar form bland de Jesustroende grupperna. Här behandlas brytningen mellan judendom och kristendom, Paulus och hans efterföljare, de johanneiska Jesustroende, icke-rabbinska judar och olika varianter av judendom samt gnosticism. Till sist följer en diskussion utifrån kategorierna enhet och mångfald. I det avslutande sjätte kapitlet finns sedan ett antal exempel på läsningar av specifika nytestamentliga texter med en viss betoning på läsarorienterade tolkningar. Dessa fungerar väl som exempel på den exegetik som förespråkas i boken som helhet.

Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins är i många avseenden ett föredömligt verk. Bokens betoning på de historiska sammanhangen ger läsaren en god vägledning till att förstå den tidiga rörelsen av Jesustroende. Texterna är lättillgängliga och kompletteras med belysande bilder, tabeller och hänvisningar till vidare läsning. Vidare är boken omfattande, har en innovativ struktur och är tydligt präglad av den expertis som de totalt 22 författarna besitter. I bokens omfattning och innovativa upplägg ligger samtidigt även några av dess utmaningar. Låt mig ta två exempel. För det första kan det finnas en viss oklarhet kring var jag som läsare kan hitta den information jag söker. Om jag till exempel slår upp boken med syfte att fördjupa mig i Paulus och hans brev inser jag att det dels finns en allmän översikt av paulinsk forskning (s. 19–21), dels en (till viss del överlappande) fördjupning om Paulus och judendomen (s. 23–31), dels en introduktion till de paulinska breven (inklusive Paulus liv och verksamhet, s. 280–289), dels en längre fördjupande del om Paulus och hans efterföljare (s. 399–437).

Den andra utmaningen gäller hur boken bäst ska komma till användning. Dess 700 sidor är, med reservation för att jag här primärt resonerar utifrån en svensk kontext, förmodligen för omfattande för en introduktionskurs till Nya testamentet. Det är givetvis inte svenska studenter som är bokens huvudsakliga målgrupp, men frågan är intressant att lyfta utifrån att den svenska föregångaren har fyllt denna funktion. En reviderad version innebär ju i regel en reviderad litteraturlista. Oavsett om *Jesus, the New Testament, Christian Origins* kommer att ersätta eller fungera sida vid sida med sin föregångare inom detta område kan vi slutligen konstatera att boken, med sin betoning på utförlig historiskt inriktad tolkning, är ett mycket välkommet bidrag till den engelskspråkiga exegetiken.

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Jennifer Nyström. *Reading Romans, Constructing Paul(s): A Conversation between Messianic Jews in Jerusalem and Paul within Judaism Scholars*. Lund: Lund University. 2021. 357 s.

Reading Romans, Constructing Paul(s) är Jennifer Nyströms doktorsavhandling i Nya testamentets exegetik som hon lade fram och framgångsrikt försvarade i september 2021 vid Lunds universitet. Nyström tar avstamp i det nyare perspektivet ”Paul within Judaism” (i boken och här förkortat PWJ) och undersöker hur messianska judar i Israel tolkar Romarbrevet 11 som bland annat handlar om Guds plan för folket Israel och utgör en central text för dessa. Avsikten

är att jämföra messianska judars tolkningar av Rom. 11 med PWJ-forskares, då det finns kontakt mellan grupperna och vissa messianska judiska teologer är insatta i Paulusforskningen. Själva undersökningen sker genom intervjuer, "Bible-reading interviews", och forskningen kan klassificeras som receptionshistoria med användning av antropologiska metoder med inslag av sociologi. Nyström anammar verktyg som James S. Bielo utvecklat för att studera "the social life of Scripture" och undersöker hur och varför en text tolkas som den gör. Dessutom lägger hon till analysfrågor om "what comes out of the interaction" (s. 12). De arton intervjupersonernas identitet hålls hemlig och de omtalas med pseudonymer.

I en forskningsöversikt förklarar Nyström inledningsvis vissa grundläggande aspekter om identitet och bibelsyn bland messianska judar. Det handlar om en judisk rörelse vars medlemmar inte kallar sig för kristna, vilket ger dem en prekär ställning bland andra judar i Israel. Därefter följer en längre utläggning om Paulusforskningen som Nyström delar in i tre inriktningar: "*Outside*, *And*, or *Within* Judaism." Nyström är en företrädare för PWJ-perspektivet som tidigare kallades "the radical perspective". Perspektivet innebär ett paradigmskifte från en (mycket) tidigare syn då man generellt sett antagit att Paulus brutit med judendomen. Det innebär i korthet att Paulus som Kristustroende fortsatte att identifiera sig som jude och leva efter de judiska lagarna. PWJ är en benämning som dessa forskare själva använder och är allmänt vedertagen. De andra indelningarna som Nyström föreslår är däremot problematiska. "Paul And Judaism", vilket handlar om en viss ambivalens i synen på Paulus förhållande till judendom, är en otydlig beteckning. Forskningen som betecknas som "Outside Judaism" är i flera fall missvisande. Även om somliga forskare med rätta kan anklagas för att drivas av en negativ syn på judendom är det olyckligt att blanda tidigare och samtida forskare under en sådan kategorisk beteckning. I gruppen forskare som Nyström anklagar för att påverkas av "anti-Jewish elements" ingår bland andra Stephen Westerholm, en nordamerikansk Paulusforskare. Nyström misstolkar citaten från hans bok utan hänsyn till kontexten och tillskriver honom åsikter som inte är representativa för hans forskning. Om Nyström planerar att publicera en förlagsutgåva bör detta avsnitt revideras betydligt.

Kapitlet "The Landscape of Messianic Judaism in Israel" börjar med en beskrivning av gudstjänster i två olika typer av messianska församlingar i Jerusalem, en som påminner om en karismatisk kristen gudstjänst och en som mer liknar en synagogsgudstjänst. Beskrivningarna ger läsaren en inblick i de stora skillnader som föreligger mellan de många församlingarna i Jerusalem. Dessa skiljer sig åt framför allt gällande språk (rörelsen består till stor del av immigranter), karismatisk karaktär och i vilken utsträckning medlemmarna följer ortodox judisk praxis. I en historisk överblick förklarar Nyström mycket väl bakgrunden och framväxten av rörelsen i Israel sedan 1948. I dag omfattar rörelsen mellan 10 000 och 15 000 personer. Kapitlet introducerar frågor om judisk identitet som präglar grupperingarna, vilket är förklarligt eftersom tron på Kristus vanligtvis utgör en skiljelinje mellan judar och icke-judar.

Hur tolkar representanter för messianska judar då Rom. 11? I tre substantiella kapitel får vi följa olika läsningar av texten. Presentationen av olika tolkningar av Paulus pendlar mellan individuella röster och uppfattningar som delas av flera. Genomgående jämförs messianska judars tolkningar med perspektiv inom PWJ. Det är fascinerande läsning där många gemensamma aspekter kommer fram. För messianska judar är Paulus judiska identitet viktig, vilket betonas i början av Rom. 11. Intressant är att många identifierar sig med "resten" ("en rest som Gud utvalt av nåd") i 11:5 och ser sig som den sanna resten av Guds folk som håller förbundet och är frälsta. Det blir då relevant hur de ser på andra judar. En vanlig syn är att majoriteten judar tillhör en "incomplete or unfulfilled kind

of Judaism", men att de inte har förkastats av Gud (s. 163). Förhållandet till den andra motpolen, de kristna, är likaledes komplex. För denna fråga spelar metaforen med olivträdet i Rom. 11 en central roll. Messianska judar tolkar Paulus kritik som riktad mot den samtida kristenheten, även om åsikterna går isär gällande dess ställning. Generellt sett ser de sig själva som "an 'authentic' expression of the Jewishness of the Jesus movement", medan icke-messianska kyrkor utgör inautentiska former (s. 233). Det framkommer många olikheter bland intervjupersonerna och vissa underliggande konflikter. En person föredrar till exempel att kallas "Jewish messianist" och är kritisk till den bredare rörelsen av messiansk judendom som han anser vara "Jesus-obsessed evangelicalism" (s. 165).

Likt PWJ-forskare anser majoriteten av de intervjuade att Paulus följde Torahs lagar, medan några anser att han modifierade dem. Intressant i sammanhanget är i vilken utsträckning de själva följer judisk praxis, speciellt som de överlag är kritiska till ortodox judendom. Här framkommer stora skillnader. Nyström förklarar att "flexibility is the distinguishing mark of the Messianic Jewish attitude toward Torah observance" (s. 190). Däremot utgör uppfattningen om att staten Israel bildades genom Guds ingripande en gemensam grund. Vidare delar de övertygelsen om att de lever i sluttiden och väntar på Messias återkomst, vilket för övrigt påminner om situationen i den tidiga kyrkan. För läsare som är insatta i konflikterna mellan olika falanger av judiska och icke-judiska Kristustroende i den tidiga kyrkan, som utgjorde en liten minoritet i det romerska samhället, slås man av likheterna i diskussionerna kring identitet, etnicitet och utvaldhet. Nyström förklarar till exempel att icke-judar som dras till messianska församlingar utgör ett speciellt problem: "some non-Jews want to practice Judaism as much as possible, whereas Messianic Jews oppose this idea as it threatens their unique position and identity" (s. 240). Det kunde ha handlat om första århundradet likaväl som det tjugoförsta.

Metoden som Nyström utvecklat, "Bible-reading interviews" över Rom. 11, fungerar mycket väl som ingång i en studie över messianska judars teologi, bibelsyn och identitetskonstruktion. Boken är välskriven och innehåller genomtänkta analyser och reflektioner. Översikten av Paulusforskningen som överdrivet polariserar forskares åsikter drar däremot ner helhetsintrycket av en annars utmärkt avhandling.

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Mikael Stenmark, Karin Johannesson & Ulf Zackariasson (red.). *Förnuft och religion – filosofiska undersökningar*. Skellefteå: Artos. 2021. 549 s.

"Människor har under alla tider funderat över livet, kärleken, lidandet, Gud, varifrån vi kommer och vad som kommer att hända när vi dör. Religionsfilosofins syfte är att både förstå och kritiskt och konstruktivt granska människors föreställningar om, svar på och förhållningssätt till dessa tillvarons grundläggande frågor" (s. 9).

Med denna programförklaring inleds en drygt 500-sidig antologi om det filosofiska utforskandet av främst religiösa, men även sekulära livsåskådningar.

Bortsett från en översättning av en amerikansk bok från 1991 (*Förnuft och religiös tro*, 1997), finns inte många introduktionsböcker till religionsfilosofi på svenska. Min favorit i genren är fortfarande Ulf Jonssons *Med tanke på Gud* (2004). Några år senare utgavs en antologi med bidrag från religionsfilosofer vid framför allt universiteten i Lund och Uppsala: *Religionsfilosofisk introduktion – existens och samhälle* (2010). För att fylla detta tomrum har nu en tjock volym utgivits vilken ger en grundlig översikt av de frågor som är aktuella inom den moderna religionsfilosofiska forskningen. Titeln till trots – *Förnuft och religion* – är man noga med att påpeka dels att man inom den

religionsfilosofiska forskningen bör inkludera även sekulära livsåskådningar, dels att religion och livsåskådning inte enbart handlar om trosföreställningar som kan prövas mot förnuftet utan också om något praktiskt och existentiellt, något man lever, även om fokus ligger på trosföreställningar och deras rationalitet. Det som skiljer religionsfilosofin från andra former av religionsvetenskaplig forskning är nämligen, enligt inledningskapitlet, att fokus ligger på (a) det teoretiska innehållet i de olika trosföreställningar som omfattas och (b) ”hur ett sådant innehåll kan berättigas eller kritiseras” (s. 9). Den typ av filosofiska frågor som berörs är *epistemologiska* (Kan vi veta att det finns en gud? Under vilka omständigheter är det rationellt att tro att något är fallet?), *ontologiska* (Vad är verkligt? Finns det en verklighet bortom det jordiska livet?) och *etiska* (Hur bör jag bete mig mot andra människor? Vari består ett gott liv?).

Boken är indelad i femton kapitel. Efter ett inledningskapitel som presenterar forskningsområdet religionsfilosofi följer två kapitel som ger en närmare presentation av religiösa och sekulära livsåskådningar. Av de senare diskuteras två: scientism (eller naturvetenskaplig naturalism) och sekulär humanism. Som exempel på religiös livsåskådning ges här en kort översikt av teismens grundläggande teser.

Tre kapitel diskuterar därefter relationen mellan religion och naturvetenskap och mellan tro och vetande. Här ligger fokus vid vad vi kan veta eller rationellt tro (hålla för sant) och i sådant fall på vilka grunder. Kan en människa till exempel både omfatta en gudstro och samtidigt acceptera vetenskapliga teorier och resultat utan att säga emot sig själv? Svaret är ja även om vetenskapliga resultat begränsar vad som är rationellt att tro om världen och om Gud. Traditionellt har tro och vetande-debatten handlat om huruvida det är rationellt att ha en religiös (ofta mer specifikt en teistisk) livsåskådning. Vad som är nytt är ”att det också förs en intensiv diskussion om det rationella i att vara ateist eller naturalist” (s. 154). Då naturalism inte endast är förnekandet av Gud (eller gudar) utan även bejakandet av något, till exempel att ”materia eller fysiska partiklar ligger till grund för allting som existerar” (s. 77), är detta inte heller överraskande. Även en sådan livsåskådnings försanthållanden bör naturligtvis analyseras och prövas.

I de kapitel som följer fokuseras på särskilda frågor, såsom lidandets problem och livets mening, människosyn, religion i offentligheten, gudsbilder, religiöst språk, religiös erfarenhet, mångfald och oenighet samt *embodiment* (kroppslighet) och filosofi. I kapitlet om gudsbilder presenteras till att börja med begrepp som monoteism, minimal teism och klassisk teism. Därefter granskas ett antal alternativa gudsbilder: deism, öppen teism, panenteism, panteism och alteritetsteism (eller radikal apofatism). I bokens sista kapitel utvecklas möjligheten att utforma en global religionsfilosofi, en religionsfilosofi som inte är så knuten till västerländskt kristen tradition utan mer tar hänsyn till den globaliserade värld i vilken vi lever. Ett exempel på hur olika religiösa traditioner kan mötas i en konstruktiv dialog är zenbuddhism och kristen panenteism.

Lyckas man då uppfylla den ambition som presenteras i förordet: ”att möjliggöra för studenter och andra intresserade” att ta del av den religionsfilosofiska forskningen (s. 7)? Den filosofiska novisen skulle jag hellre rekommendera ovan nämnda antologi på drygt 200 sidor från 2010, vilken innehåller kortare essäer kring olika religionsfilosofiska ämnen. För den som verkligen vill fördjupa sig i en systematisk genomgång av den religions- och livsåskådningsfilosofiska forskningen är däremot *Förnuft och religion* en gedigen kunskapskälla. En stor förtjänst är att den behandlar inte endast tidigare forskning, utan även den senaste tidens, med vilken författarna är djupt förtrogna. Boken kommer också att fylla – och fyller redan – sin givna funktion inom utbildningen i religionsvetenskap vid landets lärosäten för vilka den är avsedd. Det går utmärkt att läsa enstaka kapitel för den som föredrar att inrikta sig

på vissa frågeställningar. Möjligen finns viss risk för att boken kan upplevas som alltför Uppsalacentrerad. Med ett par undantag är nämligen samtliga kapitel skrivna av professor Mikael Stenmark och andra uppsalafilosofer, av vilka de flesta arbetar inom en analytisk anglosaxisk filosofisk tradition. (Tyvärr saknas författarpresentationer, vilket är en brist.) Därtill anknyts till flera doktorsavhandlingar tillkomna vid teologiska institutionen i Uppsala.

För att underlätta för läsaren att få en överblick av bokens innehåll hade jag dock önskat fler mellanrubriker på fler nivåer samt att dessa mellanrubriker varit införda i innehållsförteckningen. Ett person- och sakregister saknas också. Att engelska citat inte översätts är förstås inget hinder för den akademiska studenten men kan möjligen störa läsningen för en allmänintresserad läsare. Det finns således en hel del redaktionellt arbete att utföra inför en andra upplaga.

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